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Family Legacies and University Lineages: U.S. Universities, Slavery, and Feminist Rhetorics of Redress

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Abstract

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In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, we have witnessed a surge of public interest in and discussion around racial reckoning. Universities in the United States and across the globe are grappling with their historical associations with transatlantic and chattel slavery. This dissertation takes up the question of how the U.S. university—a social institution that is deeply structured by histories of white supremacy—reckons with this racial past at this present moment, and what reckoning might mean for the university moving forward. How might university-based projects of repair invite or impede the collective reimagining of more just futures?

In this dissertation, I examine how, when, and to what ends twenty-first-century practices of racial reckoning at U.S. universities rely on and reinforce structures of the family. I do so by focusing on Universities Studying Slavery, a U.S.-based consortium committed to addressing legacies of slavery and understanding how these pasts continue to affect present-day practices. I argue that as universities grapple with their pasts, they rearticulate gendered and racialized forms of inheritance and identity facilitated by the family, first to determine the moments at which minoritized subjects "count" within the university and, second, to enfold these subjects in the university's subsistence. I contend that this enduring recourse to the family delimits forms of institutional responsibility and care associated with repair, stifles the imaginative possibilities of redress, and risks reiterating the structures of racialized exclusion that universities purport to remedy.

Feminist scholarship, most notably Black feminist thought and women of color feminisms, offers extensive insight into how disempowering university structures are maintained and transformed. Feminist scholars have also long engaged in debate around the family form and abolition. Further, current scholarship emerging out of the comparably nascent field of critical university studies probes the imperative of abolition in relation to the university. My project

positions racial reckoning at the site of the university as a unique space that might bring these discourses together to reveal the entanglement of these abolitionist imperatives and to reimagine the possibilities of university redress. As such, my interrogation of university redress is grounded in Black feminist thought, rhetorics of reconciliation, and abolitionist discourses of the university and the family. By using this theoretical framework alongside rhetorical analysis, I analyze the extent to which U.S. universities rearticulate affective and material structures of the family while reckoning with legacies of slavery.

This project presents three discrete case studies of U.S. university reckoning and of the ways in which familial belonging is conceived by and through universities. I first explore how Georgetown University approaches redress by reworking the racialized admissions practice of legacy preference through recourse to genetics and genealogy. Then I focus on how Virginia Commonwealth University engages local community members in the labor of social reproduction, inviting them to guide the university in reckoning with human remains discovered during a campus construction project. Finally, I turn to the committed partnership between Tougaloo College and Brown University, which was initially formalized in 1964 during the twentieth-century civil rights movement. I consider the ways in which the fiftieth anniversary of the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership prompts rhetorical negotiations of the lineage of this coupling—between a predominantly white-serving university and a historically Black university—and of institutional debts.

As this dissertation demonstrates, practices of twenty-first-century university redress require enduring attention to the interlocking and unfolding relationships between race and gender. For racial reckoning at the site of the university to imbue transformative potential, we must scrutinize the ways in which the institutions of both university and family are inherited, the ways in which they continue to unfold at present, and the possibilities for their active reinvention and dismantling across time.

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This dissertation is the product of curiosity, diligence, commitment, and most of all, cherished relationships. First, I am grateful for all the suggestions and feedback generated in conversation with my advisor, Dr. Angela G. Ray, and my committee members, Dr. Jennifer C. Nash and Dr. Leslie M. Harris. It would be impossible, Angela, to overstate how fortunate I feel to work with and alongside a scholar, mentor, and individual of your integrity, thoughtfulness, and intelligence. I've watched you lead with compassion and teach with curiosity. I continue to learn from you daily and I look forward to doing so well into the future. Jen, I am in awe of your brilliance and commitment to feminist thought. I aspire to approximate something close to the intellectual generosity you demonstrate in the classroom and in your scholarship, and I deeply value your continued contributions to this project. Leslie, your leadership and ongoing work in university racial reckoning directly inspired and continue to inform this project. I am thankful for your unparalleled insights and suggestions.

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the safety and comfort of our shared memories and ever-deepening friendship. Becca, Patricia, and Kelly, the sense of grounding and the unfettered encouragement that you provide is beyond measure. I feel like I am heading home every time I return to Philadelphia (and as we know, there have been many times) and this is because of you three. Schept, your levity, compassion, and wisdom are the perfect antidote in any situation. I'm also grateful to Joe and Kathleen, who instilled in me their insatiable intellectual curiosities and value of ambitious achievements, respectively.

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Contents

Here We Are

When Mélisande Short-Colomb arrived on Georgetown University's campus in 2017, she had already raised four children, now adults with children of their own, and spent another twenty-two years holding various professional roles.[1] Her initial interest in applying to Georgetown—which led to her eventual acceptance and decision to attend—was sparked by the university's reckoning with its legacy of slavery and subsequent alterations to its admissions policies. When Short-Colomb matriculated as an undergraduate student at sixty-three years old, most of her incoming classmates were more than four decades her junior. Short-Colomb reflected on this dramatic difference in age. With age came experience; she could perhaps share her differing perspectives with her cohort and pass down some of her wisdom. At the same time, however, she had no qualms about clarifying her freedom from a parental-like responsibility for these students' well-being or academic successes. Though she was, in her words, "the age of their grandparents," Short-Colomb was very clear that she neither harbored the sentiments nor wanted to fill the role expected of such family figures.[2] Rather, according to one reporter who interviewed her, "she speaks to her fellow undergrads in ways their parents don't." As Short-Colomb put it, "I say, 'I'm not invested in you. You're not my kid. I don't have any expectations of you. I just want you to be your best person.'"[3] While Short-Colomb

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[1] Catherine Morris, "A Bittersweet Return," *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* 34, no. 21 (November 16, 2017): 18–20; Richard Harris, "How A Slavery Legacy Made This 65-Year-Old a Georgetown Undergrad," *Forbes*, June 16, 2019, https://www.forbes.com/sites/nextavenue/2019/06/16/how-a-slavery-legacy-made-this-65-year-old-a-georgetown-undergrad/. As an interesting note, the plain black robe and flowered headscarf that Short-Colomb wore to Georgetown's new student convocation in 2017 is now housed at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. "Robe worn by Mélisande Short-Colomb at Georgetown University convocation," National Museum of African American History and Culture, accessed April 22, 2023, https://nmaahc.si.edu/object/nmaahc_2021.10.1.

[2] Harris, "How A Slavery Legacy Made This 65-Year-Old a Georgetown Undergrad."

[3] Harris, "How A Slavery Legacy Made This 65-Year-Old a Georgetown Undergrad."

did not possess a deep investment in the outcomes of her classmates, her physical presence on campus represented another kind of institutional investment, similarly entangled in a knotty web of familial relations and responsibility, institutional care and indebtedness. This dissertation examines how U.S. universities like Georgetown invest in racial reckoning, and what happens when an institution takes on the project of caring for its past, the various groups that become implicated in this labor, and the myriad ways in which the material and emotional responsibility for such work is parceled out.

Short-Colomb is a Black woman, a native of New Orleans, and a descendant of the Queen and Mahoney families. These families trace their ancestry back to individuals owned and sold by Jesuits in the early nineteenth century to assuage Georgetown's crushing debt. Because of this familial lineage, Short-Colomb is also one of the first two undergraduate "descendants" who were admitted by Georgetown following the university's extension of legacy admissions preferences in 2016. The amended policy offered special considerations in the university admissions process to people whose ancestors, like Short-Colomb's, were "enslaved people owned by the Maryland Province of Jesuits." This form of "care and attention" was already extended to applicants whose family members presently worked for the university or held Georgetown degrees.[4] As Short-Colomb's earlier reflections suggest, her life at the university was fleshed out by arrangements of investment and expectation that were largely understood through the framework of family. Family—as genealogical inheritance, mode of belonging, symbol of social organization—tethered the individual to the institution, and the university's past to its present and future.

Though Short-Colomb was not the only student admitted under this revised admissions policy, the overwhelming majority of media attention focused solely on her and her journey, as she put it, to

[4] "Descendants," Georgetown University Office of Undergraduate Admissions, https://uadmissions.georgetown.edu/applying/descendants/.

"go back to the source of my family in America."[5] This journey entailed the easily anticipated obstacles of relocating one's life to a tiny dorm room a thousand miles away from a home of origin. It also brought the additional burden of alienation. Short-Colomb's interests, daily routines, and physical appearance—as one of the oldest students and also one of the few Black students on campus—set her apart from her undergraduate comrades.[6] While the acute intensity of these feelings of isolation would ease whenever she saw "others who look[ed] like her there—workers behind the counter or behind the scenes, making the university function," such moments were "bittersweet."[7] In an interview with *The New Yorker* two years into her undergraduate degree, Short-Colomb "admitted feeling bitter when she sees the African-American groundskeepers, knowing that the university had built over the former burial sites of slaves." Remarking on Georgetown's historical disregard for the enslaved and the institution's ever-present legacy of slavery, she added, "No brothers weeding and mowing *their* grounds."[8] Short-Colomb's comments draw attention to the inheritances that remain embedded in the university's campus today, despite its efforts to attend to

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[5] Terrence McCoy, "Her Ancestors Were Georgetown's Slaves. Now, at Age 63, She's Enrolled There — as a College Freshman," *Washington Post,* August 30, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/her-ancestors-were-georgetowns-slaves-now-at-age-63-shes-enrolled-there----as-a-college-freshman/2017/08/30/31e22058-8d07-11e7-84c0-02cc069f2c37_story.html.

[6] Kitty Kelly, "A Reparations Movement Begat at Georgetown," *New Yorker*, May 13, 2019, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/05/20/a-reparations-movement-begat-at-georgetown. According to *Forbes*, which cites 2020-2021 data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, only 7.2% of undergraduate students identify as Black or African American. "#22 Georgetown University," *Forbes*, https://www.forbes.com/colleges/georgetown-university/?sh=2aa47be94efc.

[7] Harris, "How A Slavery Legacy Made This 65-Year-Old a Georgetown Undergrad"; Morris, "A Bittersweet Return."

[8] Kelly, "A Reparations Movement Begat at Georgetown." Short-Colomb graduated from Georgetown in 2021. As of 2023, she is continuing to perform her one-woman piece *Here I Am* in Washington, DC, and premiering her newest work, a documentary titled *I Am the Bridge* that follows Short-Colomb's involvement in the GU272 reparations movement on Georgetown's campus. Franzi Wild, "'Involuntary Founders': The Missing People in Georgetown's Memory Work," *The Georgetown Voice*, February 3, 2023, https://georgetownvoice.com/2023/02/03/involuntary-founders-the-missing-people-in-georgetowns-memory-work/.

this racial past.

Georgetown University's attempts at atonement certainly had tangible benefits for Short-Colomb, including a bachelor's degree from one of the nation's finest elite institutions; previously, she had started and never completed a degree at Xavier University of Louisiana, a historically Black university in New Orleans.[9] Yet her story also illustrates the more subtle though no less present ways in which she bore the embodied and emotional labor of university reckoning. This labor included offering her narrative time and again as a form of edification and watching as her being in part became an object of institutionalized proof, evidence of the university's having accomplished some measure of "success" in addressing its legacy of slavery. Short-Colomb was tacitly tasked with recalling and reciting her familial lineage in relation to Georgetown, and with informing individuals and the institution alike about the enduring aftereffects of the university's historic violence against Black individuals, communities, and families. At the same time, her acceptance to and triumphant passage through the university will presumably allow her to reap the benefits of this institution, despite its deeply entrenched racial pasts.

As a Black woman in the United States, as a mother and grandmother, as a descendant of people whose enslaved labor and sale directly and traceably benefited a university, as an individual who began her university journey decades earlier at a historically Black institution and completed a degree at this predominantly white-serving institution, Short-Colomb and the story of her relationship to Georgetown summon the many themes that thread through this project. Yet by invoking the image of Short-Colomb (in a dissertation that will facilitate doctoral accreditation at a historically white-serving institution, no less), this introduction again asks that she momentarily shoulder the

[9] According to the university's website, Xavier is the nation's only Catholic and historically Black university. The university began as a normal school under a different name in 1915 and began operating as Xavier University of Louisiana in 1925. "The Full Story," Xavier University of Louisiana, accessed April 22, 2023, https://www.xula.edu/about/the-full-story.html.

complexities, tensions, and paradoxes of contemporary university reckoning that animate this project. The insights shared by Short-Colomb and the glimpses of her intimate experience of institutional redress position the family as a fundamental component of university pasts, presents, and futures. Throughout this project, I probe the ways in which university projects of redress take up the family, as institution and as discursive resource, and the ways in which reliance on the image of the family helps to configure university redress. How is it possible that the family might serve as a foundation of the university's historic racial violence and also function as a present-day vehicle through which reckoning is determined and reparations are dispensed?

This dissertation examines how U.S. universities approach redress for legacies of slavery in the twenty-first century. The questions that guided my initial inquiry began broadly, as I asked how U.S. universities publicly reconciled these legacies alongside contemporary racial injustices. What forms might this reconciliation assume? How might redress function for universities at present, and in what ways might redress factor into institutional futures? How and in what ways might these racial histories become rhetorical resources for universities as they rearticulate commitments to equity and inclusion? I came upon Short-Colomb's story early on in my research as I investigated what would become my first analytic chapter, which focuses on Georgetown University and legacy admissions preferences. As my writing of Chapter 1 progressed, I repeatedly found myself wrestling with the concepts of care and responsibility. Certainly, the appearance of such terms could be expected when surveying discourses of how to handle at present the violence embedded in our institutional histories. Yet these concepts contain phenomenological and material ambiguity: care for whom or what? What does responsibility consist of and what form might it take? Who is responsible for providing care, and who is privileged enough to receive care, when, and why? To what ends are the caring and the cared-for involved in defining the terms (and the term limits) of responsibility? Such questions captured my curiosity. As I moved on to the work of writing my second chapter, I began

to settle into the endlessly complex ways in which university and community articulations of responsibility were coupled with discursive recourse to the family. In Chapter 2, various terms and types of responsibility emerged in relation to forms of reproductive labor. By Chapter 3, responsibility assumed the shape of paternalistic indebtedness to institutions, as one might be beholden to a parent or bound to a spouse, and it became clear that the discourse of family was inextricably woven throughout the fabric of university reckoning and my analysis.

In this project, I argue that making sense of university redress requires a deep comprehension of the university's reliance on and reinforcement of family, as well as the stakes of the enduring union between the formidable institutions of university and family. The latter warrants explanation here and ongoing attentiveness throughout my analysis, since each of us carries our own experiences with, feelings about, and understandings of the family; its ubiquity defies singular definition. I discuss and scrutinize the family in this dissertation as an image called upon by universities. As such, my analysis should not be confused with a targeted critique of any daily or individual experiences of loving, respecting, and relating to others. Rather, I am interested in how the family serves as a rhetorical vehicle that invites certain configurations and categorizations of people and that justifies the distribution of responsibilities. My concern is with the ways in which institutional invocations of the family shape how universities and individuals conceive of and participate in racial redress at a given moment. As universities rely on the image and discourse of family in relation to redress, what versions of responsibility, care, or investment might this reliance facilitate, reproduce, and preclude? If institutions were to eschew recourse to the family, what other possibilities for relation and thus remedy might take shape?

I examine these questions and the ways in which the familiarity and ease of relying on family obstructs the consideration of other modes of imagining redress. To do so, I engage with feminist literature on abolishing the family. Certainly, abolition carries varied connotations in connection to

the history of slavery in the United States and the present-day prison abolition movement, which are also entangled.[10] My orientation toward abolition is greatly informed by this twenty-first-century moment in wherein rhetorics of abolition articulate the desires both to demolish and to critically reimagine the institutions and structures perpetuating systemic racism. By entering into conversation with scholarship that presents abolition as the absolute dismantling of such institutions and creative envisioning of new forms of social connection, my aim is to lay the groundwork for conceiving of alternatives to the family as universities reckon with their pasts.

Another significant objective of this project is to firmly define racial redress at the site of the university as an inherently feminist issue, one that demands attention to the imbrication of the social institutions of gender, race, and university.[11] In analyzing university redress alongside gender and race, my aim is to underscore how social institutions like the university enculturate ways of being that suggest what is or is not normal and which alternately determine forms of acceptance and exclusion. I build my arguments in conversation with feminist critiques of the university, many of which come from scholars of Black feminist thought and women of color feminisms.[12] The many scholars that I draw from as I execute my analysis and who fall within this capacious categorization

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[10] For a comprehensive discussion of all the ways in which U.S. slavery and its abolition directly connect to the present-day burgeoning carceral system in this country, see Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012).

[11] My understanding of the university is informed by Sara Ahmed's elaboration of institutions "in terms of how some actions become automatic at a collective level." For Ahmed, institutions are physical, social, and historical structures that amass credence over time, such that certain ways of doing appear as the natural way things have always been. She notes, "When history accumulates, certain ways of doing things seems natural. An institution takes shape as an effect of what has become automatic." Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 25.

[12] Here, my reference to feminist critiques of the university and academia includes the influential writings of scholars like Audre Lorde, June Jordan, and Barbara Christian, as well as subsequent engagements with and reflections on the works of these and other Black feminist thinkers within the academy by the likes of Marquis Bey, Roderick Ferguson, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Grace Kyungwon Hong, and Jennifer C. Nash, to name a few.

have examined and continue to scrutinize the university and their gendered and raced position within this institution in remarkably insightful ways. If the twenty-first-century momentum toward university reckoning is to be harnessed in ways that affect the meaningful transformation of this substantial social institution—as an engine for knowledge production and education, and for creating community and strengthening collectivity—then we need, as Sara Ahmed puts it, "feminist and antiracist critique because we need to understand how it is that the world takes shape by restricting the forms in which we gather. The time for this is now. We need this critique now if we are to learn how not to reproduce what we inherit."[13]

In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, we have witnessed a burgeoning movement of universities across the United States publicly calling attention to and considering how to reckon with their historical relationships to the violence of the transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery. Disparate, individualized, or grassroots efforts—in the form of student-led protests and articles published in student newspapers, and faculty-led innovations, such as the reworking of syllabi and research in university archives—often precede formal institutional efforts at many universities. These activities are at times accompanied by other institutionally unsanctioned actions, such as the unambiguous marking up and toppling over of on-campus statues and the destruction of racist imagery.[14] More formalized institutional efforts include university-sponsored and coordinated

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[13] Ahmed, *On Being Included*, 182.

[14] There are numerous examples of universities both within and beyond the United States wherein institutional engagements with their legacies of slavery follow years of unofficial work led by faculty and students. For example, nearly a decade before Harvard University began its formal Presidential Initiative on Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery, Harvard professor of history Sven Beckert headed the Harvard and Slavery Research Project which, along with his seminar on Harvard and slavery, entailed extensive work in the university's archives to tease out this history. Corydon Ireland, "Harvard and Slavery," *The Harvard Gazette*, November 18, 2011, https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/11/harvard-and-slavery/. At Yale University, student protests related to the renaming of on-campus buildings garnered national attention well before the university charged a formalized working group in October 2020 with interrogating its institutional history and slavery. Noah Remnick, "Yale Defies Calls to Rename Calhoun College," *New York*

committees and working groups consisting of faculty, staff, students, and alumni, the removal of statues, plaques, and building names exalting those who owned slaves or directly benefited from enslavement along with the construction of memorials or monuments commemorating the enslaved, as well as modified curricula to highlight and examine these histories. The Universities Studying Slavery (USS) consortium offers a helpful cross-section of this breadth of institutionalized efforts emerging in the twenty-first century. The case studies constituting this project come from USS.

University Reckoning in the Twenty-First Century

In April 2021, Georgetown hosted a virtual conference of USS. The conference coincided with the District of Columbia's Emancipation Day and featured panel discussions that included "Contemporary Legacies of Slavery: The Justice System" and "Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation: A Pathway Forward." These traditional academic panels were interspersed with other events, like a "GU Virtual Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation Walking Tour" and the premiere of Short-Colomb's virtual performance titled *Here I Am*, which concluded the first day of conference programming. Throughout the piece, Short-Colomb used storytelling, pictures of archival documents, photographs, and other vibrant images to pay "homage to her ancestors and her personal journey through narrative, music and imagery."[15] Short-Colomb's

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Times, April 27, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/28/nyregion/yale-defies-calls-to-rename-calhoun-college.html. Yale also serves as the site of one poignant and well-known example of individualized, institutionally unsanctioned activities related to racial reckoning. In June 2016, Corey Menafee, an employee working in the dining hall of Yale's Calhoun College, "used a broomstick to smash a stained-glass window that depicted enslaved people of African descent." Eli Meyerhoff, *Beyond Education: Radical Studying for Another World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 2-3.

[15] "Georgetown Preserves Memory, Charts Path for Lasting Change at Emancipation Day Conference on Legacies of Enslavement," Georgetown University: University News, May 5, 2021, https://www.georgetown.edu/news/georgetown-preserves-memory-charts-path-for-lasting-change-at-emancipation-day-conference-on-legacies-of-enslavement/;
"Current Projects: Here I Am," Laboratory for Global Performance and Politics, accessed April 22,

participation in the conference brought Georgetown's efforts to reckon with its past and its involvement in USS full circle. In her performance, Short-Colomb poetically untangled her family history in relation to the university in front of a virtual audience that included other university students, alumni, faculty, and staff both at Georgetown and beyond, people who may have been in the midst of similar explorations of the past at their respective institutions. As one of the events highlighted as part of the conference, Short-Colomb's performance also exemplified Georgetown's efforts; as a beneficiary of the university's reconciliatory actions, she offered embodied evidence of how redress might take form.[16]

With events like the one hosted by Georgetown, the first two decades of the twenty-first century have brought a significant increase in the general public's knowledge of the historical relationship between U.S. universities and slavery, as well as universities' organized engagement with the particularities of this past.[17] The circulation of information pertaining to the racial pasts of universities can be attributed in part to the early efforts of schools like the University of Alabama, Emory University, and Brown University, as well as the conferences and initiatives facilitated by

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2023, https://globallab.georgetown.edu/projects/here-i-am/.

[16] Angela G. Ray discusses the myriad ways in which one's embodied experiences might operate as evidence in relation to a 1791 letter from Benjamin Banneker to Thomas Jefferson. Angela G. Ray, "'In My Own Hand Writing': Benjamin Banneker Addresses the Slaveholder of Monticello," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 1, no. 3 (1998): 387–405.

[17] Discussing Georgetown University's recent efforts to reconcile its past, historian of slavery and Georgetown professor Adam Rothman points out that, while historians have long known of this complicated legacy, it seems that the public (and even those intimately connected to particular schools as faculty, staff, and alumni) has only recently awakened to these pasts. Adam Rothman, "Slavery and Institutional Morality at Georgetown University: Reply to Nelson," *British Journal of Sociology* 69, no. 3 (2018): 552–59. One text that significantly contributed to public knowledge of the university's past is Craig Steven Wilder's influential and widely cited book detailing the inception of Ivy League institutions in concert with the development of the nation and proliferation of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery; Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013). More recently, edited collections such as *Slavery and the University* have shown how slavery undergirded university growth and maintenance; Leslie M. Harris, James T. Campbell, and Alfred L. Brophy, eds., *Slavery and the University: Histories and Legacies* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019).

USS. At the same time, this swelling attention to university histories has been punctuated and pushed forward by acute moments of present-day anti-Black violence, most notably perpetrated by police. The year 2020, and the hypervisible deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in particular, haunt each of the chapters of this project. While these egregious and abhorrent acts are woefully not unique to the twenty-first century, the access afforded by smartphones and social media and their concurrence with a global pandemic made their visibility and widespread acknowledgment all but unavoidable. Simultaneously, student actions across U.S. campuses have heightened public attention to and intensified the urgency of university redress.[18] Unsurprisingly, the growth of USS in the past few years reflects the national climate. In 2018 USS added thirteen universities to its list of members, and in 2019 it added nine; yet in 2020 USS added seventeen and in 2021 eighteen new universities to its list, the largest number of new members in a single year to date.[19] Though impossible to prove without a doubt, it is reasonable to assume that the national zeitgeist of the spring and summer of 2020 further compelled universities to consider addressing the roots of present-day racism and racialized practices on campus and participating in USS. As the twenty-first century unfolds, the number of universities publicly grappling with their legacies of slavery continues to grow (both related to and beyond the bounds of USS), totaling in the hundreds.

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[18] There is much to be said about the powerful input of students as it relates to reckoning with university pasts. For example, at Yale, students successfully advocated for the administration to change the name of a residential college that commemorated John C. Calhoun; similarly, at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, students and faculty alike requested that four buildings be renamed on campus. Another fine example of this that I discuss throughout this project is how Georgetown students were organized to advocate for reparations. Noah Remnick, "Yale Will Drop John Calhoun's Name From Building," *New York Times*, February 11, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/11/us/yale-protests-john-calhoun-grace-murray-hopper.html; Liz Schlemmer, "UNC Chapel Hill Will Rename 4 Buildings That Honored White Supremacists," *WUNC 91.5*, July 29, 2020, https://www.wunc.org/education/2020-07-29/unc-chapel-hill-will-rename-4-buildings-that-honored-white-supremacists.

[19] These numbers are according to the news and press releases provided by the USS website. In 2022 the number of new members receded to pre-2020 numbers, with only nine new institutions added to the list.

In the wake of an independent report published in 2001, Yale University became the first U.S. university to garner twenty-first-century public attention for its historic ties to slavery.[20] It was Brown University's 2003 establishment of a Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, however, that set a formative example of institutional investigation, which has been adapted by scores of other schools around the nation.[21] In 2014, a national advisory board comprised of individuals involved in these early activities at Brown along with representatives from the University of Virginia, Emory University, and the College of William and Mary (all universities that had already begun engaging with their racial histories and strategically thinking about redress) contributed to envisioning "an organization that would effectively institutionalize and perpetuate that important cross-institutional learning in a more powerful way."[22] Between 2014 and 2015, the small group of Virginia-based universities actively participating in collaboration around this cause grew into a collective open to "any school contemplating or already investigating its own history as it relates to slavery or racism."[23]

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[20] For more information on Yale's 2001 controversy, see Kate Zernike, "Slave Traders in Yale's Past Fuel Debate on Restitution," *New York Times*, August 13, 2001, sec. New York, https://www.nytimes.com/2001/08/13/nyregion/slave-traders-in-yale-s-past-fuel-debate-on-restitution.html; Jia Lynn Yang, "Yale Slavery Report Questioned by Experts," News, *Yale Daily News,* December 12, 2001, https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2001/12/12/yale-slavery-report-questioned-by-experts/; Mark Alden Branch ('86), "The Slavery Legacy," *Yale Alumni Magazine*, February 2002, http://archives.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/02_02/slavery.html.

[21] The decision to establish a formal committee to investigate Brown's history, made by then president Ruth Simmons, is often cited by other institutions following suit. Brown's efforts are particularly notable because of Simmons's leadership and her position as "the first African American to head an Ivy League Institution." Leslie M. Harris, James T. Campbell, and Alfred L. Brophy, eds., *Slavery and the University: Histories and Legacies* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 2. Further information pertaining to Brown's foundational committee to investigate the university's ties to slavery, as well as the committee's final report, can be found here: "Brown University Committee on Slavery and Justice: Home," accessed July 13, 2020, https://www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice/. Yet, it was not until 2017 that Brown signed on to the USS roster. Similarly, Yale only joined the consortium in 2020.

[22] "Universities Studying Slavery (USS): The Birth of a Movement," President's Commission on Slavery and the University, https://slavery.virginia.edu/universities-studying-slavery-uss-the-birth-of-a-movement/.

[23] "Universities Studying Slavery (USS): The Birth of a Movement." With only Virginia-based schools as members, USS was in its first iteration known as Virginia's Colleges and Universities

Georgetown began participating in USS in 2015, which marked a turning point in extending the consortium's focus beyond the borders of the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2016.[24] The virtual USS conference in 2021 was the second hosted by Georgetown (it followed an in-person conference in 2017) and one of many symposiums, conferences, and meetings organized by the consortium over the years.[25]

While not every university grappling with its historical relationship to slavery is today affiliated with USS, the consortium serves as a central and growing locus for over a hundred institutions communicating about and engaging in such efforts in the United States and around the world. One can find USS-affiliated institutions across North America (including all corners of the United States and Canada), Europe (in Ireland, Scotland, and England), and as of 2022, South America (with the participation of the Universidad del Rosario in Colombia). In the United States, these institutions include large public research institutions (like the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), liberal arts colleges (such as Southwestern University in Texas and Amherst College in Massachusetts), military colleges, historically Black colleges and universities, Ivy League institutions, women's colleges, men's colleges, Jesuit universities, and even college preparatory boarding schools

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Studying Slavery (VCUSS). "Universities Studying Slavery (USS): The Birth of a Movement."

[24] "Focus Areas," Georgetown University, accessed April 22, 2023, https://www.georgetown.edu/slavery/focus-areas/; "University of Cambridge Joins Universities Studying Slavery," President's Commission on Slavery and the University, accessed April 22, 2023, https://slavery.virginia.edu/university-of-cambridge-joins-universities-studying-slavery/. As a member of USS, Georgetown hosted USS spring conferences in both 2017 and 2021.

[25] I personally attended the October 2019 USS symposium, which was hosted by the University of Cincinnati and Xavier University and titled *The Academy's Original Sin*. Other USS symposiums have included 2023's *At This Place: History, Race, and a Way Forward*, hosted by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; 2022's *Legacies of Slavery: Landscapes of Segregatio*n, hosted by the University of Virginia, 2021's *Slavery, Reparations and Education: African Nova Scotia, Canada and Beyond*, hosted by Dalhousie University and University of King's College; and 2017's *Universities, Slavery, Public Memory, and the Built Landscape*, hosted by the University of Virginia. In 2018, Tougaloo College and the University of Mississippi Slavery Research Group hosted a USS meeting, titled *Universities, Slavery, Respond, and Repair*. I discuss the relationship between Tougaloo College, USS, and redress in Chapter 3.

(like New England's Loomis Chaffee School and Phillips Academy). As members of the USS roster, these institutions are, according to the consortium's website, "all committed to research, acknowledgment, and atonement regarding institutional ties to the slave trade, to enslavement on campus or abroad, and to enduring racism in school history and practice."[26]

As the mission and description of USS begin to suggest, there are endless ways to characterize the efforts of member schools. While discussing their engagement with the consortium and their particularized pasts, members of the consortium employ various terms to describe their work; at different moments and across these institutions, one can find the use of "acknowledgment" and "atonement," as well as "address," "repair," "recognition," "reconciliation," and "reckoning." Each of the labels carry distinctive meanings depending upon the discursive and institutional contexts in which they are deployed, and each of these terms appears at various points throughout this project. When broadly articulating these collective and widespread efforts, however, I rely on the language of redress. According to scholars Michael T. Martin and Marilyn Yaquinto, the terminology of redress "suggest[s] a purposeful inclusivity."[27] They add that redress encompasses activities and approaches that, despite overt dissimilarities, together "share a common aim at 'repairing' historical injustices and atoning for injuries and crimes against victimized population groups."[28] By using the terminology of redress as a rhetorical anchor in this research, I foreground the multiplicity of actions that universities take to reconcile the past as well as the historical and lasting racial injustices that these efforts attempt to rectify.

Without question, there is no single approach to university redress. The four universities that I

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[26] "Universities Studying Slavery," President's Commission on Slavery and the University, accessed April 22, 2023, https://slavery.virginia.edu/universities-studying-slavery/.
[27] Michael T. Martin and Marilyn Yaquinto, eds., *Redress for Historical Injustices in the United States: On Reparations for Slavery, Jim Crow, and Their Legacies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2007), 3.
[28] Martin and Yaquinto, *Redress for Historical Injustices in the United States,* 3.

examine at length in this dissertation offer a sampling of techniques. However, many universities and educational institutions throughout the United States have begun or are embarking on important twenty-first-century projects related to histories of slavery and yet do not appear in great detail in this project. Take, for example, the Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS), a graduate institution that is not (yet) a member of USS. In 2019, VTS launched an endowment to provide reparations to "'shareholders,' living direct descendants that are members of the generation closest to the person who labored at VTS between 1823 and 1951."[29] The endowment of $1.7 million ensures that these "shareholders" receive annual checks from the seminary, the first of which were distributed in 2021.[30] This institution's conception of reparations also extends beyond enslavement to consider the ways in which the labor of Black communities was unjustly exploited throughout the era of Jim Crow segregation as well. Other fine examples of robust university programs of racial reconciliation and repair include USS founding institutions like the University of Virginia and the College of William and Mary. The former's President's Commission on Slavery and the University and the latter's Lemon Project consist of multifaceted curricular, campus, and community programming. At the University of Virginia, this commission has given way to a newer President's Commission on the University in the Age of Segregation, which further demonstrates leadership in the realm of reckoning with university legacies of slavery *and* their enduring afterlives.

In this project, I focus on four universities chosen from the lengthy and ever-growing roster of institutions participating in USS. These universities—Georgetown University, Virginia

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[29] "Frequently Asked Questions about the Reparations Initiative," Virginia Theological Seminary, accessed April 22, 2023, https://vts.edu/reparations-faq/#1627497090687-6618abdd-9e28983c-6193.

[30] In 2021, the checks received by "shareholders" in the endowment were for $2,100. However, this dollar amount will likely fluctuate. Elizabeth Redden, "Paying Reparations," *Inside Higher Ed*, June 14, 2021, https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/06/15/virginia-theological-seminary-issues-first-reparations-checks.

Commonwealth University, Tougaloo College, and Brown University—exemplify the enmeshment of family and redress. In some ways, these institutions also present a glimpse of the breadth of those involved with the consortium; they include a private Jesuit university, a public research institution, a historically Black college, and an Ivy League school, respectively. From another perspective, these four institutions have other similarities that cannot be ignored. All are geographically located in the eastern region of the United States, while two of the universities, Georgetown and Brown, boast exceptional institutional wealth and elite global statuses, along with endowments in the billions of dollars and histories that (not coincidentally) stretch back to the eighteenth century.[31] Together, the four universities that I discuss offer insight into the ways in which the discourse and institution of the family are repeatedly relied on as universities define the depth and extent of historical harm and demarcate the terms of repair. Throughout, I suggest the co-presence of advantages and limitations riddling this entanglement. My aim is to move discussions of redress toward feminist modes of reimagining forms of relationality and repair at the site of the university.

Attending to Family Affairs

My attention to the family and its conceptual force amid university redress is influenced by recent conversations in women's and gender studies that revive and reinvestigate feminist calls for the abolition of the family. While there is a rich history of feminist engagements with the family, my

[31] In his extensive history of U.S. universities and slavery, Craig Steven Wilder discusses the concurrence of Brown's founding in 1764 (as the College of Rhode Island) and the Brown family's profitable involvement with the transatlantic slave trade. As Wilder notes, Brown was later named as such in 1804 because of the family's financial generosity to the institution, and in particular a gift from Nicholas Brown. Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 73-74. I say all this to underscore the ways in which universities like Brown and Georgetown began amassing wealth in connection to transatlantic and chattel slavery centuries ago, in comparison to schools like Tougaloo College, which were founded in the late nineteenth century and have never enjoyed this level of financial security.

concern in this project is the ways in which understandings of family—and related articulations of who counts as family, when, and why—are institutionally instrumentalized in connection to caring for university pasts. Across the approaches to university redress discussed in this dissertation, care is deeply connected to (and often explicitly articulated in conversations about) the ways in which institutions acknowledge and take ownership of their legacies of slavery at present. Oftentimes, the discourse and image of family serves as a vehicle through which present-day institutional responsibilities are demarcated and related forms of care are distributed. As feminist abolitionist Sophie Lewis puts it, family "is, at root, the name we use for the fact that care is privatized in our society."[32] In her 2022 polemic *Abolish the Family: A Manifesto for Care and Liberation*, she makes the case for the urgent reality of family abolition while carefully clarifying that she is talking not about abolition as a symbolic act or merely in theory. Rather, Lewis argues for the actual material disruption of the family structure in order to clear space for considering other ways of relating.

I contend that scholarly conversations around abolishing the family offer heretofore unthought implications for university redress. As this scholarship demonstrates, the discourse and the image of the family offer revered forms of protection just as readily as they traffic modes of expulsion. The language of abolition invites the wholesale clearing and reconceptualization of this relational terrain, rather than struggling against deeply ingrained historical structures and closely held ideologies to broaden the ways in which family is conceived or who counts as family, when, and why. Rather, abolition invites questions like, once reliance on family is removed as *the* singular mode of financial, emotional, and physical attachment and responsibility, what might this newfound territory for reimagining racial reckoning generate? These discussions of abolishing the family also carry an extensive lineage. Lewis offers a comprehensive genealogy of family abolition literature that stretches

[32] Sophie Lewis, *Abolish the Family: A Manifesto for Care and Liberation* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2022), 4.

as far back as Plato's *Republic* and includes the writing of Charles Fourier at the turn of the nineteenth century, the influential work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the mid-nineteenth century, and the well-cited feminist writings of Shulamith Firestone in the late 1960s and 1970s. While this capacious survey is useful, most important for my project are the myriad ways in which "the family is a method for cheaply arranging the reproduction of the nation's labor-power and securing debt repayments."[33] As becomes clear, the relational ties designated as and organized under the symbol of family can facilitate varied forms of affective and material coercion.[34] My interest is in how the persuasive force of family operates amid university redress.

I use the word "coercion" intentionally, as such word choice underscores the ways in which the family carries personal, social, and cultural influence. As the family is discursively conjured up across university efforts at redress, I contend that it functions as a rhetorical resource. Certainly, scholars writing about family abolition gesture toward and at times directly discuss how language, certain references, and related symbolism circulate. However, a thoroughly rhetorical understanding of the family foregrounds the persuasive heft of this institution, as well as that carried by invocations of its most prolific figures, like the "mother" and the "child."[35] Further, suggesting that the family is a rhetorical resource helps to clarify the purpose of my project by directing focus away from firm

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[33] Here, Lewis is speaking in conversation with sociologist and gender theorist Melinda Cooper and her writing on family values. Melinda Cooper, *Family Values: Between Neoliberalism and the New Social Conservatism* (New York: Zone Books, 2017). In this same vein, rhetorical scholar Dana Cloud has written on the discursive deployment of "family values." While discussion of the rhetorical heft of "family values" is related to my analysis and important, it's not the main focus of my work. Dana L. Cloud, "The Rhetoric of 'Family Values': Scapegoating, Utopia, and the Privatization of Social Responsibility," *Western Journal of Communication* 62, no. 4 (1998): 387–419.

[34] For an excellent history of the origins of family abolition and the evolution of the Western nuclear family in relation to labor, see M. E. O'Brien, "To Abolish the Family," *Endnotes* 5 (2019): 360–417.

[35] Queer theorists have written extensively of the affective and social weight carried by such familial images, exemplified by Lee Edelman's work. From a political theory perspective, Elisabeth Anker also explores the uses of this imagery in connection to the melodramatic rhetorics. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2004); Elisabeth Anker, *Orgies of Feeling* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

definitions of the family (though not an unimportant task, such a massive endeavor would require an entire, separate dissertation dedicated to this undertaking). Instead, as universities and communities alike summon the family while teasing out their pasts and making attempts to repair or remedy (or merely acknowledge) these racial histories at present, I look toward the effects of relying on this image.[36] Such a rhetorical approach leads me to questions like these: When an institution or an individual makes reference to the family, what do these statements *do*? How and to what ends might such utterances call upon the affective constellations that couch the family? Once activated, in what ways might these affective charges sway audiences and subsequently shape the present and future possibilities of university practice and policy? These are the types of analytic questions guiding my inquiry and the types of conversations—at the level of the university and among those engaging in discussions about racial redress—that this project endeavors to both inspire and inform.

By positioning the family as a rhetorical resource, I am also making an argument for the necessity of rhetorical criticism amid present-day discourses of redress. This dissertation demonstrates how rhetorical investigation—of the family, of the university, and of the ways in which these institutions are bound up amid present-day practices of redress—can usefully aid, to use rhetorical scholar Angela G. Ray's words, "in explaining evolving belief, in accounting for multiple perspectives, in scrutinizing processes of cultural influence."[37] Throughout this dissertation, rhetorical investigation assumes the form of closely analyzing university working group reports,

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[36] Indeed, many have already offered extensive genealogies of the family form and its evolution. The family—and its contemporary emergence and evolution as a bourgeoisie technology for social control—appears across Michel Foucault's ample body of work, in both his writing and recorded lectures. In their writing on the intellectual lineage of family abolitionism, M. E. O'Brien offers a comprehensive historical survey of the emergence of what we might today consider a typical or traditional nuclear family. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1, An Introduction* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1990); M. E. O'Brien, "To Abolish the Family," *Endnotes* 5 (2019): 360–417.

[37] Angela G. Ray, "Rhetoric and the Archive," *Review of Communication* 16, no. 1 (2016): 48.

committee documents, community forums, and media coverage. I track the ways in which the family is evoked across institutional and social contexts to gain understanding of the rhetorical effects of its deployment. While rhetorical recourse to family might, for some, bring the comfort of a sense of security in times of financial, emotional, or corporeal precarity, for others (and, as Lewis suggests, *many* others) the imperative to rely on family ensures that all of these iterations of care are limited or even out of reach entirely, sutured to gendered, raced, and heterosexist structures, restricted and privatized, and unquestionably beyond the responsibility of the state (or here, the university). When wielded by the university, family similarly effects these Janus-faced aspects of promising an inherent safety net that is, in actuality, all but absent. Greater insight to the evolving beliefs, perspectives, and cultural influences (to recall Ray) that contextualize how, when, and in what ways universities articulate racial reckoning alongside the family can help clarify the material, structural, and systemic stakes in twenty-first-century U.S. university redress. What forms of care might university reliance on the family facilitate? How does the image and discourse of family dictate the bounds of institutional redress and the ways in which universities assume responsibility for racial pasts, articulate the extent of these harms, and attempt to make them "right" at present (whatever shape "rightness" might take, depending on institutional circumstances)?

In my project, references to and representations of the family emerge in widely varied configurations. Most broadly, however, I structure my examination of how the family functions amid university redress according to three main forms. This tripartite structure is indebted to Kathi Weeks's articulation of the "three key fundamentals of the family," which are "a privatised system of social reproduction, the couple form and bio-genetic-centred kinship."[38] I move through these three conceptualizations of family in connection to each of my case studies, beginning with Georgetown

[38] Kathi Weeks, "Abolition of the Family: The Most Infamous Feminist Proposal," *Feminist Theory*, 2021, 6.

University and bio-genetic-centered kinship. In Chapter 1, I examine the ways in which Georgetown prioritizes genetics and genealogy in tracking down the descendants of enslaved laborers historically connected to the institution. By carving out family through a reliance on direct descent, the institution subsequently defines who is and who is not today eligible for university acknowledgment, amends, and acceptance (both literally and figuratively) to the university community. Throughout my discussion of Georgetown's approach to redress, I raise questions about archival silences, exclusionary admissions practices, and the university's ongoing surveillance of minoritized individuals and communities. Further, I probe the ways in which acceptance to the university, translated into the tangible terms of legacy admissions policies, relates to a broader belonging within and imagining of a vast "Georgetown Family."

While each of my chapters offers a critique of how family is invoked in connection to university redress, I am not interested in launching a generalized criticism of the ways in which family is individually experienced. Technologies of state surveillance and discipline have for centuries enabled and continue to direct forms of violence and pathologization toward economically under-resourced families and Black and brown families in particular.[39] Yet there are times when the relational forms operating under the sign of family provide these very same individuals and communities respite from such systems.[40] As Tiffany Lethabo King puts it, "The Black praxis of family as an everyday

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[39] Tiffany Lethabo King remarks on the anniversary of *The Moynihan Report*, published in 1965, tracing its "legacy of pathologization" and the damning discursive circulation of the "Black family" (King 69). According to King, part of the report's legacy has included attempts by Black feminist and Black queer feminist scholars to counter this condemnatory image and to reclaim and reimagine this family as a site of nurture and affirmation. In an attempt to move beyond mere response and to step alongside this lineage and its intrinsic "attachments to the liberal humanistic concept of the filial as the organizing frame for legible Black collective life," King launches an argument for the heretofore "unthought" position of Black feminist abolitionism by engaging with the work of Kay Lindsey and Hortense Spillers. Tiffany Lethabo King, "Black 'Feminisms' and Pessimism: Abolishing Moynihan's Negro Family," *Theory & Event* 21, no. 1 (2018): 69.

[40] In Weeks's words, this aporia is precisely "the problem" that abolitionism gets at. Weeks states, "the model of the nuclear family that has served subordinated groups as a fence against the state,

lived experience has the potential to ground people, provide material and emotional support and affirm the spirit of many Black people who feel vulnerable in the world. For many, including myself, family helps make life liveable amidst everyday enactments of antiblack violence."[41] Weeks is similarly judicious in differentiating between an individual's experiential knowledge of family and the family as a "social and economic institution."[42] Following these scholars, I am not concerned with how individuals manage the realities of their unfolding present nor are these individual decisions the object of my critique. Rather than judging how people practice family relationships and family life, my aim is to probe the ways that, according to sociologists Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, "the inequities of the family and its appeal are closely related—they are two sides of the same coin. The benefits of family life depend upon the suffering of those who are excluded."[43] When family is thoroughly entwined amid university redress, what sorts of exclusions might these institutions and their legacies inadvertently advance?

As the title of this dissertation indicates, the language of legacy appears throughout the discourse, practices, and overarching purpose of USS as schools in the consortium focus on addressing "the legacies of racism in their histories."[44] In common parlance, "legacy" refers to the

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society and capital is the very same white, settler, bourgeois, heterosexual and patriarchal institution that was imposed by the state, society and capital on the formerly enslaved, indigenous peoples, and waves of immigrants, all of whom continue to be at once in need of its meagre protections and marginalised by its legacies and prescriptions." Weeks, "Abolition of the Family," 4. King also notes the family's inherent paradox, and traces how Black feminists have already begun to carve out a path toward abolition of the institution of the family by demonstrating its inherent whiteness, intimacy with the violence of enslavement, and weaponization as a measure of discursive and state control.

[41] King, "Black 'Feminisms' and Pessimism," 70.

[42] Weeks, "Abolition of the Family," 2.

[43] Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, *The Anti-Social Family* (London: Verso, 1982), 132-133.

[44] "Universities Studying Slavery." While "legacy" is a term that can be easily found in rhetorical scholarship, its conceptual valences remain under examined. The term often appears in phrases such as "rhetorical legacy" and is commonly affixed to notable figures and historical events as an indication of prominence in public memory. A number of studies discuss the "rhetorical legacies" of famed orators and leaders of racial justice, including Dolores Huerta, Martin Luther King Jr., and Frederick Douglass; presidents such as George W. Bush and presidential hopefuls like Barry

physical traits, material objects, and principles and perspectives that are passed down or passed on from ancestors or forebearers. As such, legacy also invokes familial lineage and family inheritance. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) broadly defines "legacy" as varied forms of bequest, including the "long-lasting effect of an event or process." In reference to universities and in direct relation to my first chapter on Georgetown, the *OED* also articulates "legacy" as the preferential treatment an

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Goldwater; and iconic cultural figures such as Aretha Franklin. See Stacey K Sowards, *¡Sí, Ella Puede!: The Rhetorical Legacy of Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2019); Michelle Kelsey Kearl, "WWMLKD?: Coopting the Rhetorical Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* 8, no. 3 (2018): 184-199; Jonathan P. Rossing and John R. McKivigan, "Frederick Douglass's Rhetorical Legacy: Introduction," *Rhetoric Review* 37, no. 1 (2018): 1–76; Michael J. Lee, "Us, Them, and the War on Terror: Reassessing George W. Bush's Rhetorical Legacy," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 14, no. 1 (March 2017): 3–30; John C. Hammerback, "Barry Goldwater's Rhetorical Legacy," *Southern Communication Journal* 64, no. 4 (Summer 1999): 323–32; Ashlee A. Lambert and Mark P. Orbe, "#BlackLivesMatter Political Discourse: A Burkeian Analysis of Controversial Comments at Aretha Franklin's Funeral," *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* 9, nos. 3/4 (July 2019): 126–38. Beyond the life or oeuvre of a prominent individual, "rhetorical legacy" is also deployed to indicate the ongoing influence of a discrete rhetorical text, such as a singular speech or a prevalent song. See Jason A. Edwards, "Monsters to Destroy? The Rhetorical Legacy of John Quincy Adams' July 4th, 1821 Oration," *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* 7, no. 1 (2017): 19; Caroline C. Koons, "The Rhetorical Legacy of 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic,'" *Southern Communication Journal* 80, no. 3 (July 2015): 211–29. Finally, the repeated use of the term "legacy" suggests the import of understanding how and to what ends remembering certain moments, figures, or objects garner national acclaim and affect collectives across time. However, the rhetorical operation of "legacy"—along with the presumptions and public sway carried by this term—requires elaboration. In a 2019 essay, Megan Fitzmaurice indirectly discusses the rhetorical significance of this concept in the context of tours that highlight histories of slavery on presidential estates and plantations owned by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. Fitzmaurice attends to the ways that public memories of historical figures are circulated and selectively edited. Such tours revise the activities and impressions left by these presidents, acknowledging the fact of their participation in chattel slavery while also enabling their vaunted remembrance. Here, the reworking of particular "legacies" allows them to fit within contemporary racial contexts, which enables the survival (and continued lauding) of these figures across the passage of time amid inevitably shifting cultural or social contexts. Megan Fitzmaurice, "Recirculating Memories of the Presidents as Benevolent Slaveholders on Presidential Slavery Tours," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 22 (2019): 495–532. Fitzmaurice's article joins those of other rhetoricians who have written on how national histories of racial violence are retold through tours, including Kristan Poirot and Shevaun E. Watson, "Memories of Freedom and White Resilience: Place, Tourism, and Urban Slavery," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (2015): 91–116; and Cindy Duquette Smith and Teresa Bergman, "You Were on Indian Land: Alcatraz Island as Recalcitrant Memory Space," in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, ed. Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian L. Ott (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 160–88.

applicant might receive because of their family lineage and "because a parent or other relative belonged or belongs to that institution."[45] While these interpretations are likely obvious to contemporary readers, "legacy" also carries traces of antiquated meanings that have long left colloquial usage. Rather than the inheritance of prized possessions, physical attributes, or familial privileges, preceding understandings of the term foreground delegation. Articulated as both noun—"a body of people sent on a mission"—and verb—"the act of sending such a body"—this now archaic inflection of "legacy" directs attention to the bodies charged with passing on a specific message as well as the legitimacy of this furtherance. Thus, legacy also hints at the labor of redress and the ways in which the reparative work of racial reckoning is delegated to select groups of people on campuses and throughout communities.

The labor of social reproduction is an intimate aspect of the family, the second of the three fundamentals put forth by Weeks, and the focus of my second analytic chapter. Feminist critiques of

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[45] I am grateful for ongoing exchanges with Angela G. Ray, who encouraged further consideration of the multiple meanings of "belonging" in the context of the university's historical engagement with chattel slavery. The language of "belonging" resonates across present-day discourses of "legacy," from the consideration of new applicants to the cultivation of alumni constituents and donors. One poignant example of the overlap between university "legacy" and belonging is a 2019 controversy at Harvard University wherein, while discussing changes to fundraising practices, President Lawrence Bacow allegedly associated the colleges' "ownership" of alumni donors with the "ownership" of slaves. Local and national publications picked up this story, noting, "As the 13th Amendment banned slavery and involuntary servitude, Lawrence Bacow told the university's alumni relations and fundraising staff Tuesday that donors no longer could be owned by the specific colleges from which they had graduated." Marisa Iati, "Harvard Made It Easier for Alums to Donate. Then Its President Compared Them to Freed Slaves," *Washington Post*, September 28, 2019, sec. Higher Education, https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/09/28/harvard-made-it-easier-alums-donate-then-its-president-compared-them-freed-slaves/; Alexandra A. Chaidez and Aidan F. Ryan, "Bacow Apologizes for Comparing Harvard Schools' Relationships with Donors to Slavery," News, *The Crimson*, September 29, 2019, https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/9/29/bacow-compares-donors-thirteenth-amendment/; Elin Johnson, "Harvard President Sorry for Comparing Fundraising to Freeing Slaves | Inside Higher Ed," *Inside Higher Ed,* September 30, 2019, https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2019/09/30/harvard-president-sorry-comparing-fundraising-freeing-slaves; Spencer Buell, "Harvard's President Says He's Sorry for Slavery Comparison," *Boston Magazine,* September 30, 2019, https://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/2019/09/30/harvard-president-slavery-lawrence-bacow/.

social reproduction focus on the ways in which the myriad labors of the home—including the nourishment and nurturing of all family members, and the birthing and rearing of children—are delegated according to gender and divided between public and private; women are most often tasked with assuming the reproductive work relegated to this private sphere. The history of feminist debates around reproductive labor also emphasizes the ways in which race relates to the divergent experiences (decisions and desires) of women in the home.[46] Recent feminist scholarship responding to the global COVID pandemic brings this theoretical history to bear on the unjust distributions of labor at the site of the university, extending an already robust body of literature on inequitable conditions and expectations of labor within the academy.[47] In Chapter 2, I extend this discussion to consider how forms of reproductive labor undergird university redress. To do so, I discuss how Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) reckoned with the human remains of African and

[46] In her formative essay marking the state of feminist debates concerning social reproduction through the early 1990s, Evelyn Nakano Glenn points out the ways in which race was all but absent in considerations of reproductive labor and gendered oppression. Writing in 1992, she argues that "reproductive labor has divided along racial as well as gender lines and that the specific characteristics of the division have varied regionally and changed over time as capitalism has reorganized reproductive labor, shifting parts of it from the household to the market." Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor," *Signs* 18, no. 1 (1992): 3. Patricia Hill Collins also writes about the importance of centering the unique experiences of Black women at work both within and outside of the home. Patricia Hill Collins, "Gender, Black Feminism, and Black Political Economy," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568 (2000): 41–53.

