



Ruth J. Simmons Center for
the Study of Slavery & Justice
BROWN UNIVERSITY

2024 Annual Report

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Front Cover:
Helena Evans ’24, Student Caretaker of the Symbolic Garden of the Enslaved, plants echinacea in the garden.
RYTHUM VINO BEN

Director’s Note

This year, our 12th, has been a mixed one for the Center. We lost one of our central figures, Professor Lundy Braun; began the pilot MA program in Integrative Studies, focused in Public Humanities; and ended the year with the December 12, 2024 opening of the ten-year-in-the-making exhibit—*In Slavery’s Wake: Making Black Freedom in the World*—in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Professor Braun joined the Simmons Center as one of its first research cluster chairs. For many years before, we had spoken about the ways in which the fields of medicine and medical care had been shaped by the legacies of American racial slavery. I had been educated by her work and was impressed by her deep commitment to understanding the science of biological/medical matters and their organic links to social life. She became chair of the Race, Medicine and Social Justice Research Cluster. She built this research cluster into a model one, making links across the university and drawing into the cluster faculty from across the university creating an interdisciplinary venue. I recalled that, when COVID began, she was able to put together a virtual panel of emergency doctors for the Center’s virtual series *This is America* which the Center hosted during the pandemic. The session was so impactful that local state medical officials got in touch with the Center requesting our help in educating communities of color about the pandemic. Part of Professor Braun’s work was to connect these officials to the doctors on the program. We at the Center will mourn her but we

will also celebrate a life lived which recognized that medical science was about knowledge and practices best deployed in the service of others. It is something that all her students will attest to.

Since its inception, the Center has been committed to the field of Public Humanities—not as a discipline which could be described, in current language, as practices of engagement and public-facing. Such descriptions remove the field from its intellectual moorings and turn it into one which is understood as not quite scholarly. The Humanities are often considered to be just philosophy, art, literature, literary, performance, and theater studies—and sometimes history. These are all disciplines in which human cultures are studied. One question which is typically posed is: how does one define culture? Increasingly, thinkers like the late Stuart Hall have come to define culture as also human practices which create and give meaning to human life. Human practices involve many things, but a distinctive feature is how human life is itself a praxis. We live life. How to grasp life as it is lived requires many ways of thinking. To give an example, literature can be understood as one way in which we grapple with an interior life through the characters in a novel. But how does one grapple with the practices of that life as it expresses itself through dance, religion, and music? How do we study and grasp the ways in which museums collect the artifacts of life and display them—turning them into forms of representation. In the domain of history, how do we tell the stories of the marginalized, of those whose lives have been

erased from history? With regard to the latter, in attempting to investigate these lives, do we not engage in forms of Public History which are about translation of a conventional historical work, but rather seek to tell historical stories which are enriched by the memories and stories of those who are alive or have passed? Public Humanities is an interdisciplinary field which creates ways of learning in which human life in its full complexities is investigated. For the Center, this has meant paying serious attention to forms in which we can reimagine and tell fuller historical stories about racial slavery and colonialism; creating a visual vocabulary for the telling of these stories and practicing, wherever possible, an ethos of reciprocity with various communities. Our new MA in Integrative Studies focused in Public Humanities draws from these practices.

For over ten years, the Global Curatorial Project catalyzed by the Center has been a major project engaging our attention. On December 12 and 13, 2024, the exhibition *In Slavery’s Wake: Making Black Freedom in the World* opened. It was a special moment: the culmination of a decade of collaboration between numerous partners and individuals. This project has been, for many years, our signature one. The accompanying project *The Unfinished Conversation Series* with its objective of creating a global archive of oral histories of the

voices of the descendants of the enslaved and the colonized is almost complete and will be opened soon to the public in 2025. These two projects have produced new knowledge because they operated from the frame that the voices of the enslaved and the colonized not only have something to say but are critical and central to any understanding both of domination and fuller human freedom. This is the historical frame of the Center’s work.

And, in that regard, by the end of the Center’s 12th year we have come to realize that we might be at a crossroads. Regime changes in liberal democracies typically do not impact adversely upon the knowledge production work of universities. However, the recent regime change here in America has signaled that this liberal convention might not operate. For us at the Center, questions about historical truth-telling as well as that of contemporary justice are at the core of why we exist. In this moment, we will not bend from that core.

Finally, my deepest thanks to all the staff, faculty, students and friends who have supported our work over the past year.

Anthony Bogues

Director of the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice

March 2025

President’s Advisory Council Chair’s Note

This has been a particularly eventful year for me as the Chair of the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice and for all of us connected to the Center. It was particularly gratifying to have the opportunity to honor past Brown President Ruth Simmons by naming the Center after her. She was the catalyst for the creation of the Center as well as the Advisory Council. It is because of her leadership that many of us have enthusiastically joined the Council and supported its programs. The ceremony honoring her and unveiling the new name of the Center touched all of us in attendance. We were reminded again of Dr. Simmons’ knowledge, dignity and great love for Brown and the Center.

Supporting Dr. Bogues and the staff as they develop lectures, public programs, educational material and exhibitions has encouraged all of us on the Council to think both imaginatively and critically about the Simmons Center’s growth. The information provided in this year-end document offers an insight into the rich variety of activities which are generated by the Center. The seminars, educational materials, and exhibitions offered under the auspices of Simmons Center have made valuable contributions to discussions concerning race, decolonial practices and social justice around the world. Two initiatives involving the Public Humanities Program at Brown and the development of an international exhibition and publication with the National Museum of African American History and Culture especially resonated with me.

The decision to explore the possibility of bringing the Public Humanities program under the umbrella of the Center was a significant step. With the thoughtful perspectives of Dr. Bogues, the pros and cons of adding this additional responsibility to the portfolio of the Simmons Center generated careful discussions within the Council. In the end, all believed it was the right decision for the long-term development of the Simmons Center. The result is the creation of *The Master’s in Integrative Studies (Public Humanities)*. The program will

train the next generation of public humanities professionals who will carry a deep appreciation for the importance of race and social justice in the work they create.

Working with the National Museum of African American History and Culture of the Smithsonian Institution on an international exhibition to explore the impact of slavery worldwide has been another important initiative. The collaboration is a tribute to the high regard which other notable institutions have for the Simmons Center. The project entailed working with organizations and scholars on four continents to investigate the impact which the emergence of enslavement had on the economies, cultures and histories of these places. I have had the opportunity to work with the museum and understand that it is very selective about the partnerships it enters and the topics on which it is willing to commit significant resources. This project has been in process for several years and was a featured event at the museum in late 2024. The collaboration with the Simmons Center and Dr. Bogues is something the museum proudly highlights when discussing the project.

Along with these two specific projects among the many of the Simmons Center this year, I must recognize my happiness at working with the other members of the Advisory Council. They are an impressive group who are committed to the work of the Simmons Center and providing both intellectual and financial support. Our conversations over the course of the past year have enriched the quality of the work of the Simmons Center and have consistently impressed me with the rich perspectives they offer. They have made serving as the Chair working with them, Dr. Bogues and the Simmons Center staff an honor and a privilege.

Spencer Crew PhD. ’71, P’00, P’04

Chair, President’s Advisory Council on the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice



About the Center

The Symbolic Garden of the Enslaved
RYTHUM VINOBEN

Work of the Center

The Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice (Simmons Center) 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 Simmons Center creates a space for the interdisciplinary study of the historical forms of slavery while also examining how these legacies shape our contemporary world.

For fall 2023 through the end of 2024, the Center’s work was organized around the following research clusters and projects:

RESEARCH CLUSTERS

Historical Injustice and Democracy

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

Human Trafficking

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

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.

Race, Medicine, and Social Justice

This research cluster explores the history and persistence of structural racism in biomedicine as it intersects with economic and social conditions. The cluster focuses 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 brings together the best scholars on this subject in the world. This three-year project is co-led by the Simmons Center and the International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam).

Slavery and Finance

This endeavor to “follow the money” investigates the technologies of finance that facilitated the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Atlantic plantation complex by developing new perspectives on the financial mechanics of slaving operations and the trade’s relationship to maritime insurance, commodity brokerage, currency arbitrage, banking, and other elements of the financial services industry.

Stolen Relations: Recovering Stories of Indigenous Enslavement in the Americas

This community-based project, housed at Brown University, is a collaborative effort to build a database of enslaved Indigenous people throughout time all across the Americas in order to promote greater understanding of the historical circumstances and ongoing trauma of settler colonialism.

PUBLIC HUMANITIES—MASTER’S IN INTEGRATIVE STUDIES

The Master’s in Integrative Studies, focused in public humanities, provides students with an interdisciplinary exploration of issues surrounding race, decolonial practices and social justice with specific references to cultural work in museums and other cultural organizations. Students will gain the knowledge and tools to lead institutional change within their organizations.

PUBLIC HUMANITIES PROJECTS

Freedom Archive

This project creates an inventory of materials in Brown University Library’s Special Collections related to racial slavery and abolition to help scholars more easily access these items. Through *The Unfinished Conversations Series*, the Freedom Archive will also include memories of the afterlives of racial slavery and colonialism gathered from communities around the world.

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 the Simmons Center and the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African American History & Culture in partnership with museums around the world.

The Unfinished Conversations Series

The Unfinished Conversations Series is a new form of curatorial practice, public engagement, and programming to collect, give voice to, and provide a platform for untold histories, memories, and narratives related to the history of racialized slavery and its afterlives. Part of the Global Curatorial Project, it is a collaborative project with museums and communities around the world, with funding support by Abrams Foundation and the Wyncote Foundation.

Creating a New World: The Transatlantic Slave Trade Film Project

With Firelight Media and filmmaker Stanley Nelson

This project involves creating a multi-part documentary series on the Atlantic slave trade, a digital learning platform, and a learning companion. One of the project’s main objectives is to provide accessible educational tools to chart the economic and human costs of the slave trade across the Atlantic basin, underscoring how this system of violence and profit built the modern world.

Reimagining New England Histories

This project is organized by the Simmons Center in partnership with Williams College, Mystic Seaport Museum, Black community members, and tribal partners. Funded by the Mellon Foundation, the project aims to tell a different and more complete historical and contemporary understanding of the lives, contributions, and everyday experiences of Black and Indigenous people in New England.

Symbolic Garden of the Enslaved

In small spaces beside their cabins and huts on the plantation, along marginalized hillsides, in swamps, gullies and forests, and in outdoor sanctuaries created to honor their dead and contemplate that ancestry, enslaved Africans and their descendants throughout the Americas “stole” back their own time and labor in snatches of the night, on Sundays or “holidays,” to plant garden plots of use, beauty, and spiritual and physical refuge. Located behind and to the side of our 94 Waterman Street building, the Symbolic Garden of the Enslaved designed by Prof. Geri Augusto draws on that history. The garden renders imaginatively a small part of what the slaves knew and wrought, and what they might have thought as they created new landscapes against all odds. It is a work of cognitive justice and contemplation.

SEMINAR SERIES

Advanced Knowledges Working Group

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

Carceral State Reading Group

The Simmons Center facilitates a year-long reading group which focuses on historical and contemporary issues of imprisonment, incarceration, captivity, criminalization, and policing. The reading group is a collaboration between various sectors of the Providence community and the Center.

AFFILIATED STUDENT GROUP

Decolonization at Brown

Decolonization at Brown (DAB) is a student-led group that seeks to bring together students, staff, faculty, and local communities to resist colonialism in Brown’s relationships, academics, and spaces. DAB’s current focus is identifying and raising awareness of colonialism in Brown’s structure and culture through task forces, bi-weekly general body meetings, mutual aid initiatives, teach-ins, campaigns, and more.

ARTS INITIATIVES

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 racial slavery in our world today.

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. This project is collaboratively presented by the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre (VIAD), University of Johannesburg, Simmons Center, and the Brown Arts Initiative. Visit www.theimaginednew.org

This Life: Black Life and the Time of the Now

This Life: Black Life and the Time of the Now is a collaboration between the Simmons Center and the [Miami Museum of Contemporary Art of the African Diaspora](#) to create an experimental digital exhibition and an accompanying documentary with four Black artists.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

Slavery & Legacy Walking Tour

In the eighteenth century, racial slavery permeated every aspect of social and economic life in Rhode Island. The Slavery and Legacy Walking Tour invites guests to learn about the history and legacy of slavery as it pertains to Brown University and the state of Rhode Island. Major stops on this hour-long walking tour include the Ruth J. Simmons Quadrangle, Van Wickle Gates, University Hall (Nathanael Green Plaque), and the Slavery Memorial (Manning Hall).

Slavery in the Americas High School Curriculum Project

The Racial Slavery in the Americas: Resistance, Freedom, and Legacies High School Curriculum Project, released in August 2020, was a collaborative project with The Choices Program at Brown. This curriculum fulfills part of the Simmons Center’s mission to undertake public history projects which tell the story of racial slavery. This high school curriculum project sought to challenge myths and the current absences in how our schools teach the history of racial slavery. The project worked closely with youth and educators to discern their understanding of the topic, areas of interest, and classroom challenges. [View the curriculum online here.](#)

Black and Indigenous Histories Summer Institute

A free summer program for Rhode Island rising 10th–12th grade students, the Black and Indigenous Histories High School Summer Institute is designed within a restorative justice framework that centers on self-reflection, critical thinking, and reading against the grain to reframe how we understand history and heal our communities.

Reimagining New England Histories K–12 Curriculum Project

The RNEH K–12 Curriculum aims to create curricula around particular themes and topics that educators could adapt for their classroom needs, as well as finding ways to share related curriculum units that have already been created. The K–12 Curriculum Committee consists of New England-based K–12 educators as well as tribal and community members. The Committee does not aim to create a comprehensive curriculum on New England history, but rather, to create thematic lesson plans that educators could easily adapt as needed based on school standards.

