

Center for the Study of
SLAVERY
& **JUSTICE**

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

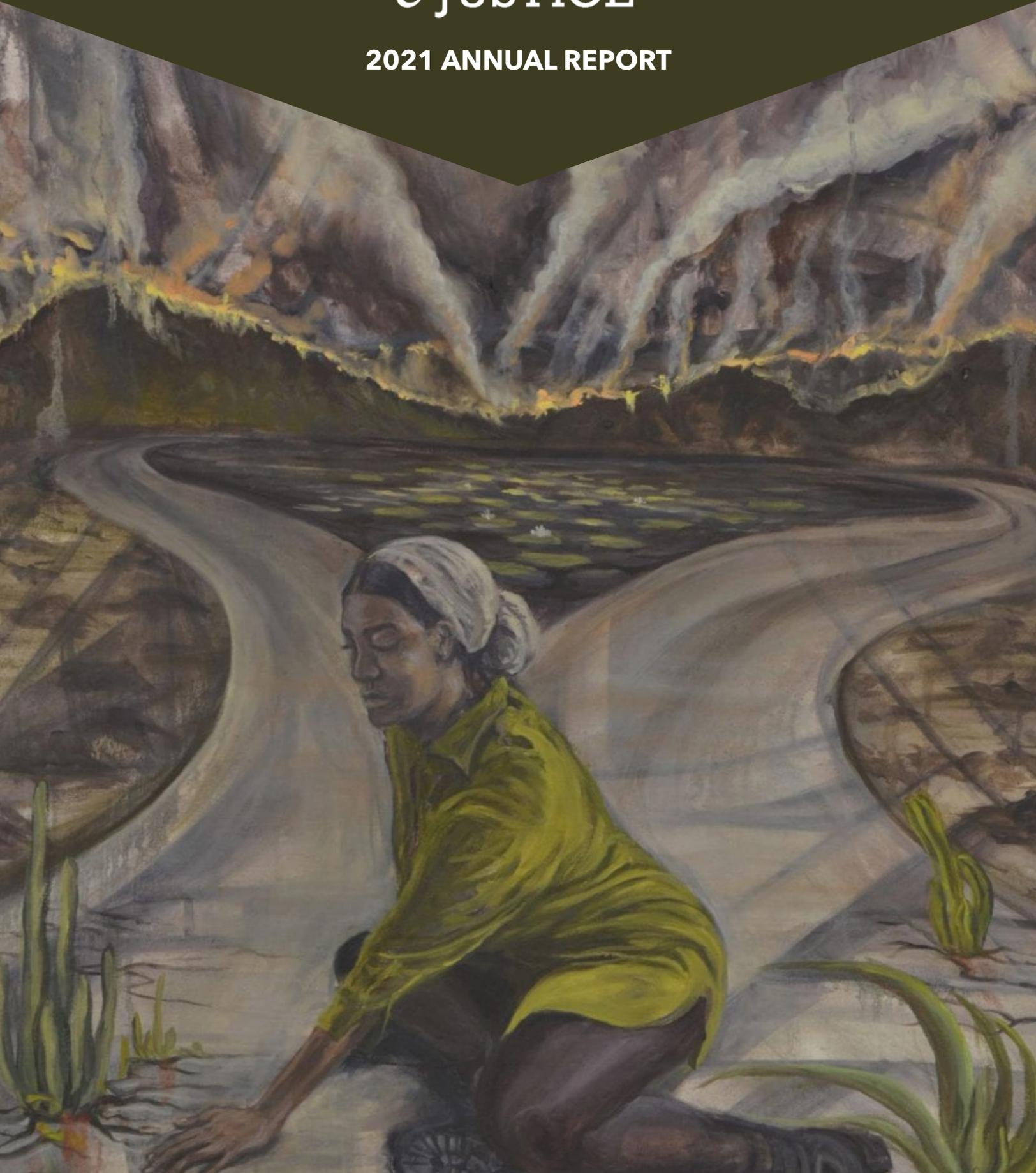


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Cover Image:
Abyss, 2020
Dara Bayer
Oil on Canvas
30"x40"
Courtesy of the Artist

Director's Note

No one could have predicted this. A global pandemic which exposed deep fissures in all societies. At the time of writing over 4.6 million persons have died because of COVID-19. In the U.S., the virus to date has taken the lives of over 600,000 persons. We have witnessed and it is now common knowledge that as the pandemic moved through America, Black and other marginalized communities paid a higher price. They did so due to the structural racial inequities both in health care and social systems which undergird Black life in America. On a global scale there was the "vaccine apartheid" as many countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America did not have the necessary quantities of vaccines to administer to their populations. This occurred while many countries in what can be loosely called the "global North" stored surpluses. The pandemic not only exposed the fissures of race, class as well as unequal global relations, but it also forced many of us to adapt to a digital world. Zoom and other digital platforms for many of us became the norm. Yet, even within this new normal there were deep inequalities. Those who had ready access to the tools of modern technology could log on and enter a digital world while those without languished in despair as educational classes and communication proved oftentimes impossible. It is safe to say that one contemporary feature of the world has been exposed by the pandemic – inequality. Since 1980, various studies have illustrated that social and economic inequality have sharply increased in the world. When this occurs, given historical systems of racial domination, there is a profound adverse impact upon the African American population. To put this at its most obvious, racial slavery shaped and continues to impact America's structural social and economic inequities.

We are at a unique moment in American society, one in which the Black Lives Matter Movement and the actions of African Americans have put on the table the issue of anti-Black racism and its structural legacies. In this milieu, there is a pushback within the domain of education, a pushback which seeks to present a sanitized version of American history that elides the racial history of America. Such elision does not confront one source of inequality – the afterlives of racial slavery. Recognizing this, the CSSJ deepened its mission of telling the complex history of America by again partnering with Firelight Media to produce a companion volume in sync with the PBS documentary on the Atlantic slave trade. For us at the Center, the pandemic called for resilience and adaptation. We focused on digital public programming as one way to

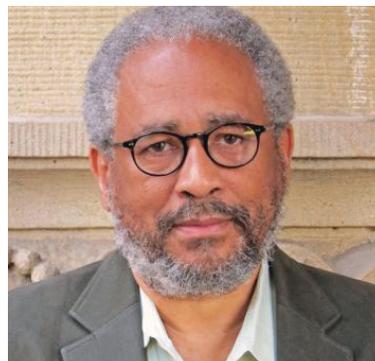
connect with different communities keeping alive one of our key tasks – to tell the story of racial slavery in America and its current legacies. Thus we continued over the past year with our signature webinar series *This is America*. Even though we shifted gears to the digital, many of our programs continued, due to the resilience of staff (including development office staff), faculty fellows, post-doctoral fellows, board members, and both graduate and undergraduate students affiliated with the CSSJ. This report represents the remarkable cumulative efforts of all persons associated with the Center. There are no words to thank everyone who worked so hard and thoughtfully in the middle of one of the most traumatic periods in our connected history.

As we enter the period of our 10th anniversary, the Center will undergo an external review. That review will shape our next five years or so. In the middle of a pandemic we are called upon as a Center to be creative; to be attentive to the results of the deep structural inequalities and the narratives which embed these inequities within what one cultural critic called the "structures of feelings" which shape our everyday lives. So, with the spirit of justice as our guide, we continue our mission of conducting cutting-edge scholarship around racial slavery and other injustices while creating modalities of delivering this cutting-edge scholarship to various publics.

Thank you for reading this report and be safe. We at the Center look forward to seeing you either virtually or, if public health conditions permit, in person sometime during our 10th anniversary programming.

ANTHONY BOGUES

Director, Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice



Reflections from the External Advisory Board

The past year remained challenging times for the nation and the Center. There was a tumultuous presidential election, an attack upon the Capitol Building seeking to overturn the election and new efforts to install laws which sought to make it harder to vote especially for citizens of color. More recently, teaching about structural racism and its role in the evolution of the nation has come under attack. This effort is led by politicians and others who want to ignore these issues and prefer only highlighting what they see as the glorious positive history of the nation. They are resisting having a factual and thoughtful conversation about issues pertaining to race. This perspective runs counter to the charge of the Center which emerged from the determination of Brown to engage its past relative to slavery and racism and to use that information in a constructive manner.

Despite this rise in resistance to engage in conversations about race, the Center has not slowed its own work. As this annual report will show, the Center continues to serve as a leading voice in the exploration of these issues. Of particular note is its work in developing a comprehensive high school curriculum focused on African American history, "Racial Slavery in the Americas: Resistance, Freedom, and Legacies." The curriculum is available online as well as through webinars to directly interact with educators. This is one of many activities initiated by the Center during the past year which have attracted strong interest from viewers from around the country. It also reinforces the goal of the Advisory Board and the Center to serve as a source of information for the general public as well as our academic counterparts.

As an Advisory Board, we look forward to continuing our support of the work of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice. Its voice is needed now even more than ever.

SPENCER R. CREW

Chair of the External Advisory Board



About the Center

The Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice is a scholarly research center with a public humanities mission. Recognizing that racial and chattel slavery were central to the historical formation of the Americas and the modern world, the CSSJ creates a space for the interdisciplinary study of the historical forms of slavery while also examining how these legacies shape our contemporary world.

For the 2020-2021 academic year, the Center's work was organized around the following research clusters and projects:

RESEARCH CLUSTERS

Human Trafficking

This project explores contemporary forms of human bondage and engages in public programming around this issue.

Freedom Archive

This project creates an inventory of materials in Brown University Library's Special Collections related to slavery and abolition to help scholars more easily access these items.

Race, Medicine, and Social Justice

This cluster explores the history and persistence of structural racism in biomedicine as it intersects with economic and social conditions. We focus on reimagining the knowledge we produce about race and health from a social justice perspective.

Race, Slavery, Colonialism and Capitalism

This research cluster is reshaping scholars' understanding of the history and growth of capitalism and will bring together the best scholars in the world. This is a three-year project that is co-led by CSSJ and the International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam).

Historical Injustice and Democracy

The making of the modern world was in part constituted by the historical injustices of colonialism and racial slavery. This is a joint project between the Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs and the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice.

Mass Incarceration and Punishment in America

This research cluster seeks to examine punishment and the U.S. carceral state through an interdisciplinary lens. The cluster operates from the frame that race and anti-Black racism are cornerstones to understanding the vast leviathan of punishment in America.

PUBLIC HUMANITIES PROJECTS

Global Curatorial Project

This exhibition and curatorial project presents both the global interconnectedness of Atlantic slavery and the slave trade, as well as illuminates an alternative view about the history of our global modernity. It is co-led by CSSJ and the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History & Culture.

Slave Trade Film Project with Filmmaker Stanley Nelson

This research and workshop project aims to support the development of a multi-part documentary series on the Atlantic slave trade. *Creating a New World: The Transatlantic Slave Trade* will chart the economic and human cost of the slave trade across the Atlantic basin, underscoring how this expansive system of trade, violence, and profit built the modern world.

Heimark Artist-in-Residence

The Heimark Artist-in-Residence program brings to campus musicians, poets, visual artists, and performers whose work grapples with the legacies of slavery on our world today.

Slavery in the Americas High School Curriculum Project

This project seeks to create a high school curriculum that will challenge myths and absences in how our schools currently teach the history of slavery. This is a collaborative project with The Choices Program which produces award-winning curricula on current and historical international and public policy.

The Imagined New

The Imagined New is an interdisciplinary platform for critical exchange and research around African and African Diasporic art practices, as they relate to questions of history, archive and the alternative imagination(s) of the Radical Black Tradition.

SEMINAR SERIES

CSSJ Advanced Knowledge Working Group

The CSSJ Advanced Knowledge Working Group is a seminar for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and other scholars affiliated with or working alongside the CSSJ to come together to think critically about the legacies of slavery and boundaries of freedom across time and space.

Carceral State Reading Group

The Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice facilitates a year-long reading group which focuses on issues of imprisonment, incarceration, captivity, criminalization, and policing historically and in the present day. The reading group is a collaboration between various sectors of the Providence community and the CSSJ at Brown University.

Graduate Seminar and Reading Group on Black Aesthetics

Organized by graduate students, this seminar is focused on engaging in deep study and inquiry into the discourse of history and aesthetics as praxis. The group seeks to interrogate a set of aesthetic practices bound up in the conventions of Western thought. The group will produce publications, mixtapes, and exhibitions and aims to develop a close intellectual and artistic partnership with the Center for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa.

Faculty Fellow Seminar

This graduate level seminar led by Brown faculty is an interdisciplinary course that seeks to explore emerging issues in the study of racial slavery and its legacies.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Slavery & Legacy Walking Tour

The Slavery & Legacy Walking Tour examines the history behind Brown University, the State of Rhode Island and their roles in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. New digital resources help students (K-12 & college) as well as adult groups think critically about the University and state histories.

Civil Rights Movement Initiative

This initiative aims to help high school students understand the Civil Rights Movement as something more than events of the past, and as a bridge to understanding the present. Students meet for weekly classes at the Center and participate in a week-long visit to the South, visiting important sites in the Southern Freedom Movement and meeting with activists. Moving forward, this work will be expanded to include two additional Providence Public schools and provide course credit.

