

**The 2004-2005 Slavery and Justice  
Undergraduate Group Research Project  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
to the  
University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice**

**MAY 16, 2005**

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Dear Students/Fellow Community Members/Fellow Citizens:

The attached document is the product of a year-long exploration of Brown University's institutional relationship to American slavery and its legacy. This document was submitted in mid-May 2005 to the University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, with the hope that these student-drafted recommendations would strongly influence the content and dissemination of the Committee's final report next year.

We are sharing this document with you in hopes that it will inform, provoke, and inspire your participation in this ongoing process of historical exploration and modern-day application. Although no one involved can genuinely claim the status of "expert" on such a wide-ranging and difficult topic, the sustained examination that generated these recommendations might serve as a model for a broader engagement with a troublesome past, an ambiguous present, and a hopeful future. These recommendations are both radical and driven by commonsense logic: radical because it is intrinsically difficult and bold to examine such aspects of history, let alone suggest that something be done in response; and commonsensical because doing so simply reflects our society's commitment to justice and to learning from history.

The purpose of making recommendations— something that the student Group Research Project was not initially commissioned to do— is to accelerate a meaningful discussion of retrospective justice toward an uncomfortable past. It is our hope that these suggestions will inspire readers to value and engage the unique work of Brown's Slavery and Justice Committee. The attached document at times may make you feel uncomfortable, skeptical, angry, hopeful, enlightened, or just plain confused— but so long as the conversation continues, then we will have achieved our main goal. Regardless of whether you agree or disagree with these recommendations, it is incumbent on you, the reader, to join this discussion with ideas of your own.

In fact, we urge you to attend the Slavery and Justice events on campus during fall 2005 and to contact the authors of this document with your questions and reactions.

Sincerely,

The 2004-2005 Slavery and Justice GRP (*Africana Studies 183-184*)  
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## Introduction

By Rachael Bedard

Last May, every student at Brown received a “Morning Mail” invitation to join the Slavery and Justice Committee’s Group Research Project for the 2004-05 academic year. We are among the two-dozen students who responded to that invitation and who have now completed two semesters of study and dialogue. Although the Committee’s charge seemed broad and the GRP’s structure ambiguous, we each found the fundamental premise of the initiative— to investigate the historical relationship between the university and American slavery, and to consider the university’s responsibility for redress— challenging and compelling.

As we began meeting as a class in September, our first challenge was to define the scope of our endeavor: Should we examine the Brown family’s historical relationship to the slave trade? Certainly. Should we examine the complex social ties between this university, the eighteenth-century Rhode Island economy, and slave trading more generally? That seemed logical. Should we consider the ways in which other societies have sought to remedy historical injustices? Yes, models of restorative justice from South Africa and elsewhere could inform and inspire us. But then: Should we also examine Brown’s role in defining American race relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? What about looking into the history of the black student experience at Brown? Taking the legacies of *Slavery* and contemporary aspirations for *Justice* to their logical conclusions, we quickly realized that the scope of our enterprise extended over four centuries and stretched from historical analysis to present-day policy prescriptions. We believe it is impossible to separate our study of the historical relationship between Brown University and slavery from our obligation to confront the complex legacy of slavery in this country, and Brown’s role in perpetuating, challenging or accepting that legacy.

Our class engaged in a variety of activities that would help us to approach these issues from an informed, critical perspective. Many of us routinely attended the lectures that the committee sponsored on campus, as well as holding separate meetings with such visiting scholars as John Hope Franklin, Edward Ball, and James and Lois Horton. We each embarked on independent research projects exploring a diverse array of topics, ranging from an inquiry into language laws in Ireland to an examination of the retrospective prosecution of civil rights murders in Mississippi; from a comparison of the slavery’s representation in different American museums to an oral history project interviewing black Brown University alumni/ae. Others combed eighteenth-century archives to recover the records of a 1764 slaving voyage that the Brown brothers sponsored. We also read different sources on the history and legacies of American slavery and the reparations movement. As we did this work we were eager to connect Brown’s self-study to a wider audience, but were not entirely sure how to proceed. It is our hope that the University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice will also strive to connect its work to a wider community in Providence, in Rhode Island, and in the United States more generally.

To that end, the most significant legacy of our class is this student-generated proposal for the Committee's consideration. Much of what we have included here reflects the research that we have done collectively and individually throughout the year. Much of it also reflects our collective experiences as Brown students, and addresses issues affecting student life and the Brown community. A persistent theme that runs through almost all of the recommendations is a desire to take what we have been learning and thinking about beyond the University and into the state of Rhode Island, through education initiatives, memorialization projects, and initiatives to rectify contemporary injustices that burden local communities.