People

Leadership and Administrative Staff

Anthony Bogues
Director

Asa Messer Professor of Humanities and
Africana Studies

Natasha Rosario DeChambeau
Financial and Administrative Coordinator,
2024–Present

Yannick Etoundi ’26 Ph.D.
Unfinished Conversations Student
Researcher and Project Editor, 2022–2025

Sabina Griffin
Center Manager, 2024–Present

Destiny Jones
Program Assistant, 2024

Kennedy Jones
This Life: Black Life and the Time of the
Now, 2023
Unfinished Conversations Curatorial
Researcher, 2024

Kiku Langford McDonald
Center Manager, 2021–2023
Communications Manager, 2024–Present

Bianca Pallo
Global Curatorial Project Archivist,
2022–2024

Traci Picard
Researcher, 2024

Africa Smith
Administrative Coordinator, 2021–2024
Events Coordinator, 2024–Present

Reina Thomas
Manager of Public Education Initiatives and
Community Outreach, 2024–Present

Shana Weinberg
Associate Director, Public Humanities
Programs

Nada Samih-Rotondo
Manager of Public Education Initiatives and
Community Outreach, 2022–2023

President’s Advisory Council on the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice

Dr. Ruth J. Simmons
Founding Board Chair Emerita

Spencer Crew ’71
Chair, 2020–Present

Rakim H. Brooks ’09

James T. Campbell

Emily Cavanagh ’91, 2021–2023

Lehidy L. Frias ’17

David Haas ’78

Libby Heimark ’76, P’11 ’14 ’17

Pablo Sorensen ’71, ScM’75, ’77 Ph.D.,
LHD’19 hon., P’06

Lisa Van Dusen ’76, P’13

Mary Vascellaro ’74, P’07

Faculty Advisory Board

Philip Gould
Israel J. Kapstein Professor of English

Matthew Pratt Guterl
L. Herbert Ballou University Professor of
Africana Studies and American Studies
Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion,
2025–Present

Françoise N. Hamlin
Royce Family Associate Professor of
Teaching Excellence in Africana Studies
and History
Associate Professor of Africana Studies
and History

Juliet Hooker
Royce Family Professor of Teaching
Excellence in Political Science
Professor of Political Science

Kevin Quashie
Royce Family Professor of Teaching
Excellence in English
Professor of English

Seth Rockman
Associate Professor of History
Director of Undergraduate Studies,
History Department



L to R: Shana Weinberg, Destiny Jones, Sabina Griffin, Kiku Langford McDonald, Anthony Bogues, and Africa Smith.
RYTHUM VINOEN



L to R: Kevin Quashie and Melaine Ferdinand-King.
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Research Cluster Faculty
Fellows

Lundy Braun
*Race, Medicine, and Social Justice Research
Cluster Faculty Fellow, 2016–2024*

*Professor Emerita of Africana Studies and
Medical Science*

Linford Fisher
*Stolen Relations Research Cluster
Faculty Fellow*

Associate Professor of History

Director of Graduate Studies

*Principal Investigator, Stolen
Relations Project*

Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve
*Mass Incarceration and Punishment in
America Research Cluster Faculty Fellow*

Associate Professor of Sociology

Latoya Teague
*Historical Injustice and Democracy
Research Cluster Fellow*

*Simmons Center/Watson Historical
Injustice and Democracy Postdoctoral
Research Associate*

Elena Shih
*Human Trafficking Research Cluster
Faculty Fellow*

*Manning Assistant Professor of American
Studies and Ethnic Studies*

Taneisha Wilson, MD, ScM
*Race, Medicine, and Social Justice Research
Cluster Faculty Fellow, 2021–Present*

Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine

*Attending Physician, Brown
University Health*

*Director, Clinical Research, Brown
Emergency Medicine*

Affiliated Faculty

Renée Ater
*Visiting Associate Professor of
Africana Studies, 2022–2024*

Linford Fisher
*Stolen Relations Research
Cluster Faculty Fellow*

Associate Professor of History

Director of Graduate Studies

*Principal Investigator, Stolen
Relations Project*

Emily Owens
Associate Professor of History

Faculty Associates

Geri Augusto
*Senior Fellow in International and Public
Affairs, Watson Institute*

Rae Gould
*Executive Director of the Native American
and Indigenous Studies Initiative (NAISI)*

Joseph S. Meisel
Joukowsky Family University Librarian

Amanda E. Strauss
*Associate University Librarian for Special
Collections, 2021–2024*

Visiting Faculty

Mack Scott
*Visiting Assistant Professor, Reimagining
New England Histories Project*

Public Humanities Faculty

Akeia de Barros Gomes
Adjunct Lecturer, 2024–Present

Steven Lubar
*George L. Littlefield Professor of American
History, Department of American Studies*

Postdoctoral Fellows

Christopher Baldwin
*Simmons Center/JCB Joint Postdoctoral
Research Associate in Slavery and Justice,
2024–2025*

Alycia Hall
*Simmons Center/JCB Joint Postdoctoral
Research Associate in Slavery and Justice,
2023–2024*

Leonora Masini ’22 Ph.D.
*Postdoctoral Research Associate in Slavery
and the Public Humanities, 2022–2024*

Gabriel Regalado
*ACLS Emerging Voices Postdoctoral
Research Associate, 2022–2024*

Latoya Teague
*Simmons Center/Watson Institute Joint
Historical Injustice and Democracy Post-
doctoral Research Associate, 2023–2025*



L to R: Justin Lang, zuri arman, and Arlin Hill.
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Reimagining New England
Histories Visiting Fellow

Cheryll Holley
*Mellon Visiting Fellow in Slavery and
Justice, 2022–2023*

Visiting Scholars

Pepijn Brandon
Visiting Scholar, 2020–2025

Akeia de Barros Gomes
Visiting Scholar, 2021–Present

Sylviane Diouf
Visiting Scholar, 2019–2025

Paul Gardullo
Visiting Scholar, 2020–2025

Graduate Fellows

zuri arman ’26 Ph.D.
*Simmons Center Advanced Knowledges
Working Group Facilitator, 2023–2024*

*Carceral State Reading Group
Co-Facilitator, 2024–2025*

Zoë Clark ’28 Ph.D.
*Slavery & Finance Graduate Proctor
2024–2025*

Yannick Etoundi ’26 Ph.D.
*Interdisciplinary Graduate Dissertation
Fellow, 2024–2025*

*Unfinished Conversations Student
Researcher, 2022–2025*

Arlin Hill ’27 Ph.D.
*Race, Slavery, Colonialism and Capitalism
Graduate Proctor, 2024–2025*

*Race, Slavery, Colonialism and Capitalism
Graduate Fellow, 2023–2024*

Isaac Mensah ’28 Ph.D.
*Mapping Global Finance Graduate Proctor,
2023–2024*

Melaine Ferdinand-King ’25 Ph.D.
*Co-Curatorial Fellow, Voices of Mass
Incarceration, 2023–2024*

Justin Lang ’26 Ph.D.
Graduate Research Fellow, 2020–2025

*Carceral State Reading Group
Co-Facilitator, 2020–Present*

Public Humanities Students

Florence Blackwell ’26 A.M.

Claire Inouye Rothstein ’26 A.M.

Christina Young ’26 A.M.

Ray Zhang ’26 A.M.

Student Researchers

HUMAN TRAFFICKING
RESEARCH CLUSTER

Arman Deendar ’25

Shravya Sompalli ’25

Sarath Suong ’24.5

Amy Xiao ’24

MASS INCARCERATION AND
PUNISHMENT IN AMERICA

Julian Cohen ’26

Katie Jain ’25

Kate Kuli ’25

Sterling Stiger ’22

Samuel Theoharis ’24

RACE, MEDICINE AND
SOCIAL JUSTICE

Eric Jones Ph.D. Candidate

REIMAGINING NEW ENGLAND
HISTORIES

Victoria Cheff ’26 Ph.D.

STOLEN RELATIONS

Annette Lee ’24 MPA

UNFINISHED CONVERSATIONS

Daniel Everton ’24 A.M.

Yannick Etoundi ’26 Ph.D.

zuri arman ’26 Ph.D.

Gustav Hall ’24

Nélari Alejandra Figueroa Torres ’25

Dillon Stone ’25

Laura Tamayo ’25



L to R: Kadence Early, Kiku Langford McDonald and Emily Colon.
ZACH LEGAT

Student Workers

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS

June Dike '27

Kadence Early '27

Destiny Wilson '26

**CARCERAL STATE READING
GROUP FACILITATORS**

zuri arman '26 Ph.D, 2024–2025

Matisse Doucet '26, 2024–2025

Justin Lang '26 Ph.D., 2023–2024

Sarah Ogundare '24, 2023–2024

**COMMUNICATIONS
COORDINATORS**

Janelle Aponte '27

Felora Bellamy '26

Emily Colon '25

Elizabeth Sepulveda '27

**EDUCATION PROGRAM
COORDINATOR**

Kate Harty '24

**SLAVERY & LEGACY WALKING
TOUR GUIDES**

Katherine Harty '24

Marielle Buxbaum '24

Carlo Kim '27

Sunday Labrucherie '27

John Modarres '25 M.S.

Telijah Patterson '24

**SPECIAL PROJECTS
COORDINATOR**

Destiny Jones '23.5

**SYMBOLIC GARDEN OF THE
ENSLAVED CARETAKERS**

Kevin Carter '25

Helena Evans '24

Allyssa Foster '25

Elizabeth Flores '27

Cole Francis '26

Rayna Franklin '27

Amelia Holl '25

Ariel Montague '24, MPH '25

Research Clusters & Seminar Series



Spring 2024 Race, Slavery, Colonialism and Capitalism Research Cluster Workshop Discussion at the Simmons Center.

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Research Clusters

HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESEARCH CLUSTER

In 2024, the Human Trafficking Research Cluster (HTRC) celebrated the second book born out of its collaborative research with sex workers’ rights and anti-trafficking organizations. [Understanding Health and Care Amongst Sex Workers: Perspectives from Rhode Island](#) (Palgrave Press 2023) by Claire Macon, Eden Tai and Sydney Lane, is based on unique research with sex workers conducted alongside Ocean State Advocacy, a grassroots sex workers’ rights organization in Rhode Island. The book was commissioned by the Palgrave special series on New Advances in Sex Work, co-edited by HTRC Faculty Fellow Elena Shih, and includes an introduction by former undergraduate HTRC research fellow Julianna Brown ’19; Alpert Medical School ’24. In May 2024, the HTRC hosted a book launch for the event that included public comments by Lorelei Lee and Yin Q. The first HTRC book was [White Supremacy, Racism, and the Coloniality of Anti-Trafficking](#), by Kamala Kempadoo and Elena Shih (Routledge 2022).

Separately, HTRC continued its ongoing collaborative research project with Red Canary Song, a grassroots coalition of migrant massage workers combating racist violence and human trafficking in New York City. HTRC undergraduate research fellows Arman Deendar ’25, Shravya Sompalli ’25, and Amy Xiao ’24 have built a digital map of policing violence against Asian massage work in New York City. The HTRC plans a Fall 2024 launch of the map, “Liberation Atlas.”

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



Above and Below: HTRC Book Launch Event for Understanding Health and Care Among Sex Workers
ELENA SHIH



Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice

RACE, MEDICINE, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE RESEARCH CLUSTER

We reflect on the work of this research cluster with gratitude to the late Dr. Lundy Braun who passed away in August, 2024. Sections of this report reflect Dr. Braun’s contributions.

During the 2023–2024 academic year, the Race, Medicine, and Social Justice Cluster continued its in-depth examination of racism in medicine. Under the co-direction of Dr. Lundy Braun and Dr. Taneisha Wilson, the Cluster focused on anti-Black racism in medicine, both as a historical foundation and as an ongoing structure that affects all marginalized communities. Throughout the year, we engaged in interdisciplinary discussions and hosted Dr. Eugenia “Gina” South, the Ralph Muller Presidential Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at UPenn’s Perelman School of Medicine and Faculty Director of the Penn Medicine Center for Health Justice. Dr. South’s work on structural health interventions—such as vacant lot greening and abandoned home remediation—demonstrated powerful effects on gun violence prevention and mental and physical health on populations. Her lecture emphasized the importance of place-based, health-promoting interventions that counter structural inequities, especially in Black and Brown communities.

