

Engaging the Past through the Present

SLAVERY & LEGACY WALKING TOUR



BROWN

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THE *SLAVERY & LEGACY WALKING TOUR* is now central to the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice's public programs. It explores the history and legacy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as well as Rhode Island's and Brown University's role in this history. While we recognize that this hour-long tour does not and cannot provide the most expansive history, the tour does help to locate pieces of this history that are part of the Brown landscape and the experiences of people of color today. As we walk, a history often hidden is revealed. This is about a work with and through history.

COVER IMAGE (LEFT)

**"Brown University,
Providence, R.I."
(1870).**

COURTESY OF THE BROWN
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

COVER IMAGE (RIGHT)

**Slavery Memorial,
2019 Family Weekend
Walking Tour.**

IMAGE COURTESY OF
RYTHUM VINOBN.

OLIVE STREET

ANGELL STREET

THAYER STREET

BROWN STREET

FONES ALLEY

TUNNEL PORTAL

WATERMAN STREET

PROSPECT STREET

GEORGE STREET



4

PAGE-ROBINSON HALL



5

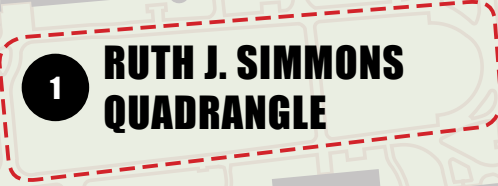
Lippitt House

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SLAVERY & JUSTICE



2

UNIVERSITY HALL



1

RUTH J. SIMMONS QUADRANGLE

SLAVERY MEMORIAL

3

Manning Hall

Faunce House

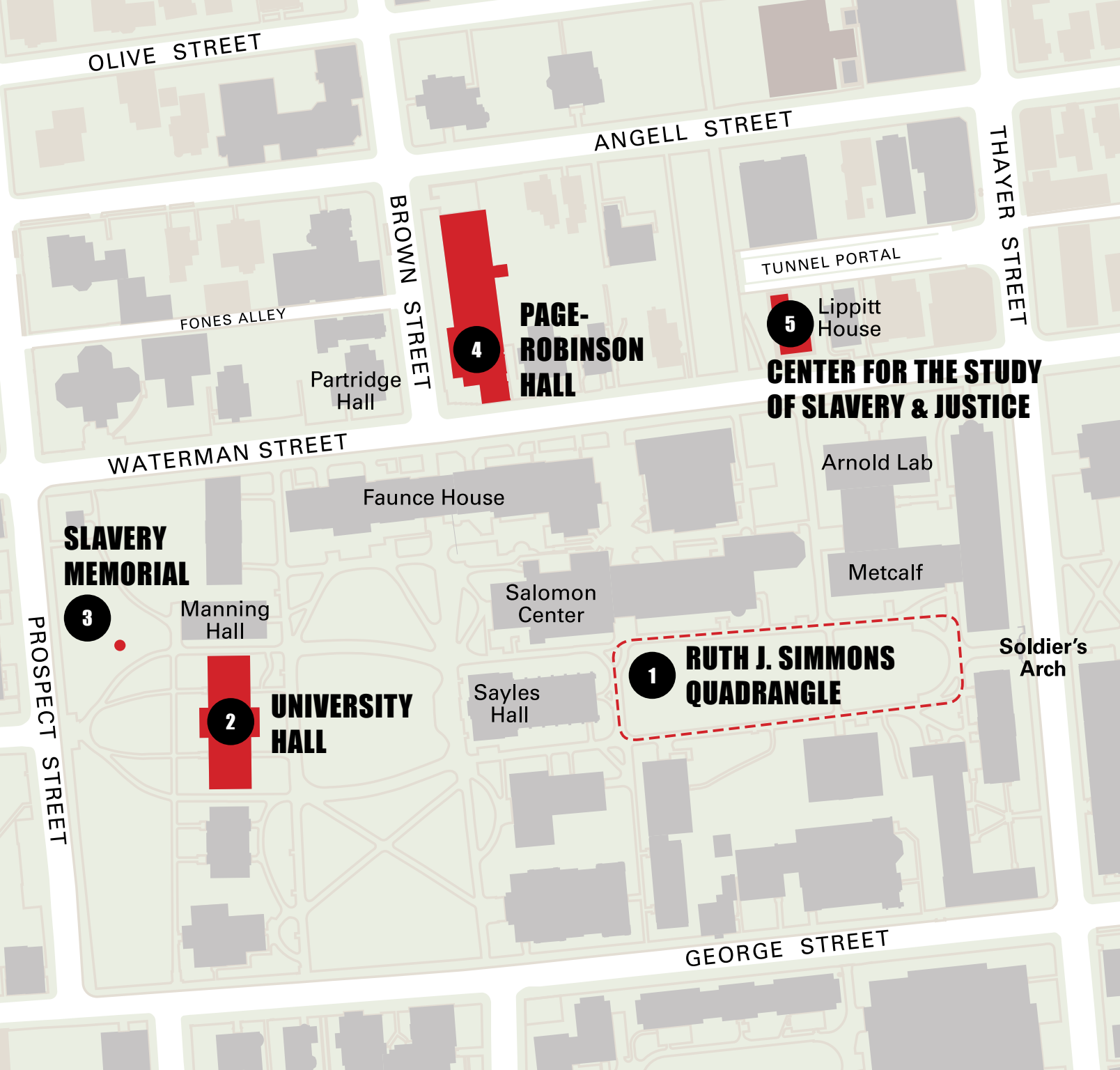
Salomon Center

Arnold Lab

Metcalf

Sayles Hall

Soldier's Arch





On October 9, 2015, students came together in solidarity with Native students at Brown during their staged “die-in” on campus. The protest was organized to pay tribute to the resistance of Indigenous Peoples throughout the Americas. Originally the University recognized the second Monday in October as Columbus Day, and after pushback in 2009 from students and faculty, administrators changed the name on the academic calendar to Fall Weekend, still ignoring Indigenous presence throughout history. However, following this 2015 protest, Brown University officially renamed the Columbus Day holiday to Indigenous People’s Day.

IMAGE COURTESY OF DANIELLE PERELMAN

Entangled Histories