STAFF & ADMINISTRATION

Anthony Bogues

Director
Professor of Africana Studies

Shana Weinberg

Associate Director, Public
Humanities Programs

Maiyah Gamble-Rivers

Assistant Director of Education
and Community Engagement

Catherine Van Amburgh

Center Coordinator

Kiku Langford-McDonald

Center Manager

Administrative Assistance

Sydney Smith '22

Program Coordinators

Dylan Lewis '22

Lillian Pickett '22

Atlantic Slave Trade Research
Group

Callie Bouton '22

Halle Bryant '21

Kaela Hines '22

Jamie Solomon '21

Serena Varner '22

Carceral State Reading Group

Felicia Denaud PhD '22

Connor Jenkins '22

Justin Lang PhD '25

FACULTY ADVISORY BOARD

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English

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Professor of Africana and
American Studies,
Chair of American Studies

Françoise N. Hamlin

Associate Professor of Africana
Studies and History

Juliet Hooker

Professor of Political Science

Kevin Quashie

Professor of English

Seth Rockman

Associate Professor of History

EXTERNAL ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Ruth J. Simmons

Founding Board Chair
Emeritus

Spencer Crew '71

Chair, 2020-Present

James T. Campbell

Katherine Chon '02

David Haas '78

Libby Heimark '76, P'11 '14 '17

Mary Vascellaro '74, P'07

AFFILIATED FACULTY

Linford Fisher

Associate Professor of History,
Brown University

Emily Owens

CSSJ Faculty Fellow
Assistant Professor of History,
Brown University

FACULTY ASSOCIATES

Geri Augusto

Visiting Associate Professor of
International & Public Affairs
and Africana Studies

Rae Gould

Executive Director of the
Native American and
Indigenous Studies Initiative

Joe Meisel

Joukowsky Family University
Librarian

Amanda Strauss

Associate University Librarian
for Special Collections

VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSORS

Mack Scott

Reimagining New England
Histories Project

Zachary Sell

Visiting Assistant Professor
of Slavery and Justice, Brown
University, 2019-2020

RESEARCH CLUSTER FELLOWS

Lundy Braun

Professor of Medical Science
and Africana Studies,
Race, Medicine and Social
Justice Research Cluster
Faculty Fellow

Elena Shih

Assistant Professor of
American Studies and Ethnic
Studies, Human Trafficking
Research Cluster Faculty
Fellow

Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve

Associate Professor of
Sociology, Mass Incarceration
and Punishment in America
Research Cluster Faculty
Fellow

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

Charlene Fletcher

Emerging Voices Postdoctoral
Research Associate in Slavery
and Justice, 2020-2021

Marcelo Rosanova Ferraro

Historical Injustice and
Democracy Postdoctoral
Research Associate, 2021-
2023

VISITING SCHOLARS

Pepjin Brandon

Visiting Scholar, 2019-2021

Akeia de Barros Gomes

Visiting Scholar, 2021-2022

Meadow Dibble

Visiting Scholar, 2019-2021

Sylviane Diouf

Visiting Scholar, 2019-2021

Paul Gardullo

Visiting Scholar, 2020-2021

Naz Habtezghi

Visiting Scholar, 2020-2021

Hadiya Sewer

Visiting Scholar, 2019-2021

GRADUATE FELLOWS

Sherri Cummings

Global Curatorial Project,
Graduate Fellow

Felicia Denaud

6th Year Interdisciplinary
Graduate Dissertation Fellow,
2021-2022

Jeffrey Feldman PhD '22

Graduate Fellow, 2021-2022

Melanie Ferdinand-King PhD '24

Graduate Associate Fellow

Allyson Laforge

Center for the Study of Slavery
& Justice Graduate Proctor,
2021-2022

Justin Lang PhD '25

Graduate Associate Fellow

Leonora Masini

6th Year Interdisciplinary
Graduate Dissertation Fellow,
2021-2022

Larissa Nez

Reimagining New England
Histories Graduate Proctor,
2021-2022

Rai Terry '22 A.M.

Graduate Fellow for the Study
of the Public History of Slavery

Malcolm Thompson PhD '25

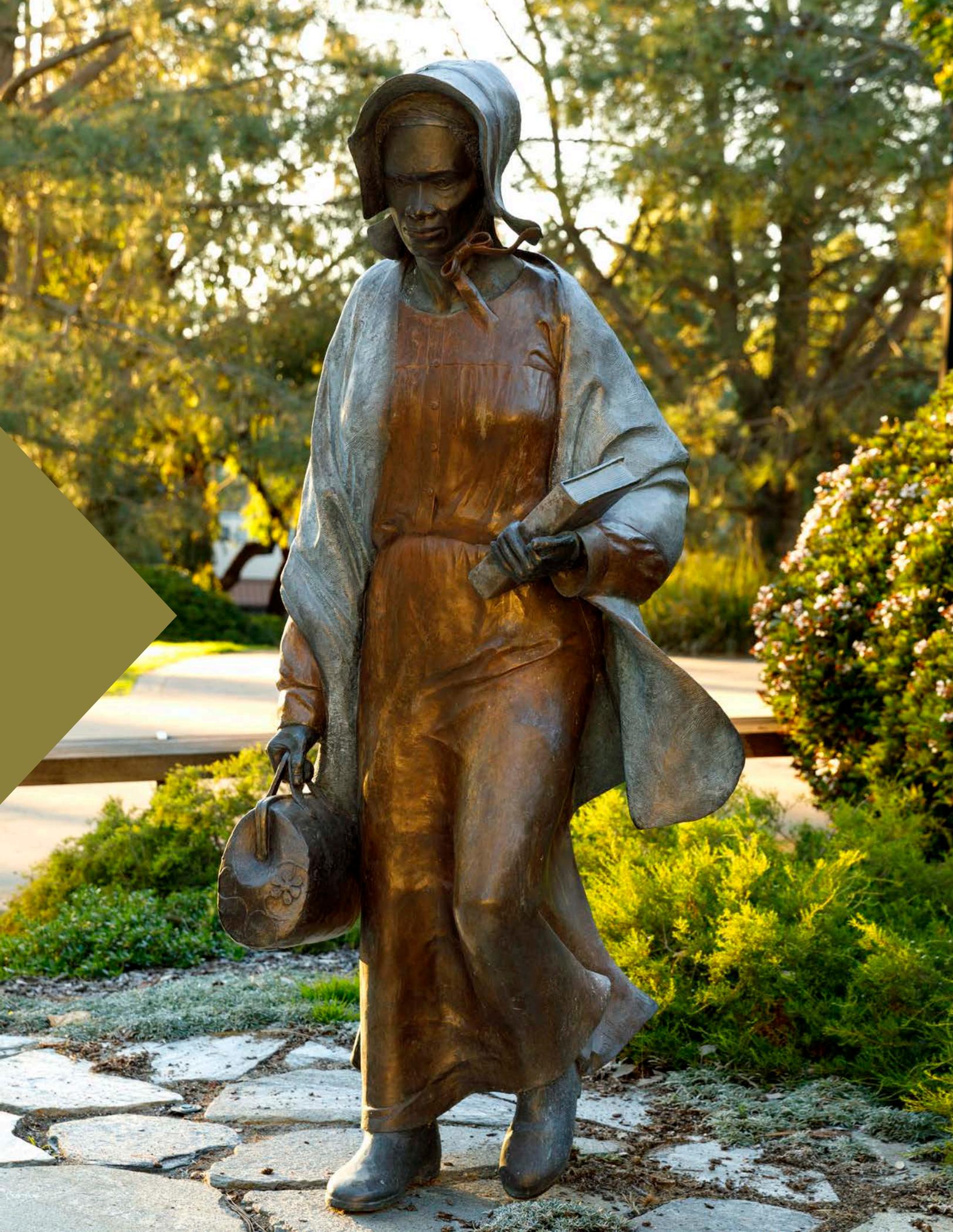
Graduate Associate Fellow

Miranda Worl

Reimagining New England
Histories/NAISI Fellow, 2021-
2022

A Year in Review

The upcoming 2022 calendar year will mark the Center's 10th year! The Center's impact on campus and institutions around the world continues to grow. The 2020-2021 academic year was a year full of new initiatives and collaboration. We remained focused on our mission of supporting and sharing scholarly work, as well as digital public humanities and educational programming in the midst of a global pandemic. These new efforts allowed us to explore and share the histories and legacies of racial slavery in a deeper way with a wider audience.



CSSJ Research Clusters

HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESEARCH CLUSTER

The Human Trafficking Research Cluster focused on its collaborations with Red Canary Song (RCS), a grassroots coalition of migrant massage workers, sex workers, and allies working to end the policing of Asian massage work in Flushing, Queens. In Fall 2020, core collective members of RCS offered zoom guest lectures to student participants of the research cluster.

Following the March 2021 mass shootings at three Atlanta massage spas, the HTRC's research on "Policing Asian Massage Work," received national attention through a New York Times op-ed, "How to Protect Massage Workers," published by research cluster director Elena Shih. In response to the shootings, the HTRC also convened a timely panel on "Policing, White Supremacy, and Asian Massage Work," with experts from across North America. The video has been widely circulated and viewed over 2,300 times.

In Rhode Island, the research cluster has also been engaged in local discussions around the policing of Asian massage work. Following the June 2021 raids of three Asian massage businesses in Cranston, I published an op-ed in the Providence Journal speaking to "The Racialized Policing of Human Trafficking in Rhode Island." Throughout summer 2021 and the next academic year, the research cluster will work with Red Canary Song and Butterfly Project to launch a North American campaign against the licensing laws that vociferously police Asian massage work in the name of human trafficking.

ELENA SHIH

*Manning Assistant Professor of American Studies
CSSJ Human Trafficking Research Cluster Faculty Fellow*



RACE, MEDICINE, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE RESEARCH CLUSTER

In 2016, the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice launched the Race, Medicine, and Social Justice Research Cluster, composed of faculty, graduate, and medicine students, to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue across campus on race and racism in science, medicine, and public health. Focused on the material/concrete ways in which racism works through the practice of “normal” science and medicine, the Working Group of the Research Cluster explored how to better integrate discussions about race, science, and medicine in the undergraduate, graduate, medical, and public health curricula and in the conceptualization of research projects. When our working group began, analyses from the humanities and social sciences had not been integrated into medical curricula nationally or internationally. There were, however, the kernels of interdisciplinary dialogue emerging in some academic journals, driven in part by student activists.

With attention to the systems of racism and the various relationships that sustain these systems, including invisible aspects of racism such as race-based algorithms, over the past five years the working group has responded to the many important controversies developing in science, medicine, and public health. We centered our discussion on complexities around knowledge production and classificatory apparatuses in the biomedical sciences as a structural feature of race and racism – with profound effects on health. Why, we ask, is racial science so credible as an explanatory framework for inequality? What are the harms? Several members of the Working Group wrote to the House Ways and Means Committee regarding race-based algorithms to respond to these questions.

This academic year, the Research Cluster launched its meetings with a discussion of a webinar by Professor Rana Hogarth of the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, moderated by Harvard University historian of science Professor Evelyn Hammonds. Author of the remarkable *Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Difference in the Atlantic World, 1780-1840*, Professor Hogarth’s work centers on the history of medicine among enslaved peoples, the consequences for knowledge production, and the myths of innate racial difference. In this thought-provoking interview, Professor Hogarth examined the experience of African Americans and the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. Over the course of two semesters, our sessions explored such important topics as the myriad structures of racism in medicine and public health, the Covid-19 vaccine, and mothers and incarceration facilitated by CSSJ Emerging Voices postdoctoral fellow Charlene Fletcher. Facilitated by Working Group member Dr. Taneisha Wilson, we had an especially rich discussion in our last session on a recent, highly controversial podcast promoted by the prominent biomedical journal JAMA. In keeping with our global perspective, our featured speaker to the Brown community this academic year was Professor Adia Benton, Associate Professor at Northwestern University, and award-winning author of *HIV Exceptionalism: Development through Disease in Sierra Leone*. Examining the experiences of survivors in Sierra Leone in the aftermath of the Ebola epidemic, Professor Benton demonstrated what care looked like in a faltering, if not crumbling public health system, run by international donors. Next year, we will continue to interrogate the nature of societal structures that shape health, focusing on the relationship between health care systems, racial capitalism, the operation of medical hierarchies, and the centrality of scientific knowledge production to the persistence of racism in medical research and practice.

LUNDY BRAUN

*Professor of Medical Science and Africana Studies
Race, Medicine and Social Justice Research Cluster
Faculty Fellow*

RACE, SLAVERY, COLONIALISM, AND CAPITALISM RESEARCH CLUSTER

On 15 January 2021, the CSSJ publicly launched its new Research Cluster on Race, Slavery, Colonialism, and Capitalism. This project is a cooperation between the CSSJ and the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam (the Netherlands), and arose out of a series of conversations between Prof. Anthony Bogues and myself on the question how to understand global capitalism's formative but continuously-changing relationship with slavery, racism and colonialism. From its inception, we intended the project to cross traditional borders between imperial histories and national historical scholarship.

Building an international network of scholars around this task, of course, provided us with numerous challenges in times of a global pandemic. International gatherings became practically impossible, forcing us to adapt many of our initial plans. Though not a substitute for in-person interaction, online meetings did give us a platform for fruitful discussion. Our first international gathering on 15-16 January (all joining in from our own home offices in vastly different time-zones) showed us that even our already quite extensive initial questions still were too limited. New themes were added, such as the patterns of ruthless exploitation of natural resources that the plantation enshrined at the heart of capitalism as a global system.

A webinar in the afternoon of 15 January allowed us to lay out the foundational ideas and debates behind this project in front of an international audience. The public forum was introduced and moderated by CSSJ director Anthony Bogues. Speakers, apart from myself, were Walter Johnson (Harvard University) and Jennifer Morgan (New York University). Well over four hundred people attended.

The debate focused in particular on questions of the relationship between history and the present. How did slavery shape modern modes of accounting and the commodification of human life and nature? What is the place of global finance in histories of race-making and exploitation? The global outburst of Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of George Floyd infused many questions from the audience, and led to a particularly spirited exchange on the responsibilities of academics in the face of injustice. The entire webinar was recorded, and can be watched here: <https://youtu.be/nL7damuM9rA>.

The public forum and closed workshop left us with a long list of questions to address in the next phases of this project. These will be explored in a new workshop in fall of 2021 hosted by the CSSJ, that will be followed by a second workshop in Amsterdam in 2022. The planned outcome is a collaborative volume that brings a crucial trans-national perspective to ongoing debates on the origins and varieties of racial capitalism.

PEPJIN BRANDON

Race, Slavery, Colonialism, and Capitalism Research Cluster Faculty Fellow & Professor of Global History (Free University of Amsterdam)

MASS INCARCERATION AND PUNISHMENT IN AMERICA

This research cluster examines the origins and consequences of mass incarceration and centers race and anti-Black racism as the cornerstones to understanding punishment in America. This research cluster serves an important purpose: bridging the research-based examination of mass incarceration in the United States with the activist and system-impacted people shaping the dialogue around human rights, criminal justice reform and abolition. This year, we assembled programming for students, faculty and the community that placed scholarly thought-leaders in dialogue with path-breaking activists or those who faced years of wrongful conviction at the hands of the State.



For instance, we welcomed Professor Laurence Ralph from Princeton University to discuss his book, *The Torture Letters* - a work also adapted into a New York Times documentary short. In these works, he innovates on the traditional academic book, asking readers to examine one of Chicago's darkest and most shameful human rights violations: the torture of over 130 Black men by the Chicago Police. The work brings the power of the social sciences together with the beauty of the humanities to confront a legacy of trauma and violence that transcends time and generations. In addition, we invited Professor Reuben Miller, from the University of Chicago, to discuss his book, *Halfway Home*, days after his appearance on NPR's Fresh Air with Terry Gross. In this book event, Ronald D. Simpson-Bey, The Director of Outreach and Alumni Engagement for JustLeadershipUSA, discussed the text as someone who served 27 years in the Michigan prison system- a charge ultimately reversed. The event highlighted the ways that incarceration has an "after-life" - exerting control and punishment long after release. Finally, we hosted a series of panels centering the voices of formerly incarcerated people. One panel examined the heroic legal effects of people who exonerated themselves from behind bars. Another panel examined people who were "juvenile lifers" - sentenced, as children, to die behind bars - but released only after a change in the law. Finally, we examined the stories of people whose sentences were commuted after 30 or 40 years of serving time behind bars. Overall, this research cluster continued to focus on presenting the most current research in the area while incorporating the perspectives and expertise of those impacted by the institutions we study.