RYTHUM VINO BEN



ANNUAL REPORT



Panelists Lundy Braun, Taneisha Wilson, Dannie Ritchie, and Eric T. Jones at the 2023 Commencement Forum “Health, Racial Inequities, and Power in American Medicine.”
RYTHUM VINO BEN

The Cluster also continued critical conversations on topics like the persistence of race-based algorithms in healthcare, the role of physician unions, and the legacies of colonialism in epidemiology. Notable discussions included an exploration of *Maladies of Empire* by Jim Downs, which examined the roots of epidemiology in imperialism and slavery, and Duana Fullwiley’s analysis of genetic ancestry versus race in medicine. This upcoming year’s events will build on previous contributions especially as we pay tribute to the late Dr. Lundy Braun. The Cluster with the STS (Science, Technology, and Society) will honor her legacy through symposium planning and the upcoming reading of *Breathing Race into Medicine*. The group remains steadfast in advancing Dr. Braun’s work to challenge the racialized underpinnings of medical knowledge production, ensuring that future medical research and practice reflect principles of equity and justice. Through these initiatives, our Race, Medicine, and Social Justice Cluster will continue to foster an environment for transformative learning and activism, bridging academia with real-world impact

Taneisha Wilson, MD, ScM
Race, Medicine, and Social Justice Research Cluster Faculty Fellow
Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine
Attending Physician, Brown University Health
Director, Clinical Research, Brown Emergency Medicine

RACE, SLAVERY, COLONIALISM AND CAPITALISM

Overall, the opportunity to work with the Race, Slavery, Colonialism and Capitalism Research Cluster has been a truly enriching experience. As the graduate fellow for the group, I was not only able to help plan and facilitate the logistics of a spring workshop, but also was given the opportunity to conduct original research as well as to pull together a complementary student panel. More specifically, on one hand, I was asked to liaise with group members regarding comments, deadlines, and edits; collect, review, and distribute notes, documents, and other materials from the Spring 2023 conference at The University of West Indies, Mona, Jamaica; and help to coordinate travel, accommodations, and on-campus logistics for the workshop. On the other hand, I was able to write for and host an interdisciplinary black studies roundtable aimed at pushing the bounds of the analytic of gendered racial capitalism by exploring the layered dimensions, modalities and registers of Western Imperial economic, political, and social domination from the perspective of the Black Radical Tradition. Furthermore, through this

Below: Panelists for “Different Angles and Vectors of Analysis: (Gendered) Racial Capitalism, Western Imperialism, and The Black Radical Tradition,” a public event that was part of the Spring 2024 workshop hosted at Brown Univeristy (L to R: Jorge Banuelos, Jordón Crawford, Elise Barnett, Zawdie Sandvliet, and Arlin Hill).

RYTHUM VINOGEN



process I was afforded the great fortune of learning from top scholars in my field of interest while also building new peer relationships with other students with whom I hope to work for years to come.

Arlin Hill Ph.D. '27

Race, Slavery, Colonialism and Capitalism Graduate Proctor, 2024–2025

Race, Slavery, Colonialism and Capitalism Graduate Fellow, 2023–2024



Above: Spring 2024 Race, Slavery, Colonialism and Capitalism Workshop Discussion at the Simmons Center (L to R: Pepijn Brandon, Jennifer Morgan, Arlin Hill, and Zawdie Sandvliet).

RYTHUM VINOGEN

MASS INCARCERATION AND PUNISHMENT IN AMERICA RESEARCH CLUSTER

The Mass Incarceration Punishment in America 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. During the 2023–2024 academic year, we had a dynamic year of programming and research that engaged undergraduates, graduate students, activists and alumni. Our cluster hosted author and professor Dr. Melanie Newport for a discussion of her book, *This is My Jail*, which details the dark history of Chicago’s Cook County Jail, the largest single-site jail in the United States. The seminar format welcomed students and the community to hear Dr. Newport’s research as well as stay for a meet-and-greet to have their books signed.

Beyond this signature event, the cluster was active with events and research activities aimed at building an archive on mass incarceration through the Mass Incarceration Lab. The Lab’s mission is centering incarcerated voices in the telling of the history of mass incarceration in America. The cluster hosted two LIVE oral history events. The first event was with Russell Morse as he shared his story of experiencing juvenile incarceration. He learned how to write while incarcerated and is now an advocate for criminal justice reform. The second event was a LIVE oral history of Albert Brown and Jabir Pope, two men who have been exonerated and released after 38 years in prison. Both men were falsely accused of and charged with armed robbery and murder because the State hid exculpatory evidence and testimonies. After several appeal processes and a decades-long struggle for freedom, Pope was released in 2021 and Brown in 2022. They shared their stories of their time incarcerated and discussed their paths to justice and exoneration. They even sang together doo-wop style and performed for the audience.

Nicole Gonzalez Van Cleve

Mass Incarceration and Punishment in America Research Cluster Faculty Fellow

Associate Professor of Sociology



Following the talk by Dr. Melanie Newport, students received free signed copies of *This is My Jail* and had a chance to speak with the author.

KIKU LANGFORD MCDONALD



Following the LIVE oral history of Albert Brown and Jabir Pope, students and Prof. Van Cleve pose with the speakers.

NICOLE GONZALEZ VAN CLEVE

SLAVERY & FINANCE
RESEARCH CLUSTER

In its inaugural year, the group convened for monthly meetings to survey the major scholarly approaches to slavery’s financial history. We were delighted to welcome such distinguished scholars as Professor Mary Hicks (University of Chicago), Professor Michael Ralph (Howard University), and Professor Sharon Murphy (Providence College) to the Simmons Center. We also heard from Dr. Jesús Bohorquez and Dr. Têlio Cravo, two John Carter Brown Library fellows who pointed our attention to Brazil’s importance in the nineteenth-century’s global financial architecture.

The cluster has attracted participants from across the Brown campus, including undergraduate and graduate students; postdoctoral researchers; and faculty from History, Economics, and other disciplines. The enterprise was also supported by the work of Isaac Mensah, a doctoral student in History, as well as the Simmons Center staff who coordinated speaker visits and provided delicious refreshments for participants.

The first year’s work made clear that scholarly and popular understandings of slavery’s financial history are still at an early stage. But the group’s premise that “following the money” will lead to a richer history and unanticipated new stories seems to have found immediate confirmation in (to offer only one example) accounts of slave-mined Brazilian diamonds being used to secure Dutch loans to the Portuguese Crown in pursuit of expanding slave importations to the Americas.

Our ambitions now turn to mobilizing Brown-affiliated researchers in pursuit of other entangled histories that point to finance as a critical aspect of slavery’s rise and fall in the Western world, as well as to slavery’s importance to the rise of the modern financial sector.

Seth Rockman

Slavery & Finance Research Cluster Faculty Fellow
Associate Professor, Department of History

Mapping Global Finance Graduate Proctor Isaac Mensah ’28 Ph.D. and Prof. Seth Rockman
RYTHUM VINOGEN



Seminar Series

CARCERAL STATE READING GROUP

The 2023–2024 Carceral State Reading Group renewed its purpose as a space for critical reflection and honest conversation amid several local, national, and global crises related to the group’s focus on contemporary conditions of captivity and carceral power. The university’s acquisition of Mumia Abu-Jamal’s archive provided a lens through which we examined ongoing practices of criminalizing and repressing dissent. The group contributed to public conversation with a symposium titled “[Autonomy] Amid Fascism” on March 8–9, 2024, featuring a seminar with Professor Felicia Denaud on “western fundamentalism,” a discussion between authors William C. Anderson and Ashani Alston on contemporary organizing, and a screening of “The Pendleton 2: They Stood Up,” a documentary on the case of Naeem Trotter and Bala-goon Cole, currently held political prisoners in Indiana DOC. Recordings and transcriptions of the event will continue to serve as resources for discussion, calls to action, and archives of this historical moment.

Sarah Ogundare ’24, Justin Lang ’26 Ph.D.

Carceral State Reading Group Co-Facilitators

Pendleton 2 Defense Committee members Too Black and TheKingTrill and Stop Torture RI member Brandon Robinson speaking to the audience during the panel discussion following the screening of “They Stood Up,” on March 9, 2024.

JUSTIN LANG





Events

The Simmons Center at 94 Waterman Street bustles with activity during the exhibition opening reception for *Art and the Freedom Struggle: The Works of Mumia Abu-Jamal*.
RYTHUM VINOBN

SIMMONS CENTER UNVEILING

September 7, 2023

Just over a decade after opening our doors, the Center was renamed in honor of Brown President Emerita Ruth J. Simmons, who during her time as president from 2001 to 2012 sparked a landmark effort to uncover the University’s historical ties to slavery. The renaming was marked on campus by the unveiling of the Center’s new signage. During the unveiling events, the Center presented Dr. Simmons with a special gift: a custom made box containing an archive of all the catalogs from the Center’s decade of presenting art and historical research exhibitions as part of its public humanities mission.



Prof. Anthony Bogues and Dr. Ruth J. Simmons at the Simmons Center unveiling ceremony.
BROWN UNIVERSITY/NICK DENTAMARO

HEIMARK ARTIST IN RESIDENCE TALK

October 14, 2023

During Family Weekend, our 2023 Heimark Artist in Residence Renée Elizabeth Neely-TANNER gave an artist talk entitled ‘I Quit Slavery.’ American Maroons and the Absolute Freedom of Abstract Art. This conversation explored the historical landscape of the Great Dismal Swamp Maroons and how their achievement to ‘hide in plain sight’ is best represented in the liberating terrain of abstract art. The talk took place in the gallery among Neely-TANNER’s exhibition entitled *Speculative Ecologies The Intimate Bond of Freedom and Green*.

Renée Elizabeth Neely-TANNER speaks about her artwork and inspiration in the gallery to a standing-room only crowd.
RYTHUM VINO BEN



MANOR SUITE:
LANDSCAPE, MEMORY & STORY

April 8, 2024

Sylvester Manor, located on Shelter Island on the East End of Long Island, New York, is the most intact plantation remnant north of Virginia with ownership that had passed through eleven generations of Sylvester descendants for almost 400 years. Operating as a nonprofit organization since 2009, their mission is to cultivate, preserve, and share historic Sylvester Manor, telling the stories of all the people who lived, worked, and died there and sustaining the land for generations to come.

Donnamarie Barnes, Director of History & Heritage at Sylvester Manor, joined the Simmons Center for a talk to explain the various ways history narratives and stories are discovered and interpreted through storytelling and image-making. Using photographs from the archive at Sylvester Manor and her own present-day images of the place, she presented examples of history stories from Sylvester Manor.



Fellows’ Talks

STRATEGIC TIES: MAROON AND
ENSLAVED INTERACTIONS BETWEEN
SLAVERY AND EMANCIPATION

April 9, 2024

On August 1, 1834, abolition took effect throughout the British Caribbean. In the weeks following, British officials’, local officials’, and planters’ attention was firmly on the transition from slavery to wage labor throughout the British Caribbean. Miles away from the coastal plains of sugar plantations, in the interior of Jamaica on Maroon settlements, the transition from slavery to apprenticeship also impacted the Maroons. Did Maroon communities face the same tensions in transitioning out of slavery? When Maroons were required to grant full freedom to their apprentices early what transpired in the communities? In her talk, Alycia Hall, Simmons Center/JCB Joint Postdoctoral Research Associate in Slavery and Justice, speculated that some formerly-enslaved people in the Maroon settlements were absorbed into Maroon societies in the post-emancipation period.

DIALECTICS, DIASPORAS, AND
SOLIDARITY AS PRAXIS FROM SOUTH
LA TO CUBA AND PUERTO RICO

April 23, 2024

Dr. Gabriel Regalado, Simmons Center ACLS Emerging Voices Postdoctoral Research Associate, gave a lunch talk about his archive of experiences as a community organizer based in South Los Angeles. In the wake of the 2020 Black Lives Matter uprisings, he was tasked with designing and implementing a leadership development fellowship at the Social Justice Learning Institute. His objectives were to engage an annual cohort of scholar-activists in critical research and immersive traveling experiences. In 2022, he coordinated a solidarity tour to Puerto Rico for our first cohort of fellows to engage and learn from Afro-Borinquen scholars, artists, and activists concerned with issues of police violence, femicide, and crisis management. In 2024, he coordinated a solidarity tour to Cuba for our second cohort of fellows to engage and learn from Afro-Cuban scholars, artists, and activists concerned with strategies of ecological sustainability and cooperative economics. These efforts have generated a radical solidarity praxis towards a more comprehensive abolition discourse.

Major Events

DOING PUBLIC HUMANITIES TODAY

October 27, 2023

As part of Black Alumni Reunion, former graduate fellows of the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice reflected on their current work in cultural heritage organizations. Today, these fellows are emerging leaders in the fields of curation, preservation, and interpretation. Panelists discussed curatorial and archival practice, oral history projects, and preservation initiatives they have led focused on the legacies of racial slavery, race and racism, and restorative justice.



“None of those departments really felt at home for me until I found the center and began working with Dr. Bogues, and working with Shana because of the kinds of questions the center asks, and how to engage us researchers and how to engage our communities, and how it brings people together to ask difficult questions, but important questions, to really interrogate the structure of our world and what our work can do to bring about this notion of justice.”

Anni A. Pullagura A.M. ’16 AM ’22 PhD ’22
Margaret and Terry Stent Associate Curator of American Art, High Museum of Art



“The Center was my home on campus... It was the place where I felt intellectually and emotionally safe and where I felt listened to...there’s something about when people believe in you that you start to empower yourself.”

Elon Cook Lee A.M. ’14
Director of Interpretation and Education for the Historic Sites Department National Trust for Historic Preservation



“My time as a Public Humanities student and fellow at the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice deeply shaped and impacted my growth as a cultural practitioner. From curating exhibitions to creating multimedia storytelling, the Center provided the platform and support for a hands-on education in public-facing research and community-engaged work.”

Johanna Obenda A.M. ’19
Curatorial Specialist at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC)

IN CONVERSATION: BLACK AND INDIGENOUS HISTORIES AND PEDAGOGIES SYMPOSIUM & GATHERING

November 16 & 17, 2023

Hosted by the Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice and NAISI, this two-day symposium and gathering provided an opportunity for regional Black and Indigenous community historians, scholars, storytellers and educators to collectively engage with critical questions focused on higher education curricula related to Black and Indigenous histories and pedagogical approaches to teaching these histories. The focus of this event was knowledge sharing from within Black and Indigenous communities.

“In Conversation” was a wonderful opportunity for dialogue and discussion across a number of areas: between and across disciplines, with and among academics and non-academics, and including a range of participants from many professional and personal backgrounds. The perfect blend of academic research and locally-held knowledge, this two-day gathering and symposium provided an atmosphere that fostered listening and learning above all else. NAISI was pleased to have partnered with the Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice to make this event a reality and to provide a space that was inviting, open and collaborative. We not only learned much about the history of the Southern

New England area through the presentations shared at the event, but also about pedagogy and meaningful engagement with various audiences. The foundation created through this gathering for engagement and dialogue with Black and Indigenous peoples across the region will provide future opportunities to expand our knowledge across Brown University and beyond.

