

**Report of the Advisory Committee
on a
Slavery and Justice Initiative**

Our committee was appointed in April 2007 by Provost David Kertzer as one element of the University's response to the report of the University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice (USCSJ). In response to the USCSJ report, Brown committed itself to "a major research and teaching initiative on slavery and justice." The focus of this initiative was to be on the history of slavery and its legacy. The University's response further indicated that a "committee of experts will be appointed to explore how best to carry out such an initiative, the shape, cost, and scope of which is to be determined by the committee, in consultation with the Provost, the President, the Corporation, and the relevant standing committees of the faculty. Whether this results in a new center or the significant enlargement of an existing and coordinated set of programs should be determined through this process."

The present report emerges from this latter committee's deliberations over the past eight months. We are unanimous in our primary recommendation – that an Institute on Slavery and Justice should be created at Brown. In what follows we summarize our views about the intellectual directions and activities of this Institute; we offer brief descriptions of the major scholarly themes that we think the Institute should pursue; we discuss a possible governance structure; and survey related academic units and scholarly resources currently in place at Brown.

Summary of Recommendations

It is the conclusion of this committee that this initiative presents an important opportunity for Brown to achieve national prominence in several scholarly disciplines, to create new educational opportunities for its students both within the curriculum and in the community, and to influence the development of public policies that bear on a number of significant social and political issues. Accordingly, *we propose that a new teaching and research initiative be established at Brown University – an Institute on Slavery and Justice – to provide a focal point for these activities, and to ensure that they have a sustained presence in and lasting impact on the intellectual life of our campus, for generations to come.*

As its name suggests, the core mission of a new Institute on Slavery and Justice would be two-fold: to foster academic programs in the University which deepen our understanding of the origins, the evolution, and the legacy of slavery in North America; and to link this historical and social scientific scholarship with sustained inquiry into the question of justice, in all of its theoretical, practical, and historical dimensions. *This linkage – between the rigorous study of the historical legacy of American slavery and a sophisticated engagement with the questions of justice that are raised by that history –*

would distinguish the Institute we are proposing from superficially similar efforts now being undertaken elsewhere.

Clearly, combining historical and social scientific scholarship with in-depth normative reflection is likely to be fruitful for the study of other morally troubling societal practices, past and present. Indeed, the USCSJ report proposed that we understand slavery as a crime against humanity, and went on to argue that the University's proper response to its own history should be formulated in light of just such an understanding. We fully concur with this judgment. Thus, while the study of American slavery and its legacy would lie at the core of the proposed enterprise, *the Institute that we envision should be sufficiently broad in its focus to support scholarship and teaching on other crimes – genocide, “ethnic cleansing” and human trafficking, for instance – which, sadly enough, continue to plague humanity to this day.* Systematic, society-wide violations of basic human rights inevitably give rise to political structures of domination, social movements of resistance, and trans-generational problems of justice. The broadened perspective that we recommend – one that sees “slavery” as species, with “crime against humanity” as genus – would provide a conceptual and ethical unity to the work of this new Institute. This conceptual integrity would, in turn, encourage the kind of comparative studies that we think are crucial for gaining a better understanding of how the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the racialized system of slavery that it sustained have influenced the political, social and economic history of the United States, and of other nations and peoples across both space and time.

To advance this mission, we recommend that the Institute on Slavery and Justice support a range of activities: to develop new courses and enrich with relevant subject matter many existing courses and concentrations; to support pre-doctoral and post-doctoral scholars with endowed fellowships, travel funds, and by other means, both independently and in coordination with entities such as the John Carter Brown Library that already have prominent and effective fellows programs; to support conferences, symposia, and an annual academic lectureship, thereby bringing together leading scholars from within and outside the Brown community to share ideas and highlight the scholarly resources that exist across campus; to consider mid-career fellowships for non-academic professionals working on human rights-related issues throughout the world; and to endow a high-profile public lecture series that would bring to campus prominent figures with an international reputation on issues related to human rights. (This would be a way to lift the visibility of the center, both externally and on campus.) Some of these activities might be guided by a set of annual themes that would enable the Institute to sustain its focus and yet convene scholars working within a particular set of disciplines around topics of shared interest. Beyond this, the Institute should consider internships, independent study opportunities, and UTRAs as means through which Brown students can be engaged in an educationally rigorous manner with the history of African slavery and its legacy in America, as well as with other instances of massive injustice and the systematic denial of basic human rights that have taken place, and that continue to occur, throughout the world.