The following document is organized to present related ideas together by category. Different segments of the class took responsibility for different parts of the recommendations, so there are also natural discrepancies in writing styles and ideas between sections. Much of what we have suggested here could be listed under the heading "Further topics for research." We are putting forward ideas that need to be fleshed out and discussed at length, and we hope that the committee will examine them with that in mind.

In formulating our recommendations, we have consistently grappled with the relationship of the academic to the political. Do we choose to draw a line between "academic" initiatives (digitalizing eighteenth-century account books, for example), and "radical" forms of redress, such as making Brown a living wage campus? We find this distinction contrived. Everything we are talking about is radical. Changing what sixth-graders learn about the popular American narrative and the place of slavery in it is radical. Asking that Brown erect a memorial on the Main Green to honor the slaves who built University Hall, bringing that aspect of Brown's history front and center and marking it with something physical and permanent, is radical. Certainly, asking that Brown employees be paid enough to feed their families, or suggesting that Brown become engaged in issues of voter disenfranchisement in this state may also be radical ideas, but they are no bolder or less achievable than other ideas that may come across as tamer or more conventional. The crucial standard, instead, is whether our ideas are logically rooted in the history we are examining and in the principles of justice we hold dear. This University and this state pride themselves with great justification on a history of promoting progressive change. It is only fitting for us to continue in that tradition as we confront and attempt to rectify the aspects of our local history that have been systematically erased.

In this light, President Simmons's decision to create the Slavery and Justice Committee was brave and visionary. It created an opportunity for a dialogue to take place that normally does not happen, and it opened up a space to harness the intellectual, financial and political resources of the university in changing the ways we think about our identities, our national narratives and our social, economic and political relationships. Although our class devoted a great deal of time to debating whether our academic work and policy prescriptions were radical enough, or endowed with enough commonsense credibility, the fact is that to even discuss redress of historical injustice is an inherently radical action at this moment in our nation's history.

Our class has also spoken at length about the brief window of media coverage that Brown can expect next winter when the Slavery and Justice Committee releases its report. Two years of sustained inquiry and debate will be distilled into a “sound bite.” Two possibilities give us pause: we would hate to hear “Brown accepts responsibility for all evils; checks to follow,” just as we would lament “Brown says academics had a productive discussion; more discussions to follow.” Instead, we must present a series of bold ideas that offer an honest assessment of our past and a forward-looking program for our future. We believe that Brown University can bring forward a series of specific proposals and initiatives that can model an institution’s responsibility to the past and its obligation to the future, fulfilling the highest ambitions of the University and the progressive promise of the American nation.

### **Knowledge, Awareness and Curriculum at Brown**

By Kathleen Osborn and Sean Siperstein

“There are few non-controversial means of addressing the issue of slavery in the public setting, and no comfortable way to deal with this question that resides at the core of American identity and conscience,” observes James O. Horton, president of the Organization of American Historians. That slavery is a difficult and sensitive topic owes something to the natural gap between the critical approach of academic scholarship and the celebratory and nationalistic needs of the broader American public. While researchers have made slavery central to the largest narratives of American History and connected slavery to ongoing hierarchies of race, class, and gender, Brown University must propel this work forward by supporting student and faculty engagement with the American public. Fulfilling its educational mission at Brown and beyond, the University can play a central role in preparing the nation for a sustained investigation of slavery and its legacies.

The Brown campus must be engaged in this process in a way that builds community and integrates ongoing initiatives and structures. As students who engaged in discussion along those lines and who represent a cross-section of academic interests, experiences and leadership within the student body, we feel that this is perhaps the area with which we have the most collective expertise. The following are suggestions for how the committee might ensure that its work will be continued on this campus for the next several years.

- The Committee should create a curriculum that makes the University’s history in regard to slavery, race, and restorative justice accessible to its students. More classes need to incorporate these topics into their existing syllabi, and other classes should be created to address these issues directly.
- The Committee should make a long-term commitment to student research on slavery and restorative justice. Funding student research projects, GISPS, and UTRAs would encourage students to get beyond the classroom towards more experiential learning. They may also provide resources for members of the Brown

and wider Rhode Island constituencies to engage with one another in forming community partnerships.. One possibility might be to recommend the establishment of a ten-year experimental fund so that scholars and students may pursue diverse projects regarding the legacy of slavery at Brown and within larger contexts. Next year's GRP provides a *crucial* opportunity for modeling this process and for engaging another energetic group of students in the Committee's work for both the short and long term.