LAND AND LABOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SLAVERY & JUSTICE (CSSJ) would like to acknowledge the Narragansett and Wampanoag Peoples whose traditional lands Brown University resides on. The CSSJ recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as the original stewards of this territory and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and the land. To recognize the land honors the Indigenous People who have been living and working on this territory for centuries before Europeans arrived in the so-called New World. It is important to understand the long history that has brought each of us to reside on this territory, and to seek to understand our place within that history.

We use the year 1492 as our point of departure for thinking about the entangled histories of Indigenous Peoples and Black People who were forcibly removed and brought to this land. Drawing from scholar Sylvia Wynter we note:

“It is clear that the intra-African indigenous to his own territory—the Continent of Africa—entered a market relation of exchange, a relation that would define him as ‘native labor.’... For if he was native in the context of a new economic relation, he also remained native in the sense of being indigenous.... Negated as human, made into a commodity, the Black reinvented himself as human, as native.”

Wynter marks this moment of African enslavement, as one where the African person becomes a new subject and would over time become a new native in the Americas. Using Wynter’s understanding of the entangled legacies of both enslaved Black People and the First Peoples of this land, we question the dominant narrative that tells us that the histories of

Native Peoples and Black folks exist independently of one another. The past and present-day experiences of people Indigenous to this territory, both Black and Native, exist in opposition to the dominant conceptions of colonialism, slavery, race, and their legacies that inform the myth of America, continuously reinforced in our everyday lives. It is our responsibility to treat these histories not as parallel but interconnected.

The United States, the city of Providence and, by extension, Brown University's existence and legacy would not be possible without the genocide, displacement and erasure of Native People and the forced labor of enslaved Black People. We acknowledge, respect, and honor those whose lives allow us to work, live, and learn in present. *We would like to honor the Indigenous voices who have fought for centuries and continue to fight. We would like to acknowledge their continual work to unsettle conversations, injustices and miseducation.* We hold sacred the people whose lives have made this work possible.