[47] For example, Brandi Lawless documents the often invisible expectations of and nonexistent compensation for emotional labor in the academy. Lawless focuses on the field of communication and points to the ways in which such labor is inequitably distributed to women and people of color. Brandi Lawless, "Documenting a Labor of Love: Emotional Labor as Academic Labor," *Review of Communication* 18, no. 2 (2018): 85–97. Of course, Lawless is not the first scholar to point this out and communication is not the only field in which unrecognized and devalued forms of work are placed on particular bodies in the academy. In the edited collection of essays, *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*, scholars discuss the myriad ways in which race, gender, and class, as well as underrepresentation and unjust expectations (those socially antiquated and grossly stereotyping), position and disadvantage them in various ways in the academy and among colleagues. Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., eds., *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2012).

African American individuals discovered during a university construction project. In a gesture of inclusion, VCU engaged local community members and assembled a group of these individuals under the moniker of the Family Representative Council. VCU's approach to redress relied on the invocation of familial structures of relation, as the name of the council alone makes plainly evident. However, unlike the clarity around genetic and genealogical descent that characterizes the case of Georgetown, VCU had no way of knowing about the people behind the remains, who they had been, and whether they had living relatives in the vicinity (or at all). Thus, in the absence of traceable family lines, VCU tasked the council with serving as "surrogate" family and, through the vehicle of family, with reproducing the personhood of anonymous individuals long since passed. Surrogacy is but one form of reproductive labor, rife with conceptual and material considerations and contested claims to ownership and property.[48] My case study on VCU demonstrates how this lineage of labor and the logic of dehumanization that necessitated it are rooted in campus grounds and inextricably connected to university knowledge production.

While I direct my discussion of social reproduction and the university to focus on the reproductive labor that is part and parcel of redress, there is ample scholarship organized under the label of critical university studies (CUS) that examines other forms of labor demanded by the so-called imperial or neoliberal university. Such scholarship highlights exploitative practices of labor in

[48] There is much more to be said about surrogacy, and there are many conversations within feminist scholarship about the ways in which gender, race, and economic means shape the realities of surrogate labor. For a chronological introduction to some these discussions, see: Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988); Robyn Wiegman, "Intimate Publics: Race, Property, and Personhood," *American Literature* 74, no. 4 (2002): 859–85; Amrita Pande, *Wombs in Labor: Transnational Commercial Surrogacy in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Laura Harrison, *Brown Bodies, White Babies: The Politics of Cross-Racial Surrogacy* (New York: New York University Press, 2016); Sophie Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism against Family* (London; New York: Verso, 2019); Johanna Oksala, "Feminism Against Biocapitalism: Gestational Surrogacy and the Limits of the Labor Paradigm," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44, no. 4 (2019): 883–904.

connection to the university's insatiable acquisition of financial and material assets throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The field of CUS took shape during the 1990s, emerging out of scholarship that focused on the changing fiscal and social makeup of the university. Including the writing of Marc Bousquet, Christopher Newfield, Bill Readings, and Jeffrey J. Williams, CUS scholarship broadly presents a linear timeline that begins in the mid-twentieth century and subsequently charts the damaging ways in which university funding structures have been altered over the decades.[49] This common chronological throughline marks the 1950s and 1960s as the "Golden Age of American higher education," a perceived highpoint in public education during which university attendance bloomed in connection to state and federal funding initiatives.[50] Leading into the tumultuous end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, the university was positioned as a salve for inequalities related to income, race, and gender, in the form of new academic areas and increased "inclusion and diversity" in admissions, as well as faculty and staff hiring. However, as the decades

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[49] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Marc Bousquet, *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011). Christopher Newfield, *The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016); Jeffrey J. Williams, "The Need for Critical University Studies," in *A New Deal for the Humanities*, ed. Hutner and Mohamed (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016), 145–59. These scholars contribute to what is broadly considered Critical University Studies. According to Williams, CUS "analyzes how our social institutions foster injustice or perpetuate inequality, and it advocates for their fuller democratic possibilities. Thus, its aim is, besides exposition and analysis, confrontation and opposition to the current neoliberal turn in higher education" (149). Many (though not all) of the scholars writing for this audience fill disciplinary locations in the humanities, such as Ethnic Studies, English, and Comparative Literature.

[50] According to Williams, such initiatives included the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and National Education Act of 1965. Williams, "The Need for Critical University Studies," 147. Abigail Boggs and Nick Mitchell critique the recurrent use of the phrase the "Golden Age," noting that "the expansion of public funding during the 'golden age' from the 1960s to the early 1970s, when institutions actualized their promise of racial and gendered inclusiveness, and when the university was imagined as a form of redress in the absence of broader forms of wealth redistribution." Abigail Boggs and Nick Mitchell, "Critical University Studies and the Crisis Consensus," *Feminist Studies* 44, no. 2 (2018): 442.

of the 1970s and 1980s unfolded alongside the steady withdrawal of federal funding, seemingly democratic access was replaced by capitalist consumer choice and hefty tuition price tags, leaving the university flagrantly stratified and in need of repair.[51] The elimination of tenure-track positions, increasing reliance on inadequately paid and seemingly expendable labor, gutting of the humanities, and expansion of handsomely paid administrative positions are all indicators of the university's seeming decline. In light of this increasingly bleak outlook, CUS scholarship tends toward the idealization of a return to the university as a publicly funded, (seemingly) accessible, and socially (and federally) valued institution.[52] Yet as Abigail Boggs and Nick Mitchell point out, by presenting a linear temporal trajectory with origins in the mid-twentieth century, the dominant narratives perpetuated by CUS eclipse historical injustices to which the twenty-first-century university is indebted.[53] As Boggs and Mitchell's work demonstrates, this collective authorial choice is just that: a decision that enables the foundational aspects to which the contemporary university is indebted to remain unaddressed. Considerations of temporality and debt similarly characterize my third and final analytic chapter.

Questions of institutional responsibility—of what a university owes at present because of its

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[51] Williams, "The Need for Critical University Studies," 147-48. As scholars like Bousquet, Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie, and Slaughter and Gary Rhoades are careful to note, however, the contemporary university should be seen not as the victim of a changing economy but rather as an active participant in late capitalism. Bousquet, *How the University Works*, 10. Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie, "Expanding and Elaborating the Concept of Academic Capitalism," *Organization* 8, no. 2 (2001): 154–61; Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

[52] This is an observation that has also been made by other scholars, including Boggs and Mitchell, who are writing from the margins of critical university studies.

[53] Of course, as Boggs and Mitchell and many other scholars point out, such injustices are not relegated to the past. Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira discuss the "imperial university" to emphasize the ways in which the contemporary U.S. university is "firmly embedded in global structures of repression, militarism, and neoliberalism." Like Boggs and Mitchell, these scholars emphasize "the historical continuities of crisis and the boundaries of regulation and containment, especially in the current moment"; Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira, eds., *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 3, 13.

past—undergird the entirety of my project and broader discourses of university redress. In Chapter 3, I examine how the invocation of familial imagery of coupledom in university redress invites expectations of filial responsibility and repayment across time. The "couple form" is the third and final fundamental offered by Weeks. I focus on the longtime partnership between Tougaloo College, a historically Black college (HBCU) in Mississippi, and Brown University, an Ivy League institution in Rhode Island, to call attention to how images of familial coupling facilitate affective and temporal dimensions of indebtedness. For these institutions, the celebration of their fiftieth anniversary of committed partnership provided a moment to reflect on the preceding decades, project their relationship into the future, and strategically reimagine their responsibilities—to one another and to their respective communities—at the present. Images of the familial pairings of mother and child and of dedicated spouses enabled Tougaloo and Brown to articulate their anniversary moment as characterized by varied forms of indebtedness.

While indebtedness and responsibility emerge as two of the key terms that I discuss in Chapter 3, debt unsurprisingly riddles most discussions of university reckoning. At Georgetown, debt has been a formative aspect of reckoning and one that is inextricably tied to the role of current students in present-day repair. In 2019, an on-campus group called Students for the GU272 led a student vote "in favor of the creation of a GU 272 Reconciliation Contribution and the allocation of its proceeds by a GU 272 Reconciliation Board of Trustees."[54] (GU272 refers to enslaved persons sold

[54] LaMont Jones Jr., "Black Studies Leaders Laud Georgetown Student Vote for Fee to Fund Reparations," *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education* 36, no. 6 (May 2, 2019): 16–17. The "GU272" is shorthand for 272 enslaved people who were owned by Jesuits in Maryland and sold in order to financially support Georgetown University, then Georgetown College, in 1838 (the number is now believed to be at least 314). Students in 2019 voted in favor of contributing the symbolic amount of $27.20 each semester, which would be added to tuition bills and pay into a fund managed by and directly descendants of the 272. However, this additional fee for students cannot take effect until it is confirmed and implemented by university administration. Rachel Sadon, "Georgetown Students Are Voting on a Fee to Benefit Descendants of Slaves Sold by the University," *DCist* (blog), April 11, 2019, https://dcist.com/story/19/04/11/georgetown-students-are-voting-on-a-fee-to-benefit-

in 1838 to benefit the college.) Reflecting upon this proposition, students expressed feelings of indebtedness to the historically enslaved and a sense of obligation literally to repay descendants.[55] Current students positioned themselves as direct beneficiaries of the university's legacy of slavery and thus accountable for assuming the responsibility for reparations. Mélisande Short-Colomb was one of the student activists at Georgetown who advocated for this form of student-driven redress. In an OpEd published on the website of the campus newspaper *The Hoya*, Short-Colomb wrote that "Georgetown students and alumni have a responsibility to the families of enslaved people who provided the wealth that sustains the institution to the present day. This wealth was not a gift; it was not a grant. The Georgetown community owes these families a debt greater than gratitude. It is the debt of existence."[56] There is perhaps no greater debt of existence, to borrow Short-Colomb's words, than that carried by a child to their parent. Yet understanding and addressing the historic

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descendants-of-slaves-sold-by-the-university/; Martin Pengelly, "Georgetown Students Vote to Pay Reparations for Slaves Sold by University," *Guardian*, April 15, 2019, sec. World News, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/15/georgetown-students-reparations-vote-slaves-sold-by-university.

[55] Adeel Hassan, "Students Vote to Support Reparations," *New York Times*, April 13, 2019, Late Edition-Final edition, sec. National Desk; Saahil Desai, "The First Reparations Attempt at an American College Comes from Its Students," *Atlantic*, April 18, 2019, https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/04/why-are-georgetown-students-paying-reparations/587443/; LaMont Jones Jr., "Black Studies Leaders Laud Georgetown Student Vote for Fee to Fund Reparations," 16–17. It is worth noting that the sense of indebtedness inherited by members of Georgetown's student community is intimately tied to the university's own history of insolvency and the 1838 sale of 272 enslaved people by Jesuit leaders that helped to resolve the past debts of Georgetown (then Georgetown College). This is the same time period during which the stricture of "debt" emerged as a revised form of enslavement. According to Miranda Joseph, by the end of the nineteenth century, debt was solidified as a racialized mode of producing "indebted subjects." In her comprehensive overview of accounting, Joseph details the history of "debt" and "bankruptcy" in the United States. She states, "Various and ultimately successful attempts to establish bankruptcy laws enabled the resolution of creditor-debtor relations through legal procedures that identify and distribute the assets of the debtor to creditors and then relieve the debtor of further responsibility for those debts: federal bankruptcy laws were passed (and shortly repealed) in 1800, 1841, and 1867, and then passed more durably in 1898"; Joseph, *Debt to Society*, 52, 44.

[56] Mélisande Short-Colomb, "VIEWPOINT: Support GU272 Referendum," The Hoya, January 26, 2019, https://thehoya.com/viewpoint-support-gu272-referendum/.

debts carried by institutions like Georgetown through a fundamental reliance on the family continues to "tether them to the past." As Weeks puts it, when the family is positioned as the vehicle through which to understand one's identity and to imagine the future, this can have the converse, stymieing effect of "foreclosing" "true futurity, futurity as a project of political imagination and invention."[57] Thus, transformative racial redress at the site of the university—that is, rectifying historical injustices while reimagining and reinventing institutional futures—requires decoupling from and even destabilizing the rhetorical force of the family.

Imaginatively Reorienting Institutional Futures

Inheritance, identity, and imagination are conceptual tissues that connect scholarship across feminist writing on the abolition of the family, Black feminist insights on the university, and rhetorics of reconciliation. By bridging these academic conversations, I conceive of a feminist rhetoric of university redress. As the chapters in this dissertation demonstrate, such a rhetoric interrogates the ways that reckoning relies on, relates to, and reproduces racialized and gendered relations.[58] As universities confront their pasts, how might they address the residual feelings and

[57] Weeks, "Abolition of the Family," 15. Here, Weeks is referencing Lee Edelman's discussion of "the Child" (which I also reference above).

[58] While rhetoricians have not yet explored the university's contemporary dealings with racial redress in depth, scholars have written on how institutions grapple with historic injustices at present. Claudia Janssen analyzes the rhetoric of corporations apologizing and taking responsibility for benefitting from both slavery and forced labor. Janssen's work is useful to my research for the way in which it considers how the lasting impressions of prior harms offer an opportunity for reworking relations at present. Claudia I. Janssen, "Addressing Corporate Ties to Slavery: Corporate Apologia in a Discourse of Reconciliation," *Communication Studies* 63, no. 1 (2012): 18–35; Claudia I. Janssen, "Corporate Historical Responsibility (CHR): Addressing a Corporate Past of Forced Labor at Volkswagen," *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 41, no. 1 (2013): 64–83. Beyond U.S. universities, the early 2000s witnessed a surge of attention to racial reparations for slavery, including the oft-cited works *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks* by Randall Robinson (2000) and *Atonement and Forgiveness: A New Model for Black Reparations* by Roy L. Brooks (2004). Other scholarship emphasizes the importance of addressing and appealing to historically and racially sedimented feelings. By way of example, in his discussion of identifying eligibility and calculating debt, legal

material losses bound up with histories of structural exclusion? In what ways can and should universities account for the lingering and felt effects of intergenerational experiences of inequitable access to the university and the subsequent resources and capital it affords? When does reliance on the family pass on rather than rectify these painful legacies? The questions that I raise throughout this project take seriously the experiences of and emotions embedded in university redress and are indebted to a Black feminist framework.[59]

There is no singular definition of "Black feminism" or "Black feminist thought." For the purposes of my project, I understand Black feminism as a theoretically robust and deeply inventive practice for making sense of a world in which manifold forms of oppression are interlocking, and in which personal experiences—of women, of Black women, of people minoritized within the university's walls—can and must complement institutionalized knowledge.[60] I am greatly influenced by Jennifer Nash's suggestion that Black feminism is that which is intentionally and self-consciously "capacious," "a varied project with theoretical, political, activist, intellectual, erotic, ethical, and creative dimensions; black feminism is multiple, myriad, shifting, and unfolding."[61] Regarding my focus on university redress, Black feminist perspectives allow for the holding of partial, contradictory, and evolving experiences of the institution.[62] Such experiences include the ways in

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scholar Kevin Hopkins contends that a consistent hindrance to reparations is "emotion, denial" and "white backlash." Kevin Hopkins, "Forgive U.S. Our Debts? Righting the Wrongs of Slavery Review Essay," *Georgetown Law Journal* 89 (2001): 2541.

[59] Regarding rhetorical engagements with Black feminism, see Scarlett L. Hester and Catherine R. Squires, "Who Are We Working For? Recentering Black Feminism," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 15, no. 4 (2018): 343–48.

[60] Here, I'm drawing directly from the Combahee River Collective statement, which is reprinted alongside contemporary discussions with its authors in Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, ed., *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 15-27.

[61] Jennifer C. Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 5.

[62] Even when the governing power of academic institutions and their disciplinary commitments is not the professed purpose for writing, critical engagements with the university can often be found lurking between the lines of the texts organized under the broad label of Black feminism. Here, I'm

which the university makes inequitable demands on particular bodies—and I do mean both human bodies and bodies of scholarship—and differentially doles out degrees of aggression to certain persons.[63] Yet while the university can and does enable gross mistreatments, it also fosters moments of intimate connection, communion, and collaboration that might happen only because of the physical and intellectual spaces provided by its halls. In relation to university redress, evocations of and emotional attachments to family operate at times as disciplining forces and at others as forms of community comfort. Such complexities cannot be understated or easily untangled, nor can their effects on persons within and beyond the university be concisely summarized or simply unified.

According to Grace Kyungwon Hong, Black feminism operates as both verb and noun; rather than a "discrete and knowable set of objects," it is an orientation toward knowledge, a way of "gestur[ing] toward what cannot be known, what has been erased, and how."[64] Hong goes on to emphasize the creative (like Nash) and imaginative components of Black feminist thought, noting

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thinking of Christina Sharpe's formative monograph *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. While I would be hesitant to classify this work as part of the literature to which I am broadly referring, Sharpe uses her intimate relationship to the university to frame her introduction. In these first few pages, Sharpe juxtaposes her navigation of academia and performance of "being a good academic"—securing an Ivy League pedigree, attending academic conferences, accepting invitations to give intellectual talks—with an intimate portrait of her family, including her parents' and siblings' educational paths and the heart-wrenching losses that riddle this lineage. While Sharpe does not focus her critical analysis directly on the social institution of the university, it is certainly there in the shadows. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

[63] Here, I am thinking about Brittney Cooper's concise overview of the pressure placed on Black feminist scholars to perform academia perfectly, lest their scholarship and theoretical insights risk dismissal. I am also thinking about Robyn Wiegman's discussion of how certain disciplines are positioned by the university as the sites for performing liberalism, political awareness, and social and cultural politics more broadly. Brittney C. Cooper, "Love No Limit: Towards a Black Feminist Future (In Theory)," *Black Scholar* 45, no. 4 (2015): 7-21; Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

[64] Grace Kyungwon Hong, "'The Future of Our Worlds': Black Feminism and the Politics of Knowledge in the University under Globalization," *Meridians* 8, no. 2 (2008): 106. Elsewhere in this article, Hong discusses the "violence toward black feminist bodies" wrought by the "university formation" (98).

that "Black feminism reminds us to imagine a different future, for 'the future of our worlds' hangs in the balance. So what might our future within the university look like?"[65] When read from a rhetorical perspective, this emphasis on future-facing and worldmaking imagination resonates with understandings of reconciliation.[66] As rhetorician Erik Doxtader points out, reconciliation similarly refuses the allure of a firmly defined object or a knowable set of objectives, eschewing rumination on the past and instead "recollect[ing] the past in the name of making the future,"[67] in the hopes of

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[65] Hong, "'The Future of Our Worlds,'" 108. Similarly, I discuss the university as both verb and noun in Chapter 1 in conversation with Sara Ahmed's writing on this institution. While I discuss the affinities between rhetorics of reconciliation and Hong's writing, there are also moments in which I see Hong's words speaking to certain understandings of rhetoric more generally, wherein rhetoric is defined as a way of conceiving of how an object (or objects) carries influence and operates in the world, while contributing to and shaping different forms of knowledge.

[66] The body of rhetorical literature on reconciliation that I am referring to here includes: Erik Doxtader, "Reconciliation—a Rhetorical Concept/Ion," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89, no. 4 (2003): 267–92; Erik Doxtader, "The Faith and Struggle of Beginning (with) Words: On the Turn between Reconciliation and Recognition," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 40, no. 1 (2007): 119–46; Erik Doxtader, *With Faith in the Works of Words: The Beginnings of Reconciliation in South Africa, 1985-1995* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2009); John B. Hatch, "Reconciliation: Building a Bridge from Complicity to Coherence in the Rhetoric of Race Relations," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 6, no. 4 (2003): 737–64; John B. Hatch, "Beyond Apologia: Racial Reconciliation and Apologies for Slavery," *Western Journal of Communication* 70, no. 3 (2006): 186–211; John B. Hatch, *Race and Reconciliation: Redressing Wounds of Injustice* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008); John B. Hatch, "Rounding (Out) the Bases of Racial Reconciliation: (Dia)Logology and Virginia's Apology for Slavery," in *Transcendence by Perspective: Meditations on and with Kenneth Burke*, ed. Bryan Crable (Anderson, SC: Parlor Press, 2014), 87–113; Mariko Izumi, "Asian-Japanese: State Apology, National Ethos, and the 'Comfort Women' Reparations Debate in Japan," *Communication Studies* 62, no. 5 (2011): 473–90; Katherine Elizabeth Mack, *From Apartheid to Democracy: Deliberating Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2014); Mark Lawrence McPhail, *The Rhetoric of Racism Revisited: Reparations or Separation?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001). Additionally, the journal *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* hosted a forum to discuss the rhetoric of reconciliation following Hatch's 2003 article, which included these responses: Erik Doxtader, "The Potential of Reconciliation's Beginning: A Reply," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2004): 378–90; Mark Lawrence McPhail, "A Question of Character: Re(-)Signing the Racial Contract," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2004): 391–405; Kirt H. Wilson, "Is There Interest in Reconciliation?," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 7, no. 3 (2004): 367–77. See also John B. Hatch, "The Hope of Reconciliation: Continuing the Conversation," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9, no. 2 (2006): 259–77.

[67] Doxtader, "Reconciliation—a Rhetorical Concept/Ion," 267. Doxtader more comprehensively defines reconciliation as "a working faith in the works of words. . . . For and within history, reconciliation is a rhetorical memory made, an active re-membering of rhetoric's making, and a remembrance of what rhetoricity might yet make" (284). He titled his 2009 book *With Faith in the*

collectively inventing a more just future. Doxtader's writing on reconciliation details the complex entanglement of institutional inheritances, identity, and invention (a synonym for imaginative creation that firmly grounds his work in a long history of rhetorical scholarship),[68] and emphasizes reconciliation as an active process of "(re)making." Engagement "opposes the way in which we establish the essence (the exclusivity) of things, challenges the ways that we justify the value of such distinctions, and endeavors to dismantle those modes of definition that legitimize identitarian violence," all the while asking "how human beings can invent and express the potential to be(come) by standing between what they are and what they are not."[69] This discursive process creates space for moving beyond debates over *what has happened* and empowering the collective envisioning of *what could be.*[70]

Rather than a predefined origin or endpoint, reconciliation resides in the unfolding rhetorical process of communication, the outcome of which cannot be predetermined. Perhaps most importantly, rather than reinforcing or negotiating cemented identities and delineations of past,

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Works of Words.

[68] Rhetorical scholars have long written of the import of "rhetorical invention." For a sampling of this scholarship, see John Arthos, "Rhetorical Invention," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication* (Oxford University Press, 2017); Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Performing Critical Interruptions: Stories, Rhetorical Invention, and the Environmental Justice Movement," *Western Journal of Communication* 65, no. 1 (2001): 1–25; Robert L. Ivie, "Metaphor and the Rhetorical Invention of Cold War 'Idealists,'" *Communication Monographs* 54, no. 2 (1987): 165–82.

[69] Doxtader, "Reconciliation—a Rhetorical Concept/Ion," 267. Doxtader's discussion of identity in relation to reconciliation is especially poignant in the context of U.S. higher education and ongoing debates surrounding identity and inclusion and focusing on affirmative action. Notably marked by the 1978 Supreme Court decision in the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (which was filed four years earlier), affirmative action ensured that schools could consider race and ethnicity (and in general identity-based "differences") in the admissions process, contingent upon the fact that such decisions enabled the school to achieve its broader educational mission. As Robert Post notes, this decision articulated affirmative action not as a remedy for past (and ongoing) injustices but rather as a present-tense tool for democracy and the production of "educated and critical citizenry that spans existing racial and ethnic differences." Robert Post and Michael Paul Rogin, eds., *Race and Representation: Affirmative Action* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 24.

[70] Doxtader, "The Potential of Reconciliation's Beginning," 380.

present, and future, active engagement in the process of reconciliation produces a sense of "togetherness," to borrow rhetorician Kendall Phillips's term, that engenders "its own relational potential."[71] Similar to reconciliation, a Black feminist focus on university redress invites questions of how individual and institutional identities relate to past actions and future outlooks,[72] and lingers in a "moment that holds the question of what to do (now) with history's future."[73] Comprehensive understandings of twenty-first-century university redress require an immediate and ongoing attention to the interlocking and unfolding relationships between race and gender, the way in which these relationships are inherited and continue to unfold at present, and the possibilities for their active reinvention across time.

This theoretical constellation of inheritance, identity, and invention resonates with abolitionist discourses including and beyond the literature on abolishing the family. Across contemporary scholarship, abolition emerges as an imaginative praxis that is, as Dylan Rodríguez puts it, "part of

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[71] Phillips writes of how the act of "remembrance"—the process of collectively remembering or coming to a consensus about the past—is a "crucial aspect of our togetherness, our existence as a public." Kendall R. Phillips, ed., *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 4; Doxtader, "Reconciliation—a Rhetorical Concept/Ion," 269. It is important to note that Doxtader is not advocating for homogeneity or the artificial embrace of uniformity. Rather, his conceptualization of reconciliation emphasizes the import of words to allow for "(be)coming into a relation of unity in difference." Doxtader, *With Faith in the Works of Words*, 13.

[72] For Doxtader, reconciliation both "depends on and opposes" understandings of identity. Writing on apartheid in South Africa, Doxtader argues that the process of reconciliation is implemented to remake (national) identity but at the same time locates the past problem of apartheid in (multiple and contesting) identities. Identity is thus in tension throughout reconciliation. Doxtader, "Reconciliation—a Rhetorical Concept/Ion," 274. In his own elaboration (and in conversation with Doxtader, among others), Kirt Wilson specifically addresses the negotiation of institutional identity amid reconciliatory processes. Wilson grounds his argument in critical race theory and offers the framework of interest convergence to make sense of the ways in which civil rights are gained and the past acknowledged; Wilson, "Is There Interest in Reconciliation?," 371. For Wilson, interest convergence can explain how and why institutional rhetorics of reconciliation enable the perception of active atonement while also ensuring that institutions and their stakeholders continue to reap "material benefits" (373).

[73] Doxtader, "The Potential of Reconciliation's Beginning," 378.

the *historical present tense*."[74] Abolition is an ongoing, participatory practice with indeterminate coordinates and outcomes; it bears a lengthy social and political genealogy which is inherited as actions learned from those who have previously engaged in this work of reimagining more just futures.[75] In the years since I began the research and writing for this project, conversations about "abolition" have proliferated within, across, and well beyond the academy, not unlike appeals to "reckoning." Indeed, the term abolition has become something of a buzzword for right-wing conservatives and leftist folks alike, with the utterance of this single word serving as a quick rhetorical route to asserting their brand of politics through either rebuke or embrace. In their collection of essays written for the present political moment of the 2020s, Angela Y. Davis, Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, and Beth E. Ritchie caution against this tempting tendency, pointing out that "concepts, derived both from organizing and scholarship, can become brittle, empty terms—

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[74] Dylan Rodríguez, "Abolition as Praxis of Human Being: A Foreword," *Harvard Law Review* 132, no. 6 (2019): 1576. For an introductory overview of how other scholars are similarly conceiving of abolition as a collective praxis, see Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "What Is to Be Done?," *American Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (2011): 245–65; Elias Rodriques, "Abolition Is a Collective Vision: An Interview with Mariame Kaba," March 29, 2021, https://www.thenation.com/article/culture/mariame-kaba-interview-til-we-free-us/; David A. Maldonado and Erica R. Meiners, "Due Time: Meditations on Abolition at the Site of the University," *Social Text* 39, no. 1 (146) (2021): 69–92. Further, scholars have recently discussed abolition and the university specifically. As Abigail Boggs, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein put it, abolition "offers the occasion for thinking about the university in ways that the institution itself might otherwise render impossible. And in doing so it may offer an occasion to trouble the institution as we know and inhabit it—and as it inhabits us. What follows is an attempt to shift our relation to that anxiety. We are looking to find a different path to the question, What would an abolitionist approach to the university say yes to?" Abigail Boggs et al., "Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation," *Abolition: A Journal and Community of Radical Theory & Practice*, August 28, 2019, 2. Similarly preempting feelings of anxiety or alarm, David L. Clark notes that "it may seem strange to call for the abolition of the very institution that has given and continues to give so very much to me. But that is precisely what I am saying." Clark later explains that, "An abolished university is not undone but commits itself to its perpetual undoing. Can we dare to imagine, then, a revolution not, or not only, in how universities are administered or how classes are delivered but instead a campus that suffers a transformation for nothing less than the good, and for goodness's sake?" David L. Clark, "Abolish the University: Build the Sanctuary Campus," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 21, no. 3 (2021): 1, 12.

[75] Rodríguez, "Abolition as Praxis of Human Being," 1576.

tools to wield against others—rather than living, generative, and rigorous frameworks that deepen and strengthen our theoretical understanding and our movements for social and political transformation."[76] Davis and colleagues set their sights on carefully defining "abolition feminism," a term in which each element carries immense intellectual and social weight. This "*now* practice," as they put it, "refuses to let go of the visionary—that which does not yet exist—and the radicalness of the imaginary as a space for what is yet unthinkable, at the edge of the possible."[77] In each of my chapters, I analyze the ways in which discourses of university redress seize upon and circulate concepts pertaining to family, like descent, surrogacy, and parentage, as well as responsibility and care, in order to understand their rhetorical repercussions.[78] While each chapter gestures toward abolition, I reflect more directly upon the relationship between university redress and family, abolition and futurity, in my conclusion.

Finally, the questions that I raise and begin to address throughout this dissertation can easily translate to and inform other related critical discussions of the university now emerging in communication studies spaces. Recent articles have gestured toward the enduring harm perpetrated by the university, while also pointing to the historical violence wrote by this institution, in order to question the costs of existing within this social institution. In March 2023, the journal *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* published a forum discussion that "interrogat[ed] the critical/cultural landscape of higher education" and featured reflections on public memory and "the ways our higher

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[76] Angela Y. Davis et al., *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021), 1. The observation that the discursive circulation of "abolition" is noticeably increasing is similarly made by Marquis Bey and Jesse A. Goldberg. In an article published in 2022, they point out that "We hear the phrases "abolition now" and "defund the police" uttered more frequently and in more mainstream venues than at any previous time during the twenty-first century." Marquis Bey and Jesse A. Goldberg, "Queer as in Abolition Now!," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 28, no. 2 (2022): 159–60.

[77] Davis et al., *Abolition. Feminism. Now., 16.*

[78] For a thorough discussion of Black feminist thought and "The Politics of Care," see Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined,* 76-80.

education campuses are explicitly and implicitly enmeshed in discourse of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and neoliberal erasure of trauma and violence."[79] Further, two journals in rhetorical studies have pending calls for papers that address the potentialities and possibilities of rhetorical perspectives on abolition. Writing from the position of a graduate student of communication, Jessica Hatrick raises the ambivalence of care, pointing out that "care work arguably functions as the work that keeps the university running, and those of us most impacted by the violence of the university use care work to keep each other within the university."[80] Rhetorical scholar Bryan McCann similarly discusses the double-edged quality of the university's demands and survival, focusing on the ways in which those who render themselves most complicit with institutional environments of toxicity and taxing exploitation reap the greatest rewards.[81] In this manner, McCann's autoethnographic examination reveals how caring for the self is sacrificed for the academic subject. Like Hatrick and McCann, I am cognizant of how my own social and structural position within the academy irrevocably informs my approach to this subject matter, the disciplines that matter for this project, and my deep investment in subjects, both disciplinary and human, surviving the university. My hope is that readers—fellow and future scholars and administrators alike—reconsider the uses of the family, as discourse and as institution, amid racial redress. By doing so, we might reorient our engagements with the past and the future of the university, allowing us to "dream our way out" of the institutionalized and cyclical reproduction of racialized and gendered injustices and "imagine beyond the given."[82]

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[79] Meredith M. Bagley, "Introduction: Interrogating the Memory Landscape of Higher Education," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 20, no. 1 (2023): 1.
[80] Jessica Hatrick, "How to Outlive the University?," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 17, no. 4 (2020): 412.
[81] Bryan J. McCann, "Economies of Misery: Success and Surplus in the Research University," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 20, no. 1 (2022): 1–18.
[82] Davis et al., *Abolition. Feminism. Now., 16*.

"Our Georgetown Family": Declaring Descent and Demarcating the Bounds of the Georgetown University Community

> Reclaiming that from which one has been disinherited is a good thing. Self-possession in the full sense of that expression is the companion to self-knowledge. Yet claiming for myself a heritage the weft of whose genesis is my own disinheritance is a profoundly troubling paradox.
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> —Patricia J. Williams, "On Being the Object of Property"[1]

On the first of September 2016, Georgetown University president John J. DeGioia welcomed university community members to their first week of the academic year. The cyclical beginning of any new academic year typically presents the opportunity to welcome a university's newest community members, including recently hired faculty and staff, and first-year students. This year, however, Georgetown convened to usher in the new year and to learn about the university's recent efforts to address its legacy of slavery. While DeGioia discussed Georgetown's reconciliatory steps, he also marked a notably different composition of the university community. In addition to the freshly minted undergraduates and latest hires, DeGioia welcomed "the presence" of "the descendants of the enslaved children, women, and men of the Jesuit plantations and from whom our university benefited," who were sitting in the audience and listening in online. He embraced "the descendants" on behalf of the university, affirming his belief that it was "essential that our institution . . . accept our responsibilities to the descendants of the children, women, and men, enslaved and sold to benefit our University, and acknowledge that they are, in fact, members of our Georgetown community." Later in this same address, DeGioia emphasized the "care and respect" that these descendants would receive from the university, similar to that enjoyed by other members of "our

[1] Patricia J. Williams, "On Being the Object of Property," *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988): 6-7.

Georgetown community."[2] In no uncertain terms then, according to this welcome event, "the descendants" now belonged to the university community. Yet who were "the descendants" and why, at this moment, did their presence and membership require such explicit acknowledgment?

This chapter explores how, when, and why "the descendants" are imagined as part of the Georgetown University community and what "care and respect" are owed to and demanded by this emergent constituency. As DeGioia in 2016 continued outlining the university's efforts to reckon with its racial past, he further elaborated Georgetown's responsibilities to "the descendants." One of perhaps the most important parts of reconciling this aspect of "our" history, he noted, was Georgetown's responsibility to rectify the damage it had done to families and to the parents and children, spouses and siblings, who were treated as chattel and torn apart by slavery. Part of owning the university's historical role in these practices of dehumanization and in the violent destruction of familial bonds entailed helping those who were harmed by this aspect of "Georgetown's history" to "re-connect." In addition to making the institution's extensive archives accessible for genealogical research, DeGioia announced that the university would offer "the descendants" "an advantage in the admissions process." In explaining this decision, he reasoned that the university already "provides care and respect for the members of the Georgetown community—faculty, staff, alumni—those with an enduring relationship with Georgetown."[3] Now recognized as members of the university community according to familial lineage, "the descendants" would reap these same benefits of university belonging and gain the ability to pass down this status.[4]

Georgetown University is a Jesuit university situated in the affluent Georgetown neighborhood

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[2] John J. DeGioia, "Racial Justice: A Georgetown Response, Continuing the Conversation," *President John J. DeGioia* (blog), September 1, 2016, https://president.georgetown.edu/slavery-memory-reconciliation-report-remarks/.
[3] DeGioia, "Racial Justice."
[4] It's worth noting that prior to 2015, "the descendants" were scarcely mentioned in reference to the members of the university community and in discussions of the university's legacy of slavery.

of the District of Columbia. The school was founded by Jesuits in the late 1780s and opened in 1792 as Georgetown College.[5] Georgetown is one of the oldest U.S. universities and the first Jesuit institution founded in the United States, and slavery played a significant part in the university's past. There is ample research detailing the history of Jesuits involved in slaveholding, including those historically connected to Georgetown, the Maryland Province Jesuits. In September 2015, DeGioia formed a Working Group on Slavery, Reconciliation, and Memory to investigate this part of the university's past and to recommend ways for the university to move forward. Georgetown faculty member and historian Adam Rothman, who also served as a member of the Working Group, has written extensively on the university's legacy of slavery. Profits from the plantations run by Jesuits in Maryland directly benefited the university and, in Rothman's words, helped to "subsidize the education of white boys."[6] These profits included the now notorious sale of over three hundred enslaved people in 1838; whereas historians and the university originally put the total at 272, and that number continues to circulate in public and scholarly circles, recent research has revealed higher and less precise figures.[7] Put plainly by Rothman, Georgetown was "built on the backs of enslaved

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[5] Robert Emmett Curran, "Georgetown University: A Brief History," *2021-2022 Undergraduate Bulletin* (blog), https://bulletin.georgetown.edu/about/guhistory/. For extensive details about Georgetown's founding and early history, see Robert Emmett Curran, *The Bicentennial History of Georgetown University: From Academy to University, 1789-1889* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1993).

[6] Adam Rothman, "Reckoning with Slavery at Georgetown," *Association of American Colleges and Universities* 21, no. 3 (2018), https://www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/2018/summer/rothman.

[7] Rothman, "Reckoning with Slavery at Georgetown." It is important to note that at the time of Georgetown's founding Jesuits were "prohibited from charging tuition to their students." According to Rothman and the Working Group's final report, this funding model included a "recruitment strategy oriented to the South" and fortified the school's reliance on profits from chattel slavery and enslaved labor. "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation to the President of Georgetown University," Georgetown University, Summer 2016, p. 12. Regarding ambiguity around the number of individuals sold to benefit Georgetown, in 2015 and 2016, the time period on which this chapter focuses, the number of individuals included in the sale was repeatedly stated as 272. However, because of continued research into Georgetown's past, this number is now estimated to be higher and still uncertain. According to the New England Historic Genealogical Society's website *American Ancestors*, "various sale-related documents (including the June 19, 1838

people."[8] By the twenty-first century, the fact of this history was neither revelatory nor singular in the context of U.S. universities. Yet Georgetown's past attracted mounting nationwide attention in the mid-2010s because of a series of articles published by an undergraduate history major in the university's student paper, *The Hoya*; student protests pertaining to the renaming of campus buildings; and in-depth features in the *New York Times* that outlined the university's history and heightened awareness of individuals whose ancestors were sold in 1838.[9] While the visibility of Georgetown as an elite school in the nation's capital surely fueled this contemporary focus on its past, it was the 1838 sale that captured the attention of the public and helped fuel the emergence of a collective and organizing group of descendants.

Sale Agreement) stated that the Maryland Jesuits were selling 'two hundred and seventy two' enslaved individuals to purchasers in Louisiana. Even today historians and commentators uncritically accept the accuracy of this count. However, closer examination has shown that the 1838 sale actually involved (and radically reordered the lives and family relationships) of at least 314 distinct men, women and children." "GU272 Memory Project," New England Historic Genealogical Society, American Ancestors, https://gu272.americanancestors.org/finding/who-were-the-GU272.

[8] Rothman, "Reckoning with Slavery at Georgetown." In addition to Rothman's specificity, research like Craig Steven Wilder's makes clear the extent to which U.S. universities in general are indebted to slavetrading and slaveholding, accompanied by settler colonial practices of depopulation and displacement. Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013).

[9] It is interesting to note that Matthew Quallen, the undergraduate student who wrote these articles, later served as a member of the university's Working Group. Matthew Quallen, "QUALLEN: Georgetown, Financed by Slave Trading," News, *The Hoya*, September 26, 2014, https://thehoya.com/georgetown-financed-by-slave-trading/; Matthew Quallen, "QUALLEN: Jesuit Ideals Facing the Slave Trade," News, *The Hoya*, January 16, 2015, https://thehoya.com/jesuit-ideals-facing-slave-trade/; Matthew Quallen, "QUALLEN: Slavery's Remnants, Buried and Overlooked," News, *The Hoya*, September 11, 2015, https://thehoya.com/slaverys-remnants-buried-and-overlooked/; Matthew Quallen, "QUALLEN: Slavery Inextricably Tied to Georgetown's Growth," October 23, 2015, https://thehoya.com/quallen-slavery-inextricably-tied-to-georgetowns-growth/; Rachel L. Swarns, "272 Slaves Were Sold to Save Georgetown. What Does It Owe Their Descendants?," *New York Times*, April 16, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/17/us/georgetown-university-search-for-slave-descendants.html; Rachel L. Swarns, "Intent on a Reckoning with Georgetown's Slavery-Stained Past," *New York Times*, July 10, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/11/us/intent-on-a-reckoning-with-georgetowns-slavery-stained-past.html; Rachel L. Swarns, "Georgetown Plans Steps to Atone for Slave Past," *New York Times*, September 1, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/02/us/slaves-georgetown-university.html.

Though "not the only, the first, or the last sale of slaves to provide operating revenue for the school," the 1838 sale was the Jesuits' largest.[10] This sale also offers an explicit example of how slavery directly funded early U.S. universities, since it was used as a means of rescuing Georgetown College from detrimental debt and impending bankruptcy. Surveying an array of archival documents largely held by the university—including correspondence between Maryland Province Jesuits and Jesuit authorities in Rome, bills of sale, and ship registries—archivists, historians, other academics, and journalists have pieced together the tale of a bungled exchange.[11] One major mishap was a clear disregard of the conditions set for the sale and presented by Jesuit authorities at the time. These authorities' directives dictated that "families not be divided, that the continued practice of the Catholic faith by these baptized slaves be ensured, and that the monies raised from the sale be used for endowment, not for operating expenses or the paying down of debt."[12] Despite such demands, local officials—including then president of Georgetown, Father Thomas Mulledy, and the superior of the Maryland Province, Father William McSherry—used profits from the sale to rescue the school from ruination. Further, enslaved individuals were ripped from their kin when they were sold and relocated to Louisiana, with many sold again.[13]

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[10] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 13. Additionally, because of the Jesuits' impeccable record keeping, the sale is also one of the best-documented.
[11] Adam Rothman, "Slavery and Institutional Morality at Georgetown University: Reply to Nelson," *British Journal of Sociology* 69, no. 3 (2018): 557; Adam Rothman and Elsa Barraza Mendoza, eds., *Facing Georgetown's History: A Reader on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2021).
[12] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 14.
[13] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 16. Two individuals are of significance in the local decision to ignore conditions of the sale. These are first, then president of Georgetown Father Thomas Mulledy and, second, then superior of the Maryland Province Father William McSherry. Notably, the names of these individuals graced buildings on Georgetown's campus until, in 2015, student protests spurred their renaming. Katherine Shaver, "Georgetown University to Rename Two Buildings That Reflect School's Ties to Slavery," *Washington Post*, November 15, 2015, sec. Local, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/georgetown-university-to-rename-two-buildings-that-reflect-schools-ties-to-slavery/2015/11/15/e36edd32-8bb7-11e5-acff-673ae92ddd2b_story.html.

In September 2016, while announcing the publication of the Working Group's final report and informally inducting "the descendants" as part of the Georgetown community, DeGioia focused on the importance of the family. He emphasized the fact that "there were two evils that took place in 1838: there was the sale itself, and there was the breakup of families."[14] The first evil, the exchange of individual human beings for financial gain, an event that occurred nearly two hundred years earlier, could not be undone in the twenty-first century. However, by tracing lines of descent and helping to reunite the family members of those sold, the second evil harbored the possibility of present-day reconciliation. Thus, moving forward with contemporary racial redress subsequently required that the university repair the severance of these familial lineages, re-connect with "the descendants," and mend the broken institutional bonds of the university and the family. Part of rendering these institutions whole would include offering "the descendants" special admissions considerations comparable to that of other university "applicants who are descendants of faculty, staff or alumni."[15] On the surface, such an amendment appeared to be an inclusive institutional embrace. Yet, as Patricia Williams poignantly notes, to search for remedies in and through the very institutions responsible for one's initial injuries is to face irreconcilable tensions and contradictions.[16] By examining Georgetown's reworking of admissions advantages according to this broadening of descent and rhetorical negotiation of university belonging, this chapter begins to consider the paradoxes of the university and the family as sites of anti-Blackness and of repair.

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[14] DeGioia, "Racial Justice." As Jennifer L. Morgan describes throughout her historical work on slavery, such familial "breakups" were all too common and unremarkable. Jennifer L. Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship, and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).

[15] "Descendants," Georgetown University Office of Undergraduate Admissions, https://uadmissions.georgetown.edu/applying/descendants/.

[16] Williams, "On Being the Object of Property," 6-7.

Tracking Descent and "the Descendants"

In this chapter, I examine the repeated recourse to family lineage across Georgetown's discourse of reconciliation. I began this exploration by asking how and in what ways claiming the position of descendant might enable participation and influence in university discussions of reconciliation. During the Working Group's tenure, individuals connected to ancestors once owned by the Maryland Jesuits began to connect with one another and with the university as never before. Alongside public and university revelations of the elite institution's legacy of slavery, increasing numbers of individuals began to uncover their familial connections to this history and, importantly, began to do so in conversation with one another.[17] By the time that the Working Group's report was publicly shared and the university's advantaged admissions status extended, these people had organized to varying degrees. The GU272 Descendants Association, one such organization, began articulating descendants as legitimate members of an atemporal "Georgetown Family." Much like the Working Group and the university, these descendants employed the language of family and familial belonging so ingrained in the university's own discourse. However, they did so to position themselves as legitimate participants in Georgetown's reconciliation process, participants who rightfully demanded a say in this process and in its outcomes.

The rhetoric of descent and "the descendants" mercurially operates as institutional inheritance, institutionally acknowledged identity and site of differentiation, and, finally, institutionally located invention amid discourses of university redress. In the following pages, I explore how the

[17] The process of fleshing out one's lineal descent was largely facilitated by the Georgetown Memory Project (GMP). The GMP is an organization founded by Georgetown alumnus Richard Cellini with the four-part mission to "Identify the people sold in 1838 / Locate their living descendants / Acknowledge them as members of the Georgetown family / Honor their sacrifice & legacy." Since 2016, the organization has marshaled resources and funded genealogical research to track down the relatives of GU272 ancestors. In 2017, the organization partnered with American Ancestors to create an accessible and searchable database for GU272 descendants. "Georgetown Memory Project – Further Research Is Necessary," https://www.georgetownmemoryproject.org/.

constituency of "the descendants" emerged at Georgetown and the ways in which these individuals began rhetorically reclaiming their familial and institutional inheritances. Perhaps most importantly, by analyzing the movement of "the descendants" from peripheral (and perhaps even invisible) to foregrounded members of Georgetown's community, I unveil how this broad group of people set about articulating this emerging identity for themselves.

To understand how the university operationalized "the descendants" and how these descendants themselves organized, I focus on two primary documents at the center of Georgetown's recent reconciliation efforts. First, I examine the Working Group's final report, which was drafted during the summer of 2016 and made public that September, as discussed by DeGioia in his welcome address. The report provides insight into how and why the university's approach to reconciliation unfolded, as well as the warrant for modifying the admissions language of "advantaged status." Second, I consider the Declaration of GU272 Descendants, a one-page document drafted by the GU272 Descendants Association that reveals another aspect of the contemporary discourse of reconciliation at Georgetown. The drafting of this document roughly coincided with the conclusion of the group's efforts in the summer of 2016. This Declaration, which was written by a group of people identifying as descendants, offers a glimpse of the ways that these individuals envisioned and articulated their relationship to the university.[18] Further, some of these same descendants involved in

[18] The exact number of individuals involved in the drafting of this Declaration is difficult to ascertain. Additionally, estimates regarding the approximate number of members of the GU272 Descendants Association at the time of the Declaration's inception varied. In the first week of September 2016, Karran Harper Royal, who served as the founding Executive Director of the group, described the association as "a group of nearly 500 descendants of Georgetown's former slaves who are pushing the university to do more." Another concurrently published article, however, estimated that this number was closer to 300. Karran Harper Royal, "Georgetown University Sold My Family's Ancestors. Now It Needs to Do More to Atone," *Washington Post*, September 6, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/09/06/georgetown-university-sold-my-familys-ancestors-now-it-needs-to-do-more-to-atone/; Rachel L. Swarns, "Georgetown Plans Steps to Atone for Slave Past," *New York Times*, September 1, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/02/us/slaves-georgetown-university.html.

writing the Declaration joined DeGioia for the public announcement of the Working Group's report and findings, reading the Declaration aloud at this event.[19] These documents demonstrate divergent approaches to reimagining descent in relation to Georgetown, the former from the position of the university and the latter from descendants themselves.

I am primarily interested in investigating the rhetoric of descent revealed by these documents and marked by this moment of university accommodation. While the report and the Declaration demonstrate ways in which descent factored into and was cast by Georgetown's efforts surrounding reconciliation, the two documents do not represent the entirety of this discourse. However, after surveying a breadth of materials spanning the Working Group's formation in fall 2015, the attention Georgetown attracted throughout the spring of 2016, and responses surrounding the report's 2016 release—as well as news articles and university events, press releases, and presidential addresses immediately before and after this twelve-month period—I find that the significance of the report and the Declaration stands out. While the undeniably dissimilar genres of these documents preclude direct comparison, there is value in assessing their resemblances and divergences, most notably in the ways that they characterize the university community, key stakeholders in the university's history of slavery, and the ongoing relationships between these constituencies. Despite the very different conditions of their creation, both documents present descent at the rhetorical and conceptual nexus of the university and the family. Yet these arrangements have markedly different rhetorical effects. While the working report lays the foundation for the university's revision of legacy admissions preference and recasting of community confines, the Declaration reimagines a collective grounded in Georgetown's past that simultaneously eludes the discursive disciplining of the neoliberal academy.

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[19] While there is no video recording that documents this event, descendant Karran Harper Royal describes attending DeGioia's address and "read[ing] our group's declaration at the school's presentation" alongside "fellow descendants." Royal, "Georgetown University Sold My Family's Ancestors."

Examining the Work of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation

In the summer of 2016, the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation at Georgetown University handed its final report over to university president John J. DeGioia. The report summarized over nine months of the group's labor poring over the university's historical relationship to slavery, organizing events and symposiums around this topic, and teasing out the ways in which the legacy of this past lived on in the present day.[20] The Working Group was appointed by DeGioia in the fall of 2015 and consisted of representatives who spanned the university community: sixteen faculty members, administrators, alumni, and students.[21] According to DeGioia's charge to the group, these individuals would advise the university "on how best to acknowledge and recognize Georgetown's historical relationship with the institution of slavery; examine and interpret the history of certain sites on our campus . . . ; and convene events and opportunities for dialogue."[22] The culminating 103-page document reflected on the university's history and how the group's work unfolded; ruminated on slavery, memory, and reconciliation (the key terms for which the Working Group was named); presented six recommendations on how to remedy the university's legacy of slavery today; and offered explications from the group's five subcommittees on archives, ethics and reconciliation, local history, memorialization, and outreach. Between the Working Group's appointment in 2015 and the publication of its final report in 2016,

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[20] According to the Working Group's report, the entire group "met ten times over seven months," while the group's five subcommittees met many more times. Related events planned by the group most notably included a December 2015 "Teach-In" and the April 2016 Emancipation Day Symposium. "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 3.

[21] More specifically, the roster of the Working Group comprised four historians and single representatives from the Departments of Government and English; three administrators, the Vice President of Institutional Diversity and Equity, the Assistant Director of the Center for Multicultural Equity and Access, and the Vice President of Mission and Ministry; two Georgetown alumni; and five then-current Georgetown students.

[22] John DeGioia, "Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation: A Message from President DeGioia," *President John J. DeGioia* (blog), September 24, 2015, https://president.georgetown.edu/slavery-memory-reconciliation/.

the terminology of "the descendants" came to contour a constituency who began as individuals widely unknown to the university, and uneasy outsiders, and finally explicit members of the university community. Also during this time, this constituency came to articulate themselves as part of Georgetown.