- The Committee should activate the student body by partnering with student groups. Political and cultural groups, campus-wide programming groups such as the Lecture Board and the Debate Union, creative and performance arts programming, and student governance mechanisms must be encouraged to keep the student body involved and informed. In seeking to lead on these matters, students who have already demonstrated themselves to be active leaders should be part of this process. Student organizations ought to be approached to co-sponsor or take responsibility for some of the recommendations previously mentioned in this section. The GRP provides an especially powerful means to connect the Committee to a host of campus organizations.
- The Committee should ask President Simmons to sustain its work beyond 2006, potentially as a core component of her Diversity Initiative for the University. An institutionalized discussion of the legacy of slavery and an institutional commitment to diversity are reinforcing goals.
- The Committee should establish a working group to oversee the coordination of these various activities. This working group could involve representatives from some of the groups already mentioned—i.e. student leaders, members of the Committee and students who have been associated with its work, personnel from University institutions such as the Dean of the College, Office of Campus Life and Third World Center—and could also include a liaison to the Providence/Rhode Island community who can coordinate campus-based initiatives with community-based initiatives.

## **Local History, Local Justice**

By Ari Savitzky

When Brown University announced its intention to investigate its connection to slavery in Rhode Island, many people assumed that the story would begin and end with the Brown brothers themselves. The feud between abolitionist Moses and slave-trader John is the stuff of great history. But to focus on the Brown family alone obscures the larger systemic relationship between the University and racial hierarchy and injustice in Rhode Island. Brown University produced the leadership of nineteenth-century Providence and Rhode Island. Those alumni, faculty, administrators, and trustees of the University participated in a drama far more complicated than “slave-trader versus abolitionist.” By recovering their

decisions as policy-makers and shapers of public opinion, we can escape from what Joanne Pope Melish calls the “constructed amnesia” of racial injustice and slavery in New England.

Historians have begun to document the centrality of slavery to the economy of colonial Rhode Island, and indeed Brown University originated in a state deeply immersed in the Atlantic commerce of people and commodities. Enslaved people labored on South County plantations, while Newport merchants transported rum, sugar, and slaves between New England, West Africa, and the Caribbean. We know significantly less about the history of race and slavery in early-nineteenth-century Rhode Island. We can see the relationship between the University and communities of color in Providence most clearly during the early decades of the nineteenth century. By better understanding Brown’s historical role in its community, we can begin to meet our obligations to the future.

### Brown and the Community

Brown University stood at the center of Rhode Island power in 1800:

- Stephen Hopkins, signer of the Declaration of Independence, was the University’s first chancellor.
- Tristram Burgess, a five term congressman and Chief Justice of the RI Supreme Court, was a member of the faculty.
- Theodore Foster, class of 1770, was one of Rhode Island’s first Senators, and a trustee for almost 30 years.
- Esek Hopkins, commander and chief of the US Navy and once captain of the *Sally*, sat on the Brown Corporation for almost two decades.
- Joseph Leonard Tillinghast, AM Hon. 1819, published the *Providence Gazette*, was speaker of the state house, a three term congressman, and a corporation member from 1833 until his death in 1844.
- Richard Jackson, a corporation member from 1809 to 1838, was a cotton manufacturer and president of the Washington Insurance Company, a major maritime insurer in Rhode Island, for almost 40 years, and a three term US congressman.
- Protestant Episcopal Bishop Alexander Viets Griswold, who served as Chancellor from 1815 to 1828, was the rector of St. Michael’s church in Bristol, a major site of Rhode Island’s illegal slave trade.
- John Brown Francis, class of 1808, served in the state house of representatives from 1821 to 1829 as well as the state senate; he was governor of Rhode island from 1833-1838 and a US Senator, and he served on the Brown corporation from 1828 until 1857, for 13 of those years as Chancellor.

Brown graduates, faculty and corporation members in Providence, perhaps numbering some 300 or more by 1830, would have made for a substantial and powerful minority of the approximately 1500 freemen qualified to vote in town meetings and state elections.

Nicholas Brown Jr. exemplifies Brown's place within the balance of economic and political power. He would become a powerful merchant and manufacturer, and the University's namesake. Heir to the international shipping company of Brown brother Nicholas Sr., he also controlled Brown and Ives, one of the largest corporations in the state, and eventually most of the Blackstone river waterpower behind his uncle Moses' factories. He was the financier of Hope College, and the University's Treasurer. In 1822, Brown was also a member of the state legislature that added the word "white" to the voting qualifications of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. The city's four-man delegation also included Nathaniel Searle (class of 1794 and a corporation member) and Samuel Dexter (class of 1801). The proposal to racialize the franchise came from a committee of six state officials, more than half of whom served on the corporation.

The University came of age during a period of racial violence and racist lawmaking, as people of color attempted to assert themselves and were quashed by the dominant class of whites. As the state adopted gradual emancipation in the late eighteenth century, former slaves became free without becoming citizens. As employers, the Brown community shaped the economics of racism that made this so. By 1810, 3,600 free people of color lived in Rhode Island, nearly a third in Providence. The African-American population of Providence had barely grown by 1830— unsurprising considering that these free men and women were denied the franchise, excluded from good jobs, and subject to violence.