NICOLE GONZALEZ VAN CLEVE

Associate Professor of Sociology

Mass Incarceration and Punishment in America Research Cluster Faculty Fellow

This is America Series

Embedded within the American social, political, and economic systems are various forms of structural violences. The Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice's series *This Is America* explores how these structures and systems are rooted in anti-Black racism. It is funded in part through support from Brown University's Addressing Systemic Racism Seed Fund.

EDUCATION IN RHODE ISLAND DURING COVID-19

The opportunity to participate in a candid discussion around education and the effects the pandemic has had allowed for some truly meaningful dialogue. In a year filled with fear, uncertainty, struggle and loss, one of the many areas most severely impacted has been education. Students, administrators, faculty and families have been forced to adjust to completely unfamiliar teaching and learning structures which, almost certainly, has taken its toll on most. Therefore, the timeliness of the CSSJ's push to create a space for both educators and learners to be heard is not lost on me.

As panelists, we discussed remote teaching and learning, and how it has impacted us personally and throughout our respective school communities. Leslie, one of the two student panelists, shared the difficulty many students experienced trying to balance schoolwork, personal and family health concerns, as well as more prominent roles within the family structure due to loss of employment and/or wages. She spoke candidly about having to juggle her classes while providing support for her younger sibling with his classes as her mother has limited English proficiency, something many immigrant families also experienced. Genesis, the other student speaker, spoke to the mental health implications the pandemic has placed on many students. She shared her frustrations with "Mental Health" days not being acknowledged by teachers across the board. She also spoke to the large disconnect in technical abilities amongst faculty and the extreme need to address this issue as remote learning continues.

As the two educators on the panel, Claribel and I both explored the re-imagining of education moving forward. We discussed ideas that challenged the status quo with respect to the delivery of education. Is the standard 5-day, 8-hour school week that begins at 7am really vital? Is there room to adjust with later start times or incorporate more Mental Health days? With many SAT testing sites closed due to the pandemic and more colleges moving towards a "Test-Optional" model in regards to admission, should we consider leaning into this idea more widely? As a society, are we viewing educators as the Essential Workers that they have proven to be? Are they being compensated appropriately and provided the support needed to be most effective at their job? And finally, how do we ensure that families in the most underrepresented areas are prioritized and served in the most adequate and equitable of ways?

The roundtable allowed for deep reflection on issues we each feel very strongly about. And as the pandemic continues to persist, we must remain steadfast in our obligation to do right by this generation no matter the obstacle.

CHUCK YOUN

Community Organizer

"My brother, when he needs help he comes straight to me. When we try to explain to my mom the question he has, translating from English to Spanish is hard. My mother studied in Nicaragua...and so did I. It is different from what he is learning now. There isn't good support for parents who speak Spanish. All of the links are in English and the translations to Spanish are not even good."

-Leslie, Class of 2020

POST-ELECTION CONVERSATION

In the wake of a tumultuous, highly-contested national election and the unprecedented rampage of the U.S. Capitol, political leaders and citizens alike were forced to grapple with the reality of the anti-Black violence and its prevalence in many social, political, and economic institutions. As part of the *This is America Series*, the "Post Election Conversation" brought together voting rights activists, policy experts, and legal scholars to discuss the state of democracy following both the national and Georgia state elections. Nsé Ufot, the Chief Executive Officer of the New Georgia Project, began the dialogue, gesturing to the increased voter registration and participation of Black, Latinx, and young voters and the resulting "whitelash," an attempt by white Americans to undermine and discourage the expansion of a more inclusive democracy. Marcia Johnson-Blanco, Co-Director of the Lawyers' Committee's Voting Rights Project, echoed Ufot's point about the record voter registration efforts, reminding the audience that "this is the best election in our country's history, but it's not the best that we can do." Johnson-Blanco linked the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol to the Georgia run-off elections that drew on historic images of the Selma to Montgomery march which led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the previous summer of 2020 during which Black Lives Matter protests and the global health pandemic made clear the racial, political, and economic inequalities that exist throughout the country. Citing recent conservative legal victories in Alabama and Texas that will continue to strip voting rights from predominantly minority voters, Sonia Jarvas, Distinguished Lecturer at the Marxe School of Public & International Affairs at Baruch College, CUNY, urged attendees to do the necessary work of pushing local and state officials to protect and expand access to the ballot. The three panelists concluded the conversation by invoking the hopeful tone of Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem, "The Hill We Climb." Gorman, the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history declares that "while democracy can be periodically delayed, it can never be permanently defeated."

SYDNEY SMITH '22

This is America Series Events

June 11th, 2020

[Black Lives: Structural Violence, Protest and Change](#)

June 29th, 2020

[Breaking the Thin Blue Line of Bigotry: How Outcries for Police Reform Have Led to Calls for Abolition](#)

July 16th, 2020

[Challenges to Global Anti-Black Racism: A Conversation](#)

September 17th, 2020

[Race, Injustice, and Health Disparities: Barriers to Equity and Citizenship](#)

September 29th, 2020

[Defunding the Police: Organizing Against the Carceral State in Providence](#)

October 20th, 2020

[Voter Suppression](#)

October 28th, 2020

[2020 Debra Lee Lecture: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty First Century](#)

November 16th, 2020

[The Torture Letters: Reckoning with Police Violence](#)

January 22nd, 2021

[Post-Election Conversation](#)

January 26th, 2021

[Roundtable on Education in Rhode Island during COVID-19](#)

February 11th, 2021

[CRMI, A Bridge to Understanding our Present](#)

February 23rd, 2021

[Reimagining Memorials and Commemoration](#)

March 29th, 2021

[Halfway Home: Race, Punishment and the Afterlife of Mass Incarceration](#)

April 6th, 2021

[Black Politics and US Democracy, Beyond Mourning and Sacrifice](#)

April 8th, 2021

[Memorializing Black Death](#)

April 13th, 2021

[Design Practices and Memorializing Difficult Histories](#)

April 20th, 2021

[Black Monument Builders](#)

May 19th, 2021

[Legal Advocacy from Inside](#)

May 26th, 2021

[Serving Life: Juvenile Lifers and the Struggle for Freedom and Redemption](#)

June 2nd, 2021

[After Life: Commutation, Redemption, and Making an Impact After Incarceration](#)

MONUMENTS AND THE SLAVE PAST: ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION WITH RENÉE ATER

In March and April 2021, Dr. Renée Ater, Provost Visiting Associate Professor in Africana Studies, introduced undergraduate projects for her course on monuments, history, and memory and led several conversations with public artists for CSSJ's series *This is America*. On March 6, four undergraduates presented their monument interventions. The students included Noah Howard, Miya Matsuishi-Elhardt, Avery Oliver, and Ciara Sing. Howard rethought the John Carter House at 21 Meeting Street in Providence, challenging the interpretation of the historic house and highlighting the role of the slave trade within its walls in his project entitled the Providence Slave Trade Memorial and Museum. Matsuishi-Elhardt re-envisioned the AIDS Memorial Grove in San Francisco, adding a living memorial component to activate the space. With an intervention into Kennedy Plaza in Providence, Oliver rethought the memorial landscape to create a more inclusive, welcoming space entitled *We Dream a World*. In response to the Caesar Augustus Statue on Brown's campus, Sing created *The Acknowledgment Garden*, a new memorial space on Wriston Quad, that focuses on inclusivity, sustainability, and contemplation. Her garden design is indebted to a Mashpee Wampanoag spiral symbol.

Through three events in April 2021, after moderated discussions with thirteen sculptors and design practitioners and architects, the purpose of these conversations was to focus on the ways in which artists have engaged the slave past through public art and memorialization, and to have artists present their projects and dialogue with each other about their work. The first event on April 8, *Memorializing Black Death*, included three academically trained sculptors who have created memorials for reclaimed and restored Black cemeteries. The presenters included David S. Newton (*Freedman's Memorial Cemetery*, Dallas, Texas); Mario Chido (*The Path of Thorns and Roses*, Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery Memorial, Alexandria, Virginia); and Jerome Meadows, (*We Stand In Honor of Those Forgotten*, African Burying Ground Memorial, Portsmouth, New Hampshire).

On April 13, three groups of design practitioners/architects came together for the panel, *Design Practices and Memorializing Difficult Histories*. Shane Allbritton and Norman Lee, co-founders of RE:site, presented their work for St. Mary's College of Maryland, *From Absence to Presence: Memorial to the Enslaved Peoples of Southern Maryland*; Katie MacDonald and Kyle Schumann, co-founders of After Architecture, discussed their design for the Camp Barker Memorial in Washington, DC; and Julian Arrington and Dayton Schroeter, Design Leaders at the SmithGroup-Washington, DC, discussed their recent moveable memorial, *Society's Cage*. The last panel, *Black Monument Builders*, took place on April 20. Four artists engaged in a lively multi-generational conversation about the role of public art, slavery, and the telling of hard truths. The artists included Vinnie Bagwell, Manuelita Brown, Becci Davis, and Ed Dwight.

RENÉE ATER

Provost Visiting Associate Professor of Africana Studies



The Path of Thorns and Roses, 2014
Mario Chido

BLACK POLITICS AND US DEMOCRACY: BEYOND MOURNING AND SACRIFICE

The webinar on “Black Politics and US Democracy, Beyond Mourning and Sacrifice” in the CSSJ’s *This is America* series brought together some of the most insightful scholars of black politics specializing in social movements, racial violence, U.S. political development, and black feminist theory, to think through this important moment in US history. Almost ten years since the uprisings spurred by the ongoing killings of black people by police officers erupted, the massive multiracial protests for racial justice that took place in the summer of 2020, the pivotal role of black activists (especially black women) in the 2020 election, as well as the violent Jan. 6, 2021 white insurrection at the US capitol, questions about black politics and race and US democracy are front and center in the national dialogue. Megan Ming Francis, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Washington and the author of *Civil Rights and the Making of the Modern American State* (Cambridge, 2014); Shatema Threadcraft, Associate Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies and Philosophy at Vanderbilt and the author of *Intimate Justice: The Black Female Body and the Body Politic* (Oxford, 2016); and Deva Woodly, Associate Professor of Politics at the New School for Social Research and the author of *The Politics of Common Sense: How Social Movements Use Public Discourse to Change Politics and Win Acceptance* (Oxford 2015), and the forthcoming: *Reckoning: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Necessity of Social Movements*, collectively situated the current era of black protest focused on racial justice and anti-black violence in historical perspective and provided compelling answers to questions about the role black politics has historically played in U.S. democracy and how we should assess the accomplishments of the Movement for Black Lives and the challenges it faces going forward.

JULIET HOOKER

Professor of Political Science



Global Curatorial Project

For the past year, I have been deeply engaged in the Global Curatorial Project at the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice (CSSJ). With an historical foundation grounded in the study of precolonial and postcolonial Africa, transatlantic slavery and gender, my research, as part of the curatorial team, touches upon a myriad of topics that focus on the silenced narratives and active participation of Black women in new world colonial spaces. A crucial component of this research is the acknowledgment of gendered African retentions and intellectual contributions that were utilized in these contentious spaces in spite of the bonded condition of African women and their daughters. Some of these topics included women's participation in the healing arts in Africa and on plantations in the Americas, including inoculation and the treatment of various diseases that affected the enslaved. African women have practiced inoculation for centuries in Africa, even developing commercial enterprises by dealing in the materials that caused viral diseases like yaws, so that mothers could protect their children from the painful and fatal distemper. This knowledge traveled with the enslaved to plantations in the Americas where African women utilized this knowledge to care for the enslaved community. In places like Suriname, African women incorporated what they learned from their Indigenous counterparts about the curative properties of various plants and shrubs to their own repertoire of healing arts. Many of the plants they encountered looked similar to the healing plants and herbs from their African homelands and also yielded the same desired pharmaceutical results. During the eighteenth century, western medicine broadened to include the field of tropical diseases because of the number of white settlers in tropical locales. European physicians, mostly male, appropriated African and Indigenous medicinal knowledge without a nod to the enslaved women they learned from.

The healing contributions of Black women would be a strong component for survival in the mighty quilombo of Palmares in the lush interior of Pernambuco, Brazil and among the enslaved and free(d) in the complex slave society of colonial Saint Domingue. However, my research pertaining to these two events is not limited to the creation of timelines. It also involves the afterlives of slavery, querying the ways Palmares and the Haitian Revolution are currently remembered and memorialized. The great Zumbi, the leader of Palmares is celebrated for his strength and might against colonial Portuguese forces.



Capoeira

There are statues dedicated to him, as well as a national holiday named for him to commemorate his life and fight for freedom. His wife Dandara, however, is also memorialized through popular culture— video games, music and art— and called upon to provide strength and guidance for women activists and women-centered movements throughout Brazil. On the other hand, like Zumbi, the fathers of the Haitian Revolution, Toussaint Louverture, Jean Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe, are celebrated with dedicated statues and glorified accounts of their military expertise and prowess. However, it is the women of the revolution who are remembered through the creation of material goods. Sanité Belair, who fought alongside her husband during the revolution, is memorialized on the ten Haitian gourd, while Henriette St. Marc, who used her feminine wiles to gain intel and weapons for the fighting rebels is memorialized on throw pillows for the home.

As these three projects draw to a close, I look forward to the next research project. Most importantly, as part of the Global Curatorial Project and the CSSJ, I anticipate the discussions centered on the ways to bring these histories forward to actively and creatively educate and engage the broader public, thus making for memorable experiences at the CSSJ and various exhibition spaces around the world.