Our committee is not recommending that this newly created academic unit make tenure-track faculty appointments on its own account. Rather, although we believe that additional faculty lines in connection with the launch of an Institute on Slavery and Justice would be of substantial benefit to the Institute and the University, and see the possible creation of an endowed professorship in connection with this Institute (whether as director or otherwise) as a potentially attractive fundraising opportunity, we also believe that any faculty appointments made by the Institute should take place in cooperation with relevant departments on campus. Further, we think the Institute should focus on drawing together faculty and students from the academic departments and research centers on campus so as to shape a distinctive and compelling locus for scholarship and teaching. It is our hope, and our expectation, that the Institute will enable Brown more readily to recruit and retain outstanding faculty across the range of disciplines that will be enriched by its work, and that related departments, centers and programs at Brown will be significantly strengthened by the activities of the Institute we are proposing.

We recommend that the University raise and commit substantial resources to create this new Institute. Indeed, *we see it as highly desirable that a permanent endowment be generated to support the administration and core programmatic activities of the Institute, in perpetuity.* In addition, the Institute is likely to require dedicated space for its activities which, ideally, should be centrally located in proximity to related academic units on campus. Meeting both of these desiderata would provide a powerful signal of Brown's commitment to this enterprise.

The Institute should be led by a director who is a tenured member of the Brown faculty, together with an executive committee. The director, in consultation with the Provost and with the executive committee, would determine the specific intellectual agenda and activities of the Institute, within the broad parameters of the core mission as proposed above, and as elaborated on more fully in what follows.

Some Suggested Programs and Activities for the New Institute

In preparing this report, the committee has concluded that it would be unwise for us to be excessively prescriptive in defining the intellectual mission of the Institute. Rather, we view our role as providing broad guidelines which can inform the work of the Institute's director and its governing council. There are two reasons for this. First, any research and teaching initiative of this kind must have the capacity to evolve with the composition of our faculty, and as their interests and expertise change over time. So long as the Institute keeps to the mission as broadly described above, we believe it will remain faithful to the institutional impulse and obligations that brought it into existence. Second, even within our committee there were varied compelling and conflicting perspectives on the specific projects that this Institute should advance, and with regard to the intellectual framework needed to define and prioritize those projects. Indeed we view the lively and animated discussions that characterized the work of our committee as indicative of the potential for this initiative to host and support scholarship and teaching that bring many different practical and theoretical approaches to bear on some of the central questions that we as a

nation, and as global citizens, should understand and confront. (At the same time, we wish to note that on this point one member of the committee found himself in dissent from the views of the rest of the committee, believing that defining a more clearly focused agenda for the Institute would deepen its significance and impact.) In what follows we briefly sketch several illustrations of the kinds of scholarly work that this new Institute can and should advance.

The History and Legacy of Slavery

As the prior report of the USCSJ made abundantly clear there is fertile ground – in the fields of history, economics, ethnic studies, sociology, gender studies, American Civilization, Africana studies, Latin American and Caribbean studies, and American literature, among many others – for the continued scholarly investigation of slavery and its legacy in North America and in the Americas more generally. Although an impressive body of scholarship on this subject has developed over many decades, significant work remains to be done to illuminate the many strands that are woven into the story of slavery and its legacy in American society. Moreover, Brown is well-positioned to take advantage of these opportunities. Brown faculty have, over the generations, made lasting contributions to this area of scholarship, and the University has amassed significant and unique scholarly collections that can form the basis of scholarship and teaching that will touch the lives of our students in profound ways, and make Brown a nationally-known center of excellence for scholars in these fields.