Rae Gould
Simmons Center Faculty Associate
Executive Director, Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative (NAISI)



Above: Panelist Brad Lopes speaks during the symposium and gathering. RYTHUM VINOBN

Below: Audience members participate in the discussion during Q&A and between sessions. RYTHUM VINOBN



UNESCO MAPPING GLOBAL ANTI-BLACK RACISM MEETING AT BROWN

March 22 & 23, 2024

Two years ago, as requested by the The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Simmons Center became the lead organization to create a project that would map anti-black racism globally. Over the last two years, the project has had meetings with scholars and activists in Africa and the Caribbean and is now in the preliminary stage of its completion. On March 22 and 23, 2024, members of the Steering Committee of the project met at Brown to discuss the outline of the report. The publication of the report is expected at the end of 2025.

Anthony Bogues

Director of the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice.

L to R: Mr. Matheus Gato De Jesus, UNESCO Program Manager Tabue Nguma, Prof. R.A. Judy, Prof. Thiven Reddy, Priscilla Lewis (infant), Prof. Maziki Thame, Prof. Anthony Bogues, Mr. Huri Henrique, Ms. Dominique Day.

SHANA WEINBERG



GEORGE LAMMING: LITERATURE, HISTORY AND THE POLITICS OF DECOLONIZATION—A TRIBUTE

April 19, 2024

I chose for my intervention in this conference in honor of George Lamming to shift from looking at his immense contribution to Caribbean fiction to briefly explore his profound political role in helping define the Caribbean as a unique and coherent social and cultural space. In his 1999 edited volume On the Canvas of this World, Lamming combined together special issues of the New World Quarterly journal that he had edited and dedicated, respectively, to recognizing the independence celebrations of Guyana and Barbados, both of which occurred in 1966. In his choice of contributors, from CLR James to Walter Rodney, Nicolas Guillen, Paule Marshall and on to Aimé Césaire, Lamming sought to link together the poets, novelists, historians and thinkers from all language components of the region into a common purpose and vision. This was directed, not unlike most of his fictional work,

Below: Panelists Kwame Dawes and Brian Meeks speak with moderator Anthony Bogues during the session entitled “Lamming: The Poetics of Lamming and the Political Novelist.”

SCOTT LAPHAM



towards imagining an anti-colonial future that was expansive, inclusive and defiant of notions of nationalism inherited from the recent past. While the postcolonial histories of the Caribbean suggest that the project of small micro-states surviving in the contemporary world was always fraught, Lamming’s vision and those of his collaborators in Canvas, still shine a brilliant light, suggesting possible futures for these territories, wallowing in the stasis of the neoliberal moment.

Brian Meeks

Professor of Africana Studies



Above: Panelists Rhonda Cobham-Sander, Nadi Edwards, and Supriya Nair speak during the session entitled “Lamming: Caribbean Literature and Postcolonialism.”

SCOTT LAPHAM

THE IMAGINED NEW BOOK LAUNCH

April 29, 2024

The Simmons Center hosted a book launch for *The Imagined New (or what happens when History is a Catastrophe?)*, the new book edited by Prof. Anthony Bogues, Leora Farber, Zamansele Nsele & Surafel Wondimu Abebe.

Joining Prof. Bogues to discuss the book were panelists Prof. Brian Meeks, Professor of Africana Studies; Prof. Lindsay Caplan, Assistant Professor of History of Art and Architecture; and Prof. Geri Augusto, Senior Fellow in International and Public Affairs at the Watson Institute. The event was moderated by Prof. Philip Gould.

Lindsay Caplan
KIKU LANGFORD MCDONALD



“The Imagined New offers a kaleidoscopic accounting of art as a catalyst of historical processes. It lays out different, even conflicting, ways that art functions with and against historical narratives, archival collections, images, and imaginaries . . . Taken together, the essays model what I see as the brilliant ambitions and achievements of the book: to see art as a site to produce these frictions, that epistemological disobedience that we have seen cited, as well as catalyze new relationships to history to reimagine it anew.”

Lindsay Caplan
Assistant Professor of History of Art and Architecture

“As broadly captured in the pages of The Imagined New and in his monumental efforts at the Simmons Center for Slavery and Justice, and indeed, from the path he has followed since I knew him as a high school student in Kingston Jamaica, Tony Bogues is intimately concerned with the history, lived experiences, and prospective futures of the peoples of the African Diaspora. However, while many scholars might concentrate on one or two venues of the Diaspora, Bogues’ vision is truly diaspora-wide, with his interests and research spread across broad swaths, from

Brian Meeks
KIKU LANGFORD MCDONALD



Kingston to Addis Ababa, Johannesburg, Senegal and Barbados, and of course the sterling work of the Simmons Center in Rhode Island itself.

A second feature of his work is its exemplary interdisciplinarity. Tony starts out as a political theorist, but next thing you know he is hosting African film festivals; and then soon after, he is curating art exhibits; and I should mention that beyond this volume, and to drive home my point, there’s an accompanying one soon forthcoming on the Black Sonic Arts.”

Brian Meeks
Professor of Africana Studies

ARCHIVES OF SLAVERY AND JUSTICE:
A RESEARCH UPDATE

May 7, 2024

For several years I have worked in local archives, exploring questions about the free and enslaved laborers who built Brown University and Providence. This work draws on multiple sources, but is grounded in the Brown Family Business Records, housed at the John Carter Brown Library. During an in-person session in May, I updated attendees on what I've found and how I found it.

The project seeks to build on previous research by examining the memory, language and historiography of slavery and unfreedom connected to the founding and early days of Brown University. The core of the work is deep archival research, scanning the same records but from a different perspective. By centering laborers, relationships and material culture, I hope to demonstrate the importance of sharing new stories and of identifying names, networks and shifting identities in the archival record.

Archival research can be a solitary pursuit, so getting this work out to the Brown community has provided me with great conversations and feedback, both during the talk and



Traci Picard shares her archival research findings.
KIKU LANGFORD MCDONALD

in the months afterwards. It also marked a shift from mostly gathering information to beginning to produce a report, tentatively called *Company Property: Re-examining the Archives of Slavery and the Building of Brown University*.

Traci Picard '23 A.M.
Senior Research Associate

KIKU LANGFORD MCDONALD



Public Humanities
Projects

Entwined: Freedom, Sovereignty, and the Sea exhibition visitors view
Wall on Whalers, A Portrait of Amos Haskins, 2023 by Felandus Thames.
RYTHUM VINOBN

At the Simmons Center

ART AND THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE: THE WORKS OF MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

March 1–December 11, 2024

The exhibition *Art and the Freedom Struggle: The Works of Mumia Abu-Jamal* curated by Melaine Ferdinand-King, PhD Candidate in Africana Studies, offers a poignant exploration of artistic expression within the confines of incarceration. Inspired by Abu-Jamal’s archives and essay “Art & Incarceration,” the exhibit showcases how creativity persists as a vital means of self-expression and social commentary amidst the challenges of the carceral state.

Abu-Jamal, known internationally as a political prisoner, uses his artistic mediums—including painting, drawing, poetry, and music—to bridge the gap between the “inside” and “outside” worlds. His works reflect a profound commitment to themes such as abolition, Black liberation, and community-building. The exhibition and activation space encourages viewers to reflect on Abu-Jamal’s story in relation to the ongoing struggle for freedom and justice.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalog, featuring an exclusive 2024 essay by Mumia Abu-Jamal, written and recorded by Abu-Jamal for the exhibition. An original music video for Abu-Jamal’s composition, “Panther Walk” is also available online, arranged by Marcus Grant, Ph.D. candidate in Musicology & Ethnomusicology.



Marcus Grant and exhibition opening visitors watch the premiere of “Panther Walk,” lyrics and music by Mumia Abu-Jamal, 2011; arranged by Marcus Grant.
RYTHUM VINOBN

The Simmons Center has supported the curator in hosting private tours to international and student visitors and in organizing three events:

1. The Art and the Freedom Struggle Community Discussion & Mixer (May 23, 2024) at AS220 in downtown Providence featuring speakers:
 - Mumia Abu-Jamal, exhibition artist, scholar, and political prisoner
 - Ashanti Alston, former member of the Black Panther Party
 - Jesse LaTonya Andrews, Black and Pink
 - Jay Lew, AS220 Youth Music Coordinator
 - Melonie Perez, Direct Action for Rights and Equality
 - Brandon Robinson, STOP TORTURE RI
2. A Commencement Forum Workshop: On Mumia Abu-Jamal, Art, Incarceration, and Creating Activation Spaces with Melaine Ferdinand-King at the John Hay Library (May 25th, 2024)
3. Voices from the Movement: A Radical Theater and Black August Workshop with Jericho Boston & Jihad Abdulmu-mit at Rites and Reason Theatre (August 24th, 2024).

Melaine Ferdinand-King ’25 Ph.D.

Curator



Curator Melaine Ferdinand-King ’25 Ph.D. gives remarks at the exhibition opening.
RYTHUM VINOBN

SYMBOLIC GARDEN OF THE ENSLAVED

As the first winter that the student caretaker team had to face, Fall 2023 was a period of learning and planning. We used our most prolific grower, comfrey, to mulch the plants that would overwinter with a lot of success. Sadly, our African Blue Basil did not survive the winter, but we were able to use the wood it grew as mulch later in the season. Seed collection was also a new activity within the garden as the plants held their final summer blooms and began to feel the fall weather. As the garden was put to bed, students also limewashed the garden wall together on a cool fall afternoon.

In the Spring, the garden caretaking team hosted an amulet workshop for students, faculty, and community members. During this workshop—inspired by Sonya Clark’s Beaded Prayers Project—participants inscribed their personal wishes onto pieces of paper that were wrapped with fabric and ribbons and adorned with beads, creating amulets that would later be hung in the garden. Just like the other elements of the garden, these amulets were inspired by African tradition, adding on to the myriad of African culture and experience represented in the garden.

Some of the summer 2024 Caretaker team for the Symbolic Garden of the Enslaved. L to R: Kiku Langford McDonald, Amelia Holl ’25, Liz Flores ’27, Sophia Gumbs (NAISI Program Manager), and Kevin Carter ’25.
KIKU LANGFORD MCDONALD



During a summer rich with sunlight and timely rain events, the garden flourished with the help of the caretaking team, who rejuvenated it by cultivating both new and pre-existing plants and elements. Sticks, twine, and burlap were used to assemble bunny cages around small plants and the flower terrace, fresh sand was spread around the magnolia tree, stones were scattered along the walking path descending from the steps, and a raised bed was constructed to hold African daisies and hibiscus. In addition, NAISI Program Manager Sophia Gumbs and the caretaker team tended to a plot in the UEL garden that included edible plants, like green onion, tomato, and collard greens.

Another project that took off during the summer is the Symbolic Garden of the Enslaved website. Over the past year, the garden caretakers worked on profiles for the plants and elements that have been featured in the garden since its inception, detailing their histories and uses as well as how to take care of them and where they are located in the garden. Now, the caretaker team is building a website where these profiles can be displayed to the public, allowing people to take a deeper dive into the garden’s lore.

Kevin Carter ’25

Symbolic Garden of the Enslaved Caretaker

Allyssa Foster ’25

Symbolic Garden of the Enslaved Coordinator and Caretaker

Global Curatorial Project

UNFINISHED CONVERSATIONS AND TERANGA PRAXIS OF CARE AND REPAIR IN SENEGAL

With its long history of global connections, Senegambia is an extraordinary laboratory to explore and reflect on the ways in which slavery and colonization shaped the modern world. The “Unfinished Conversations” were designed to collect relevant data to engage with that history difficult history in support of the exhibition *In Slavery’s Wake* in ways that were more attentive to the past and present lived experiences and memories of the formerly enslaved and colonized. One critical methodological obstacle was to break the social wall of “public secret” and silencing that impose complex forms of forgetting/unforgetting for public history approaches where the setting, the comfort, the knowledge and the power of the narrator were showcased. This method inspired by *teranga* praxis of care and repair guided *The Unfinished Conversations Series* in Senegal that targeted mainly two communities in northern Senegal: the colonial city of Saint Louis and its suburbs and; the historical village of Orkadiéré, that is the seat of the Endam Bilaly organization composed of formerly enslaved Halpulaar communities spread across, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Guinée and the Gambia.

During those “Unfinished Conversations,” we collected untold stories on religion and spirituality, landscape transformations, socioeconomic changes, and, struggles for freedom and equality in the context of expanding French colonial rule in the 19th and 20th centuries. These changes resulted in massive population movements that were in part unleashed by the false promises of freedom and economic prosperity in French colonial cities like Saint Louis. Paradoxically though, the insecurity caused by colonial wars and African resistances and; the creation of “freedom villages” by the French colonial authorities ultimately created important labor reserves for the nascent cash crop peanut economy and for the French military.