Two riots within a decade of each other- the Hardscrabble riot in 1824, and the Snow town riot in 1831- exemplify the marginality of people of color in Providence and Brown University's complicity in that injustice. The communities in Hardscrabble and Snow town, near the water on the northwestern and northern peripheries of College Hill, were ridiculed openly for demanding equality. They could find uneven work, but were targeted for operating brothels and dance halls to generate income; they were harassed by sailors and lower-class whites for walking on the sidewalks. In 1831, whites who lost a brawl to Providence black men recruited white sailors from the *Ann* and *Hope* – a ship named after Brown women, and owned by Nicholas Brown Jr.'s Brown and Ives– to help them destroy the homes of former college hill slaves, touching off the Snow Town riot.

In the wake of the riots, Brown community members were the direct agents of racist policy. In 1824, Tillinghast defended the white rioters who had literally destroyed Hardscrabble, getting two acquitted, and the charges against the remaining six dropped. In his defense, he noted that the black neighborhood was "a notorious nuisance" whose destruction no "sober citizen" could truly regret. Seven years later, the town council, which investigated the 1831 Snow town riots painfully overlooked any mention of black security, or compensating black property owners in their review of the riots. While lamenting the overthrow of law and order, the committee's report noted that people of color in Providence had been "unusually bold" as of late, and that the areas destroyed were inhabited by "idle blacks of the lowest stamp." Many of the white actors during the riot

were members of the Brown community –like the Justice of the peace who read the riot act, and the lead author of the Town Council’s Riot Committee report – and the same Joseph Tillinghast moderated the Town Meeting after the Snow Town debacle.

The elites who formed the core of the University in this period defined the standards of freedom and justice. If Nicholas Brown Jr. or others like him acknowledged their roles as the arbiters of who was truly free, then they did not acknowledge the racism within their society, nor did they offer those with darker skin the freedom they claimed. Perhaps, for those cultivated on College Hill, being a benevolent patron meant avoiding reconciliation with one’s actions and history vis-à-vis black slavery in Rhode Island. For others, clearly, a once-enslaved race could never be free.

### Legacies

The Brown community’s power in early 19th century Providence was not used accept people of color into society on equal terms. Today that power remains, and this community’s obligation, to the people around it, remains as well. How will we use our influence?

Brown is the city’s 3<sup>rd</sup> largest employer, behind RI Hospital and the Roman Catholic Church. The University continues to enjoy massive tax exemptions; its professors sit on State Ethics Commissions, its President on a search committee for a new school superintendent. Brown Alums occupy the mayor’s chair of the state capital, the governor’s seat, and one Senate seat, and the University, more than ever, is a gateway to power and acceptance for those lucky enough to be admitted. Its alumni and corporation members fill the ranks of Rhode Island and America’s elite.

Today, as in the early 1800s, economic justice, social inclusion and political equality are fleeting, at times wholly ignored by the powerful. There is much more to know, and the truth is indeed complicated. But we must re-examine the institution’s relationship with the local community with an eye towards the structural injustice faced by people of color in Providence in the early 1800s.

The idea of “temporary workers” at Brown working for years with no job security provides a corollary to the labor situation of free people of color in the early antebellum period, whose employment opportunities were circumscribed, and whose race provided an easy justification for mistreatment, underemployment or dismissal. While different situations by far, each is the result of a power imbalance used unjustly. To live up to the higher standard demanded by its legacy, Brown cannot operate like any other business. Once some Rhode Islanders were denied the right to economic and thus political independence by racism and property qualifications, and Brown’s agents were willing participants. So we must honor this tenet: all Brown employees should be paid a living wage and be secure in their jobs. We assert that positive right because it was not asserted then, and has not been since.

With its power as an employer, the University can also examine new ways to raise the standards of economic and social fairness. For example, the University could help

community members own their homes by instituting an Employer-Assisted Homeownership fund, in which both parties contribute to a fund used by an employee to buy his or her home. This is a powerful economic statement- that Brown believes everyone is entitled to own property, specifically their own home – but also one that addresses the economic and political exclusion of the local past.

In 1794, the Brown Corporation voted that “the President should use his influence to establish a grammar school in this town.” In his memoirs, William J. Brown recalls that his school closed down after his teacher left town. Despite, or perhaps due to Brown’s historic influence over the Providence school system, the city’s schools were segregated in 1828. Can Brown help every child in Providence gain the right to a stellar education?