Numerous examples may be given of the scholarship that Brown could fruitfully support and pursue. Some obvious topics include: the origins and history of the transatlantic slave trade; the role of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade in the Atlantic economy; and, slavery's impact on African societies and on North America up to the early decades of the 19th century. Other examples include comparative studies of New World slave societies, particularly given that the collections of the John Carter Brown Library offer an unparalleled and internationally-known resource; the evolution of organized resistance to slavery (where the collections in the John Hay Library are relevant); evolving concepts of race and their impact on society and politics from the earliest history of European settlement to the present day; the effect of the institution of slavery on political development in affected nations; the profound impact that the legacy of racial slavery has had, and continues to have, on the evolution of social policies in the U.S., down to the present; and, transnational analyses that draw on the rich possibilities to contrast racial slavery with other society-wide injustices, conceived as crimes against humanity.

We envision the Institute supporting scholarship which places these issues within multiple contexts. We are especially keen to see attention given to how scholarly work on these themes can be linked to programs of research and teaching that have prominent homes (or potential homes) elsewhere within the University. As one example of what we have in mind, we wish to call attention to the potential for the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity to foster scholarship and teaching on the exploitation and decimation of Native American populations – a phenomenon which occurred contemporaneously with and parallel to the enslavement of Africans, with far-reaching consequences for

American society. Another natural point of connection between the Institute we are recommending and other academic units on campus would be to study the impact of slavery -- and of notions of "race" -- on immigration, urbanization, the emergence of social democracy, and the rise of an American middle class. Finally, through close collaboration between the Institute, the Department of Africana Studies, the Center for Latin American Studies, CSREA, and the John Carter Brown Library, Brown could become the premier place in the world for the study of comparative slavery and the comparative history of African peoples in the New World, including South America, Central America, and the Caribbean.

Theories of Social Justice and Freedom

We have recommended that a unique and powerfully defining feature of this new Institute should be the way that it connects the historical and social scientific study of slavery and its legacy with inquiries on fundamental questions of moral and political philosophy. One area ripe for development in political theory, and central to the intellectual work of the Institute as we envision it, is the study of justice in the context of what the philosopher John Rawls termed "non-Ideal theory." This branch of philosophy and political theory investigates, among other things, the principles that might guide the ethical behavior of individuals and the structure of institutions under less than perfect circumstances; and further inquires into what principles of justice require in a society whose present economic life, patterns of social organization, and general attitudes have been deeply marked by profound and systematic injustice in the past. There are significant opportunities not currently being fully exploited to engage Brown faculty and students from Philosophy, Political Science, History, the Political Theory Project, and other departments, in research and teaching that explore these issues. What follows are four examples of the kinds of research topics that might be included within the broad rubric of non-Ideal theories of justice and freedom.

(a) One theme is the study of contemporary distributive and/or redistributive justice in U.S. society, given the fact that the consequences of American slavery continue to influence the broad contours of the nation's social landscape. Much previous work by political theorists in this domain has focused on reparations and affirmative action. But there is a great deal more to be done here.

(b) Another theme involves the study of non-Ideal justice across territorial boundaries, as it might bear on political responses to contemporary human trafficking, the forced sexual labor of women and children, etc. The study of crimes against humanity (from historical, political, and philosophical frames of reference), and of our trans-national moral obligations to respond to such crimes, would find a natural place here.

(c) Yet another theme, in the history of political thought, entails the study of how ideas about justice have interacted with the institution of slavery (to justify it, to challenge it, etc.). This might include, for instance, further work (along the lines sketched in the USCSJ report) on how conceptualization of and justifications for slavery emerged during the 18th century in tandem with ideas about the universal rights of man and the standards

of justice which these ideas implied. One aspect of this theme could include a particular focus on the political thought of African-American intellectuals forced to come to grips with this history.