Stories collected revealed family separations, physical abuse, and humiliations which testify to the dehumanization of the black body that was not merely physical but was also symbolic and insidiously inscribed in the realms of thought, culture, food, language, etc. The economics of slavery and of freedom were embedded in the intimate genealogies and biographies of people which highlights stories of capture,



Portrait of Marème Diarra, by Akonga (Chérif Tahir Diop), 2023.
PHOTO BY NMAAHC

purchase, sale, resale and uses and, abuses of the human body close to anthropophagy. Stories collected show the complex coping mechanisms of enslaved descendants’ communities to cure, care and protect their members against colonial inequalities, racial discrimination and, injustice to maintain its unity, cohesion and stability. They highlight, for instance, how a small self-proclaimed abolitionist Protestant Church in Khor in Saint Louis du Senegal founded in 1905 was able, with the support of colonial authorities, to sponsor the delivery of certificates of liberty to enslaved fugitives in exchange against religious freedom and the payment of a tithe. The manipulation of the black body through religion and practices of authorization and subjection were constantly resisted which occasioned exclusion from the protestant lands. Many uprooted landless enslaved descendants were nevertheless able to rebuild their lives conquering insalubrious lands that they rendered fertile for agriculture and gardening to ultimately become the main supplier of the colony of Saint Louis with vegetables and fruits. It is only in 1995 that the Protestant church conceded the parcels of land to the descendant community that occupied them.

There are also stories of redemption and survival in the present. The Endam Bilali, a transnational Association of enslaved descendants from Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, Guinée and Gambia was founded in the early 2000 to bring together *maccube* (slaves). Members are united as a community by the *Makari* which is played out as a musical anthem that reconnects people and places through common experience and; challenges past and present political geographies that remain unsettled and unfixed.

The highlight of *The Unfinished Conversation Series* in Senegal also included bringing back into life through a portrait, Marème Diarra originally from Mali but who became Marème Ndiaye through Senegalese *teranga* praxis of care granting her full Senegalese citizenship.

Dr. Ibrahima Thiaw

Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire (IFAN) of the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar, Senegal

IN SLAVERY’S WAKE: MAKING BLACK FREEDOM IN THE WORLD

How have slavery and colonialism shaped our world? What are practices and global legacies of Black freedom-making? These are some of the many questions explored in the traveling exhibition *In Slavery’s Wake: Making Black Freedom in the World*. A dynamic mix of history, art, and media, *In Slavery’s Wake* makes connections between Black freedom-makers across time and invites visitors into a global conversation on the continued impacts of slavery and colonialism. This multilingual experience features over 100 objects, 250 images, and 10 multi-media interactives and films. Alongside historic artifacts are the works and perspectives of international contemporary artists, bridging art and history. The exhibition also features voices and stories from descendant communities interviewed as a part of a new oral history archive called *The Unfinished Conversations Series*.

Co-convened by the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice at Brown University and the Center for the Study of Global Slavery at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, *In Slavery’s Wake* grew out of a decade-long collaboration between

Detail of *Universe of Freedom Making*, Daniel Minter, 2024



curators, scholars, and community members. In 2014, the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice invited key staff from several world museums to address the topics of public history, racial slavery, and colonialism. Over several years, more museums entered the network and began to imagine this exhibition.

Collaboratively curated and constructed to travel from 2025–2028 to partner institutions in Belgium, Brazil, England, Senegal, and South Africa, the exhibition will traverse to four continents reaching hundreds of thousands of visitors globally, and even more online. *In Slavery’s Wake*—and the partnership at its heart—provides an innovative model of how museums and research institutions can employ public history to catalyze international conversations, connect the past with our present, and uplift histories centering Black voices.

Johanna Obenda A.M. ’19

Curatorial Specialist at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC)



Unidentified Woman or Women
Ancestral Memorial, Coney Island
1995
silver and photographic gelatin on photographic paper
COLLECTION OF THE SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE, © CHESTER HIGGINS, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED



Rhode Island State Anti-slavery Society collection box, ca. 1836
BROWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS



Flag of the Early Haitian Republic, ca. early 19th century
SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE



Global Curatorial Project members in Dakar, Senegal, 2019
KATE MCMAHON

BROWN’S SIMMONS CENTER CO-ORGANIZES MAJOR SMITHSONIAN EXHIBITION ON GLOBAL LEGACIES OF SLAVERY

A decade-long global research initiative led by Brown University’s Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice has culminated in a new, major Smithsonian Institution exhibition at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington.

Co-organized by the Simmons Center and the museum’s Center for the Study of Global Slavery, “In Slavery’s Wake: Making Black Freedom in the World,” approaches the history of slavery and colonialism from an international perspective, rather than the more traditional local or national lens, and it centers the voices of those affected, according to Simmons Center Director Anthony Bogues.

“It’s clear that racial slavery was not a local or regional phenomenon but a global historical process that was the foundational grounds for the making of the modern world,” Bogues said. “It’s imperative that we consider the implications of that, as they still live with us today.”

The exhibition opened in December and will remain on view through June 8, 2025, after which it will reach audiences worldwide as it travels to museums in Belgium, Brazil, England, Senegal and South Africa.

A team of curators and educators from around the world contributed to the Brown-led “Unfinished Conversations” oral history project.
IMAGINE PHOTOGRAPHY DC / HEAVEN BROWN



“‘In Slavery’s Wake’ is such an impressive achievement—of collaborative process as much as the stunning exhibit itself,” said Brown Professor of History Karin Wulf, director of the John Carter Brown Library, which contributed artifacts to the exhibition.

The exhibition was developed over many years with continuous input and collaboration from the Global Curatorial Project, an international network of nearly two dozen public history scholars, curators and educators that was catalyzed during a conference Bogues led at Brown in 2014.

“Brown has been an incredibly rich resource of knowledge for this project,” said Paul Gardullo, director of the Center for the Study of Global Slavery at the National Museum of African American History and Culture. “The model set by the Simmons Center [is one] of incredible ethical partnership and collaborative spirit with our global curatorial partners.”

In addition to hundreds of artifacts, images and artworks, the exhibition debuts a new collection of nearly 150 oral histories documenting the impact of global slavery and colonialism, collected through the Simmons Center-led “Unfinished Conversations” historical archival project.

Excerpts from the filmed oral histories, which will be digitally archived and housed at Brown’s John Hay Library, are incorporated throughout the exhibition and in its 225-page catalog, published by Smithsonian Books.

“I think ‘Unfinished Conversations’ is the most important part of this project,” Gardullo said. “When you’re trying to tell

a new story about slavery and colonialism that privileges the people and the lives of those who were enslaved or colonized, you need to create new archives that centralize those stories.”

Working closely with local curators and guides in eight countries on four continents, Bogues and fellow members of the Global Curatorial Project conducted the oral history interviews over several years, with grant support from the Abrams Foundation and the Wyncote Foundation. Interview questions focused on themes related to the topics of “how slavery shaped this place” and “why it still matters here,” yielding deeply personal stories and reflections related to resistance, resilience and memory.

“Now we have archived voices that have never been heard before, speaking to the way this past has shaped our present, and people speaking to their visions for the future,” Gardullo said. “I think it’s going to inspire people to give voices to their own memories and visions.”

While the full “Unfinished Conversations” collection will be archived digitally at Brown, each curatorial partner and the interviewees will retain their full archive of interviews for their own use, according to Bogues.

“There’s historical significance for the work we’ve done, both at the level of non-extractive curation that foregrounds the voices of the colonized and enslaved, and for the study of slavery itself,” said Bogues, who is a professor of humanities and of Africana studies at Brown.

The Simmons Center worked with a freelance director and editor and a team of Brown undergraduate and graduate students to develop an hour-long “Unfinished Conversations” documentary film, which includes interviews with the global curators and excerpts from the oral history interviews. Bogues expects it to be screened on the Brown campus during the Spring 2025 semester.

Brown University President Christina H. Paxson called the debut of “In Slavery’s Wake” a powerful testament to the importance and value of the humanities.

“The endeavors of the Simmons Center team and its global partners to unearth buried histories bring to the forefront new insights on not just the past, but pressing questions facing the world today,” Paxson said. “And what better way to share those findings with the greater public than a compelling exhibition at the Smithsonian that promises to educate and inspire many thousands of visitors from across the nation and the world?”

Artifacts from Brown’s library collections enhance exhibition

In addition to the oral histories collected by the Simmons Center, four artifacts from the collections of the Brown University Library and the John Carter Brown Library, an independent research library on Brown’s campus, are included in “In Slavery’s Wake,” in a section called “Abolition in Action.”

One of the featured artifacts is an 1836 collections box that belonged to a member of the Rhode Island Anti-Slavery Society. The funds collected in the wooden box were used to distribute anti-slavery literature, fund the abolitionist newspaper The Liberator and assist enslaved people attempting to escape to Canada. Also from the University’s collection is an 1881 certificate, filed on behalf of an enslaved woman named Marcelina, to request freedom from the Cuban government.

The John Carter Brown Library’s contributions to the exhibition are two books: “The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave,” published in 1831, and a book written in 1802 by French historian Cousin d’Avallon that recounts the life of Toussaint Louverture, a general who led Haitian rebels to secure freedom from slavery and gain independence.

Among the other artifacts on display are cowrie shells excavated in Rio de Janeiro, which may have been carried by people who were forced to travel the Middle Passage across the Atlantic Ocean; an early flag from the Republic of Haiti, which was established after enslaved people overthrew French rule; and a “face vessel” that may have been made by an enslaved potter named Tahro, who was brought to the U.S. on an illegal slave ship in 1858.



The exhibition will remain on view through June 8, 2025, after which it will reach audiences worldwide as it travels to museums in Belgium, Brazil, England, Senegal and South Africa.
IMAGINE PHOTOGRAPHY DC / HEAVEN BROWN

The historical items are complemented by more contemporary artifacts, as well as artwork commissioned for the exhibition.

Brown University alumna Johanna Obenda, who received a master’s degree in public humanities from Brown in 2019, is a former Simmons Center graduate fellow who now works for the Smithsonian’s Center for the Study of Global Slavery. Obenda, one of multiple public humanities graduate students who worked on the project over the years, served as primary exhibition developer and wrote many of its wall texts.

“It was Johanna Obenda’s job to take the ideas from every part of the world, listen to the conversations that we had about what should or should not be going into the exhibition, and then think that through with others at the museum to determine what the exhibition should look like,” Bogues said.

Bogues noted that there is a strong link between the exhibition and Brown’s groundbreaking 2006 Slavery and Justice Report, which came after then-Brown University President Ruth J. Simmons appointed a committee to study the University’s historical ties to the transatlantic slave trade. The University’s Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, which has a public humanities mission, was established in 2012 as a direct recommendation of the report. In 2023, it was renamed in honor of Simmons.

“The way in which the Slavery and Justice Report was constructed reflected a certain kind of democratic ethos on

“In Slavery’s Wake” features historical items and more contemporary artifacts, as well as artwork commissioned for the exhibition.

IMAGINE PHOTOGRAPHY DC / HEAVEN BROWN



Brown’s campus—it involved staff, students, faculty members and some members of the administration,” Bogues said. “At the Simmons Center, we have always tried to follow that type of model, with discussion and collaboration in everything that we do. We were able to catalyze this exhibition and the Global Curatorial Project because of that commitment.”

Simmons, who ended her tenure at Brown in 2012, said during the exhibition’s opening at the Smithsonian that she has followed the development of “In Slavery’s Wake” since its inception. She praised the ingenuity and persistence that propelled it from a seed that was planted at the conference on Brown’s campus 10 years ago, when Bogues convened a group to discuss opportunities to advance and improve the way scholars and educators tell the story of slavery today. That initial effort led to an innovative, sweeping exhibition that will travel the world, she marveled.

“It’s somewhat overwhelming to imagine that a very small effort, it seemed at the time, could have such far-reaching effects,” said Simmons, Brown’s president emerita and a former member of the National Museum of African American History and Culture’s National Council. “That is in large part because of the persistence, the intelligence and the capacity of the people involved to reach across and involve others in the project. It’s been extraordinary to see how this has developed.”

Jenna Pelletier

Senior Communications Manager and Writer, Brown Office of University Communications

UNFINISHED CONVERSATIONS

The Unfinished Conversations Series is an oral history, archival, and curatorial project that documents and shares community memories of how the legacies of slavery and colonialism continue to impact people’s lives today. Providing a platform for people to speak for themselves and tell their own histories is at the heart of Unfinished Conversations. With the support of Abrams Foundation and the Wyncote Foundation, *The Unfinished Conversations Series* has recorded over 200 hours of oral history interviews with the communities most impacted by the legacies of racial slavery and colonialism.

With contributions from people across four continents, this global collection challenges mainstream narratives that seek to whitewash the history of colonialism, racial slavery, and empire building and conventions of whose stories should be told and preserved. Led by the Simmons Center, the project is jointly organized with Global Curatorial Project (GCP) partners and their communities. Since 2021, partners have video recorded communities’ stories in Saint-Louis and Fouta, Senegal; Liverpool, United Kingdom; Africatown, United States of America; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Cape Town and the Groot Constantia Wine Estate, South Africa; neighborhoods surrounding Brussels, Belgium; Kinshasa and the Kimbanguist Church, Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Kingston and Charles Town Maroons, Jamaica.

Since its founding, the GCP network has shared a commitment to uplifting lesser-known community histories that speak to the lived experiences of enslaved and descendant communities, and challenge official state narratives. The stories of regular people, told in their own voice, have been largely absent in contemporary exhibitions on slavery. Conversations with communities in Liverpool and Senegal directly shaped *The Unfinished Conversations Series*. Community members were clear that they wanted to tell their histories themselves, despite the trauma associated with some of these stories. During a preparatory field visit in 2019, a community member in Senegal stated that documenting these stories requires talking to communities directly and “not to make history in their place.” A Senegalese leader of a prominent organization of descendants of slavery advised that the resharing of these histories was important, noting, “History is made up of things that give pleasure and other things that are painful.” Community members shared their hopes that these narratives presented through public-facing

projects like the In Slavery’s Wake exhibition and archive at Brown University will help to make them more widely known and begin the process of eroding continually perpetuated false histories.