SHERRI CUMMINGS

PhD. Candidate, Department of History

Unfinished Conversations: Voices of the Freedom-Seekers from the Liberty Villages of Northern Senegal

From February 4-13th, a team of researchers from URICA-IFAN of the University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar working with and within the framework of the *Unfinished Conversations* series of the Global Curatorial Project, traveled to northern Senegal to meet with descendants of freedom seekers from across West Africa who arrived there in the 19th and 20th centuries. At that time, Senegal was the knee pad for French colonial expansion in West Africa. Promises of freedom in the newly conquered territories by the French collided with the urgent need for unfree labor to set up an administration and develop public infrastructures. Colonial wars and resistance to it, as well as, ambivalent emancipation policies caused massive movements of people who were ultimately settled by colonial authorities in liberty villages. In the wake of those complex processes, many become uprooted diasporic communities aloof of their region of origin. They struggled relentlessly to rebuild their lives and creatively designed complex strategies to redefine their identity and status in alien lands including through patronym change, the maintenance of secret societies and beliefs from home cultures, conversion to Christianity or Islam, crafting new landscapes and communal sovereignties, and much more. Today, long after independence and the official ban on slavery, some of these communities continue to face stigmatization and marginalization to which they resist in multiple ways. Informed by decolonial practices that give due respect to the sensibilities and political subjectivities of our interviewees, *Unfinished Conversations* series permitted us to collect nearly thirty individual narratives in various localities but also to locate several archaeological sites and other material manifestations pertaining to this unique experience in the making of freedom across northern Senegal during and after French colonization era.

DR. IBRAHIMA THIAW

URICA-IFAN-University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar

The Imagined New

The Imagined New is an interdisciplinary platform for critical exchange and research around African and African diasporic art practices as they relate to questions of history, archive and the alternative imagination(s) of the Radical Black Tradition.

The first volume of the programme - Art, History & the African Diaspora - was an interdisciplinary workshop platform that took place in Johannesburg in 2019. Key points of discussion centered around Black memory as performing archives of the imagined new; enactments of refusal and creative strategies for living otherwise; and the necessary rethinking of African and Afrodiasporic sacred art practices. Following this important gathering, a co-authored publication on Volume I is still in progress.

The second and current volume of the program, Black Sonic(s), presents an ensemblic online program of artist-led soundings, curated listening sessions, multimedia exhibitions, and conversations. The Black Sonic workshop is a point from which participants may rethink and offer a new vision of sound as a heritage of heretical praxis, as many alternative ways of being and becoming. The Black Sonic is not about sound or sonics as content or category, as the cultural 'by-product' of the Black experience, but the multiple soundings, dissonances, resonances, rhythmic patterns and diasporic relays that have historically animated and continue to enunciate Black life and create new types of archives. The project is collaboratively presented by the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre, University of Johannesburg, the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, Brown University, and the Brown Arts Initiative. Convened by CSSJ Director and VIAD Visiting Professor and Curator Anthony Bogues, the curatorial team of Volume II includes Lois Anguria, Machel Bogues, Melaine Ferdinand-King, Will Johnson, and Kundai Moyo.

MELAINE FERDINAND-KING

Graduate Associate Research Fellow

Exhibition

BLACK SPECULATIVE FUTURES

Inspired by an expedition into the multidimensional realms of Octavia E. Butler's archives, Heimark Artist in Residence Porsha Olayiwola (current poet laureate for the city of Boston) and CSSJ Visiting Artist Dara Bayer '08 together explore patterns in the development of the individual and the collective. The virtual exhibition "reflection /abyss/ vision/ legacy" is a portal inward to imagine and re-imagine possibility. This program, moderated by Prof. Lisa Biggs, John Atwater and Diana Nelson Assistant Professor at Brown University features Olayiwola and Bayer in conversation to discuss their unique collaboration, the impact of Butler's writing on their work, particularly at this moment, and how a trip to the Huntington Library provided them with insights into Butler's process.

Lisa Biggs (LB): As kids, what kinds of art were you exposed to early on? What was your very first medium?

Porsha Olayiwola (PO): My first medium was definitely poetry. I probably first started reciting poetry before I began writing it. In school, I was known for a poem called "Hey Black Child." I would recite that at all of the assemblies. Though it's not necessarily considered art, I have historically practiced the African American arts—that of reclaiming history. I always find myself always at the intersection of those two.

Dara Bayer (DB): Visual art has always been my central medium. I've played with performance a little bit—theatre, music, and playing guitar. But I've always come back to my work as a visual artist. I really love writing stories, illustrating stories, creating visual stories, and also painting on furniture. I love painting and I think I truly fell in love with painting as my medium in high school, while also doing some drawing and some photography. So I've always been in the visual art world and that's how I've identified myself from a very early age.

LB: Porsha, do you remember who introduced you to poetry? Where did you start performing?

PO: I definitely started in elementary school, so I was maybe 10 years old. I always performed at the Black History Month assembly and also did debates. I think the first speech I recited was one from Hillary Clinton. Those were my first moments diving into the study of language.

I love performing and memorizing poems because you can really study the intent behind it. My own practice of poetry was solidified in high school. I am from Chicago's southernmost south side, which is home to the largest youth poetry slam in the world, Louder Than a Bomb. One of my history teachers told me about this competition and when I went, I fell in love with the fact that a young person's voice could be heard. In that room, everybody stopped to listen to that person. That was my aha moment— I understood what a poem could do to bridge humans. And I haven't stopped writing poems since that moment.

LB: Dara, can you talk a little bit about your piece entitled, "Reflection?"

DB: Initially, I wanted to visually bring our ancestors into this piece because I was thinking a lot about reflection in relation to us as a continuum. We're each a continuum of us who came before us, who shape us, and all that we will shape. That's a direct reference to Earthseed verses in Parable of the Sower. Some of the imagery, specifically the tunnel, portal, or passageway in the back of the painting evolved from the architecture at Caltech in Pasadena, which is where Octavia Butler grew up. It also looks like the door of no return, the passageway from freedom to slavery that many of our ancestors took after being kidnapped and enduring the Middle Passage. Emerging from our chests are succulents, which became a metaphor for Black resilience, survival, and the idea of inner resource. Succulents are diverse and able to gather all the little bits of nutrients that they have access to in order to survive. To me, that is very much related to Blackness— its diversity, resilience, and power. I wanted to invite the viewer to situate themselves by modeling myself and Porsha. Originally, I didn't think about this piece as looking into a mirror, but that became a central motif.

LB: How did you all meet and what was it like working together in the archive?

DB: I love telling our story. Porsha and I are both based in Boston but we had never met each other. It felt really synergistic. We came together at the Center in early December of 2019 to connect for the first time. We shared our work with each other and recognized that Octavia Butler was a huge inspiration for both of us. In playing around with the intersections of our work, we

Reflection, 2020
Dara Bayer
Oil on Canvas
30"x40"
Courtesy of the Artist



An excerpt from "THE MIRROR ANSWERS WHO IS FAIREST OF THEM ALL"

*have you ever known me to like that?
have you ever known glass to splinter
a body sharper than doubt can?
a shattered version of you is still the best
sacrifice the gods have to offer any
mortal. so, why are you here? what
business are you really in? ask your mother,
ask her mother & her mother & her mother's
mother & her mother's mother before
that, how a stare can become a shotgun
barrel for anything thinking we don't belong
to ourselves. we learned the lesson quick:
a well-timed squint cautions children,
dares men, threatens countries to cross
a lineage of "no"
of "too pretty"
of "not pretty enough"
dark spell spoiled
dark edge swoop
swoop of dark dark dark
chubby-nappy. we ethereal, baby. you & i
appease the sun. we cause mountains
to curtesy. there is a whole depth of
ocean treasured with the likeness of our
complexion. so why the scowl, darling?
why the weeping smile? the bleak eye?
we strut & the wind is a wistful lust
after our approval. the trees canopy
our crowns, arbor of inheritance. even
even the concrete cannot bury us. gracious
craters convexing our cheeks, the skin,
as toiled as soil. praise the night
in the jaw. praise the neck unbowed
the *spiders?* webbing a geometry
of braids. you know, we've always been
flyer than the midnight sky, more
breakthrough than daybreak, we stay
the decadence of time. your archaic
inquiry, asking what we both know:
who cares about us? who cares for us?
not the government, not our brothers
not our lovers, nor our law,
not the schools, the council,
the supremacists, the news, no. it is us.*

PORSHA OLAYIWOLA

For more, see the exhibition website: <https://sites.brown.edu/cssjrvl/>

thought a lot about lineage and ancestry. The Center said that they could support us to go to her archives and it felt like a dream to know more. Once we were there, it was a magical and transformative experience to be immersed in her work, to talk together as artists, and to get to know each other. I brought some elements to create an altar for her and to honor our relationship to her and Porsha had a brilliant idea of having us write to each other through journal entries. I can't express how much of a gift it was to be in her process— seeing her notes, the multiple obsessive iterations of her manuscripts, her fragments of writing, her journals, photographs, and all the research she did that informed her writing. We were able to see what she was up against in trying to make her livelihood as a writer and the level of commitment she had as an artist. This was who she was and she wasn't going to stop doing that.

LB: Can you talk a little bit about why it was so important to include a journal process so early on in your collaboration?

PO: Writing is my medium. I write down what I need to say before I say it out loud. I think it just allows me to gather my thoughts. When you collaborate with another artist, you are creating cohesive work but also work that is separate. After spending 8 hours going through the archives, I couldn't imagine telling Dara everything that I experienced, so journaling was necessary to process what was happening in my own body and in the archives. It also felt very spiritual and intimate. One of my personal highlights was going to Octavia E. Butler's gravesite, laying in the sun, and thinking about the legacy of this woman. So, there were some parts of this process that were super academic and heady, while others were more vulnerable and intimate. That's why the journal was helpful for me.

LB: How did you collaborate after the immersive experience in the archives?

PO: Looking at the archives, it was clear that Butler had an obsession with patterns, the most obvious being the cycles of human behavior. That provided a form and structure for us to cling to as we moved through the archive. The pattern that we chose to structure our work around was reflection, abyss, vision, and legacy. We knew that we would create four pieces each to intersect with those ideologies. There were some categories I felt very attached to and others, like reflection, that I had no idea what to write about. It was the last one I wrote. I would send over things that I was working on and Dara



Porsha at Octavia Butler's gravesite

would send her work back, so there was a lot of digital exchange.

DB: There was a lot of texting, sharing, and phone calls. The ethic of care really informed how we related to one another and how we navigated our lives as the pandemic hit. We just cared for each other and tried to figure out how to do this creative process with one another. We were really good at developing frameworks, inserting our pieces, and sharing and giving feedback. To me, process is more important than product. That's also a Black feminist foundational truth—the way that you do something matters more than the outcome. That's reflected in Octavia Butler's work around the possibilities of relationship and community in the face of destruction. I think we were collaborating around questions about what it means to take care of each other, what it means to share ideas, inspire each other, and encourage each other during difficult times.

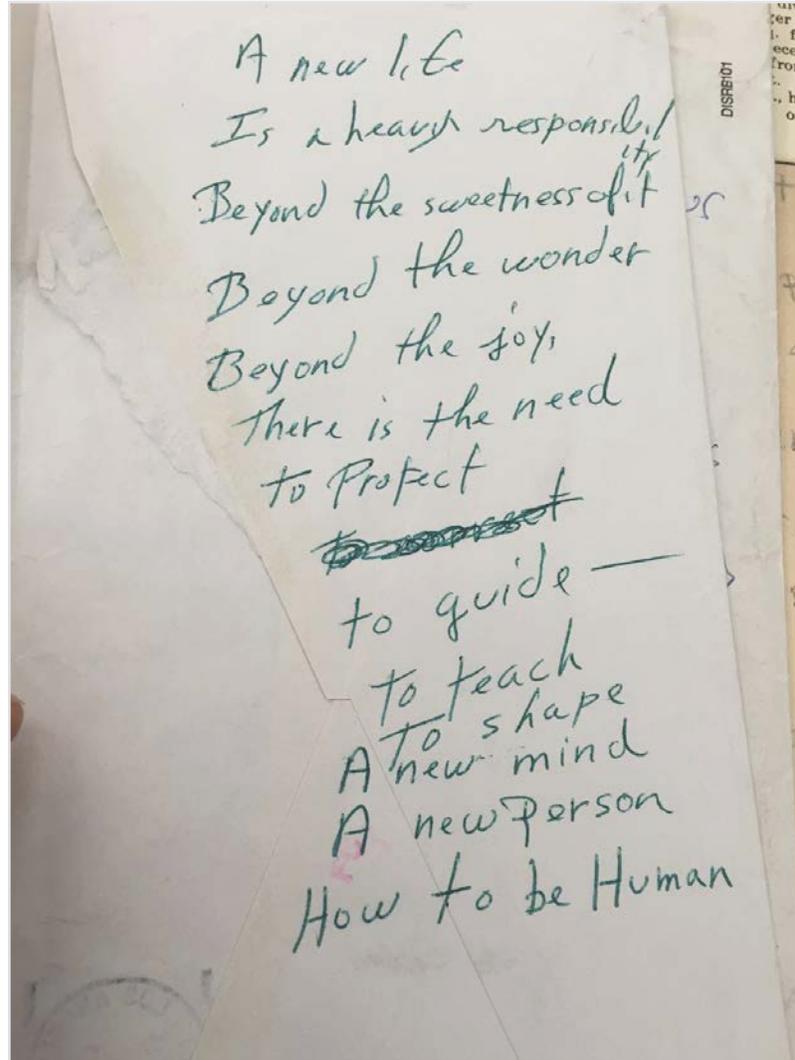
LB: Did you discover things in Octavia Butler's work through each other's art? Are there things that you keep discovering in your own work?
DB: Porsha's idea of obsession and questioning really deepened my understanding of my relationship to Octavia Butler and her legacy. Those are ideas that I may have thought about, but I didn't see them as central to our collective liberation. I think we pathologize the idea of obsession but Porsha's way of talking about it, how she related it to Butler's work, and her incredible cataloguing of all the questions she encountered in Octavia Butler's notes and manuscripts was really important to me. It demonstrated how obsession is connected to excellence, commitment, and attention to detail. This level of forethought comes through a lot of her stories in how her protagonists navigate the world. They exist in the world as if they are not constricted by social and political barriers—there is

a drive, focus, and vision that will not be deterred and I think that's connected to the ethic of obsession. Porsha supported me in that understanding, which I'm wanting to engage with in my creative work and my life.

PO: I adore these poems and paintings, but getting to know Butler and getting to work with Dara was more than that. I feel like I really got to see Butler past her books. It was nice to see the notes written in the margins and all of her invoices written by hand. One question that kept coming to me was "what business are you really in?" I couldn't get it out of my head and it felt like Butler was talking to me. It pushed me to think about what business I am— not just the business of poetry, but what day to day interactions am I making with humans and this Earth. Another thing that I keep thinking about, especially considering her legacy, is how sad Butler seemed to be. I think about our friends, family, and mothers who are sometimes lonely and don't necessarily have the withal to reach out. It made me more in tune to checking in with folks and asking how they are.

LB: What does a Black speculative future mean to you? What does it look like? What legacy, as Black speculative artists, do you hope to leave?