(d) The study of freedom and human agency in non-ideal contexts provides a final example of this kind of work. What does it mean to be free, or what are the possibilities for and the responsibilities of freedom, in the context of a continuing legacy of racial inequality? How do the experience and legacy of slavery in the Americas (and the contemporary practices of slavery today) challenge traditional conceptions of human freedom, and how do they illuminate the nature and limitations of human agency?

Race and Inequality

Among the more prominent present-day legacies of American slavery is the social formation that we know as “race.” Therefore, exploring the consequences of African slavery in America for presentday racial inequality should be a central aspect of this effort. Of course, this topic is already of great interest to a number of existing academic units on campus – to scholars and students in Anthropology, Economics, Ethnic Studies, Sociology, Africana Studies, Political Science, Education, and Philosophy departments, and for teaching and research at the medical school, the Taubman Center for Public Policy and American Institutions, the Population Studies and Training Center, and at the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. We nevertheless believe that there is room for additional work along these lines. It is quite natural for this new Institute to address questions of race and inequality, in fruitful cooperation with other interested parties at Brown and beyond. The Institute could be a valuable meeting ground for faculty working in these areas, a forum for the presentation of work in progress and the exchange of ideas.

Thus, we envision that one key aspect of the Institute’s work would entail academically rigorous and publicly engaged scholarship on the role played by “race,” racism and racial identity in supporting contemporary structures of economic, political, social, and cultural inequality in American society – with an emphasis on the condition of the descendants of African slaves. That is, we wish to explore the history and contemporary manifestations of the idea of “race”; the ways in which that idea has been constructed, contested and revised by actual people; and the ways in which this concept, and the profound stigma that it has generated, has shaped and continues to shape our individual and collective humanity.

Something that would make this aspect of the Institute’s work unique within this field of study would be connecting rigorous scholarship with efforts at policy reform ongoing (or being contemplated) at the local, state and national levels. Joint projects with initiatives being undertaken elsewhere (at the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute at the Harvard Law School, for instance) can easily be envisioned. Connecting our students with local public officials and with non-profit organizations – to serve as interns, or to do supportive research, for instance – could facilitate their active involvement on a host of policy issues in the city of Providence and the state of Rhode Island.

Specific research topics on racial inequality might include educational disparities; the political economy of immigration and the workings of urban labor markets; the dynamics of residential segregation in American cities; a new demography of “race” in 21st century America; and so on. An emphasis on rigorous, quantitative study of these issues would be a way to differentiate this undertaking, making it distinctive within the broader field of “race studies.” Moreover, given the strengths of existing faculty in the relevant disciplines (e.g., economics, demography and sociology), this focus on the quantitative, social scientific investigation of racial disparities in contemporary American society could be readily implemented at a high level of scholarly distinction. Indeed, it is at least conceivable that, with concerted effort and sufficient resources, Brown could quickly become one of the best places in the world for this kind of work.

One aspect of inequality that is particularly urgent involves “race” and incarceration in America. There are extensive research, teaching, advocacy and service efforts already ongoing across the University that relate to this theme. But much more could be done. Providing a central home to some of these undertakings would be a natural activity for this new Institute – entirely in keeping with its mandate to study the legacies of African slavery and to address questions of justice. There is also a great deal of student interest in this issue. An important specific initiative in which Brown might be actively engaged (whether through this new Institute or otherwise) would involve spearheading a prison education program in conjunction with other Rhode Island institutions of higher education. (There is a great deal more to say on this particular theme, though this report is not the place for it.) Another useful undertaking would be to mount a multidisciplinary conference on the advent of “mass incarceration” in contemporary America, which could draw considerable public attention to the new Institute, influence the public agenda at an especially propitious political moment, and put students, researchers and practitioners into fruitful conversations with one another.