We know from history that the power to define the terms of citizenship and inclusion are easily used against people of color, or communities without a political voice. How can Brown help those voices grow louder? Rhode Island’s felony disenfranchisement laws currently make 26.3 percent of black men in Providence ineligible to vote- statewide, the rate is over 20 percent for black men and less than 4 percent for whites. On College Hill, .3 percent of residents are ineligible to vote – on the South Side of Providence that number is over 10 percent, and over 30 percent for black men. The majority are non-violent offenders who are on probation or parole, living in the community without full citizenship rights just like their predecessors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Resolved, that Brown University should use its influence to stop the disproportionate disenfranchisement of black men through these laws.

In the early 1800s the town council decided who was or was not a resident, and those not favored had no rights. Today, those deemed non-residents, no matter how long they have lived here, are denied what others are granted as “free” persons. How can Brown challenge the exclusionary structures of the present day? Perhaps we can start by making it easier for any domestic resident of the US and Rhode Island to apply to here and receive financial aid, or by supporting community members who work as interpreters, register voters or help local people access their freedoms.

What narratives will future congressmen and state legislators, products of this University, remember as they form the rules which support some and condemn others? Those who forget history, Santayana reminds us, are doomed to repeat it; indeed, free people of color, despite their successes, were subjected to this lesson by a generation seeking to cut their ties with human bondage. In the face of slavery, of this University and this city’s history, we must acknowledge that there is much yet to be done, and that the responsibility is on us.

## **Memorialization**

By Annie Lewis and Cassandra Coulter

If slavery helped to write the early history of Brown University, we are obliged to recount that history in the present. Like many tourist destinations around the nation, Brown has erased its connection to slavery and the slave trade. Although enslaved men helped construct University Hall, this fact is absent from campus tours and brochures. In this regard, Brown is no different from most other sites in Rhode Island or the numerous plantation museums in the American South where, according to scholars Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small, retellings of the past “symbolically annihilate” the centrality of slavery. In fulfilling its charge, the Slavery and Justice Committee must create a permanent symbol of this history on our campus.

A memorial on the Main Green in the vicinity of University Hall would raise awareness of the impact of slavery on our campus, state and nation and create opportunities for discussion. It would also demonstrate Brown’s responsibility for dealing with an exploitative past and its legacies of inequity in the present. We propose that the Slavery and Justice Committee sponsor a memorial design contest for members of the Brown community or perhaps all of Rhode Island. This project could also be incorporated into the American Civilization course, “Memorials, Monuments and Museums.”

Brown’s memorialization of slavery should be a process rather than a fixed product. It is essential that a slavery memorial at Brown does not merely become a “part of the furniture,” but remains a dynamic space that may generate reflection and conversation for members of the Brown Community, Rhode Island and the nation as a whole for years to come. Community events can be planned to incorporate the memorial space and draw attention to the history it represents. For example, a dedication ceremony for the memorial in which students, faculty and staff could come together for speeches, music and performance to honor nameless individuals could mark the unveiling of the space.

Another way to continually draw attention to what the memorial represents might be to include it in the standard speech that tour guides give to prospective students and their parents. Tour guides are in some way our University heritage and image liaisons to the public. We believe that tour guides should present information about University Hall, the Brown Brothers’ involvement in the slave trade, and the existence of the Slavery and Justice Committee. While some people might be concerned that a discussion on the subject of slavery would decrease interest in the University or incite resentment, we feel Brown would be taking an exemplary step by revealing its past and its desire to deal with it in a constructive fashion.

The John Carter Brown library contains a wealth of information regarding the Brown family’s history and all aspects of business dealings and life. It has given us access to meticulously documented information regarding the disastrous Trans-Atlantic path of the Brig *Sally*, a slave ship chartered by the Brown Brothers. Our class has created an exhibition about the voyage of the *Sally* to install in the Rhode Island Historical Society’s Aldrich House. We ask that the University continue to support the dissemination of these

historic materials and the conversion of the display into a traveling exhibition to take to libraries and schools around Rhode Island. The John Brown House reinterpretation will include information on the *Sally* and the history of slavery. We hope that the *Sally* story will also be included in the National Slavery Museum.

The dedication of space and time to the recognition of contributions of enslaved persons is necessary for reformatting our collective memory. In addition to the physical commemoration of the history of slavery, the ongoing pursuit of knowledge is both a crucial component of restitution for past injustice, as well as a form of memorialization that encourages systemic change in the present. The memorial should serve as a reminder of the consequences of two hundred and fifty years of slavery and an impetus to disentangle the doctrine of white supremacy from the threads of American culture.

### **Slavery, Justice, and Education**

By Viki Rasmussen

The frequent argument that slavery has no bearing on contemporary America attests to our nation's failure to teach this history. That this complaint is voiced on our own campus suggests that Brown needs to do more to increase what Americans know about their nation's slaveholding past. Such sentiments are striking in light of continuing racial disparities in education and opportunity here on Providence's East Side—just look at the situation at Hope High School or at Brown's low proportion of students of color. In light of these facts, the University must make new commitments to promulgating the history of slavery in America, supporting educational opportunities in local communities, and increasing the diversity of its student population.