DB: As a visual artist, I struggle with the fact that looking at a piece of art is a sort of passive activity. The last piece of the exhibition was going to be an interactive component: an altar that honors possibility and our potential. To me, Black speculative futures are about leaning into possibility and stretching our imagination to consider all the ways that we can exist outside of the current system. Even right now, if we consider all the possibilities that we have access to internally, we don't need tons of material resources to create a new world together. We can always shift our relationship to ourselves. Porsha's poem about reflection talks about how to be in relationship to ourselves as Black women. We can define who we are, how we understand what our potential is, and how we can heal with one another and ourselves. The purpose of Black speculative fiction is to center our diversity of experiences as Black peoples and lean into creating ideas of what's possible. Think about all the things that seemed impossible that our ancestors actualized to get us to where we are now. Consider what we can offer our descendents as they reflect 200 years from now about the conditions we helped create for them to be more free. The altar of possibility was going to be a mirror with some prompts for us to consider, as we looked at ourselves, what it means for us to be ancestors and what our legacies will be.



Notes and reflections from Butler's Parable series

PO: My short answer is that I have no idea. I think I wake up and ask myself this everyday. The answer that I've been writing myself into is just about Black women. As I look at these poems and archives, it starts with Black women. I think there is something inherently tied to understanding what it means to be a Black woman and the perspective that one is allowed because of that position. showed up to get us through the year of 2020. That's what I speculate about my Black future— it lies in my hands and the hands of other Black women. I think there is something instructive about listening to Black fem and trans voices. Even if we just look at Butler alone and the map that she laid for us, there are a lot of wrongs that need to be right via Black women and Black womanhood.

I've been looking at 2020 as an apocalypse, revelation, discovery, or an uncovering. I've been tallying the list of ways in which Black women showed up to get us through the year of 2020. That's what I speculate about my Black future— it lies in my hands and the hands of other Black women.

LB: What was the tactile experience of being able to put your hands on Butler's handwritten notes, invoices, and other personal writings? How did you figure out what material you wanted to prioritize? What was on your must-see list?

DB: I think the tactile experience was everything for me. To see and touch the pages with her handwriting was such a gift. In terms of navigating the vast archive, there's a really awesome podcast by Adrienne Maree Brown and Autumn Brown called *How to Survive the End of the World*. They interviewed some Octavia Butler archivists who created The Octavia Butler Legacy Project, which was helpful to get a sense of how the archive is organized. One piece that I spent a lot of time with in the archive was her notes on the Parable series and her unpublished manuscripts. She had so many notes about worldbuilding, what the society would look like, and how the communities would be organized. As someone interested in alternative communities, it was incredible to see that she was doing the research about what collective living could look like, what roles people could have, how we share resources, and how we relate to one another. There was brilliance just scribbled on envelopes and receipts where she calculated her bills. You can see the parts of her life coming together amidst her creative work. The quote that really speaks to me was written on an envelope. It says, "A new life is a heavy responsibility. Beyond the sweetness of it, beyond the wonder, beyond the joy, there is the need to protect, to guide, to teach, to shape a new mind, a new person, how to be human." This idea is at the center of *Earthseed*: shaping and being shaped. This is at the center of how I think about my work as an educator, someone in the community, in my role as a mentee, or sitting at the feet of elders.

LB: Are there things about how to be human that you want people to walk away from your work with? What have you learned from this collaboration?

PO: For me, it's always love. I'm always learning how to love and how to love folks. I think one thing that Butler teaches us is hard love—how to interrogate the world and the people around us. She teaches us how to have hard conversations with ourselves. Like our idea of the abyss,

she teaches us how to look into the darkness and figure out what to do through love for self, our neighbors, and our community. I love Butler, but I'm always questioning what it is specifically that she wants me to take away. Sometimes it's not necessarily black and white, but it always feels as though there is a constant quest in discovery and unearthing. And that feels related to love.

DB: I think all her work is about the importance of needing to be in relationship. There is no way to survive, to navigate the messes that we created for ourselves without being in relationship. There is no vision or possibility without relationship, which feels connected to love. It doesn't mean that relationship is perfect or beautiful all the time. There is complexity and contradiction in how we navigate our relationships, but interdependence is at the core of survival.



This interview has been edited for clarity and length. To see more of "reflection /abyss/ vision/ legacy" please visit the exhibition website at <https://sites.brown.edu/cssjravl/>.

Seminar Series

CARCERAL STATE READING GROUP

In its third iteration, the Carceral State Reading Group continues to respond to and to contest ongoing and concurrent crises posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the anti-Black white supremacy that underwrites modernity. We have congregated virtually this year, allowing us to expand our membership across space and honing our spatial analysis at a larger scale. We continue to center the past and present experiences of captives of the state in Rhode Island and beyond, engaging discourses around decarceration and abolitionist futures whose necessity the past year has laid bare. Arundhati Roy insisted last year that the rupture of this pandemic provides a “portal” through which we can reimagine the conditions we inhabit. The Carceral State Reading Group continues to take up this call as we have built solidarity across prison walls.

At the core of our analysis, we center the role of slavery’s origin story in the making of the carceral state and the conditions it produces. This historical orientation renders the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice critical as the intellectual and political grounding for the Carceral State Reading Group. Yet, we build solidarity and sit with the current violence and terror the state continues to dole out to non-white, and primarily, Black people, both in and beyond the United States. We have considered abolitionist praxis with children and youth through discussions and a speaker series with local Rhode Island educators and students. Going forward, we look forward to a speaker series of abolitionist academics, artists, activists, and thinkers, along with collaborations in abolitionist pedagogy both at the secondary and collegiate levels.

We continue to write, act, and congregate remotely toward a world beyond bars, captivity, and incarceration, building community despite being physically apart. We have considered the organized abandonment that faces those released in the decarceration efforts in COVID-19’s wake. We have mourned and recalibrated as we center the material lives of those experiencing state violence in our analysis, constantly reinventing ourselves to contest the dynamism of slavery’s afterlives. We refuse the ongoing threat posed by the active remaking and reforming the prison, instead demanding a radical alterity that addresses the fundamental contradiction between captivity and accountability.

FELICIA DENAUD PhD '22
CONNOR JENKINS '22
JUSTIN LANG PhD '25

ADVANCED KNOWLEDGES

The Advanced Knowledges Working Group brings together graduate-student scholars working in a variety of disciplines to read, think, and write together. Throughout the Fall semester we met biweekly to read works of criticism and theory and to discuss politics and aesthetics in the context of racial slavery and its afterlife. While we could (and likely will!) write volumes about the content of our discussions, I'll just name a few of the concepts we touched on: Blackness, indigeneity, gender, sovereignty, coalition, political strategy, discipline, and humanism. We read work by scholars such as Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, Axelle Karera, Tiffany Lethabo King, Michael Sawyer, Jared Sexton, and Frank Wilderson. We were lucky enough to be joined by several of these thinkers—Professors Jackson, King, Sawyer and Wilderson—in the Spring for a series of workshops and a public talk. We are grateful to Professor Bogues, Catherine Van Amburgh, Shana Weinberg, and Maiyah Gamble-Rivers for their support in organizing these events.

In August, we invited graduate students from institutions across the country to share work-in-progress at a virtual Graduate Colloquium entitled *Humanities beyond 'The Human'*, which featured a keynote address from the scholar of Black aesthetics and critical theory Alexander G. Weheliye. We hope to foster a nourishing intellectual community that will last beyond the two-day discussion among scholars at every career stage, including graduate students, junior scholars and senior scholars. The Colloquium was planned by a dedicated committee of graduate students within the working group, including zuri arman, Damali Britton, and Kristen Maye, with support from Precious Robinson. Justin Lang, Breylan Martin, and Malcolm Thompson also contributed massively to the work of the group. I look forward to seeing what the group and its members will achieve over the coming years.

JEFF FELDMAN PhD '21

6th Year Interdisciplinary Graduate Dissertation Fellow

HABEAS VISCUS



RACIALIZING ASSEMBLAGES, BIOPOLITICS,
AND BLACK FEMINIST THEORIES OF THE HUMAN
ALEXANDER G. WEHELIYE

BLACK HISTORICAL AESTHETICS READING GROUP

Organized by five graduate students in the Departments of Africana Studies and American Studies, the Black Historical Aesthetics reading group is focused on engaging in deep study and inquiry into discourses of history and aesthetics as praxis. In contemplating Black historical aesthetics as a major preoccupation, the collective considers definitions and experiences of Blackness in light of inherited historical and sociopolitical conditions. Seeking to critique sets of aesthetic practices grounded in the conventions of Western thought, the group meets periodically to discuss pre-selected materials in Black Studies toward intra-group project development and thought production.

The focus of their gatherings emphasizes practices of being, making, and seeing in the world and their relationship to discussions of past, present, and future time. Since 2020, BHA has self-published numerous essays, musical playlists, and poems on their website and have collaborated with student and activist groups locally and otherwise. BHA's most recent project is a jointly curated set on Black sonics, alongside graduate students and artists based in the U.S. and South Africa as part of the CSSJ's Imagined New workshop, scheduled for fall 2021.

MELAINE FERDINAND-KING

Graduate Associate Research Fellow

FACULTY FELLOW SEMINAR

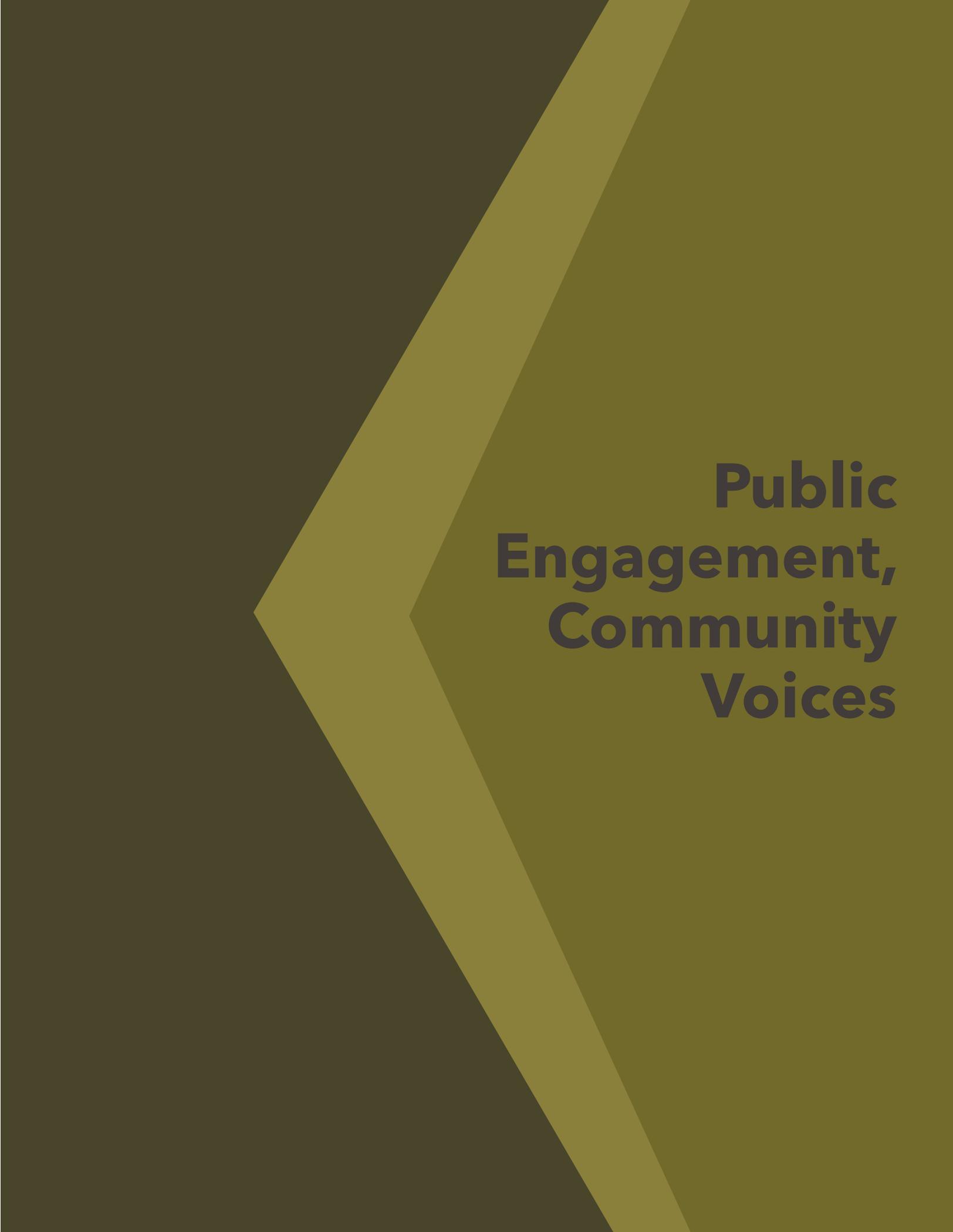
The class was designed as a “topically-based seminar focused on critiques of representations of antebellum slavery in contemporary mass culture,” but it was also so much more. Students from Africana Studies, American Studies, Public Humanities, and Anthropology gathered each week to discuss cutting-edge scholarly literature written from various disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives on the afterlife of slavery. Virtual guests to the class included Salamishah Tillet, Yogita Goyal, Kimberly Juanita Brown, and Khalil Muhammad.

The virtue of these topically-focused faculty seminars is that they draw together students from across the campus, and that they lay the groundwork for future collaborations and research agendas. In this way, they are a form of infrastructure, enabling the CSSJ's mission to materialize in graduate coursework and eventually in essays, chapters, and entire dissertations. The point, in the long run, is to expand the work we do at Brown on slavery and justice – and also to make better, more far-reaching, more consequential work possible.

Zoom made some things real. Taught in COVID-time, the class was notable for its flattening out of participation, its provision of multiple access points for students, through Zoom and Canvas, through Google docs and email. The aim was to expand conversation about our common work and our common readings well beyond the stale confines of our scheduled minutes in the classroom. To make access to the conversation more equitable, more welcoming, and even more dynamic for those who might be tired of the digital boxes we have inhabited for the past year.