Slavery and Its Legacy in Rhode Island

The UCSJ report provided a rich and complex interpretation of the place of slavery and slave trading in Rhode Island, but it is clear that much more scholarship can flow from the rich resources at Brown and in Rhode Island more generally. Slavery and the transatlantic slave trade had profound effects on the economic, social, and institutional development of Rhode Island in the 18th and 19th centuries, and thus the legacy of slavery is as significant to our state as to the nation as a whole. Scholarship that explores the history and legacy of slavery in Rhode Island could situate slavery and its legacy within a larger project of investigating the racial and ethnic diversity of the state, the various forms of economic activity that shaped its history, and the ways in which contemporary social, political, and cultural institutions have been shaped by this history. (As a heavily industrialized community that was easily accessible to Europeans looking for factory jobs, Rhode Island was one of the most diverse places in the United States in the 19th century.) Descendants of the original native peoples of this region are still around, and there has been a high degree of intermixing from all the traditions that

came in the centuries since. The peopling of Rhode Island has included a substantial number of African-Americans -- recently arrived immigrants as well as the descendants of African slaves -- along with all the strands of European-Americans who flooded to these shores in the 19th century, and a great number of new immigrants from Central America and Southeast Asia, as well.

All of this suggests that this state presents a natural context for broad historical and sociological study, in ways that link to and expand on the kinds of activities we described under the “race and inequality” heading above. Moreover, given the excellence of our early records about Rhode Island (in the unparalleled collections of the JCB, the holdings of the University Library, and at the Rhode Island Historical Society), this new Institute could be a vehicle for the most serious study that has ever been undertaken of a state, its demography, its labor practices, and the legacies of those practices as developed over two centuries.

Slavery’s legacy would be a significant part of this local initiative, linked to a narrative of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration that shaped the history and that continues to influence the present reality of the state where Brown resides. Indeed, a number of efforts presently underway in Rhode Island, which aim to uncover the state’s historical relationship to slavery and the slave trade, resonate powerfully with Brown’s slavery and justice initiative. Some of these efforts link their work explicitly to social justice issues in the present. The agencies engaged in such work include the Rhode Island Historical Society, the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities (which has just announced plans to spend the next three years focusing almost exclusively on slavery and its legacy), Rhode Island for Community and Justice (which is organizing community dialogues on slavery and its legacy all over the state), and even the National Park Service (which is doing a complete reinterpretation of its Rhode Island sites to incorporate slavery) – to name a few.

In this as in other areas that we have suggested, the Institute could foster new and deeper means of connecting the scholarly work of the University to issues of significant importance to the community of which Brown is a part. In partnership with the Swearer Center for Public Service and other entities both on and off campus, the Institute could explore new means of community engagement around issues of race, social justice, and inequality.

Crimes Against Humanity

As already noted, the report of the USCSJ offers a compelling argument for employing a “crimes against humanity” framework to interpret, explain, and contextualize the history and consequences of racial slavery in North America. That report defined “crimes against humanity” as offenses “so atrocious that the damage they do extends beyond immediate victims and perpetrators to encompass entire societies.” Furthermore, such crimes “are directed at particular groups of people, who have been so degraded and dehumanized that they no longer appear to be fully human or to merit the basic respect and concern that other humans command.”

The present committee feels that this concept opens up an important realm of scholarship – namely, the long-term consequences for societies that follow from the dehumanization of particular groups within those societies. Accordingly, such scholarship and related teaching and outreach activities should occupy an important place among the initiatives that our proposed Institute will support. This is so not only because studies of this kind have great potential as explanatory tools, but also because Brown University graduates will enter a world where such crimes are a recurring feature of human societies. Students should be equipped with historical and philosophical tools enabling them to recognize such phenomena, and they should be enabled to understand the strategies that have been developed over the past two centuries to prevent their recurrence and to bring justice in their wake.