Land and labor acknowledgments do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: the afterlives of colonialism and the legacies of racial slavery are current ongoing processes, and this nation needs to build its mindfulness of its present participation in this ongoing historical process.

CONSIDER

What were you told about the “first encounter” between European colonizers and Native Peoples? At what age did you first learn about racial slavery and what were you told?

RUTH J. SIMMONS QUADRANGLE

Dr. Simmons and The Slavery and Justice Report

DR. RUTH J. SIMMONS was the first African American president of any Ivy League Institution, serving as President of Brown University from 2001-2012. President Simmons' call in 2003 for the formation of the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice (SCJC) to investigate Brown University's relationship to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This was the first of its kind by a U.S. institution of higher education. This landmark publication paved the way for other colleges and universities to undertake similar studies. This three-year inquiry culminated in the [Slavery and Justice Report](#), published in 2006. The call for an investigation into the University's ties to the trade was met with mixed response from those both within and beyond the Brown community. The Report made a series of recommendations to the University including the creation of a center (the CSSJ) to continue research around slavery and the slave trade, investing in the recruitment and retention of African-American faculty and students,

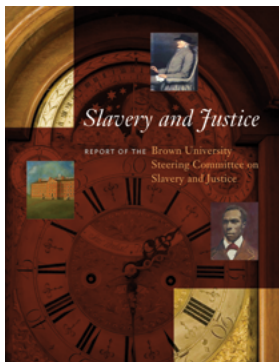


*President Emerita
Ruth J. Simmons, 2015*

Steven Polson

COURTESY OF THE BROWN
UNIVERSITY PORTRAIT
COLLECTION.

the creation of a public memorial, the designation of an annual day of remembrance on the academic calendar, and the deepening of Brown's commitment to Providence Public Schools among others.



“This seems an effort fraught with potential for conflict, embarrassment, and discord. But few issues in U.S. society are so important, and you deserve great credit for taking on this important work. And your efforts – if they are rigorous and critical and comprehensive – could serve as a model for a broader discussion throughout our society of the residue of slavery.”

LETTER TO THE
STEERING COMMITTEE,
APRIL 2004

“You disgust me, as you disgust many other Americans. Slavery was wrong, but at that time it was a legal enterprise. It ended, case closed. You cite slavery’s effects as being the reason that black people are so far behind, but that just illustrates your ignorance. Black people, here and now, are behind because some can’t keep their hands off drugs, or guns, or can’t move forward, can’t get off welfare, can’t do the simple things to improve their life.... They don’t deserve money, they deserve a boot in the backside over and over until they can find their own way.... [so] Can your ignorant research, and can Ruth Simmons, too.”

LETTER TO THE STEERING COMMITTEE, APRIL 2004

The 2006 Report failed to mention the ways in which Brown University benefitted from the forced removal of Wampanoag and Narragansett Peoples. Settler colonialism, and genocide created the context in which slavery occurred. Racial slavery was central to the emergence and growth of the economic system of capitalism. These systems laid the foundation for the United States to establish itself as a slave society—a society where slavery was central to everyday life. The United States could not build an economy from the labor of enslaved people without enacting violence on the Native Peoples of this land. The confrontations between Native Peoples and English colonizers in what is now New England laid the groundwork for our understanding of the ways in which slavery permeated every aspect of society in Rhode Island and early America.

Today it is critical to think about the ways that the University must acknowledge this history as part of its legacy and increase representation of and dedicate greater resources to Black and Native faculty and students. Brown University must take serious conversations and solutions towards reparative justice and begin to reconsider its collecting, particularly of sacred belongings of the Narragansett and Wampanoag Peoples.

CONSIDER

How do we speak for those and with those who continue to be excluded from the conversation of reparative justice? As a first step towards repair, how can the University begin to rectify the theft of sacred Indigenous belongings such as decorative arts, textiles and beadwork that are found in both the University’s museum and its archives which occupy stolen Native land?