#### **Disseminating the History of Slavery in Rhode Island**

- The Committee should fund the distribution of the Watson Institute's *Choices* "Slavery in New England" curriculum to Rhode Island public schools. Because Rhode Island has such a strong connection with slavery and such a severe financial crisis in its public schools, we recommend that Brown University see to it that the *Choices* curriculum is made available to those teachers who agree to use it in their classrooms.
- Brown should host a summer teacher's institute on the subject of slavery in New England. This way, teachers from all over the country can have the opportunity to engage in the topic and learn thoughtful, creative ways in which to approach its complexities in their classrooms. This teachers' institute would help Brown lead the way in making New England slavery a widespread topic in public and private schools across the US.
- Brown should create a permanent resource/research/community center for the exploration of institutional complicity and the legacy of slavery in New England and the United States. This resource center should include a library, where community members (Brown and otherwise) can find information regarding slavery and reparations debates.

Additionally, the resource center should serve as a space (comfortable, welcoming, safe) where campus and broader community discussions surrounding these issues can take place. Seminars, lectures, meetings, and the Brown teacher's institute will be held here. The establishment of a resource center will firmly establish Brown as the nation's leader in the discussion of issues of slavery, memory, and repair as it will demonstrate our institution's seriousness and commitment in addressing these questions.

#### Remedying Racial Injustice in Rhode Island Public Education

Just a few blocks away from our prestigious University, Hope High School has a drop out rate of fifty-two percent. The Committee is not responsible for Hope High School's or the Providence school district's failings. Nonetheless, our focus on restorative justice obliges us to address the University's relationship to its community, and especially the most marginalized segments of Providence. In the spirit of educating and creating dialogue, Brown should establish serious and long-lasting relationships with certain schools around Providence, particularly neighboring Hope High School. The administration should create a partnership with Hope High and institutionalize this relationship so that it will outlast the commitments of any cohort of graduating students. What can the two institutions gain from one another? How can Brown's resources best be used at Hope? What is needed most? Brown must start asking these questions and become an active partner with Providence public schools if it is to address the legacy of slavery and racism in Rhode Island.

Brown should create a scholarship for Providence students of color and consider naming the award for the enslaved workers who helped to build University Hall in the 1780s. This scholarship can be given to a Providence student or students who have demonstrated their commitment towards addressing inequities in their communities. It will not necessarily have to be used for attending Brown University, but can be used in any kind of pursuit of higher education. This scholarship will serve to reinforce Brown's commitment to the Providence community and will also honor those historically denied the opportunity of higher education.

#### Recommitting Brown University to Racial Diversity

If Brown is serious about initiating a *national* dialogue around the legacy of slavery in the United States, the school must take risks. We therefore recommend that Brown reaffirm its commitment to affirmative action, specifically cite its institutional legacy in doing so, and challenge the Ivy League and the federal government to follow suit. Part of the present day consequences for past injustices regarding the inaccessibility of institutions like this one for African Americans is that African Americans, as a group, are severely underrepresented. Opponents of affirmative action have gone so far as to imply that racism no longer exists in the United States or that our unjust past is not at fault for present day inequalities. Brown University, with its prestigious position among institutions of higher education, is in a wonderful position to take a stance against current policies that are in the process of dismantling affirmative action as we know it.

Brown can and should continue to establish programs such as PCEP (& other Swearer Center programs) that encourage local African American youth to pursue higher education.

These programs should be formatted in a way that provides students with the necessary academic rigor for the high level of academic achievement necessary to enter the highest-ranking academic institutions in the nation, such as Brown. Brown could also implement one such program that would guarantee those seniors whom successfully complete the program undergraduate seats in Brown's incoming class. In taking these actions, Brown would be making a concrete commitment to supporting local African American students, many of whom, are the descendants of slaves. In addition, Brown can look at programs such as the University of Rhode Island's GAP (Guaranteed Admissions Program) for ideas on how to implement such programs.

### **Recruitment, Retention, Representation**

By Sage Morgan-Hubbard, Erica Sagrans, Basirat Ottun and Vidya Putcha

Over the years students of color have worked to increase minority presence at Brown, through their own work as well as pushing the University to take action. In 1968, black students divorced themselves from the University, demanding Brown increase minority recruitment and retention efforts. After negotiations, Brown pledged itself to "institute a new policy to at least reflect in each entering Brown class the black representation in the general populace" ("Brown Pledges \$1.2 Million for Blacks," *Brown Daily Herald*, December 9, 1968). Yet despite student agitation when the University did not fulfill its part of the bargain (in 1968, 1975, and 1985), Brown's population still fails to reflect the diversity of the United States as a whole. The Slavery and Justice Committee must demand the University finally fulfill its 1968 agreement on increased minority representation: every incoming class' percentage of minority students should reflect their numerical representation the United States population. This would specifically mean each class would have at least 12% African-American students.