There are many ways that this framework could inform the scholarly work of the institute. Among them we would highlight: the conceptual link between crimes against humanity and the institution and experience of African slavery in the US ; the link between contemporary crimes against humanity and past slavery as it existed in the United States and other societies; the legal definition of crimes against humanity and its connection to issues of international justice and punishment; the link between crimes against humanity and contemporary discussion of issues of restitution and reconciliation; the opportunity to involve Brown students in activities related to on-going crimes against humanity as part of their education about their own nation's legacy and the ways in which Americans have, and have not, come to terms with past crimes. Many of these issues are already a part of the Brown curriculum, but a new partnership between the Institute and the Department of History, the Program in Judaic Studies, and other academic units could both strengthen the curriculum and foster new interdisciplinary scholarship.

Proposed Structure

Director. The institute should have a director who is a tenured member of the Brown faculty. We recommend a term (renewable) appointment of five years, consistent with the normal practices of the University. The director should report to the Dean of Faculty, and should be appointed by the Dean in consultation with the Provost. The director should be provided with appropriate staff support, though it is our recommendation that additional staff be kept to a minimum so that available resources can be directed to scholarly and teaching activities.

Faculty Executive Committee. The director should recommend to the Dean members of an executive committee of 5-10 members drawn from departments whose work most closely relates to the Institute's mission. Members would be appointed to regular three-year renewable terms. The executive committee would advise the director on the goals, priorities and programs of the Institute, would review and recommend any academic appointments (such as postdoctoral fellows, graduate fellows, and visiting faculty), and would review and approve the annual budget of the institute. This committee will be critical to ensuring that the Institute achieves the mission we have recommended, and that it is capable of sustaining scholarship, teaching, and related activities of the highest quality and impact.

Review. We would suggest that an external committee be appointed on a regular basis (every 5-7 years) to review the activities of the Institute and make recommendations to the director, the executive committee, and University's administration on the Institute's accomplishments and future direction.

Potential Partners on Campus

As the report of our predecessor committee made clear, Brown is already blessed with a rich and diverse array of faculty, students, and scholarly resources that link to the study of slavery and its legacy, and enable us to situate such studies within a dense web of scholarship and teaching in the humanities and social sciences that spans such topics as genocide and other crimes against humanity; the history of race and race relations in many parts of the world; studies of contemporary American society and social policy through which the thread of slavery's legacy may be traced; the long and evolving interplay of racial and ethnic identity, migration and immigration, social and economic development; and the manifold ways in which issues of slavery and justice have found expression and critical examination in literature and the creative arts. In any given year students can find dozens of courses at Brown dealing with such topics as slavery, justice and the justice system, race, African-American history and culture.

We describe briefly below some of the existing scholarly resources and academic units that we believe could contribute to, and be a part of, a more concerted effort to support, highlight, and sustain teaching and research on issues of slavery and justice. The list is meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive, for scholarly and pedagogical connections between the proposed Institute and existing departments and centers could be imagined across the full spectrum of the humanities and social sciences, and into the life and health sciences as well. It is our conclusion that the Institute should not only draw on existing strengths among these potential partners, but in turn deepen the impact and visibility of the work that faculty, staff, and students in these academic units already do.

The John Carter Brown Library. The John Carter Brown Library holds an unparalleled, world-class collection of printed materials from the Americas, from the earliest period of exploration into the first half of the 19th century. These materials provide a unique scholarly vantage point on the origins, experience, perception, and consequences of slavery and the slave trade in the Americas, and represent a significant attraction for scholars from around the world to come to Providence. In addition to maintaining and expanding its holdings, the JCB sponsors approximately forty annual scholarly fellowships (typically lasting between two and ten months), which present another avenue for collaboration between the JCB and the proposed Institute on Slavery and Justice. Through jointly sponsored fellowships, conferences, publications, and other activities, the Institute and the JCB should become an unrivaled destination for scholars studying New World slavery and its impact throughout the Atlantic world.