Individuals shared the community histories they felt were the most important. The cadences of storytelling—a pregnant pause; a searching for words; a shared, knowing laugh between interviewer and interviewee—create an intimacy between speaker and viewer that begins to shift the current understanding of racial slavery and colonialism. The interviewees’ candor allow a listener to begin to understand the human suffering caused by these violent and extractive systems, without scholarly or administrative jargon to mask these experiences.

Words are insufficient to express our immense gratitude to the communities that welcomed GCP members into their homes, neighborhoods, places of worship, and workplaces. In a world that continues to be so deeply shaped by the stratum and hierarchies created by colonialism and racial slavery, we do not take lightly the courage it took to share these personal, and often painful, histories. As the title of this initiative suggests, the work remains unfinished. We hope that the sharing of these stories through the archive at the John Hay Library, the *In Slavery’s Wake* exhibition (opening December 2024 at the National Museum of African American History & Culture, and other platforms will help to further understanding of how the past and present are so closely entwined. We also hope that we have succeeded in making small steps toward acknowledging this history as it really was.

Shana Weinberg

Associate Director, Public Humanities Programs



Photograph of Roderick Sauls and Shanaaz Gallant. 2022. Global Curatorial Collection, 2014–2024 (Ms-2022-010, Series: South Africa, Folder: Iziko Project 2022 PHOTOS). John Hay Library, Brown University.

MASALA FILM WORKS

Reimagining New England Histories

REFLECTING BACK & RIPPLING
ONWARD: REIMAGINING NEW
ENGLAND HISTORIES, 2021–2025

During the late-summer heat of 2020, in the midst of COVID and the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, the Mellon Foundation created a new Just Futures grant line to fund “visionary, unconventional, experimental, and groundbreaking projects in order to address the long-existing fault lines of racism, inequality, and injustice that tear at the fabric of democracy and civil society.” Brown University, among other higher-ed institutions, was invited to propose projects with institutional partners. Awards would be few (10 nationwide) but large (up to \$5 million) and competition would be intense.

Tony Bogues and Shana Weinberg at the Simmons Center quickly reached out to us at Mystic Seaport Museum and to colleagues at Williams College. The grant appeared a golden opportunity to draw upon existing relationships and build on early conversations about partnering on summer institutes, internships, and exhibits. The application process proved daunting. We needed to work collaboratively and remotely under pandemic restrictions, with new institutional partners, each in a different state and within its own organizational structure; a large Ivy League university (Brown); a small liberal arts college (Williams); a maritime museum (Mystic Seaport Museum); and a semester-long undergraduate program (Williams-Mystic Coastal and Ocean Studies Program). We had less than five weeks to craft a shared vision, compose a multi-year budget, create a compelling proposal, and complete all the paperwork.

Joining Tony and Shana in the long hours of zooming, writing, re-writing, and imagining the project were Tom Van Winkle and Sofia Zepeda (Williams-Mystic), Christine DeLucia (Williams College), Paul O’Pecko and myself (Mystic Seaport Museum), with extensive support and shepherding by our colleagues in grants management, finance, and sponsored projects. It takes a large and talented team to secure and steward a grant of this size and complexity.

Together we crafted the outline for an ambitious and novel project that drew together many threads. Our proposal for “Re-Imagining New England Histories: The Sea, Sovereignty, and Freedom” focused on African, African-descended, and

Indigenous experiences as distinct but also intertwined, applied a maritime lens, and centered on the geographic area of the Dawnland (New England).

Once the grant was awarded in January 2021, figuring how to organize the effort was the first task. Tony and Shana at the Simmons Center drew on their deep experience to lead a small joint administrative committee to steer the work, consisting of the project co-directors from each partner institution. Soon, it became clear that the disparate project activities could develop concurrently through focused committees of community leaders, activists, scholars, and knowledge-keepers from Black and Indigenous communities as well as staff from the institutions. Committees organized on Publications, Exhibition, and Community Outreach, as well as a separate K–12 Education Committee, not funded by Mellon but such an important element that the Simmons Center covered the costs. During the first two years of the grant, we also held monthly Research Cluster zooms, sharing project-related scholarship within and across the partner institutions. The tangible “products” include a major gallery exhibit and companion basketry display, several publications, additional signage, African and Three Sisters gardens, and four collaboratively created K–12 curriculum units. The intangible results reside in those engaged with the project as committee members, fellows, interns, staff, students, visitors, and readers.

Perhaps the most intense, gratifying, and memorable RNEH activities were the annual “Gatherings” of institutional and community partners that drew us all together for conversation, learning, and sharing. The first was online during the pandemic, then successive ones were at Mystic Seaport Museum, a significant site in local Indigenous history and memory, across the river from the site of the 1637 Pequot massacre. Committee members shared updates, gained feedback, worked through critical questions regarding forward movement, and built community over meals catered by local Black and Indigenous chefs and caterers. Each day started with West African or Dawnland drumming and sometimes dancing and included time to reflect, walk along the river, or tour related exhibits between sessions. Additional support from Brown’s Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative helped cover costs outside the Mellon grant.

Organizing all the work between the Gatherings happened through emails, newsletters, bi-monthly administrative group Zooms, regular check-in conversations, questionnaires, and shared documents. Shana Weinberg led the staff, fellows, and student-workers at the Simmons Center who kept us all in touch and updated.

That isn't to say that the voyage was smooth, particularly the first year of the RNEH project. Due to the tight submission timeline, we were unable to reach out to tribal nations and Black community organizations while preparing the Mellon proposal. But only after Mellon announced the award publicly in January 2021 were we able to begin discussing the project with the very people whose stories and experiences the project was designed to "reimagine." As a result, some organizations, tribes, and people refused to participate. Others were wary, but willing to engage, so we slowly began the process of working with, listening to, and building trust among our Black and Indigenous community partners.

The project has been a four-year journey to balance the organic and the individual with the institutional and

organizational, moving forward at a pace to achieve set goals while also "moving at the speed of respect." Often this meant pausing at a critical stage for reflection, additional conversation, and consultation. Sometimes it required shifting goals to meet community needs. Occasionally it meant taking a far different voyage than originally envisioned. And always, it resulted in richer, deeper, and stronger relationships than any of us could have imagined.

As we enter the final year of the project, nearly all the project "deliverables" have been completed and shared. But the relationships, conversations, and practices continue. Looking back, we can report to Mellon how we've achieved the Just Futures goals "to support fundamental and applied humanities exploration, in a manner that requires new forms of intellectual partnerships that are based in deeply reciprocal modes of collaboration, with the goal of shaping the future through the generation of bold new perspectives and imaginatively developed new knowledge." May the ripples continue to flow outward as we do the necessary work in the years ahead.

Elysa Engelman

Director of Research and Scholarship at Mystic Seaport Museum

The Exhibition Committee, exhibit designers SmokeSygnals, curators and artists celebrating the opening of the *Entwined* exhibit at Mystic Seaport Museum in April 2024.

RYTHUM VINOBN



ENTWINED: FREEDOM, SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE SEA EXHIBITION

The exhibition *Entwined: Freedom, Sovereignty, and the Sea* was conceived of as the culmination of the Reimagining New England Histories (RNEH) project. The larger RNEH project challenges the notion of New England as a place of freedom and justice. It highlights that freedom and justice for some was built on the backs of Dawnland (New England) Indigenous peoples and African-descended peoples. "New England" was created by means of colonialism, racialized slavery, and dispossession of Indigenous lands. Before work on the exhibition began, I sat in a (Zoom) room with Indigenous (from different Dawnland tribal nations) and Black Exhibitions Committee members and said, "What is our maritime story and how do we want to tell it?" In that first conversation, it was clear that while we all recognize that colonialism, slavery, and dispossession have fragmented our communities and our histories, that colonialism, slavery, and dispossession is not the sum of our history. Our history is

so much more than what has happened to us in the last 500 years. It is a maritime story that is at least 12,000 years old. Our maritime story is one of cycles of time, our ancestors, and of creation. It is a maritime history of skills, knowledges, and survival. It is a maritime story that continues through the present. It was collaboration with Black communities and Indigenous tribal nations that created the story told through our exhibition. It is the result of Mystic Seaport Museum ceding authoritative voice in the exhibition and telling the stories the way the community sees fit—and validating those stories. It represents all of us who do the work to make our fragmented histories, communities, and nations whole. And although *Entwined* was intended to be the culmination of the project, the work continues...in honor of our ancestors.

Akeia de Barros Gomes

Simmons Center Adjunct Lecturer in Slavery and Justice
2024–Present

Director, Newport Center for Black History, Newport Historical Society, 2024–Present

Simmons Center Visiting Scholar, 2021–Present

William E. Cook Vice President of the American Institute for Maritime Studies at Mystic Seaport Museum, 2023–2024

Curator of Maritime Social History at Mystic Seaport Museum, 2021–2023

Community members touch the muhshoon (Pequot)/aklo (Togolese)/dugout canoe (English) created by Mashantucket Pequot, Mashpee Wampanoag, Ghanaian, and Togolese artists during a 10-day residency.

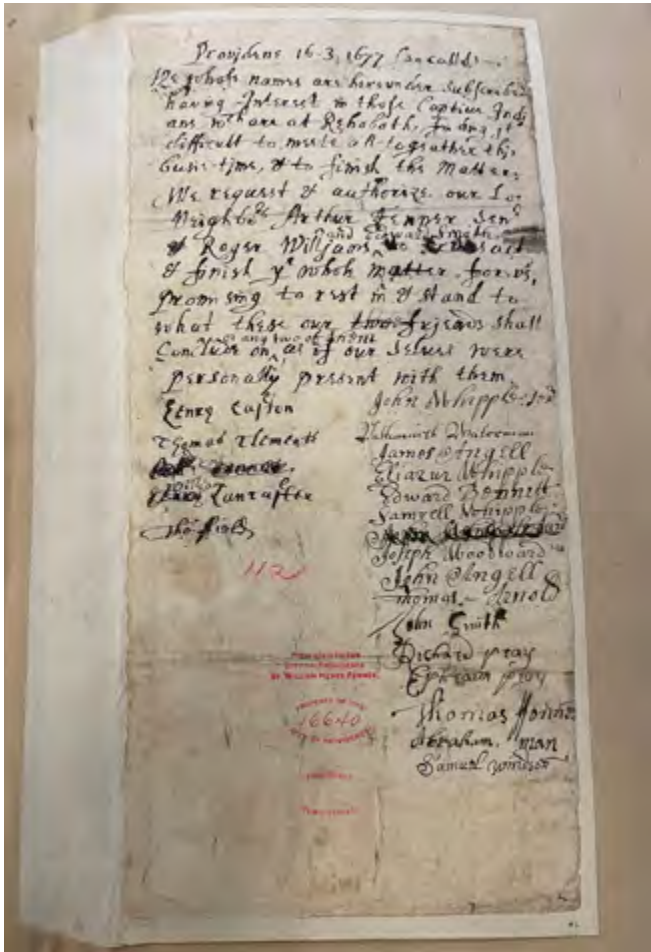
RYTHUM VINOBN



RECLAIMING STORIES: A FELLOW’S JOURNEY IN REIMAGINING NEW ENGLAND HISTORIES

My fellowship at Brown University, as part of the Reimagining New England Histories project, was an incredible experience that deepened my commitment to amplifying the voices of Black and Indigenous communities. Engaging with the history of New England from these perspectives challenged the traditional narratives that have long dominated the discourse, and instead, centered the stories, struggles, and resilience of those often marginalized.

While serving on the Exhibition Committee, I contributed to curating narratives that not only presented historical facts but also evoked current experiences of Black and Indigenous people in New England. This work was about more than just correcting historical records; it was about creating a space



The search for ancestors forced into servitude after King Philip’s War
CHERYLL TONEY HOLLEY

where these communities could see themselves reflected in the historical landscape, reclaiming their stories with dignity and truth.

On the K–12 Curriculum Committee, I worked alongside educators and historians to develop materials that would reshape how young people in New England learn about their region’s past. We aimed to ensure that students could engage with a more complete and honest version of history—one that acknowledges the contributions, cultures, and challenges of Black and Indigenous peoples.

Through the Publication Committee, I worked with scholars to guide the narrative structure and thematic focus of written materials that will continue to educate and inform long after the fellowship has concluded. This work was integral in ensuring that the scholarship produced during this project is community-based, accessible, and impactful to a wider audience than the usual scholarly prints.

Lastly, I was given the precious time to focus on my own research into Black and Nipmuc histories and explore my ancestors’ lives and practices. This opportunity allowed me to explore the stories of my own communities more deeply, contributing to a broader effort to honor and preserve our heritage.

Cheryll Toney Holley

Simmons Center Mellon Visiting Fellow in Slavery and Justice

Hassanamisco Nipmuc



Reclaiming ancestral knowledges
CHERYLL TONEY HOLLEY



Public Engagement & Education

Families and students participating in the Slavery & Legacy Walking Tour during Family Weekend.
RYTHUM VINOBN

CREATING CURRICULA IN COMMUNITY

The Reimagining New England Histories Curriculum Committee (RNEHCC) includes community leaders and educators in and outside of the classroom who champion inclusive educational experiences.

Informed by the Professional Learning Opportunity held for K–12 educators last summer at the Simmons Center, we have spent the past year designing and refining lessons that foreground the experiences and histories of Black and Indigenous persons and communities throughout the Dawnland. These free lessons include everything educators need to teach inclusive and substantive histories.

The RNEHCC worked to make the plans accessible to diverse audiences by providing differentiated materials with student-centered accommodations. Through the support of the Simmons Center, all these resources will be made available on an interactive website where educators can select lessons and materials aligned with their state’s curriculum requirements.