Additionally, the University should distinguish between African-American students, Afro-Caribbean, African Diaspora, and Continental African students. While it is important to have all of these groups of students represented in both the student body and within the faculty and staff, there are differences in socioeconomic and cultural experiences between each of these various groups. Currently these students all check the box "Black" on admission forms and are automatically included in the same group. Admissions officers should aggressively recruit African-American students from places like the "Black Belt" in the South in order to increase not only our Black population but specifically our African American population.

Brown's retention of students of color depends in part on providing support services and programming geared towards both supporting students of color on campus and on bringing issues of diversity to the forefront of the wider community's consciousness. The Slavery and Justice Committee should recommend that the University:

- Make a specific commitment to increase the number of faculty of color on campus, specifically African-American faculty.

- Offer specific programming for orientation week, perhaps using “Orientation Class Meeting #3 on Diversity” as a platform. Engaging students at the beginning of their Brown experience will help to establish the committee’s work as a prominent feature of campus life. Possible ideas include screening of the documentary “Colored Brown;” featuring a relevant research-to-performance play during Class Meeting #3; and planning other optional events to educate first-years about Brown’s history, to provoke discussion, and to inspire further involvement in the Committee’s work.
- Continue to bring up issues of diversity, racial and economic injustice and the redress of historical wrongs throughout the academic year. Other early-fall activities serving the entire campus might include kicking off and publicizing a public-history/memorial design contest (described under “Memorialization”). An ongoing process might take advantage of already established Brown programming such as community meetings or faculty fellow breaks to continue conversations about the Committee’s investigations. It would behoove the Committee to begin this process during the 2005-2006 school year so that these campus-wide discussions can be brought to bear on the committee’s final report in December, 2005.
- Establish and endow a Presidential Lecture Series that will continue to bring speakers to campus to specifically address issues of race, historical injustice and historical reconciliation.

The Third World Center's diversity programming is essential to the entire university’s programming. Although planned with the help of student programmers, TWC programs are very different from other student group organizing and needs to be distinguished as such in its quest for funding. Student programmers at the Third World Center should not have to go through the student-run Undergraduate Finance Board to obtain their budgets. The student staffers are themselves underpaid and generally have more unpaid hours than equivalent student programmers who work in places like the Swearer Center. This results in stressed out student of color who have to work more than one job at a time in order to fully receive their work study allowance, as well as under-funded heritage weeks and months that could have been planned better if their budget was established before they began to program. We recommend that funding for the TWC programming come directly out of an administrative office, such as Associate Provost Brenda Allen's Office of Institutional Diversity or the Third World Center’s overall budget.

In addition, we have the following recommendations to make concerning specific campus programming initiatives:

- The Third World Center, the Office of Institutional Diversity, the Swearer Center, the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America, and other related centers should actively work with the diversity programs of other local schools (such as Johnson & Wales, Rhode Island College, RISD, etc.) to share speakers, costs and programming ideas so that we can build connections between the schools, particularly between the student of color communities at these institutions.

- Black students at Brown should have more opportunities to work with the Inman Page council and Alumni Relations in order to inspire them to stay at Brown and help them continue on and find jobs. Within activities such as career services panels and informal 'get to know you events' there should be opportunities for current Black students to see who has come before them and where they can go with their Brown degree.
- One feature of this relationship with the Inman Page Council and Alumni relations should be that these organizations make at least a three-year commitment to developing a "Black Oral History Project". Through the Third World Center, the Swearer Center and the Committee for Slavery and Justice, students will interview Black alumni about their experiences at Brown to learn about how the Brown experience for students of color has changed and how it has stayed the same over the past hundred plus years. This project will be laid out by the end of this year and will need to be implemented through the Slavery and Justice group research project, the TWC staffers, MPC Friends. Students should receive course credit or a stipend for their participation in the project.

### **Further Research Topics**

Compiled by Brianna Larkin

Throughout the year, the students in the Slavery and Justice GRP explored Brown's connection to slavery through several research projects. Those projects included studies on Mississippi's Civil Rights History legacy, creating a museum exhibit on *The Sally* slaving voyage, developing an oral history project on the Black Experience at Brown, writing a curriculum on slavery in New England and beginning an oral history project that investigates the Black experience at Brown. We urge you to continue to create classroom opportunities for students to research this complicated history as well. We have come up with several research topics for exploration in the future.