MATT GUTERL

*Professor of Africana Studies and American Studies,
Chair of American Studies*



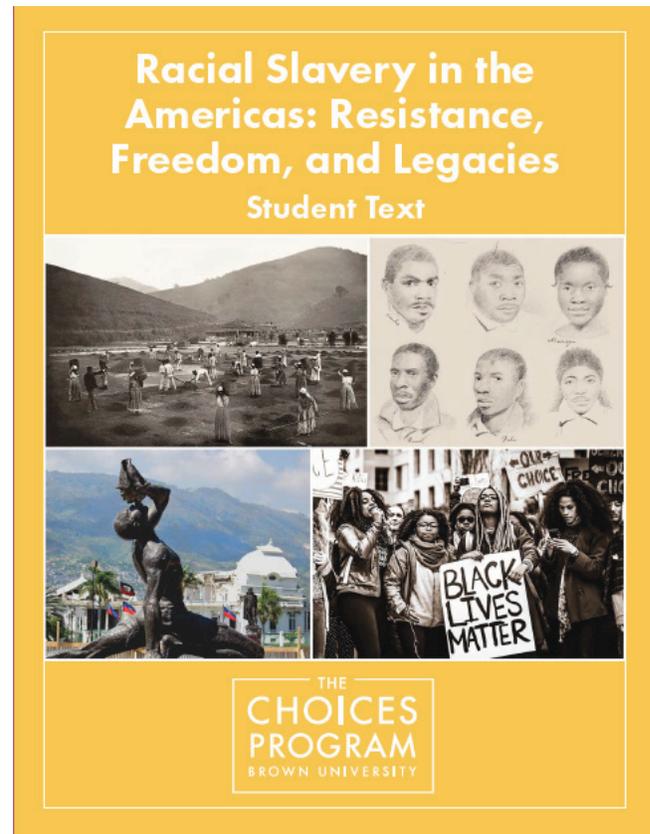
**Public
Engagement,
Community
Voices**

Slavery in the Americas Curriculum Unit

Our school, Blackstone Academy Charter School in Pawtucket, has long benefited from the partnership and collaboration of the CSSJ. In pre-pandemic years, we have taken students to the Center each fall as part of a formative ninth grade unit on the history of enslaved people in Rhode Island and the complicity of the state in the institution of slavery. Students regularly reflect on the trip for months afterward and often cite it as one of the key experiences of their ninth grade year. Sadly, the pandemic made the trip impossible in the fall, but the disruption of our typical “business as usual” also invited us to rethink some of our framing and expand on the curriculum we offered. I was delighted to enjoy the partnership of CSSJ on this effort, where the new Choices curriculum on Racial Slavery in the Americas gave me and my colleagues an enormous pool of resources for exploring the history of enslaved people throughout the Atlantic world.

My journey with the curriculum started in the summer, where I attended the Professional Development offered on zoom. A talk by graduate student Felicia Denaud helped me build my own knowledge base and allowed my co-planner and I to consider new links between Rhode Island, West Africa and Haiti as we incorporated the new materials into our yearly sequence. In addition, a sample lesson examining international models for reparations in comparative perspective piqued our interest and led us to reorient our unit to address questions of reparative justice more directly than we had in the past.

In the end, we emerged with a series of lessons that prompted rigorous discussion and challenged students to connect local and global history. Narratives of enslaved people, differentiated and supplemented with audio recordings to help our ninth graders access them, left an enormous impression on our students. Charts, maps and images from the curriculum pushed their critical thinking and helped them examine the institution of slavery in all of its complexity.



Finally, the unit culminated in a Socratic Seminar, adapted from the Choices final action project, in which students discussed steps that could be taken to repair the past injustices of racial slavery. Students’ comments connected the local Rhode Island State Name ballot initiative to models of reparation in South Africa and Germany, leaving them engaged and poised to insist on a better world outside the classroom.

The Choices curriculum allowed us to build a vital community and guide students toward critical examination of their world. Overwhelmingly, students reported that the unit had changed their thinking and even expressed excitement about starting conversations within their families and social circles. As one student wrote in a reflection, “I could share my knowledge on slavery to those who might not know how important and harmful slavery was or to those who weren’t taught it. The stories of those who suffered slavery are important and should not be hidden or denied.”

THOM FINLEY

Teacher at Blackstone Academy

Primary Source

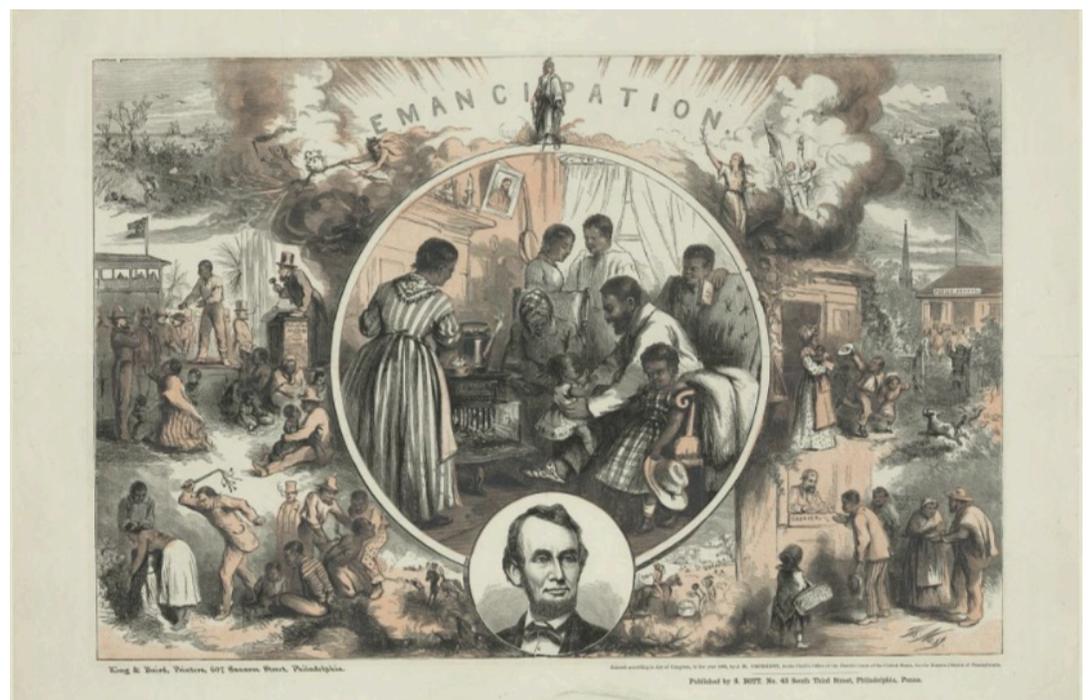
Advancing a vision of education that is scholarly-informed, sensitive to the needs of learners, and progressively-oriented towards critically interrogating racial injustice demands sustained and collaborative partnerships. This past year, I was fortunate enough to begin solidifying a deeply meaningful and inspiring partnership with the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice at Brown University. As a program director at Primary Source, an education nonprofit in Massachusetts dedicated to a vision of education that is multicultural, globally-oriented, and culturally affirming, my work focuses on designing professional development for K-12 teachers, providing knowledge and resources for classrooms to become more equitable and inclusive spaces. Much of my work this past year has focused on expanding the scope of critical approaches to teaching U.S. history in the elementary grades where social studies education is ripe with opportunities to be reimagined so that younger learners can have early and substantial exposure to narratives and representations that are too often excluded. With the assistance of Maiyah Rivers, my colleagues and I were able to adeptly respond to the requests made by school districts across Massachusetts.

With Maiyah and Brown University doctoral candidates—Kristen J. Maye, Sherri V. Cummings, and Aaron Jacobs—we developed professional development workshops that granted elementary teachers with opportunities to expand their historical knowledge while interacting with frameworks and lenses for bringing critical approaches to the study of race into their classrooms. With Maiyah, I learned more about the challenges and opportunities for teaching “hard” history in elementary spaces, where it is not necessarily the normative experience. Maiyah and the Center brought expertise in history and pedagogy, respecting the needs of the teachers that I work with while translating scholarship into relevant and developmentally-appropriate guidance for teachers who are invested in the work of curricular transformation. Because of the Center’s commitment to community outreach and public education, I was able to provide experiences for teachers’ professional development that would have otherwise been unavailable. Research and scholarship are not always accessible and issues of equity are real. Yet, because Maiyah and the Center work to bring knowledge around race and justice into local communities, their work is part of the ongoing process of removing barriers and bringing a range of communities into contact with powerful and necessary teaching and learning.

DAN OSBORN Ed.D.

Program Director, Primary Source

King & Baird, Engraver, Thomas Nast, S Bott, and J. W Umpehent. Emancipation / Th. Nast ; King & Baird, printers, 607 Sansom Street, Philadelphia. , ca. 1865. [Philadelphia: Published by S. Bott, no. 43 South Third Street, Philadelphia, Penna] Photograph.



The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation *Reimagining New England Histories: Historical Injustice, Sovereignty and Freedom*

During Summer 2020, the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice was awarded a \$4.9 million grant by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The grant will fund a collaborative project with Williams College and the Mystic Seaport Museum, titled “Reimagining New England Histories: Historical Injustices, Sovereignty, and Freedom” that will use maritime history as a basis for studying historical injustices and generating new insights on the relationship between European colonization in North America, the dispossession of Native American land and racial slavery in New England. This partnership will create new work and study opportunities at all three institutions, particularly for scholars, curators and students from underrepresented groups. Through this project, the Mystic Seaport Museum will curate a new exhibition on race, subjugation, and power, juxtaposing well-worn maritime narratives about early New England with archaeological materials, literature, music, and oral histories that tell a different story about the past. The CSSJ will develop a new research cluster that focuses on how societies founded on historical forms of injustice can become more inclusive and just and hosts community practitioners and interdisciplinary scholars at both Williams and Brown.

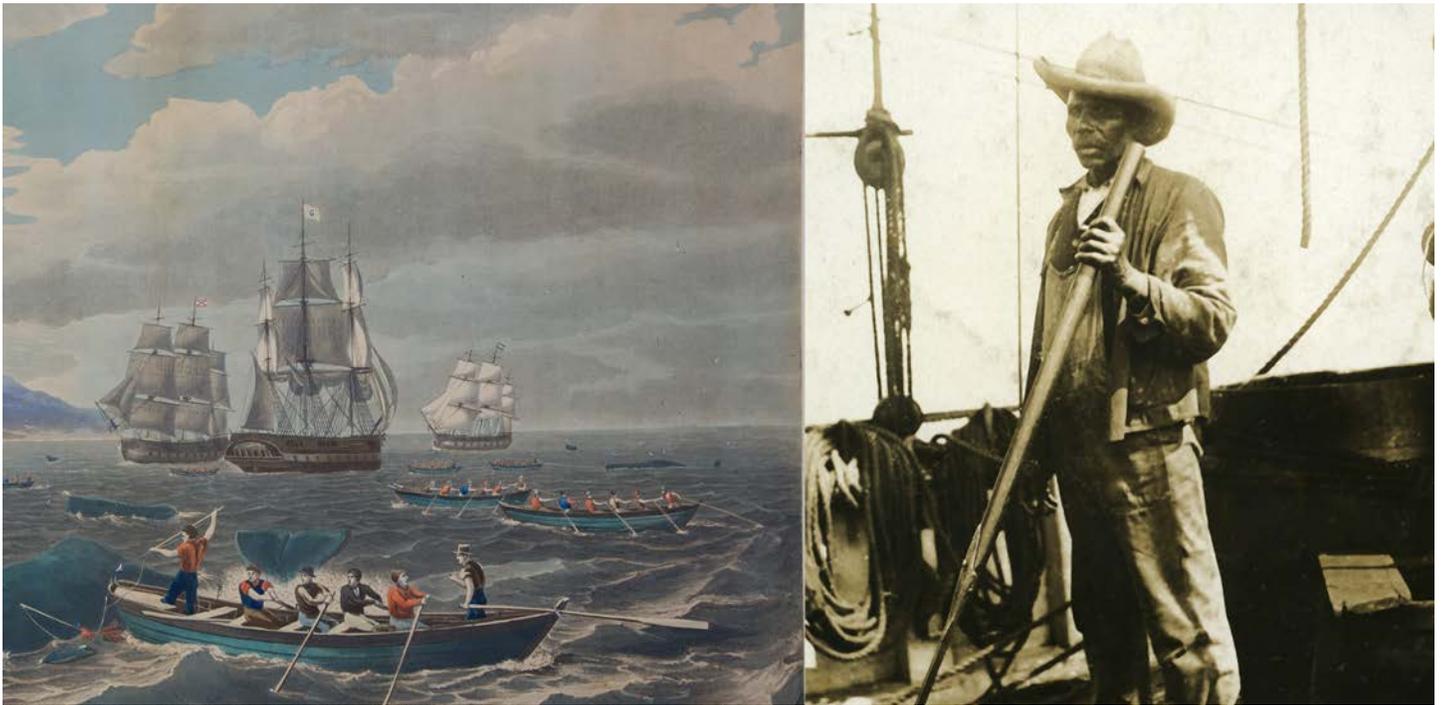
JUST FUTURES INITIATIVE

In January 2021 the CSSJ embarked on a three-year collaboration sponsored by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s “Just Futures” initiative, linking Brown University, Williams College (including the Williams-Mystic Program), and the Mystic Seaport Museum. These partners have launched an interdisciplinary public humanities project titled “Reimagining New England Histories: Historical Injustice, Sovereignty, and Freedom,” which endeavors to reshape the ways young people, communities, scholars, and college students understand the history and present day of New England. The project uses the sea as one lens to grapple with intertwined histories of Indigenous and African-American people and experiences in the Northeast, and the closely-related impacts of colonization and enslavement that have so deeply affected multiple communities. Equally important, the project foregrounds the continuous work Black communities and sovereign Native nations and tribes have undertaken to maintain freedom, self-determination, and cultural thriving in this region.

Since the project commenced, PIs from each institution have communicated with representatives from multiple tribal nations and African-American community organizations to discuss goals, needs, and opportunities for working together. Mystic Seaport Museum has hired a new Senior Curator of Social Maritime Histories, Akeia de Barros Gomes, who will lead the development of an exhibition to open at Mystic in 2023. Faculty and staff from all of the institutions have joined a Research Cluster that has convened regularly via Zoom to share insights from many of the project angles (maritime histories, Native American and Indigenous Studies, Indigenous enslavement and freedom, African-American histories and studies). Williams College initiated a summer student program that in June–August 2021 engaged two undergraduates in place-based learning, decolonial approaches to archives and museums, and independent project development.

