

# HERstory



Works by Jessica Hill

on view May 3 – October 31, 2018

**Brown University**

**Gallery at the Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice**

94 Waterman Street, Providence, Rhode Island

right

*Land of the  
Free and the  
Home of the  
Slaughtered*  
2018

Woodcut on  
fabric  
65x46 in.



cover

*Hunting  
Down White  
Supremacy*  
2017

Mixed Media  
24x24 in.

For centuries the sale and enslavement of men and women of African descent fueled a global economy. The system of racial slavery relied upon ideas of racial difference that regulated social norms, and conceptions of humanity and beauty. The continued dominance of whiteness formed during this social system continues to devalue Black life and dehumanize men and women of African descent. As well, Black women's experiences are often left out of histories of slavery; their contributions at the forefront of social movements forgotten.



*Black  
Madonna  
and Child*  
2016  
Woodcut Relief  
18x24 in.

The work of 2018 Heimark Artist in Residence Jessica Hill examines the resilience of black womanhood today. Her pieces explore the ways in which racial slavery created ideas about race and racial difference that continue to divide our society. Her work references folktales created through the middle passage and the communities which enslaved people formed in the New World. She creates intricate and beautiful patterns, drawing from African symbols and design as well as the African American quilting tradition. Using iconic references and images of slavery and resistance such as the whip, the plantation, chains, and raised fists she visualizes the ways in which Black women have always fought various forms of incarceration, seeking freedom for themselves and future generations. By asking the viewer to reimagine familiar symbols, the work of Jess Hill seeks to erode historical constructs which continue to dominate American society.

## Artist's Statement

My art explores the resilience of black womanhood and depicts her dream of overcoming many levels of incarceration.

I am a Southern Black Woman. I am affected by the remnants of slavery, and the inequities suffered for being a woman, living in an "imperialist white-supremacist-capitalist-patriarchal world" (a term coined by Bell Hooks).

For the sake of profit, slavery dissolved many unions; turning whites against blacks, Mulattos against dark-skinned Blacks, kinky-hair people against straighter-hair people, and even males against females. The media still accentuates these differences and divisions, and now many people throughout the world worship the white concept of beauty, and the preeminence of masculinity. These flawed concepts devalue, demoralize, and dehumanize people of African descent.

Many of us look for differences. Then we shame others for being different. We are distracted by the illusion of being separate and better than others.

Since we have no control over which race or sex we were born into, can we relinquish the false religion of superiority, and search for things that unify the human race? Can we appreciate our different cultures, genders, races, and religions, realizing that our different perspectives strengthen us?

My art analyzes African folklore, quilted patterns, and symbolisms. Historical and current social issues also influenced my work. My art promotes the love of self-identity, by portraying all humans as beings of value. My goal is to change our thinking from individuality to global similarity - seeing "me" in "them," and "them" in "me."



*Color Me Blind  
and Call Me Deaf*

2017

Brown paper bag  
and newspaper

18x45 in.

*African Mask  
Study #1  
2017  
Woodcut  
on fabric  
24x24 in.*



*Cultural Pattern Study (Africa) #1  
2017  
Woodcut on fabric  
24x24 in.*



*Dem  
Cotton Trees  
2017  
Woodcut  
on fabric  
24x24 in.*

*Cultural Pattern Study (Native) #1  
2017  
Woodcut on fabric  
24x24 in.*





## About Jessica Hill

Jessica Hill is the 2018 Heimark Artist in Residence. She recently received her BFA in Printmaking with a minor in Art History at the University of West Georgia. She is a recipient of the 2017 Emerging Artist Residency at Atlanta Printmaker's Studio. Her work focuses on how we view others through the prism of race and gender/sex. It explores and celebrates the differences among the human race. Other themes that appear in her work are class, religion and different cultural patterns. She uses woodcut, screen printing, painting and mixed media methods to create her art. Her ultimate goal is to dismantle the barriers that keep human beings believing that we are separate from one another.



## About the Heimark Artist in Residence Program

The Heimark Artist in Residence program brings to campus musicians, poets, visual artists, and performers whose work grapples with the legacies of slavery on our world today. Prior recipients of the residency include the Marian Anderson String Quartet, poet Evie Shockley, playwright Jaymes Jorsling and performance artist ChE Ware.

## About the Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice

The Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice (CSSJ) is a scholarly research center with a public humanities mission. Recognizing that racial and chattel slavery were central to the historical formation of the Americas and the modern world, the CSSJ creates a space for the interdisciplinary study of the historical forms of slavery while also examining how these legacies shape our contemporary world. Our renovated 19th century building at 94 Waterman Street includes a gallery exhibition space, the stunning glass wall art piece *Rising to Freedom*, and a symbolic slave garden. For more information, please visit: [brown.edu/slaveryjustice](http://brown.edu/slaveryjustice)



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**SLAVERY**  
& **JUSTICE**