While the parameters of "the descendants" remained nebulous, the discursive codification of this signifier culminated in the Working Group's final report and DeGioia's contemporaneous announcement that Georgetown would adopt the group's recommendation to alter preferential admissions practices. The revision of this practice simultaneously cemented "the descendants" as a recognized category of Georgetown community members; as such, they were eligible to receive the same "care and attention" as other members. Throughout at least the latter half of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, holding the position of faculty, staff, or alumnus/alumna at Georgetown—each of which was represented on the Working Group's roster—has typically guaranteed "advantaged status" for one's offspring in admissions. Today, this practice is common U.S. institutions of higher education, especially institutions whose selectivity or elite status resemble that of Georgetown.[23] Though increasingly contested as elitist and racialized, the practice is found across these institutions of higher education, including large public research universities and small

[23] In their sociological review, Deborah L. Coe and James D. Davidson survey the legacy admissions practices of a range of institutions, from Ivy League schools to smaller, state-supported schools, to large public research institutions. Across these universities, "legacy status" always indicates family lineage; however, the specific ways in which these practices influence the assessment and selection of applicants vary widely. By way of example, Coe and Davidson note that the "child of a Stanford alum is about twice as likely to be admitted as the general population," while at the "University of Virginia, where natives of the state comprise two-thirds of each class, children of alumni are treated as native Virginians, paying in-state tuition rates, regardless of where they reside, which gives them a competitive edge." Deborah L. Coe and James D. Davidson, "The Origins of Legacy Admissions: A Sociological Explanation," *Review of Religious Research* 52, no. 3 (2011): 233–47. Richard Kahlenberg also offers a comprehensive overview of legacy admissions, its history and its contemporary contest, while rhetorically and conceptually connecting this admissions practice with affirmative action. Richard D. Kahlenberg, ed., *Affirmative Action for the Rich: Legacy Preferences in College Admissions* (New York: Century Foundation, 2010).

private liberal arts colleges.[24] Universities defend the designation of advantaged status or legacy preference as a technique for bolstering financial contributions, preserving beloved campus traditions, and strengthening institutionally reciprocated respect and responsibility.[25] However, by adopting the Working Group's recommendation, Georgetown extended advantaged status to include a markedly different legacy of familial descent. This legacy was determined by the university's

[24] The practice of legacy preference or legacy admissions has faced public scrutiny throughout the twenty-first century, intensifying in the past decade and unfolding on campuses like Georgetown. Most generally, opponents of legacy preference argue that it prioritizes wealth and family connections over inclusion and diversity, and that it implicitly privileges white applicants while fortifying systems that are inherently racist. Editorial Board, "End Legacy Admissions," *Georgetown Voice*, January 31, 2020, https://georgetownvoice.com/2020/01/31/end-legacy-admissions/; Editorial Board, "Eliminate Legacy Privilege," *The Hoya*, October 27, 2017, https://thehoya.com/editorial-eliminate-legacy-privilege/; Christian Paz, "Legacy Students Twice as Likely to Be Admitted," News, *The Hoya*, May 19, 2017, https://thehoya.com/legacy-students-twice-as-likely-to-be-admitted/; Annemarie Cuccia, "Students Petition to End Legacy Admissions at Georgetown," *Georgetown Voice*, July 15, 2020, https://georgetownvoice.com/2020/07/15/students-petition-to-end-legacy-admissions-at-georgetown/; Editorial Board, "End Legacy College Admissions," *New York Times*, September 7, 2019, sec. Opinion, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/07/opinion/sunday/end-legacy-college-admissions.html; Richard D. Kahlenberg, "A New Call to End Legacy Admissions," *The Atlantic* (blog), February 14, 2018, https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/02/when-affirmative-action-benefits-the-wealthy/553313/.

[25] Coe and Davidson point to three reasons as to how and why universities explain their persistent reliance on legacy admissions today. First, they claim that this practice "increase[s] financial contributions"; second, they believe that "legacy admissions foster a sense of family history, preserve important traditions, and reward loyal volunteers"; and third, they assert that "legacy policies help the school to have a more diversified student body, *because* they look at qualifications beyond achievement test scores." Coe and Davidson, "The Origins of Legacy Admissions," 244. In an analysis of the legality of legacy preference practices, Kathryn Ladewski notes that "modern legacy preferences are employed as methods of encouraging alumni to donate and volunteer on behalf of the university." She points to Harvard University as an example of one institution that defends this practice as based on the benefits "of service, of money, and of community relations" that come from the children of alumni attending their parents' alma mater. While the status of "legacy" can offer applicants a "leg-up" in the admissions process, Ladewski astutely notes that "Comparisons of admissions rates between legacy and non legacy applicants may be misleading . . . because legacy applicants are often more qualified than applicants overall." This insight importantly suggests the pervasive impact of inheritance on educational access, intergenerational wealth, and structural racism. Kathryn Ladewski, "Preserving a Racial Hierarchy: A Legal Analysis of the Disparate Racial Impact of Legacy Preferences in University Admissions Note," *Michigan Law Review* 108, no. 4 (2010): 582-583.

historical engagement with slavery and, rather than the extension of familial privilege, it was precipitated by the rectifying of racial harms.[26]

In retrospect, and in light of the prominent presence of "the descendants" in the Working Group's final report and subsequently instrumental place in the Georgetown community, the absence of any representation from "the descendants" on the group's roster is conspicuous. At the group's inception, there was almost no mention of those whose family lines stretch back to enslaved ancestors, suggesting ignorance of or indifference to the relationship between these individuals and the university community. In August 2015, in one early mention of Georgetown's intent to form a Working Group and formally investigate its past, DeGioia emphasized the import of involving the entirety of "our community." At this time, "our community" notably included "faculty, students, alumni, staff, and administrators" who would "help guide the activities that we will undertake as a community."[27] He concluded by reflecting on how, by "looking back at our history" and "com[ing] together to confront difficult events, learn[ing] from and with one another, and rely[ing] on the collective wisdom and resources of our extraordinary community to determine how we may best move forward toward justice and truth," Georgetown would be furthering a legacy of "what we do best as a university community."[28] In December, three months after the group's inception and in

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[26] U.S. universities, and specifically admissions offices, are often purposefully unforthcoming about policies relating to legacy preference. With this in mind, it is impossible to confirm the specificities of Georgetown's own policy. However, legacy preference was discussed as a factor considered in admissions decisions at least as far back as the mid-1960s. In one 1966 article in the university's student newspaper *The Hoya*, Georgtown's assistant director of admissions, Joseph A. Chalmers, discussed the shifting landscape of university admissions. He was quoted saying that the university was committed to assessing academic performance alongside the "admittedly 'not very refined'" "nonacademic standards" of personality. However, he added that "applicants given a 'definite preference' were children of alumni, or brothers and sisters of present students, the rationale being one of familial reciprocity." "Rising Applications Force New Admissions Standard," *The Hoya*, March 3, 1966.

[27] John J. DeGioia, "A Message Regarding Mulledy Hall," *President John J. DeGioia* (blog), August 24, 2015, https://president.georgetown.edu/mulledy-hall/.

[28] DeGioia, "A Message Regarding Mulledy Hall."

connection with contestation surrounding the (re)naming of two campus buildings, the Working Group drafted and circulated a brochure to help educate the university community about Georgetown's history.[29] This resource conveyed the enormity of Georgetown's connection to slavery, noting that "one of the many tragedies of the transatlantic slave trade and slavery is that we can ultimately never fully account for the lives lost and shattered by this system."[30] Mention of "some descendants" appeared in passing relation to the "enslaved families who were sent to Louisiana," about whom the Working Group knew little. At this point in the group's tenure, there remained uncertainty about the names of the people sold in 1838 or the number of enslaved individuals who contributed to the university's early subsistence in vastly different capacities, let alone the descendants of these people. At this moment, attention to those who would later claim relation to these African American ancestors was minimal.

The general invisibility of "the descendants" across the Working Group's early efforts was coupled with the university's professed unfamiliarity with the enduring existence of familial connections to ancestors enslaved by the Maryland Jesuits.[31] Members of the university community, the general public, and even descendants themselves expressed surprise when later learning about Georgetown's legacy of slavery (and in the case of those who descended from enslaved ancestors, their intimate connection to this history). Interviews with people self-identifying as descendants confirm that some of them possessed fragmented information about their ancestral roots in

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[29] A copy of this brochure can be found as an appendix to the Working Group's report. The format of the original booklet includes a list of the Working Group's members, details about upcoming events such as the December "Teach-In" and spring "Emancipation Day Symposium," and information about related grants available to university community members.
[30] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 87.
[31] "The [working] group would have benefited from input from descendants, but it was nearing the end of its work when it became aware of them. At the very least, it should have conferred with them on the contents of the report, which was released Thursday," The Editorial Board, "Georgetown Confronts Its Ugly Past," *New York Times*, September 1, 2016, sec. Editorial, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/02/opinion/georgetown-confronts-its-ugly-past.html.

Maryland prior to the Working Group's endeavors, though they were largely unaware of Jesuits' involvement.[32] Yet it's worth noting that a lack of knowledge regarding descendants was not unanimous. Some members of the university community apparently knew about such relationships well before the Working Group was established in 2015. As Georgetown historian and chair of the Working Group David Collins noted, he had been in "contact with individual descendants since I was a Jesuit novice and was first introduced to the history about 30 years ago."[33] Thus, select members of the Georgetown community were well versed in the persistence of familial ties to enslaved people who forcibly labored for the benefit of the university.

Regardless, as the Working Group proceeded, the discourse around Georgetown's history proliferated and the awareness of individuals with familial ties to those enslaved and sold in 1838 grew. These factors contributed to a marked shift in how the university and these individuals interpolated and positioned "the descendants" in relation to the university community. While reflecting on his time at the helm of the Working Group, Collins asserted that "'the descendants' are people, not an organization or an institution." However, he added, the unanticipated and overwhelming "outreach of descendants to the university" was a "moving part of the past year."[34] The group's final report recorded this burgeoning contact from "the descendants," noting that their "unprecedented outreach to the University has moved all of us so greatly."[35] Thus, "the

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[32] Rachel L. Swarns and Sona Patel, "'A Million Questions' from Descendants of Slaves Sold to Aid Georgetown," *New York Times*, May 20, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/05/20/us/-descendants-of-slaves-sold-to-aid-georgetown.html.

[33] James Martin, "How Georgetown Is Coming to Terms with Slavery in Its Past," in *Facing Georgetown's History: A Reader on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation*, ed. Adam Rothman and Elsa Barraza Mendoza (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2021), 244. Collins also further details his position in the Jesuit ministry, along with his own as long as others' efforts to introduce new Jesuits to Jesuit history, including slaveholding.

[34] Martin, "How Georgetown Is Coming to Terms with Slavery in Its Past," 244.

[35] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 28.

descendants"—as a collective identity, rhetorical positioning, and acknowledged faction of the university community for which Georgetown was responsible to provide "care and attention"—emerged alongside the Working Group's efforts and was marked most prominently in the group's final report, the culmination of a year of research and discussion.[36]

Finding "the Descendants" in the Working Group's Report

Throughout the report, "the descendants" come into sharpest view at two historical moments: first, during the decades preceding emancipation and second, in the months immediately surrounding the group's efforts. The former delineation occurs in the archival traces of ancestors, and the latter unfolds through descendants' own direct advocacy and outreach. Far from a firmly defined entity, however, "the descendants" shift in and out of focus across the report and related discourse. Despite the apparent specificity conveyed by this signifier, who does or does not "count" as a descendant remains in question from page to page. From one section to the next, "the descendants" may refer to the people whose ancestors forcibly worked Maryland Jesuit plantations. That is, "the descendants" could indicate the people whose lineal ancestors were among 272 individuals who may have been included in the 1838 sale. At times, the edges of "the descendants" blurs to include those whose ancestors were owned by families of Georgetown students, or by faculty or trustees; or those whose ancestors' labor was rented from local families and agencies unrelated to the university save through geographic proximity.[37] Further still, the report at moments

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[36] While DeGioia specifically used the phrase "care and respect" in his September 1, 2016, address, the current wording of this policy on the website of Georgetown's Office of Undergraduate Admissions states: "The preferential admission consideration would be similar to the care and attention given to applicants who are descendants of faculty, staff or alumni." "Descendants," Georgetown University Office of Undergraduate Admissions, accessed November 5, 2019, https://uadmissions.georgetown.edu/applying/descendants/.

[37] Georgetown Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation, "What We Know: Georgetown University and Slavery" (Georgetown University, November 23, 2015), 6-7. Included in

seems to count as among "the descendants" individuals whose ancestors were owned and sold as chattel to benefit Georgetown, yet who fit neatly in none of the aforementioned categories. While the Working Group report acknowledges the immeasurable breadth of "Georgetown's full landscape of slavery" and the professed indeterminacy of the expansive population of individuals whose forced labor may have benefited Georgetown, the report's repeated articulation of "the descendants" carries a disciplining sense of finitude linked to the family.[38]

The report begins with an overview of the Working Group's efforts, followed by reflections on the group's convening over the previous twelve months, the university's historical involvement in transatlantic and chattel slavery, and the research to date concerning this past. These reflections detail the ways in which the 1838 sale unfolded, its origins and surrounding controversies, as well as Jesuit authorities' stipulations about maintaining the integrity of enslaved families and the subsequent disregard of those guidelines. A December 1836 correspondence from the superior general of the Society of Jesus in Rome to the Maryland Province's Father McSherry lays out the conditions of the later sale. Family members to be considered, according to the terms outlined in this letter, included husbands and wives (whether one or both were owned by the Jesuits) and parents and children.[39] Though the Working Group notes that this was "one of the best-

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the back of this brief brochure, circulated by the Working Group in November 2015, is a list of outstanding questions that the group hoped to answer. One question specifically calls attention to descendants, wondering "what happened to the enslaved families who were sent to Louisiana; we have some names and know of some descendants."

[38] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 17-18.

[39] This information is detailed in documents made digitally available through the Georgetown Slavery Archive and include translations of the letter and another list of more detailed conditions, both from 1836. Condition three listed in the latter states that "Any married slave couples both of whom belong to us must not be separated, nor parents from children, as much as possible, especially if the parents are already elderly, or if the children are of still tender age." In condition four, specific attention is paid to accounting for enslaved persons whose husbands or wives belong to "other owners" such that "married couples, even those in this category, not be separated by our fault." "Fr. Roothaan, S.J. Lays Out the Conditions for the Sale of Enslaved Persons, 27 December 1836," *Georgetown Slavery Archive*, http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/94; "Twenty

documented large sales of slaves in American history," it also concedes that the archives lack details about precisely where those people enslaved by the Maryland Jesuits were relocated and how profits from the sale were allocated.[40] While emphasizing "how precious the archives of the University and the Province are, not only to professional scholars but also to men and women in search of their families' histories," the group notes that "such histories have usually left few traces, precisely on account of the injustices we are exploring."[41] Despite the comparative quality of the university's and the Jesuits' records, there still remains a paucity of knowledge about the event of the sale, its aftermath, and the extent of reliance on enslaved labor on and around the campus more broadly. The language of "descendants"—and the "living descendants of the people who were sold in 1838 and shipped to Louisiana, as well as living descendants of slaves of the Maryland Province who remained behind"—is first referenced in the report as a potential source of insight beyond these institutional archives.[42] As the report unfolds, however, "the descendants" become the default identifier as the Working Group envisions the prospective relationship between descendants and the university.

Though the Working Group initially acknowledges gaping archival absences pertaining to the lives and experiences of the people treated as chattel, the subsequent specificity assumed by the terminology of "*the* descendants" belies these enduring ambiguities. Pointing to the operative effects

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Conditions of Sale, 1836," *Georgetown Slavery Archive*, http://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/items/show/407.

[40] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 16.

[41] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 25.

[42] Living descendants are again mentioned as a potential resource later in the report by the Committee on the Archives. This committee notes that "many of the descendants of people owned and sold by those connected to Georgetown kept their own family histories and have sustained their own knowledge of the past." This committee goes on to note that, throughout the process of the Working Group, "descendants and total strangers have contacted the Working Group to contribute valuable documents" to the archive. "Report of The Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 51-53.

of this terminology should not diminish the utility and importance of the documents held by Georgetown and materials increasingly available through the Georgetown Slavery Archive, a burgeoning online resource.[43] Rather, understanding the rhetorical force of a seemingly innocuous qualifying article—"*the* descendants"—and the way in which it might carve out the bounds of a discernible group can help to unveil the strategic uses and the limitations of these bounds. Here, such delimiting occurs in spite of the admitted impossibility of fleshing out the lives linked to these ledgers, bills of sale, loans, and interactions. As Katherine McKittrick notes, colonial archives (including those held by Georgetown) should be understood "not as a measure of what happened, but as indicators of what else happened."[44] Rather than confirming the totality of enslaved experiences, the surviving remnants and records of slavery instead gesture toward "the unspeakable, the unwritten, the unbearable and unutterable, the unseeable and the invisible, the uncountable and unindexed, outside the scourge, that which cannot be seen or heard or read but is always there."[45] McKittrick argues that, by merely reading and relaying the calculations and documentation left by slavery, one takes part in the "violent arithmetics of the archive."[46] Joining other Black studies scholars, she posits that by articulating Blackness as originating in and solely according to these stark surveys and numerical figures, one contributes to writing a present and future that is violently dictated by dehumanizing determinants.[47] McKittrick adds that "if we are to name the violent displacement of Black cultures, this must be done by both noticing and undoing the compulsion to inhabit safe and comfortable places within the very same system that cannot survive without anti-blackness."[48] In the context of the Working Group's report, McKittrick's insights raise important

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[43] "Georgetown Slavery Archive," Georgetown University, https://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/.
[44] Katherine McKittrick, "Mathematics Black Life," *The Black Scholar* 44, no. 2 (2014): 22.
[45] McKittrick, "Mathematics Black Life," 22.
[46] McKittrick, "Mathematics Black Life," 19.
[47] McKittrick, "Mathematics Black Life," 19.
[48] McKittrick continues, "We are therefore also asked to imagine those lives that are so

questions about how "the descendants" are coupled with an emphasis on "the power of archives in the service of understanding who one is and where one is from."[49] How might this pairing reinvest in institutions like the family, that reinscribe racialized distributions of power?

The nuclear and lineal family are central to Georgetown's reconciliatory efforts. The guidelines for the sale provided by Jesuit authorities (and which were later disregarded by those executing the sale) and DeGioia's September 2016 address foreground the value of family. As the Working Group notes in the report, "human dignity was fundamentally disregarded for the sake of the University's balance sheet."[50] The report recommends, and as DeGioia explicitly stated in his address, that part of remedying this past requires recognizing and restoring the families of people sold as chattel and individuals whose enslaved labor benefited the institution. The repeated cordoning off of "*the* descendants" begins to suggest that the legacy of this dehumanization—the extent of its echoes and injury, as well as the institution's reparative responsibilities—might be cleaved and contained according to family lines and biological inheritance. However, much like McKittrick's work, Saidiya Hartman's scholarship helps us to see how this demarcation might replicate rather than rectify slavery's legacy. Commenting on what she conceives as slavery's "afterlives," Hartman writes, "If slavery persists as an issue in the political life of black America, it is not because of an antiquarian obsession with bygone days or the burden of a too-long memory, but because black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries

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inconceivable, so unworthy of documentation, so radically outside our archives, that they are merely psychic impressions of life and livingness: lies and truths and new stories and familiar scars that, because they are unindexed, cannot provide us with the analytical tools to analytically take black life away." Further, McKittrick notes, "The racial economy of the archive begins a story that demands our betrayal of the archive itself. It gives us the scourged back as a commonly available image that is also an asterisk of history—the archive lies as it tells a truth." McKittrick, "Mathematics Black Life," 19, 22.

[49] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 25.

[50] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 26.

ago. This is the afterlife of slavery—skewed chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment."[51] Descent is thus shaped across decades of lived experience, which include the racialized quotidian of poverty, statistically disproportionate mortality rates, and inadequate schooling that shape contemporary conditions of Black life.

The afterlives of slavery cannot and should not be synthesized solely according to the archive or summarized by family line, as demonstrated by McKittrick and Hartman. The sights of Black life under slavery provided by such documents are always incomplete, while the institutional sites holding them are always already structured by systems of anti-Blackness.[52] Furthermore, the 1838 sale was, according to the report, merely one instance of Georgetown's enduring enmeshment in an economy founded on and fueled by slavery, wherein slave labor could be locally rented, enslaved persons might accompany students or faculty to campus, and the wealth of university benefactors was rooted in slaveholding.[53] Yet, rooted in the presumption of clearly articulated familial connections, the rhetoric of "*the* descendants" is instrumental in limiting the social and material reverberations of the university's racial history while eclipsing slavery's illimitable afterlives according to lineage. Re-turning to descent and positioning the archive as possessing related answers

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[51] Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 6.

[52] In addition to McKittrick's discussion of anti-Blackness, my understanding is informed by kihana miraya ross's writing on anti-Blackness and education. Ross discusses anti-Blackness as "something distinct from racism, to grapple with society's inability to recognize Black humanity." Kihana Miraya Ross, "Anti-Blackness in Education and the Possibilities of Redress: Toward Educational Reparations," *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 66, no. 1 (2021): 229.

[53] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 12, 17; Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013). According to historian, Georgetown faculty member, and Working Group participant Adam Rothman, records indicate that Jesuits in Maryland were slaveholders in the early 1700s and active participants in the transatlantic slave trade dating back to the 1500s. Summarizing Georgetown University's roots in slavery, Rothman states, "Georgetown was founded by a Catholic elite in Maryland whose wealth was based on slavery, which secured a cheap labor force for their tobacco fields." Adam Rothman, "Slavery and Institutional Morality at Georgetown University: Reply to Nelson," *British Journal of Sociology* 69, no. 3 (2018): 552.

undergirds rather than unsettles systems of erasure, objectification, and quantification. The report's introductory reflections conclude with the assertion that "the counsel of the descendants of the slaves, whose labor and value supported the University, should be sought out and weighted heavily."[54] Precisely who the term "the descendants" indicates, however, is left decidedly unclear.

Despite the immovable appearance of heavy gray stone Gothic buildings like those found on Georgetown's campus, universities are neither permanent nor immutable. Turning to Sara Ahmed, we are reminded that universities "can be thought of as verbs as well as nouns," institutions that actively take shape through the repeated actions, mandates, condoned behaviors, and discourses of administrators and alumni, staff, students, and faculty, and other contributing members.[55] Ahmed's provocations take on particular import for rhetoricians concerned with analyzing specific terminology to understand how discourses enable "institutional realities [to] become given, without assuming what is given by this given."[56] Reliance on terminology like "the descendants" contributes to contouring these "institutional realities" and the constituencies that comprise institutions. Such realities influence understandings of who belongs to the university, whose demands on the university are legitimate, and for whom the university is responsible. Though at Georgetown "the descendants" became institutionally certified as part of the university community, belonging to the university comes with its own complications. Roderick Ferguson points out that while institutional inclusion may carry forms of legitimacy, institutional recognition can also render groups vulnerable to containment, management, and institutional disciplining.[57] Ferguson demonstrates that

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[54] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 29.
[55] As Ahmed puts it, "When history accumulates, certain ways of doing things seem natural. An institution takes shape as an effect of what has become automatic." Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 21, 25.
[56] Ahmed, *On Being Included*, 21.
[57] In his analysis of the open admissions, Ferguson articulates the contradictions embedded within the movement's claims, an aporia that also undergirds discussions of and around descendants at Georgetown. That that "dynamism of minority communities, on the one hand, and the desire for

minoritized communities must be especially cautious of the university's ability to use forms of institutional inclusion to demobilize rather than to meet demands.

Similarly reflecting on the university's histories of conquest and control, Nathan Snaza and Julietta Singh point out that the "colonial university," in their words, has been and continues to be a site of differentiation wherein particular forms of "life and liveliness are biopolitically invested for flourishing (while others are defunded, marginalized, delegitimized, uninvited, eliminated, etc.)."[58] Their concern is with how the university—and more broadly education—imposes "violent forms of dehumanization that exclude or devalue anyone who can't or won't be thus mastered."[59] Repeated references to "the descendants" craft a discrete constituency that is recognized by Georgetown and, to use Ferguson's language, absorbed as part of the university community. At the same time, by entrusting family lineage with the terms of hospitality,[60] such articulations simultaneously effect

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institutional forms that would ultimately restrict and arrest that dynamism, on the other. This contradiction would begin a new point of departure for minoritized life in the late twentieth century." Roderick A. Ferguson, *The Reorder of Things: The University and Its Pedagogies of Minority Difference* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 104. Additionally, the terminology of "academic disciplining" has its own scholarly genealogy which is beyond the bounds of this analysis. However, in addition to Ferguson's work, my use of the term is informed by Alexis Pauline Gumbs's reflections on the varied inflections of "discipline" in relation to the intimacies existing between Audre Lorde and June Jordan, and these Black feminist scholars' navigation of disciplines and the disciplining of the university. Of note for my discussion of descent and university redress, Gumbs remarks that "Lorde is teaching us what it means and what it does not mean to be relative, asking us to comply and politicize kinship in the service of the world we deserve." Alexis Pauline Gumbs, "Noboby Mean More: Black Feminist Pedagogy and Solidarity," in *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent*, ed. Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 250.

[58] Nathan Snaza and Julietta Singh, "Introduction: Dehumanist Education and the Colonial University," *Social Text* 39, 1 (146) (2021): 1–2.

[59] Snaza and Singh, "Introduction," 2.

[60] In DeGioia's September address, he discussed the metaphor of home and hospitality in relation to the campus, the "Georgetown community," and "the descendants." DeGioia, "Racial Justice." On the topic of "home," "home-making," and "hospitality" as forms of racialized disenfranchisement and displacement, see Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Eve Tuck, "Settler Colonialism and Cultural Studies: Ongoing Settlement, Cultural Production, and Resistance," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 17, no. 1 (2017): 3–13.

forms of differentiation and exclusion. Thus, like Snaza and Singh point out, some populations are acknowledged and incorporated while others are placed beyond the reach of the university's "care and attention." In this case, descent is rhetorically positioned as the reconciliatory vehicle through which the university might master its past while demarcating those to whom (and for whom) it is today responsible. At the same time, by using descent as *the* determining factor in present-day remedies, the university discursively abates the extent of its culpability, drawing lines between those who are included and those who are not. This becomes most clear in Georgetown's turn to legacy preference as a site for redress, wherein "the descendants" exist in an uneasy liminal space of institutional acknowledgment and accumulation, as well as capitulation and capture.

Admissions Practices and Racial Redress

Highlighted second on the Working Group's list of six "General Recommendations" to the president and under the heading "Descendants" is the need to further engage these individuals in the process of reconciliation. Here, the Working Group differently defines "the descendants" as "the descendants of the enslaved whose labor and value benefited the University" and "the descendants of the enslaved people owned by the Maryland Jesuits."[61] Among suggestions for university engagement, the group proposes that the university meet with "descendant communities" both near campus and "in their home communities," assist with "genealogical research to help descendants explore their family histories," and consider the "feasibility of admission and financial-aid initiatives that might be established for the descendant community."[62] The topic of admissions is revisited later down the list of recommendations under the heading "Investment in Diversity." Here, nestled between suggestions that the university "Intensify outreach to prospective African American

[61] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 37.
[62] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 37.

students, especially from Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Louisiana" and "Devote attention, funding, and resources to assessing and improving the racial climate on campus," the group proposes a reworking of legacy admissions.[63] Specifically, it recommends that the university "Grant the descendants of those owned by the Maryland Province an advantage in the admissions process."[64]

Although the Working Group's recommendation to rework the practice of legacy preference in service of racial reconciliation is unconventional, it joins an extensive history of using admissions practices to facilitate social transformation by recalibrating the racial composition of university students. As Latiqua Liles explains, though Georgetown's extension of legacy preference falls just short of mentioning overtly racialized categories, the "underlying racial classification implicated by the fact that this advantage in admissions will benefit descendants of slaves" is indisputable.[65] In this context, the university's remedial revision confronts decades of legal disputes and Supreme Court cases that have found the preferential treatment of race in university admissions as a way to correct past racial injustices both exclusionary and inequitable.[66] Such legal decisions have affirmed that race

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[63] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 40.
[64] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 40.
[65] Latiqua Liles, "A 'Legacy Preference' for Descendants of Slaves: Why Georgetown's Approach to Admissions Is Misguided," *Rutgers Race and the Law Review* 19, no. 1 (2018): 30. As a legal scholar, Liles ultimately argues that other universities engaging in racial redress should avoid following this legally vulnerable example set by Georgetown.
[66] Unquestionably the best-known case pertaining to "affirmative action" is the case of *Regents of University of California v. Bakke*. The ruling of this case, and Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr.'s opinion that the university "must be viewed as seeking to achieve a goal that is of paramount importance in fulfillment of its mission," set the legal standard for any admissions decisions that accounted for race. For a comprehensive survey of the legal history of affirmative action, see Robert Post and Michael Paul Rogin, eds., *Race and Representation: Affirmative Action* (New York: Zone Books, 1998). Legal scholar and Harvard Professor Emerita Lani Guinier has also written extensively on affirmative action, meritocracy, and race in U.S. university admissions practices. Lani Guinier, "Reframing the Affirmative Action Debate Speech," *Kentucky Law Journal* 86, no. 3 (1998): 505–26; Lani Guinier, *The Tyranny of the Meritocracy: Democratizing Higher Education in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2015). It's also important to note that as of April 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court is deciding on two cases that concern the uses and considerations of race in admissions. The oral arguments for

may influence university admissions policies (and decisions) only to the extent that it operates as an aspect of "educational diversity" that enables the university to achieve its educational mission rather than as a way to remedy past injustices.[67] In a quick survey of the evolving relationship between affirmative action and diversity, Jennifer Nash points out that "diversity has become a key rhetoric animating an institution's self-presentation and organization,"[68] as opposed to redress.

The Working Group gestures to the relationship between changes to legacy preference and broader diversity efforts at Georgetown. However, this consideration of diversity is not evident in the implementation of the Working Group's recommendation. Rather, the language on Georgetown's undergraduate admissions webpage glosses over the group's work, omitting any mention of diversity and explicitly citing reconciliation. This change to the university's admissions activities broadens the bounds of the university community by relying on existing university practices and the rhetoric of descent. At the same time, it articulates descent in such a way as both to extend and to delimit the extent of institutional care.

Counting "the Descendants": Determining the Parameters of Preferential Legacies

Georgetown's Office of Undergraduate Admissions offers information on its website for a

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these cases, *Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* and *Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina et al.*, were heard in October 2022. The court's decisions are expected in June 2023. "Argument Transcripts," Supreme Court of the United States, accessed April 13, 2023, https://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcript/2022.

[67] Liles, "A 'Legacy Preference' for Descendants of Slaves," 43. The Working Group recommends admissions preference in multiple sub-sections, one of which is specifically focused on "Investment in Diversity." However, this mention neither undoes nor outweighs the connection between admissions practices and redress. Public debates and academic discussions regarding diversity and inclusion at U.S. universities, and the tactics that these institutions might take to both define and achieve this goal, are extensive. This discourse includes considerations of legacy preference and affirmative action, at times juxtaposing these admissions practices.

[68] Jennifer C. Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 23.

variety of applicants seeking acceptance to the university. These include prospective first year and transfer students, domestic and international, as well as "visiting students," or non-degree seeking students who wish to take one or two classes. Located on this menu of applicant options, after "Diversity and Access" and before "Active Military and Veterans," is a link for "Descendants." With a click, visitors are brought to a one-paragraph overview of who descendants are, why they're considered a separate demographic in Georgetown's process of admissions, and what one can do to proceed if they believe themselves to be a "Descendant." As the site affirms, "Admission to Georgetown—to any university—is a complex decision that takes into account many factors."[69] Since the fall of 2016, "being a descendant of faculty, staff or alumni, or being a descendant of the people enslaved by the Maryland Province" has been one factor officially considered by Georgetown's admissions officers. The full panoply of factors that influence admissions decisions vary across time and according to university priorities and annual applicant pools, this marked attention to the descendants of people enslaved in the region is unique. While U.S. universities might commonly require standardized test scores and high school grade point averages (a practice that is coming into question in the twenty-first century), offers of admission are further dictated by the particularities of an individual's personal experience, a nebulous catchall beyond easy quantification.

The consideration of family legacy in the calculation of admissions decisions emerged in the early twentieth century. In the 1920s, elite American institutions like Harvard, Yale, and Princeton—which, like Georgetown, did not invite applications from women until the 1960s and 1970s—began eschewing strict attention to academic criteria and additionally considering a college applicant's "character."[70] "Character" referred to a prospective student's personal achievements beyond the

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[69] "Descendants," Georgetown University Office of Undergraduate Admissions, https://uadmissions.georgetown.edu/applying/descendants/.

[70] According to the Georgetown University Library website, Georgetown "became fully coed in 1969, when women were at last admitted to the College of Arts and Sciences." Georgetown

classroom, as well as to his family upbringing; these qualities became instrumentalized as a technique of gatekeeping and exclusion. By extending the criteria for admissions to account for "character," these universities, according to Jerome Karabel, sought the "latitude to admit the dull sons of major donors and to exclude the brilliant but unpolished children of immigrants."[71] Such practices suddenly put applicants of Jewish and non-Protestant heritage at a distinct disadvantage, as they were far less likely to have fathers who had previously attended these Ivy League institutions.[72] While such policies perhaps didn't transparently spell out the import of familial ties, this subtle change mobilized the education of one's parent (and more broadly, one's race, religion, wealth, and so on) as a mode of exclusion. By including these additional factors in admissions considerations, such elite universities effectively fortified the racial and ethnic boundaries of their (largely white, largely Protestant, exclusively male) university communities.

Throughout the twentieth century, the amalgam of a prospective student's extracurricular activities or athletic involvement, compelling narratives conveyed through personal essays, and of course, family history all helped to separate out "qualified" from "unqualified" applicants in college admissions. This was no less true for Georgetown. Beyond the practice of legacy preference, explicit

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University Library, accessed May 9, 2023, https://library.georgetown.edu/infrequently-asked-questions/blog/when-were-our-first-female-students-admitted#:~:text=Different%20schools%20on%20campus%20admitted,Medical%20School%20was%20then%20called. The exact years that elite, historically white-serving universities became fully coed vary. For more information about these universities, see Nancy Weiss Malkiel, *"Keep the Damned Women Out": The Struggle for Coeducation*, First Edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[71] Jerome Karabel, *The Chosen: The Hidden History of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2005), 2. At Yale University, the broadening of admissions criteria from strictly academic credentials to include character and individual merit led to a distinct drop in the percentage of Jewish students in accepted classes by the end of the 1920s. Part of solving the "racial problem" of the early twentieth century entailed preference for alumni sons of (white, Protestant) "legacies." While selectivity at Yale increased, the percentage of "legacies" accepted for admission simultaneously grew "from 13 percent in 1920 to 24 percent in 1930" (116).

[72] Karabel, *The Chosen*, 1.

attention to a candidate's race as a determining factor in acceptance also carries a fraught history of social and legal discord. Surveying the discourse that surrounds race and university admissions, Judith Butler notes that "the language of the factor," and discussion of race as one "factor" taken into consideration of university admission, "presumes that minority status might be contained and exhaustively represented in quantifiable form."[73] Following Butler's logic, positioning membership in "the descendants" as a factor "abstracts [them] from the qualitative considerations of background, history, environment, opportunity, and cultural forms of expression and ideals, but also freezes the status of [the descendants] in an ahistorical vacuum, subjecting it to a logic of calculability that destroys the very referent it seeks to represent."[74] By employing the terminology of "the descendants," the Working Group attempted to capture a complex past in a calcified form. The university's extensive use of the language of descent minimized the meaning of this signifier.

Descent in relation to redress, and references to "the descendants" in particular, gained prominence during the Working Group's tenure. When DeGioia first announced that the university would consider membership in "the descendants" as a factor in admissions, he used this terminology exclusively in relation to Georgetown's legacy of slavery and in reference to "the descendants of the enslaved children, women, and men of the Jesuit plantations and from whom our university benefited." These descendants were positioned in contrast to long-established university community members, or the "members of the Georgetown community—faculty, staff, alumni—those with an enduring relationship with Georgetown."[75] This announcement followed the precedent set by the Working Group. Most notably, the term "the descendants" articulated by the group exclusively indexed the university's historical involvement with slavery. Georgetown subsequently extended

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[73] Judith Butler, "An Affirmative View," in *Race and Representation: Affirmative Action*, ed. Robert Post and Michael Paul Rogin (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 163.
[74] Butler, "An Affirmative View," 164.
[75] DeGioia, "Racial Justice."

preferential admissions "as a means of reconciliation recommended by the University's Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation."[76] However, despite overtly declaring the impetus for this change, the university conflated "the descendants" with the myriad other forms of familial inheritance one might hold in relation to the institution as it revised this policy. Thus, though this admissions change was directly related to racial reconciliation, descent was stripped of its specificity. Evocations of descendants suddenly implicated broader university belonging and included both newly inducted and long-established members of the community.

The effect of this shifting rhetoric unfolded in two movements. First, as "the descendants" became the recipients of university "care and attention" according to their familial lineage, Georgetown articulated who would and who would not count as a member of this category. Second, by broadening the language of descent to include all members of the university community, the university diluted the historical specificity of this admissions alteration and its direct relationship to racial reconciliation, contradicting the overt declaration on the admissions webpage. This rhetoric enlarged the university community while at the same time delineating its perimeters. Through recourse to particular historical events and genealogy, both "the descendants" and the university's culpability were ultimately restricted.

By rendering belonging to the university in this manner—and creating a constituency eligible for engaging in and benefiting from this newly acknowledged route to recognition—this rhetoric of descent also produced a constitutive outside. Rinaldo Walcott, in his assessment of how race-based inclusions reinforce existing structures of whiteness, offers a perspective that aptly applies to this augmentation of legacy status. While constructing a constituency that can be included in (and become part of) Georgetown, extending "care and attention" to "the descendants" "simultaneously

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[76] "Descendants."

produces disposable populations in its wake."[77] Following Walcott, inclusion in an institution like the university—an incorporation that is rhetorically marked by the implementation of this admissions practice—"comes at the expense of thousands of other people rendered as waste."[78] Certainly, some may benefit from tracing and demonstrating to the university their relation to "the descendants." However, individuals falling beyond the genealogical bounds of university-dictated descent would require no further consideration, at present or in the future, from Georgetown.

The presentation of "the descendants" throughout the report left the identity of this constituency open to interpretation; anyone with an ancestor whose enslaved labor may, at some point in the university's centuries-long history, have contributed to Georgetown's subsistence and successes might count. However, the brief language on Georgetown's admissions website pertaining to this past was far more precise. Despite the lengths to which slavery historically saturated the university and the surrounding area, only the "Descendants of the enslaved people owned by the Maryland Province of Jesuits" would receive advantaged admissions in relation to reconciliation. At the same time that Georgetown discerned these parameters of "the descendants," the linguistic malleability of descent allowed the university to ease the historical specificity of racial violence at the

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[77] Rinaldo Walcott, "The End of Diversity," *Public Culture* 31, no. 2 (2019): 402. Rhetorical scholars have long pointed to language as a way to create "insiders" and "outsiders," including but not limited to Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Québécois," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987): 133–50; Jeremy Engels, *Enemyship: Democracy and Counter-Revolution in the Early Republic* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010); Robert Elliot Mills, "The Pirate and the Sovereign: Negative Identification and the Constitutive Rhetoric of the Nation-State," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 17, no. 1 (2014): 105–35; Ashley P. Ferrell, "'Righting Past Wrongs': Rhetorical Disidentification and Historical Reference in Response to Philadelphia's Opioid Epidemic," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 22, no. 4 (2019): 533–68. Other discussions of rhetorical definition (and defining insiders and outsiders) include David Zarefsky, Carol Miller-Tutzauer, and Frank E. Tutzauer, "Reagan's Safety Net for the Truly Needy: The Rhetorical Uses of Definition," *Central States Speech Journal* 35, no. 2 (1984): 113–19.

[78] Walcott, "The End of Diversity," 402. Walcott's insights and specific word choice also resonates with my discussion in Chapter 2 regarding the ways in which the university historically rendered human beings as specimens for study before discarding their remains.

root of this recognition. Instead of exclusively indicating those whose ancestors were trafficked as chattel, the terminology of descendant applied to the family members of anyone encompassed within the Georgetown community. Yet these forms of institutional descent were not interchangeable. In contrast to "a descendant of faculty, staff or alumni," those who "believe that [they] are a Descendant of the enslaved people owned by the Maryland Province" faced a unique verification process.[79]

Since DeGioia's fall 2016 announcement, the university has provided supplemental information regarding how this preference would be parceled out.[80] These details are located alongside more general information about Georgetown's "long-term and ongoing process to more deeply understand and respond to the university's role in the injustice of slavery and the legacies of enslavement and segregation in our nation."[81] Here, in addition to up-to-date news and events related to reconciliation at the university, individuals conducting genealogical research can find directions to additional resources as well as further details about the admissions revision ensuring that "any program (undergraduate and beyond) that currently considers whether an applicant is a

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[79] "Descendants." On this admissions page, "Descendant" is capitalized in some instances and lowercased in others; any reasoning behind this differentiation is not apparent. Information pertaining to the exact terms of typical legacy admissions practices at universities is notoriously difficult to find and often not available to the public; at Georgetown, this is no different. It is reasonable to assume, however, that typical legacy applicants—that is, the children of faculty or alumni—are not required to provide genealogical information stretching back decades if not centuries. Of course, there are also rare exceptions to the opacity of these legacy admissions practices. At the University of Virginia, a "legacy" applicant is clearly defined as "a student whose parent, step-parent, or adoptive parent has a degree from UVA. Legacy status is acknowledged in our review process. Legacies residing outside of Virginia pay the out-of-state tuition rate." "FAQs," UVA Admission, accessed April 13, 2023, https://admission.virginia.edu/faqs#:~:text=How%20does%20legacy%20status%20affect,%2Dof%2Dstate%20tuition%20rate.

[80] Since this information is presented on the university's website, it is difficult to determine the exact date at which it was added or updated. However, it is reasonable to assume that it was added in September 2016 or shortly thereafter.

[81] "Georgetown Reflects on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," Georgetown University, https://www.georgetown.edu/slavery/.

member of the Georgetown community as a factor in admissions will give that same consideration to Descendants of persons enslaved by the Maryland Province of Jesuits."[82] Before securing the status of "Descendant" and receiving this same consideration, however, one's lineage requires legitimation. To accomplish this, Georgetown established a "process to provide care and attention to applications submitted by Descendants of the people enslaved by the Maryland Province of Jesuits."[83] The process to determine eligibility within this constituency (and thus as part of the Georgetown community) implies that individuals seeking recognition are already aware of or preemptively suspect their ancestral relation. After making this known to the university, applicants must assemble and provide the university with as much genealogical information as possible "that may directly connect their family to those enslaved by the Maryland Province of Jesuits." Georgetown then shares this data "confidentially with colleagues" who cross-check it with archival materials and help to validate whether one's familial connections count. The description of this process concludes by underscoring its confidentiality, suggesting not only the sensitivity of familial information but also the potential hesitancy one might feel in turning it over to the institution.

Georgetown's adoption and implementation of preferential admissions for "the descendants" demonstrates how the university's offer of "care and attention," and university redress more broadly, might extend forms of institutional surveillance. Though inclusion was foregrounded in this instance of reconciliation, the accompanying processes to determine familial lineage require intensified forms of institutional oversight. University assessment and management of descent are effected both linguistically and literally, first by determining the terms of "the descendants" and then by serving as a receptacle for genealogical "proof." This process of carving out and collecting according to descent is reminiscent of what Simone Browne names "racializing surveillance" or "those moments

[82] "Descendants," Georgetown University, https://www.georgetown.edu/slavery/descendants/.
[83] "Descendants," Georgetown University, https://www.georgetown.edu/slavery/descendants/.

when enactments of surveillance reify boundaries, borders, and bodies along racial lines, and where the outcome is often discriminatory treatment of those who are negatively racialized by such surveillance."[84] In contrast to racial redress—wherein institutions might acknowledge their historic injustices and alter standing structures in order to remedy them in the present—Browne finds that racializing surveillance "most often upholds negating strategies that first accompanied European colonial expansion and transatlantic slavery that sought to structure social relations and institutions in ways that privilege whiteness."[85] Though the extension of "care and attention" was part of Georgetown's reconciliatory efforts, the process of securing institutional inheritance—or acquiring the admissions advantages already bestowed upon the children and family members of faculty, staff, and alumni—requires "the descendants" to consent to the close scrutiny of their lineage.[86] Further still, the "burden of proof" remains with "the descendants."[87]

Reimagining Rhetorics of Descent

On May 19, 2021, the Descendants of Jesuit Enslavement, a collective organized through

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[84] Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 16.

[85] Browne, *Dark Matters*, 17. In an intimate weaving of personal experience and academic scholarship, Jennifer Doyle draws explicit attention to how racialized and gendered practices of surveillance and security permeate U.S. universities in the twenty-first century. Jennifer Doyle, *Campus Sex, Campus Security* (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2015), https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/campus-sex-campus-security.

[86] To recall my earlier discussion of anti-Blackness, Browne asserts that these types of surveillance are a "fact of anti-blackness." Browne, *Dark Matters*, 10.

[87] I briefly communicated by email with a researcher with the New England Historic Genealogical Society's American Ancestors who is working on the "GU272" project. They noted that there was little they could share regarding what they called the university's "burden of proof" put in place to confirm "the descendants" eligible for legacy preference. However, the researcher was able to explain that some descendants can "prove" their connections using a paper trail, and others through DNA tests that show a genetic link to "known GU272 descendants" (i.e., those who have already confirmed their connection through materials and documents).

Facebook, assembled for a virtual town hall meeting.[88] The event, which streamed live on YouTube, featured seven panelists, including Karran Harper Royal and Sandra Green Thomas, two of perhaps the most recognizable descendants whose prominent voices have helped guide the ongoing public conversation surrounding Georgetown and the history of Jesuit enslavement. In 2016, both Royal and Thomas held leadership positions in inaugurating the GU272 Descendants Association, an organization that helps to bring descendants together and advocates on their behalf. On this spring evening, Royal welcomed attendees and began the town hall by introducing herself and her six fellow discussants, identifying each by their first and last names as well as their "family names." After noting her role as the former executive director of the GU272 Descendants Association, Royal turned to Thomas, stating, "Joining us tonight, we have Sandra Green Thomas, former president of the GU272 Descendants Association, and Harris, Ware, West?" She added with a laugh, "Uh, Sandra, you can correct me on all of your family names."[89] While discussants may not use their

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[88] Though this list is no longer available on the American Ancestors' website, there are numerous descendant groups that have organized in relation to the GU272. While this chapter focuses on the GU272 Descendants Association, which is a non-profit organization based in Louisiana, other groups have included but are not limited to the GU272 Isaac Hawkins Legacy, the Campbell Family, the Georgetown Memory Project, and the Descendants of Jesuit Enslavement. This final group is an online community founded by Karran Royal. "Descendants of Jesuit Enslavement," Descendants of Jesuit Enslavement, https://ourjesuitenslavedancestors.com/.

[89] Descendants of Jesuit Enslavement, *Descendants of Jesuit Enslavement Informational Town Hall*, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BbpNy0jyeI. Lists of these family names can be found on many websites, including the Georgetown Slavery Archive, the GU272 Descendants Association, the American Ancestors website, and the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation. This latter organization was founded in September 2019 as a partnership between "the GU272 Descendants Association, the President of the Jesuits Conference in the United States, and U.S. Provincials." The foundation continues to be at the center of descendant discussions, including this town hall, for its claim to represent the majority of descendants of enslaved ancestors. "Descendants Truth & Reconciliation Foundation," https://www.descendants.org/; Rachel L. Swarns, "Catholic Order Pledges $100 Million to Atone for Slave Labor and Sales," *New York Times*, March 15, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/15/us/jesuits-georgetown-reparations-slavery.html; Rachel L. Swarns, "A Catholic Order Pledged $100 Million to Atone for Taking Part in the Slave Trade. Some Descendants Want a New Deal," *New York Times*, April 17, 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/17/us/catholic-church-jesuits-reparations.html; Liana Hardy, "Descendants of Jesuit Enslavement Voice Opposition to New Reconciliation Fund," *The Hoya*

"family names" in quotidian interactions, such identifiers link individuals to the "GU272" and connect these people to the broader "Georgetown Family."

Broadly, family names are the monikers that today are barely legible on faded eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Maryland Jesuit bills of sale and smudged ship manifests, documents that are held by the publicly accessible and partially digitized Georgetown Slavery Archive. These names are at times incomplete or misspelled, with some appearing in early letters and then disappearing from the record altogether, as is so common across the archive of slavery.[90] More uncommon for the archives of transatlantic and chattel slavery are the Jesuits' detailed records, which can include the baptized given names and surnames of enslaved individuals. While some people searching within these archives may be able to describe their family line in great detail—from marriages and births to tragic losses—others may know little or nothing more about their lineage beyond the link to the past that a family name provides. In fact, many of the individuals who now identify themselves as descendants of the GU272 were until recently unaware of their ancestors' connection to Georgetown.[91] While the increasing use of DNA testing throughout the first and second decades of

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(blog), April 16, 2021, https://thehoya.com/descendants-of-jesuit-enslavement-voice-opposition-to-new-reconciliation-fund/.

[90] While Saidiya Hartman details the affective and material effects of slavery across her scholarship, in her most recent book, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval,* she surveys the reverberations of slavery in relation to Black kinship at the turn of the twentieth century. She notes that the home "had been destroyed by slavery" and that the resulting forms of "flexible and elastic kinship were . . . a resource of black survival, a practice that documented the generosity and mutuality of the poor." Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019), 90-91.

[91] Perhaps one of the most confounding stories of descendant discovery is that of Jeremy Alexander, a staff member at Georgetown University. Alexander unearthed his family's connection to Anna Mahoney Jones, one of the GU272, while working at the very same institution that benefited from the sale of his great-great-great-grandmother. I had the opportunity to meet Alexander in October 2019 at the Universities Studying Slavery symposium in Cincinnati, Ohio, and hear him speak on this experience during a panel. Alexander's heartfelt recount of this discovery was affectively charged, marked by what seemed to be a mix of sorrow and pride for his ancestors, his family, and his current institution and employer. Audra D. S. Burch, "Tracing His Roots, Georgetown Employee Learns University Sold His Ancestor," *New York Times*, March 24, 2017, sec. U.S.,

the twenty-first century has assisted Black and African American individuals in fleshing out their past,[92] there remain enduring silences that cannot be rectified by following a paper trail or securing genetic confirmation.

As discussed, Saidiya Hartman has written extensively on the enduring absences embedded in the archive of slavery. This archive "rests upon a founding violence. This violence determines, regulates and organizes the kinds of statements that can be made about slavery and as well it creates subjects and objects of power."[93] What can be known about the people who suffered under, experienced, and survived slavery is known overwhelmingly from the perspectives of those empowered to own and inventory these people as property. In her attention to the ways in which broader structures of power dictate what is said and by whom, and, further, how and why these statements survived the passage of time, Hartman's insights have particular resonance for rhetoricians. In the case of Georgetown, fragments of information about the people sold in 1838 reside in such documents as a census that includes names, ages, locations, and family origins; the manifest of the *Katherine Jackson*, one of the ships that transported these individuals south; and fragmented bills of sale for fifty-six persons, sixty-four persons, eighty-four persons, and so on.[94] Piecing together these sources enables archivists, historians, and researchers to flesh out flickers of

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https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/24/us/a-georgetown-employee-slavery.html.

[92] There is literature on the use of DNA testing in relation to African American genealogical research. Alondra Nelson's work is particularly enlightening. Nelson has discussed the case of racial reconciliation and reparations at Georgetown University, to which Adam Rothman responded. Alondra Nelson, *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation after the Genome* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016); Alondra Nelson, "The Social Life of DNA: Racial Reconciliation and Institutional Morality after the Genome," *British Journal of Sociology* 69, no. 3 (2018): 522–37; Rothman, "Slavery and Institutional Morality at Georgetown University," 552–59.

[93] Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 2 (June 2008): 10.

[94] Information regarding the sale, as well as Georgetown's history of involvement with transatlantic and chattel slavery, is publicly accessible at the online Georgetown Slavery Archive. "Georgetown Slavery Archive," Georgetown University, https://slaveryarchive.georgetown.edu/.

enslaved experiences. While turning to such documents, however, Hartman urges scholars to consider carefully our intent and aims, and to be cognizant of how writing about slavery might sensationalize or objectify these individuals, thus perpetuating revised forms of violence.

By repeatedly relying on the imperfect descriptor of "the descendants," the university once again differentiates, divides, and determines the boundaries of institutional inclusion. Further, the repeated articulation of "the descendants" risks effecting the very forms of erasure and speculation that Hartman discusses. Yet read against the grain, the inherent opacity of such terminology might also begin to hint at what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten describe as "[being] in but not of" the university.[95] I use opacity here in reference to Édouard Glissant's theoretical conception of "that which cannot be reduced" or flattened to a simple signifier.[96] Glissant is concerned with how the experiences of minoritized individuals and communities are captured by a presumptive label or term—or not. As Glissant explains it, "the verb to *grasp* contains the movement of hands that grab their surroundings and bring them back to themselves. A gesture of enclosure if not appropriation."[97] To remain "opaque" and to avoid "appropriation" means remaining beyond the grasp of language and, as such, beyond the totalizing grasp of power. Groups identified according to particular demographics such as "the descendants" are visible and legible to the institution, as evidenced by their inclusion in the Working Group's report, countless mentions in university

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[95] Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe, Eng.: Autonomedia, 2013), 26.

[96] Glissant writes, "The opaque is not obscure, though it is possible for it to be so and be accepted as such. It is that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee for participation and confluence." In relation to an identity or label for one's experience, to remain opaque means that minoritized individuals and communities are both seen and acknowledged, and yet never fully "grasped" by structures of power and, specific to Glissant's discussion, the West. As Glissant further explains, "the verb to *grasp* contains the movement of hands that grab their surroundings and bring them back to themselves. A gesture of enclosure if not appropriation." Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 191-192.

[97] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 191-192.

addresses and communications, and codification in admissions policies. Yet they are difficult if not impossible to completely synthesize—*ungraspable*—which can enable a type of fugitive movement within and throughout the existing institutional structures that Harney and Moten describe. Drawing out the constitutive complexity of "the descendants" rather than attempting to determine a finite definition can unveil the rhetorical potential of this identifier because of—not in spite of—its enduring ambiguity.

This subversive orientation to the university—being in but not of the university, for Harney and Moten, and remaining opaque to powers of lucid depiction, for Glissant—is one recognized by the institution and yet beyond its complete comprehension and, consequently, its complete control. Such fugitive individuals—the "adjunct Marxist historians, out or queer management professors, state college ethnic studies departments . . . historically black college sociologists, and feminist engineers"[98]—fail to fit neatly into the normative categories of faculty, staff, and student. Beyond the grasp of institutional dictates, fugitive individuals may operate within the university while also evading the discipline of administrative demands. While a descriptor like "the descendants" may seem self-evident and is used as such by the university in attempts to demarcate and divide, it is constituted by an infinite lack of clarity. Bringing Hartman into conversation with Harney and Moten, and with Glissant, suggests that while terminology intrinsic to university redress may harbor the potential for injury, it might also offer opportunities for rhetorical inventiveness within institutional spaces. Descent moves between mode of relation to the university, faction of institutional community recognized by the university, and an identity assumed by individuals both within and beyond the university's walls. This mercuriality imbues the discourse of descent with both predicaments and rhetorical possibilities.