CHRISTINE DELUCIA

Associate Professor of History, Williams College



MUNSON MELLON INSTITUTE

During the summer of 2021, I joined eleven other graduate students, early career professors, and public historians from multiple institutions located around the US as a Mellon Fellow with the Munson Institute based at the Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut. Following decades of educating students on maritime histories, the Munson Institute curriculum this year shifted to focus on the mission of the Reimagining New England History Project, a joint initiative between the Mystic Seaport Museum, the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, and Williams College. The course curriculum adaptation now covers the Black and Indigenous histories of New England, especially in their maritime contexts, from oceans, to rivers, to lakes, to ponds. Monday through Thursday mornings for five weeks, three hours each day, the twelve of us listened intently over Zoom to dozens of lectures delivered by academics, tribal representatives, and public humanities practitioners about the interconnected histories of Black and Indigenous people in the New England region. From the widespread enslavement and dispossession of Native Americans in New England to the sailing histories of enslaved Black mariners, the content of the lectures consistently looked to assert the underrepresented histories of groups of people who for hundreds of years have occupied the lands and waters around New England. From this course, I learned that thinking only with the terrestrial does not give a comprehensive

understanding of New England's history or present, nor that of America more broadly. In considering maritime histories and spaces, Black and Indigenous experiences should be centered, especially in recognition that these groups have always been engaged with the many waterways of New England and the US. From whale ships to merchant ships, to the boats moving up and down the Mississippi to the Great Lakes, from wading in water to deep water diving, the historical relationship of these two broad and always intersecting groups has been diverse, continuous, and has transcended every space. Without this course, I am not sure I ever would have concluded that I should consider the materials, topics, and theories that I now know so well, and that will forever shape not only my academic work, but also my personal connection to and understanding of New England.

KAYCI MERRITTÉ

PhD. Candidate, Department of Modern Culture & Media

Images Above:

Left: Aquatint of the Rotch Fleet vessels Enterprise, Houqua, Pocahontas, and William Rotch are pictured among a school of sperm whales off the coast of Hawaii. Circa 1833. ©Mystic Seaport Museum, 1955.491.

Right: This whaler, shown onboard an unknown vessel, has been identified by family members as Charles W. Morgan crewmember Joe Gomez, a Cape Verdean-born man who later settled in New London, CT. Portuguese-speaking Cape Verdeans constituted 11% of the ship's crew over the time. ©Mystic Seaport Museum, 2009.22.84.

STOLEN RELATIONS: RECOVERING STORIES OF INDIGENOUS ENSLAVEMENT IN THE AMERICAS

Over the past five years, a group of researchers at Brown has been working on a project titled *Stolen Relations: Recovering Stories of Indigenous Enslavement in the Americas* (www.indigenousslavery.org). *Stolen Relations* is a community-centered project that seeks to document as many instances as possible of Indigenous enslavement in the Americas between 1492 and 1900 (and beyond, where relevant). Led by Associate Professor of History Linford Fisher and a team of scholars at the Center for Digital Scholarship, with strong support from the CSSJ, this project seeks to recover the stories of individuals as well as educate the public on the reality of these processes. Although the vision for the project is hemispheric in scope, we are focused primarily on New England for now, and are working in close partnership with approximately thirteen regional tribes, nations, and communities. Tribal input has been essential for placing these events in larger Native contexts; understanding the legacies and historical trauma caused by enslavement, dispossession, and settler colonialism; and discussing how to decolonize the documents on which this information is drawn by paying attention to language, wording, and the assumptions that are latent in colonial sources.

Over the past academic year we have had ten research assistants working part time on the project, finding and entering New England relevant materials. We currently have approximately 3,100 individuals in the database (enslaved and enslavers) drawn from over 1,100 records. *Stolen Relations* is part of a large Mellon Foundation grant secured by the CSSJ in conjunction with Williams College and Mystic Seaport Museum and Research Center. This three-year project will put *Stolen Relations* in conversation with a larger effort to contribute public knowledge about the histories and legacies of settler colonialism, dispossession, and enslavement in New England. With CSSJ support, this summer we developed a tribal summer institute on Indigenous slavery, which occurred in July.

LINFORD FISHER

Associate Professor of History



Departmental Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan Student Advisory Board

This year, the Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice launched its inaugural Departmental Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DDIAP) Student Advisory Board. The 2016 Pathways to Diversity and Inclusion: An Action for Brown University outlined the DDIAPs as a way to ensure that every academic unit at Brown is fully inclusive.

I've had the honor of serving on the CSSJ's DDIAP Student Advisory Board with Jeff Feldman and Malcolm Thompson. Our goal for the 2020-2021 academic year was to examine the student perspective on issues of diversity and inclusion and provide recommendations to the Center about activities or programming to more directly engage undergraduate students and graduate students.

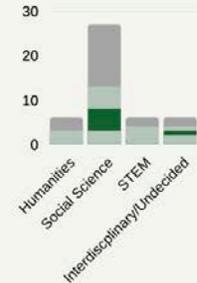
To best understand the wants and needs of undergraduate and graduate students, we curated a 10 minute survey on student outreach, previous engagement with CSSJ programming, familiarity with the 2006 Slavery and Justice Report, and interest in a CSSJ academic course. We disseminated the survey across campus- to undergraduate and graduate networks, through the Departmental Undergraduate Groups (DUGs) for every concentration, and through related student organizations. Approximately 50 graduate students and 70 undergraduate students responded to the survey along with a few alumni, medical students, and Brown staff members, yielding a total of 126 respondents.

While we are still in the process of analyzing student responses and drafting recommendations to the Center, it's clear that the survey was successful in assessing CSSJ programming and outreach among students and inviting community members to reflect on types of events and activities they would like to see the Center tackle. In the coming months, we hope to share our results with the CSSJ and larger Brown community and create tangible recommendations in order to make CSSJ programming more inclusive and responsive to students' interests.

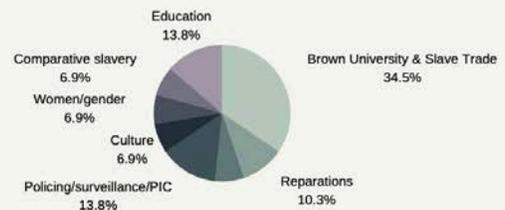
SYDNEY SMITH '22

Highlights of DDIAP Survey Results

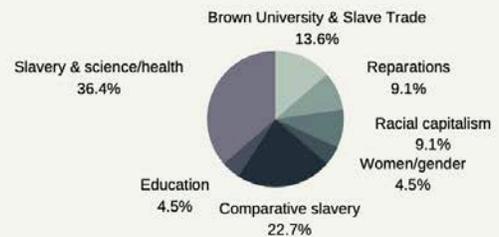
Within each disciplinary division of the university, students who have engaged in CSSJ programming are more likely to be further along in their programs. This may suggest a need to find ways to engage students earlier in their time at Brown.



Undergraduate Student Course Suggestions



Graduate Student Course Suggestions



Survey respondents who hadn't engaged in CSSJ programming recommended advertising events in Today@Brown, on social media, and through identity centers like Brown Center for Students of Color and the Samuel M. Nabrit Black Graduate Student Association to access more students

New CSSJ Endowment

During the 2020-21 academic year, the mission of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice was more critical than ever for advancing knowledge and telling the story of racial slavery in all of its complexities. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the University sought to connect with alumni, parents, and friends of Brown in new ways. CSSJ used virtual events and conversations to showcase the Center's core programs involving alumni, faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, and key partnerships. These virtual presentations included:

- Grappling with the History of Racial Slavery in the Present: Education and New Forms of Public Histories
- Conversation with President Paxson and Tony Bogues: Mission of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice
- Art, History, and Slavery: A Discussion with the Artist, Edouard Duval-Carrié
- Mass Incarceration and the Carceral State

The death of George Floyd and other high-profile cases of anti-Black racism in the summer of 2020 further underscored the importance of Brown's commitment to the Center's critical work, both in the Brown community and the world around us. As a result, alumni, parents, and friends recognized that boosting fundraising for the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice through the BrownTogether campaign was a crucial goal.

In keeping with President Paxson's aim to support scholarship that addresses the impacts of racism and the legacy of slavery, David Haas '78 made a \$5M commitment to serve as the lead gift in an effort to establish a \$10M endowment for CSSJ. David's commitment inspired additional gifts to the endowment from Jerome '74, P'07 and Mary Vascellaro '74, P'07; Ricki Stern P'19, P21 and Evan Guillemin P'19, P'21; and the Hewlett Foundation.

There is growing momentum among Brown alumni, parents, and friends in support of the Center's mission and endowment. To date, we have raised a total of \$6.9 million towards the \$10 million goal. We are continuing our efforts to raise the additional \$3.1 million in endowment funding and \$2.3 million in current-use gifts to support the day-to-day work of the Center. Those interested in learning more about the Center and its fundraising goals can contact Alyssia Coates at acoates@brown.edu or 401.863.1221.

ALYSSIA COATES

*Director of Development for Diversity and Inclusion,
Advancement/Development*



Our Fellows

Reflections from Our Fellows

6TH YEAR DISSERTATION FELLOW

The 2020-2021 year put intense pressure on the conditions of study to a degree I hadn't hitherto felt. I am grateful that the CSSJ, in consistently making space for urgent and deeply-studied conversations that address this moment of crisis, made the project of study feel a little more possible. Thanks to Professor Bogues and to Shana Weinberg for offering me an opportunity to contribute to this work—it has been immensely rewarding.

As an Interdisciplinary Opportunities Fellow, I had the privilege of working with the incredible CSSJ team in a number of capacities to support the Center in its mission to promote the study of racial slavery and its afterlife: coordinating the Advanced Knowledges Working Group, inviting speakers to give virtual talks, and supporting diversity and inclusion initiatives within the department. Thanks to Catherine Van Amburgh, Maiyah Gamble-Rivers, and Shana Weinberg for their support in making these events a success.

As the coordinator of the Advanced Knowledges Working Group, I benefited from being in intellectual community with some of the most brilliant thinkers on campus, including zuri arman, Damali Britton, Justin Lang, Breylan Martin, Kristen Maye, and Malcolm Thompson. Our biweekly meetings were a source of not only intellectual inspiration but also moments of conviviality and joy, despite all the limitations imposed by the pandemic.

As a 5th-year PhD candidate writing a dissertation in political theory, this fellowship afforded me time to read, think, and write and a community within which to make effective use of that time. My dissertation considers the general strike as a political concept: how it has been and could be used to conceptualize sources of democratic authority parallel to and beyond the state. I look to the Black radical tradition, critical theory, and decolonial thought and practice to develop a theory of the general strike that might address democratic challenges facing polities structured by anti-Black racism and colonialism. Professor Bogues's expertise in political theory, and his willingness to support my work, has been invaluable, and I am grateful for our conversations.

The scholars and the administrators who run the CSSJ have shown me that it is possible to build a safe haven for those who ask and answer difficult but crucial questions that other institutions wouldn't dare take up, consistently challenging me to engage such questions in my own work. I will surely carry this lesson with me wherever my intellectual journey takes me.

JEFF FELDMAN

6th Year Interdisciplinary Graduate Dissertation Fellow

EMERGING VOICES, POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE IN SLAVERY & JUSTICE

The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Emerging Voices Fellowship program supports early career scholars whose perspectives will strengthen academic institutions and the humanities. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the fellowship was completely remote during the 2020-2021 academic year. As the Emerging Voices Postdoctoral Fellow at Brown University, I am based in the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice and affiliated with the Africana Studies and History departments. As part of the fellowship, I am required to teach classes in each of the affiliated departments and engage in the Center's Race, Medicine, and Social Justice research cluster.

During the Fall 2020 semester, I am teaching "Say Her Name: Black Women and the Carceral Experience Since 1865," in the Africana Studies department. Forty-five students enrolled in the course and were eager to dig into the course material and class discussions. During the Spring 2021 semester, I am teaching "The Oldest Profession: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Sex Work," in the History department.

In addition to classroom experience, I have taken advantage of the Sheridan Center resources by enrolling in the Sheridan Teaching Seminar during the Fall 2020 semester. The course is designed to encourage Brown faculty, postdocs, and graduate students to reflect on their teaching methods and refine evidence-based teaching skills.



I am very excited about advancing my research while at Brown. I am a member of the Race, Medicine, and Social Justice research cluster in the Center of the Study of Slavery and Justice. The cluster is an interdisciplinary group that regularly meets to discuss current scholarship and other trends in the field. My research explores mental and maternal health as forms of confinement, and the research cluster will be an ideal space to engage in more in-depth discussions about the topic.

During the fellowship year, I have completed my teaching responsibilities and honed my pedagogical skills utilizing the Sheridan Center resources. I enjoyed incorporating my research into the courses I have constructed and benefited immensely from student engagement. During the academic year, I've also completed research and revisions to the fourth chapter of my dissertation and incorporated the feedback I received from the Race, Medicine, and Social Justice research cluster into revising my dissertation. I also submitted an article for publication in an edited volume with the University Press of Kentucky.

CHARLENE J. FLETCHER

Emerging Voices Postdoctoral Research Associate in Slavery and Justice



Incoming Fellows

6TH YEAR DISSERTATION FELLOW

Felicia Denaud is a sixth year doctoral candidate in Africana Studies at Brown University. She is currently writing her dissertation “At the Vanishing Point of the Word: Blackness, Imperium, and the Unnameable War” which activates the category of war as a conceptual analytic for the structural, experiential, and historical dimensions of Black life. In addition to her dissertation work, Felicia is a graduate student proctor for the Pembroke Center’s Black Feminist Theory Project, works in the field of prison education, and co-facilitated the Carceral State Reading Group out of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice.



6TH YEAR DISSERTATION FELLOW

Leonora Masini is a Ph.D. candidate in Italian Studies at Brown. She was educated at the University of Milan and the University for Foreigners, Siena (BA and MA). She was a Visiting Scholar at Dickinson College, Carlisle, for two years before Brown. Her academic focus intersects areas of Comparative Ethnic/Racial Studies concerning a transnational perspective that addresses the false historical reconstructions of the colonial period (1910-1945). Her dissertation underscores particular attention to Italian colonialism in North and East Africa and its acceptance within the post-colonial Italian phase depicting the so-called “myth of the Italians good-fellows” [italiani brava gente] that saturated a post-war construction. Leonora’s scholarship and research endeavor to shed new light upon the similarities between Italian, British, and French colonial rules, as well as their stark differences, while locating Italian colonialism and its legacy within a larger international frame. While at the CSSJ, Leonora will be focusing on the cinematic representations of the anti-slavery argument in British and Italian missionary films.



HISTORICAL INJUSTICE & DEMOCRACY POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE

Marcelo Ferraro will be the Historical Injustice and Democracy Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Center for the Studies of Slavery and Justice during the academic years of 2021-2023. He completed his PhD at the University of São Paulo (Brazil) in 2021, having previously received his master's degree in Social History and his B.A. in History, Law, and Social Sciences at the same institution. In 2019, he was a Global Fellow of the Weatherhead Initiative on Global History and a Visiting Graduate Student of the Afro-Latin American Research Institute at Harvard University. He is a coordinator of LabMundi (Brazil and the World System Studies Lab) at the University of Sao Paulo and a member of the Global History Network. His first research project analyzed the role of architecture in a plantation society from southeastern Brazil. More recently, he developed a comparative study on the intersections between slavery and criminal justice in Brazil and the southern United States. He is currently working on his first book on slavery and racial violence across the Americas in the long nineteenth century.



