



The Duty of Universities and the Right to the City: Campus Expansion's Impact on Housing: Facilitation Guide

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www.legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/normative-case-studies and www.justiceinschools.org

Learning about a topic like the legacy of slavery can be overwhelming. [Community Care Resources](#) are available for members of the Harvard community seeking support for mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being.

Learning Goal

Participants will explore ethical dilemmas raised by the legacy of slavery and the effects on communities when universities expand their campus footprints.

Time

75–95 minutes

Group Size

Normative case discussions generally work best in groups of 6–10 people. If your group is much larger, we suggest splitting into smaller groups to discuss the dilemmas and values in the case. (See lesson plan for details.)

Materials

- Case study (normative case study)
- Slides and this facilitation guide
- Some way to write (pen/paper, laptop/tablet)

Background

This nonfictional case examines the ethical challenges that arise when universities expand their campus footprint. This includes the construction of new student housing to accommodate increasing enrollment numbers. With university expansion efforts often resulting in harm to and tensions with surrounding communities, what are the tradeoffs to consider so that universities can balance their duty to their students and their communities?

The goal of this discussion is to surface the many competing values at play in the dilemmas raised by the case. Discussion participants should know that the goal of the discussion is not to generate the “right” answer to the central question above but rather to find new questions that exist within that main question.

The issues raised in this case are complex, and there are, in fact, no easy answers to the questions that will come up during this discussion. Both participants and facilitators should expect non-closure and ambiguity here.

In addition to raising dilemmas related to the legacy of slavery at Harvard, this case study is built to help participants think about their relationship to this challenging issue. This protocol scaffolds this discussion by first asking participants to think about how the multiple identities of the characters in the case influence their feelings about the topic before asking them to think about their own identity. While not all participants may feel comfortable exploring their identity in relation to this topic aloud with the group, the protocol allows for them to at least reflect on the topic.

Session Agenda

Part I: Introductions and Norms (5–10 minutes)

Part II: Reading the Case (10–15 minutes)

Part III: Group Discussion (50–60 minutes)

Part IV: Reflections and Takeaways (10 minutes)

Part I: Introductions and Norms (5–10 minutes)

DISCUSSION PROTOCOL

1. If this is a one-off group (rather than an ongoing class, for instance), introduce yourself and explain why you are excited to be leading this case discussion. Also share the agenda for the session. (Slides 1–2)
2. If there is a small number of participants, invite each person to introduce themselves briefly. If there is a large number of participants, explain that they will have the opportunity to introduce themselves to one another in small groups when they are getting ready to discuss the case.
3. Explain that the conversation will explore difficult themes related to race and responsibility.
4. Present norms to the group. You can use the following list or bring your own. (Slide 3)
 - **Respect for Self and Others**
(e.g., Actively listen, maintain confidentiality, and challenge ideas not people)
 - **Acknowledge the Different Backgrounds and Experiences of Others**
(e.g., Consider the role of your identities and power dynamics)
 - **Accept Challenge and Anticipate Discomfort**
(e.g., Push your thinking, hold yourself and others accountable, and contribute to the conversation)
 - **Keep an Open Mind**
(e.g., Allow for growth, listen before responding, and stay engaged)
 - **Embrace Uncertainty and Non-Closure**
5. Ask participants whether they would like clarity about, to amend, or to add any norms.

FACILITATOR TIPS

If your group meets regularly for discussion, you likely already have norms in place. You can decide whether to simply review those norms here or whether you need to bring in some new norms today.

If you have more time, you can make norms setting a collaborative experience. If you are pressed for time, you may want to present norms to participants rather than co-construct them.

For additional resources on norms creation and facilitation with norms, see “[Leveraging Norms for Challenging Conversations](#)” (2016).