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[98] Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 30.

As the May 2021 town hall conversation commenced and attendees continued to join the discussion virtually, many individuals followed suit and used their family names to establish an immediate sense of belonging. People announced their arrival and greeted one another in the chat box: "Hello. Hawkins descendant"; "Good evening Family"; "Hello, Cousins!"; "I am a cousin to the Butler family"; "Hawkins descendant"; "Hello All! Greenlief/Green/Campbell Descendant"; "I am a descendant of Butler, Harris, Mahoney, Ware/West and several more"; "I am a descendant of Louisa Mahoney"; "I am from Louisa's sister Anna."[99] The sounding off of these family names at descendant gatherings is common. Attending these meetings and announcing these names offer the opportunity for individuals to connect immediately with one another in the present—as "cousins" across an ever-expanding collective of distant relatives—and also to connect to their pasts. Yet town halls such as this one seem as much charged by uncertainty and confusion as they are by embrace. Across town hall meetings, descendant declarations, statements, opinion pieces, and letters, it has become clear that establishing descent does not offer an answer to the rhetorical questions of what interpellating and inhabiting the identity of descendant might entail in relation to the university.

During another descendant town hall, held one month earlier in collaboration with Georgetown University students, and including at least one self-identified student-descendant, attendees raised questions about the responsibility and role of the university in resourcing the further identification of descendants, digitizing and sharing related archival materials, and even determining who participates in these town hall discussions.[100] Several attendees noted that their ancestors were not

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[99] Descendants of Jesuit Enslavement, *Descendants of Jesuit Enslavement Informational Town Hall*. In follow-up to my earlier observation that these names are at times incomplete or misspelled, GU272 surname lists note that "Greenlief," as noted here, might also appear in records as "Greenleaf" or "Green," the surname "Queen" as "Quinn" or "Quin," and so on.

[100] It's worth noting that at least one of the students involved in organizing and in virtually welcoming attendees to this town hall is a descendant who has benefited from the extension of legacy preference. In the fall of 2017, Shephard Thomas was one of the first of "the descendants" to matriculate at Georgetown following the Working Group's efforts and report. Thomas matriculated

included in the 1838 sale, not considered part of "the GU272," though they were owned by Maryland Jesuits (or Jesuits elsewhere). Scant records leave descendants with chasms in their family lines, and ambiguous articulations of "the descendants" cause confusion over which individuals are being referenced and when. These features of descendant discussions together result in open-ended queries about individuals' present belonging in these descendant gatherings, let alone in the university community. Their questions take different shapes: How and in what ways might their ancestors "count" amid discussions that center Georgetown and "the GU272"? Which descendants rightfully inherit membership in this specific group? What about those whose ancestors helped build Georgetown, labored on Jesuit plantations, or perhaps even labored on the campus but were not included in the 1838 sale? If one is uncertain as to whether their ancestors were directly linked to Georgetown, are there other descendant groups that they should be looking into? While the enunciation of family names can effectively serve as an integral mark of inclusion, family names are but one aspect of figuring out how and where, as one attendee aptly put it, one "fits in." Fleshing out one's family tree may point individuals back to enslaved people owned by the Society of Jesus or Maryland Jesuits, yet asserting this lineage does not clear up what this inheritance means in relation to Georgetown or in relation to fellow descendants.

The questions raised during these two town hall meetings point to the persisting ambiguity that underlies "the descendants" both as a university descriptor and as a collective identity since it began gaining traction. In 2016, as references to "the descendants" captured public attention and inspired other descendants to discover their own lineage, Georgetown grappled with how to harness this history and enlarge the university community so that it might move forward. Reconciling the past while looking ahead meant reckoning with how "the descendants" and the roots of their inheritance

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at Georgetown the same year as Mélisande Short-Colomb.

related to Georgetown at present. Descendants were themselves also wrestling with these questions. Chronologically aligned with the Working Group's wrap-up and final report, a group of descendants produced a public document that reimagined how they "fit" into what they specifically termed the "Georgetown Family."[101]

Throughout 2016, institutional discussions of "the descendants" grew increasingly prominent, and changes to Georgetown's admissions policies attempted to codify the university's relationship to this new constituency. At the same time, those self-identifying as descendants were at work imagining their position in relation to Georgetown and similarly using the rhetoric and the image of the family. Thus, both the university and descendants foregrounded the family as a constitutive component of redress. However, while the university's emphasis on "the descendants" positioned the family as a way to differentiate and distill institutional membership down to the particularities of individual lines of descent, descendants conversely operationalized the family to "spatially and temporally" "scale up" notions of belonging.[102] Though ancestral connections served as a precursor to participation in descendant discussions, descent provided an initial point of entry into a capacious "human family" rather than serving as an endpoint that demarcated the parameters of inclusion. The Declaration of GU272 Descendants, a one-page document drafted in 2016, provides an example of how descendants of enslaved ancestors entered into the discourse of reconciliation at Georgetown while working to broaden the terms set by the university.

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[101] GU272 Descendants Association, "Declaration of GU272 Descendants," Summer 2016. While a revised version of the Declaration can be found on the association's webpage, an original version of the document is available on the Descendants Truth and Reconciliation Foundation's website. "Our History | Descendants Truth & Reconciliation," https://www.descendants.org/who-we-are/history.

[102] This language is borrowed from Kathi Weeks, whose conceptualization of abolitionism in relation to the family strongly informs my analysis of the descendant declaration. Kathi Weeks, "Abolition of the Family: The Most Infamous Feminist Proposal," *Feminist Theory* (2021): 2.

Declaring Membership in the "Georgetown Family"

In August 2016, members of the recently formed GU272 Descendants Association shared a Declaration written by and for the "direct descendants of 272 members of the Georgetown University family who for decades were enslaved for the benefit of the entire Georgetown Family."[103] While the authors of the document presented themselves as the "direct descendants" of those individuals sold in 1838, their main focus was not on determining descendants but rather on articulating a "Georgetown Family." Much like the Working Group and the university's employment of the term "the descendants," the use of this familial terminology was imperfect in its application. Throughout the Declaration, who counted as "Family" remained debatable, with members spanning temporality, geography, genetics, and types of university affiliation. Yet in contrast to the rhetoric of "the descendants," which carved out a distinct subcategory of the university community, the Declaration articulated descent as a relational orientation that existed well beyond the administration of contemporary institutional dictates.[104] As such, the rhetoric of the Declaration offers an alternate mode of approaching reconciliation that similarly acknowledges violent injustices of the past while also refusing to use this history to dictate the present and importantly the future extent of redress.

As in the Working Group's report and the university's subsequent implementation of legacy preference, the image of the family is central to the Declaration. Those who drafted the Declaration

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[103] GU272 Descendants Association, "Declaration of GU272 Descendants."Throughout my discussion, I replicate when and how "family" is capitalized in the Declaration. Much like the Georgetown Admissions website's treatment of "descendants/Descendants," "family" is at times capitalized and at others not.

[104] In her ruminations on "orientations," Sara Ahmed remarks that "when we inherit, we also inherit the proximity of certain objects, as that which is available to us, as given within the family home. These objects are not material: they may be values, capital, aspirations, projects, and styles. Insofar as we inherit that which is near enough to be available at home, we also inherit orientations, that is, we inherit the nearness of certain objects more than others, which means we inherit ways of inhabiting and extending into space." Sara Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 4 (January 2006): 557.

rely on this language to legitimize belonging. Familial lineage—and recourse to "our 272 ancestors"—serves as the basis for these descendants' present-day participation in the discourse of reconciliation at Georgetown. Like the Working Group's rhetoric of "the descendants," the conceptualization of a "Georgetown Family" is initially rooted in the historical events surrounding the 1838 sale. Also similar to the Working Group's use of "the descendants," evocations of the "Georgetown Family" encompass an unmistakable sense of ambiguity that leave this terminology vulnerable to competing interpretations. The Declaration begins by inviting readers to imagine "the entire Georgetown Family" as an entity that harbors a violent past of profiting from slaveholding and also holds "honorable" values. In these first few lines, the 1838 sale of "272 members of the Georgetown University family who for decades were enslaved for the benefit of the entire Georgetown Family" is generously presented as an act that "helped sustain the Jesuit Order in pursuing its honorable mission to advance education and social justice." This curious abatement of the university's injurious past rhetorically eases readers into the document and into articulations of the university community at present. Throughout the five-paragraph Declaration, this initial glimpse of leniency transitions to agential assertions that envision a "Georgetown Family" and reimagine the scope of reconciliation.

From the Declaration's introduction, the use of signifiers like "Georgetown University family" generously encompasses people of the present-day and those of the past. Such members include descendants, their enslaved ancestors, as well as Jesuits responsible for the 1838 sale and presumably also present-day Georgetown administration, students, and faculty. Yet at other points, those drafting the Declaration seem to distance themselves from the "Georgetown Family," appealing to this entity's process of decision-making as a group external to it.[105] Such contradiction is evident in

[105] *Washington Post* published an OpEd by Karran Harper Royal within days of the public release of the Working Group's final report in 2016. In this piece, Royal refers to "our Georgetown family"

statements that note how the "Georgetown Family has demonstrated *its* willingness and intention to embrace the reality of our one destiny."[106] These moments of differentiation are further couched in opaque references to "our Georgetown University Family" and "our Georgetown brothers and sisters," and coupled with the notion of a "Common Good for our family, our country and our humanity." Such broad rhetorical strokes—the gesture toward a "Common Good" and the notion of an all-encompassing "humanity"—leave readers to question who is being called forth by the document.

The Declaration's failure to present a firm definition of the "Georgetown Family" resembles the Working Group's treatment of "the descendants." But the rhetoric of the Declaration markedly departs from the group's and the university's move toward taxonomizing and containing descent. The Declaration's authors start with familial lineage but then set about envisioning a Georgetown community beyond it. Georgetown's admissions policy adjustment proffers inclusion according to temporally linear genealogical strictures. However, the language used throughout the Declaration introduces an atemporal and affective sense of inclusion reminiscent of what Jennifer Nash calls a "Black Feminist love-politics." This political orientation, according to Nash, "crafts a collectivity marked by 'communal affect,' a utopian, visionary, future-oriented community held together by affiliation and 'public feeling' rather than an imagined—or enforced—sameness."[107] While considering the address of structural racisms, Nash posits that Black feminism offers critical alternatives to state-based "remedies" that require identity-based uniformity ("homogeneity and

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and "Georgetown" in contexts that suggest that they are not synonymous. Despite articulating herself and other descendants as "committed to organizing all of our Georgetown brothers and sisters," thus indicating family membership, she later adds that they are "looking forward to Georgetown embracing us as an important part of its family." Royal, "Georgetown University Sold My Family's Ancestors."

[106] The italics here are mine.

[107] Jennifer C. Nash, "Practicing Love: Black Feminism, Love-Politics, and Post-Intersectionality," *Meridians* 11, no. 2 (March 2013): 19.

fixity").[108] With statements like "though we may be different fibers, our destiny is in fact woven together into a single garment," the descendants writing the Declaration affirm that it is their outlook toward the future, rather than their claims to identity at present, that brings them together. By using the sweeping rhetoric of "our one destiny," they imagine a collective future rather than adhering to an "imagined sameness" at present, which further prioritizes sentiment over specifics. The focus on shared feeling in this short document—and the sense of dignity and dedication that the Declaration evinces—is a far cry from the university's accentuation of systematizing factors.[109]

The particularities of who is and is not interpellated by the Declaration's "our" or considered part of the "Georgetown Family" is eschewed in favor of focusing on the future-oriented intent of and "commitment to the uplifting of humankind." Demonstrating Nash's articulation of a Black feminist love-politics, the Declaration "suspends . . . attachment to the present, recognizing that changing the grammar of our contemporary political moment will not remove us from the script that is always already in place."[110] Rather, to borrow Nash's words, the document's authors "dream of a yet unwritten future" and begin to "imagine a world ordered by love, by a radical embrace of difference, by a set of subjects who work on/against themselves to work for each other."[111] Institutionally dictated terms of belonging, such as those codified through legacy status, demand that individuals trace specific family lines in order to receive "care and attention." In contrast, the

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[108] Nash, "Practicing Love," 13.
[109] Descendants' murky relationship to Georgetown was punctuated by the university's initial failure to invite them to the fall 2016 gathering in which DeGioia and members of the Working Group reflected on the group's efforts and shared the final report. As Royal notes, the fact that descendants had been excluded from this announcement of Georgetown's progress toward reconciliation "was painful." She explains that "when I learned about the event and realized we hadn't been part of the study and deliberations that led up to it, I felt like it was 1838 all over again." Throughout this piece and in this passage specifically, Royal replicates the temporal tensions between past, present, and future that characterize the Declaration. Royal, "Georgetown University Sold My Family's Ancestors."
[110] Nash, "Practicing Love," 18.
[111] Nash, "Practicing Love," 18.

Declaration offers individuals the opportunity to imagine themselves as united in their communal, forward-facing desires. Avowing that "THIS IS OUR INTENT! / THIS IS OUR COMMITMENT! / THIS IS OUR MISSION!"[112] the authors sketch out a group rooted in descent. Yet instead of having the effect of containing or cordoning off this constituency, this rhetoric and the understanding of "our" opens ever outward to the expanse of "our Georgetown Family, our nation, and our human family."

Through the use of vivid description, like the "rich black Louisiana soil that covered their calloused feet; the same soil that supports strong and healthy sugarcane crops," the Declaration's authors shift between the past and present tense to articulate atemporal desires. By recalling this history and connecting it to the here and now—the soil that *formerly* covered their feet is the same soil that *still* remains today—these descendants coax readers into understanding the intimacy and

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[112] In these emphatic statements, the declaration assumes the characteristics of a manifesto. Rhetorical scholar Elliot Heilman writes that the genre of the manifesto is often noticeable through a "directness [that] takes the form of affected clarity, hiding its rhetorical art behind a sincerity most often connoted through the expression of rage." He goes on to add that, typically, "the desire to participate in and shape public conversations demonstrated by manifestos is complicated by the fact that manifestos are often issued by those who are not in power, or by those whose power is not certain." Elliot Heilman, "Manifestos in Postrevolutionary Mexico: Opposition, Imposition, and the Comprimido Estridentista," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 17, no. 1 (2014): 8. Manifestos have a rich and important history in the field of Black feminist thought, notably marked by the unequivocally influential Combahee River Collective Statement. According to Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, this statement "stands tall among the many statements, manifestos, and other public declarations of the period [of the 1970s] for its clarity, rigor, and political reach. It is an important document, not only as a statement of radical Black feminism but also in its contribution to the revolutionary left in the United States." Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, ed., *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 7. Grace Kyungwon Hong discusses the Combahee River Collective Statement as contributing to a Black feminist tradition in which "the work of imagination is not a frivolous or superficial activity, but rather a material and social practice toward 'revolutionary change.'" Grace Kyungwon Hong, "'The Future of Our Worlds': Black Feminism and the Politics of Knowledge in the University under Globalization," *Meridians* 8, no. 2 (2008): 108. Finally, feminist political theorist Kathi Weeks more broadly discusses the value and import of feminist manifestos, such as those related to the wages for housework movement, in helping to "confront the present and reimagine its possible futures." Kathi Weeks, *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 117.

interconnectedness of past, present, and future. They underscore this sentiment by then summarizing the yearnings of their ancestors, their "tenacious desire to be free; to be equal; to be, and be recognized, as equally valued members of God's one human family." The next paragraph drags these perspicuous desires into and through the present day. Jumping to "today in 2016," the authors connect "what started in 1838 as 272 unshakable enslaved people" to "more than 10,000 steadfast and determined descendants worldwide." Though this statement of determination is left untethered (determined in what ways, how, and to what ends?), the unsettled temporality of the Declaration creates the sense that this determination is connected to carrying out their ancestors' wishes for freedom, equality, recognition, and belonging. The Declaration presents these desires as cutting across two centuries of enduring experiences of strength, survival, and family, and despite slavery, segregation, and racism. Strength, survival, and family are the rhetorical cornerstones of this document.

After the Declaration's authors emphasize their familial relation to the "272 lives and their contributions to our one humanity," they attend to their own contributions to Georgetown's reconciliation efforts. This collective of individuals clearly stakes out their intent to "choose to pursue the reconciliation of [our ancestors'] enslavement as an important and defining part of the history of our Georgetown University Family." Through this assertion of agency, descendants demand a role in determining the parameters of university reconciliation and subsequently position themselves as instrumental to "organiz[ing] and involv[ing] all of our Georgetown brothers and sisters in an effective and sustained movement to reconcile our Georgetown Family, our nation and our human family from the legacy of slavery." At the same time, the ongoing oscillation between the "human family" and "our Georgetown Family"—which resembles the back-and-forth movement between verb tenses that also characterizes the document—leaves one to question the parameters of university belonging. Thus, while these descendants identify themselves as integral participants in

reconciliation at Georgetown, their language refuses any firm restrictions on participation. As such, they simultaneously work to reimagine the temporal and relational bounds of the university. These rhetorical decisions suggest a sense of accommodation for descendants foreclosed by the Working Group's narrow terminology of "the descendants" and terms of inclusion implemented by the university.

U.S. universities will likely continue to extend conciliatory amendments to institutional policies and forms of memorialization, recognition, and atonement related to descent. With certainty, genealogical research and fleshing out one's family tree will continue to prove valuable for descendants and useful in reconciliation efforts like those at Georgetown. Yet at the same time, the shared sentiment conveyed by the Declaration suggests that as universities address their legacies of slavery, descendants of enslaved ancestors can and must foster modes of belonging that supersede institutional mandates. Nash's conceptualization of a "Black feminist love-politics" unveils a long history of Black feminists building "utopian, visionary, future-oriented community." As Nash explains, accentuating the affective temporality of a collective group can transcend the limiting language of "sameness" and the trappings of identity politics.[113] The language used by descendants throughout the Declaration inches nearer to this utopian outlook, offering ways of otherwise conjuring a group like "the descendants" beyond institutionally finite terms that might require fixed identity. In comparison to Georgetown's parsing of "*the* descendants" who belong to the university

[113] Nash, "Practicing Love," 13. Here, I am also thinking about Saidiya Hartman's reflections on attending and participating in a 1994 conference, "Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name," which resonate with some of the concerns Nash raises and my own analysis throughout this chapter of the inflections of descent. In this article, Hartman notes, "The desire to fully recognize oneself in the other, if realizable, can only be accomplished at the expense and extermination of the other, and at the cost of sacrificing differences, not simply the difference between us, but the differences and the crossings that constitute the individual subject. What did it mean that the most available language for expressing our being-in-common depended on the certainty of sameness?" Saidiya Hartman, "The Territory Between Us: A Report on 'Black Women in the Academy: Defending Our Name: 1894-1994,'" *Callaloo* 17, no. 2 (1994): 442.

community, those drafting the Declaration articulate an imagined "Family" that realizes belonging through feeling instead of strictly determined by factors like paper trails and family genetics.[114]

Curiously, the language of utopia fleetingly appears in the Working Group's report in a short section titled "Reconciliation," though it is couched in a very different tone. The group explains its assigned task of reconciliation and the potential for the "healing of estrangement between people and the restoration of friendship," noting how reconciliation "implies forgiveness sought and offered." However, the group also concedes that "what reconciliation could be in this instance is not obvious" in part due to the passage of time and the physical absence of individuals who might identify as "perpetrators and victims." Following this outline of obstacles, the group concludes by adding that it "received well-considered cautions against a utopian pursuit of reconciliation."[115] Instead of giving room for imaginative future possibilities, the open-ended indeterminacy presented by temporal distance and by the lack of firm and fixed identities is positioned as a threat. In the Working Group's report, "utopian" insinuates empty and impractical undertakings into which, if not careful, the group's and the university's "inspired" pursuit of reconciliation might lapse.[116] However, as descendant discourse and the Declaration begin to demonstrate, ambiguity holds space for imagining otherwise. Rather than a hindrance, the lack of clarity can serve as a critical resource in efforts of university redress.

The language of the Declaration reveals how members of the GU272 Descendants Association rhetorically imagine relationships between the past, present, and future, and between descendants and the university. The Declaration articulates modes of belonging that move beyond the binary of "perpetrators and victims," which the Working Group report discusses as a constitutive component

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[114] Nash, "Practicing Love," 19.
[115] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 26.
[116] The report also notes that the Working Group "found the goal of reconciliation inspiring." "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 25.

of reconciliation.[117] By using the language of "family," the Declaration eschews divides between university insiders and outsiders and encourages a sense of creativity in reconceptualizing the terms of and the participants in university redress. The intimacies of family experiences and ancestral lineage, along with the resources offered through genealogical research, are undeniably important to the Descendants Association. This is clearly evident in descendant town halls and through the practice of calling on and calling out one's "family names." Yet while descent is foregrounded in the Declaration, its authors also offer "something other than what lineage, kin and genealogy beget," partaking in what Tiffany Lethabo King describes as a "willing[ness] to name oneself again and again to avoid capture, discursive or otherwise."[118] This fugitive inventiveness, while holding a sense of utopian possibility, is characteristic of an abolitionist approach that "opens up conversations about alternative modes of naming the self in relation to others outside of the Western humanist tradition."[119] In colloquial conversations, abolition often emerges in relation to the present-day carceral systems and past institutions of slavery, and emphasizes the dismantling of these structures. However, abolitionist orientations to addressing systemic racism are also coupled with a deep inventiveness in approaching an indeterminate future. The Declaration displays inflections of this approach and gestures toward what King explains as the "possibility of naming and doing Black relations outside of the categories that currently name humanness,"[120] including those categories codified by institutions like the university and the family.

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[117] "Report of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation," 26.
[118] Tiffany Lethabo King, "Black 'Feminisms' and Pessimism: Abolishing Moynihan's Negro Family," *Theory & Event* 21, 1 (2018): 84.
[119] King, "Black 'Feminisms' and Pessimism," 69.
[120] King, "Black 'Feminisms' and Pessimism," 69.

Conclusion

Four years after the Working Group's conclusion and Georgetown's extension of advantaged admissions for "the descendants," Georgetown students drafted and began circulating a GoogleDoc entitled "Petition to Abolish Legacy Admissions at Georgetown" among members of the university community. Amid the national uprisings protesting racial injustice in the summer of 2020, the petition underscored the ways that university policies like legacy admissions reified the racist structures undergirding institutions like Georgetown. Specifically, these students wrote, legacy admissions gave "an unwarranted advantage to those from privileged backgrounds, directly perpetuat[ing] structural racial inequality." Since this racialized and innately unfair advantage helped to perpetuate "social, political, economic and moral structures in America that discriminate against members of the Black community," the students reasoned, their university must cease its use. There was, however, a concluding caveat. In light of Georgetown's history of "profit[ing] off the enslavement of Black people," the students confirmed that "the only applicants who should be given special consideration given their familial history should be the descendants of the 272 slaves that were sold to keep Georgetown University financially afloat."[121] Instead of delivering on the promise foregrounded in the petition's title, these final lines suggested that aspects of this institutional practice, if in service of righting the university's past wrongs, could remain intact. Thus, the students rearticulated family legacy as a form of redistribution in opposition to its traditional role as a tactic of intergenerational exclusion.

This student petition encapsulates the ongoing entanglement of institutional and familial inheritance in discourses of racial redress at U.S. universities, and the paradoxes of repair at

[121] Amanda Feldman and Adam Shaham, "A Petition to Abolish Legacy Admissions at Georgetown," Google Docs, accessed February 20, 2022, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OPsDjhUszajLlmg2bgX96nYLuI9rtMYxklv31UPw9qQ/edit?usp=drive_web&ouid=113170400180057104979&usp=embed_facebook.

Georgetown. Though four years in the future from the Working Group's report, the descendants' Declaration, and the university's alteration of legacy admissions preferences, the petition picks up on key themes that animate this chapter's analysis: bio-genetic family forms, definitions of descent, and legacy admissions. It also juxtaposes the creative possibilities of the future with the rhetorical demands of the present. This petition's rehabilitation of legacy preference as an institutional practice with the potential to effect redress echoes Georgetown's earlier efforts. Yet the students presented this practice—of inclusion in the university community by way of family relations—alongside abolitionist calls for the eradication of these very same preferences. At a glance, the irreconcilable demands of the petition, along with its evocation of abolition, risk easy dismissal. However, as David Maldonado and Erica Meiners remind us, "At once about the present and the future . . . abolition is the space that holds on to contradictions and paradoxes to imagine an elsewhere, an otherwise, right here and now."[122]

As I've demonstrated throughout this chapter, forms of university inclusion that require institutional recognition and validation of the family, like these admissions policies, can operate as mechanisms for demarcating those who "count" and those who do not. This effectual exclusion can materialize even when marshaled under the charge of redress. Reworking legacy preference—or calling for its "abolition," as done by this student petition—without accounting for the structuring force of the family is to focus on remedying the university's legacy of slavery while at the same time overlooking the family's historical entanglement with this very same institution. Georgetown approached reckoning with the past by recognizing descendants of enslaved individuals and by relying on the contours of the bio-genetic family. As my analysis shows, in doing so, and in these attempts to expand the bounds of the university community deserving of "care and attention," the

[122] David A. Maldonado and Erica R. Meiners, "Due Time: Meditations on Abolition at the Site of the University," *Social Text* 39, no. 1 (146) (March 2021): 83.

family can become the vehicle through which the parameters of university inclusion and exclusion and of institutional responsibility are redrawn.

This chapter attends to the ways in which individuals identifying as descendants began to creatively reimagine themselves in relation to one another and the university, as well as their relationships to the present and, importantly, to the future. While their work was done in intimate relation to Georgetown, it surpassed institutional definitions. This inextricable connection to institutions that reproduce structures of harm while also enabling forms of healing further illustrates Maldonado and Meiners's articulation of the university's paradoxes and the place of abolition "as a method, a practice, a politics" that "orients us to feel out fractures and gauge the possibilities, together. In other words, it's a way of studying, and of doing political organizing, and of being in the world, and of worlding ourselves."[123] Maldonado and Meiners resist any attempt to reconcile the aporia of abolition made possible within and because of the university, focusing instead on what these impasses might engender. Racial redress at the site of the university and in reliance on the family occupies a space of similar unease. This chapter serves as a foundation for my subsequent explorations of the productive tensions—and as I discuss in Chapter 2, at times palliative ties—between university reckoning and family.

[123] Maldonado and Meiners, "Due Time," 82.

Reckoning with Reproductive Labor: Surrogacy and Ancestral Care on the Grounds of Virginia Commonwealth University

The Medical College of Virginia (MCV) campus at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) features five health sciences schools and a university medical center.[1] Among these buildings, the Hermes A. Kontos Medical Sciences Building houses university departments like Anatomy and Neurobiology and the School of Medicine. One can set out on a six-minute walk from the Kontos Building and reach the White House of the Confederacy—the manor in which Confederate president Jefferson Davis and his family resided during the Civil War and which is now a National Historic Landmark and museum. Walk a mere five minutes in the other direction and find the city's historic African Burial Ground in Shockoe Bottom. Taken together, these markers begin to signal Richmond's historical ties to slavery and VCU's prominent place in this past.

This chapter focuses on VCU's health sciences campus and the space it claims in Richmond's urban center and at the heart of the city's history. In 1994, during the raising of the Kontos Building, construction crews discovered human remains that evidently had been discarded alongside animal remains and medical instruments in the mid-nineteenth century. Archaeologists at VCU removed as much of the remains as possible in the short timeframe allotted by the university and shortly thereafter the remains were sent to the Smithsonian for analysis. Subsequent research revealed that the humans were mostly of African and African American descent and that their bodies had been used as material for dissection and classroom instruction at a nearby medical school that is now part

[1] Virginia Commonwealth University has two campuses in Richmond, Virginia. Approximately a mile from the MCV campus, VCU's Monroe Park campus stretches west from downtown and features expanses of green lawns, brick walkways, and sidewalks that connect the university's academic buildings and residence halls to undergraduate hubs: a library, a student commons, a gym. The Monroe Park campus is where the majority of undergraduate coursework takes place.

of VCU.[2] Though little was done by way of institutional recognition in the 1990s and early 2000s, these macabre facts gained attention in 2011 compelling the university to initiate the East Marshall Street Well Project in 2013 to reckon with this past.

The individuals whose cadavers were used for medical instruction at VCU performed a type of postmortem labor that directly benefited faculty and students, and the university as a whole. By stealing corpses from their graves, using them as institutional specimens, and then unceremoniously discarding the remains, the university stripped these individuals of their humanity. Prior to the 2010s, the history of this nonconsensual work was not discernibly valued or plainly visible across the institution despite being foundational to the university and its early position as a premier medical school. With VCU's establishment of the East Marshall Street Well Project, coming to terms with this past required widely recognizing these specific forced contributions of people of African and African American descent to university medical training. This reckoning also demanded the significant retroactive work of instilling personhood, work that I suggest resembles a type of reproductive labor. The Family Representative Council, nominated by Richmond community members, appointed by VCU, and unpaid for their efforts, undertook this labor as "surrogate family."[3]

In this chapter, I explore forms of labor that are indispensable to the twenty-first-century

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[2] While the work of "resurrectionists" and the practice of grave robbing in order to supply medical school dissection rooms continued through the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, research suggests that the well found during the Kontos Building construction may have been sealed in the mid-nineteenth century. According to VCU historian Jodi Koste, "facts suggest that the well discovered in April of 1994 may have been the one used by various demonstrators of anatomy to dispose of human remains in the period between 1848 and 1860." Jodi Koste, "Artifacts and Commingled Skeletal Remains from a Well on the Medical College of Virginia Campus: Anatomical and Surgical Training in Nineteenth-Century Richmond," Virginia Commonwealth University, *Office of the President Documents*, June 18, 2012, 15, https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/arch001/2.

[3] I have found nothing that indicates that the council members received any material compensation—financial or otherwise—for their work.

university, moving chronologically from the forced, postmortem labor of the past to the present-day reproductive labor of university redress. This discussion is grounded in a general understanding of reproductive labor as the unpaid work—typically feminized work done in the home and for the family—that critically contributes to capitalist production.[4] Following descriptions of the council's work, I analyze the rhetorical and embodied work of "surrogates," a specific form of reproductive labor that implicates a particular entanglement of authority, property, and ownership. Today, the work of staffing dining halls or cleaning campus buildings clearly read as forms of reproductive labor that contribute to the university's functioning. Even tasks less obviously linked to social reproduction and specific to the university, like teaching, advising and mentoring, can assume the characteristics of this labor, especially when these tasks are consistently under- or uncompensated, tasked to part-time, hourly, and contract employees, or tacitly expected of those most marginalized within the institution and unrecognized in the university's everyday milieu. Such work also includes the most precarious positions on campus (i.e. positions that lack adequate health care, time off, and job security).[5] Yet, while these varied manifestations of labor may be materially undervalued, much

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[4] I use the terminology of reproductive labor throughout this chapter because of its implications in the context of surrogacy and in the extensive history of Black women's reproduction under slavery, all of which is pertinent to my chapter and broader dissertation. However, Tithi Bhattacharya's conceptualization of social reproduction could also apply here, as it directly implicates reproductive labor in the processes of capitalist accumulation. Tithi Bhattacharya, ed., *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression* (London: Pluto Press, 2017).

[5] Scholarly articles, forums, and conference panels across the humanities that focus on precarity in academia have burgeoned amid the ongoing pandemic. Additionally, including and beyond the pandemic, food service contracts on campuses offer another significant example of the ways in which universities participate in and support unjust hiring practices and unlivable working conditions. VCU is one of many universities that contract with Aramark, a food service provider that has attracted national attention for abysmal pay and unconscionable use of prison labor. Much of this attention has been brought to light by student reporting and articles in campus newspapers, including Maryam Beshara, "Rams against Aramark Demands Severance from Food Service Provider," *The Observer*, March 21, 2021, https://fordhamobserver.com/61823/recent/news/rams-against-aramark-demands-severance-from-provider/; Alexandra DeMarco, "Students Petition to End UT's Contract with Aramark as Company Falls under National Scrutiny for Ties to Prison System, Racist Actions," *The Daily Beacon*, July 1, 2021,

like the legacies of slavery that fortified numerous U.S. universities, they essentially underpin contemporary institutions of higher education. Throughout this chapter, I argue that the case at VCU exemplifies the burgeoning reproductive labor of contemporary university redress and its dual value to local communities and to institutional subsistence in the twenty-first century.

VCU's Family Representative Council was named by the university in August 2015, following four city-wide public meetings and a public nomination process that invited the participation of all Richmond community members. The council then began performing material and emotional labor for the university and on behalf of the broader community. The association of this work with that of a "surrogate" underscores the distinctly reproductive quality of the labor undertaken by this body, as well as the specific relationships of power that existed between the council and the university. The following summer, in June 2016, the council presented preliminary recommendations for how VCU should handle the remains and how the university might further incorporate its racial history. Two years later, in December 2018, council members presented their final recommendations for VCU in the Kontos Building, the site at which the remains were initially found, marking the official completion of their task as "surrogates."

Throughout this chapter, I trace the Family Representative Council's inception and efforts. Before doing so, however, I provide more in-depth context for university redress in Virginia as well as the history of VCU and the grounds upon which it stands. I then review the details of how and when the human skeletal remains were discovered during the construction of VCU's Kontos

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https://www.utdailybeacon.com/campus_news/students-petition-to-end-ut-s-contract-with-aramark-as-company-falls-under-national-scrutiny/article_13cc972e-bbda-11ea-9f7e-57427588cb38.html; Gabriella Depinho, "The Contract and the Controversy: Aramark Comes to Campus, Community Reacts," *The Quadrangle*, September 1, 2020, https://mcquad.org/2020/09/01/the-contract-and-the-controversy-aramark-comes-to-campus-community-reacts/; Kaki McNeel, "Op-Ed: It's Time to Divest from Aramark," *The Daily Tar Heel*, November 2021, https://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2021/11/opinion-oped-divest-from-aramark.

Building while also illuminating the ways in which they were handled. After surveying the scene through which VCU's family council emerged, I discuss how emphases on family and community operated during the four public meetings that set the stage for the council's selection and eventual work. Evocations of family importantly laid the groundwork for the reproductive labor of the council, which I analyze next by looking at how council members imagined their work. Finally, focusing on the reproductive labor of "surrogacy" and using this concept as a heuristic,[6] I examine how the council rhetorically labored to restore humanity to the "remains" and the ways in which related discourse connected the non-consensual, stolen labor of these "ancestors" to the present-day. My discussion ends with the 2019 ceremonial return of the remains from the Smithsonian Institution, which housed them for many years, to Richmond.

Like VCU, other U.S. universities and their surrounding communities continue to discover bodies and graves as they develop property and erect new buildings. Though unsettling to hear (and, from a cynical perspective, institutionally inconvenient), narratives of institutional unearthing, acknowledgement, and remorseful atonement are comparatively common in the twenty-first century.[7] Yet VCU's handling of the remains found in the East Marshall Street Well sets it apart

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[6] My thinking here is informed by Alys Eve Weinbaum's conceptualization of the surrogacy/slavery nexus, which I discuss in greater depth later in the chapter. Alys Eve Weinbaum, *The Afterlife of Reproductive Slavery: Biocapitalism and Black Feminism's Philosophy of History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

[7] The increasing commonality of unearthing human remains offers material evidence of the dehumanizing violence of slavery as well as settler colonialism. At U.S. universities in the past two decades, similar discoveries have been made and well-documented by campus faculty, student newspapers, and campus working groups at the University of Alabama (UA), the University of Georgia (UGA), and the University of Virginia (UVA). Furthermore, Harvard University's report on "Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery" describes in detail how, in the nineteenth century, "Harvard had begun to amass human anatomical specimens, including the bodies of enslaved people, that would, in the hands of the University's prominent scientific authorities, become central to the promotion of so-called race science at Harvard and other American institutions." This academic knowledge was deployed to strengthen claims regarding racial differences and to bolster race-based exclusion and segregation. "Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery" (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, April 2022), 8, https://legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/report/introduction-and-findings.

from many other cases. The discarded remains found under the Kontos Building were unquestionably connected to the production and inheritance of academic (and specifically medical and anatomical) knowledge. Furthermore, VCU's decision to convene a council made up of community members and to locate the responsibility of shepherding the (re)designation of personhood to this "surrogate family" offers unique inroads to examining how reckoning might bring universities and communities into new modes of relation. Both the language and the legacy of surrogacy are haunted by undertones of property and ownership that extend back to slavery.[8] Heeding this history further complicates the labor conducted by the body of VCU's council. The rhetoric of family and surrogacy serves as an ongoing reminder of the institutional authorization shaping the parameters and perimeters of redress, encompassing the family council's efforts, and helping to influence (and to ensure) the university's future.

In Chapter 1 I showed how Georgetown University articulated descent and approached redress according to genetics and genealogy and by reworking entrenched university practices. VCU's efforts similarly attended to the relationship between family and university. However, unlike Georgetown, the case at VCU highlighted the intimate interrelation of ancestry and locale, and the ways in which family inheritance is entangled with the land and logics of dehumanization that undergird the university. I examine how reckoning with VCU's legacy of slavery implicated the communities in close proximity to its institutional grounds and stretching across generations. By probing this

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Beyond U.S. universities, the federal government is contending with remains found at the sites of former "Indian Boarding Schools," educational sites that were part of the violent project of U.S. settler colonialism and assimilation. See Moriah Balingit, "Investigation Finds Burial Sites at 53 Federal Indian Boarding Schools," *Washington Post*, May 12, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/05/12/federal-indian-boarding-schools-remains/.

[8] Anita L. Allen's work offers a useful entry point for understanding the legal implications of this history. Anita L Allen, "The Black Surrogate Mother," *Harvard BlackLetter Journal* 8 (1991): 17–31; Anita L Allen, "Surrogacy, Slavery, and the Ownership of Life," *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 13, no. 1 (1990): 139–49.

divergent focus on lineage according to terrain and proximity as opposed to genealogies and DNA, I explicate the ways in which divergent forms of labor underpin the contemporary university. Without lionizing one approach to reckoning and repudiating the other, this chapter introduces a new perspective from which to conceive of the rhetoric of university redress and the ways in which rhetorics of descent and lineage manifest and mature.

Grounding

While universities across the United States are reflecting on and attempting to address their relationships to the transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery, such efforts are particularly pronounced in Virginia. In 2021, VCU was one of five public universities named in Virginia's Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program.[9] This state legislation serves as a means of "reckoning with the history of the Commonwealth, addressing the long legacy of slavery in the Commonwealth, and acknowledging that the foundational success of several public institutions of higher education was based on the labor of enslaved individuals."[10] The new bill requires that five universities—the University of Virginia, Longwood University, the Virginia Military Institute, the College of William and Mary, and VCU—identify and memorialize, "to the extent possible, all enslaved individuals who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property."[11] These institutions are also tasked with developing and extending "tangible

[9] Colleen Grablick, "VA Law Will Require Universities to Create Scholarships for Descendants of Slaves," *NPR*, May 6, 2021, https://www.npr.org/local/305/2021/05/06/993878297/v-a-law-will-require-universities-to-create-scholarships-for-descendants-of-slaves; Lisa O'Malley, "As Virginia Colleges Begin Restitution Plans for Slavery, Widespread Reparations Remain in Question," *Insight into Diversity*, August 17, 2021, https://www.insightintodiversity.com/as-virginia-colleges-begin-restitution-plans-for-slavery-widespread-reparations-remain-in-question/.

[10] David A. Reid, "Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program," Pub. L. No. HB 1980, § 23.1-615.1 (2021), https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+ful+CHAP0442.

[11] Reid, "Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program." Each of these

benefits" to "individuals or specific communities with a demonstrated historic connection to slavery that will empower families to be lifted out of the cycle of poverty."[12] Though the five universities vary in size, scale, and mission, all were founded prior to the Civil War, flourishing alongside chattel slavery and then during Jim Crow segregation.[13]

For scholars, the historic ties between slavery and U.S. universities brought under the microscope by the Virginia bill are not groundbreaking. Indeed, as Leslie M. Harris, James T. Campbell, and Alfred L. Brophy put it, this "relationship [has been] hiding in plain sight for the better part of two centuries."[14] However, the way in which this legislation relies on the perimeters of "institutionally controlled grounds and property" to carve out, first, the enslaved labor that requires acknowledgment and, next, the terms and timetable of this present-day reckoning, should give one pause. According to this law, VCU and the four other universities named can cease operating the program once they've matched "a period equal in length to the period during which the institution

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institutions is a member of the USS consortium, which signifies a willing acknowledgment of these facts and demonstrates a desire to address this past at present. Indeed, all five were collaborative actors in the "new consortium of 12 colleges and universities in Virginia" that first met in 2015 and that later became USS, while UVA currently houses the USS headquarters on its campus."Virginia Colleges and Universities Join Together to Discuss Their Shared Historical Legacies," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, August 11, 2015, https://www.jbhe.com/2015/08/virginia-colleges-and-universities-join-together-to-discuss-their-shared-historical-legacies/; Jahd Khalil, "Universities, the Enslaved, and Repairing Damage," *WVTF*, accessed May 28, 2021, https://www.wvtf.org/post/universities-enslaved-and-repairing-damage.

[12] Reid, "Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program." As of spring 2023, VCU launched Project Gabriel, its program in connection to VA HB1980. The project is meant to "report, reconcile and heal the wounds caused by VCU's historic ties to the institution of slavery." "Project Gabriel: President's Special Commission on Slavery and Justice," Virginia Commonwealth University, accessed April 12, 2023, https://projectgabriel.vcu.edu/.

[13] Of these five, the College of William and Mary was founded during the transatlantic slave trade, and it is the second oldest postsecondary institution in the nation. While the remaining four universities were founded after the transatlantic slave trade's official end in 1808, chattel slavery was still prominently practiced. According to the institutional histories listed on their respective websites, the College of William and Mary was founded in 1693, while over a century later, UVA was founded in 1819, VCU in 1838, and both the Virginia Military Institute and Longwood University in 1839.

[14] Leslie M. Harris, James T. Campbell, and Alfred L. Brophy, eds., *Slavery and the University: Histories and Legacies* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 4.

used enslaved individuals to support the institution."[15] Yet, as the human remains found in the East Marshall Street Well begin to signal, the breadth of material and embodied nonconsensual labor "supporting" U.S. universities throughout and in the wake of slavery exceeds the temporal strictures suggested by this bill. By prominently foregrounding the work that (manually) took place *on* university grounds and property while suggesting that such labor might be temporally confined or quantified, this legislation risks eclipsing the extent to which free and enslaved Africans and African Americans were violently forced to labor for the university, both in life and after death. Furthermore, the bill begins to curb the depth of slavery's harms, its everlasting reverberations, and, important for this discussion, its requisite redress.[16]

The postmortem labor signaled by the discovery of VCU's East Marshall Street Well slips between the rhetorical cracks of the Enslaved Ancestors Program's articulation of labor; however, it continues to support the bodies of knowledge that undergird medical schools and universities more broadly. As Joseph Jones, Family Representative Council chairperson and anthropology professor at the College of William and Mary, pointed out, "these were people who we know were enslaved, who built this city, who built MCV and whose bodies upon which medical sciences now rest."[17] Jones

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[15] Aside from matching the length of time that the university relied on enslaved labor, institutions may alternately cease offering their new programming once "scholarships have been awarded to a number of recipients equal to 100 percent of the population of enslaved individuals identified pursuant to subsection B who labored on former and current institutionally controlled grounds and property, whichever occurs first." Reid, "Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program."

[16] While discussing drafts of Virginia's HB 1980, education and ethnic studies scholar Vineeta Singh notes that "Rather than turning a critical eye inwards on labor conditions on campus or addressing how universities' real estate and fixed capital investments impact adjoining neighborhoods, both bills look outwards from the institution to compensate Black Virginians outside the institution for the harm done in the past." The questions that Singh begins to ask in this article—"To whom does the university owe justice? How much? How do we measure and reconcile the university's debts to Black Americans?"—resonate with my own work. Vineeta Singh, "Inclusion or Acquisition? Learning about Justice, Education, and Property from the Morrill Land-Grant Acts," *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 43, no. 5 (2021): 420.

[17] Brian McNeill, "A Journey Home," *Exposure: Virginia Commonwealth University*, November 26, 2019,

makes clear that Black bodies—beyond literally building and upkeeping "institutionally controlled grounds and property"—figuratively "built" the university by fueling medical training, professionalization, and accreditation.[18] Such labor laid the foundation for the university and as such continues inextricably to support the (re)production of academic knowledge.

Indeed, the remains found in the East Marshall Street Well have yet to be laid to rest and continue to contribute to academic knowledge and pedagogical practice, albeit under decidedly different circumstances. In 2019, as the remains were relocated from the Smithsonian back to Richmond, graduate students in forensic sciences and anthropology from VCU and the College of William and Mary were intimately involved in inventorying and accounting for the bones. According to Jones, such practice is common to ensure that "the chain of custody is complete. And we wanted to make sure that students had an opportunity to see the process as it should play out."[19] Three years later, in January 2022, following dictates of the Family Representative Council, the remains were brought to the Department of Forensic Science at VCU for further research and DNA and microbial analysis. Graduate students at VCU are engaged in this examination alongside faculty, learning more about these individuals while also learning more about their prospective academic field and acquiring the skills to succeed in it.[20] Thus, until they are reinterred in a final resting place,

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https://vcu.exposure.co/a-journey-home.

[18] Many have detailed the ways in which enslaved labor contributed to the literal and figurative building of U.S. universities. For example, historian Craig Steven Wilder's formative work tracks the creation and development of the first institutions of higher education in the United States alongside both slavery and settler colonialism. Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013). Additionally, universities are also undertaking the work of outlining how their historical relationships to slavery unfolded on their specific campuses. The President's Commission on Slavery and the University at the University of Virginia compiled a thorough report that includes extensive details pertaining to the daily violence experienced by enslaved people on UVA's campus and at the hands of students in particular. "President's Commission on Slavery and the University: Report to President Teresa A. Sullivan" (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, July 2018).

[19] McNeill, "A Journey Home."

[20] Eric Kolenich, "Hundreds of Human Bones Were Found in a Richmond Well. Now VCU Hopes

the remains continue to be tasked with the role of critical object for analysis and teaching tool.

By looking at this case at VCU and narrowing my focus to the work of the family council, I am concerned with making visible the forms of labor that help to (re)produce the university today. More specifically, I aim to raise new kinds of questions about the relationships between university labor of past and present, and the reproductive labor of twenty-first-century university redress and university subsistence. However, such inquiry cannot and should not minimize the deep importance of the council's work to its immediate members, to communities residing throughout Richmond, and to other people beyond the city's bounds. Saidiya Hartman's insights are particularly apt in explaining how, regardless of the ways in which the council functioned for VCU, the "forms of care, intimacy, and sustenance exploited by racial capitalism, most importantly, are not reducible to or exhausted by it."[21] My interest is in this very unease in institutionally bound reproductive labor: the simultaneous presence of both tender care and proprietorship that permeate university redress in the twenty-first century.

Moving Forward

In the following pages, I unearth and analyze the forms of labor that contribute to the ongoing (re)production of the university yet circumvent the boundaries established by Virginia's new legislation. According to the bill, the Enslaved Ancestors Program is expressly intended to offer a "tangible benefit . . . for individuals or specific communities with a demonstrated historic connection to slavery."[22] When the language is read literally, there is not a community in the United

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to Learn Their Origins," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 3, 2022, https://richmond.com/news/local/education/hundreds-of-human-bones-were-found-in-a-richmond-well-now-vcu-hopes-to-learn/article_af9ec45f-ac5b-5467-95e5-c51f5c128769.html.

[21] Saidiya Hartman, "The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women's Labors," *Souls* 18, no. 1 (March 14, 2016): 171.

[22] Reid, "Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship and Memorial Program."

States that falls beyond the bounds of such historic connections. Yet this statement carries an implicit focus on Black "individuals or specific communities" and gestures toward entrenched intergenerational systems without directly calling attention to anti-Black sentiment embedded in these racist structures. In fact, explicit articulations of race were often absent from the discourse that surrounded VCU's Family Representative Council as well. Part of my aim in this chapter is to untangle such silences and understand how, why, and what may be accomplished by eschewing direct references to race amid discussions of reckoning. What might such absences reveal regarding intended audiences, implicit assumptions, and eventual aims?

Finally, while tracing the genealogies of labor that undergird contemporary university redress at VCU, I use the term "reckoning" with frequency and with caution. Contemporary discourses across institutions, including and beyond the university, are inundated with talk of reckoning; it has become a significant part of the zeitgeist of recent years as institutions, organizations, and corporations alike are compelled to acknowledge deeply ingrained systemic and structural racism. As such, marking the ease with which institutions (and individuals and legislation) traffic in the language of reckoning and noting how rhetorical deployments of reckoning can (and do) replace the labor of redress is important. Yet all words associated with institutional interrogations and repair of the past—including and beyond atonement, address, acknowledgment, repentance, and recognition—carry fraught histories, and all descriptors imperfectly capture these efforts. Like the Virginia bill, the Family Representative Council uses the term reckoning, along with redress, in its final report and recommendations to VCU. Thus, I rely on reckoning and redress to remain consistent with the language of the Enslaved Ancestors Program and of the council as I disentangle the labor on university grounds and property.

Unearthing the Remains of VCU's History and the Roots of Medical Racism

From the moment that the remains were found in 1994, descriptions of the East Marshall Street Well captured the violent treatment of the Black bodies that literally and figuratively undergirded the Kontos Building and the broader medical sciences. Because of the layers of earthen clay and mud, and because of the circular brick structure of the well that held them, the bodily remains found during the construction of the building were notably well preserved. Media coverage, which began in 1994 but only burgeoned in the 2010s, linguistically conveys the dehumanizing conditions that surrounded the well's use and its discovery.

Much of the "waste" found in the well (alternately referred to in public media as a "sink" or the expressly violent "limb pit") consisted of dismembered corpses that were "dumped" after serving as demonstration materials and pedagogical devices for anatomy dissection "material" and medical student "practice."[23] Firsthand accounts of this initial scene convey remarkably gruesome imagery of "human remains" and describe parts of bodies evidently prodded, scraped, and lacerated. One article in a 1994 edition of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, which covered the events, is particularly horrific. It describes in detail "a jaw in which an abscess was treated by sawing out several inches of chin," bodies that "may have been killed with fireplace pokers, and some of the mangled limbs may have been run over by carriages," skulls that "still have sprigs of hair," and the presence of "intestinal flesh" that "will be tested for parasite eggs."[24] L. Daniel Mouer, the founder of VCU's Archaeological Research Center, recalled these findings and the rushed project of removal as "a grisly scene, to tell you the truth. I don't think any of us who were down there that day will forget

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[23] Tammie Smith, "Human Bones Found in a Well at VCU Reveal the Mixed Legacy of Race and Medical Progress," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, February 14, 2015, accessed March 21, 2022, https://richmond.com/news/local/human-bones-found-in-a-well-at-vcu-reveal-the-mixed-legacy-of-race-and/article_e4d44069-ff99-561d-906e-156de4b0491b.html; McNeill, "A Journey Home."
[24] Mike Allen, "Well-Preserved Find at MCV: Bones Give Clues to 1800s Practices," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 11, 1994, Access World News – Historical and Current.

it."[25] From the moment that Mouer and colleagues assessed the remains, it was evident that they were of human bodies.

Despite immediate evidence of human skeletal bones, VCU opted to continue construction on the Kontos Building and to avoid digging any further into the historic circumstances beneath it. The university also neglected to investigate further the likely presence of additional remains, buried deeper than those already discovered.[26] Instead, VCU gave researchers a firm, days-long deadline for removing as much as possible before a "backhoe plowed into the earth, pulling up the bones and dirt."[27] The remainder was cemented in place. The university's actions effectively sealed off any further discourse pertaining to the well; according to a 2021 *Times-Dispatch* article, "VCU largely forgot about the remains. The university never filed a report with the Virginia Department of

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[25] Tina Griego, "Into the Light," *Richmond Magazine*, September 8, 2015, https://richmondmagazine.com/api/content/ebcbcf88-5658-11e5-8b3e-22000b078648/.

[26] Assessing the findings in the well and the decision to cover over rather than continue removing remains, Mouer stated in 1994, "It would've meant putting on scuba gear and going down a well full of dead bodies. . . . We'll leave that for archaeologists in two or three hundred years." Eric Kolenich, "VCU Building Will Tell the Story of Centuries-Old Human Remains Found in 1994 at the Bottom of a Well," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, September 29, 2021, Second edition, sec. Main. Furthermore, a thorough report on the history of the East Marshall Street Well as part of the Smithsonian's investigation, Jodi Koste, Interim Department Head and University Archivist and Associate Professor at Special Collections and Archives at VCU, notes that there is at least one other well in the vicinity of the Kontos Building and Academy Square. Koste writes that "Workers did uncover a large refuse well under the basement of the Egyptian Building during a major structural renovation of the college's oldest facility in 1939. A long-serving college administrator confirmed that this well had once been used to dispose of cadavers and other anatomical specimens in the late 19th and early 20th centuries." Jodi Koste, "Artifacts and Commingled Skeletal Remains from a Well on the Medical College of Virginia Campus: Anatomical and Surgical Training in Nineteenth-Century Richmond," Virginia Commonwealth University, *Office of the President Documents*, June 18, 2012, 15, https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/arch001/2.