VISITING ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

Dr. Mack H. Scott III is a historian, educator, and enrolled member of the Narragansett Indian Tribe. His work focuses on the intersections of race and identity and employs agency as a lens through which to view and understand the voices, stories, and perspectives of traditionally marginalized peoples. Dr. Scott has published works illuminating the experiences of African American, Native American, and Latin American peoples. He is currently working on a project that traces the Narragansett from the colonial to the modern era.



NEW CSSJ STAFF



The CSSJ is pleased to welcome Kiku Langford McDonald as the new Center Manager. Kiku grew up outside of Tucson, Arizona and has spent most of her adult life in New England. She holds an A.B. in Studio Art from Dartmouth College and an M.A. in Religion from Yale Divinity School. Kiku spent several years as an exhibition coordinator and educator at the non-profit AVA Gallery and Art Center in Lebanon, NH during which time she also worked for a documentary filmmaker and interned in Japan for the International Animation Festival - Hiroshima. The last 8 years, she has worked at RISD, first in the Career Center and most recently at the RISD Museum. She took an active role in the RISD Community as the Chair of Staff Council and by both spearheading and participating in several campus-wide initiatives to increase dialogue and learning among staff, faculty, and students about anti-racism, social equity, and inclusion. Her personal practice seeks to build unexpected connections and mutual understanding between people via collaborative creativity and community dialogue in the form of artmaking, choral singing, origami crane folding, baking, and healing circles. This, combined with interests in human rights and social justice, led her to become involved in regional and national activism with the NAACP and Tsuru for Solidarity. She is happy to join the CSSJ community and find new ways to help support movements toward liberation for all oppressed people.



**Friends
of the
Center**

Friends of the Center Report

The Friends of CSSJ are a group of alumni that supports the Center by highlighting its research and public humanities work to the global Brown alumni community, and working to expand its network of supporters. Beyond that mission statement is something that explains how we've kept building and thriving, particularly amid the challenges of 2020 and 2021. The Friends have truly blossomed into what Tom Bales '63 and Ann Coles '63 envisioned when they founded this group seven years ago: a diverse, multi-generational community dedicated to CSSJ's work to more accurately tell the story of America while connecting it to contemporary struggles for justice.

Against the backdrop of a pandemic that laid bare inequality that traces its roots to American slavery, alongside uprisings for racial justice and a nation grappling with how to discuss and confront anti-Black racism, that mission has met its moment—and been rewarded with a continuous string of successful, widely-attended virtual events. Ongoing partnership with the Inman Page Black Alumni Council (IPC) has once again been a highlight, embodied in virtual events focused on celebrating Juneteenth, the structural racism reflected in anti-trafficking organizations (a joint event with the Asian American Alumni Alliance), and Race, Justice and Health Disparities (a collaboration with IPC's Philadelphia chapter and part of CSSJ's flagship *This is America* series).

The Friends have also continued and deepened our partnerships with regional Brown Clubs, working with the Office of Alumni Relations to promote CSSJ's work and the *This is America* series to alumni communities in Miami, Philadelphia, Boston, London and more. Stay tuned for potential upcoming programs in collaboration with some of those clubs!

Our longstanding partnership with the Brown Club of DC (BCDC) has continued to thrive as well, with virtual events enabling a broader geographic reach and collaboration. Friends Steering Committee member Emily Dietsch '06 was the driving force behind (and able moderator of) two successful virtual panels: COVID, Carceral Populations and Public Health (cosponsored by the Brown Club in NY, CSSJ and IPC); and Talking Food and Social Justice during COVID-19 (cosponsored with the Columbia Club of DC, CSSJ and IPC), a panel that included noted food writers Mark Bittman and Ian Knauer, award-winning DC restaurateur and chef Peter Prime, and scholar of African diasporic foodways and former CSSJ Fellow Johanna Obenda 'AM 19. The Brown Club of Georgia also graciously promoted both of these programs to its constituents.

Over the summer, the Friends' Steering Committee has been hard at work brainstorming for the 2021-2022 school year, with a particular focus on planning for CSSJ's 10th anniversary in 2022 and highlighting the work of the new Reimagining New England project supported by the Mellon Foundation. We'll also continue to work to expand CSSJ's network of alumni financial supporters.

As our co-founder Tom Bales '63 observes in his contribution to this report, and my own experience as a student researcher working with the Committee on Slavery & Justice hammered home for me, the legacy of American slavery is not an abstract historical concept; understanding its systemic daily ramifications remains essential to moving toward a truly just society. CSSJ continues to be an embodiment of that mission, and it's the Friends' privilege to assist in that work.

Becoming a Friend of the Center can be as simple as a small (or large!) financial contribution, and as involved as becoming more deeply engaged with the Center's work. I encourage you to support that vital work, and ensure that Brown remains ever true to the fullness of its own institutional history, by joining us.

SEAN SIPERSTEIN '05

Co-Chair, CSSJ Friends Steering Committee

A HISTORICAL RECKONING

The Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice encapsulates both a historical reckoning with Brown's early ties to the Atlantic slave trade as well as an effort to teach contemporary citizens about the difficult work in the present to overcome anti-black racism. The Center has captured my interest for over seven years as a volunteer to reach out to alumni in an effort to promote its scholarship, and extensive public education programs such as the current *This Is America* series. As a student at Brown, I became involved in the civil rights protests of the early 60's supporting the struggles of black students in the South to free themselves of the determination of many white people to deny them equality in the community. As president of the campus NAACP, I worked with fellow students to promote voting registration for inner-city people of color, raise money for SNCC, and establish a tutoring program for grade school students living in poor areas of Providence.

After graduation, I continued with other students to develop this tutorial work in some of the segregated schools of Cleveland, Ohio where I lived. Reverend Bruce, a pastor at a local church, led us to go beyond tutoring to challenge the school board over some of its policies that allowed segregated education to continue. He led a protest at the site of the construction of an elementary school that would have made it harder to achieve an integrated student body. In an attempt to halt the construction, he lay down behind a bulldozer. The

driver put his machine in reverse, and crushed Bruce. His traumatic death seared my memory. Civil rights was not an abstract concept. Just as slavery was rooted in tragedy, so might the effort to root out its legacy in present day life.

Through the years that followed, I continued to search for ways to promote equality, participating in open housing programs, and moving my family to an integrated community. However, I wanted to become more active in promoting racial equality. Years later, when I heard about Brown's creation of the Center, I contacted Professor Bogues to see what I could do to help. We met, and he was eager to find ways to communicate with alumni about the purpose of the Center. Along with a fellow classmate, Ann Coles, the Friends of the Center was launched. Over time, the Friends have organized educational forums for alumni in New York and Washington, DC. We are now seeking to widen our contact with other Brown clubs to continue to inform a wider group of alumni about the significance of the work of the Center. The Inman Page Council has helped to promote outreach efforts like this. The leadership of Tony and Shana along with Maiyah and Catherine continues to focus the energy of the Friends. For me personally, the memory of the sacrifice Reverend Bruce made both haunts me and pushes me to stay the course of promoting racial justice along with the rest of the Friends committed to the success of the Center.

TOM BALE '63

CSSJ Friends Co-Founder

FILLING IN THE GAPS: “NEVER ONCE DID WE LEARN ABOUT JEFFERSON AS A SLAVER”

In the early 1960s, American Studies majors at Brown took a capstone course titled, “Thomas Jefferson and His Influence on 20th Century America.” We studied Jefferson as a renaissance man— an architect, statesman, lawyer, musician and philosopher. Never once did we learn about Jefferson as a slaver, who owned 600 enslaved Africans over his lifetime. I enjoyed the course and I viewed Jefferson as an American hero—that is, until the late 1990s when the mass media surfaced stories about descendants of Jefferson and Sally Hemings, a young slave he owned with whom he sired six children.

After graduating from Brown, during decades of active involvement in efforts to break down the systemic racism that pervades American society, I never thought about the central role of the legacy of slavery in preventing our nation from achieving racial equity. Then, in 2009, an engraved granite plaque was installed on the outside wall of the cemetery across from my home honoring the memory of enslaved Africans owned by town residents that were buried there. The information on the plaque jarred me. I realized I had been blind to the widespread practice of slavery in New England. My schooling covered none of this history, and I felt a sense of urgency to start filling in the gaps in my education.

An opportunity to better understand the history of slavery presented itself a few years later when a Brown classmate introduced me to the CSSJ and asked me to help him found a “friends” group for the purpose of making Brown alumni aware of the Center’s important work and its need for financial support. The Center’s resources and events proved to be incredibly valuable in furthering my learning about slavery’s history.

One of the most impactful events was a three-day conference bringing together scholars, curators, and public historians to share their experiences and insights on the representation, memory, and meaning of the transatlantic slave trade. One presentation by Sandra Arnold, a CSSJ Graduate Fellow, impressed me. She described a plantation cemetery in rural Tennessee where her ancestors had been enslaved. Near her great-grandfather’s headstone, she found some dark green ground cover with blue flowers known as periwinkle growing among a group of plain stones. Her relatives believed this was the place where many of the plantation’s slaves were buried. Sandra’s story got me thinking about the possibility of planting periwinkle by the unmarked graves of the enslaved people in the cemetery near me.

Since then, my involvement with CSSJ has strengthened my resolve to memorialize the enslaved people inside the cemetery near me as well as on its outside wall. Some are buried with their owners and others, in the cemetery’s paupers’ grave. Three fought in the Revolutionary War, and another is believed to have shared an African medical practice that led to the first smallpox inoculation performed in America. I am currently working with the Friends of the Old Burying Ground to explore options for recognizing and honoring these early residents of our town who contributed significantly to the vibrant community we are today.

Being a “friend” of CSSJ has enriched my life in many respects. I have a much deeper understanding of the history of slavery and its impact on the enormous challenges we face in achieving racial equity. My newly-acquired knowledge has inspired and equipped me to take action locally and globally, and I have found a place where I can experience firsthand the difference my annual financial contribution to Brown makes.

ANN COLES ’63

Co-Chair, CSSJ Friends

INMAN PAGE BLACK ALUMNI COUNCIL & CSSJ FRIENDS

Partnership and support of The Center of the Study of Slavery and Justice (CSSJ) has long been a priority and passion for Inman Page Black Alumni Council (IPC). In fact, part of our mission is to establish a productive interaction among Black alumni, students, faculty, and staff; and our relationship with the Center has been one of the most effective vehicles for achieving that this past year. Over the last year, we have co-created and collaborated with the team at the Center in multiple ways. Through our regional collaboration focused on The 1619 Project, the CSSJ & IPC: Juneteenth Panel, and the joint event with CSSJ & Asian/Asian American Alumni Alliance (A4) on the Anti-Trafficking Industrial Complex Panel, the work of scholars from the Center has expanded the consciousness and knowledge of IPC members and the larger Brown community. Our relationship has enriched IPC programming and deepened our impact in the larger Brown community. IPC is extremely proud of our strategic partnership with CSSJ this year.

Our programming with CSSJ has been some of the most well-attended of our collaborative events since January 2020. Our joint event with the Brown Club of NYC and CSSJ, *Beyond 1619: Engaging Our History, Advancing Our Narratives*, was so successful that the venue was not only sold out, but it also inspired a second CSSJ partnership with the IPC regional chapter in Philadelphia in September 2020. Both events are excellent examples of how partnering with CSSJ has helped IPC increase Black alumni participation at Brown, largely, because of CSSJ's unmatched ability to honor the resiliency, strength, and legacy of Black people. The physical and psychological assaults on Black bodies that have been recorded and widely circulated in recent years have left many Black alumni hungry for reminders of the strength and resilience of Black people.

The research and programming by The Center has provided much-needed stories of Black people resisting and rebelling against systems of oppression (rooted in slavery). These stories and research draw Black alumni to CSSJ and have increased their engagement with Brown as a whole. Furthermore, Black alumni frequently share that the work of CSSJ is important and transformative in its ability to help IPC, and all alumni, hold Brown accountable for its past. This has also helped engage IPC members in the life of the University. And, while accountability is important, CSSJ also helps to educate future generations of Brownians of the world we live in and why systems and people operate in specific ways. IPC members are incredibly invested in these benefits arising from the work and programming of CSSJ, and we are committed to helping grow CSSJ's influence and impact at Brown and beyond.

As we look into the future, IPC is enthusiastic about continuing our partnership with CSSJ. We will continue to support The Center's efforts to arm members of the community with knowledge that encourages deep reflection about slavery and its ongoing legacy throughout the world. We look forward to the ways that the Center's programming will spur creativity among people, which will ensure that pathways to a brighter future are generated by members of the Brown community and beyond.

ELDRIDGE GILBERT '05

President, Inman Page Black Alumni Council

Support the Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice

Supporters of the Center provide vital funding for the Center's initiatives that breathe life into the neglected history of enslaved people and their descendants.

Support Where It Is Most Needed

Your unrestricted gift to the CSSJ will help support core programs focused on the history and legacies of the racial slave trade globally.



Support CSSJ Mass Incarceration and Carceral State Project

Support the CSSJ's Mass Incarceration and Punishment in America Research Cluster and Carceral State Reading Group, two programs that explore contemporary policing and mass incarceration and its links to our nation's history of slavery. Beginning in July 2020, your gift to the Center will be matched by the Bale Family dollar for dollar for a total of \$60,000.



Major Donors

The Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice would like to sincerely thank its major donors for their support, Ms. Barbara and Mr. Tom Bale, Ms. Donna Emma and Mr. Larry Davis, Mr. David Haas, Ms. Libby and Mr. Craig Heimark, Ms. Sharon and Mr. Joseph Holston, Ms. Debra Lee, Dr. Ruth J. Simmons, Ms. Mary and Mr. Jerome Vascellaro, Mrs. Ann and Mr. Richard P. Coles, Ms. Katherine Chon, Mr. Timothy and Mrs. Patricia Schantz, Mr. Luis Lopez, Mr. Lawrence Title, Abrams Foundation, American Endowment Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Philadelphia Foundation Grand Distribution, Jewish Community Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Wyncote Foundation. We also wish to thank the Friends of the Center, External Advisory Board Members, and all financial contributors to the Center. Each year the work of the Center broadens and deepens. Each contribution sustains our work.

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