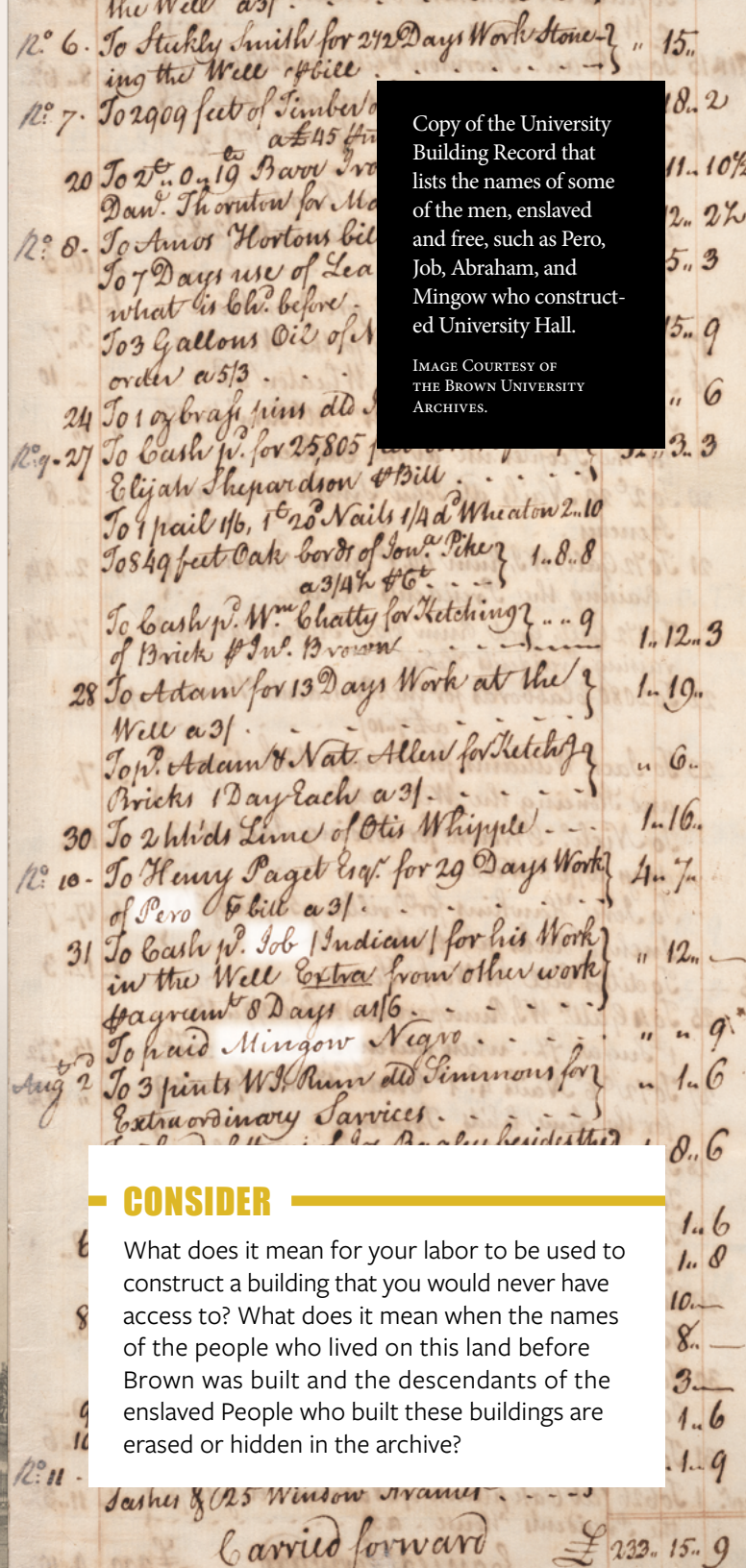
UNIVERSITY HALL

Land, Labor & Historical Erasure

UNIVERSITY HALL is the oldest building on campus, constructed on land belonging to Narragansett and Wampanoag Peoples. There has yet to be a significant undertaking from Brown University concerning the history of its role in Native land dispossession and its part in harming the Native nations of this area. This is in part because of the serious toll that settler-colonialism took on Indigenous nations.