[27] Eric Kolenich, "Hundreds of Human Bones Were Found in a Richmond Well. Now VCU Hopes to Learn Their Origins," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, April 3, 2022, https://richmond.com/news/local/education/hundreds-of-human-bones-were-found-in-a-richmond-well-now-vcu-hopes-to-learn/article_af9ec45f-ac5b-5467-95e5-c51f5c128769.html. As one article describes the events, the "untenured university archaeologists were only given a weekend to recover what they could from the 'sink fill' before construction continued without pause for a section 106 review." Sarah King, "Mapping the Diaspora," *Richmond Magazine*, February 25, 2019, https://richmondmagazine.com/api/content/df9bac36-3932-11e9-8c73-120e7ad5cf50/.

Historic Resources, as it agreed to, and dedicated the building without mentioning the well."[28] The remains that were removed were transferred out of Richmond and to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, for further forensic analysis, where they lay under-acknowledged and under the Smithsonian's care for over two decades.[29]

Attention to the remains found in the well resurged in the 2010s, due largely to the work of VCU professor Shawn Utsey and his 2011 documentary film, *Until the Well Runs Dry: Medicine and the Exploitation of Black Bodies*. The documentary laid bare the historic practice of grave robbing and the imbrication of medical training and cadaver trade, which, as Daina Ramey Berry writes, involved "the underground disposal and traffic in dead bodies, of which African Americans occupied a disproportionate majority."[30] Forensic research at the Smithsonian, featured in Utsey's film, revealed that most of the bodies found in the well were of African and African American people, presumably living in the Richmond area in the early to mid-nineteenth century and including both free and enslaved individuals.[31] These bodies were likely stolen from their graves and used without consent

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[28] Kolenich, "VCU Building Will Tell the Story of Centuries-Old Human Remains."

[29] A comprehensive report conducted by forensic anthropologists at the Smithsonian details each and every one of the over four hundred human bones found, along with the bits of cloth, animal bones, pieces of china, nails, and doorknobs, and various medical instruments. Based on the bones recovered from the well and examined at the Smithsonian, analysts estimate that at least forty-four adults and nine children were discarded in the well, with many of the skeletons incomplete. Douglas Owsley and Karin Bruwelheide, "Artifacts and Commingled Skeletal Remains from a Well on the Medical College of Virginia Campus: Human Skeletal Remains from Archaeological Site 44HE814," Virginia Commonwealth University, *Office of the President Documents*, June 18, 2012, https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/arch001/4; Merry Outlaw, "Artifacts and Commingled Skeletal Remains from a Well on the Medical College of Virginia Campus: Artifact Collection from Archaeological Site 44HE814," Virginia Commonwealth University, *Office of the President Documents*, June 18, 2012, https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/arch001/3; Kolenich, "Hundreds of Human Bones Were Found in a Richmond Well."

[30] Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2017), 8.

[31] The family council's final report cites Jodi Koste's report, discussed in the following section of this chapter, to specify that the well was used between 1848 and 1860. The council's report notes, "Archival records further specify the well's use as a 'sink' for disposal of 'medical waste,' including human remains, from as early as 1848 until 1860 when MCV became a state institution" (Koste,

by what is now VCU's medical school for anatomical dissection and practice before being discarded in the nearby sink.[32]

The East Marshall Street Well is estimated to have been erected decades before the Civil War. While the property of the well belonged to VCU at the time of its discovery in the early 1990s, these grounds have passed through the governance of various institutional parties across time. Initial programs of medical professionalization and training were established on-site in 1838 as Hampden-Sydney College's Department of Medicine. In 1854, this establishment became the independent Medical College of Virginia, which in 1968 merged with the Richmond Professional Institute to become Virginia Commonwealth University.[33] Based on the corporeal fragments and medical devices found, the well was evidently used by practitioners at the nearby medical school as a place to unceremoniously discard that which was deemed "waste."[34] Forensic analysis revealed that the well was likely used episodically, with the majority of its "fill generated during the first few years of operation of the nearby Egyptian Building, which was completed in 1845."[35] The Egyptian Building,

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"Artifacts and Commingled Skeletal Remains," 2012). VCU East Marshall Street Well and Family Representative Council, "Recommendations for Research, Memorialization and Interment of the East Marshall Street Well Ancestral Remains" (Richmond: Virginia Commonwealth University, August 21, 2018): 8.

[32] It's worth noting that there are some discrepancies between the documentary and the facts of this case. For example, the documentary states that the remains were discovered in 1996 when they were actually discovered in 1994.

[33] Information regarding VCU's history can be found on the university's official website at "History: VCU School of Medicine," accessed July 15, 2022, https://medschool.vcu.edu/about/history/; "Mission and History: Virginia Commonwealth University," Virginia Commonwealth University, accessed July 15, 2022, https://www.vcu.edu/about-vcu/mission-and-history/.

[34] Sandy Hausman, "Surrogate Ancestors to Remains of Slaves," *Radio IQ, WVTF*, August 7, 2015, https://www.wvtf.org/richmond-confronts-past-present/2015-08-07/surrogate-ancestors-to-remains-of-slaves.

[35] According to one of the Smithsonian's forensics reports drafted by Merry Outlaw, curator at Jamestown Rediscovery, "Near the well, on the northeast corner of College and Marshall Streets, the Egyptian Building was built to house the Medical Department of Hampden-Sydney College established in 1838. One of the oldest medical education edifices in the South, the Egyptian Building was completed in 1845. It housed a dissecting room, lecture rooms, an infirmary, and patient beds. The well became a repository for medical waste from the medical college around this time based on

so named only in the twentieth century because of the building's Egyptian revival architectural style, initially housed lecture halls and a dissecting room for Hampden-Sydney's medical department.[36]

While those who resided in Richmond during the well's use have long since passed, Utsey's film foregrounds the local lore of body snatching that persisted in the area's Black communities

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dateable artifacts." Merry Outlaw, "Artifacts and Commingled Skeletal Remains from a Well on the Medical College of Virginia Campus: Artifact Collection from Archaeological Site 44HE814," Virginia Commonwealth University, *Office of the President Documents*, June 18, 2012, 32, 28, https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/arch001/3. The exact dates of when the well was first used and finally sealed are unclear. However, according to Jodi Koste's archival research, use of the well seems to coincide with the construction of the Egyptian Building. There is a possibility that the well known today as the East Marshall Street Well was sealed as early as 1860; however, VCU (then MCV) continued to harvest cadavers for dissection from African burial grounds for decades after 1860. Jodi Koste, "Artifacts and Commingled Skeletal Remains from a Well on the Medical College of Virginia Campus: Anatomical and Surgical Training in Nineteenth-Century Richmond," Virginia Commonwealth University, *Office of the President Documents*, June 18, 2012, https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/arch001/2. Additionally, though Outlaw notes the building's completion as 1845, Koste's research suggests otherwise. Though the structure was first used in 1844, the building was not completed until 1846 according to Koste. The commemorative plaque placed outside of the building in 2006 details this timeline, as well as its naming as the Egyptian Building in 1927. Mike Porter, "VCU's Egyptian Building Commemorated with Historic Marker," *VCU News* (blog), May 1, 2006, https://www.news.vcu.edu/article/VCUs_Egyptian_Building_commemorated_with_historic_marker.

[36] Koste points out how and why the Medical Department of Hampden-Sydney College (later the Medical College of Virginia and, later still, VCU) was intentionally situated in Richmond. The 1838 opening of the institution was spearheaded by a medical practitioner who had previously taught at the University of Virginia yet relocated because of Charlottesville's dearth of cadavers for dissection (Koste, "Artifacts and Commingled Skeletal Remains," 5). The knowledge gained by (white male) students through the instructional use of cadavers was at a premium in the early nineteenth century and used by medical schools to jockey for prestige and higher student enrollments (6). Due to Richmond's southern location, its centrality in the chattel slave trade, and its abundance of jobs requiring grueling physical labor, as well as its temperate climate, the city served as an ideal site for securing corpses or instructional "material" (6). As faculty of the Medical Department at the time noted, "from the peculiarity of our institutions, materials for dissection can be obtained in abundance, and we believe are not surpassed if equaled by any city in our country" (7). Teaching physicians could and did illegally contract with grave robbers to ensure they secured ample examples for their classes (11), with institutions like the Medical Department and the University of Virginia cooperating in order to avoid "rivalry" and ensure their ability to procure the corpses required for instruction. While Koste's report includes ample information beyond the scope of this chapter, it's interesting to note that the "burden of acquiring bodies for dissecting" (an illegal endeavor at the time) was left up to faculty, thus making the "chair or professorship of anatomy one of the more difficult faculty roles" (9).

throughout the twentieth century. By tracing these tales (as told throughout the documentary by longtime residents) back through the history of medical training, anatomy classes, dissection practices, and the cadaver trade of the nineteenth century, the film deftly demonstrates the entwinement and paradoxes of scientific racism that grounded the Medical College of Virginia, VCU, and U.S. universities more generally.[37] The historic images featured throughout the documentary are deeply disturbing, displaying white men crouched over bare, often mutilated Black corpses splayed out on examination tables. The East Marshall Street Well signals what Jennifer C. Nash refers to as the widespread and "decidedly not-new condition" of "medical racism."[38]

As the Richmond community learned more about the well, people displayed "anger, sorrow and determination . . . as the university seeks to right past wrongs with an African-American community that has a deep skepticism of powerful white institutions in general, and VCU in particular."[39] Such entrenched distrust is well earned. In her formative work on reproductive justice, Dorothy Roberts draws direct connections between the contemporary denial of reproductive rights for Black women

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[37] As Utsey's documentary puts it and explicitly details, "Sacrificing black bodies for the higher aims of science" came to be the norm. Shawn Utsey, *Until the Well Runs Dry: Medicine and the Exploitation of Black Bodies*, DVD (Richmond, VA: Burn Baby Burn Productions, 2011). In her report on the well, Koste also details stories and rumors surrounding the medical school, beginning in the nineteenth century. In the mid-nineteenth century, the renamed Medical College of Virginia operated as the primary location for student clinical instruction. Though open to the Richmond public, the college was "frequently patronized by itinerant workers, owners who sought treatment for their slaves, free Blacks, and immigrants" (Koste, "Artifacts and Commingled Skeletal Remains," 13). Koste highlights one editorial that appeared in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* that notes how "many of the negroes laboring in Richmond, are, for the want of room and nurses, sent to the Infirmary of the Medical College, when they are taken sick. Among them prevails a superstition that when they enter the Infirmary they never come out alive" (13). Koste's research explicates the "superstitions" entangled with historical fact that evolved over time and appeared in Utsey's documentary as local lore and familial warnings. These entangled and intergenerational geographies of violence constituted the history of the greater Richmond community; it necessitated the inclusion of people living with this history in the process of reckoning at and with the well.

[38] Jennifer C. Nash, *Birthing Black Mothers* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 3.

[39] Griego, "Into the Light."

and scientific racism.[40] Other writers further note that racism undergirds broader U.S. health care histories and continues to structure who receives medical attention, when, and to what extent.[41] Medical ethicist Harriet A. Washington points to the forcible and coercive use of Black bodies for medical experimentation in the not-so-distant past, connecting this history to the ongoing and strategic denial of care to Black individuals today.[42] More recently, the COVID pandemic has further codified the ways in which Black communities are disproportionately vulnerable to inadequate health care and attention.[43]

The East Marshall Street Well thus held the material remnants of a violent past that was also carried by generations of Black and African American community members throughout the greater Richmond metropolitan area. Locals interviewed for Utsey's documentary described the ways in

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[40] Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 9. Roberts's work is formative in scholarly and public discussions regarding Black women and reproductive (in)justice.

[41] For more on public discussions of intergenerational racial injustices in U.S. health and medicine, see Dayna Bowen Matthew, *Just Health: Treating Structural Racism to Heal America* (New York: New York University Press, 2022); and Dayna Bowen Matthew, *Just Medicine: A Cure for Racial Inequality in American Health Care* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

[42] Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Anchor, 2006). In the introduction to her book, Washington describes (and debunks) a painted depiction of James Marion Sims's surgical work. Sims conducted horrific experiments on enslaved women throughout the mid-nineteenth century and, today, is heralded as a founder of gynecology. Washington's discussion brings to mind Patricia Williams's description of contemporary legal cases related to coerced sterilization that demonstrate the continuum of medical injustices faced by Black women and other women of color. Patricia J. Williams, "On Being the Object of Property," *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988): 7. Both Washington and Williams describe the ways in which white supremacy structures institutions and shapes the individuals operating within them.

[43] As Barnor Hesse and Debra Thompson write, "2020 as the year of the two pandemics: COVID-19 and antiblackness." They go on to note specific statistics, like "Early demographic data from April 2020 revealed that Black Americans were infected with and dying from coronavirus at disproportionate rates across the country. In Chicago, for example, Black residents were dying at six times the rate of their white counterparts." Barnor Hesse and Debra Thompson, "Introduction: Antiblackness—Dispatches from Black Political Thought," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 121, no. 3 (July 1, 2022): 452, 455. For more about the disproportionate effects of COVID, see Kalemba Kizito and Andrew Carter, "Denied Access: COVID-19, the Epidermal Border and Black Health Disparities," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 19, no. 2 (April 2022): 127–33.

which this past shaped their continued presence in the city, the inherited tales of grave robbing and body snatching, and the necessity of learning to navigate certain streets with cautious care at the behest of more knowledgable parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.[44] According to the stories passed down from one generation of Black Richmonders to the next, the remains may also have included the bodies of murdered Black locals who had been "snatched for the dissection room" after walking too near the grounds of the medical campus in the middle of the night.[45] The history of the well and the harms that it represented thus belonged not only to the university but also to those living near VCU's campus and among its medical buildings, nestled in downtown Richmond.

In plainly presenting these grisly facts alongside the legacy of medical racism, Utsey's work urged the community and the university, as he phrased it, to "confront our skeletons head-on—literally in this case."[46] In 2013, the university established the East Marshall Street Well Project, an institutional initiative to involve the local community in reckoning with the well and "emphasizing the dignity and respect that should be accorded to these human remains."[47] Through the project, the university

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[44] Utsey, *Until the Well Runs Dry*.

[45] According to Ryan Smith, a historian at VCU, "As a historian, I tend to favor the documents, and the actual physical artifacts a little bit more, but I heard a good bit about what people still remembered or were told about the 19th century and things that happened around MVC—and specifically people being snatched off the streets and killed to being brought in to be used as cadavers, and I wasn't sure whether those were all kind of folklore that died out, but it was obviously still on people's minds today in a way that I hadn't anticipated." Sandy Hausman, "Surrogate Ancestors to Remains of Slaves," *Radio IQ, WVTF*, August 7, 2015, https://www.wvtf.org/richmond-confronts-past-present/2015-08-07/surrogate-ancestors-to-remains-of-slaves; Karin Kapsidelis, "Confronting the Story of Bones Discarded in an Old MCV Well," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 11, 2011, https://richmond.com/news/confronting-the-story-of-bones-discarded-in-an-old-mcv-well/article_4a784033-ca30-5a30-be4d-80c7fd9a3783.html; Tina Griego, "A Reckoning," *Richmond Magazine*, June 5, 2016, https://richmondmagazine.com/api/content/785af66e-2a97-11e6-9b90-0a2c6093033d/.

[46] Kapsidelis, "Confronting the Story of Bones."

[47] "About: East Marshall Street Well Project," Virginia Commonwealth University, East Marshall Street Well Project, accessed March 17, 2022, https://emsw.vcu.edu/about/. The East Marshall Street Well is situated in an area of Richmond referred to as Academy Square.

determined that the work of defining the contours of "dignity and respect" required the directives and contributions of family.

Rhetorics of Familial Responsibility and Claiming Relation to the Remains

In 2013, VCU president Michael Rao identified an East Marshall Street Well Project planning committee to "help us to ensure that we do the right thing for human beings that lived tragic lives." According to Rao, "Good universities confront these issues. You [planning committee members] will help us determine what is the right way for us to have these conversations and what is the best way for us to move forward."[48] This committee—which included university faculty and administrators, elected officials, local faith leaders, and nonprofit employees, along with support from VCU staff and external consultants—suggested "identify[ing] people in the community who might serve as stand-in ancestors *[sic]* to help plan the memorial services." According to media coverage of the planning committee's proposal, "Much the way families come together to plan a loved one's funeral, there would be a core group selected to make arrangements."[49] Because of extensive corporeal corrosion, dearth of paper documentation, and lack of dedicated resources, "the nature of the discovery of these human remains [did] not provide a clear group of descendants to speak on their behalf."[50] Thus, VCU would need people to "stand in" as descendants. These people, first referred to as a steering committee and later named the Family Representative Council, would take on the responsibility of caring for the remains and conceiving of how the university might adequately impart "dignity and respect."

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[48] Mike Porter, "Community-Campus Committee Will Work to Memorialize Human Remains Uncovered in 1990s Construction Project," *VCU News*, September 26, 2013, https://news.vcu.edu/article/communitycampus_committee_will_work_to_memorialize_human_remains.
[49] Smith, "Human Bones Found in a Well at VCU."
[50] "About: East Marshall Street Well Project."

VCU's approach of identifying stand-in family followed the precedent set by the African Burial Ground in New York City in the 1990s and early 2000s, wherein stakeholders from the city and the community collaborated to respectfully recognize and reinter the dead. Michael Blakey, a professor of anthropology at the College of William and Mary, who directed research for the burial ground project in New York and served as one of the consultants for the VCU planning committee, affirmed this strategy to reckon with the remains. Blakey noted that the "right of descendants, symbolic or otherwise, to determine the disposition of their ancestors is a matter of ethical science."[51] He added, "This is about the right of human beings to be human beings, because this is what we do: We memorialize our dead. . . . It is the definitive aspect of our species."[52] However, before memorializing the deceased and affirming this human right, VCU needed to restore humanity to these remains. This personhood was intimately linked to reconceiving of the remains as belonging to a family and, further, a family that was once and could still be part of the greater Richmond community.

In November 2014, the East Marshall Street Well Project's planning committee invited the greater Richmond community to learn about the well, the remains, and VCU's plans for moving forward. During these ceremonial events, the Reverend Dr. J. Elisha Burke, a member of the planning committee, emphasized the intergenerational enmeshment of community and university, past and present, using the image of family. Throughout his remarks, he addressed the violent events that necessitated their gathering and implicated that evening's attendees in the work that needed to be done to reckon with this horrific history. He stated in reference to the remains found in the well,

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[51] Griego, "Into the Light." Regarding science, Griego also quoted Blakey, who added that "humans are also curious and interested in scientific study, Blakey says, and the experience of the African Burial Ground proved 'that if we rely on the descendant community to determine what it thinks is important, research or not, it is possible to have both.'"

[52] Griego, "Into the Light."

"We are called to honor the memory of people whose names we don't know, but they are not strangers to us. They are us. We do know that they had families all those years ago. We do know that someone cared for them. We don't know if their descendants are now our neighbors, so we stand in as their children. We will be their impassioned advocates and their substitutionary voice. We are honored to do so."[53] Burke's reliance on the symbol of family imbued the labor of advocating for the remains on behalf of absent descendants with an air of intimacy and of onus. Further, the image of family facilitated empathy across time, both in relation to these people and their imagined loved ones.

Ongoing references to family saturated the conception of the East Marshall Street Well Project and broader discourse surrounding the remains. In her examination of family as symbol and ideology, Patricia Hill Collins points out that notions of such relation often carry a sense of debt, with individuals "feel[ing] that they 'owe' something to, and are responsible for, members of their families."[54] Through the use of "we," "us," and "our," Burke's statements remained open to varied interpretations. He may have been referencing his role as a member of the planning committee and interpellating the other members. Perhaps he intended to gesture toward his place among those living in the Richmond area, the Black and African American community of Richmond, or even the greater African diaspora. Regardless, Burke's address underscored an unquestionable obligation to the remains. Rather than blood relations, however, this sense of kinship was rooted in common belonging to place. In the absence of biologically or genetically linked family, relations seemed grounded in "our community" of Richmond. The following spring, VCU and the planning

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[53] East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU East Marshall Street Well Project Open House and Ceremony,* YouTube (Richmond, VA, 2014), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvSiWykktW4.
[54] Patricia Hill Collins, "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation," *Hypatia* 13, no. 3 (1998): 71. While Collins is here focusing on familial bonds according to blood ties, her observations can be applied to the discourse surrounding the East Marshall Street Well Project.

committee initiated a series of Community Consultations on the Well to select people to formally stand in as family. As such, these people assumed the responsibility of carefully tending to the remains and laboring to fulfill the needs and desires of the broader community—their fellow family members—and the university.

Selecting Stand-In Family Members

VCU's four initial community consultations took place on Saturday mornings throughout April and May 2015 in the auxiliary gym of a local middle school. While the program for each consultation varied, they typically included presentations from university faculty, historians, and medical school administrators that helped to flesh out the geographic, social, and institutional circumstances of the well. Additionally, each consultation spotlighted the work of local individuals and organizations to foreground the present Richmond community. The four initial consultations were recorded on video—including all of the presentations as well as commentary from select audience members—and made publicly accessible through the East Marshall Street Well Project website. Ultimately, the consultations underscored the community's importance in providing a form of care and respect that had heretofore been denied to the people whose remains were found in the well. Facilitated by Justice and Sustainability Associates, the same consulting firm that had led the process of (re)interment and memorialization at the African Burial Ground in New York, the consultations educated the community about the institution's history of racial violence in the era of chattel slavery including and beyond the violences demonstrated by the well. These meetings also offered the opportunity for VCU to learn from local community members in attendance about their experiences in Richmond, their desires pertaining to this history, and their hopes for the remains. Finally, the consultations allowed the university to secure the Richmond community's endorsement of the creation of a Family Representative Council. Individuals including and beyond VCU would help to

nominate the people who would formally compose this representative body, thus legitimizing the collaborative process between university and community.

On April 18, 2015, attendees gathered for the first consultation at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, fanning themselves to fend off the impending Virginia summer and listening to the format and goals of the four-part series.[55] All of the consultations were open to the public; as such, attendees presented as visibly diverse in age, gender, and race and included VCU students, other individuals from VCU, and people from throughout the city.[56] Ellen Robertson, councilwoman for Richmond's sixth district and chair of the planning committee, opened the meeting by remarking, "we serve as their family. You're very special, you're very important, and every word that you have to say is very significant." Robertson rhetorically embraced all in attendance as part of an expansive family, and her comments suggested an air of communal intimacy. The subsequent speakers at this first consultation reiterated broad understandings of community as family, a kinship seemingly constituted through shared residence in the greater Richmond area.

While outlining the format of the consultations, facilitator Don Edwards, who had also worked with stakeholders in New York, noted that this process would be one of "learning how to be responsible for one another's lives."[57] Speaking on behalf of the university, Quincy Byrdsong, the

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[55] My summary and analysis of VCU's East Marshall Street Well Project Community Consultations is pieced together through video recordings of each consultation and media coverage of the events. Each consultation was facilitated by Justice and Sustainability Associates' Don Edwards and included presentations from university administrators, faculty, and individuals from community organizations or offices. Additionally, the consultations all included breakout sessions that enabled attendees to discuss pertinent questions and concerns with one another. These sessions were transcribed in real time, and transcriptions were subsequently shared with the entire group. Catherine Komp, "Community Process Guiding Future of 19th Century Remains Found at MCV," *VPM.org*, April 30, 2015, https://vpm.org/news/articles/1991/community-process-guiding-future-of-19th-century-remains-found-at-mcv.

[56] In each of the consultation videos the camera pans around the room, which appears to be an auxiliary gym, providing a glimpse of the attendee demographics and the audience members seated at circular tables, at times in discussion and at other times listening.

[57] VCU East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU Community Consultations on The Well - Part 1,* YouTube

vice president of clinical research administration and compliance with VCU Health, acknowledged VCU's responsibility for how the remains were treated, both in the mid-nineteenth century and in 1994. Byrdsong also elaborated the university's commitment to "honoring the dignity" of these individuals. He pointed out that, while these were "people whose names we don't really know," they were "not strangers to Richmond." Addressing those in attendance, he added, "in fact, they are Richmond. And we do know that they had families, all these years ago; they cared for them and we're not really sure if the descendants of these families are now our neighbors. So, you stand in as their children. You will be the impassioned advocates and substitutionary voices for the people that we are honoring today. . . . The fact that you're here means that you care about this issue and you care about this community and all of its people."[58] By countering the absence of names and personal details with collective roots in Richmond, the comments from Byrdsong unmistakably echoed Burke. For both, an evident connection to place—the fact that the individuals whose bodies were found in the well had possibly resided in Richmond and their families perhaps still resided there—might offer a salve for the anonymity haunting the remains and compelling these consultations. Place would also serve as the basis for the identification of acceptable familial "substitutions."

Speaking on behalf of VCU, presenters like Byrdsong conjured a community connected through a shared history; however, he did so without directly referencing how understandings of this history and its associated and ongoing harms might differ according to racial background and experience. According to Byrdsong, this community would work to "acknowledge this tragedy from our past and move forward to build a better future." In this future they would resemble a "community that is

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(Richmond, VA, 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-a20uk9o6o. Edwards is the CEO and Principal of Justice and Sustainability Associates (JSA), a consulting firm based out of Washington, DC. According to the firm's website, JSA "specializes in designing and implementing large and small group multi-stakeholder agenda setting and decision-making processes." See https://www.jsallc.com/about-us/.

[58] VCU East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU Community Consultations on The Well - Part 1*.

not divided by race, social status, ethnicity or ideas, but one that is unified in the belief that all of us can make a difference when working together for the betterment of humankind."[59] Following Byrdsong, Jim Hare, Director of Survey and Register Division of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, described Virginia's regulations around the recovery of human remains. Hare emphasized the importance of descendant communities in helping to dictate how these remains are handled.[60] He added that VCU "has pledged to seek guidance from the descendant community." With a subtle opening of his arms out toward attendees, he added, "all of us here today." The first consultation laid the foundation for understanding the relationship between community, family, and the remains, underscoring how kinship and community-wide accountability were rooted in the city's grounds.[61]

The subtle gesture toward "all of us" fellow descendants, and the implication of a community bound by place rather than by racial identity, echoed throughout the remainder of the consultations. In the second meeting, Edwards reintroduced the Family Representative Council as the group that would serve as stand-in descendants. This council would operate as the body that "we"—"all of us" at VCU and across the Richmond community—would "empower" to step in following the four consultations, taking over for the entire community and taking on the familial responsibility of guiding the university.[62] Though participation was sparse at the first and second consultations, with

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[59] VCU East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU Community Consultations on The Well - Part 1*.
[60] As Hare put it in an interview later in the morning, the department is responsible for "document[ing] and car[ing] for discovery of human remains legally, for the state." VCU East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU Community Consultations on The Well - Part 1*. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, a permit is required for "the archaeological excavation of human remains." "Permit Required for the Archaeological Excavation of Human Remains," Pub. L. No. 10.1-2305 (1989), https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title10.1/chapter23/section10.1-2305/.
[61] As Hare noted, "Dignity in life and in death is a basic human right." As such, he added, "We look to the descendants and the descendant communities to tell us how best to protect and respect that dignity." VCU East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU Community Consultations on The Well - Part 1*.
[62] VCU East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU Community Consultations on The Well - Part 2*, YouTube (Richmond, VA, 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLJOWux-0b0.

what appeared to be under forty attendees at each and many empty chairs, word clearly spread throughout the city in the following weeks. Many of the previously empty chairs were filled during the third consultation, and by the fourth meeting the crowd had easily doubled in size.

At the third meeting, attendees learned more about the role that VCU intended for the family council, how this body would be chosen, and how the council would relay its findings back to the university. Kevin Allison, professor of psychology and senior executive for special projects at VCU, confirmed that the university would "work to support that group [the council] with any additional information, resources, opportunities to learn that will help them to do their work." Once the council completed its efforts and compiled its findings, "those recommendations would come back to [VCU]" such that the university could take over and "transition to implementation." Following Allison's description of how the council would relate to the university, Edwards reiterated the purpose and conditions of council participation, this "smaller group of people who will take some ownership" over the remains, as family, and take "responsibility" for communicating a "set of steps" to guide VCU.[63] He further elaborated, "In some ways, what we're doing here is trying to, by proxy, make sure that these remains and the people behind the remains, whose remains they are, are not lost to history. . . . the biggest qualification is that you care."[64]

At the end of the fourth gathering, Edwards reminded attendees that "we are proposing to convene a council to serve as family on behalf of these humans whose remains were improperly left in the well in order to decide what is most respectful and dignified for what happens to the remains next. . . . The name of the council says essentially what its work is to do."[65] As a representative family, these individuals would take on the intimate labor of care and take over the responsibility of

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[63] VCU East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU Community Consultations on The Well - Part 3*, YouTube (Richmond, VA, 2015), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jND5gZ2NMk.
[64] All quotations in this paragraph are citations from the third community consultation.
[65] VCU East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU Community Consultations on The Well - Part 2*.

suggesting appropriate terms of reverence for the remains, guiding the university's approach to further research, and deciding upon the conditions of eventual interment. However, as the consultations clarified, while these community members would temporarily take on the role of family, their labor would materialize within conditions established by VCU, and its product would eventually return to the university for resolution and implementation.

The Reproductive Labor of Redress and Specifics of Surrogacy

Throughout the nominating, naming, and work of the council, media, community members, and the ten council members themselves referred to their labor as that of a "symbolic family" and a "surrogate family."[66] During the community consultations, news coverage of the East Marshall Street Well Project drew attention to the identification of these "stand-ins." Early on, articles emphasized the creation of a "symbolic family, a descendant community,"[67] a group of "representatives who would stand in for the unknown families."[68] They described the council members as the "Surrogate Ancestors *[sic]* to Remains of Slaves"[69] and, later, the "'surrogate descendants' of the deceased"[70] and "surrogate family for the unidentified remains."[71] Council

[66] The Family Representative Council finalized its recommendations in August 2018 and released this written report to the public in December 2018. The university and the East Marshall Street Well planning committee subsequently created implementation committees to carry out these recommendations, some of which included former members of the council. These implementation committees, which convened in 2019, focus on Interment and Memorialization and on Research.
[67] Griego, "Into the Light."
[68] Catherine Komp, "Community Makes Progress on East Marshall Street Well Project," *VPM.org*, June 9, 2016, https://vpm.org/news/articles/2371/community-makes-progress-on-east-marshall-street-well-project.
[69] Sandy Hausman, "Surrogate Ancestors to Remains of Slaves," *Radio IQ, WVTF*, August 7, 2015, https://www.wvtf.org/richmond-confronts-past-present/2015-08-07/surrogate-ancestors-to-remains-of-slaves. It's worth noting that more than once the term "ancestors" was incorrectly used to indicate the council members rather than the remains.
[70] Mel Leonor, "Remains of African Americans Found in Marshall Street Well Return to Richmond 25 Years Later," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 26, 2019, Second edition, sec. Main.
[71] McNeill, "A Journey Home."

members similarly referred to themselves as "surrogate family" when reflecting on their experience.[72] At first glance, "stand-in," "symbolic," "representative," and "surrogate" seem to operate as easily interchangeable synonyms. Yet unlike the other qualifying terms that prefaced descriptions of the council and its work, the concept of "surrogate" carries complex histories of and associations with family and childbearing, aspects of the feminized and racialized forms of nurturing and duties of caretaking that fall within the purview of reproductive labor.[73]

Feminists and feminist scholars have long engaged with the work of caring for family, elaborating the concept of reproductive labor as that which unfolds within the private sphere of the home. These discussions have extended to the divergent types of labor that undergird the university,[74] demonstrating how markedly similar labor can also emerge in the workplace. Roxanne

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[72] Early, who is white, similarly referred to the other members of the council as "brother" and "sister," underscoring the way in which the image of "family" transcended racial and lineal roots. Jen Early, "The East Marshall Street Well Project: A Story of Our Ancestral Remains," VCU Kaltura MediaSpace, May 18, 2021, https://vcu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/The+East+Marshall+Street+Well+ProjectA+A+Story+of+our+Ancestral+Remains/1_tyneegej.

[73] Here, my use of the term "racialized" is informed by Jodi Melamed's explanation of how racialization unfolds and takes hold. Melamed states, "racial knowledges are materially produced discourses that both constitute and are determined by the historically specific material circumstances and geohistorical conditions for which they offer comprehension and sense making. They do not just arrange human beings along a pregiven scale of value. Instead, they are at once productive and symptomatic of the total value making (such as political value and economic value) that secures specific historical configurations of personhood, human organization, and relations to the natural world as possible, imaginable, and sustainable." Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 12.

[74] In her formative work on the entanglement of patriarchy and capitalism, Maria Mies takes on the daunting task of summarizing feminism and feminist debates across the globe up to the date of writing in the mid-1980s. For Mies, reproductive labor indicates the capitalist division of the private sphere of the home and the public sphere of production, and also implicates debates over divisions of labor and the very meaning of "work." Mies writes, drawing from the early 1970s work of Maria-Rosa Della Costa, "The nuclear family, organized and protected by the state, is the social factory where this commodity 'labour power' is produced. Hence, the housewife and her labour are not outside the process of surplus value production, but constitute the very foundation upon which this process can get started. The housewife and her labour are, in other words, the basis of the process of capital accumulation. With the help of the state and its legal machinery women have been shut up in the isolated nuclear family, whereby their work there was made socially invisible, and was hence

Shirazi summarizes reproductive labor as the "domestic work of the home, the labor that reproduces the workforce and therefore contributes to the labor value of the waged worker and indirectly creates financial value for corporations."[75] One can conceptualize reproductive labor in the (neoliberal) university in myriad forms; it includes the physical work of keeping dormitories clean, dining halls running, and office trash emptied. One might also consider the intellectual labor of adjuncts and lecturers, and those who shoulder the vast majority of university teaching responsibilities, as well as the mentoring that helps to guide students and the volunteer committee work that supports tenure reviews and program operations, a kind of reproductive work. What makes this work reproductive in character is the way in which these institutional roles function as vital to the university's daily operation, financial value, and thus future, and yet all share aspects of invisibility, financial precarity, and devaluation. While taking place in the public sphere of the university, much of this labor also carries the affective inflections of feminized care work that unfolds within the home.

By assuming the position of family and guiding VCU through the difficult task of appropriately addressing the remains, the council provided a kind of intimate affective service that contributed to

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defined—by Marxist and non-Marxist theoreticians—as 'non-productive.'" As Mies adds, this "socially invisible" and "non-productive" labor "appeared under the form of love, care, emotionality, motherhood and wifehood." Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, Third Edition (London: Zed Books, 2014), 31. Furthermore, feminist scholars have written extensively of the imbrication of the family and the university, pointing out the ways in which women and feminized individuals, and in particular women of color, are tasked with various manifestations of "mothering" within the academy. This may include bearing the burden of carrying intergenerational aspects of fields and passing down disciplinary canons, as well as various forms of mentorship and volunteer labor. For discussions that provide further insight on the complexities of how identity, experience, and labor expectations relate within the university, see Barbara Christian et al., "Conference Call," *Differences* 2, no. 3 (November 1990): 52–108; Hortense Spillers and Ann duCille, "Expostulations and Replies," *Differences* 29, no. 2 (September 2018): 14.

[75] Roxanne Shirazi, "Reproducing the Academy: Librarians and the Question of Service in the Digital Humanities," in *Making Things and Drawing Boundaries: Experiments in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Jentery Sayers (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 88.

the viability of the university's endeavor of reckoning. However, the council's labor was anything but invisible. In fact, it was institutionally positioned and publicly perceived as "essential" if not exalted. The council was working to ensure that the people whose bodies had been used and discarded by the university were appropriately valued and, as VCU president Rao publicly affirmed during the council's presentation of final recommendations, "There's nothing more important than human lives."[76]

Rebecca Herzig and Banu Subramaniam offer a slightly recalibrated perspective on reproductive labor in the context of the university that explains how this work might shift from the shadows into the limelight.[77] They look to how such labor, in their words "institutional caretaking" or "housekeeping," changes under specific societal conditions. Herzig and Subramaniam point out that "social reproduction consists of the effort required not only to create human beings in the biological sense, but also to fashion subjects capable of maintaining capitalist production. Like the private family, the university holds a dual role with respect to social reproduction: it is at once centrally responsible for endowing individuals with particular attitudes, competencies, and dispositions and positioning them within specific social hierarchies, and it is an institution dependent on un- or under-recognized 'reproductive' labor—e.g., the work of cooking, cleaning, and caretaking—for its own existence."[78] Amid contemporary crisis, this "caring" work can be insidiously "rebranded" while

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[76] VCU East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU East Marshall Street Well Project - Final Recommendations,* YouTube (Richmond, VA, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lB5nlBVgcyM.

[77] Sara Ahmed offers a similar take on the terminology of "housekeeping" or, as she puts it, "housework," in the university. Ahmed notes, "Counterinstitution work in Black feminist and feminist of color hands is also often *housework*, with all the drudgery and repetition that word entails; painstaking work, administrative work, care work, and yes, *diversity work*. Institutions become what we work *on* because of how they do not accommodate us." Sara Ahmed. *Complaint!* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 23.

[78] Rebecca Herzig and Banu Subramaniam, "Housekeeping: Labor in the Pandemic University," *Feminist Studies* 47, no. 3 (2021): 505. In a slightly different take on the deeply raced and gendered aspects of university labor, Debra A. Harley discusses the disproportionate labor assumed by and

retaining many of its original (i.e., flagrantly devalued) characteristics.[79] In the present moment of global pandemic, for example, the feminized, racialized, and affectively burdened work of "housekeeping" is no longer swept under the rug. Rather, this labor is repositioned as "laudatory and significant—as, in fact, 'essential.'"[80] Yet the rhetorical reframing of reproductive labor as "essential" does not necessarily affect the terms of material recognition.

As members of VCU's Family Representative Council voluntarily assumed this uncompensated institutional role, the labor they carried out markedly resembled "essential" housekeeping. To paraphrase Edwards's comments during the community consultations, the driving qualification of

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expected of African American women at predominantly white-serving institutions. Debra A. Harley, "Maids of Academe: African American Women Faculty at Predominately White Institutions," *Journal of African American Studies* 12, no. 1 (2008): 19–36.

[79] On the topic of university labor that is deemed necessary by the public and yet devalued by the university, historian Chana Kai Lee ruminates on her experience participating in and subsequently leading efforts to reckon with the racial history and legacies of slavery at her home institution, the University of Georgia (UGA). Regarding the initial struggle to secure funding for these efforts and the ongoing stresses of this work, she writes, "The labor demands have tested me in ways that I could not have anticipated at the start. They have moved me to reflect on what it means to be an African American woman desperately searching for small fragments of information to revise an official account of the school's founding and expansion dating back to 1785, an account that erased people who looked like me. The initial battle for funding left a mark on me that shapes how I have viewed this project and my role"; Chana Kai Lee, "A Fraught Reckoning: Exploring the History of Slavery at the University of Georgia," *The Public Historian* 42, no. 4 (2020): 14. She later adds, "After nearly twenty-five years in the profession, I knew enough to be wary about race-specific service assignments, and that was how this work was regarded. I was under no illusion that this type of service would count the same as other assignments, including and especially labor-intensive job search duties, and, in our department, assignments related to running undergraduate studies and graduate degree programs, both of which offered course release time and additional pay" (19). In this article, Lee also discusses UGA's discovery of human remains on campus grounds during a construction project, similar to the discovery of remains at VCU. However, Lee points out the shockingly disrespectful ways in which university officials and administrators intentionally excluded members of the community and campus from participating in decisions pertaining to the remains and their reinterment in order to "get back to business as usual" as quickly as possible (17).

[80] Herzig and Subramaniam, "Housekeeping," 504. Herzig and Subramaniam emphasize that such "caring labor is disproportionately conducted by feminized workers, and increasingly feminized workers of color" (503). These forms of "care work" or "housekeeping" became particularly precarious in the context of the COVID pandemic as these individuals were required to report for their roles in order to ensure the care and safety of students, regardless of the risks that they themselves had to assume in order to commute to and carry out their jobs in person.

council members was that they must care. As such, despite the perceived necessity of the council's work, "the obvious parallels with 'family life'" might mean that "the symbolic elevation of care as a virtue is not necessarily matched by meaningful transformation in working conditions or material compensation. Rather . . . labor is merely extracted even more efficiently and surreptitiously via the sentimental imperatives of love and commitment."[81] The family council's labor was driven by a deep sense of duty to the remains and the greater community, demonstrating the type of reproductive labor required of university redress and further constitutive of the contemporary university.

In their daily lives, these ten council members served as professors, museum CEOs, community strategists, funeral directors and embalmers, nurses and health administrators.[82] According to its final report to the university, the composition of the council was "rather homogeneous with respect to race/ethnicity and gender—i.e., comprised mostly of African American women."[83] In this position, council members collaboratively compiled recommendations for the university while also assuming the affective, embodied, and rhetorical labor of collectively caring for an extended family.

Reimagining Kinship and Restoring Familial Relations

As the selected community members stepped into their role as the council, they began using family as the template for imagining themselves in intimate relation to the dead. Through the use of rhetorical questioning, they implored others to do so as well. Council member Stephanie Smith pondered, "Can you imagine finding your loved one's grave desecrated? . . . We are never going to get these individuals back to their families. We are never going to know who they are, but we owe it

[81] Herzig and Subramaniam, "Housekeeping," 504.
[82] While I have found no direct statement issued on behalf of the planning committee or the university clarifying exactly how the members of the council were chosen, they appear to be well-regarded members of the community.
[83] VCU East Marshall Street Well Family Representative Council, "Recommendations for Research, Memorialization and Interment," 11.

to them to make sure they are honored."[84] Christopher Rashad Green similarly wondered, "What if this were my mother? What if this were your father? What would it be like to bury them and then return to find the grave plundered and the body gone?"[85] By drawing on their personal experiences and their understandings of familial relations, the council members conjured a deep emotional investment in their labor. Jen Early, who identified herself as the only white council member, claimed that "to say that we are acting as a symbolic family probably isn't strong enough. . . . We really have encompassed the sense that this is our family that we are seeking to protect and honor and find a little bit of retribution for."[86] Early's comments underscore the temporary sense of ownership over part of "our family," regardless of individuals' racial identity.

The affective engagement of the council was palpable during a February 2016 visit to view the remains firsthand at the Smithsonian, where they had been held since the mid-1990s.[87] Bones were unceremoniously displayed alongside assorted medical instruments on long tables. These items were presented together as undifferentiated inanimate objects, all similarly numbered and labeled for research and cataloging. While this method of categorization was rote for those working in forensic anthropology, the matter-of-fact presentation of human bones jarred the members of the council. Though the council was already well versed in the history of the well and familiar with images of the findings, the sterile scene caught many of the members off guard, leaving them shaken and visibly

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[84] Griego, "Into the Light."
[85] Tina Griego, "A Reckoning," *Richmond Magazine*, June 5, 2016, https://richmondmagazine.com/api/content/785af66e-2a97-11e6-9b90-0a2c6093033d/.
[86] Griego, "A Reckoning." It's worth noting that Early herself points out that she was the only white council member. She states, "I am the only white person that's on this council, and I'm also one of the youngest people on the council. . . . the individuals who were discovered in the well were by and large of African or African American descent. But everyone agreed that our families are diverse, our families have all kinds of folks in them, and it should really be the love for the people that we were going to work together on behalf of that should be bringing us together." Early, "The East Marshall Street Well Project."
[87] According to the East Marshall Street Well Project's Facebook page, the Family Representative Council also visited the Jamestown Rediscovery project.

disturbed. A journalist described the council members' entering the room, writing that "to the evident surprise of the forensic anthropologists present, several [of the council members] begin to weep."[88]

Later recollecting that day, Early mused at how "scientific excitement overshadow[ed] the fact that we were coming to visit our ancestors as family members, and we walked into a room of skulls displayed on a table. And I can tell you that members of our family almost fell to their knees crying with that kind of introduction."[89] Stacy L. Burrs, another member of the family council, recalled that it "was remarkably emotional. . . . To have them presented in a way that almost—you could almost see the life that was in them and had been drained from them."[90] Council members were visibly overcome by the brutality of using the bodies of human beings as "specimens," a history made clear by this presentation, and the accompanying gravity of their task in restoring dignity and humanity. This scene at the Smithsonian captures the way in which council members embodied the role of an emoting (and grieving) family—physically standing in and falling to their knees—in the stead of the greater Richmond community and the university.

When the council later presented their preliminary recommendations to community members at a fifth and final consultation, in June 2016, "more than one person wept, and the eyes of members of the family council welled with tears when speaking of their experiences."[91] While discussing these recommendations and reflecting on the council's labor to date, council chair Joseph Jones stated, "We bonded as 'surrogate descendants' of these children, women and men—quite possibly enslaved

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[88] Griego, "A Reckoning."
[89] Early, "The East Marshall Street Well Project."
[90] Griego, "A Reckoning."
[91] While there is no video available of the fifth consultation during which the council shared their preliminary recommendations with the community, Griego notes that approximately seventy-five persons were in attendance and describes the format of the meeting as similar to the preceding consultations, including small group discussions that allowed attendees to share their thoughts and concerns. Griego, "A Reckoning."

Africans—whose bodies helped form the foundation of American medicine."[92] The final version of the council's recommendations to the university, submitted in August 2018, codified this language of surrogacy. In a preface to its recommendations, the council characterized its work as that of a "body of surrogate or symbolic descendants of the EMSW Ancestors."[93] At the release of this report a few months later, planning committee member Ellen Robertson framed the council as a "family that was birthed out of the planning committee"[94] and thus beholden to the university.

The council's work included looking after the deceased while tending to the wants and needs of the broader living community by whom they were, in part, appointed. However, as Jones's reiteration of "surrogate" and Robertson's metaphor of lineal descent gesture toward, the council was inextricably bound to and ultimately dictated by the university. Narrowing the council's work from reproductive labor generally to surrogacy specifically adds further perspective on how the council functioned in relation to the university. Drilling down from a discussion of reproductive labor to focus on the more specific role of "surrogate" also invites consideration of the affective complexities and ambivalences in which university reckoning is entrenched. Surrogacy, as metaphor and material reality, carries deep relationships to ownership, property, and authorization, as well as historical entanglements with gender, slavery, and racial capitalism. Exploring surrogacy in relation to the family council opens space for critically questioning the ways in which the labor of reckoning might simultaneously echo and amend the university's racial history.

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[92] Mike Porter, "Preliminary Recommendations Made for Human Remains Uncovered in 1990s VCU Construction Project," *VCU News*, June 4, 2016, https://news.vcu.edu/article/preliminary_recommendations_made_for_human_remains_uncovered.

[93] VCU East Marshall Street Well Family Representative Council, "Recommendations for Research, Memorialization and Interment of the East Marshall Street Well Ancestral Remains" (Richmond, VA: Virginia Commonwealth University, August 21, 2018).

[94] VCU East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU East Marshall Street Well Project - Final Recommendations*.

Reckoning with Surrogate Histories and Reproducing Personhood

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a surrogate is a "person appointed by authority to act in place of another."[95] As the definitional reference to authority begins to suggest, beyond merely "acting in place of another," the actions of surrogates unfold within particular arrangements of power that dictate the parameters of their work.[96] Furthermore, the person "acting in place of another" is, quite often, not in complete control of the terms and conditions of this (re)authorization. In the case of the Family Representative Council, members of the greater Richmond community participated in the process of nominating potential representatives. However, the final "appointing authority" of the family council lay with the East Marshall Street Well Project planning committee and the university. VCU presumably retained the right of final say in which nominees would be asked to join the council and thus who would be responsible for helping to facilitate the institution's process of reckoning. Upon completion, the tangible culmination of the family council's labor—recommendations in the form of a report—would be delivered to the university, the arbiter of if, when, and how to implement the council's advice.

In her discussion of Black women and histories of reproductive labor, Saidiya Hartman begins with the premise that "gestational language has been key to describing the world-making and world-breaking capacities of racial slavery."[97] Beyond the quotidian reproductive labor of cooking or cleaning, Hartman and other Black feminists and historians have detailed the critical import of

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[95] Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "surrogate," accessed July 24, 2022, https://www-oed-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/view/Entry/195052?rskey=pyEd7A&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid.

[96] As public scholar Sophie Lewis puts it in her reflection on the strictures inherent in gestational surrogacy (i.e., carrying a fetus through pregnancy), to "dream of surrogates running surrogacy is to change forever the very meaning of the word 'surrogate.' Materially and semiotically, it poses the question: what (if anything) could surrogacy be under conditions of cooperation and horizontality?" Sophie Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism against Family* (London: Verso, 2019), 145.

[97] Hartman, "The Belly of the World," 166.

gestational reproduction in fueling the economy of slavery and racial capitalism more broadly. Through the childbearing of enslaved women—often forced and forcibly seized—white slaveowners were able to (re)produce their valued property of human chattel.[98] Thus, throughout slavery and even in the wake of its abolition, "subjection was anchored in black women's reproductive capacities."[99] For Hartman, the terminology of "surrogate" broadly captures the ways in which, even after the end of legal enslavement, Black women "were forced to perform the affective and communicative labor necessary for the sustenance of white families at the expense of their own."[100] Using this same term in relation to VCU's racial reckoning urges critical consideration of how the labor of the family council might similarly benefit the regeneration of historically white-serving

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[98] Black feminist historians and scholars, including Jennifer Morgan and Hortense Spillers, have further analyzed the intrinsic relationships between slavery and gestational reproduction, the production of (human) property, and the denial of kin. Historian Jennifer Morgan's study of how "slaveowners appropriated [Black women's] reproductive lives by claiming children as property, by rewriting centuries-old European laws of descent, and by defining a biologically driven perpetual racial slavery through the real and imaginary reproductive potential of women whose 'blackness' was produced by and produced their enslavability" is especially informative in this respect. Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 1. Additionally, in her formative essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe," Hortense Spillers foregrounds the discursive lineages that connect present-day claims to naming oneself and one's family to the fact that enslaved Black women "could not, in fact, claim [their] child[ren]." Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 80. Extending these insights, Walcott contends that contemporary conceptualizations of property continue to be rooted in Black people's denial of ownership over their own bodies and those of their children. According to Walcott, the inability to "lay claim to family" "meant that the Black enslaved person literally had no autonomy or control over either their body or biological kin: the child followed the condition of the mother and thereby became at birth the white master's property. This fact has informed Black people's relationship to property ever since." Rinaldo Walcott, *On Property: Policing, Prisons, and the Call for Abolition* (Windsor, ON: Biblioasis, 2021), 17. Finally, Alys Eve Weinbaum, whose work has contributed to my thinking throughout this chapter, points out how "enslaved women were denied the legal right to be recognized as mothers; in all instances the children whom they gestated and to whom they gave birth could be legally stripped from them." As such, she states that "Surrogate and slave are linked by the experience of racialized dehumanization that is historically predicated on the racialization of reproductive labor as a process performed by slaves." Weinbaum, *The Afterlife of Reproductive Slavery*, 51, 47.

[99] Hartman, "The Belly of the World," 168.

[100] Hartman, "The Belly of the World," 171.

institutions.

Alys Eve Weinbaum similarly points out that the term "surrogate" "implicates the racialized reproductive processes that fueled slavery (the biological acts of gestation, parturition, and nurture) in the production of hegemonic racial formations and modern capitalism alike."[101] Further grounding the language and the labor of surrogacy in the history of slavery and racial capitalism, Weinbaum conceives of "the afterlife of reproductive slavery," or the "myriad itineraries and iterations of anti-blackness in a neoliberal, supposedly post-racial present."[102] By connecting gestational reproduction under slavery to contemporary surrogacy arrangements, Weinbaum demonstrates how this particular aspect of reproductive labor tracks back to and carries traces of the exploitation and dispossession of slavery.[103] Her insights also warn of how the "post-racial" language of community as family, such as that evidenced throughout the consultations and couching the council, might extend rather than dislodge the historically anti-Black itineraries and iterations necessitating the council's work. As surrogates shouldering the responsibility of reckoning, the council supplied work that was certainly of value to the university. Not only did the council provide guidance to VCU, but it also served as visible evidence of the institution's efforts to reckon with the

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[101] Weinbaum, *The Afterlife of Reproductive Slavery*, 31. Weinbaum presents this definition of surrogacy through her reading of Toni Morrison.

[102] Alys Eve Weinbaum, "The Slave Episteme in Biocapitalism," *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 8, no. 1 (April 2022): 3.

[103] Weinbaum, *The Afterlife of Reproductive Slavery*, 52. Here, my understanding of "racializing" is taken from Weinbaum's summary of Jennifer Morgan's analysis of enslaved women's reproduction, wherein Black women's reproductive labor was rendered "less-than-human," enabling the product of this labor to be treated as property that could be taken and evaluated. As Weinbaum summarizes, the fact that this process was "alienable and fungible" aided in the (re)production of slavery (Weinbaum, "The Slave Episteme in Biocapitalism," 38). Weinbaum further articulates her arguments in a subsequent article that attempts to bring her work on slavery into conversation with histories of colonialism. Here, she succinctly articulates her work as identifying a "constitutive epistemic antecedent for the complex processes of racialization that power the forms of (re)productive extraction and dispossession by which we are today surrounded and in which many people participate" (4).

well and engage local community members.