We are excited for the opportunity to share our process, content, values, and website with educators at the National Social Studies Conference in fall 2024. We continue to develop strategies for sharing our lessons and soliciting educator feedback as they incorporate the lessons into their curricula.

Mack Scott

Reimagining New England Histories Project K–12 Curriculum Committee Co-Chair

Sofia Zepeda

Reimagining New England Histories Project K–12 Curriculum Committee Co-Chair

Assistant Professor of Maritime History, Williams-Mystic

Professional Learning Opportunity participants explore Brown’s campus with co-facilitator Lorén Spears.

CHRISTEN MAKRAM



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITY REFLECTION

It is my responsibility as a teacher to always impart the truth to my students. However, with limited or nonexistent resources, how can I convey the truth? My drive to find answers drove me to search. For me, it was more than simply a question, it was and still is a matter of learning for justice. It was then that I had the great fortune to read about the Reimagining New England Histories: Professional Learning Opportunity in the Tomaquag Museum’s newsletter, in the summer of 2023. My participation in the PLO has definitely expanded my understanding of the unique and crucial contributions made by the Indigenous People. We were given access to powerful resources and the chance to learn how to acknowledge Native People’s lands, as well as time to examine, assess, revise, and develop lessons that take into account and highlight the historical and ongoing contributions of Native People, encouraging us to include such concepts in our curriculum not only during Native American Heritage Month but all year long. Throughout the 23/24 academic year, I participated in the Reimagining New England Histories Curriculum Committee. Working with other amazing colleagues,

we refined five lessons covering important topics that can be appropriately presented to upper elementary through high school students. Unquestionably, these enlightening opportunities provided the necessary information and knowledge to impart the truth to all students. I believe that now is the moment to rewrite history, not just in New England but across the country. This is the appeal for a better education in truth to build the next generation of civic leaders.

Patricia Santos

Professional Learning Opportunity Participant

4th Grade General Bilingual Teacher (Portuguese/English strand) at the International Charter School, Pawtucket, RI



Dr. Mack Scott leads educators in an activity interrogating the legacy of place and memory making on Brown’s campus.

SOFIA ZEPEDA





A Symbolic Slave Garden

In small spaces beside their cabins and barn on the plantation, along marginalized hillside, in swamps, gullies and forests, and in outdoor sanctuaries created to honor their dead and contemplate that exonerated, enslaved Africans and their descendants throughout the American "wild" back their own time and labor in matches of the night, on Sundays or "holidays," to plant garden accompanying wild assemblage, both designed by Prof. Gett Augustus, draw on that history to render imaginatively a small part of what the slaves knew and struggle, and what they might have thought as they created new landscapes against all odds. It is a work of rigorous justice and contemplation. The garden has four key elements: a stone cosmogram, a stone bench of contemplation, a bottle tree, and a grassy flowered terrace.

Dikenga dia Kongo

A Kongo cosmogram in stone, placed in spring with Native American herbs and regional "wild" flowers. In the Dikenga, two moments of the journey of life are symbolically depicted by the larger stones around its circumference: Birth (black stone), Physical Prime (red stone), Death (white stone), and Spiritual Prime (yellow stone). Two, a traditional Kongo cross inscribed within the Dikenga, is made up of a horizontal line of water-worn stones depicting Kalunga - the sea dividing the worlds of the living and the dead - and Makoko, a vertical line.

Stone Bench of Contemplation

A resting place to think about life, in slavery and in freedom, and all the earth's living things, waded through local grasses and dandelions.

Bottle Tree in Swept Dirt Circle

Maguolia tree transformed into a traditional African American root art form which draws on several older West African beaded systems.

Grassy Terrace Beside Walkway

Local African American and Native American flowers thought in multiplicity for protection, food, medicinal use and beauty. They are planted in the broken containers and grounds, and along simple trellises, that would have been available to the enslaved and the indigenous population.

Students, Fellows
& Staff

Postdoctoral Fellows Leonora Masini '22 Ph.D., Latoya M. Teague, and Alycia Hall.
KIKU LANGFORD MCDONALD

Graduating Student Reflections



“Working with the Simmons Center helped me develop my skills in archiving and deepen my understanding in practicing ethical care and policies for materials from marginalized communities. *The Unfinished Conversations Series* is significant in its scope and meaning, and it pushes for more collaborative and less extractive methods of preserving cultural heritage.”

Dan Everton '24 A.M.

Unfinished Conversations Graduate Archivist



“I first heard about the Center after attending one of the *Slavery and Legacy Walking Tours* during my sophomore year. My time working as a garden caretaker not only taught me more about plants native to Rhode Island and their connection to the legacy of slavery—working at the Center also helped me to bridge connections between my own racial identity and my educational interests.”

Helena Evans '24

Caretaker for the Symbolic Garden of the Enslaved



“Working on *The Unfinished Conversations Series* this past year has allowed me to not only contribute my perspective to a vital public humanities project, but has also re-shaped the manner in which I personally understand our histories, both told and untold. I hope the widening of perspective I’ve personally experienced in engaging with previously unhighlighted experiences and insights in the wake of the transatlantic slave trade will, through the exhibit and documentary, influence others in a similarly profound manner, so as to hopefully spark a material reckoning with these histories.”

Gustav Hall '24

Unfinished Conversations Researcher



“Through and within this reading group, I collaborated with and met some of the scholars and activists I admire most—exploring theory as practice, in community. Only in the Carceral State Reading Group could I have built up the foundational political knowledge that I did—about political prisoners (from Mumia Abu-Jamal to Martin Sostre) and what it means to free them all. Now that I work in the civil rights world, I know that my experience at the Simmons Center formed the best possible building blocks for the justice work I’m excited to continue.”

Sarah Ogundare '24

Carceral State Reading Group Co-Facilitator

New Public Humanities Students

The Simmons Center is happy to welcome our first cohort of Public Humanities Master’s students who joined in fall 2024.



FLORENCE BLACKWELL

Florence Blackwell was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA. She earned a BA in Art History and a BFA in Photography from the University of Colorado Denver. She was an active member on campus, where she had the opportunity to work in various student-serving offices. Upon graduation, she was a curatorial intern at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, where she gained direct experience collaborating with artists and nonprofit organizations, furthering her interests in archival research, exhibition production, and rectifying the representation gaps in visual culture. In 2022, she co-founded an art collective, serving as Curator, which offered complimentary professional development and access for historically underrepresented Colorado artists to showcase and sell their works at different venues and nonprofit spaces, including the American Civil Liberties Union in Denver. Blackwell plans to integrate her eclectic professional experiences in her practice as a curator, scholar, and eventually, a university professor.



CLAIRE INOUE ROTHSTEIN

Claire holds a B.A. in psychology from Oberlin College, where she worked on the relationship between social media and decision making. A master’s student in the Public Humanities program with an Integrative Studies emphasis, she is particularly interested in exploring non-profit and policy applications for scholarship.



CHRISTINA YOUNG

Christina Young (she/they) is a painter and arts worker whose creative practice weaves together visual artwork production, scholarly study, and public engagement. An incoming M.A., Public Humanities student, she holds a B.A. in Art Practice from UC Berkeley, where she developed her studio practice alongside studies in Modern and Contemporary Art History, Feminist Cultural Studies, and Post-colonial/Post-modernist theory. With a rich background working in Bay Area arts organizations including Headlands Center for the Arts, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and the Oakland Museum of California, she is committed to engaging the arts as a vehicle for individual empowerment, cultural pluralism, and social justice.

At Brown, Christina will study aesthetics and methods of production at the intersection of queer and mixed ethnicity identities within art history and curatorial practice. In this program, she seeks to shape approaches to art history and public engagement that are deeply cross-disciplinary, with a justice focus that centers decolonial frameworks for research and presentation.



RAY ZHANG

Ray Zhang received his B.A. in history with a minor in museum studies and peace and conflict studies from Colgate University in 2024, examining the significance of public history and collective memory in exhibition spaces. He was particularly interested in researching the historical development of the Underground Railroad and the abolitionist movement in the Upstate New York region. Examining international slavery history in London and working on his thesis at British archives in 2023, Ray is interested in exploring the global impact of racial inequality from different perspectives. He is currently completing his master in public humanities at Brown and working as a fellow at the Simmons Center for the first year.

New Simmons Center Staff



SABINA GRIFFIN

Center Manager

Sabina Griffin is an Armenian American who grew up in Azerbaijan and Russia before immigrating to Boston as a teenager. Sabina received a B.S. in Communications from Boston University, with a concentration in Film and Television writing. She joined Brown University as a staff member of the Physics Department in 2008. For the last 9 years, Sabina served as the Center Manager at the John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities and Cultural Heritage where she supported public engagement initiatives, engaged scholarship and managed the Public Humanities Master’s program. Her interests include cultural heritage and preservation, public history, human rights and social justice, and she is excited to join the Ruth J. Simmons Center to support its crucial public engagement work, academic programs, and research on the history of racial slavery. Sabina lives in Providence with her husband and two children. In her free time, she enjoys writing, watching movies, cooking and exploring cultural heritage through food, and traveling.



REINA THOMAS

Manager of Public Education Outreach and Initiatives

Reina Thomas (she/her) has now called Providence home for 10 years, having moved here from Columbus, Ohio to pursue certification to teach in public school systems from Brown University. At Brown she earned a Master of Arts in Teaching in Secondary Education (Social Studies/History) after graduating from Kenyon College with a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies, concentrating in Africana and Education Studies. Her interests include curriculum design, examining inequalities within school systems, the study of Black and Indigenous history in the US, Christianity and Theology, and an expanding interest in art history.

Prior to becoming the Simmons Center’s Manager of Public Education Outreach and Initiatives, Reina taught Middle and High School History and English at Milton Academy and the Wheeler School for the past 9 years. In addition to teaching, Reina has been an active member in organizations such as Sista Fire, the Providence Rugby Football Club, and several youth education programs, including Movement Education Outdoors (MEO).

In her free time, she enjoys finding cozy spots in the city to read, reflect, and write, often while planning her next concert, play, or art exhibit to attend.



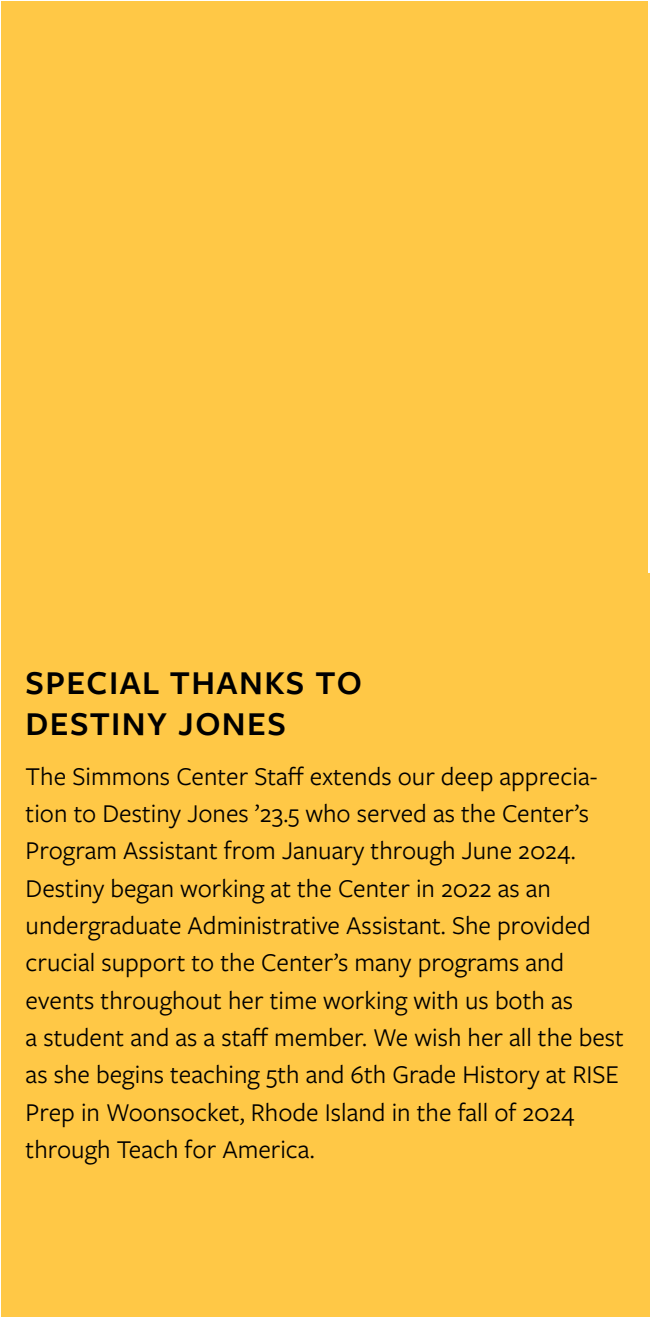
NATASHA ROSARIO DECHAMBEAU

Administrative and Financial Coordinator

Natasha is local to Providence and was raised in a bright Caribbean family, the middle of five kids. A web of many non-profit programs supported her and her family in her youth. Programs like CityArts! and Community MusicWorks were second homes for her. Natasha received an A.B. in Visual Arts from Brown University in 2016. A creative of multiple media, Natasha earned an M.A. in Cello Performance from URI in 2023.

She seeks the full integration of her creative interests and her desire to be part of a space that values the humanity of each person. Organizations like AppleHill Center for Chamber Music, Sphinx Performance Academy and Cellísimo inspired her to nurture this part of herself within the world of classical music.

As a student and employee of Community MusicWorks, Natasha used music as a tool for social justice. She was attracted to the vibrant research and ongoing initiatives featuring the intersectionality of race and social justice within the Simmons Center.