The Department of Africana Studies. Brown's department of Africana Studies engages faculty and students interested in the artistic, historical, literary, and theoretical expressions of the various cultures of Africa and the African Diaspora. The Department explores the cultures, histories, social formations and artistic expressions of Africa and the locations that comprise the African Diaspora. Departmental faculty study the intersection of class, gender, nation, race, and sexuality from multiple theoretical and methodological perspectives. The department lists sixteen faculty and an additional five affiliated faculty, with joint appointments in departments including American Civilization, Psychology, History, Pathology, English, and Portuguese and Brazilian Studies. The department aims to sustain as its intellectual strengths the following areas of focus:

- African American History and Popular Culture
- African American Philosophy and Religion
- African American Theatre
- Africana Political Theory and Political Thought
- Black Feminisms
- Caribbean Philosophy
- Critical Race Theory
- Intellectual History
- Literature of Africa and the African Diaspora
- Race and Health Inequalities
- Race in Latin America
- Twentieth Century African History

Given these interests, the department will clearly be a critical partner with, and key to the success of, the proposed Institute. At the same time, we see significant potential for the Institute to support and extend the work of faculty and students in Africana Studies by fostering new scholarship in the social sciences and humanities that connects topics of interest to departmental faculty with the work of other social science and humanities faculty at Brown.

Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. CSREA, founded in 1988, supports teaching, research, conferences, symposia and other programs on African American, Asian American, Latino, Native American, Middle Eastern, biracial and multiracial peoples. The Center emphasizes the interdisciplinary and comparative study of these groups and promotes analytical studies of race, ethnicity, gender, and class. The Center's formal charge includes the following elements:

- To facilitate research on race and ethnicity as social constructions in American society, including comparative studies of analytically similar problems in societies in other parts of the world
- To coordinate and develop Brown's resources for research and teaching on racial and ethnic minorities in America
- To generate intellectual and financial resources for the Center, including support for new faculty positions and for research and curricular development

- To promote university-wide discussion of issues relating to race and ethnicity

Given the close relationship between the mission of the Center and the activities we have recommended for the proposed Institute on Slavery and Justice, natural synergies exist between the two entities that should be exploited as fully as possible in order to extend the impact of the Institute and to deepen the ability of scholars and students at Brown to carry out multidisciplinary projects on the comparative study of race and ethnicity.

The John Nicholas Brown Center for the Study of American Civilization.

The John Nicholas Brown Center is Brown's center for the public humanities. In conjunction with the Department of American Civilization, the JNBC administers a Master of Arts program in public humanities that trains students for careers in administering museums and other public cultural institutions. This year it is initiating a new fellowship program for students seeking an MA in public humanities with a focus on the history and legacy of slavery. The Center sponsors additional scholarly activities such as lectures, conferences, exhibitions, and symposia. The JNBC would be a strong partner in the Institute's mission of disseminating new knowledge to a broad public, in developing means to sharpen public memory and acknowledgement of the history and legacy of slavery, and in supporting scholarly, pedagogical, and curatorial work on slavery and the slave trade in Rhode Island.

Watson Institute for International Studies. The Watson Institute for International Studies is a leading center for research and teaching on international affairs. The Institute's research focus is organized around the global economy, environment, international security, and related issues of culture and identity. The Institute's core faculty is complemented by faculty associates from across the University and an ever-changing cohort of visiting scholars and practitioners from around the world. The Institute works closely with key organizations such as the United Nations, local governments, and non-governmental organizations. The Watson Institute oversees one of the University's largest academic concentrations - the International Relations Program, with over 400 students. Also at the Institute are the Development Studies, Latin American Studies, Middle East Studies, and South Asian Studies concentrations. Additionally, the Institute's Choices for the 21st Century Education Program reaches students and teachers in over a third of American high schools with instructional materials and professional development activities. The Institute sponsors seminar series, conferences, lectures, workshops, and other meetings each year brings leading scholars and public figures to the Institute to put current events into context, explore emerging global issues, develop policy options, and publish research. The Institute also develops documentaries, webcasts, and other global-interest media to reach the public. The Watson Institute could be a natural partner in supporting scholarship and teaching about the ongoing experience of enslavement and related crimes against humanity in the contemporary international context.