However, the value of this labor served dual purposes and extended beyond university dictates. In the role of surrogates, the council offered a revised version of human reproduction; they labored to repair personhood and reproduce human value. As one article commenting on VCU's East Marshall Street Well noted, members of the family council stood as the "symbolic descendants of those stolen from graves, turned into specimens, and then dumped in a pit, along with medical tools, clothing, shoes."[104] This nonconsensual practice of stealing corpses and turning them into "specimens" extended across geographic and historic practices of medical training and instruction well beyond VCU.[105] As Daina Ramey Berry's research reveals, the domestic cadaver trade was prevalent in the nineteenth century United States. These practices of grave robbing and then selling and subsequently using Black bodies as "specimens" for dissection and medical training underscored the differential and shifting ways in which bodies (and forms of corporeal labor) were valued and the extent to which enslaved individuals were "treated as disposable property before they were born and after they died."[106] For council members, the reality of this historical removal of humanity was

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[104] Each time I read this quote I am struck by the rhetorical violence it evidences and the emphatic need to locate "descendants" for those rendered "specimens." Griego, "A Reckoning."

[105] The individuals hired by universities and university faculty to retrieve corpses were called "resurrectionists." Utsey's documentary details Chris Baker's work at VCU at length. Baker was a notorious resurrectionist who worked at MVC at the turn of the twentieth century. Kapsidelis, "Confronting the Story of Bones." One article paints a particularly vivid picture of such resurrectionist work in Richmond. It begins, "They come for the bodies at night. With their shovels and lookouts and wagons, the resurrectionists hit the cemeteries of free and enslaved blacks, of the poor and imprisoned, robbing the graves of the freshly dead. . . . A ceaseless appetite for human cadavers exists. The students dissect and amputate, perfecting their knowledge of anatomy, and when they are done, the staff discards what is left in a brick well behind the Richmond school." Griego, "Into the Light."

[106] As Berry goes on to note, "Enslaved people were valued in life and in death. But because they were people and property, multiple sets of values encompassed them and were placed on their bodies. Value is used here as a noun, a verb, and an adjective. It is active, passive, subjective, and reflexive. It is 'rooted in modes or kinds of valuing' and requires an assessment of feelings." Berry, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh, 7,* 3.

palpable as they encountered the remains at the Smithsonian.

The language of "specimen" eviscerates traces of humanity and starkly reflects the social conditions and medical practices that rendered Black bodies institutional property and disposable training material.[107] Though the label of "remains" hints at prior life, it too carries a sense of devalued debris left behind, as demonstrated in 1994 by the hasty and careless removal of remains. According to Black studies scholar Christina Sharpe, Black and African American individuals continue to this day to bear linguistic and material remnants of slavery's violence. The initial rendering of Black bodies as "specimens" for institutional gain and their subsequent classification as unidentifiable, nameless "remains" evidences Sharpe's insights and what she discusses as "Black life in the wake; this is the flesh, these are bodies, to which anything and everything can be and is done."[108] Sharpe offers the notion of "the wake" to articulate the ongoing embodied and affective reality of "living the history and present of terror, from slavery to the present, as the ground of our everyday Black existence; living the historically and geographically dis/continuous but always present and endlessly reinvigorated brutality in, and on, our bodies while even as that terror is visited on our bodies the realities of that terror are erased."[109] Being in the wake is "to occupy and to be occupied

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[107] I would be remiss if I discussed the terminology of "specimen" and did not mention Amber Musser's work. Musser broadly addresses diversity and inclusion practices of the twenty-first-century university, and the ways in which her own body becomes absorbed within and valued by institutions. Her discussion of valuation echoes an enduring institutional violence of "specimen-making" of minorized individuals. For Musser, the term "specimen" critically "draws attention to the ways that money, science, and desire intersect to confer value on an object." Musser reflects how present-day university practices of specimen-making through objectification and institutionalization play out across particular bodies in the academy such that the "minority as specimen operates as a particular commodity" that the university might invest in or "possess." As "specimens," the individuals whose remains were found in the East Marshall Street Well involuntarily labored even after death, illicitly possessed by the university and serving as the grounds for nineteenth-century medical training, thus contributing to the intellectual property of the institution. Amber Jamilla Musser, "Specimen Days: Diversity, Labor, and the University," *Feminist Formations* 27, no. 3 (2015): 1–20.

[108] Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 16.

[109] Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 15.

by the continuous and changing present of slavery's as yet unresolved unfolding."[110] While collaboratively composing tangible recommendations for the university to counter this constant unfolding, the council began enfolding these historical "specimens" and "remains" in the humanizing language of lineage.

Alongside ongoing expressions of privilege, honor, and grief, council members expressed a profound sense of responsibility. Members emphasized their collective debt to the dead and duty to the living. Crystal Noakes talked through the thought process that guided her participation in the group, noting that the "first question I ask myself is, 'How do you represent individuals who have been treated this way, family members who have been treated this way?' You ask yourself, is it even possible? . . . Then I began to think yes, it is, because I felt their spirits. I felt a pull to be part of something so significant for the African American community. . . . I don't know if it will bring closure, but to be a part of honoring those who have been dishonored, if I can represent them, I am representing my father, my mother, my grandmother, my grandfather, my great-grandmothers and fathers. I am representing my family."[111] In addition to relying on her affective reserves and personal relationships, Noakes's comments drew attention to the historic import of the council's work for the African American community. By seamlessly connecting "those who have been dishonored" (in the past) to her own father and mother (her present lineage), Noakes's rhetoric transcended temporality to embrace Black and African American people of past and present. Ongoing references to community were left opaquely unqualified throughout the community consultations and broader discourse surrounding the East Marshall Street Well. Noakes's specificity offered a stark contrast to this ambiguity and accentuated how important this labor was for her, for her own Black community, and for understandings of Black humanity today.

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[110] Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 14.
[111] Griego, "Into the Light."

As council members like Noakes convened and labored over recommendations for VCU's handling of the remains, they rhetorically crafted an intergenerational throughline that not only restored "dignity and respect" to the remains discarded in the well but also reinforced Black life at present. By imagining themselves as the family responsible for caring for those found in the well (and imaging themselves as family to one another), the council began countering the dehumanizing anonymity of "specimens" and "remains." Practically, this meant intentionally and repeatedly rearticulating the refrain of "ancestors." Yet the ways that the council and other Richmonders rhetorically related to these "ancestors" varied; much like the amorphous contours of the community, people personalized connections to these "ancestors" (and thus to the city's past) in different ways. At times, council and community members referenced "our ancestors," claiming overt ownership over and responsibility for them. The specifics of this "our," however, were often left indeterminately open to interpretation. At other moments, individuals discussed "the ancestors" or "these ancestors," which effectively distinguished the speaker from direct descent while affirming the existence of such descendants. Even in the council's final recommendations to the university, released in 2018, articulations of ancestry maintained a rhetorical flexibility—shifting between "the Ancestors," "the EMSW Ancestors," and "our Ancestors"—that left interpretations open-ended and provided endless opportunities for imagined intimacies with these forebears.

At the release of the council's report, Edwards, the consultant who had facilitated the community conversation process, commended the council on their labor and what it must have taken "for people to assume a role of caring and concern over a distance of a hundred and seventy years. . . . We were asking people . . . to put themselves in a relationship with folks they would never really know, except through their imagination. Through their cultural imagination, their spiritual imagination, and through the imagination that comes out of their own lives linking the experience

and responsibility to their experience with their own family members."[112] He concluded his comments by mirroring the family council's labor and grounding himself in his own family's ancestry, beginning with his great-great-grandparents, "George and Charlotte Butler, the property of Mr. Butler down in Barnwell South Carolina, in the early 1800s."

Organized under the symbol of "surrogate," the council assumed responsibility for imparting, in VCU's terms, "dignity and respect," while simultaneously (re)claiming humanity. They engaged in "wake work," as Sharpe puts it, "hard emotional, physical, and intellectual work" that "demand[ed] vigilant attendance to the needs of the dying to ease their way, and also to the needs of the living."[113] Laboring on behalf of Richmond locals and a broader, atemporal Black and African American community, the council worked to restore value to the deceased as "something more than raw material" by rhetorically reproducing "ancestors."[114]

While the council's labor served, to again cite Weinbaum, as a "form of *(re)production* that *(re)produce[d]* surplus value"[115] for the university, it also affirmed the rights of the dead as human beings. Thus, as "surrogates," the council members performed an invaluable form of reproductive labor. They stood in for descendants and for the community, helping to restore a sense of humanity to the remains while also guiding the university in reckoning. Perhaps most importantly, beyond contributing to institutional value, the council facilitated the (re)production of Black personhood of past and present at a national moment of indisputable anti-Black violence and, as such, heightened

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[112] VCU East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU East Marshall Street Well Project - Final Recommendations*.
[113] Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 10.
[114] Spillers and duCille, "Expostulations and Replies," 9.
[115] Weinbaum, *The Afterlife of Reproductive Slavery*, 42. By using the terminology of "(re)production," Weinbaum is drawing attention to how "reproduction is today a form of production." Reconceived as a simultaneous form of capitalist production, reproductive labor (including gestational surrogacy) extends beyond labor that enables the recreation and continuation of the worker to also serve as a good in and of itself that yields surplus value.

instability.

Conclusion

At the public release of the family council's final recommendations to the university three years after its creation, in 2018, council chairperson Joseph Jones commended the council members and others in the audience. Jones stated, "I just want to congratulate everyone who has contributed thus far to this process because you are honorary members of the Black Lives Matter movement, whether or not you realize it. This is Black Lives Matter, this is what got me into the discipline of anthropology . . . seeing that we can retroactively make these Black lives matter. That history matters. . . . Symbols matter."[116] In his comments, Jones articulated his personal investment in the academy and how it related to the actions for racial justice unfolding across the United States. He also insisted on the interconnection of university reckoning and national antiracist movements.

Alongside Jones, the members of the council had labored to make the Black lives and Black bodies constitutive of VCU's history matter. The council's final report to the university articulated the history of the well in connection to a contemporary context of anti-Black actions and rhetoric. It began by addressing "the Ancestors—those children, women and men recovered from the East Marshall Street Well and those whose physical remains may still reside at the site of their desecration"[117] and concluded with reflections on how, "nationally and locally, we are deciding, once again, who we are and what we will become. Serious attempts to address these questions begin by considering how we got here; and how we shape the present and future, in part, through our

[116] VCU East Marshall Street Well Project, *VCU East Marshall Street Well Project - Final Recommendations*.
[117] VCU East Marshall Street Well Family Representative Council, "Recommendations for Research, Memorialization and Interment," 3.

meanings and memorialization of the past."[118] According to council members, the well and the geographic locale and history of Richmond were part of a "story [that] is still being written (and rewritten) and, for many, African American dignity and respect remain its central themes."[119]

As the council's final report indicates, VCU's East Marshall Street Well Project and the council's efforts were temporally situated within the larger social context of the 2010s and the hypervisibility of anti-Black violence. Trayvon Martin was murdered in 2012, a year after Utsey's documentary about the well garnered public attention. The police killing of Michael Brown and subsequent disregard of his body followed in 2014. Though by no means the only Black deaths at the hands of police, these horrifically violent events planted the seeds of the Black Lives Matter movement and helped to make plain the fact that, in Rinaldo Walcott's words, "We live in a moment where the value of Black human life remains an ongoing question for many who are not Black."[120] This social and political context of divergent (de)valuations of human life was reemphasized in the council's final report. Council members used the report's "concluding remarks" to situate their work amid "public dialogue [that] addresses issues such as police shootings, immigration, Confederate monuments, and resurgent white supremacist violence."[121] VCU began reckoning with the history of the well and the legacies of racial violence that remained amid a context of acute anti-Black violence, which lent a sense of urgency—even "crisis"—surrounding this work.[122]

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[118] VCU East Marshall Street Well Family Representative Council, "Recommendations for Research, Memorialization and Interment," 22.
[119] VCU East Marshall Street Well Family Representative Council, "Recommendations for Research, Memorialization and Interment," 22.
[120] Walcott, *On Property*, 103.
[121] VCU East Marshall Street Well Family Representative Council, "Recommendations for Research, Memorialization and Interment," 22.
[122] In Chapter 3, I discuss the operationalization of "crisis" in relation to historically Black colleges and universities.

Contextualizing and Concluding the Family Council's Reproductive Labor

Though the Family Representative Council was a body conceived of and convened by VCU, the labor carried out by the council mattered well beyond the university's walls. While reflecting on the East Marshall Street Well Project and his own involvement in the project as a member of the planning committee in 2015, professor and documentarian Shawn Utsey noted that "VCU has a history of paving over African-American history, literally paving over history. . . . The well was a garbage pit, and most of the people dumped in it were African-American." Echoing Jones, he added, "This is Black Lives Matter before the Black Lives Matter movement. That's what this is really about: the humanity of people. The humanity and dignity of people, even in death."[123] Utsey's contemplative statements seemed to draw parallels between the recently formed family council's impending labor and the ongoing work of antiracist organizing and attending to Black life. The labor of restoring and reaffirming humanity cut across and connected these efforts.

In the years following the family council's labor and recommendations, the Movement for Black Lives has gained global momentum while the names of Black and brown people killed by police (and amid enduring, historically rooted systems of racism) continue painfully to accumulate. As institutions grounded in the same histories and pervasive logics of human (de)valuation, universities are more and more responding to imperatives to recognize and dismantle racist structures. Yet a widely held consensus remains that, despite its flaws at present, the university is a "good in itself . . . an institution defined ultimately by the progressive nature at its core."[124] Such "crisis consensus," to borrow Abigail Boggs and Nick Mitchell's terminology, "invokes the university as the protector of time-honored and -tested values, one whose defense requires a temporality characterized

[123] Griego, "Into the Light."
[124] Abigail Boggs and Nick Mitchell, "Critical University Studies and the Crisis Consensus," *Feminist Studies* 44, no. 2 (2018): 434.

simultaneously by urgency and nostalgia."[125] Boggs and Mitchell are focused on the rhetoric of repair and return that characterizes prominent scholarship on the public university and its slow dismantling since the mid-twentieth century. However, their analysis also applies to how universities manage to address institutional roots in structural racial violence even while maintaining an institutional ethos of inherent "good." This tension is evidenced by VCU president Rao's comments at the inception of the East Marshall Street Well Project about what "good universities" should do.

Though it would be impossible to simply summarize the vast ways in which universities are undertaking the essential labor of engaging with their racial histories in the twenty-first century, the notion of "rebranding" raised earlier by Herzig and Subramaniam lurks at the edges of these efforts. Abigail Boggs, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein engage with the contemporary impulses of universities to reckon with their pasts, specifically citing the Universities Studying Slavery consortium. They skeptically note that such efforts have all too often "taken the form of public relations campaigns." While universities are neither created equal nor equitably financed,[126] such campaigns attempt to reckon with racial injustice while relying on the uncritical acceptance of these goodwill efforts to air publicly their histories of slavery or settler colonialism.[127] Boggs and her three coauthors point out how, "through reports, public statements, special task forces on university history, and the renaming of buildings, the knowledge form itself is thus called upon to do the work of redress. Brand management, today's university officials understand, involves

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[125] Boggs and Mitchell, "Critical University Studies and the Crisis Consensus," 434.

[126] As Matt Brim pertinently reminds us, universities across the United States grapple with hugely varied access to resources. Extending these meditations on the university as "public good," Brim notes that "college isn't only a public good; the good work of democratizing education is to take place in public institutions. The chief drivers of educational inequity—rich, elitist, exclusionary, private colleges and universities—remain untouched by these calls for public-minded reforms." Matt Brim, *Poor Queer Studies: Confronting Elitism in the University* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 195.

[127] The notion of uncritically accepting universities' goodwill is discussed by Boggs and Mitchell. Boggs and Mitchell, "Critical University Studies and the Crisis Consensus,"

'owning' one's institutional history."[128] Looking specifically at 2020, which includes the first few months of the enduring COVID pandemic and that summer's antiracist uprisings, Fatima El-Tayeb and Maria Stehle note the "seeming collective awakening of—largely white—university chairs, deans, and presidents to the reality of anti-Black racism" that "resulted in a deluge of statements, proposals and, sometimes, new initiatives."[129] Yet El-Tayeb and Stehle add that institutional interests in carrying out these commitments to change racist structures and campus climates dissipated almost as immediately as they arose.

While these perspectives necessarily urge us to remain cognizant of the futility of institutionally issued statements and critical of how history is used to fortify university futures at moments of emergency, such an awareness should not allow us to dismiss either the necessity nor the significance of redress at this moment.[130] Rather, following the instruction of Black feminist and women of color scholarship, we might instead consistently critique how power (manifesting through race, gender, and other identity categories) operates within and across the university, even as these institutions undergo the labor of acknowledging and remedying historically sedimented structures.[131]

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[128] Abigail Boggs et al., "Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation," *Abolition: A Journal and Community of Radical Theory & Practice*, August 28, 2019, https://abolitionjournal.org/abolitionist-university-studies-an-invitation/.

[129] Fatima El-Tayeb and Maria Stehle, "Editorial Introduction: Special Issue: Time, Urgency, and Collaboration in the Corporate University," *Feminist Formations* 34, no. 1 (2022): ix.

[130] It's worth clearly stating that these scholars are not overtly calling for a dismissal of university attempts at reckoning with their pasts. However, I think it important to emphasize this fact, as it would be all too easy to quickly find oneself in an unworkable position.

[131] As Sara Ahmed puts it, her enduring "commitment to the project of rebuilding universities [is] because I believe that universities, as places we can go to learn, not the only places but places that matter, universities as holders of many histories of learning, should be as open and accessible to as many as possible. In working *on* the university, I am deeply indebted to the work of Black feminists and feminists of color who have offered important critiques of how power operates within universities." Ahmed, *Complaint!*, 22. Nash similarly underscores how Black feminists have remained invested in the university while being fully aware of institutional and institutionalized violences. As Nash states, "black feminism has remained oriented toward the university despite this violence, and has largely retained a faith in the institution's capacity to be remade, reimagined, or reinvented in ways that will do less violence to black feminist theory and black feminists' bodies." Jennifer C.

Perspectives on reproductive labor, affective investments in the university, and institutional evasions of racially responsible restructuring begin to flesh out how VCU's Family Representative Council functioned. However, they cannot adequately account for the complexity of council members' relation to the past and present Richmond community (and to one another) or for the value of their work.

The council's work cannot be written off as mere "rebranding" or filed away under "public relations campaign." These people personalized the anti-Black violence of slavery and its afterlives. No longer were the council and the greater community dealing with anonymous "remains"; instead, they were reclaiming and rearticulating the humanity of "ancestors." Yet by reconceptualizing the council's work as a form of reproductive labor and focusing on the specific language of "surrogate" in relation to the family, I've also suggested that such university-led projects (including projects that incorporate people beyond the university's payroll) can reside in a liminal space between acknowledging and rectifying, reenacting and erasing, institutionally sanctioned violences of the past and present.

Retrieving and Bringing "Home" the Ancestral Remains

On November 25, 2019, four years after the creation of the Family Representative Council and one year after its final recommendations were delivered to VCU, a somber ceremony was held within the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC, to honor and to "bring home" the remains found at the East Marshall Street Well. Current health sciences students from VCU aided the transfer, serving as makeshift "pallbearers" and maneuvering carts carrying seventeen boxes of remains—covered ceremonially with Ghanaian cloth—down echoing hallways. One of

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Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 5.

these students remarked on their relationship to and responsibility for the remains, noting that "these people were living in Richmond and they were mistreated. And now we get to help to bring them home to their families or their community, which is really important. . . . We owe a lot to them. Without what they went through, we wouldn't have been able to advance medically. So we owe them a lot of thanks and acknowledgement, and part of that is bringing them back home."[132] "Home" indicated Richmond and the region of Virginia where the remains were found, where their families presumably once resided, and where their greater community still remained.

Once loaded into the backs of a "waiting hearse and black Suburban," the boxes were "escorted by Virginia State Police down Interstate 95 to Richmond."[133] When they arrived back in Richmond, custody of the boxes was handed off to VCU police. Eventually, they would travel back to the Kontos Building for a ceremony of welcome and public acknowledgment. From there, the remains would rest at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources until further research was conducted, further delaying their final interment. However, before their departure from the Smithsonian, Angela Duncan, an ordained Presbyterian minister and assistant dean for student affairs and community engagement at the VCU College of Health Professions, led the group in a spiritual affirmation. Duncan stated, "May we gain strength through the parts of their story that we do know. May we find courage as we realize their purpose and our purpose as we continue to discover all that we need to know about them. And may we all know that their lives, and our lives, matter."[134] Rhetorically gesturing to the Movement for Black Lives, the prayer reemphasized Black humanity in the wake of its durational denial. Duncan's words seamlessly sutured the divergent temporalities of past and present, "theirs" and "ours," underscoring the weight of VCU's reckoning at the well to a greater,

[132] McNeill, "A Journey Home."
[133] McNeill, "A Journey Home."
[134] McNeill, "A Journey Home."

atemporal community.

This "homecoming" of "ancestral remains" to Richmond realized the first of the council's many recommendations to VCU. These ancestors were "welcomed home" along a "trail of white petals lin[ing] East Marshall Street" and to the percussive beating of "drums and bells." Community members gathered to witness and partake in an African libation ceremony near the well that paid "homage to the African ancestors of the deceased" before hearing from elected officials, university administrators, and members of the council.[135] While reflecting on the relocation of the ancestral remains from the Smithsonian back to Richmond, Jones mused, "This is a promise kept to the broader community to bring back these ancestral remains." He added, "We are happy now. A bit overwhelmed. This is an overwhelming day. We think we've answered the call of our ancestors in bringing them home today."[136] In his comments considering the importance of that day, Jones concisely demonstrated the ongoing patterns in the discourse on the East Marshall Street Well and the council: a reverence for and shifting relation to ancestry, family and community, and university.

In this chapter, I've demonstrated how the Family Representative Council, as "surrogates," carved out directives for the university; through this reproductive labor, they also (re)claimed kin to (re)produce human value.[137] The capaciousness of family and ancestry offered council members rhetorical inroads to imagining themselves as inheritors of the East Marshall Street Well's history and advocates who encouraged Richmond residents to consider their own proximity to this past.

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[135] Leonor, "Remains of African Americans Found in Marshall Street Well."
[136] McNeill, "A Journey Home."
[137] Christina Sharpe attends to how U.S. kinship structures are rooted in transatlantic and chattel slavery and, as such, are inextricably bound to the production of whiteness and the possession (the inheritance and further amassing) of property. Sharpe sketches out how historic practices of "claiming kin" (and refusing kin) enabled the erasure of Black personhood, shifting "white kin in one direction, 'property' in another." Echoes of this afterlife of slavery continue today, informing the ways in which national policies and politics "make and unmake persons and families, and assign human beings value in and of themselves, or not." Christina Sharpe, "Lose Your Kin," *The New Inquiry*, November 16, 2016, https://thenewinquiry.com/lose-your-kin/.

The council labored in slavery's wake to broaden understandings of its historic desecration and dehumanization, to render this past a reality for those conceptually and temporally distant from it and, perhaps most importantly, to (re)produce the humanity of those whose humanity was violently disregarded.

Coda

When the Kontos Building was dedicated in 1996, there was no mention of the East Marshall Street Well or evidence of the human remains found in it. Twenty-five years later, in 2021, four panels were unveiled at this same site. The panels were one of the Family Representative Council's many recommendations to VCU on how to memorialize the ancestors and their experiences.[138] Each panel focused on a different year deemed significant to the well: 1844, the origins of the medical school and initial theft of bodies; 1994, the discovery of human skeletal remains; 2011, the release of Utsey's documentary; and 2019, the return of the remains to Richmond. As VCU celebrated the installation of the panels, it emphasized the kairotic alignment of their unveiling alongside the university's new History and Health: Racial Equity program, which was launched earlier that year by the VCU Office of Health Equity.[139] In fact, those structuring the program explicitly attempted to align it with both the East Marshall Street Well Project and the work of the council. One of the new

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[138] It's important to note that, following the Family Representative Council's final report, an Implementation Committee on Interment and Memorialization and a Research Committee were convened to help VCU realize the council's recommendations. These committees included members of the family council, university faculty and staff, and additional members of the community. See "Kontos Building Panels," Virginia Commonwealth University, East Marshall Street Well Project, https://emsw.vcu.edu/kontos-building-panels/. Additionally, it is worth noting that as of April 2023, the remains are still not interred.

[139] Logan Vetrovec et al., "Reckoning with Our Racist Past: An Academic Health Center's Engagement with History and Health," *Metropolitan Universities* 33, no. 3 (June 11, 2022): 69–88; Mike Porter, "VCU Panels Commemorate 19th-Century Human Remains Found in an MCV Campus Well," *VCU Health,* September 24, 2021, https://www.vcuhealth.org/news/vcu-panels-commemorate-19th-century-human-remains-found-in-an-mcv-campus-well.

program's learning modules was even titled "Medical Dissection and the East Marshall Street Well."[140]

The learning module on medical dissection and the well incorporates Utsey's documentary, a video recording of a community consultation, a scholarly article on medical racism, links to the East Marshall Street Well website, and several news articles covering the findings at the well and the work of the council. By completing modules such as this, participants in the History and Health program can earn a "free, verifiable badge through the VCU Office of Continuing and Professional Education. The badge is a digital version of credentials representing achievement in foundational DEI [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion] awareness."[141] Through the program, the history of the well and the council's work is translated into a marketable form of "DEI awareness" that can be listed alongside other job skills, posted to social media platforms, and used to "access labor market insights that relate your skills to jobs in Virginia or elsewhere."[142] As VCU implements the council's recommendations, it reproduces the import of and investment in university accreditation and authorization.[143]

The panels standing in the Kontos Building are visible culminations of the family council's labor.

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[140] The "planning team" responsible for driving the creation of the program was "composed of a senior leader from the health system, a senior leader from the health sciences campus, and their two directors." The program also has a steering committee that meets monthly to provide feedback and oversee operations. Steering committee members include the director of the East Marshall Street Well Project and a representative from the family council. Vetrovec et al., "Reckoning with Our Racist Past," 84.

[141] Vetrovec et al., "Reckoning with Our Racist Past," 80.

[142] "Digital Badging," Virginia Commonwealth University: Continuing and Professional Education, July 2022, https://ocpe.vcu.edu/badges.

[143] It's worth noting that in 2022, VCU released a commissioned report that further investigated the Medical College of Virginia's relationship to slavery. In the spring of 2023 and in connection to Project Gabriel, the university charged a commission to examine this report and its findings and to consider how and in what ways to move forward with this information. VCU intends to hear from the commission at the end of the 2023 academic year. "Project Gabriel: About," Virginia Commonwealth University, accessed April 12, 2023, https://projectgabriel.vcu.edu/about/.

According to VCU, they are also visible components of the university's broader diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.[144] As material markers of the university's reckoning with its racial history and reinvestment in ongoing institutional efforts, the panels signal the ways in which the labor of reckoning can simultaneously disinter and sustain university structures. As the history of the East Marshall Street Well and the labor of the council is absorbed into the ethos of VCU and recast as a form of university credit, questions raised in the family council's final report endure as ever-prescient prompts. They asked who, in the study of university pasts of slavery and anti-Black violence, benefits from the study of minoritized groups, how are issues of (past and present) vulnerability and violence addressed, and, finally, what is gained from further research, for whom, and to what ends.[145] However, I argue that the case at VCU encourages us to critically consider the slightly different questions of who benefits from the address of university pasts and what is gained by the work of university redress, for whom, when, and to what ends.

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[144] According to an article that details the development and implementation of the *History and Health; Racial Equity* program, the program came about in the wake of George Floyd's murder in 2020, during which time VCU "recommitted to its ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusion and expanded its infrastructure (both human capital and finances) to be more forthright in providing an inclusive work and learning environment for all." Vetrovec et al., "Reckoning with Our Racist Past," 74.
[145] VCU East Marshall Street Well Family Representative Council, "Recommendations for Research, Memorialization and Interment," 14.

"The Rest, as They Say, Is History": Relational Debt and Familial Responsibility in the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership

In 2014 Tougaloo College and Brown University celebrated the fiftieth year of the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership, which was initiated on May 18, 1964, the tenth anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's historic ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The partnership has consisted of student and faculty exchanges, research collaborations, curricular innovations, and pipeline programs for graduate studies. To commemorate the long-standing partnership, Brown awarded Tougaloo president Beverly Hogan an honorary doctorate and hosted her as a speaker at the institution's 2013 commencement, while Brown president Christina Paxson similarly spoke at Tougaloo's 2014 commencement ceremony and similarly received an honorary degree. Promotional videos, articles and letters in alumni magazines, and the signing of a "formal proclamation recommitting to our partnership" further marked the anniversary of what fifty years before had been an "unlikely" or "surprising" institutional pairing.[1]

While 2014 offered Tougaloo and Brown the opportunity to reflect on their joint history of collaboration and to affirm their commitment to continued partnership, the year also represented anniversaries of significance unique to each school. For Tougaloo, 2014 marked fifty years since the Freedom Summer of the civil rights movement. Throughout the mid-twentieth century, Tougaloo's campus served as a critical site for the movement. Because Tougaloo was and is a private college, it enjoyed a form of freedom beyond the purview of the state of Mississippi's funding and state dictates. Such freedom enabled it to serve as a pivotal place of respite and planning for individuals

[1] Christina Paxson, "From the President," *Brown Alumni Magazine*, Spring/Summer 2014, https://www.brownalumnimagazine.com/articles/2014-07-01/from-the-president.

coming to Mississippi and organizing alongside Tougaloo's students.[2] At Brown, 2014 brought reflections on a history that stretched much further back, as the university celebrated its founding in 1764.[3] While Tougaloo hosted a week-long conference on its campus to reflect on its intimate involvement in the events of the Black Freedom movement now fifty years past, Brown marked its 250th year over the course of twelve months through numerous events. As just the seventh university founded in the American colonies, Brown was fundamentally entwined with the nation's nascence and development, including the racial violence of transatlantic and chattel slavery. While marking its longevity, the institution seized the moment to highlight its recent efforts to address and to remedy this legacy of slavery.

Despite differences in temporality and institutional trajectory, 2014 invited Tougaloo and Brown to mark moments that approximated triumphs and transformations in relation to their racial histories. Yet while these universities commemorated the passage of time, concurrent events of 2014 would punctuate the sense of linear progress that any anniversary might suggest. Beyond the bounds of these two campuses, that year—and that summer, specifically—would be remembered for the unjust deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown at the hands of the police in New York City and Ferguson, Missouri, respectively; subsequent uprisings in Ferguson; and the further consolidation of the ongoing Movement for Black Lives.[4] As Tougaloo and Brown looked back on the era of civil

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[2] Across news article and scholarship, Tougaloo College is heralded for its central role in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s in Mississippi, and repeatedly referred to as being positioned in the "eye of the storm." This characterization also appears throughout this chapter. Deborah Barfield Berry, "Civil Rights: Tougaloo, Eye of the Storm," *The Clarion-Ledger*, February 1, 2015, https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2015/02/01/civil-rights-tougaloo-eye-storm/22700265/.

[3] "Brown's History: An Overview of Brown History," *Imagine Brown 250+*, accessed February 17, 2023, https://250.brown.edu/browns-history.html.

[4] As an interesting note, those who identify as Freedom Riders have also been active in the twenty-first century in connection to the Movement for Black Lives. Tyler Patrice Goodridge, "Disrupting the Status Quo: A Case Study of Digital Mobilization and Awareness within Black Lives Matter," *Georgetown University-Graduate School of Arts & Sciences* (thesis, Georgetown University, 2016),

rights and the racist remnants of slavery while imagining what might be ahead, the present would become a historic moment marked by the hypervisibility, or in Keeanga-Yamhatta Taylor's words, the "breaking point" of police violence and Black death.[5] This single year, rife with anniversaries and reinvigorated demands for racial justice, is the setting against which we can begin to understand the partnership between Brown and Tougaloo and the relationship between these institutions, U.S. legacies of slavery, and present-day redress.

In this chapter, I consider the ways in which the temporal context of university redress is rhetorically crafted and strategically deployed. My aim is to unsettle the implicit assumption of a linear chronology and to unveil the rhetoricity of the temporalities constructed by these institutions and conveyed as they reckon with their racial histories. As a commemorative epideictic event, an anniversary celebration offers the opportunity for a community to come together around the reassertion of shared values. While epideictic rhetoric is grounded in the temporal present, it typically traffics far more complex relationships to the past and future. In her discussion of the relationship between capitalism and time, historian Vanessa Ogle articulates temporality as that which is "taken to describe how past, present and future relate to one another, for instance through repetition and cyclical temporalities or ruptured and discontinuous temporalities, and through experiences and expectations."[6] Following the theme of temporality and expectations, another goal of this chapter is to draw attention to a third way in which the structure of the family appears

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https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/1040691; Maytha Alhassen, "Faces from Ferguson: Ashley 'Brown Blaze' Yates," *HuffPost* (blog), February 26, 2015, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/ashley-yates-ferguson_b_6573746.

[5] Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 17.

[6] Vanessa Ogle, "Time, Temporality and the History of Capitalism," *Past & Present* 243, no. 1 (2019): 314. Though a full review of this scholarship is beyond the scope of this chapter, there is a rich body of literature that discusses the entanglement of time, temporality, and capitalism, as indicated by Ogle's engagement with E. P. Thompson's influential work.

throughout the rhetoric of university redress. Throughout the following pages, I examine how the family form serves as a vehicle through which responsibility and a sense of indebtedness are rhetorically imagined and individually assigned.

While in Chapters 1 and 2 I discuss university reckoning and repair in terms of genetics and genealogy and social reproduction respectively, here I consider the way in which the affective image of heteronormative familial pairings—of mother and child, of coupled spouses—are grafted onto and operate in relation to racial redress. Through the celebration of their institutional partnership, Brown and Tougaloo recognized an ongoing responsibility for one another and recommitted to their enduring union. Like the concept of reckoning, the relational tie of responsibility is embedded with questions of what is owed, to whom, in what ways, and when. Similar sorts of questions emerged in Chapter 2 as I discussed how Richmond community members took up the reproductive labor of surrogacy and, as such, the responsibility for members of an imagined family.[7] In the context of the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership, various rhetorical configurations of familial commitment evoke notions of responsibility.[8] At times, these familial relations take the form of a parent and offspring

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[7] While I do not explicitly address temporality in Chapter 2, much could be said on the ways in which temporality and time contribute to the disproportionate labor demands doled out within the university. For example, gender and communication studies scholar Moya Bailey writes of the "exponential pressure to move faster and produce more efficiently, all in service to an imperative to survive that has been warped by capitalistic greed." In response, Bailey proposes an "ethics of pace, particularly within the academy, where research has shown there are other ways, better ways, for humans to move." Moya Bailey, "The Ethics of Pace," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 120, no. 2 (April 1, 2021): 285-86. Similarly, in their editorial introduction to a special issue on "Time, Urgency, and Collaboration in the Corporate University," Fatima El-Tayeb and Maria Stehle note the way in which university labor unfolds according to the "clock." That is, "Productivity translates into numbers and speed, resources are distributed based on seemingly neutral algorithms, while teaching and scholarship are assessed in terms of numerically measurable outcomes. Thus, while right wing movements frame academia as a hub of subversive, radical thinking and activism, innovation and collaboration in the service of transformation often face institutional obstacles." Fatima El-Tayeb and Maria Stehle, "Editorial Introduction: Special Issue: Time, Urgency, and Collaboration in the Corporate University," *Feminist Formations* 34, no. 1 (2022): xi.

[8] Another approach to thinking about responsibility, racial redress, and the university would be to attend to the imperatives of "diversity, equity, and inclusion." Sara Ahmed's insights urge us to

and, at others, that of a committed couple. However, across these varied pairings, the rhetoric of family is undergirded by an understanding of debt: outstanding and ongoing debts to the past, to one another, and to past and future generations. In sociologist Lisa Adkins's understanding, "debt concerns a promise to pay at a time which has not yet arrived, namely in the future. . . . Debt, or the promise to pay, therefore operates via a double move in regard to time: it defers the present but does so by counting on (and counting) the future."[9] Such promises, including the promise to care for one another at present and to repay prior receipt of care, emerged in Chapter 1 in relation to Georgetown and the ways in which care determined who did and did not "count" as a university legacy. These promises are also implicit in the couple forms that saturate the family. Sometimes these rhetorical conceptualizations of debt conjure a collective that must bear the responsibility of caring for the university at present, having once received the institution's care in the past. At other moments, debt assumes the literal form of financial arrears that might encumber institutions of higher education. In each appearance, the notion of owing something to someone—or to some institution—tethers the temporal present to the past and to the potential future. Yet this sense of indebtedness is made affectively palpable through understandings of family.

Thus, the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership and this moment of celebration open up space for analyzing the imbrication of temporality and debt, the operation of familial responsibility and

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consider who bears the responsibility of "diversity" within the university. That is, who is tasked with doing diversity work? Who is responsible for taking on the labor of diversifying classrooms? As Robyn Wiegman directs us, which disciplines are responsible for bearing certain political and social burdens within institutional frameworks? Or, as scholars like Amber Jamilla Musser and Rachel Lee encourage us to question, whose bodies are positioned to represent diversity, when, how, and why? Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Robyn Wiegman, *Object Lessons* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Amber Jamilla Musser, "Specimen Days: Diversity, Labor, and the University," *Feminist Formations* 27, no. 3 (2015): 1–20; Rachel Lee, "Notes from the (Non) Field: Teaching and Theorizing Women of Color," *Meridians* 1, no. 1 (2000): 85–109.

[9] Lisa Adkins, "Speculative Futures in the Time of Debt," *Sociological Review* 65, no. 3 (2017): 450.

required repayment, and their relation to university redress. In what follows, I examine the partnership using 2014 as a temporal touchstone and this moment of anniversary as a lens through which to understand the rhetorical significance of this pairing. I begin by surveying the relationships between these universities and the Universities Studying Slavery (USS) consortium, of which both are members. Next, I provide a more in-depth discussion of each university's relevant history. Following the present-day arrangement of the institutional elements of the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership, I begin by discussing Brown's recent history of reckoning with its legacy of slavery and then shift to talk about Tougaloo's ongoing embrace of its history as an HBCU and as a central site of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s. These histories provide the background against which to comprehend my close rhetorical analysis of two speech acts that took place on Tougaloo's campus within weeks of one another during the summer of 2014. As Mark Rifkin points out, background is critical to making sense of one's orientation to space, place, and time. He notes that "absent a background, nothing can figure in or as the foreground and be available for attention, perception, or acknowledgment."[10] Certainly, my authorial choice of background carefully dictates how one might understand my reading of these two speeches, the historical milieu of 2014 and of these institutions, and my broader questions pertaining to university redress and family. However, by judiciously offering these glimpses of Brown and Tougaloo, of past and present, and in this order, my aim is to raise questions about "the taken-for-granted processes through which temporal dynamics are figured"[11] and remapped by and through institutional reckonings. Further, I demonstrate how these dynamics directly connect to reiterations of familial belonging and responsibility as they are reimagined through the university.

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[10] Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 11.
[11] Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time,* 11.

Brown and Tougaloo carry very different institutional lineages. As a university founded prior to the Declaration of Independence, Brown is a historically white-serving Ivy League university whose founders, trustees, students, faculty, and their families directly and indirectly benefited from transatlantic slavery, as well as the enslavement and displacement of indigenous peoples.[12] In the years preceding the 2014 anniversary of the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership, Brown convened a steering committee to investigate this history systematically. The committee was appointed in 2003 by Brown's president and consisted of faculty, administrators, students, and alumni. Throughout these efforts, the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership that was formalized in 1964 became absorbed into the narrative of Brown's reckoning with its racial legacy and positioned as emblematic of the university's enduring commitment to racial justice and its future intentions. Conversely, Tougaloo is a historically Black college (HBCU) founded in the years immediately following the Civil War with the explicit purpose of educating the formerly enslaved and African Americans. The partnership may help substantiate Brown's perceived commitment to racial justice. For Tougaloo, the partnership signifies Brown's support of Tougaloo's survival as an accredited college and its enduring financial security amid a constricting higher education landscape rife with the pressures of austerity measures, program mergers, and institutional closures. In light of these distinct institutional inheritances, I ask how articulations of responsibility—configured as familial relations of debt and indebtedness across time—contribute to divergent experiences of university redress.[13]

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[12] *Slavery and Justice: The Report of the Brown Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice* (Providence, RI: Brown University, 2006), 8. It's worth mentioning that the label of "historically white-serving institution" is alternately used throughout this chapter to refer to Brown and other universities with similar histories. That is, this identifier, along with those like "predominantly white institution" or "predominantly white-serving institution" are meant to indicate a university that has historically excluded communities of color.

[13] Here, I am thinking of the 2020 special issue on "Rhetoric and the Temporal Turn: Race, Gender, Temporalities" in the journal *Women's Studies in Communication*. On the topic of divergent experiences of redress, Kendall Phillips's insights are particularly useful. He notes that "my experience of this new globally shared moment is not the same as that of others. While we are all sharing this time, we

In the context of the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership, the image of family provides a mode through which to imagine interpersonal and inter-institutional relations and accompanying responsibilities. I begin with the contemporary and historic backgrounds of these universities as members of the USS consortium, as institutions engaged in reckoning with their respective legacies of slavery and underfunding. This background becomes the basis for then examining how rhetorical mobilizations of family foster and foreclose university responsibility in myriad forms.

The Unending Balance Sheet and Ongoing Case of Brown's Background

Though Brown University did not join the USS roster until 2017—three years after the consortium began expanding to include universities outside of the Commonwealth of Virginia—Brown has always played a pivotal part in the consortium's origin story. As USS began to take shape and to grow in 2014, Brown had already been heralded as paving the way for others in respect to institutional reckoning. Over ten years earlier, in 2003, Brown's president Ruth J. Simmons appointed a university steering committee to "investigate the University's historical relationship to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade."[14] These efforts are recognized by USS as the formalized activities that "frankly . . . inspired all of us to begin our work—they were the pioneers back in 2003."[15]

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are experiencing very different temporalities." Kundai Chirindo et al., "Coda: A Rupture in Time," *Women's Studies in Communication* 43, no. 4 (2020): 460.

[14] "Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity (OIED)," Brown University, accessed February 14, 2023, https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/institutional-diversity/resources-initiatives/slavery-justice-report.

[15] "Universities Studying Slavery (USS): The Birth of a Movement," President's Commission on Slavery and the University, February 3, 2017, https://slavery.virginia.edu/universities-studying-slavery-uss-the-birth-of-a-movement/. Yale University was also one of the first U.S. institutions to begin grappling with its legacy of slavery in the twenty-first century, marked by the publication of a report on this racial history in the summer of 2001. However, this discourse was neither accompanied by the university's formal acknowledgment nor the formation of an official university

While Brown is in many ways an obvious addition to the USS roster, Tougaloo's presence on this list of institutions "committed to research, acknowledgment, and atonement regarding institutional ties to the slave trade, to enslavement on campus or abroad, and to enduring racism in school history and practice"[16] is in comparison a bit peculiar.[17] As Kirt von Daacke, who is an assistant dean and professor of history at the University of Virginia and the managing director of USS, put it, HBCUs are "schools whose existence are themselves in some ways legacies of the slavery and racism for which predominantly white institutions are attempting to atone."[18] In some respects, HBCUs were born of an era of national racial reckoning, albeit over 150 years ago. Education served as a mode of ensuring and guarding raced (as well as classed and gendered) distributions of power throughout the establishment and expansion of the United States, and in bolstering and maintaining violent systems of racial capitalism and enslavement. Following the Civil War and during the era of Reconstruction, HBCUs emerged as institutions designed to educate Black Americans. As such, though Tougaloo and the other HBCUs involved in USS may not ascribe to the professed need to "atone" for the historical exploitation of enslaved labor or for the ways in which economies of enslavement laid the foundation of their physical and academic structures, transatlantic and chattel slavery influenced these institutions' past and shapes their present. Speaking

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task force or steering committee. Mark Alden Branch, "The Slavery Legacy," *Yale Alumni Magazine*, February 2002, http://archives.yalealumnimagazine.com/issues/02_02/slavery.html; Jia Lynn Yang, "Yale Slavery Report Questioned by Experts," *Yale Daily News*, December 12, 2001, https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2001/12/12/yale-slavery-report-questioned-by-experts/.

[16] "Universities Studying Slavery," *President's Commission on Slavery and the University* (blog), March 18, 2016, https://slavery.virginia.edu/universities-studying-slavery/.

[17] Of course, this is not to say that Tougaloo's campus was removed from or untouched by this history. Indeed, as the college's website lays out, the land on which the college sits was the site of a plantation before being purchased by the American Missionary Association of New York from John Boddie in 1869. "Tougaloo College: Our History," Tougaloo College, July 11, 2013, https://www.tougaloo.edu/about-tougaloo-college/our-history.

[18] Kirt von Daacke, "Redress for Slavery and Racism at Universities — Is the Hard Question Really What to Do About It?," *Medium* (blog), April 13, 2021, https://kvondaacke.medium.com/redress-for-slavery-and-racism-at-universities-is-the-hard-question-really-what-to-do-about-it-aec7f3d8369e.

in regard to Tougaloo's participation in USS, Tougaloo alumnus and president of the Tougaloo College Research and Development Foundation John Rosenthall stated, "We (Tougaloo College) joined USS to put African American researchers and scholars in the national discussion."[19] Though the ways in which legacies of slavery contour Tougaloo's institutional reality markedly differ from the influences on Brown, both have notable stakes in how university redress unfolds in the twenty-first century. For HBCUs, whether these institutions are involved in USS or not,[20] these stakes are intimately related to histories of inadequate funding and ongoing struggles to maintain on-campus infrastructure along with institutional accreditation.

While HBCUs are but a fraction of the institutions participating in USS, these institutions

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[19] Marc Parry, "A 'Long Overdue Conversation': Do Universities That Benefited from Slavery Owe a Debt to Black Colleges?," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 28, 2018, https://www.chronicle.com/article/a-long-overdue-conversation-do-universities-that-benefited-from-slavery-owe-a-debt-to-black-colleges/; "Tougaloo College Hosts Universities Studying Slavery Symposium," Tougaloo College, October 23, 2018, https://www.tougaloo.edu/news/tougaloo-college-hosts-universities-studying-slavery-symposium. Based on Rosenthall's statement, which was included in a Tougaloo press release on the college's website, he is a part of the Tougaloo College community. However, it is unclear whether the Tougaloo College Research and Development Foundation, now branded TCRDF is still (or ever was) officially associated with the college. According to the TCRDF website, the organization works to facilitate collaboration with and among HBCUs and other minority-serving institutions and to lobby Congress on behalf of such institutions. Further, it's evident that the organization is intimately connected to the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD). In addition to explicitly mentioning the DOD in its mission and aims, the TCRDF Advisory Board is almost entirely composed of retired military professionals. "TCRDF: Unleashing HBCU Genius," TCDRF, https://www.tcrdf.org/. As historian Leslie M. Harris noted in 2020, USS was "piloting a collaboration with Tougaloo College, the Tougaloo College Research Development Fund, in which institutions would provide infrastructural support that would help the college apply for and track federal funds." In an effort to get more information about this pilot program, which is additionally mentioned in materials from the USS symposium held by Tougaloo in 2018, I contacted the academic program officer at the University of Virginia who works with USS. However, they were unable to provide more comprehensive information about the program. Leslie M. Harris, "Higher Education's Reckoning with Slavery," *Academe* 106, no. 1 (Winter 2020), https://www.aaup.org/article/higher-education%E2%80%99s-reckoning-slavery#.XkM0H1NKh68.

[20] As of February 2023, there were eight HBCU members of USS. In addition to Tougaloo College, these were Hampton University, Morgan State University, Norfolk State University, Stillman College, Virginia State University, Virginia Union University, and Virginia University of Lynchburg.

prominently appear in discussions of racial reckoning and related responsibility. In a 2018 article for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Marc Parry asked whether "universities that profited from slavery, and later propped up segregation, now also owe a debt to historically black colleges and universities." Though the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership originated well before the formation of USS, the partnership has similarly become wrapped up in twenty-first-century discussions of university redress. On the topic of Brown and Tougaloo, Parry quoted Rosenthall saying that "there is a debt to be paid, because these [historically white-serving] institutions received the benefit that they not only didn't pay for—they forced it out of people. . . . The debt is owed to the descendants of [the] enslaved. And how do you pay that debt back? . . .You pay that debt back by supporting the institutions that have been better to the descendants of slaves than anybody else. And that's the HBCUs."[21] As Leslie M. Harris noted in her 2020 article for the American Association of University Professors' journal *Academe*, one path toward redress might include "sharing financial resources with HBCUs, which have not recovered from the devastating 2008 economic downturn as strongly as have wealthier historically white institutions."[22] Harris similarly calls attention to debt, noting the disproportionate way in which debt is accumulated by HBCUs in the twenty-first century. Writing for the *Chronicle* in 2021, journalist Adam Harris elaborated the importance of historically white institutions sharing wealth and property with what he called "Black colleges," noting that "private money alone won't save Black colleges, but, perhaps, money from predominantly white institutions can—and it might be those colleges' responsibility to provide that aid."[23] Aptly titled "What White Colleges Owe Black Colleges," Adam Harris's article draws out the question of white institutions'

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[21] In his article, Parry specifically focuses on the partnership between Brown and Tougaloo, asking whether "historically black and traditionally white colleges can realize their ambition of a more systemic program of repair." Parry, "A 'Long Overdue Conversation.'"
[22] Harris, "Higher Education's Reckoning with Slavery."
[23] Adam Harris, "Opinion | What White Colleges Owe Black Colleges," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 30, 2021, https://www.chronicle.com/article/what-white-colleges-owe-black-colleges.

responsibility for the debts held by HBCUs and asks whether the latter should rectify these disparities[24] not through "partnership" but through "true repair [which] will very likely look a lot less like partnership and a lot more like reparations." Yet when it comes to financially flush, historically white institutions, appeals to partnership seem to be a leading and recurring approach to reckoning.[25]

According to the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership's webpage, the collaboration began in 1964 out of the desire on behalf of a few individuals, who had connections to both Tougaloo and Brown, to "support Tougaloo College financially."[26] Debt courses through the past and present of this inter-institutional relationship as an unending balance sheet.[27] In the context of the fiftieth anniversary of

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[24] In his article, Adam Harris discusses USS as well as the conference held on Tougaloo's campus and the related discussion of partnership between historically white institutions and HBCUs. He also draws attention to the case of Bennett College, a historically Black women's college in Greensboro, North Carolina, that has been struggling to maintain its accreditation since 2016 due to financial debts. He plainly states, "the university filed a lawsuit to prevent any immediate disruption to its ability to receive federal financial-aid funds and sought accreditation with the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools. The college, which had been founded to educate those newly emancipated from slavery, was struggling to stay alive because it had no money. The colleges that had benefited from slavery were flush with it." Harris, "Opinion | What White Colleges Owe Black Colleges." While Bennett lost its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in the winter of 2021, it holds candidacy status with the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools.

[25] In April 2022, Harvard University's Presidential Committee on Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery released the report "Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery." The report includes attention to the history of HBCUs in relation to Harvard, and the ways in which "In keeping with prevailing racial attitudes and the relegation of African Americans to poorly resourced HBCUs of uneven quality, Harvard—like all but a few white universities—did relatively little to support the African American quest for advancement" (44). Following an overview of the report's genesis and an extensive, in-depth review of Harvard's history, the committee offers seven recommendations on how the university might move forward. The third of these seven aims to "Develop Enduring Partnerships with Black Colleges and Universities" (59). The details of what developing these partnerships might include resemble aspects of the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership, such as faculty and student exchanges (which include financial aid provisions) as well as research collaborations (59). As an additional note, as of 2019, Harvard is also a member of USS. "Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery" (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, April 2022), https://legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/report/introduction-and-findings.

[26] "Partnership History," Brown-Tougaloo Partnership, Brown University, accessed August 6, 2022, https://tougaloo.brown.edu/partnership-history.

[27] Here, I am thinking of Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's well-known writing on debt. My ruminations on debt and responsibility in the context of the relationships between historically Black

their partnership, reconceptualizations of responsibility—to one another at past and present and to past and future generations—serve as opportune rhetorical resources for them. As Brown has engaged in efforts to acknowledge its past and the legacy of slavery in which it is entangled, the partnership has become a fixture in the university's narrative of racial redress.[28]

The "Here and Now" of Brown's Racial Reckoning

In September 2014, members of the greater Brown University community gathered around a hulking iron dome that appeared to push up from the lawn of Brown's Front Green. The dome just crests the campus landscape, suggesting that the rest of the sphere is hidden beneath the soil. Extending skyward from this iron orb are the jagged and mirrored edges of an enormous, broken chain link. The assembled crowd was attending the dedication of the new Slavery Memorial, a permanent installation on Brown's grounds. The event was just one of many activities planned for that weekend, a two-day Fall Celebration marking Brown's 250th anniversary.[29] Though the

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and historically white universities are informed by my reading of Harney and Moten's text and their assertion that "debt cannot be forgiven, it can only be forgotten to be remembered again." As they go on to memorably state, "to seek justice through restoration is to return debt to the balance sheet and the balance sheet never balances." Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning Black Study* (Wivenhoe, Eng.: Autonomedia, 2013), 63.

[28] An advisory council—consisting of fifteen members appointed by Brown's president, all of whom have alumni connections to Brown, and supported by Brown's Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity —formally stewards the relationship between the two institutions, of which the partnership is a part. On Brown's website, the council is said to consider "long-term policy and planning issues, strategic directions, and efficacy of implementation concerning the relationship between Brown University and Tougaloo College. The Council also provides assistance to the Brown-Tougaloo Cooperative Program." The term Brown-Tougaloo Cooperative Program is an out-of-date reference to the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership, to which this links. "Advisory Council on Relations with Tougaloo College, Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity (OIED)," Brown University, accessed February 14, 2023, https://www.brown.edu/about/administration/institutional-diversity/about/advisory-council-relations-tougaloo-college.