There is documented evidence that enslaved labor was used to build University Hall. The building records list the names of enslaved People such as Pero and Abraham who built University Hall. Job, a Native man, and Mingow, a free African, are also listed in the building records. The permanent exhibition, *Hidden in Plain Sight: American Slavery & The University*, housed within University Hall details both Brown University's and the state of Rhode Island's involvement in the slave trade. This exhibition is part of a larger exhibition curated by the Center in 2016 entitled [Black Mechanics: The Making of an American University and a Nation](#).

To see the [Hidden in Plain Sight catalogue](#) please visit the exhibition's page on the CSSJ website or pick up a copy of the brochure during your stop at University Hall to learn more.



Copy of the University Building Record that lists the names of some of the men, enslaved and free, such as Pero, Job, Abraham, and Mingow who constructed University Hall.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE BROWN UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES.

CONSIDER

What does it mean for your labor to be used to construct a building that you would never have access to? What does it mean when the names of the people who lived on this land before Brown was built and the descendants of the enslaved People who built these buildings are erased or hidden in the archive?



“This memorial recognizes Brown University’s connection to the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the work of Africans and African-Americans, enslaved and free, who helped build our university, Rhode Island, and the nation.”

In 2003 Brown President Ruth J. Simmons initiated a study of this aspect of the university’s history. In the eighteenth century slavery permeated every aspect of social and economic life in Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders dominated the North American share of the African slave trade, launching over a thousand slaving voyages in the century before the abolition of the trade in 1808, and scores of illegal voyages thereafter.

Brown University was a beneficiary of this trade.”

SLAVERY MEMORIAL

A Beneficiary of this Trade

A DIRECT RESULT of the *Slavery and Justice Report*, the Slavery Memorial was designed by African American sculptor Martin Puryear and installed on Brown’s campus in 2014. It is located by University Hall and in front of Manning Hall, a building named after Brown’s first president, James Manning, who brought an enslaved person with him when he arrived in Rhode Island. Today, Manning Hall houses the Haffenreffer Museum which holds an extensive collection of sacred Native and African belongings. While there is a significant collection of Indigenous material culture at Brown, the Pokanoket Nation and as well as other Indigenous tribes are actively demanding their rights to land in University possession. In September 2017, Brown University entered into an [agreement](#) with members of the Pokanoket Nation to transfer a portion of its Bristol property into a preservation trust to ensure the conservation of the land and sustainable access by Native tribes in the region.

The entire economy of Rhode Island was built upon the forced removal of Native People, the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, and the labor of enslaved Black and Native People. A number of the buildings and streets located around campus bear the names of prominent Rhode Islanders who owned enslaved People or were directly involved in the slave trade, among them: *Brown Street; Waterman Street; Hopkins Street; and Admiral Street. Magee Street*, named after William F. Magee, a slave trader, was recently renamed in 2017 to Bannister Street in recognition of two prominent 19th-century local Black activists and artists, Edward and Christiana Bannister. The re-naming of Bannister Street forces us to think about the limitations of changing names to paint a picture of progress without acknowledging the uglier and more complicated legacy of slavery and its legacies that must be grappled with in the present. The creation

of this permanent memorial to recognize Brown University's and Rhode Island's relationship to the trans-Atlantic slave trade was designed to serve as a "living site of memory," inviting reflection and fresh discovery. However, a number of community members have voiced that the plinth's text leaves much unsaid. The plinth and the memorial are focused on the economics of the slave trade and ultimately do not do the work of humanizing those most impacted by the trade.