Part II: Reading the Case (10–15 minutes)

DISCUSSION PROTOCOL

1. Explain the purpose of today's session: to surface the many issues at play in the case and the conflicts that arise when searching for a solution. There are, in fact, no easy answers to the questions that will come up during this discussion. Both participants and facilitators should expect non-closure and ambiguity.
2. Distribute and read the case together. (Slide 4)
 - Give participants time to read the case (out loud or silently). If you want participants to annotate the case, let them know. The case should take about 10 minutes to read.

Part III: Group Discussion (50–60 minutes)

RAISING DILEMMAS (10–15 MINUTES)

DISCUSSION PROTOCOL

1. Define “dilemma.” (Slide 5)
 - We define a dilemma as “a situation where there is no one right answer and it is hard (even impossible) to realize all important values and principles at once.”
 - In fictional cases like this one, dilemmas often present as choice points or questions.
2. Ask participants: *What are the dilemmas in this case, and for whom are they dilemmas?* (Slides 6–8)
 - Tell participants that the goal of this part of the discussion is to raise dilemmas in the case—as many as possible.
 - You may wish to record participants' answers in the slide show for reference. If so, note-taking space is available on Slides 7–8.
3. Follow-up questions, if needed. (Slide 9)
 - *What are the dilemmas for institutions here? What are the dilemmas for other stakeholders?*
 - *How do the dilemmas differ across stakeholder groups?*
 - *What dilemmas arise specifically for your school here? How are these similar to or different from those for the institution more broadly?*
 - *What dilemmas arise around how institutions handle campus expansion?*

FACILITATOR TIPS

If your discussion group is larger than 10 people, split into smaller groups (ideally 6–9 people) for this part of the discussion. If you're discussing online, you can use breakout rooms.

If you are leading a virtual discussion with breakout rooms, make sure that participants have the [slideshow link](#) so they can access the questions without you.

Participants sometimes forget to name for whom these are dilemmas. You may need to ask the clarifying question: *For whom is that a dilemma?*

Participants often want to quickly move from raising dilemmas to “solving” them. However, once participants propose a course of action for the characters, it becomes more difficult to see new dilemmas or alternative courses of action. If participants begin discussing what the characters should do, let them know there will be time for that part of the discussion later.

EXPLORING VALUES (15–20 MINUTES)

DISCUSSION PROTOCOL

1. Briefly summarize (1–2 minutes) the dilemmas that the participants have raised.
2. Ask participants: *Why are these dilemmas? Are there competing values at stake? Or important practical considerations?* (Slide 10)
3. Follow-up questions, if needed. (Slide 11)
 - *What do universities owe their communities?*
 - *What principles and values should guide universities, policymakers, and community members in making decisions about increasing access to universities amid insufficient affordable housing?*
 - *How can we ensure universities are living up their promise and potential as a public good?*

FACILITATOR TIPS

If you have split your large group into smaller groups (ideally 6–9 people), leave them in their groups for this part of the discussion. Again, be sure they have access to the [slideshow link](#).

If participants struggle to identify key values raised in the case, you might share this list and ask them to choose the top value they see at stake in the case:

- Equity
- Responsibility
- Truth
- Choice
- Community
- Learning
- Action
- Inclusion
- Safety

There are far more follow-up questions here than any group can cover in one discussion. Before you begin, you may want to identify a few questions that feel most relevant for your group.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IN THE CASE? (15 MINUTES)

DISCUSSION PROTOCOL

1. Ask participants to take 2 minutes to write an answer to the questions: *What should be done in this case? By whom? Why?* (Slide 12)
2. Ask participants to share their thoughts. This can be done in several ways:
 - In virtual sessions, we often use the “waterfall” approach: We have participants type their responses and then all enter them into the Zoom chat at the same time. Then we can ask questions based on the patterns that we see, or we can ask individuals to share more of their thinking based on their responses.
 - Asking participants to share with a partner can be helpful, particularly if this group is not as comfortable sharing all together. You can then ask some pairs to share their thoughts.
 - You can simply open the floor to discussion if you have ample time and a group that feels comfortable sharing.