[29] The weekend-long programming was meant to beckon thousands of alumni and past and present community members back to campus for "forums, lab and campus tours, art and gallery exhibitions, student performances, football, fireworks lighting up the night sky, a wonderful concert on the

memorial and its dedication had been swept up in the festivities associated with the university's founding, its seeds were planted by the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice eight years earlier. This steering committee was tasked with guiding the university in reckoning with its 250-year history and, more specifically, its legacy of slavery. The Slavery Memorial was the result of just one of the committee's recommendations.

Just as the memorial's dedication became enveloped by the anniversary celebrations of Brown's founding, the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership has become enfolded in the university's formal efforts to address its legacy of slavery. The steering committee's report, *Slavery and Justice: Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice*, was published in October 2006. The report introduced the initial charge from Simmons to the committee, reviewed the committee's activities, and comprehensively narrated the history of transatlantic slavery throughout New England and Rhode Island. Further, the report surveyed various approaches to reparations across time and around the globe. These instructive examples preceded six recommendations from the committee on how the university might move forward in remedying the ongoing harms of its past. The recommendations included unfettered truth telling, memorialization, institutionalized research, ethical financial practices, "expanded opportunities at Brown for those disadvantaged by the legacies of slavery and the slave trade," and expanded educational opportunities for children residing in the greater Providence area and across the state of Rhode Island.[30]

While these recommendations (along with the report more generally) emphasized the importance of education in remedying slavery's legacies, the ongoing partnership between Brown

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College Green and more!" "Fall Celebration Highlights," *Imagine Brown 250+*, accessed February 14, 2023, https://250.brown.edu/story/fall-celebration-highlights.html.

[30] Though I paraphrase most of the recommendations, I've directly quoted the report's fifth recommendation because of the similarity of its wording to language used by the Virginia legislation discussed in Chapter 2. *Slavery and Justice*, 85-86.

and Tougaloo was not mentioned by the steering committee in these final pages. In fact, though the report briefly gestured toward the history of HBCUs like Howard and Fisk while discussing the dearth of Black faculty and students at Brown prior to the latter half of the twentieth century, mention of the partnership appears nowhere in the 2006 report. By the time that the university issued a second edition of the report in 2021, however, the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership had become an important bookend in Brown's racial reckoning.

Across the sections of the 2006 *Slavery and Justice* report, the steering committee's authorial voice is unceremoniously interrupted by quotations that introduce other perspectives. These side notes, which are especially obvious due to font and color, come without linear consistency and offer additional perspectives and insights tangentially related to the adjacent subject matter. Some are marked by a year, others include a name and a source, and several remain anonymous. One particularly jarring addition, included in a subsection on "Slavery and Abolition in Rhode Island," is an anonymous letter to the steering committee dated 2004. A snippet of this letter is incorporated to the right of a historical narrative about the first enslaved Africans forcibly entering the United States in the early seventeenth century, the swelling population of enslaved individuals, and the growing differentiation between white servants and enslaved Blacks and Native Americans. As this history unfolds, the quotation alongside it interjects, "You disgust me, as you disgust many other Americans. Slavery was wrong, but at that time it was a legal enterprise. It ended, case closed."[31] Arranged in this manner, the anonymous writer appears to speak in conversation with the committee and directly to history, attempting to distance themselves from this retelling of the past, to contain it, and by doing so, to disown any present responsibility for it: case closed.[32] Yet the

[31] *Slavery and Justice,* 9.
[32] For a rhetorical engagement with the concept of temporal containment, see Logan Rae Gomez, "Temporal Containment and the Singularity of Anti-Blackness: Saying Her Name in and across Time," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2021): 182–92.

presentation of this anonymous writer's words manages to accomplish quite the opposite.

The juxtaposition of the contemporary message and the smooth retelling of the region's history of racial violence has the effect of dislodging both from discrete periods of time. Rather than effectively "closing the case," the anonymous note helps to make the case that the event of anti-Black racism is ongoing. As Lauren Berlant notes, "Usually, when an event happens there are no outcomes; it fades into the ordinary pulsations of living on undramatically, perhaps in memory, without being memorable." In the case of Brown's legacy of slavery, the once historically unremarkable and unremarked-on event of anti-Black racism undergirding the university's past serves as the raw material at present from which "people are compelled to take its history, seek out precedent, write its narratives, adjudicate claims about it, make a judgment, and file it somewhere."[33] While reconstructing the event of slavery and formulating the case for its present-day address, the steering committee also rhetorically crafts the social and political background against which Brown's institutional reckoning takes place. Including the contemporaneous words of one aggrieved individual helps to flesh out this background, in the words of this anonymous author, of the "here and now."[34] Of course, the temporal contours of this (and of any) "here and now" are always open to interpretation and only ever temporary.

In February 2007, the university issued its response to the *Slavery and Justice* report. Following acknowledgments of the committee's efforts and prior to an amended list of recommendations, the response included a conscientious acknowledgment of how this work altered the institution's temporal terrain. Though only four months after the initial release of the report, the committee's work was already positioned as part of the "University's history, where it will be available to future centuries of students and scholars seeking to understand how the community in this era responded

[33] Lauren Berlant, "On the Case," *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 4 (2007): 663–72.
[34] *Slavery and Justice,* 9.

to the questions raised by the Report."[35] While what had been the "here and now" was rhetorically rendered the there and then of the past, this response expanded the list of recommendations made by the committee to include explicit references to HBCUs. Specifically, Brown pledged to "strengthen and expand its program with Tougaloo College under the aegis of the Advisory Council on Relations with Tougaloo College."[36] The university also committed to expanding its assistance to HBCUs, "includ[ing] the provision of academic and administrative consultants to support strategic and financial planning, academic oversight, administrative review, governance revisions and assessments, and other needs as defined by HBCU boards of trustees and presidents."[37] By introducing HBCUs into the discourse around the university's legacy of slavery and its remedy, the response altered the temporal background against which the students and scholars of future centuries could understand twenty-first-century redress at Brown.[38]

Reorienting the Relationship between Brown and Tougaloo

Today, the public can access the 2006 report, the university's 2007 response and addendum, and the 2021 second edition on the university website "Brown & Slavery & Justice."[39] The site serves as

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[35] *Slavery and Justice Report with Commentary on Context and Impact: 2nd Edition of the Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice,* (Providence, RI: Brown University, 2021), 269.
[36] *Slavery and Justice Report, 2nd ed.,* 272.
[37] *Slavery and Justice Report, 2nd ed.,* 273. Since the first edition of the report was published in 2006, it was a year after the southern United States and in particular the greater metropolitan area of New Orleans experienced the enduring effects of Hurricane Katrina. This means that the rest of the United States and the world had also watched—and continued to witness—the ways in which the U.S. government failed that region and the people who lived there, in particular Black individuals and communities. It's clear in the university's response to the steering committee that Brown had provided some sort of support to HBCUs in the region that was affected.
[38] Again, my evocation of "temporal background" is done with Rifkin's writing in mind, as well as Rifkin's interlocutor Sara Ahmed, who writes about the phenomenology of queer orientations. See Sara Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 4 (2006): 543–74.
[39] The "today" of my writing and of this reference is February 2023.

a receptacle for news, documents, and updates regarding the university's ongoing efforts to "confront [its] history with racial slavery to change the present."[40] A menu along the top of the home page invites visitors to peruse the university's "Progress," the "National Impact" and the "History" of its work, and finally the "Latest News" related to Brown's ongoing efforts. Navigating to the page on "History," one is met with a timeline that details Brown's "brief history" of "confronting legacies of racial slavery." This history begins with the twentieth-century civil rights movement, noting that time period as one in which "Brown was compelled to look more critically at its practices, policies and campus environment with respect to race and other areas of inclusion, often as a result of student activism."[41] More specifically, the timeline starts in 1964 with the official initiation of the "Brown-Tougaloo Cooperative Exchange." The creation of the partnership is positioned as a significant moment that, in retrospect, was critical to the university's "deep investigation into its historical relationship to racial slavery and the transatlantic slave trade."[42] By presenting the origins of the institutional partnership as the background for Brown's twenty-first-century initiatives addressing its legacy of slavery, Brown's relationship with Tougaloo is rhetorically reconfigured as an early harbinger of what will later coalesce into a steering committee, two reports, a memorial, and so on. The partnership is featured again on the timeline in 2014, which highlights the fiftieth anniversary, the dedication of the campus's Slavery Memorial, and the university's creation of a Vice President for Academic Development, Diversity and Inclusion position. In this manner, the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership is made a prominent coordinate of mapping the institutional background against which Brown's work on slavery and racial justice appear consistent

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[40] "Brown & Slavery & Justice: Confronting Brown University's History with Racial Slavery to Change the Present," Brown & Slavery & Justice, accessed February 14, 2023, https://slaveryandjustice.brown.edu/.
[41] "Brown & Slavery & Justice: History," Brown & Slavery & Justice, accessed February 14, 2023, https://slaveryandjustice.brown.edu/history.
[42] "Brown & Slavery & Justice."

with (if not the inevitable outcome of) earlier and ongoing initiatives.

By the time that the second edition of the report was published in 2021, the partnership had been subsumed into the discourse of university repair. Retrospective rearticulations rhetorically positioned the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership as an initial and ongoing indication of Brown's commitment to racial redress; the institutional collaboration simultaneously served as an early harbinger of the university's ongoing "efforts to confront the enduring legacies of racial slavery and anti-Black racism on campus"[43] and also as part of its "action plan" for "moving ahead."[44] By 2021, the partnership signified the university's commitment to racial justice, in the past and at present.

Temporality and the Persistently Present History of Historically Black Colleges

The 2014 spring/summer *Tougaloo Alumni Bulletin* began with a letter from the university's president, Beverly W. Hogan. The bulletin featured a large red heading that reminded readers of the dates of the college's 145th commencement that summer. Just below this, Hogan provided a panoramic review of Tougaloo's preceding year. She noted that the college had recently expanded its facilities, gained approval from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to grant master's degrees, and ranked (alongside "better resourced institutions") as one of the top HBCUs in the nation according to rating systems prescribed by the likes of *U.S. News and World Report*. As Hogan continued, however, her tone turned from celebratory to somber. She went on to note that, despite the fact that the "physical appearance of our campus is more appealing than it has been in its 144 year history," "Tougaloo is challenged today with declining enrollment." The decreasing number of students was not the only challenge that Tougaloo faced in 2014. Hogan

[43] This website provides a timeline of Brown's history of reckoning with its legacy of slavery. "Confronting Legacies of Racial Slavery – A Brief History," Brown & Slavery & Justice, https://slaveryandjustice.brown.edu/history.
[44] *Slavery and Justice Reportt, 2md ed.,* 270.

enumerated other pressing concerns such as inadequate campus facilities and infrastructure, along with an insufficient institutional endowment. As she concluded the letter, she noted that these issues raised questions about the "survival and growth of this special place which has both historic significance and contemporary relevance, not merely for Tougalooians but for America's democracy."[45]

Hogan's presentation of Tougaloo as a special and significant place in the nation's history of democracy was not hyperbole. The graduation of Tougaloo's 145th class that summer would coincide with the college's commemoration of the twentieth-century civil rights movement and Tougaloo's integral part in those activities. Just before concluding her letter, Hogan reminded readers of the forthcoming celebration, which would mark the fiftieth anniversary of Freedom Summer and be "held on our historic campus, as during the dark days of 1964."[46] The events would

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[45] Beverly Hogan, "Message from the President," *Tougaloo Alumni Bulletin*, 2014, 1-2. Though not the focus of this chapter, much has been written regarding the importance and the inadequacy of HBCU endowments. Tressie McMillan Cottom offers one of the more succinct descriptions of how and in what ways endowments matter in the context of HBCUs. She points out that "Black colleges have been blatantly and systematically underfunded using public policies similar to those that create racial wealth disparities. As a result, HBCUs often have small endowments to help students who are more likely to have greater financial needs. College and university endowments are a form of institutional wealth. Generally, endowments are used to manage long-term investments in the college, like funds to support research. . . . When an institution has a smaller endowment, it cannot increase spending to offset budget cuts, for example. This leaves institutions in the position of HBCUs with few choices during difficult times. They can increase tuition, decrease aid, or compromise curriculum quality." Tressie McMillan Cottom, *Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy* (New York: The New Press, 2017), 86.

[46] Regarding Hogan's discussion of Tougaloo's importance during the civil rights movement, historian Jelani Favors offers extensive insight into the college's history of activism and ongoing commitment to social justice during these "dark days." He confirms that the campus "became a key meeting place for civil rights activists and sparked the indignation of white legislators who lacked power and direct oversight over the privately controlled institution." Favors also elaborates the more intangible contributions that the Tougaloo community and, importantly, Tougaloo students, made to the movement. As he points out, "counternarratives of self-love and dignity were essential components of a second curriculum that flowed through Tougaloo" and helped to sow the "seed of insurgency." He adds that "the powerful communitas that they cultivated helped to sharpen their criticisms of Jim Crow and deepen their resolve to develop a linked sense of fate with the masses of African Americans suffering during the Nadir. The creative tools that they developed to endure and

honor people of the past and present who "advance the noble ideals of an inclusive and open society." Presumably the fiftieth anniversary events, to borrow Hogan's words, would underscore Tougaloo's "historic significance and contemporary relevance." The institution's prominence in narratives of the past directly connect to positioning it as worthy of investment at present.

Though concise, Hogan's list of concerns offers a comprehensive glimpse of myriad issues faced by many HBCUs in the twenty-first century; addressing just one of these issues at Tougaloo would require sizable resources and ample time. Her message to alumni also pulls out many of the threads that weave throughout the history and the present day of these institutions. Such themes are neither confined to Tougaloo nor contained by the twenty-first century. The continuity of these concerns across time and institution collectively contribute to an ordinary and ongoing state of crisis.[47] In her message, Hogan rehearses the quotidian characteristics of what Lauren Berlant might call the "crisis ordinary" by laying out its familiar coordinates: dwindling enrollments, minuscule endowments, legacies of underfunding, and insufficient resources. Yet Hogan also reminds readers of the other legacies carried by Tougaloo, including the university's pivotal role in the civil rights movement and the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of Freedom Summer. The small university's contributions to the civil rights movement in Mississippi were unparalleled. HBCUs like Tougaloo were and are, in Hogan's words, institutions that consistently "defy the odds and turn our lanes of challenges into interstates of opportunities." By nodding toward Tougaloo's triumphant past of survival and social

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teach generations of young people to believe in themselves and their talents were just as important as other strategies and tactics employed by the early civil rights movement." Jelani M. Favors, *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 51, 54, 69. Elsewhere in this same chapter, Favors articulates Tougaloo's campus as a "space to envision freedom dreams" (54), calling to mind Robin D. G. Kelley's well-known book, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

[47] Here, I'm thinking of Lauren Berlant's configuration of the "crisis ordinary." Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2011), 10.

change, Hogan rhetorically navigates "what might be overwhelming at present" to narrate what she envisions as the inevitability of Tougaloo's future.[48]

The Tense Present and Imperfect Future of HBCUs

Amid her discussion of Tougaloo's declining enrollment numbers and other ongoing needs, Hogan points out one fact that is within the immediate control of the institution. This, Hogan notes, is "our ability to reach more people—*more timely*—and telling our story more effectively."[49] Hogan's interjection of "more timely" is awkwardly placed. It abruptly interrupts her thoughts, appearing emphatic. Something that is timely is well-timed, apt, or appropriate for the given circumstances. Here, however, Hogan asks for something above and beyond. This call for *more* suggests a surplus that somehow surpasses or extends beyond an opportune moment.[50] The evocation of this sort of excess echoes Elizabeth Grosz's formulation of the "untimely." For Grosz, "Something is untimely, out of its own time, either through its being anachronistic, which is another way of saying that it is not yet used up in its pastness, it still has something to offer that remains untapped, its virtuality

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[48] This is directly taken from Berlant's articulation of "what might be overwhelming at present." Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 100.

[49] Hogan, "Message from the President," 2; italics mine.

[50] The rhetorical invocation of "more" is reminiscent of Joshua Chambers-Letson's reiteration of "More Life" throughout his book *After the Party: A Manifesto for Queer of Color Life* (New York: New York University Press, 2018). In Chambers-Letson's writing, "more" functions as a site of desire and indignance, rumination and resolve. Discussions of time and debt also appear across disciplines like sociology and in terms of finance. Perhaps most relevant to the immediate discussion of an excess of time, of "more timely," Lisa Adkins charts the emergence and hold of securitized debt. According to Adkins, securitized debt manufactures a sense of "speculative time" in which "pasts, presents and futures stand not in a predetermined or pre-set relation to each other, but are in a continuous state of movement, transformation and unfolding." As such, understandings and experiences of the past, present, and future are in a continuous state of flux, requiring individuals to react, readjust, and reassess their situation of indebtedness. Adkins continues, "Far from being dispossessed of time, the subject who is bound to the speculative time of securitized debt therefore has too much time, but this is not too much of the steady time of the calendar, but of the eventful and non-chronological temporal frames which comprise the time of securitized debt." Lisa Adkins, "Speculative Futures in the Time of Debt," *Sociological Review* 65, no. 3 (September 2017): 458-459.

remains alluring and filled with potential for the present and future."[51] Similar to Hogan's call for *more timely*, the untimely cannot be contained by a single moment or within a specific period of time, spilling from the past into the future, like HBCUs.[52]

The temporality of "more timely" and "untimely" is baked into the HBCU and thus a foundational part of Tougaloo's own lineage. HBCUs are institutions that emerged in the late nineteenth century with the specific purpose of educating Black Americans. Today, they are defined as institutions founded both with this explicit purpose and prior to 1964.[53] Although a handful of colleges and universities admitted free(d) individuals in the early and mid-nineteenth century,[54] the

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[51] Elizabeth Grosz, "The Untimeliness of Feminist Theory," *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 18, no. 1 (2010): 48. Additionally, Clare Hemmings discusses how anachronism operates in relation to disciplinary narratives of women's studies and the ways in which Black feminism comes to be temporally figured as part of the past, rhetorically coded as out-of-date and done, thus precluding Black feminist thought from being part of the discipline's future. Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2011), 6, 44.

[52] For theoretical insights on the imagery and symbolism of temporal "spilling" or "spillage," see Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Spill: Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); and Marquis Bey, *Black Trans Feminism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2022).

[53] M. Christopher Brown and James Earl Davis, "The Historically Black College as Social Contract, Social Capital, and Social Equalizer," *Peabody Journal of Education* 76, no. 1 (2001): 31. It's worth noting that while 1964 provides somewhat of an official cutoff date for defining HBCUs as such, some consider institutions like Lawson State Community College and Bishop State Community College to be HBCUs even though both of these institutions were founded in 1965. A. L. Evans, V. Evans, and A. M. Evans, "Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)," *Education* 123, no. 1 (2002): 4-5. Further, it's important to clarify that HBCUs are distinct from minority-serving institutions or predominantly Black institutions, which are colleges and universities that may boast a majority Black student enrollment yet that were founded not for that purpose or perhaps not during the specified time period. Brown and Davis, "The Historically Black College as Social Contract," 32. For information pertaining to minority-serving institutions, see the extensive research of Marybeth Gasman, which includes Marybeth Gasman, Benjamin Baez, and Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner, eds., *Understanding Minority-Serving Institutions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008); Marybeth Gasman, Thai-Huy Nguyen, and Clifton F. Conrad, "Lives Intertwined: A Primer on the History and Emergence of Minority Serving Institutions," *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 8, no. 2 (2015): 120–38.

[54] By way of example, Black students attended Oberlin College in Ohio, which opened in 1833, and Berea College in Kentucky, which began operations in 1855. However, because of subpar primary and secondary school education for Black youth, these students were often unable to complete college degrees. Bobby L. Lovett, *America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities: A Narrative*

first institution founded with this mission was Cheyney University, established in 1837 as the Institute for Colored Youth in Pennsylvania.[55] In the wake of the Civil War, dozens of institutions like Cheyney sprang up. Organizations with philanthropist backing and religious affiliation significantly contributed to building out these HBCUs across the southern United States;[56] the New York-based American Missionary Association (AMA) alone helped to sponsor and operate sixty-three of these institutions in states such as Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Mississippi, one of which was Tougaloo.[57]

While HBCUs proliferated in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, they faced myriad challenges. The education of formerly enslaved individuals and of all African Americans more generally was the focus of intensive attention and discussion.[58] These institutions emerged at a

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History, 1837-2009 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2015), 6-90.

[55] This was followed by the opening of Lincoln University in 1854. Lovett, *America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities,* 12.

[56] For insight into the ways in which the establishment of HBCUs was aided by the Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890, see Lovett, *America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities,* 25-29. Conversely, for details on the ways in which the chronic underfunding of historically Black institutions and federal neglect of education for African Americans in the late nineteenth century were connected to the Morrill Acts, see Earnest N. Bracey, "The Significance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the 21st Century: Will Such Institutions of Higher Learning Survive?," *American Journal of Economics & Sociology* 76, no. 3 (May 2017): 670–96.

[57] These developments occurred between 1867 and 1904. Lovett, *America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities,* 15. Additionally, it's important to note that while HBCUs were founded in order to educate African Americans, they often had open admissions policies, thus serving as spaces to educate anyone who was unable to access entry to other institutions due to race, class, or other factors.

[58] At its most familiar and simplistic, this discourse is presented as an ideological divide represented by Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois. For example, Bracey writes, "in the early 20th century, a debate took place between two groups of African-American leaders about the type of higher education that should be made available to African Americans. On one side of the debate were accommodationists. The leading figure was Booker T. Washington, a former black slave, and the founder of Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University). . . . On the other side of the debate were educated black men, primarily in northern states, who favored agitation for the full rights of African Americans, including an education that was not restricted to skills associated with manual labor. Specifically, they argued that a liberal arts education of the sort that could lead to advanced professional degrees in law or medicine should be available to any African American on the same basis as whites. W. E. B. Dubois was the leading intellectual among those who regarded

time when there was little consensus and much contest regarding how Black Americans should be educated, why, and to what ends. Some were concerned with maintaining a "social stability" set in place by a system of white supremacy and thus, as education historian Joy Ann Williamson notes, were intent on "creat[ing] a separate African-American professional class" and "keep[ing] African Americans from attending historically white institutions." Others, however, "defied the racial caste system and educated African Americans for full equality."[59] Discussions at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century about educating Black Americans unfolded amid virulent racism and open violence. Further, the pretenses of this discourse regarding the purposes and aims of education were similarly undergirded by evident reticence to upset existing racial hierarchies that were enforced through disparately radicalized educations, Jim Crow, and segregation. Finally, access to education (and subsequent opportunities) was further hindered by inadequate infrastructure, a lack of access to institutional resources, and the unavailability (and unwillingness) of sufficiently trained instructors.[60] Thus, though HBCUs flourished at the turn of the twentieth century, they also

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Washington's simplistic goal or attitude as so much nonsense." Bracey, "The Significance of Historically Black Colleges and Universities," 682-83. Walter Allen and colleagues elaborate these various stances, nothing that "in *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois (1903/1989) famously referred to HBCUs as 'social settlements' where freedmen not only gained access to higher education as a previously withheld resource, but where they also began the process of assimilating into a civic order defined by Anglo-Protestant culture as free laborers and citizens. However, given the limits imposed by a malleable yet deeply entrenched racialized social order, the extent to which HBCUs should facilitate or modify Blacks' collective desires for upward mobility remained a point of contention. Therefore, many of the earlier studies contributed to the defense or critique of a particular brand of education (liberal arts or vocational) at HBCUs as well as social practices that defined the context for postsecondary schooling." Walter R. Allen et al., "Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Honoring the Past, Engaging the Present, Touching the Future," *Journal of Negro Education* 76, no. 3 (2007): 266.

[59] Joy Ann Williamson, "'This Has Been Quite a Year for Heads Falling': Institutional Autonomy in the Civil Rights Era," *History of Education Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2004): 555.

[60] Lovett, *America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities,* 43. While HBCUs often employed white instructors, these institutions aimed to educate and hire Black instructors for their student bodies. Further, a dearth of funding contributed to the level of instructor that these institutions were able to retain.

experienced myriad hardships, many of which Hogan mentioned in her message and persist through the present day.

Throughout the twentieth century, the number of accredited and operating HBCUs steadily waned. There were as many as 200 HBCUs founded prior to 1890 (and others following 1890), but by the turn of the twenty-first century only 103 HBCUs were still in operation.[61] While numerous factors contributed to this decline, the civil rights era of the 1960s dramatically impacted HBCUs. Institutions like Tougaloo served as catalysts for this social change and associated civil rights successes, and the changes they helped to enable also dramatically affected the landscape of higher education in the United States and, with it, the perceived place of and for HBCUs.[62] As Walter Allen and his colleagues note, "prior to the 1950s, Blacks were almost exclusively educated at HBCUs. However, by 1975, approximately three-quarters of Black college students attended traditionally White institutions."[63] Historian Bobby Lovett adds that, in the wake of the Supreme Court's *Brown* ruling in 1954, the "HBCU share of black college students fell from 95 percent (pre-*Brown*) to 16 percent" by 2008.[64] The end of Jim Crow, legally mandated desegregation, the Civil Rights Act of

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[61] Brown and Davis, "The Historically Black College as Social Contract," 31, 33.

[62] Noliwe M. Rooks, professor of Africana Studies at Brown University, discusses the changes in higher education policy and programming during these decades, focusing most extensively on the relationship between "white philanthropy and Black education" Noliwe M. Rooks, *White Money/Black Power: The Surprising History of African American Studies and the Crisis of Race and Higher Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 102. Rooks notes that "the growth of African American enrollment in 1967 was preceded by the Higher Education Act of 1965, which provided funds for education through the Work Study Program, Education Opportunity Grants, and the Guaranteed Student Loan Program. These programs were further aided by the creation in 1972 of the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant Program, which granted funds that students were allowed to use to attend the institution of their choice" (14). Rooks's book provides further information on the ways in which university funding shapes curriculum.

[63] Allen et al., "Historically Black Colleges and Universities," 264.

[64] Lovett, *America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities,* xvi. While Lovett does not cite specific dates for these percentages, he references 2008 throughout this paragraph, presumably comparing the mid-twentieth century to the present-day of his writing.

1964, affirmative action legislation, and shifting university admissions practices[65] meant that HBCUs were forced to compete with amply resourced and highly ranked historically white-serving institutions when it came to attracting and retaining both students and funding, as well as other predominantly Black colleges and universities.[66] By the late 1980s, to some it began to seem that HBCUs might be "an anachronism in a desegregated society or . . . an academic shell of the institutions which bloomed and flowered in the late 1800s and early 1900s."[67] In 1987 lawyer William A. Blakey, while championing the ongoing need for HBCUs, surmised that this general sentiment suggested that "the time for Black colleges and universities has passed." Yet he pointed out that such scrutiny was not directed at other (predominantly white-serving) universities similarly founded to address "special interests,"[68] by which he primarily meant Catholic, Jewish, or women students.

Just over ten years later, at the turn of the twenty-first century, Blakey's astute observations regarding public sentiments toward HBCUs seemed especially prescient as scholars and the general public further ruminated on the place for and purpose of these institutions. This discourse more acutely foregrounded the temporality of these institutions and explicitly questioned whether they

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[65] It is also important to situate the rise of HBCUs, along with their development and dwindling, in a broader national and global context. For instance, Martha Biondi notes that a revised form of "racial liberalism" swept across the United States in the wake of World War I, wherein "education emerged as the terrain for this national saga of racial transformation." Biondi, *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 13-14. Wendy Wall further details the global context in which national agendas of anticommunism and their associated rhetorics became entangled with civil rights. She notes that "the same language of individual rights, faith and freedom used to shore up free enterprise and cement an anticommunist consensus could be appropriated and redeployed by those arguing for civil rights." Wendy L. Wall, *Inventing the "American Way": The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 285.

[66] Lovett, *America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities,* xvi.

[67] William A Blakey, "Black Higher Education: A Legislative Victory," *New Directions* 14, no. 3 (1987): 18.

[68] Blakey, "Black Higher Education," 19.

were, to recall Grosz, "used up in their pastness."[69] Education scholars M. Christopher Brown II and James Earl Davis noted that, as pre-1964 products of the nation's racial past, the "one commonality across HBCUs is their historic responsibility as the primary providers of postsecondary education for African Americans in a social environment of racial discrimination."[70] Yet the dawning of the new millennium also brought a public optimism in regard to overt racial discrimination which, it seemed to some, was growing increasingly distant and even becoming a thing of the past.[71] To a public that increasingly desired to embrace an imagined postracial present, a fantasy further bolstered by the election of the nation's first Black president in 2008, the place for HBCUs was increasingly unclear; so too was their anticipated longevity.[72] With articles bearing titles like "Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Honoring the Past, Engaging the Present, Touching the Future," "The HBCU: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," and "A Backward Glance Forward: Past, Present and Future Perspectives on Historically Black Colleges and Universities," the scholarly discourse around HBCUs—most prominently in journals of education— made clear that these

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[69] This discourse seems particularly acute across journals of education and higher education. See Allen et al., "Historically Black Colleges and Universities"; Walter Recharde Allen and Joseph O. Jewell, "A Backward Glance Forward: Past, Present and Future Perspectives on Historically Black Colleges and Universities," *Review of Higher Education* 25, no. 3 (March 2002): 241–61; and Tilden J. LeMelle, "The HBCU: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," *Education* 123, no. 1 (Fall 2002): 190-96.

[70] Brown and Davis, "The Historically Black College as Social Contract," 32.

[71] For one example of rhetorical scholarship concerned with postracialism of the early twenty-first century, see Joshua Gunn and Mark Lawrence McPhail, "Coming Home to Roost: Jeremiah Wright, Barack Obama, and the (Re)Signing of (Post) Racial Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (2015): 1-24. Ethnic studies and communication scholar Ralina L. Joseph has also written on postracialism in the twenty-first century, and the way in which this rhetoric is strategically deployed by Black women specifically. Ralina L. Joseph, *Postracial Resistance: Black Women, Media, and the Uses of Strategic Ambiguity* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

[72] Here it is important to note the social and political context of acute attention to affirmative action in the United States in the 1990s, which included the Board of Regents of the University of California's 1995 decision on affirmative action. Robert Post and Michael Paul Rogin, eds., *Race and Representation: Affirmative Action* (New York: Zone Books, 1998); Jerome Karabel, "The Rise and Fall of Affirmative Action at the University of California," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 25 (1999): 109–12.

institutions sat at temporal crossroads.[73] Viewed collectively, these reflections present HBCUs as temporally suspended in a state of scrutiny and uncertainty, precariously wedged between what has not quite passed and what might come next.

As Hogan articulates in her message to Tougaloo alumni, HBCUs bear the unique burden of performing both "historic significance and contemporary relevance." As discourse at the turn of the twenty-first century indicates, these institutions were expected to serve as symbols of the past, to adhere to a historically moored mission, and also actively to indicate—to alumni donors, to potential applicants, to state and federal funding sources—an as of yet "untapped potential" and as such a worthy site of investment. Hogan's letter illustrates each of these demands while invoking an expansive audience—of current Tougaloo faculty, students, and staff and alumni—who all hold a responsibility to meet them. She concludes her message by asserting a collective optimism followed by language of a predictive future in which the college *will* have accomplished what needs to be done. She states, "We *will* need to continue to increase our enrollment, grow our endowment,

[73] In one of these articles, Tilden J. LeMelle warns of the ways in which grappling with the present purpose of HBCUs might rely on not only falsely relegating racial discrimination to the past but also the harmful residue left by these legacies. LeMelle notes that HBCUs were created to educate the "descendants of enslaved Africans in the United States." Regarding this inheritance, he adds, "All should remember that the U.S. is still a white male dominant racially stratified society. Race still matters and because it does the HBCU is still one of the most important bulwarks against the anti-black racism that persists." LeMelle, "The HBCU," 195. In another article, Walter Recharde Allen and Joseph O. Jewell point out that some viewed HBCUs as "relics of America's less enlightened racial past." They assessed the landscape of U.S. higher education, only to conclude that HBCUs were "at risk." Throughout their discussion, Allen and Jewell reference recent changes to affirmative action policies at the University of California (which took place in 1998). They also talk about the "conversion" of HBCUs to majority white-serving schools and the ongoing financial deficits that HBCUs faced. The conclusion of this article is aptly subtitled "Back to the Future: HBCUs, the New Millennium, and the Continuing Struggle for Black Higher Education." Allen and Jewell add that when surveying this present-day social and political context and then "looking backward, we see eerie resemblances between the systematic efforts to turn back the clock of Black progress at the end of the 20th century and similar efforts during the post-Reconstruction period at the end of the 19th century." Though their wording suggests an adherence to linear trajectories of progress, Allen and Jewell also tease out the cyclically recurrent nature of the past. Allen and Jewell, "A Backward Glance Forward," 257-58.

develop our land, expand our donor base, and engage more alumni to support the College." As Hogan repeatedly articulates a "we," she invokes an audience responsible for bearing the burden of Tougaloo's survival. Sandwiched between Hogan's discussion of Tougaloo's present need and future potential is her note regarding the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of Freedom Summer and the accompanying celebration that the university would host that June.[74]

Passing Down a Debt to History

Of course, the fiftieth anniversary of the civil rights movement and Freedom Summer was widely observed, with events extending beyond the confines of Tougaloo's campus and including conferences and celebrations held at other Mississippi-based institutions and institutions across the nation. For example, in an April 2014 address at the Civil Rights Summit at the LBJ Presidential Library in Austin, Texas, President Barack Obama took advantage of the epideictic occasion to ruminate on the simultaneity of progress and ongoing struggle. After affirming the ways in which he and so many other Americans benefited from the actions and effects of the civil rights movement, he added that "because of those efforts, because of that legacy" of the era, "we've got a debt to pay." This mention of debt underscores the tensions embedded in a desire to honor the successes of the past while also warning against, as he put it, "complacency" at present. Obama went on to caution that "history travels not only forwards; history can travel backwards, history can travel sideways."[75]

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[74] As Hogan notes in her letter, the on-campus conference and celebration were a collaboration between Tougaloo, the Mississippi NAACP and the Mississippi Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation, one of the event sponsors, further notes that the conference was "hosted by the Veterans of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movements, Inc., the Mississippi State Conference NAACP, Tougaloo College, One Voice and SNCC Legacy Project." "Freedom Summer 50 Conference Commemorates Freedom Summer of 1964 in Mississippi," *W.K. Kellogg Foundation,* https://www.wkkf.org/news-and-media/article/2014/06/freedom-summer-50-conference-commemorates-freedom-summer-of-1964-in-mississippi.

[75] "Remarks by the President at LBJ Presidential Library Civil Rights Summit," *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, April 10, 2014, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-

The image of history heading "sideways" is reminiscent of the temporal excess to which Hogan's "more timely" and Grosz's "untimely" allude. In each of these cases, the passage of time—and with it expectations for what might come based on what has already passed—rhetorically expands, circles back, and veers off course, departing from typical linear trajectories. According to Obama, "we"—Americans who similarly experienced positive changes following the movement—carried a debt to history and a responsibility for keeping it on track.

Without elaborating explicit details or terms of repayment, Obama seemed to suggest that acknowledging an enduring debt to the past meant also allowing for the indeterminacy of one's present relationship to the future. That is, while the past may have established the parameters of one's present expectations, there was no guarantee that such expectations would translate to future experience. As with any relationship consisting of multiple components and varying factors beyond a single individual's control, there was no telling what the future might hold. For gender studies scholar Miranda Joseph, such an entanglement of responsibility and history demonstrates the "fundamentally social and relational aspects" of debt.[76] As Joseph puts it, "any particular indebtedness must be the product of history; moreover, any particular *fact* of indebtedness must be the product of a process of knowledge production."[77] Articulations of debt implicate a relationship that stretches back in time and that keeps its parties—individuals, communities, or institutions—tethered to one another at present and to a future that holds the potential of its resolve. Thus, debt is more than a concrete transaction and does more than merely straddle multiple temporalities; it also brings people into communion by providing a shared thread of relation across time, binding them through a sense of responsibility to both past and future.

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office/2014/04/10/remarks-president-lbj-presidential-library-civil-rights-summit.

[76] Harney and Moten similarly conceive of debt as social and mutual in *The Undercommons,* 61.

[77] Miranda Joseph, *Debt to Society: Accounting for Life under Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), x.

Following his comments about history heading sideways, Obama insinuates the social and relational aspects of an outstanding debt to the country's civil rights legacy. As he envisions it, repayment would need to entail consistent "nurture" in the form of "struggle and discipline, and persistence and faith." Though Obama does not go so far as to reference specific family roles, through descriptions such as these, the image of tending to history begins to take on the qualities of tending to one's familial relations: nurture, discipline, persistence. As will become plainly evident, these articulations of holding a debt to the past assume the form of an ongoing, intergenerational relationship cultivated through diligent care.

Commemorating Care and Calling for the Recompense of Caretakers

In June 2014, Tougaloo College hosted the conference *Freedom50: Mississippi Freedom Summer, 1964-2014*. Tougaloo trustees, alumni, current students, and faculty assembled alongside Freedom Riders, activists, and organizers from that era to honor and observe one another and the past, and to envision the future. According to a conference agenda, titled "Mississippi Freedom Summer 50th Anniversary Conference: Inter-generational Action Agenda,"[78] the events ran for six days and included, first, three days of programming for a youth congress and then panels and plenaries attending to topics like voting rights, workers' rights, and educational rights; health disparities among Black communities, climate justice, and coalition building; and photography, film screenings, and musical performances.[79] The conference culminated in a "legacy banquet" with such notable

[78] "Mississippi Freedom Summer 50th Anniversary Conference: Inter-Generational Action Agenda" (Tougaloo College), accessed February 13, 2023, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53443b38e4b0081b96661076/t/53a737b7e4b04b8d93b1e129/1403467703886/FS50-Schedule-WEB-6.20.pdf.

[79] Pearl Stewart, "Freedom Summer 50th Anniversary Highlights Tougaloo College's Civil Rights Role," *Diverse: Issues In Higher Education*, June 25, 2014, https://www.diverseeducation.com/demographics/african-american/article/15094963/freedom-summer-50th-anniversary-highlights-tougaloo-colleges-civil-rights-role.

participants as actor and activist Danny Glover and comedian and civil rights activist Dick Gregory.[80] Though his name was not listed on the conference agenda alongside the other speakers at the celebratory soirée, Tougaloo trustee, Freedom Rider, and self-proclaimed "Buffalo Soldier" Hank Thomas offered prepared remarks addressing the audience and the needs of the college.[81] A video recording of Thomas's speech at the banquet, now accessible on Vimeo, captures his remarks from the moment he arrives at the lectern—unfolding his glasses and glancing down at the papers he has brought up with him—to the audience's final applause.[82]

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[80] Danny Glover is perhaps most widely known for his acting in films such as *The Color Purple* (1985) and *Lethal Weapon* (1987), and he has been a vocal advocate in the movement for reparations, speaking at a national hearing on reparations in June 2019. Additionally, Glover actively supported the reparations fund in Evanston, Illinois, attending and speaking at local town hall events. Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "At Historic Hearing, House Panel Explores Reparations," *New York Times*, June 19, 2019, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/19/us/politics/slavery-reparations-hearing.html; Sarah Anderson and Sanho Tree, "Danny Glover Supports Landmark Reparations Fund in Chicago Suburb," *Inequality.org* (blog), December 13, 2019, https://inequality.org/great-divide/danny-glover-reparations/; Heidi Randhava, "National Symposium on Municipal Reparations to Include Town Hall with Danny Glover," *Evanston RoundTable* (blog), December 6, 2021, http://evanstonroundtable.com/2021/12/05/national-symposium-reparations-danny-glover-evanston/. According to an NPR article reflecting on Dick Gregory's life, Gregory was a "comedian and civil rights crusader" who "gained attention as a comedian in the early 1960s, and was the first black comedian to widely win plaudits from white audiences." Gregory's daughter Ayanna Gregory was also present at the banquet and performed her spoken word piece "We Are the Children of the Movement." James Doubek and Emma Bowman, "Comedian and Civil Rights Activist Dick Gregory Dies at 84," *NPR*, August 19, 2017, sec. The Two-Way, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/08/19/544769294/dick-gregory-comedian-and-civil-rights-activist-dies-at-84.

[81] According to the Tougaloo College Fact Books publicly available online, Thomas is listed as a member of the Tougaloo Board of trustees in 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020; however, his name is not listed among the trustees in 2020-2021.

[82] The video of Thomas's remarks along with several other speakers and performers from that evening's event is publicly accessible through the Civil Rights Movement Archive's (CRMA) Vimeo account. According to the landing page, CRMA was "created by veterans of the Southern Freedom Movement (1951-1968). It preserves and makes available original-materials, histories, narratives, remembrances, and commentaries related to that movement. It is where we tell it like it was, the way we lived it, the way we saw it, the way we still see it." In addition to select videos from the *Freedom50* conference, this rich archive provides access to student interviews with veterans of the civil rights movement, documentation of the sixtieth anniversary celebrations, various oral history projects, and so on. Hank Thomas, "How Do We Thank Tougaloo?" June 28, 2014, *Freedom Summer 50th Anniversary Banquet,* video, 07:36, https://vimeo.com/crma. Quotations from and references to

As people gathered on Tougaloo's grounds for the fiftieth anniversary to reflect in jubilance and reverence, the rhetorical entanglement of debt and lineage was palpable. In the context of the campus, debt carried two distinct yet interrelated registers, both of which appeared in Thomas's succinct remarks. First, there was debt in the form of financial and material strictures that necessitated Thomas's fundraising pitch and that was featured in Hogan's earlier message to Tougaloo alumni. Second, there was a more intangible debt held by the audience in relation to the institution and to history. As Thomas's moving narrative unfolded, the cause and the effect of these two types of debt were interwoven and their origins jointly located in the events of the 1960s. By situating the source of Tougaloo's present indebtedness in this particularized past, Thomas truncates the lengthy history of social and structural "marginalization, underfunding, and sabotage of historically Black colleges" that Tressie McMillan Cottom describes as plaguing HBCUs like Tougaloo since their inception.[83] By doing so, however, he also rhetorically empowers those present with the means to help rectify this debt. Whether or not the entire audience was physically present on campus fifty years earlier, Thomas interpellates them as beneficiaries of Tougaloo's care to which this financial shortcoming is directly connected. Certainly, speakers delivering fundraising addresses commonly attempt to conjure a sense of community and a feeling of belonging in the efforts to inspire financial contributions. What is interesting about Thomas's speech and important for my purposes is his stark reliance on the structure of the family as the preeminent vehicle for receiving and providing such care.

The video of Thomas's remarks begins with him already on stage; the initial frame is tight, cutting off his lower half and showing only Thomas and an unadorned deep red backdrop.

Thomas's speech throughout this section are taken from this video.

[83] McMillan Cottom discusses the history of "sabotage" that undergirds HBCUs at present. Tressie McMillan Cottom, *Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy* (New York: The New Press, 2017), 211n18.

Throughout the video recording, viewers are given occasional glimpses of the audience, who appear alternately applauding and deeply attentive. During his seven minutes of speaking,[84] Thomas crafts a brief and affective retelling of the very history that compelled their assembly. By reimagining Tougaloo as a maternal figure, he coaxes audience members to remember the past while imagining themselves as integral members of a family whose cherished caregiver is now in need of their caretaking. According to Thomas, belonging to the civil rights history grounded in this campus means assuming a sense of responsibility for its continued stewardship. This debt, along with the active desire to take accountability for Tougaloo's future, is imagined through the bounds of the family form.[85]

Revering and Repaying "Mother Tougaloo"

Thomas begins his pitch by asserting his credentials as they relate to the impetus for this gathering and thus authorizing his presence on stage. Following his personal introduction, he uses a historical analogy to aggrandize the people whom they are gathered to celebrate, drawing a parallel between the "men who landed on the beach of Normandy and fought their way across Europe to free Europeans from Nazi terror and Nazi enslavement" and "the people who helped to free African Americans in Mississippi and across this country from the slavery of Jim Crow racism." Thomas differentiates between the former, whom some have referred to as "*the* greatest

[84] It's worth noting that the video of Thomas's remarks is seven minutes and thirty-six seconds long. However, it's evident that the video has been cut and spliced together during the moments of interspersed applause. (At these moments, though subtle, there is a notable shift from robust applause to sudden silence.) While there is no way to tell how long Thomas was on stage that night, one might assume that this applause was extensive, thus prompting the editing.

[85] Any discussion of family and debt, or family and responsibility, brings to mind Patricia Hill Collins's writing in "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation," *Hypatia* 13, no. 3 (1998): 62–82.

generation,"[86] and the latter, speaking to all those in attendance, as "*your* greatest generation."[87] From the grandiose and abstracted notion of "*the* greatest" to the ever-so-slightly more specific "*your* greatest," he then transitions to an even more intimate understanding of "generation." For the remainder of his time on stage, Thomas focuses on the intergenerational relations of kin while grounding this form of kinship in Tougaloo's campus. In doing so, he moves toward the apex of his ask: for the audience to help ensure the college's ongoing regeneration by instilling a sense of responsibility in younger generations and through financial contribution.

Following further introductory formalities, such as a gracious nod to the event's cosponsors and financial underwriters, Thomas begins to position Tougaloo as a physical place of unmatched respite during the movement. Echoing a theme commonly heard across scholarship that discusses Tougaloo's role in the civil rights movement, he emphasizes the way in which the college "provided safe harbor." According to him, this unparalleled act of service is the source of indebtedness; it is the reason that Tougaloo needs help at that moment, and it is the reason that he and many others, some of whom are in the audience, must bear this responsibility. Thomas invites the audience to join him in considering the extent of their obligation, asking, "How do you say thank you to an institution which provided safe harbor for so many who were in the eye of the storm?" This question of how to thank the institution, and of how to pay off a debt so deeply meaningful and

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[86] Thomas here references journalist Tom Brokaw's 1998 book, *The Greatest Generation*.

[87] Thomas's comparative reference to World War II, Nazis, and *that* "greatest generation" invites the audience to imagine *their* "greatest generation" as similarly having served as soldiers in a battle of good against evil. Though not exactly the same, one article from the local paper the *Clarion-Ledger*, articulated the gathering as one in which Freedom Summer "veterans" returned to their "battlefield" of Mississippi (and further, their former "safe haven" of Tougaloo). The article includes a quote from one "civil rights leader" who, in reflecting on that summer fifty years earlier, mused that "perhaps because of our youth, we took on the strategy of soldiers in a war." Jerry Mitchell, "Veterans of Freedom Summer Gather for 50th," *Clarion-Ledger*, June 25, 2014, https://www.clarionledger.com/story/journeytojustice/2014/06/25/freedom-summer-50th-anniversary-tougaloo/11378531/.

irrevocably intimate, frames the remainder of Thomas's remarks and his rhetorical movement between Tougaloo's past nurture, present need, and future presence or, in his words, Tougaloo's "surviv[al] for many, many more tomorrows." As with Obama's articulation of a persistent debt to the past, Thomas gestures toward the stakes of this anniversary celebration: ensuring the institution's longevity. To move individuals into feeling the onus of these stakes, he proceeds to reframe this responsibility in terms of family belonging; "our" past and future become inextricably entwined with the institution's tomorrows. Most plainly, Thomas decides to cast Tougaloo in the role of mother.

Through repeated gendered references to the institution, Thomas personifies Tougaloo and presents the image of a benevolent maternal figure. He leads the audience—of students, faculty, and alumni, Freedom Riders and civil rights organizers—to imagine themselves as "her" grateful offspring, thankful not least of all because of the "shelter in the storm, from the storm of racism and fatal danger" that "she" provided. Thomas firmly declares that "Tougaloo was there when we needed her. Now, Tougaloo needs us." He goes on to describe how, by welcoming and protecting the "Freedom Riders and Freedom Fighters of the 1960s," "Tougaloo paid dearly. She lost a lot of her financial support and resources that dried up in a loss that the school has not yet recovered from." Drawing from idealized images of motherhood, Thomas claims that Tougaloo selflessly sacrificed "her" security for the betterment of her progeny.[88] Here, debt morphs and multiplies, assuming a more tangible and material form. Not only are "we" beholden to "her," but "she" too is indebted. According to Thomas, "her" debt is firmly financial and directly connected to "our" well-being. Thus, rectifying these arrears now falls within the purview of "our" responsibility in the twenty-first century.

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[88] Wendy Brown also discusses how, why, and in what ways families "cohere," gesturing toward scholarship that similarly raises questions about a mother's "natural" inclination toward self-sacrifice in the interest of her children. Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015), 102.

While eloquently illustrating the passage of time and the turning of years—from then, "the springtime of our lives," to now, "the autumn of our years"—Thomas includes himself in this attendant crowd of offspring, now aged and matured. As the fellow beneficiaries of Tougaloo's "love and care for us," Thomas implores the audience that "now, we must show our love and care for Tougaloo." Much like the foundational relationship between mother and child, elder and youth, Tougaloo's grounds—the grounds that sheltered and provided for "us"—are "sacred," he claims. As such, these grounds must be treated with reverence and prioritized, tended to with diligence and concern. Repayment encompasses the enculturation of future generations, bringing "our" children and grandchildren to pay their respects to Tougaloo and ensure their ongoing respect for "her." As Thomas continues, his direct references to care are rhetorically connected to this familial lineage. As part of his fundraising request, care is also figured in the form of a financial contribution. In addition to "bring[ing] your friends" and "send[ing] your children to Tougaloo," Thomas adds that folks should also "send your checks," completing the life cycle of the family form wherein the once helpless now must assume the role of helper. Thomas ends his remarks through an embellishment of repetition, stating, "Tougaloo cared for us, Tougaloo cared for us, we must now care for Tougaloo." He concludes with affirmations of love and affection, repeating over and over, "Tougaloo, we love you. Tougaloo, we love you, and we love you. Thank you very much." Like the obligatory love for one's family (and specifically one's mother), love for one's institution is demonstrated through fulfilling obligations of care. Conflated with love, giving care is reconfigured as giving financially in order to address Tougaloo's debts.

Throughout Thomas's speech, the dutiful care for family becomes grafted onto the relationship between individual and institution. As a maternal figure, Tougaloo funneled all attention and resources into the care of her offspring; she relinquished her own safety and security for their (and, in Thomas's remarks, "our") successful upbringing. Now that those who once suckled from the

institution are fully formed and self-sufficient, they are in the position to supply resources; having returned home, they must now provide support. The way in which the family form—and imagining oneself as an integral member of this family—produces a sense of responsibility begins to demonstrate how care is prioritized and parsed out. Paraphrasing Kathi Weeks's assessment of the family's main function and flaw, Sophie Lewis notes that "the family's most fundamental feature . . . is that it privatizes care: a process of enclosure in which all kinds of families unintentionally participate."[89] As Lewis, Weeks, and other feminist scholars writing about the family point out, this is how the assumption of responsibility for providing basic needs—care in the form of food and clothing, housing and healthcare—is relocated from the state to the individual, from public to private. Through images of the family, care is cordoned off and reserved only for those imagined as family. This is perhaps the family's most evident benefit (for some) and fatality (for many). Through his presentation of Tougaloo as a maternal head of family, Thomas repositions himself and the audience as the next generation, required to pick up the burden of care within the bounds of their family unit.[90]

Lasting Debt from Tougaloo's Darkest Days

While Thomas mentioned neither Brown University nor the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership once

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[89] Sophie Lewis, *Abolish the Family: A Manifesto for Care and Liberation* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2022), 30.

[90] By focusing on the way in which Tougaloo is recast in the role as the maternal head of family, I am consciously invoking the extensive body of literature that focuses on Black motherhood and mothering. Though space does not permit an adequate engagement with this rich scholarly lineage within the body of this chapter, it is important to call attention to these scholars and their work, including Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65–81; Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976); Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (Orlando: Mariner Books, 1983); Alexis Pauline Gumbs, China Martens, and Mai'a Williams, eds., *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016); and Jennifer C. Nash, *Birthing Black Mothers* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).

during his remarks at the banquet, a fragment of his speech appeared in a 2015 promotional video celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the partnership. The video, which is just over thirteen minutes long, is catalogued on Brown's YouTube page alongside hundreds of other videos that capture university-sponsored conferences, panel discussions, celebratory gatherings, commencements, and more. It commences with the solemn tolling of a church bell and a brief historical overview of the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership, provided by a disembodied narrator whose low-pitched voice—devoid of affect—swiftly moves through the facts of the two universities' discrete origins and the year that they "officially entered into a relationship."[91] This background is followed by glimpses of the institutions' recent commencement ceremonies (Brown in 2013 and Tougaloo in 2014); interviews with faculty, staff, and students who reflect on their involvements with the partnership across the past five decades; and musings from all on how the collaboration might continue to evolve in the future.