The plinth makes no note of the Native People who were forcibly removed from their lands and enslaved. It is important to note how this lack of recognition, this lack of naming the violence also enacted on Native People, contributes to the ongoing erasure of Native nations and Peoples that occurs in the present. Multiple high profile products in Rhode Island bear the name of the Narragansett nation, however, profits from these items are not directed to Narragansett Peoples. This co-opting of the Narragansett name obscures the histories and Peoples of the Narragansett nation who still, alongside many other Native nations and People, demand restitution and recognition from Brown University, Rhode Island and the United States.

CONSIDER

These questions were originally asked in the 2006 Report, and are especially relevant: How are we, as members of the Brown Community, as Rhode Islanders, and as citizens and residents of the United States, to make sense of our complex history? How do we reconcile those elements of our past that are gracious and honorable with those that provoke grief and horror? How do we memorialize these histories in the public space?



PAGE-ROBINSON HALL

Black Student Activism on Campus

PAGE-ROBINSON HALL is located on Brown Street, named after the four Brown brothers, Nicholas, John, Moses and Joseph who launched the slave ship *Sally* the same year as the University's founding in 1764. Formerly known as J. Walter Wilson, Page-Robinson Hall was renamed in 2018 in honor of Inman Page, Class of 1877, and Ethel Robinson, Class of 1905. This building's renaming in honor of these two pioneers occurred during the 50th anniversary of the 1968 Black Student Walkout at Brown whose leadership by primarily Black

A delegation of Black students meet with Brown University President Ray L. Hefner, December 1968.

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE BROWN UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

women led to the establishment of the Africana Studies Department and Rites and Reason Theatre, the Brown Center for Students of Color (formerly known as the Third World Center), and the Third World Transition Program for incoming first-year students at Brown.

Inman Page and George Washington Milford were the first two Black students to graduate from Brown University in 1877. Born into slavery in Virginia, Page escaped and survived the American Civil War. Later at Brown, despite a hostile white student populace, he earned the honor of class orator. At his 1877 Commencement address, he presented a speech of such repute that it was covered in the *Providence Journal*. Page dedicated the rest of his life to education and went on to become a distinguished educator and academic administrator, serving as president of four colleges and universities. Novelist Ralph Ellison was among the many pupils Page influenced. The name of the Inman Page Black Alumni Council reflects his continuing legacy. After graduating from Brown with Page, George Washington Milford later received an LL.B. degree from Howard University and became a lawyer in Washington, D.C., even arguing a case in front of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Ethel Robinson was the first Black woman to graduate from Brown, graduating in 1905. Robinson returned to Washington, D.C. to teach English literature at Howard University where she mentored Ethel Hedgeman Lyle in establishing the nation's first Black sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, in 1908. Alpha Kappa Alpha boasts over 300,000 members today.

The University has held up both Page and Robinson, along with the Black Student Walkout of 1968, as seminal icons and moments in the University's history. Today Black students are confronted with their extant legacies on campus in varying ways everyday. The University, and the United States more generally, is quick to draw attention to instances



*Inman
Edward
Page, 1979*
Richard Yarde

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*Ethel
Robinson,
2017*
Jenna Laycraft

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of exemplary Black figures who are very successful against all odds, often in spite of both the anti-Black racism embedded within these prestigious institutions and the nation itself. This obsession with “the first Black...” obscures the virulent racism Black People within the institution have had to resist and masks the ways that Black People within the institution have had to conform to the idea of the “respectable” Black. The Black students who participated in the Walkout name this fact directly in their demands. Here we observe the university obscuring narratives that cannot be reconfigured to fit the story the university tells about itself as a liberal institution. We have a building now named after two Black graduates and not after those formerly enslaved by the Brown family or whose labor was used to build the University.

There is no official acknowledgment of early Native graduates at Brown. Albert L. Anthony was the [first known Native person to graduate from Brown](#) in 1944. This lack of recognition extends even to the existence of living local Native peoples themselves. Again we observe the University erasing histories and peoples whose narratives threaten the story that the University has constructed of itself, its founding, and continued participation in a settler-colonial project.

CONSIDER

What does it mean to be simultaneously seen and unseen? What issues arise with the cultural obsession around representation and recognition: i.e. “the first...”? How are the stories of “the first...” constructed to fit dominant narratives? How do we tell more inclusive and comprehensive histories without idolizing individuals?