FACILITATOR TIPS

Again, participants sometimes forget to name the actor who should actually take the action they are proposing. If they do, ask a brief clarifying question: *Who should do that?*

MAKING IT PERSONAL (10 MINUTES)

DISCUSSION PROTOCOL

1. Ask participants to complete a quick write (2 minutes) on the following questions: *Which actor in the case do you identify with most? Why? How does this case help you think about your own relationship to the legacy of slavery at Harvard or other implications of campus expansion?* (Slide 13)
2. Ask participants to share the ideas from their quick write. This can be done in several ways:
 - If participants are comfortable sharing their ideas with the whole group, open the floor to sharing.
 - Participants could partner with others who chose the same character: *How do their reasons for choosing this character compare to their partner's reasons? What can they learn from each other?* If there's time, pairs can share their learning with the larger group.

FACILITATOR TIPS

This part of the discussion is crucial. Few people at Harvard are in the position to create policy that addresses the University's responsibility in this case. However, everyone can reflect on their own responsibility to confront this difficult history and engage with it presently. Be sure to leave enough time at the end of your discussion for this reflection.

This is likely to be the most difficult part of the conversation for participants, as we move from the world of the case to our world. If you have the sense that participants would feel uncomfortable with open discussion, choose the partner option.

Part IV: Reflections and Takeaways (10 minutes)

DISCUSSION PROTOCOL

1. Ask each participant to take one minute to write a single sentence or question that they will continue thinking about after the conversation. (Slide 14)
2. Go in a circle and have each person read their sentence/question aloud (if you're in person).
3. For a virtual discussion, a waterfall technique could work well here. Have each person type their sentence/question into the chat but not press enter. Then, have everyone press enter at the same time.

FACILITATOR TIPS

You may want to allow participants the option to pass (opt not to share) during this final section, depending on the level of comfort in the group.

Tucker, C., O'Brien, S., Jonathan, O., & Levinson, M. (2022). The Duty of Universities and the Right to the City: Campus Expansion's Impact on Housing: Facilitation Guide. *Justice in Schools*. <https://www.justiceinschools.org/duty-universities> and *Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery Initiative*. <https://legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/normative-case-studies/>

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Additional Resources

[This article in the University of Chicago's student newspaper traces the university's histories and legacies of enacting and perpetuating exclusionary housing practices.](#) These include redlining, urban renewal projects in the name of clearing blight (similar to what happened in Philadelphia's Black Bottom), and funding racist covenants that prevented the sale or lease of property to Black people. [UChicago students and residents have also called for the university to give \\$1 billion in housing and education reparations to residents in the South Side.](#) Such a proposal makes the connection between slavery, urban life, and housing and puts forth another path in addressing this case's dilemma.

[The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America](#) (Liveright, 2017), by Richard Rothstein, illuminates how government policies have promoted and reinforced residential racial segregation in the United States.

[University City: History, Race, and Community in the Era of the Innovation District](#) (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022), by Laura Wolf-Powers, documents changes and continuity in planning efforts in West Philadelphia's University City over the past five decades, from the demolition of Black Bottom to contemporary university-sponsored development in the area.

[In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower: How Universities Are Plundering Our Cities](#) (Bold Type Books, 2021), by Davarian L. Baldwin, goes beyond the discussion of universities as forces of displacement and gentrification by revealing the power, presence, and authority of universities in urban areas. Universities are not only landlords but also employers, healthcare providers, and policing agents, and those most subject to their influence are communities of color.

[This article in the Chronicle of Higher Education describes not only the tensions playing out in People's Park and UC Berkeley as of August 2022 but also the ways in which the university might plan to limit the number of students physically on campus moving forward.](#) This includes increasing supports for students to ensure they graduate within four years, offering more summer and online courses, and encouraging more students to participate in off-campus study.

[This zine by Maansi Shah provides further insight on the significance and legacy of People's Park.](#) It traces resistance efforts by community members and students and the history of UC Berkeley from its origins as a land-grant ([or, land-grab](#)) institution to one that has become increasingly privatized. ■