The statement from Thomas's speech included in the video highlights his question, "How do you say thank you to an institution which provided safe harbor for so many who were in the eye of the storm? Tougaloo was there for us, 50 plus years ago." Arranged just before Thomas asks this question, viewers are met with a clip of Brown's president, Christina Paxson, who is addressing the Tougaloo community at the college's 145th commencement. Paxson probes yet another configuration of debt, speaking on behalf of Brown and stating that "we, in fact, owe you, Tougaloo,

[91] Though not directly stated in the introduction of the video, characterization of the partnership as "unlikely" prevails across reflections on this collaboration. This includes a 2014 editorial in Brown's alumni magazine, written by president Christina Paxson. Paxson states, "It may seem unlikely that a historically black college in Jackson, Mississippi, and a Northeastern Ivy League university would become partners amid the civil rights movement. What joined these seemingly different institutions, however, are the values that permeate the character and culture of each: freedom of conscience, liberty of thought, and a commitment to justice and service to society." Christina Paxson, "From the President," *Brown Alumni Magazine* (blog), July 1, 2014, https://www.brownalumnimagazine.com/articles/2014-07-01/from-the-president.

a debt of gratitude. Not only for your heroism in the darkest days of 1963 and 1964, but also for helping us to live up to our ideals." At the end of the video, the narrator returns to summarize the present and the future of the partnership from a stance of optimistic continuity, noting that "as the partnership embarks on the second half of its first century, we carry on a dream and commitment to a better future." As the next section demonstrates, a more in-depth engagement with Paxson's presence at and words during Tougaloo's 145th graduation ceremony reveals the ways in which the committed relationship between Brown and Tougaloo rests on the supposition of shared ideals and the articulation of consensual responsibility.

The Avowed Promise and Long-term Partnership of Brown and Tougaloo

A little over a month before Tougaloo hosted the *Freedom50* conference, the college held its 145th commencement on Sunday, May 18, 2014, fifty years to the day after Brown and Tougaloo initially formalized their institutional partnership. It would not be surprising if the auspicious date was intentionally chosen, since in addition to fulfilling the epideictic expectations of feting the college's graduating class, the event served as an opportunity to mark this institutional coupling.[92] Part of the commencement ceremony included an acknowledgment of the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership's anniversary, delivered by Tougaloo president Hogan, and a speech given by Brown president Paxson. Video of these events—beginning with the conferral of Paxson's honorary degree and concluding at the end of her speech—show the women on stage alongside Tougaloo faculty and

[92] While this commencement ceremony offered the opportunity for Hogan and Paxson to reaffirm the relationship between Tougaloo and Brown, universities are rife with other forms of coupledom or relational pairings. In her talk given at the 1977 Douglass College commencement, Adrienne Rich discusses the "ethical and intellectual contract between teacher and student." While Rich does not explicitly talk about debt or indebtedness, she speaks at length about expectation and responsibility (to oneself, to one another). Rich's writing offers interesting insight to one's relational responsibilities to others and to oneself. Adrienne Rich, "Claiming an Education," *The Common Woman*, 1977.

administrators, all of whom are in regalia.[93] While Hogan and Paxson fulfilled the customary expectations of a graduation event—exuding gravitas and pride and anticipating the graduates' limitless futures—the ceremony also took on the rhetorical characteristics of a different kind of epideictic affair. Their speeches assumed the form of a vow renewal, a public expression of institutionalized devotion. The commencement ceremony provided the chance for the two institutions, personified by Hogan and Paxson, to stand together in front of "family" and reassert their commitment to one another. While the event was evidently jubilant, these affirmations also carried the subtle suggestion of a racialized sense of responsibility along with the historic and enduring traces of white benevolence.

The video begins with Hogan's presentation of Paxson's honorary degree for her "continued support of the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership, formalized in May of 1964" which "makes relevant today the vision created fifty years ago." Following the pomp of Paxson's formal hooding, Hogan then leads the two presidents and all in attendance through a symbolic ceremony of recommitment that marks their cherished partnership—"peerless in American higher education," according to Hogan—and lays out their future intentions. As she narrates the institutions' mutual "pledge to stand together to sign anew the proclamation that joins our institutions in partnership," the physical proclamation—two stiffly rectangular pieces of what resembles white foam core board—is brought out. As Hogan and Paxson solemnly proceed, the commencement begins to take on the characteristics of a familiar and easily recognizable (Christian) marriage ceremony. Before either president puts pen to paper in front of the audience of witnesses, Hogan takes care to acknowledge their extended "families," which includes those in attendance and in absence. She asserts, "as we

[93] The video that informs my rhetorical analysis throughout this section of the chapter is publicly available through Brown University's YouTube page. Beverly Wade Hogan and Christina Paxson, "Tougaloo Commencement: Christina Paxson Address," May 18, 2014, *Tougaloo College Commencement Ceremony*, video, 22:38, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zj-Fmq2Bkro.

affix our signatures today, in the presence of the Tougaloo College family, and representatives of the Brown University family, we do so with our eyes on the future." Standing before members of their respective kin, these two institutions (via their esteemed representatives) solemnly swear to remain committed to one another. With this signing ceremony on Tougaloo's campus and under Paxson and Hogan's watchful eyes and unwavering hands, the two institutions promise to begin "the next step in a 50 year journey that has so happily united our two institutions."[94]

Following the inking of their (re)union, Paxson takes center stage to offer words of wisdom and encouragement to Tougaloo's graduating class. She praises the graduates, calling attention to and specifically congratulating their parents and families on the "support that you gave these young men and women on their journey." Such comments are common for the genre of the commencement address, which often include a recognition of graduates' accomplishments and an acknowledgment of those who helped them along the way. As Paxson proceeds, however, she directs her attention to a very different journey, the shared journey of Brown and Tougaloo. This celebratory moment provides her with an opportunity to mark "the beginning of a fifty-year journey, the beginning of the next step in a fifty-year journey that has so happily united our two institutions." Through a narration of the historical contexts of past and present, Paxson creates space between then and now and conjures a sense of fluctuating temporal and geographic distance. She emphasizes the consistency of Brown's institutional values—like the university's evident "commitment to freedom," which was plainly on display in 1964, given the social and political context of the era and thus its "surprising"

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[94] This quotation is from the beginning of Paxson's address, following Hogan. Hogan and Paxson, "Tougaloo Commencement: Christina Paxson Address." Additionally, this ceremonial signing resembled a very similar event held on Brown's campus just one year earlier. There, Hogan received an honorary degree from the university and spoke at Brown's baccalaureate ceremony, on May 25, 2013. For the details of Hogans address, see "Beverly Wade Hogan Baccalaureate Address," May 25, 2013, *Brown University Baccalaureate Ceremony,* video, 24:07, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqtaFaRxCic.

partnership with Tougaloo—in contrast to what Paxson suggests were sudden changes. Even as Paxson articulates the "debt of gratitude" that Brown owes to Tougaloo, she manages to laud Brown's ideals and goodwill.

Throughout her remarks, Paxson demonstrates what Lindsey Rae Miner Gearin defines as "white benevolence." By assuming a rhetorical position of benevolence, Paxson "inhabits" Brown's historical positioning in relationship to Tougaloo. She subtly acknowledges the differential effects of segregation and centuries of systematized racism, while simultaneously, to borrow from Gearin, "distanc[ing Brown] from the violence of white supremacy." Aspects of Paxson's address culminate in a gracious rhetorical gesture of "owing" Tougaloo. Yet when viewed through the lens that Gearin provides, it becomes clear that Paxson is able to reimagine Brown as a consistently "harmless" and benevolent institution that is engaged in ongoing "reparative actions" that provide "evidence that the harms of [the institution's] whiteness are being addressed and compensated for."[95] By doing so, Paxson articulates an inter-institutional debt while also canceling out any enduring responsibility for it.

The Brown-Tougaloo Partnership's Benevolent Beginnings

Paxson's story of "how Brown and Tougaloo came together" begins in 1964, a moment in which "life was beginning to change quickly in the United States." By juxtaposing descriptors like "for decades" and "suddenly," she underscores the rapidity of this revolution. While setting the scene of their historic pairing, Paxson accentuates the temporal space between the then of 1964 and the now of 2014, as well as the geographic distance and institutional difference between Tougaloo

[95] Lindsey Rae Miner Gearin, "(Un)Settling Unpayable Debt: Theorizing and Disrupting the Production of White 'Benevolence' during Giving to Reparations Funds," *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry* 9, no. 1 (2022): 52.

and Brown. She does so by marking the development and growth of Brown—"then a modest-sized New England College" and "now a large university with a global alumni network"—and using references to technologies that would have been unthinkable fifty years earlier. These technologies—"the blink of a text message, a call on Skype"—symbolize the ways in which the passage of time and the "great distance between Mississippi and Rhode Island" have been "reduced." By establishing these distinctions—between the past and present, here and there—Paxson can confidently lay out the historic conditions under which Brown and Tougaloo came together while knowing that the audience will be able to differentiate between the *then* and the *now*. She affirms that Brown was *then* a "university that was firmly rooted in its time and place, guilty of the same prejudices and careless assumptions that blocked social progress in so many elite institutions." With the Brown of *then* clearly demarcated, there is little risk of the audience confusing it with the Brown of *now*. Conversely, Paxson paints the Tougaloo of *then* as an institution that "had been an oasis of civility and interracial dialogue."[96] Yet this wellspring of generative discussion was interrupted in the 1960s when, amid the turbulence of civil rights in Mississippi,[97] Tougaloo's financial position and accreditation were suddenly at risk. As "Tougaloo stepped up in new ways" and "opened its doors to leaders of the movement," the institution "became an easy target" of state pressure and threats to "remove its charter and eliminate sources of funding."[98] It is within this historic context—one in which "*suddenly*,

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[96] Favors details Tougaloo's enduring position as both "oasis," as Paxson says, and "safe haven" or "shelter." Favors charts the history of the sense of shelter in the face of paternalistic white administration that Tougaloo provided. Favors, *Shelter in a Time of Storm*, 46.

[97] As Williamson notes, "Nine Tougaloo students inaugurated the rebirth of direct action in Mississippi with a sit-in at the Jackson Municipal Library in March 1961." Williamson, ""This Has Been Quite a Year for Heads Falling,"" 560. Lovett confirms that these students and this historical event are familiarly known and referenced as the "Tougaloo nine." Lovett, *America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities,* 164.

[98] According to Lovett, "a handful of students at private Tougaloo College, on the outskirts of Jackson, marched in support of the sit-in demonstrations sweeping the southern region. Students tried to desegregate local parks and a bus terminal. . . . The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, a state agency funded by the legislature and partly by a wealthy New York

in 1963 and '64, Tougaloo was fighting for its survival"[99]—that Tougaloo and Brown came together. In this "hour of darkness," Paxson dramatically retells, "Tougaloo's plight became known to a distant university in Rhode Island."[100] She concludes her brief foray into the genesis of their coupling by adding that, as with many a great love affair, "the rest, as they say, is history."

Although Paxson spins a tale of how, where, and why "our relationship began" that is subtly tinged with sentimentality and saviorism, historical sources reveal that this coupling was far more calculated and complex. The two institutions "already maintained a friendly relationship" prior to

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philanthropist to defend white supremacy, threatened to revoke the Tougaloo Charter after students from Tougaloo were arrested for attempting a Freedom Ride from Jackson to New Orleans. The president of Tougaloo College resigned, and some black Mississippians opened their homes to freedom riders, providing food and shelter until their court dates in Mississippi." Lovett, *America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities,* 164-65.

[99] While Tougaloo certainly experienced precarity in the early 1960s, scholarship suggests that this uncertainty was perhaps not as "sudden" as the picture that Paxson paints here. Joy Ann Williamson's work helps to flesh out this historical context. She notes that the college was financially struggling prior to the 1960s. In 1951, their accreditation was at risk because of their financial position, requiring the institution quickly to secure additional philanthropic support. It is also the case that in February 1964, following the Mississippi lieutenant governor's urging, "three state senators introduced a bill to revoke Tougaloo's ninety-four-year-old charter in the name of 'public interest.' They maintained a twofold argument: First, Tougaloo's original charter restricted the campus to $500,000 worth of assets, a figure Tougaloo passed years earlier without repercussions. Second, and more to the heart of the matter, Gartin and others accused the College of completely neglecting its charter: 'The big question to be decided is whether the school has substituted civil disobedience instruction for the curriculum it was authorized to have under its charter.'" Williamson, "'This Has Been Quite a Year for Heads Falling,'" 564-65.

[100] Paxson adds here that this was "thanks to two members of Tougaloo's board, Irving Fain and Lawrence Durgin, who lived in Providence." The Brown-Tougaloo Partnership website presents a timeline that charts the history of the pairing. According to this timeline and alongside Paxson's narrative here, it was in early 1964 when "several individuals with connections to Tougaloo and Providence convened to provide support to Tougaloo. This was realized through the creation of the Rhode Island Friends of Tougaloo group. It was formed by Irving Fain, Providence businessman, and his wife, Macie Fain, who was born and raised in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. It also included Rev. Larry Durgin, minister of Providence's Central Congregational Church and part of the Tougaloo College Board through his work with the American Missionary Association. They aimed to support Tougaloo College financially." As mentioned earlier, the American Missionary Association or AMA, of which Durgin belonged, was heavily involved in the establishment and operation of HBCUs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "Partnership History," Brown-Tougaloo Partnership.

1964 that consisted of a student and faculty exchange; furthermore, two Tougaloo trustees had deep relationships to Rhode Island and to Brown.[101] Indeed, Tougaloo's preexisting financial deficits had already prompted the college to begin exploring a more formal partnership with Brown and, in the fall of 1963, to begin the application process for funding from the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Advancement of Education.[102] Certainly, the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership transpired at an

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[101] Williamson, "'This Has Been Quite a Year for Heads Falling,'" 566.

[102] According to Williamson, the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Advancement of Education "supported partnerships between HBCUs and predominantly white northern colleges," hence making it the ideal target source of funding as talks between Brown and Tougaloo proceeded. Ford funding and the formalized partnership between the universities was entangled with the resignation of Tougaloo's then-president, Reverend Dr. Adam D. Beittel. For more on the relationship between Beittel's resignation, civil rights struggles, and Tougaloo's financial precarity at that historical moment, see Williamson, "'This Has Been Quite a Year for Heads Falling,'" 554–76. Additionally, Brown University's *Freedom Now!* and *Brown-Tougaloo Exchange* archival projects provide public access to many archival materials directly related to the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership and to the efforts in the 1960s to garner funding for related exchanges and programming. Such documents include a memo from April 30, 1964 from a program director, written on the letterhead of the Education Division of the Ford Foundation to Brown president Barnaby Keeney; this memo confirms the Board's approval of $240,000 in funding to Brown and Tougaloo, then referred to as a "Cooperative Exchange" or "Cooperative Program." The memo lays out the designated dollar amount with the accompanying stipulation of "no strings attached." It concludes with the informal and patronizing sign-off, "have fun." "Personal Note, Frank Bowles, Ford Foundation to Barnaby Keeney, President, Brown University, 30 April 1964," *Brown-Tougaloo Exchange/Freedom Now! Archives,* https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/do_search_single.php?searchid=10082. The archives also house a subsequent funding proposal for the partnership that was sent to the Rockefeller Foundation and dated September 9, 1964. This application details plans for a new language program as part of the partnership. The application notes, "It should be made plain at this point that Brown is prepared to stay with Tougaloo all the way. Its commitment without regard to time was a key factor in persuading the Fund for the Advancement of Education to provide the 'floor' support for the Cooperative Program" (3) and adds that Brown "made a thorough study of the Tougaloo situation before committing itself unreservedly to the Cooperative Program" (5). "Supplement to Rockefeller Foundation Grant, 9 September 1964," *Brown-Tougaloo Exchange/Freedom Now! Archives,* https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/do_search_single.php?searchid=10053. The language program, albeit beyond the bounds of this chapter's focus, offers interesting insight to the racialized power dynamics of white benevolence at play early in the founding of this partnership. As part of the Brown-Tougaloo Exchange project, then-Brown student Niketa Williams provided a brief glimpse of the program funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. Niketa Williams, "Brown-Tougaloo Language Project: A Controversial Experiment," Brown-Tougaloo Exchange, accessed February 19, 2023, https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/themes/language/index.html. According to

opportune moment for Tougaloo; however, it was far from sudden or spontaneous, and certainly not without careful assessment on behalf of Brown.

While financial debts likely factored into Tougaloo's decision to partner with Brown, one particularly scathing *New York Daily Tribune* article published on the day that their formal partnership was cemented suggests that Tougaloo was not the only institution saddled with debts to pay.[103] Titled "Brown U. Adopts Southern Academic Waif," the article begins, "Brown University, Providence, R.I., announced yesterday it is using a $245,000 Ford Foundation grant to take a little Southern college under its wing, enrich it intellectually and bring it up in the academic world." Through the use of egregiously infantilizing language like "waif" and "little Southern college," the article personifies and paternalizes the relationship between Brown and Tougaloo, suggesting hierarchies of both institutional wealth and (im)maturity.[104] Further still, the article takes care to add that Brown's actions, which may at first blush appear to be chivalrous charity, could also be read as

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their websites, *Freedom Now!* and *Brown-Tougaloo Exchange* constitute a two-part project that began in the summer of 2002 and included students from Brown and Tougaloo. The students joined faculty in conducting archival research at Tougaloo College and making certain materials from these archives available digitally. This research led to a more in-depth focus on the very partnership that permitted the work to start; students and faculty then turned to the Brown University archives to investigate the history of the Brown-Tougaloo Cooperative Exchange. Supporters of the project, listed on the website and relevant to my work in this chapter, include President Hogan, Brown University's Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, and the Ford Foundation.

[103] This article is discussed by then-Brown faculty member and history professor James Campbell in an online essay that helps to introduce and orient visitors to the online archival projects. A digital copy of the original article is available as part of the archive. Campbell later chaired the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice. Jim Campbell, "Brown-Tougaloo Exchange," *Brown-Tougaloo Exchange/Freedom Now! Archives,* https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/campbell.html.

[104] The provocative language used in this article plainly emphasizes the relationship between Brown and Tougaloo as one of classed and racialized power differences. While this example is extreme, it gestures toward a more generalized sentiment that conjured images of family relations and infantilizing benevolence. In 1967 Stokely Carmichael "denounced the cooperative project in a speech at Woodward Chapel, claiming that Tougaloo had been reduced from a black college to a 'Brown baby.'" Campbell, "Brown-Tougaloo Exchange." A full copy of Carmichael's speech from April 11, 1967, can be found at "'We Ain't Going' Transcript," Speech Vault, April 11, 1967, http://www.speeches-usa.com/Transcripts/stokeley_carmichael-weaint.html.

self-serving expiation. According to the piece, the relationship brought Brown's history full circle, representing an "evolutionary fulfillment for the college founded 200 years ago by John Nicholas Brown *[sic]* with money he and other contributors had earned—much of it from the slaves, sugar and rum 'Triangle Trade.'"[105] Thus, through this "Tougaloo fosterage," Brown was not only altruistically giving to a lesser entity in need. It was also repaying a long-standing debt bound up with an affluence historically accumulated through systems of white supremacy.[106]

While Paxson references the partnership's origins, her rhetorical decisions leave much of its nuance (and controversies) unaddressed. In her 2014 address at Tougaloo, rather than acknowledging the inherent divergence in Brown's and Tougaloo's institutional positionalities and inherited orientations to whiteness,[107] Paxson recasts their institutional partnership as a celebration

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[105] The exchange surrounding this article is fascinating and extensive. For example, in an interoffice memo from "Griff" to "Mr. Keeney," Brown's president, the article's egregious "errors and distortions" are clearly outlined. The memo cites the tone of the article—"particularly offensive" and "snide hogwash"—and factual inaccuracies. These errors include the information about Brown's founder and financial foundation. The memo notes, "It was Nicholas Brown, not John Nicholas Brown, who was involved in the founding; and of course it is inaccurate to say he was the sole founder or even one of the more active ones at the beginning." It adds that, "although the college was later the indirect beneficiary of the triangle trade through gifts from the Brown family . . . in the early days the condition of the college was one of penury—not one of slave trade affluence." According to the memo, Durgin, one of the Tougaloo trustees heavily involved in the collaboration, sent a letter of correction to the *Tribune*. However, the editor refused to print this letter until they received accompanying proof "(1) that Brown was not founded with slave-trade money, and (2) that Tougaloo is not a waif." "Memo re: Herald Tribune, Griff to Mr. Keeney, Brown University, 28 May 1964," *Brown-Tougaloo Exchange/Freedom Now! Archives,* https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/do_search_single.php?searchid=10075. As Campbell noted, "the Brown-Tougaloo relationship has been no stranger to controversy. On the contrary, the relationship quickly became a focal point for many of the racial and political tensions overtaking the Freedom Movement in the years after 1964. While Brown administrators typically spoke of 'helping' Tougaloo to fulfill its new mission of preparing African Americans to enter the American 'mainstream,' a growing number Tougaloo students questioned the value of 'integration,' while bristling at the alleged 'paternalism' of their new partners." Campbell, "Brown-Tougaloo Exchange."

[106] "Article, 'Brown Adopts Southern Waif,' *New York Herald Tribune*, 18 May 1964," *Brown-Tougaloo Exchange/Freedom Now! Archives,* https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/do_search_single.php?searchid=10160.

[107] According to Gearin, who is in conversation with Sara Ahmed's phenomenological understanding

of Brown's intergenerational and admirable ideals. She emphasizes this point by adding that, in 1964, "there was no better way to celebrate Brown's bicentennial than to renew its commitment to freedom. In the short term, that meant deepening Brown's ties to Tougaloo."[108]

Transitioning from Brown's inherited and ongoing commitment to freedom, Paxson acknowledges Tougaloo's upcoming conference to mark the fiftieth anniversary of civil rights and Freedom Summer, a history that is, she deferentially presumes, "of course well known to all of you here." Her gesture to the audience's foundational knowledge of this history permits her to proceed in quickly highlighting the aspects of that summer now fifty years past that are directly relevant to her present purposes. However, before doing so, she adds that knowing this history of struggle and survival does not guarantee its confinement to the past. Rather, in a statement remarkably similar to the concern evinced by Obama during his remarks at the Civil Rights Summit months earlier, Paxson articulates the risks of familiarity and idle satisfaction. She adds, "I hope we never become so complacent about that triumph that we allow it to recede into the comfort of sanitized history." Through her use of "we," Paxson takes care to shift away from talking directly to those partaking in the forthcoming anniversary celebration and to avoid delegating this responsibility solely to the Tougaloo community. Rather, she opens her address to a more ambiguous collective of which she is a part.

As Paxson concludes her foray into the partnership's past and present and prepares to send

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of orientation, "the position of white benevolence is best understood as a habitual orientation toward goodness that is inherited, familiar, and comfortable for white people. Understanding whiteness as a set of orientations is useful because it shows how whiteness operates beyond individual white people without obscuring how white people reproduce whiteness as they take up inherited orientations." Gearin, "(Un)Settling Unpayable Debt," 54.

[108] Of course, as Brown's 250th anniversary aligned with the 50th anniversary of the partnership, Brown's 200th anniversary coincided with the partnership's official start. In her speech, Paxson also mentions President Lyndon B. Johnson's visit to Brown's campus in September of 1964, which she notes was further acknowledgment and celebration of Brown's commitment to freedom and the enduring value of religious freedom, specifically.

Tougaloo's graduates off with words of advice, she gestures toward the ongoing balance sheet between Tougaloo and Brown. Noting how "the movement helped universities, and no university was helped more by its commitment to social justice than Brown," Paxson affirms that "we, in fact, owe you, Tougaloo, a debt of gratitude." The inclusion of the words "in fact" serves to underscore and to anticipate any surprise at the statement that follows. This insertion hints that the mere notion that *we*, Brown, could be indebted to *you*, Tougaloo, might counter an unspoken, widely held assumption that, if anything, Tougaloo would (and should) be indebted to Brown. Paxson herself seems to contradictorily suggest as much earlier in her address, while recollecting Tougaloo's "fight for its survival." Yet here, she firmly positions Brown as owing Tougaloo "not only for your heroism in the darkest days of 1963 and 1964, but also for helping us to live up to our ideals. Tougaloo gave that gift to Brown, and I thank you for that." Tougaloo taught Brown how to be better, at once affirming the latter's inherent and ongoing "goodness," as Gearin might say.

As Paxson's remarks draw to an end, she "draw[s] on Tougaloo's motto," noting that "this is the point at which history meets the future." By beginning to bridge the past, present, and also the future, she returns to the more formulaic configuration of a graduation speech. Paxson emphasizes the ways in which "we"—perhaps indicating the "Tougaloo College family" and the "Brown University family" that Hogan called attention to in leading up to Paxson's address—can pay respect to Tougaloo's history and repay the actions of the individuals who organized and actively engaged in the civil rights movement. These individuals, some of whom are present in the audience, as Paxson notes, "wanted to live in a fairer country than the ones their parents had. And who could blame them? Because of their courage and their sacrifice, we are better. The best way we can pay homage to that generation is by demanding that we become better still." In these final sentences, Paxson invokes familiar familial refrains of intergenerational concern. Such sentiments echo the notions of maternal sacrifice in the name of one's offspring that Thomas would articulate the following month

at the *Freedom50* banquet. However, Paxson's emphasis on the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership shifts from this focus on a single mother to emphasize the importance of a couple, a pair of parental figures responsible for shepherding the next generation.

Married Institutions and Intergenerational Intentions

Following the Sunday graduation ceremony on Tougaloo's campus in 2014, Paxson and Hogan sat down and recorded their reflections on the day and the ongoing relationship between their institutions.[109] The video of this staged conversation is publicly available on Brown's YouTube page and lasts only three minutes. It shows the presidents angled toward one another on a couch, remarkably resembling one another—entirely clad in black with single strings of white pearls around their necks—as they chat. As Paxson and Hogan converse, their visual similarities mirror their emphasis on the similar ideals that serve as the foundation for the institutional partnership. They remark on the longevity and the history of the universities' relationship, citing shared institutional values and expressing agreement over the responsibilities, expectations, and hopes for the future that both Brown and Tougaloo aim to instill in their students. Referencing the speech that she gave earlier that day at Tougaloo's commencement ceremony, Paxson muses over the way in which the universities' values are passed down and passed on, from one generation to the next, explaining, "What I loved is while I was talking, I could look over to my right, and I could see the people who are back for their fiftieth reunions, who were here and were graduating in 1964, and then looking the other way and seeing the kids who are graduating today, and it's very powerful to think about that

[109] This scene and the discussion between the two presidents is captured on video, which is available for viewing at "Tougaloo College and Brown University Celebrate and Expand Their 50-Year Partnership," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, June 6, 2014, https://www.jbhe.com/2014/06/tougaloo-college-and-brown-university-celebrate-and-expand-their-50-year-partnership/.

bridge." That bridge, between past and future, is built on the values and ideals shared by the institutions and affixed by their vow. In another discussion of the key components of this coupledom, Paxson notes that common goals are the "elements that make for such long-lived partnerships: a shared sense of mission and purpose, a commitment to making the collaboration work despite the inevitable frictions, and the existence of mutual benefits that accrue to both."[110] Having rearticulated their commitment to one another, Brown and Tougaloo can continue to instill these institutional beliefs in the generations that are presently on their campuses and in the future generations that will someday pass through.

While the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership presents the image of married institutions, veins of coupledom run throughout the bedrock of the university.[111] In her formative examination of "being married to the institution," Robyn Wiegman points out how this language, which is used to imagine one's relationship to and within the university, "collapse[s] . . . the public into the private" and invokes "the overdetermined heterosexual narrative of marriage," thus "rais[ing] the specter of the 'family' as both metaphor and organizing principle of academic life."[112] Wiegman's insights continue to resonate in the twenty-first-century context of university redress, wherein such "heterosexualized, bourgeois practices of marriage and family"[113] contribute to (re)allocations of responsibility for

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[110] Christina Paxson, "From the President," *Brown Alumni Magazine*, Spring/Summer 2014, https://www.brownalumnimagazine.com/articles/2014-07-01/from-the-president.

[111] This coupledom manifests in myriad ways, with certain forms of partnership valued and others dismissed. El-Tayeb and Stehle point out how collaboration and co-authorship, especially in relation to the temporality dictated by the tenure clock, are often written off within the humanities. They note that "co-teaching, collaborative writing and cross-disciplinary collaborations are frequently discouraged. In other words, this is a university that values collaborations as long as they produce measurable, assessable outcomes, grants, patents, or 'innovation.' . . . Neoliberal racial capitalism is driven by the 'clock' of assessment and heteronormative and ableist understandings of time and productivity." El-Tayeb and Stehle, "Editorial Introduction."

[112] Robyn Wiegman, "On Being Married to the Institution," in *Power, Race, and Gender in Academe: Strangers in the Tower?*, ed. Shirley Geok-Lin Lim and Maria Herrera-Sobek (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2000), 71.

[113] Wiegman, 73.

university pasts and for ensuring university futures. As the enduring relationship between Brown and Tougaloo demonstrates, the negotiation of debt is rendered and made affectively palpable through the terms of family.

Conclusion

In February 2022, Netflix CEO Reed Hastings and his wife, Patricia Quillin, confirmed a $10 million donation to Tougaloo. While half of the gift was earmarked for building up the college's endowment and establishing a student scholarship fund, the other half was directed toward the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership. According to identical press releases from Brown and Tougaloo announcing the news of this sizable contribution, Hastings and Quillin's monetary support was directly inspired by "Brown's commitment to engaging with Tougaloo in the early 1960s—a time when many predominantly white institutions across the country, educational and otherwise, were reluctant to embrace the tenets of racial equality."[114] In another article, Hastings marveled at the extensive history of this institutional partnership, surmising that "this relationship has enriched so many lives over the last six decades." Impressed by the partnership's longevity, he and Quillin "wanted to make sure this special bond continues to prosper and thrive so that future generations of Tougaloo and Brown students can keep sharing new perspectives and generating new ideas."[115] They further emphasized the history of HBCUs in "graduating so many Black leaders across the U.S.—

[114] "$10 Million Gift from Reed Hastings, Patty Quillin to Bolster 58-Year-Old Brown-Tougaloo Partnership," *Brown University*, February 21, 2022, https://www.brown.edu/news/2022-02-21/tougaloo; "$10 Million Gift from Reed Hastings, Patty Quillin to Bolster 58-Year-Old Brown-Tougaloo Partnership | Tougaloo College," *Tougaloo College*, February 21, 2020, https://www.tougaloo.edu/news/10-million-gift-reed-hastings-patty-quillin-bolster-58-year-old-brown-tougaloo-partnership.

[115] Todd Spangler, "Netflix's Reed Hastings Donates $10 Million to HBCU Tougaloo College," *Variety*, February 21, 2022, https://variety.com/2022/digital/news/reed-hastings-donate-10-million-tougaloo-hbcu-1235186140/.

doctors, lawyers, engineers and more. By investing in the extraordinary students who attend Tougaloo and Brown, we're investing in America's future."[116] As the couple lauded both HBCUs and the "special bond" between Brown and Tougaloo, they rewarded the institutions for the success of their ongoing relationship and courted an approach of white benevolence.

The gift from Hastings and Quillin was one of a few that the couple granted to HBCUs in recent years amid a national climate of acute anti-Black sentiment and overt police violence. Though sizable, the donation to Tougaloo is nowhere near the largest. Two years earlier, shortly following the slayings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of police in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Louisville, Kentucky, and amid the 2020 national uprisings and swell in discourse around anti-Black racism and racial redress, the pair gave $120 million spread across Spelman College, Morehouse College, and the United Negro College Fund for scholarship programs, the largest individual contribution to HBCUs to date. While reflecting on this massive contribution and the financial disparities between predominantly white institutions and HBCUs, Hastings remarked, "I think white people in our nation need to accept that it's a collective responsibility."[117] Regarding the specific dollar amount of this gift, he further added that "Mr. Floyd's killing and the emotional outpouring that followed were 'the straw that broke the camel's back, I think, for the size of the donation.'"[118] Their support of HBCUs, Hastings noted, was related to his realization of the unjust disparities that existed between these institutions and predominantly white-serving universities, "economic gaps in wealth, in assets, in endowments [that] are pretty profound and totally unfair."[119]

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[116] "$10 Million Gift | Tougaloo College."
[117] Andrew Ross Sorkin, "Netflix C.E.O. Reed Hastings Gives $120 Million to Historically Black Colleges," *New York Times*, sec. Business, June 17, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/business/netflix-reed-hastings-hbcus.html.
[118] Sorkin, "Netflix C.E.O. Reed Hastings Gives $120 Million."
[119] Molly Minta, "Netflix CEO Donates $10 Million to Tougaloo College," *Mississippi Today*, February 21, 2022, https://mississippitoday.org/2022/02/21/netflix-ceo-donates-10-million-to-tougaloo-college/.

While promising these massive payments, the couple outlined the responsibility of white people and professed the evident racial inequities in wealth distributions of institutional endowments, as have other billionaires with no evident personal or familial connection to HBCUs.[120] At the same time, this individual white family of four, headed by Hastings and Quillin, has an estimated net worth of over three billion dollars,[121] a sum well beyond the endowments of Tougaloo, Spelman, and Morehouse combined. As another point of comparison, Brown boasts an endowment of $6.5 billion dollars.[122]

As indicated in part by these considerable private donations to HBCUs, public perceptions of the importance of these institutions—and the responsibility allocated to and felt by white people to support these institutions fiscally—appears to be increasing, a stark contrast to the ambivalence and ambiguity that shrouded HBCUs at the turn of the twenty-first century. This shift in general appreciation and onus continues to be framed by the all-too-familiar language of family. In one 2022 *New York Times* article, Erica L. Green discusses this so-called "renaissance" of HBCUs in this contemporary social and political context. Rather than seeking out and striving for inclusion in the most historically prestigious predominantly white institutions, an increasing number of Black

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[120] As Adam Harris points out, "In the wake of George Floyd's murder last year, as the nation grappled with the ways structural racism affects various facets of American society, several historically Black colleges received their largest-ever donations from the billionaire philanthropist MacKenzie Scott and others. But a one-time injection of funding will not make up for more than a century of discrimination. And wealth begets wealth; while some predominantly white institutions were able to build their reserves, Black colleges were held back." MacKenzie Scott is the ex-wife of Jeff Bezos. Adam Harris, "Opinion | What White Colleges Owe Black Colleges." For more on Scott's recent philanthropy toward HBCUs, see Marybeth Gasman, Resche Hines, and Angela Henderson, *The MacKenzie Scott Donations to Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Exploring the Data Landscape*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions, 2021).

[121] This estimation is as of March 4, 2023. "Profile: Reed Hastings, CEO Netflix," *Forbes Magazine*, https://www.forbes.com/profile/reed-hastings/?sh=77436fe27829.

[122] "Endowment," *Brown University*, accessed July 26, 2023, https://investment.brown.edu/endowment#:~:text=Brown's%20%246.5%20billion%20endowment%20comprises,support%20the%20University's%20educational%20purposes.

teenagers are looking, as one young woman put it, to spend their college years "being seen as family." Green includes a quote from the owner of a college advising firm, who confirmed a "new surge of interest in [HBCUs] around 2015" and added that "families started to look and be introspective about 'Where are we sending our kids?' and started to search for safe havens."[123] In a piece for *Academe* that assesses HBCUs in the time of the COVID pandemic, Beverly Guy-Sheftall and Kimberly M. Jackson also use the terminology of "safe havens" when describing the role of HBCUs in the "higher education landscape."[124] Such language echoes the discourse that unfolded around the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership's 2014 anniversary. The notion of the HBCU campus as a "safe haven" directly corresponds to the image of Tougaloo as a "safe harbor" that Thomas spoke of to the greater Tougaloo community and community of individuals connected to the civil rights movement in Mississippi. At the same time, the claim of white responsibility articulated by Hastings and Quillin and their fiscal reward for long-term partnership resonate with Paxson's address to Tougaloo's class of 2014 and returning alumni. Furthermore, the unyielding summoning of family continues to raise questions about the unquestionable expectations of addressing responsibilities to

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[123] Erica L. Green, "Why Students Are Choosing H.B.C.U.s: '4 Years Being Seen as Family,'" *New York Times*, June 11, 2022, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/11/us/hbcu-enrollment-black-students.html. Another Times article from 2022 discusses HBCUs and "legacy families" wherein the "H.B.C.U. has become the school of choice for generations because these families believe the schools offer an essential, formative experience that will expand their children's understanding of what it can mean to be Black in America." Lise Funderburg, "For These Families, H.B.C.U.s Aren't Just an Option. They're a Tradition.," *New York Times*, May 13, 2022, sec. Special Series, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/special-series/families-hbcus-graduates-legacy.html.

[124] Beverly Guy-Sheftall and Kimberly M. Jackson, "Challenges and Possibilities at HBCUs after the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Academe*, Spring 2021, https://www.aaup.org/article/challenges-and-possibilities-hbcus-after-covid-19-pandemic. Guy-Sheftall and Jackson also discuss the increasing federal attention to HBCUs, noting that "millions in much-needed philanthropic dollars have made their way to Black colleges in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in May 2020. On December 12, 2020, Congress finally passed the HBCU Propelling Agency Relationships towards a New Era of Results for Students (HBCU PARTNERS) Act following decades of lobbying efforts by HBCU advocates. Certain federal agencies are now required annually to explain how HBCUs can compete more effectively for contracts and grants."

provide care, when, to whom, and to what extent. Recourse to the image of the family in this university context underscores an implicit sense of indebtedness.

As the Brown-Tougaloo Partnership demonstrates, reliance on familial imagery at once conjures material and affective forms of care and nurture and also traffics well-documented and all-too-familiar hierarchically racialized relationship dynamics. This chapter examines ways in which universities rhetorically navigate this knife edge while grappling with their racial histories of slavery and also their more recent pasts related to the twentieth-century civil rights movement. Much more can and should be said about the massive amounts of financial and emotional debt inequitably distributed to and historically carried by HBCUs and their student bodies.[125] In the meantime, the questions that remain for this project relate to the ways in which symbols of the family—such as the parent-child bond and the vow of commitment made between husband and wife and partners—continue to serve as the primary vehicle through which the receipt of and the responsibility for care are distributed. Even as the imagined relationship between intimate family members is deployed to counteract histories of racial injustices and to strengthen the support for HBCUs, this framework effectively regenerates the very conditions of racialized exclusion and institutional entitlement it seeks to destabilize. Thus, this chapter ends by making overt the questions that have lurked at the edges of each preceding chapter: What might it mean for universities to incorporate a reckoning with this recourse to family alongside their reckoning with legacies of slavery? How might a

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[125] This is a topic that is garnering increasing public attention in recent years. To start, see Katherine M. Saunders, Krystal L. Williams, and Cheryl L. Smith, "Fewer Resources, More Debt: Loan Debt Burdens Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities" (Washington, DC: UNCF Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute, 2016), https://cdn.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/reports/FINAL_HBCU_Loan_Debt_Burden_Report.pdf?_ga=2.165996734.1688612783.1659627285-1097352746.1658495910; Katherine Mangan, "The Betrayal of Historically Black Colleges," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 24, 2021, https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-betrayal-of-historically-black-colleges; Don Calloway, "Howard Is Not the Only HBCU That Needs Help," *Washington Post*, July 13, 2021, sec. Editorial-Opinion.

substantive engagement with the discourse of abolishing the family clear space for imagining a more equitable and just institution and thus enable more effective means of transforming the university?

Familiarity, Urgency, and Imagining What's Next

In 2019, the *New York Times* published an article titled, "'Your Heritage Is Taken Away': The Closing of 3 Historically Black Colleges." The article begins at Bennett College, a historically Black college for women in Greensboro, North Carolina, and one of only two found in the United States today; Spelman College in Atlanta is the other. As the article quickly made clear, however, that number could soon grow impossibly smaller. That year, Bennett faced the loss of its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges because of unstable finances; without accreditation, it would no longer be eligible for federal funding, most likely forcing it to close. As the article continues, it reads like an obituary, eulogizing three HBCUs that had already met their untimely fates: "Concordia College, Selma, Ala. (1922-2018)"; "Morristown College, Morristown, Tenn. (1881-1994)"; "Saint Paul's College, Lawrenceville, Va. (1888-2013)." Indeed, personal reflections on each of the shuttered schools leave readers with the impression of profound grief. One man lamented the loss of Morristown College by remembering how his time at the school "gave a feeling of being home and also growing up. . . . It's a place where I grew so much, more than I did anywhere else." Similarly, one woman reflecting on her time at Concordia said that "it was like a family, people actually cared and coached me through things." Considering the not uncommon closure of HBCUs like Concordia, this woman added, "African-American community culture has already been whitewashed, so to not have anything at all that's not yours, I don't want to think about it. . . . It's like a part of your heritage is taken away, like during slavery."[1]

[1] Wadzanai Mhute, "'Your Heritage Is Taken Away': The Closing of 3 Historically Black Colleges," *New York Times*, June 28, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/28/us/hbcu-closed-graduates.html.

Much like Tougaloo College, which proudly holds the motto of "Where History Meets the Future," Bennett boasts a similar commitment to past, present, and future with its adage of "Education for Your Future, Sisterhood for Life." Also like Tougaloo, Bennett is closely tied to the historic mission of educating recently emancipated individuals in the late nineteenth century and to actions for civil rights in the 1930s and 1960s in North Carolina.[2] Alumnae are deeply proud of the actions of other "Bennett Belles" and their own place in this lineage. Perhaps due to this history, the college has managed to remain financially afloat and to secure alternate accreditation through the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools.[3] Perhaps Bennett's survival to date also relates to the sense of family fostered on its grounds, intense feelings of community connection coupled with personal growth, which result in a sense of responsibility to return such care. As one Bennett alumna put it, "Anywhere you go in the world, if you say you're a Bennett Belle and you meet another Bennett Belle, anything you need, you have it."[4] In 2023 Bennett was able to acknowledge the sesquicentennial anniversary of its founding. While doing so, the institution noted that "as it enters its 150th year, it can add yet another major event to its long history: surviving the

[2] The Bennett College website sheds light on this history, specifically the 1938 picketing of a movie theatre by Bennett Belles (the name for women attending Bennett) for racist practices and the Belles' involvement in 1960s sit-ins. "Bennett Belles Have Storied History of Activism, Leadership," Bennett College, April 6, 2018, https://www.bennett.edu/inside/bennett-belles-have-storied-history-of-activism-leadership/. Another point of connection between Tougaloo and Bennett is Tougaloo's Institute for the Study of Modern Day Slavery. The institute is the culmination of a partnership between Tougaloo, Bennett, and Morehouse College, an HBCU for men. "Our Vision," Institute for the Study of Modern Day Slavery, accessed April 30, 2023, https://www.mdstougaloo.org/our-vision.

[3] "Accreditations," Bennett College, accessed April 30, 2023, https://www.bennett.edu/about/accreditations/. Bennett also launched Stand with Bennett, a campaign to help raise funds to keep the college afloat. "Stand with Bennett," Bennett College, accessed April 30, 2023, https://www.bennett.edu/standwithbennett/.

[4] Rebekah Barber, "Why Saving Bennett College Matters," Facing South: A Voice for a Changing South (blog), December 21, 2018, https://www.facingsouth.org/2018/12/why-saving-bennett-college-matters.

COVID-19 pandemic."[5] Bennett's recent struggles with finances and accreditation offer a glimpse at how continuing operations into the third decade of the twenty-first century is still complicated for HBCUs, conditions made even more trying by introduction of a global pandemic. Yet amid the pandemic and with the blatant display of racial violence that drew many out onto the streets in 2020, the future for HBCUs at this present moment appears somewhat secured, if not favorable.

The past few years have brought a renewed interest in supporting HBCUs, as most prominently demonstrated by the massive donations from the likes of corporate executive Reed Hastings and philanthropist Mackenzie Scott, and emergency support from foundations like the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.[6] At the same time, students are ever more interested in attending HBCUs, and a revived faith in these schools' unparalleled purpose among U.S. universities is increasingly evident.[7]

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[5] "Historically Black Colleges & Universities Support Students," Bennett College, accessed May 1, 2023, https://www.bennett.edu/news/historically-black-colleges-universities-support-students/.

[6] In May 2020, amid the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic and universities' subsequent financial stresses, the Mellon Foundation announced its distribution of $1.76 million in "emergency grants" to sixteen HBCUs, including Tougaloo College.
"Emergency Grants Out to 16 Historically Black Colleges and Universities," Mellon Foundation, May 13, 2020, https://www.mellon.org/news/176-million-emergency-grants-distributed-16-historically-black-colleges-and-universities-response-covid-19-pandemic.

[7] Beverly Guy-Sheftall and Kimberly M. Jackson, "Challenges and Possibilities at HBCUs after the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Academe*, Spring 2021, https://www.aaup.org/article/challenges-and-possibilities-hbcus-after-covid-19-pandemic; The White House, "FACT SHEET: State-by-State Analysis of Record $2.7 Billion American Rescue Plan Investment in Historically Black Colleges and Universities," The White House, March 7, 2022, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/07/fact-sheet-state-by-state-analysis-of-record-2-7-billion-american-rescue-plan-investment-in-historically-black-colleges-and-universities/; "UNCF Grateful for HBCU Resources Secured in New Pandemic Relief Bill," UNCF, accessed May 1, 2023, https://uncf.org/news/uncf-grateful-for-hbcu-resources-secured-in-new-pandemic-relief-bill.
For information on the surge in applications to HBCUs in recent years, see Peter Jamison, "HBCUs Seeing Resurgent Appeal Amid Rising Racial Tensions: Some Students Seek to Escape Racist Rhetoric by Heading to Historically Black Campuses," *Washington Post*, March 16, 2019, sec. Local, https://www.proquest.com/docview/2191943513/citation/D2261C8CC7A64BE6PQ/3; Nick Anderson, "Some Large HBCUs Are Getting Larger. The Biggest Is North Carolina A&T.," *Washington Post*, February 11, 2022, sec. Education, https://www.proquest.com/docview/2627877394/citation/D2261C8CC7A64BE6PQ/18; Amber Ferguson, "How the Protest Movement Could Help HBCUs Through Higher Education's Financial Crisis," *Washington Post*, July 2, 2020, sec. Education,

The most optimistic supporters of HBCUs "describe this moment as the dawn of a renaissance for the sector,"[8] driven in part by "the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, outsize attention from Black celebrities, many of whom graduated from Black colleges, and a sustained public-relations campaign by HBCU advocates."[9] Others point out that the seeming return to HBCUs and incontestable surge in applications are also fueled by the increasingly inhospitable racial climate that was marked by 2020 protests, leaving Black college-aged youth in search of "refuge from the racism they experience in predominantly White spaces."[10] These environments provide a sense of support, security, and "nurturing," while enabling students to carry on cherished intergenerational (and even familial) legacies.[11] In the words of one Spelman College alumna, HBCUs are places where "it's always been about 'Black lives matter.'"[12] This familiar though no less urgent refrain echoes across the chapters of this project, alongside questions of how, when, and in what ways the family is constitutive of this

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https://www.proquest.com/docview/2419569974/citation/821D8DD92C8548A7PQ/2; "Applications to HBCUs Rise Dramatically as Nationwide College Enrollment Falls," PBS NewsHour, September 13, 2022, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/applications-to-hbcus-rise-dramatically-as-nationwide-college-enrollment-falls.

[8] Vimal Patel, "Advocates of Black Colleges Are Optimistic. Here's What They Want From the Biden Administration," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 26, 2021, https://www.chronicle.com/article/advocates-of-black-colleges-are-optimistic-heres-what-they-want-from-the-biden-administration?cid=gen_sign_in.

[9] Oyin Adedoyin, "Good News for HBCUs," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 15, 2022, https://www.chronicle.com/article/good-news-for-hbcus.

[10] This same article notes that while overall college and university enrollment has declined by more than 5% since 2019, likely related to the pandemic, enrollment at HBCUs has dramatically increased. More specifically, "Among 17 historically Black universities with at least 5,000 students in fall 2019, a *Washington Post* analysis of federal, state and institutional data found 10 reported preliminary head counts for fall 2021 that exceeded their pre-pandemic totals. Howard's enrollment jumped 28 percent over two years, to 12,065. Morgan State's count was up 9 percent, to 8,469, and North Carolina A&T's was up 6 percent, to 13,322." Lauren Lumpkin, Nick Anderson, and Danielle DouglasGabriel, "Amid Nationwide Enrollment Drops, Some HBCUs Are Growing. So Are Threats.," *Washington Post*, February 11, 2022, sec. Education, https://www.proquest.com/docview/2627878604/citation/319381DB0F3C4E68PQ/4.

[11] Lise Funderburg, "For These Families, H.B.C.U.s Aren't Just an Option. They're a Tradition.," *New York Times*, May 13, 2022, sec. Special Series, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/13/special-series/families-hbcus-graduates-legacy.html.

[12] Funderburg, "For These Families, H.B.C.U.s Aren't Just an Option."

mattering amid university redress.

This conclusion picks up where each of the three preceding chapters ends: the present day of the twenty-first century's third decade, with enduring tensions around the convergence of university histories and unresolved institutional futures, and with questions about reckoning with legacies of slavery and the role of the family in university redress. As evidenced throughout this dissertation, the image, institution, and discourse of family can function as remedy, refuge, and roadmap. Yet in determining responsibility and foreclosing alternate understandings of relation, family can also facilitate the adoption and enforcement of ultimately harmful restrictions. The introduction of this dissertation establishes the conceptual coordinates of inheritance, identity, and invention as important aspects of Black feminist thought, rhetorics of reconciliation, and contemporary understandings of abolition. This triptych also provides a framework for reflecting on the preceding chapters while offering additional insights into what this project demonstrates, as well as how and why a feminist rhetoric of university redress matters as we—those of us invested in the university and its reckoning with the past—move forward.

Inheritance looms large in Chapter 1. The revision of legacy preference adopted by Georgetown University directs attention backward, requiring that one trace the lines of their lineage to the present day. By gathering the archival remnants of family lines, descendants of enslaved laborers related to Georgetown's history might receive the recognition of belonging to the university community and, with this belonging, reap the benefits of its esteemed heritage. In claiming their place as members of this community, however, individuals must first suspect and then prove their familial past to Georgetown. Furthermore, the university's creation and reliance on the identity of "descendant" is far from fleshed out, though determinative of those who qualify for care.

Identity manifests in various forms throughout Chapter 2. While Virginia Commonwealth University grapples with its institutional ethos, individuals claim a geographically determined identity

that enables them to facilitate the university's reckoning with human remains found during a construction project in the 1990s. At the same time, an absence of identity also haunts this chapter. The lingering anonymity of the human remains leaves VCU with a lack of identifiable genetic or genealogical relatives. Rather than consider approaches to relation and repair beyond the framework of family, the university tasks an imaginary family with the labor of care, and charges the image of family with rendering the remains legible as persons.

Invention serves as a driving force in Chapter 3. As Tougaloo College and Brown University mark their fifty-year relationship and reflect on their joint history, these institutions endeavor to envision their next fifty years together. Across the celebratory events of 2014, the contours of this partnership between an HBCU and a historically white-serving Ivy League university appear riddled with the dynamics of debt, both to one another and to the past. Such indebtedness is figured through various iterations of the family form and intimate couplings that often come with deep senses of responsibility. The anniversary operates as a temporal moment of reimagination, a time for rearticulating and reinvesting in one another, the past, and future generations.

Throughout this dissertation, I demonstrate the manifold forms in which family is intimately folded into university reckoning. By drawing attention to the ways that the family is positioned as a vehicle for carving out the terms of contemporary repair, I also highlight how reliance on the image and discourse of family risks reiterating the violences university redress aims to rectify. Family, whether conceived of as familiar image, abstracted institution, or cherished experience, is always complicated; its pervasiveness positions it as inevitably wrought with personal associations and deep-seated sentiments. My discussion of the family and university redress is similarly characterized by an intense array of emotions, from isolation and bitterness, to grief and guilt, loss and longing, anger, gratitude, pride, and love. At moments, the feelings that couch my analysis are explicitly spelled out and evidenced by quotes given by descendants, community members, and constituents. Other times,

the affective charges undergirding such university actions and associated demands for redress remain a spectral presence, invisible on the page. I contend that feelings, whether they are connoted by or firmly captured in text, necessarily constitute one critical component of a feminist rhetoric of university redress.

This project establishes a feminist rhetoric of redress to examine our attraction to the family, understand its rhetorical influence in relation to institutional reckoning, and imagine how we might approach university redress otherwise. In their conceptualization of an "abolitionist university studies," Abigail Boggs, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein invite readers to embrace the anxiety that an abolitionist proposal inspires, to "sit with it, to grapple with the impasse," and to "shift our relation to that anxiety."[13] Just as the prospect of an abolitionist approach to unsettling an institution like the university—one that so many of us are so deeply committed to—might stimulate an uncomfortable unease, questioning the family and its place amid university redress might be met with hesitation or even trepidation. Yet following Boggs and her coauthors, such feelings can serve as a form of instruction and as evidence of the need for productive inquiry. Seriously considering and reorienting our relationship to feelings around the family—including how we feel when we ponder its abolition—might open space for unforeseen possibilities and for potentially transformative invention.

Abolition is not merely the obliteration of systems founded on violence and disenfranchisement. It is also and perhaps most critically an act of creation, a direction toward active engagement in producing alternative systems that might offer greater justice.[14] As Marquis Bey and Jesse A. Goldberg succinctly summarize, "there is building happening at the same time that razing is required. Abolition is always two-sided in this way, not dissimilar to the queer futurity that is then

[13] Boggs et al., "Abolitionist University Studies."
[14] Boggs et al., "Abolitionist University Studies."

and there on the horizon and also here and now in moments of relation."[15] A feminist rhetoric of university redress is similarly imbued with a temporal orientation toward what could be while also being rooted in presently unfolding constellations of relation. It foregrounds the experiences and dynamics of race and gender, the ways in which we assume these identities, and how we are positioned in relation to the past and present. It directs attention toward relations of care and responsibility, and it requests our interrogation of associated expectations of labor and its delegation. Finally, it encourages us to ask how, in what ways, and to what ends we participate in the reproduction of these institutions of family and university in order to open up the possibilities for actively imagining heretofore undetermined futures.

[15] Marquis Bey and Jesse A. Goldberg, "Queer as in Abolition Now!," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 28, no. 2 (2022): 161.

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