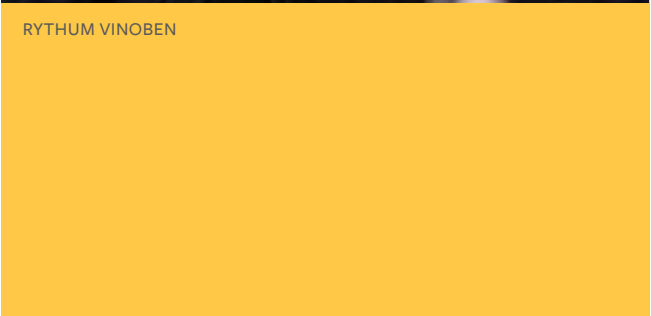


**SPECIAL THANKS TO
DESTINY JONES**

The Simmons Center Staff extends our deep appreciation to Destiny Jones '23,5 who served as the Center's Program Assistant from January through June 2024. Destiny began working at the Center in 2022 as an undergraduate Administrative Assistant. She provided crucial support to the Center's many programs and events throughout her time working with us both as a student and as a staff member. We wish her all the best as she begins teaching 5th and 6th Grade History at RISE Prep in Woonsocket, Rhode Island in the fall of 2024 through Teach for America.



RYTHUM VINOBE



Postdoctoral Fellow Reflections

RECLAIMING TRUTH OVER THE COLONIAL GAZE

“Understanding what is hidden in plain sight”. It is from this statement that I want to introduce the two-day workshop Cinema and Slavery that I organized with the help of the Simmons Center managers, coordinators, and the Center’s director in the Fall semester, 2023. Seven scholars working in Universities in North America, Brazil, and Europe convened for a reflection on images and power, colonial gazes, and how we can address and deconstruct these narratives with our students. I wish to express gratitude to all the colleagues and the Simmons Center’s community. After the workshop, the collaboration evolved into an edited volume project. The workshop was critical for my course *How We Remember: Collective Memories of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and Colonialism in Contemporary Nonfiction Cinema*. I want to conclude by thanking the students for their questions and insights. Thanks to the exchange with the students, the theoretical work undertaken over the past years has acquired full meaning.

Leonora Masini '22 Ph.D.

Postdoctoral Research Associate in Slavery and the Public Humanities



CULTIVATING DREAMS

Since starting, I have grown tremendously as a postdoc here in the Simmons Center. The networking opportunities with other slavery and justice scholars, the timely feedback on the book manuscript, and planning the Freedom Literacy workshop have offered real-world training that has stretched my capacity for university leadership and the professoriate. Last year, I wrote two peer-reviewed articles that were accepted for publication and I received the Princeton Supporting Diverse Voices Fellowship to write and submit my book manuscript to Princeton University Press. While here at Brown, many of my colleagues have been invested in my learning and development. They have gone the extra mile to see to it that I will be successful in the next stages of my journey. I am grateful for the time, the resources, and the connections that have been cultivated here.

Latoya M. Teague

Simmons Center/Watson Institute Joint Historical Injustice and Democracy Postdoctoral Research Associate



A JOURNEY BACK TO DIASPORIC
BLACK RADICALISM

My time as the ACLS Emerging Voices Postdoctoral Fellow was deeply transformative. I am immensely grateful for the bonds of intellectual camaraderie that I formed with both colleagues and students. Professor Bogues pushed my thinking in ways that have forever enhanced my research, guiding me back to a transnational interrogation of the Black Radical Tradition. Playing pick-up basketball with Dr. Scott and making origami with Kiku were fun diversions and cherished memories. My students were as brilliant as any that I’ve had the privilege of learning with.

Gabriel Regalado
ACLS Emerging Voices Postdoctoral Research Associate



SEARCHING FOR SLAVERY AND
MARRONAGE AT THE SIMMONS
CENTER AND JOHN CARTER
BROWN LIBRARY

I am deeply grateful for my time at the Ruth J. Simmons Center and the John Carter Brown Library. Throughout the past year, I have had the privilege of collaborating with exceptionally inspiring and supportive faculty, staff, and fellows who have significantly enriched my research. Engaging with an interdisciplinary cohort of colleagues, I enjoyed fruitful discussions that offered fresh perspectives on my project and led me onto unexpected research paths. Conversations with geographers, linguists, and political scientists provided invaluable insights into interpreting my sources and framing my project.

Notably, I engaged in extensive dialogues with the Simmons Center/Watson Institute Joint Fellow and my office mate on topics ranging from research methodologies to navigating the academic job market. These conversations have strengthened both my scholarly endeavors and my commitment to academia. Over the course of the year, I workshoped a chapter of my dissertation and delivered my Fellows’ Talk. The feedback I received continues to inform my manuscript editing, tentatively titled “Strategic Ties: Family, Land, and Plantation Connections in Maroon Jamaica.” Additionally, my postdoctoral fellowship provided the time and resources to attend multiple conferences in the Northeast and access academic talks and seminars covering diverse subjects from Atlantic slavery to incarceration.

Overall, my experience at the Center and Library has been pivotal in advancing my research and scholarly growth, for which I am exceptionally grateful.

Alycia Hall
*Simmons Center/JCB Joint Postdoctoral Research Associate in
Slavery and Justice*



New Fellows



CHRISTOPHER BALDWIN
*Simmons Center/JCB Joint Postdoctoral
Research Associate in Slavery and Justice*

Christopher Baldwin is a historian studying the intersections of war, law, and enslavement in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. His research explores trans-imperial regimes of maritime law that enforced racial slavery and policed Black and Indigenous mobilities in the early modern Caribbean. Before coming to Brown, he defended his PhD at the University of Toronto in August 2023 before taking up a year-long fellowship at the Library Company of Philadelphia. He is currently working on his book manuscript, tentatively entitled *An Empire of Plunder: Conquest and Enslavement in the British Caribbean, 1700–1770*, that demonstrates the centrality of maritime warfare in the trans-Atlantic and inter-colonial slave trades. These investigations highlight the geopolitical dexterity of people of African and Indigenous descent by reconstructing the strategies they developed to navigate a seascape of enslavement. They also foreground bondspeople’s ceaseless efforts to forge and re-forge communities amid the upheaval of colonial warfare and the dislocation of Atlantic slavery.



ZOË CLARK
Slavery & Finance Graduate Proctor

Zoë is a third-year Ph.D. candidate studying political theory in the Political Science department at Brown. Her work is broadly concerned with the history of capitalism, technology, and the “machine question”; political theories of alienation, domination, and control; utopianism; socialist feminism and social reproduction theory; and theories of race, colonialism and empire. She received her M.A. in Political Science from Brown in 2024. Prior to Brown, she received her B.A. in political science with honors from San Francisco State University. She is also the recipient of the Matthew F. Stolz Scholarship in Political Theory (2020), the Stolz Prize for Best Political Theory Paper (2021), and the P. Terrence Hopmann Award for Excellence in Teaching (2023).



YANNICK ETOUNDI

Interdisciplinary Graduate Fellow

Yannick Etoundi is a doctoral student at the Department of the History of Art and Architecture and an Interdisciplinary Graduate Fellow at the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice. His main area of focus is on the colonial built environments of the African continent and the African diaspora, with a special emphasis on racial slavery, abolitionism, and the French colonial empire. His dissertation explores how the abolition of slavery and colonial emancipation reconfigured the built environments of the Vieilles colonies (Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane, Reunion) after 1848 to serve France's second imperial project of the later nineteenth century. He holds a doctoral certificate in Collaborative Humanities from the Cogut Institute for the Humanities (Brown University), an M.Arch and a B.Arch from the Université Libre de Bruxelles and a BSocSc in International Studies and Modern Languages from the University of Ottawa. He also has professional experience in architectural firms based in Yukon, Canada, and Tokyo, Japan.



ARLIN HILL

Race, Slavery, Colonialism and Capitalism Graduate Fellow

Arlin Hill is currently pursuing his PhD in Brown University's Department of Africana Studies. Prior to Brown, Arlin earned his B.A. from The University of Chicago as well as his M.S. from the University of Southern California. At bottom, Arlin's research pursues a conception of (gendered) racial capitalism that extends beyond the surface area determined by the axes of race and class to the volume of imperial forms determined by additional planes established by the material and symbolic expression of intersecting axes of power. Moreover, his work seeks to do so not only economic, but also social, cultural, and political angles.



Acknowledgements

Kevin Carter '25, Student Caretaker of the Symbolic Garden of the Enslaved, plants lettuce under the magnolia tree.
BROWN UNIVERSITY/NICK DENTAMARO

In Memoriam: Lundy Braun

PROFESSOR LUNDY BRAUN’S LEGACY: RETHINKING RACE, MEDICINE, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Professor Lundy Braun’s passing is a profound loss to academia and to all who strive for a just and equitable healthcare system. Professor Braun was a visionary in the fight against racial inequities in medicine, challenging the long-held assumption that biological differences justified the use of race in medical practice and research. Her groundbreaking work reminded us that race, as applied in medicine, is a social construct rather than a biological fact. Professor Braun’s compelling advocacy urged medical professionals to rethink and ultimately eliminate race-based adjustments that perpetuate health disparities.

As the founder of the Race, Medicine, and Social Justice Cohort, Professor Braun brought together scholars and physicians to examine and dismantle the structures of racism embedded in healthcare. I am deeply honored to have been a part of this cohort, where we engaged in meaningful discussions and sought interventions that challenge institutional biases. Moving forward without her feels daunting, yet her legacy inspires us to continue our shared mission.

Her seminal book, *Breathing Race into the Machine*, traces the troubling history of racial bias in medical instrumentation, beginning with the spirometer in the antebellum South. Professor Braun highlighted how devices like these, adjusted by race, have long enforced discriminatory beliefs, falsely ascribing physiological differences to marginalized populations. This work exposes the dangers of using race as a biological variable, underscoring the imperative for researchers to address and dismantle these biases.



My 2022 Bloom from Lundy
TANEISHA WILSON

Professor Braun’s contributions extend beyond her research; she taught us that racism, not race, is the true determinant of health disparities. To add to the beauty she shared with the world each year, Professor Braun grew radiant amaryllis blooms for many of us, reminding us of her thoughtful spirit. In this simple act, she connected with friends and loved ones, spreading brightness and warmth. As we carry her memory forward, we commit to pursuing her vision: a healthcare system where all individuals receive care free from racial prejudice and injustice.

Taneisha Wilson, MD, ScM

Race, Medicine, and Social Justice Research Cluster Faculty Fellow
Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine
Attending Physician, Brown University Health
Director, Clinical Research, Brown Emergency Medicine

CARRYING ON PROFESSOR BRAUN’S LEGACY

I had the good fortune of working closely with Professor Braun over the past 6 years. She was not only a fierce supporter of my research, but was also invested in my personal well-being and success. It was Professor Braun’s research that first allowed me to envision myself at Brown. Upon my arrival, she welcomed me into the Brown community and, over the years, began to treat me as if I were her intellectual equal rather than her mentee. Her legacy is one that I plan to continue to honor in my own work.

When I applied to Ph.D. programs, Brown was my first choice due to Professor Braun’s research. Her work intrigued me because she challenged the status quo in biomedicine, and I felt connected to and inspired by her before we officially met. I was eager to understand how racism, not race, contributed to health disparities, and her research seemed like a perfect fit. My first meeting with Professor Braun was confirmation that I was in the right place—we spoke for more than an hour, and she invited me to join the Race, Medicine, and Social Justice research cluster, which marked the start of our mentor-mentee relationship.

Lundy Braun, Taneisha Wilson, Dannie Ritchie, and Eric T. Jones at the 2023 Commencement Forum “Health, Racial Inequities, and Power in American Medicine.”

RYTHUM VINOGEN



My first teaching assistant (TA) assignment was for Professor Braun’s “Health Inequality in Historical Perspective” course. This course helped me understand how and why history contextualizes the poor health outcomes of oppressed populations. Professor Braun shared her approach to pedagogy and course design with me, requested my input on syllabus revisions, and entrusted me to lead class discussions. These moments were formative because she expressed a genuine interest in my perspective and made me feel like I was one of her intellectual peers. Professor Braun’s guidance as her TA enabled me to hone my voice and contributions to the research cluster.

Her contributions to Brown and Africana Studies were invaluable. Professor Braun’s research embodied what it meant to be interdisciplinary and challenged dominant modes of knowledge production. She charted a path for graduate students like me who want to understand how slavery, colonialism, and Jim Crow shape patterns of disease. In the Race, Medicine, and Social Justice research cluster, Professor Braun created a brain trust who share their expertise and highlight how racism has contributed to health disparities, past and present. She will be missed but not forgotten because her legacy will live on in the students she mentored. I will make sure of it.

Eric Jones

Ph.D. Candidate in Africana Studies
Member of the Race, Medicine, and Social Justice Research Cluster

Gratitude to All Our Supporters

The work of the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice would not be possible without the support of the Office of the President, the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, and the Office of the Dean of the College. Thank you to all the dedicated individuals on the President's Advisory Council on the Simmons Center and the Faculty Advisory Board who continue to provide guidance for our work.

The Simmons Center would like to sincerely thank our major donors for their support:

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We also wish to thank the Friends of the Center for all of their work since the beginning. Each year the work of the Center broadens and deepens. Each contribution sustains our work. A special thanks to Elise Kirk and Erin Wells Design for providing graphic design support to the Center, to Rythum Vinoben for his exceptional photography, and to Ben Kaplan, our exhibition installer. Finally, we would like to especially thank Nelson Ramos, Danny Lapati, and Robert Farizer, the Center's caretakers and groundskeeper, for creating the clean and beautiful spaces in which we can do this work.

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