#### 1. Public Apologies

What efforts have been made in the United States to apologize for slavery? Have such apologies in other contexts—Japanese-American internment—been salutary?

#### 2. African-American History in Early Providence

What were the opportunities available to free people of color in the 1800s?

#### 3. Reparations Movement

What are the historical roots for the African-American movement for reparations? Who are the groups involved, and how do they define their objectives? What are the precedents for reparations payments in the United States?

#### 4. Labor at Brown and Labor Policies

What are Brown's labor policies towards its workers? How does this link to Brown's history with slavery? Perhaps an oral history project with Brown University workers.

5. Brown & Providence Housing

What housing issues affect the Providence community? What have they been historically? How has Brown been involved with Providence housing issues in the past?

6. Rhode Island 1700's, Slavery & Political Economy

What more can we learn about the role of slavery and the slave trade in eighteenth century Rhode Island? How can we look beyond the specific slave trading activities of the Brown family to recognize the degree to which slavery was integral to the entire state's economy? What are the antecedents of local movements for abolition? What role did free blacks and enslaved people play in the life of the state?

7. Comparative Contexts

Continuing to examine comparative contexts for the redress of historical wrongs, nationally (e.g. compensation of Japanese-Americans after the Second World War) and internationally (e.g. South Africa, Rwanda). Also examining how other American institutions might be addressing this specific injustice – e.g. the City of Chicago

8. Incarceration

What are the issues involving race, police brutality and incarceration in Rhode Island? How does this relate to the legacy of slavery?

9. Rites and Reasons Theatre

Using the Theatre to create art and stimulate dialogue engaging students in the discussion of Brown's history and legacy with slavery. Encouraging students to write plays about the topic and/or picking historical plays that deal with this issue

10. Sparking student involvement

Sponsoring some kind of campaign on campus to encourage students to engage in this dialogue. Sustaining that dialogue by allowing students to actively participate in the Slavery and Justice Committee Events: Having students plan events, participate in workshops at events, suggest speakers and topics for the Committee's fall program

11. Developing a website which includes documents from Brown's history with connections to American slavery

Similar to the Brown "Freedom Now" website documenting the Brown/Tougaloo exchange. The website could also include a selection of letters in response to the committee, this student proposal, and the research created by the Slavery and Justice GRPs

12. Visual/ Performance Art

Sponsor student art addressing this topic and invite artists from the Providence community and the public to display their art on campus

13. Activist Archive

Documenting the history of Brown activism online; encouraging current and future student groups to contribute to the archive.

## **Brown's Message On the National Stage: "Getting the word out"**

By Kathleen Osborn

For many of the same reasons that we need to invest more in education and awareness at Brown and the surrounding community, we must also invest in spreading our findings and suggestions to the country as a whole. Brown's efforts to make slavery central to the American story and unpacking the toll it has had on our stratified society must reach the national stage. At the recent conference, "Historical Injustices: Restitution and Reconciliation in International Perspective," Elazar Barkan challenged Brown's Slavery and Justice Committee to spread the word. He suggested that the modern-day legacy of American slavery will only reach the national audience through an evolving process of information gathering and responsible dialogue. Brown should export its model to other universities around the country, and then to the broader society.

Having initiated this inquiry and having received much national attention, Brown should continue to lead and shape the debate. A conference devoted to helping other colleges and institutions begin similar processes of self-study will model responsible academic inquiry. Brown should further propose a national academic commission to discuss slavery and justice in the context of higher education. We can begin with our fellow Ivy League schools, themselves deeply indebted to the wealth generated by early America's slave-based economy. Brown should host additional gatherings on the topics of the American reparations campaign, the role of slavery in economic development, and in campaigns for international restorative justice.

While Barkan's suggestion is an important piece of our work as academics, Brown should also be engaged in disseminating information on our findings and process to a broader public. Brown is already engaged in producing educational materials for primary and secondary schools, but we must reach into the realm of mass media. Brown should encourage faculty and students to publish editorials in mass-circulation publications in order to make the debate in academia readily accessible to the general public. We should explore other media domains from radio to television to internet blogs in order to spotlight our research and findings.

While disseminating information through media sources is important we also recognize the work that must be done in public spaces. When James Horton and Lois Horton visited Brown this spring, they stressed the importance of telling accurate stories in public history sites. Thousands of people a year visit historical sites from ex-presidents homes to historical recreation sites such as Colonial Williamsburg. These are the places where many, many people gain their historical knowledge. Brown can help museum and public historical site specialists, especially in the Rhode Island area, incorporate information about slavery's legacy in their presentations. In addition, Brown University can identify itself as an important site in the history of American slavery.

For our efforts not to be in vain, Brown University must become a guiding light in this difficult debate.