Political Theory Project. While the mission of the Political Theory Project (PTP) does not formally incorporate the themes of slavery and justice, there are several potential points of convergence and synergy. The PTP’s aim (as stated on its website) is “to invigorate the study of the fundamental principles of human social life. Distinctively, the Project brings to this study not only the conceptual concerns characteristic of the humanities, nor only the empirical and institutional methods of the social sciences, but instead a novel and powerful synthesis of humanistic and social scientific tools....The Project creates at Brown a space where students of good faith, and diverse viewpoints, can come together to debate one another other, freely and passionately, about the most pressing political problems of our day.”

The main thematic foci of the PTP--[The American Experiment](#); [Market Society and Social Order](#); and [Globalization and Development](#)—all have the potential to connect in fruitful ways with the Institute we are proposing, through jointly sponsored courses, post-doctoral fellowships, lectures and conferences, and other means.

The University Library. The University Library in general, and the John Hay Library in particular, have extensive holdings that are relevant to the areas of inquiry we have suggested. These include digital resources (such as African American sheet music, and materials related to Abraham Lincoln); microform collections that include antebellum plantation records, African American newspapers, and other collections; a substantial collection related to the life and presidency of Abraham Lincoln; deep resources on the history of Brown, the Brown family, and several African-American alumni; and materials on the history of Rhode Island.

The Urban Studies Program. Students and faculty in Brown University’s Urban Studies program draw on diverse ideas and methods from the sciences and humanities to explore urbanization and industrialization in the US, and throughout the world. Today’s American cities confront the paradox that, while they are home to the nation’s weakest political institutions, they nevertheless face our most intractable problems. Many of these problems – involving the issues of race, immigration, poverty, inequality, unemployment and environmental justice – relate directly to the mandate of the proposed Institute on Slavery and Justice. This makes Urban Studies a natural partner in promoting scholarship and teaching about the consequences of slavery in the present-day American social order.

Conclusion

To state the obvious, the foundation and history of our institution were entangled in a web of global commerce that trafficked in human beings. This is not merely an “academic” subject It is a fundamental fact of American history, which continues to shape the world we live in today. Our committee recommends that the University establish an academically rigorous and publicly influential Institute at Brown that puts the study of these issues at the center of our community’s intellectual life, and keeps it there.

The historical imperative for this initiative derives most directly from the American experience of African slavery and racist Jim Crow. We propose, however, that its methodological imperative should be comparative. This is only to acknowledge that useful analogies can be drawn between slavery and various other instances of society-wide oppression -- genocide, apartheid, "ethnic cleansing," mass disappearances. These are all world-historical injustices, that must be recovered-from and lived-with, and that can be studied, criticized, mitigated and perhaps even prevented through a concerted effort by people like the students and faculty of this great university. Still, it is out of the context of the American experience with African slavery that our initiative should emerge.

We are convinced that Brown now has an opportunity to make a significant and prominent contribution within and beyond the constellation of scholarly centers in the United States and abroad: first, by maintaining a focus on the paired issues of slavery and justice; second, by seeking to understand not only the history of slavery but its legacy in contemporary society; and, third, by linking this central enterprise to several related areas of inquiry, thereby widening the frame of reference beyond the 'peculiar institution' of racial slavery in North America, so as to engage the broader discourse on comparative slavery and crimes against humanity that has unfolded throughout the world over the past two centuries. The proposed institute will enrich Brown in manifold ways. It will enhance the university's national and international visibility and scholarly distinction. It will deepen Brown's relationship with the world beyond the university gates—not only with our city and state, but also with our nation and the global community. Most important, it will enrich the lives and educations of generations of Brown students by illuminating the historical, political, ethical, and moral dimensions of the world that we expect them to lead and to change.

Respectfully Submitted,

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