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SLAVERY & JUSTICE

A Scholarly Research Center with a Public Humanities Mission

THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SLAVERY & JUSTICE (CSSJ), established in 2012, is a scholarly research center with a public humanities mission. It was established based on recommendations that emerged from the *Slavery and Justice Report*. 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

Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice

IMAGE COURTESY OF PROFESSOR ROB EMLÉN



LEFT

This CSSJ exhibition, *Memory Dishes*, curated by Graduate Fellow Johanna Obenda, explored the cooking practices of African Diasporic women.

IMAGE COURTESY OF RYTHUM VINOBEIN.

Origin of the Slavery and Legacy Walking Tour

At the start of the spring semester in 2016, Vice President of the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity (OIED) Shontay Delaue, connected the Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice (CSSJ) with her daughter's 5th grade teacher who was looking for a way to engage her students with the history of slavery in Rhode Island. During the visit, students explored University Hall, the Slavery Memorial, and the CSSJ. In addition to these stops, students visited the exhibition, *Vestiges of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* at the Hay Library where they viewed a pair of leg shackles on loan to the University from the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, England. This first engagement with students illuminated the need for a permanent tour and gave life to the creation of the *Slavery & Legacy Walking Tour* as we know it today. Today the tour is overwhelmingly requested by K-12 schools, Universities, and community groups who are all seeking to better understand this history.

while also examining how these legacies shape our contemporary world. The Center creates a space for debate, programming, and research working with interns, student workers, and graduate postdoctoral fellows as well as faculty fellows. The Center supports research clusters and projects that address issues pertaining to race and legacies of slavery such as human trafficking, the American criminal justice system, and race, medicine and social justice among others. The Center also partners with faculty, curators, researchers, practitioners, and artists across disciplines to produce and share new scholarship about the ways in which slavery informs our present. The Center supports this work both within and beyond the academy, by engaging with the public through the *Slavery & Legacy Walking Tour* and exhibitions exploring race and its intersections in our contemporary world in public education, art, and other forms of embedded knowledge, such as culinary practices.

CONSIDER

What do the histories of settler colonialism and slavery tell us about struggles for freedom today? What work still has to be done?





Acknowledgments

This *Slavery & Legacy Walking Tour* brochure is made possible through the dedication of CSSJ Associate Graduate Fellow, Uchechukwu “Uche” Onwunaka. We would like to thank the many individuals who gave so generously of their time over the years to make the *Slavery & Legacy Walking Tour* possible. We would like to especially thank CSSJ student workers past and present, Lily Pickett, Connor Jenkins, Sophie Kupetz ’19.5, Thoralf Island ’19, and Jasmine Thomas ’19. CSSJ Graduate Fellows and Postdoctoral Fellows who have helped serve as tour guides, Breylan Martin, Chandra Dickey A.M. ’20, Johanna Obenda A.M. ’19, Heather Sanford PhD ’20, Dr. Zachary Sell, Dr. Nic Ramos, Dr. Roselyn Gerazime, and Dr. Crystal Eddins for their help, serving as tour guides. We would also like to thank Olivia McNeill, M.Ed, Assistant Director of First Year and Sophomore Programs at the Brown Center for Students of Color, and 2018 Third World Transition Program Community Care Coordinators, Helya Azadmanesh-Samimi ’19.5, Donia Torabian ’20, and Gabriel Gonzalez ’20, for providing the language and framework for the land and labor acknowledgment. Thank you to Erin Wells for design.

Symbolic Slave Garden [Kongolese cosmogram close up], 2014

Conceptualized and created
by Professor Geri Augusto

Professor Geri Augusto curated a Slave Garden located outside of the CSSJ. This image depicts a Kongolese cosmogram located in the garden in stone, planted in spring with Native American herbals and regional flowers.

LEARN MORE

Stay engaged and learn more by visiting the Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice:

brown.edu/initiatives/slavery-and-justice/



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