

The Black experience at Brown is both unique and a common set of experiences that don't begin with Inman Page, the first Brown graduate of color but, with the enslaved and free men of color, named and unnamed who helped build the University edifice, now known as University Hall. Could these people image Brown University today with Black students, faculty, administrators and a former president?

Assimilation and integration may have been the goals of the university at one time but, they were always challenged by even the earliest Black graduates who went on to use their, talents, knowledge and training to lead historically black colleges and universities, head university departments and distinguish themselves.

Black students at Brown are both common and unique. The University had to learn and understand this. Sometimes the students and the university didn't agree or understand each other. Authentic corrections and connections are ever evolving in this world-class university that not only integrates or expects assimilation but embraces and values diversity.

This exhibition, *Black Experiences at Brown: a visual narrative* attempts to capture the essences of the varied and layered Black experiences at Brown. It is hoped that visitors will be sparked by aspects of the exhibition to learn more by using the exhibit's interactive tools, Guide by Cell-where visitors can hear more about "The Presidents" or hear first hand accounts of student activism and the QR Codes-that lead visitors to web links of in-depth articles, panel discussions and other information. The student journals are meant to be handled and enjoyed.

Archivist extraordinaire and collaborator, Renee Elizabeth Neely '12 worked tirelessly mining images and historically accurate information. Imaginative exhibition designer, Erin Wells always remained open and creative. Installer and musician, Benjamin Kaplan made sure our ideas and design were beautifully realized. Thank you to the Inman Page Council and Harold and Bernicestine Bailey whose exhibition proposal, knowledge and determination made *Black Experiences at Brown* a realization. The Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice, Anthony Bogues, Director, is the perfect home. For making sure all of the parts came together a special thank you to: Shana Weinberg, CSSJ; Diagneris Garcia, Department of Africana Studies; Alonzo Jones, Department of Africana Studies/Rites and Reason Theatre.

Karen Allen Baxter, *Exhibition Curator*
Managing Director, Department of Africana Studies/
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BROWN BLACK EXPERIENCES AT



BROWN

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



an exhibition
Opening October 24th, 2014

Renee Neely, *Archivist*
Erin Wells, *Erin Wells Design*
Benjamin Kaplan, *Installer*
Karen Allen Baxter, *Curator*

The title is the words of Inman Page in his June 1877 commencement oration at Brown University. He and George Milford were the first two black graduates of Brown University. Page was born a slave and his self-fashioning through education was a sign of the times for the many thousands former enslaved African Americans who were emancipated in the 1860s. We know that after Brown, Inman Page went on to become the first president of Colored Agricultural and Normal University in Oklahoma as well as a leader for many other educational institutions. For the newly freed slave, education was the chance to turn emancipation into a form of freedom. This is often the untold story of the emergence of the public education system in America. Inman Page became an educator of great repute and his presence at Brown opened doors for a few. But we should recall that there were slaves who built some of the university's buildings and that the first president, James Manning lived on campus with a slave, Lewis Manning. It was not until the mid-20th century that the doors were forcibly pushed open when the Civil Rights and the Black Power Movements pushed for greater black presence and Black Studies at American universities. So, the story of Black presence at Brown is not one of smooth unfolding progress, indeed, no history for the struggles of equality is. At the end of his extraordinary text, *Black Reconstruction*, W.E.B. DuBois notes that the fight for full equality of the African American in American society was, "the last great battle of the West." This exhibition, *Black Experiences at Brown: a visual narrative*, illustrates the black presence at Brown and how that presence helped shape the university. It is an unfinished story of presence, one which allows us to remember the past and its achievements but, also to pause and recall the conditions of the, "living present." Thus it is a fitting opening exhibition for the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice.

The CSSJ would like to thank all who worked on this exhibition, particularly the curator, Karen Allen Baxter; the archivist, Renee Neely; all of the members of the Inman Page Council especially, Harold and Bernicestine Bailey, who came to us with this proposal and we worked together via many conference calls with Karen McLaurin-Chesson, Leland McGee, Paul Garrett, Sheryl Brisset-Chapman and Darwyn Parker Harris, as well as the installer Benjamin Kaplan. This could not have been done without the financial contributions of the 250th Anniversary Committee and especially the support of Eve Ornstedt, Executive Director of the 250th Anniversary, PAUR; and Marisa Quinn, Vice President, Public Affairs and University Relations.

Anthony Bogues

Director of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice

Research conducted in the early 1980s of Brown records, revealed in its first 200 years "student of color" was virtually synonymous with "African-American student" and fewer than 100 African-American students graduated from Brown. As a result, in 1964 amid the bicentennial celebration of the grand mosaic of Brown history, 'of color' participants in general and 'African-American' participants in particular were generally absent from both the celebration and the mosaic. For, despite the inclusion of Fritz Pollard's athletic leadership as an integral part of Brown lore for nearly 50 years, starkly missing from that lore was common knowledge that:

- Inman Page, one of Brown's first two African-American undergraduates was so talented that he was elected Class Orator by his classmates in 1877
- Five of the first twenty or so African-American graduates from Brown went on to become college presidents
- Ethel T. Robinson '05 was Brown's first black woman graduate and went on to help found the nation's first black sorority
- Samuel Nabritt, PhD '32, Brown's first black PhD recipient, became the first black named to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (now the Nuclear Regulatory Commission)
- J. Saunders Redding '28 became the first black professor to teach in the Ivy League in 1949 (on a visiting basis for one semester at Brown)
- Wallace Terry '59, the first black editor-in-chief of an Ivy League newspaper, went on to become the first black news magazine reporter (for *Time*) in 1963.

Until 1964, the University had never had a Corporation member, full time faculty, Dean, Senior Executive, Alumni Association officer or Rhodes Scholar who was African-American. Since that time, African-Americans at Brown have included: dozens of Corporation members, dozens of full time faculty members, three Brown Alumni Association Presidents and several other elected officers, three Rhodes Scholars, several Deans, and several Senior Executives including the Ivy League's only African-American President.

The way that happened and the impact it has had on the University is one of the most compelling evolving odysseys in Brown history and higher education.

This exhibit contains is an initial representation of that odyssey. Its timeline is intended to be digitized as a dynamic framework available to the Brown and education communities, which can be continually refined and expanded over time.

Harold Bailey '70