

HARVARD & THE LEGACY OF SLAVERY INITIATIVE

An Overview

In 2022, the Report of the Presidential Committee on Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery was released which describes the University's ties to slavery and its legacies. Specifically, Harvard has:

1 | Direct ties to slavery: Harvard leaders, faculty, and staff enslaved more than 70 people during the 17th and 18th centuries. Based on Harvard's research into direct descendants since the release of the Report, the University recognizes that these individuals represent a fraction of those enslaved by Harvard affiliates.

2 | Financial ties to slavery: Five men who made their fortunes from slavery and slave-produced goods accounted for more than one-third of all private donations and financial pledges during the first half of the 19th century.

3 | Intellectual ties to slavery: In the 19th and 20th centuries, several Harvard faculty and leaders promoted now-debunked theories of race science and eugenics, ideas that underpinned Jim Crow segregation and continue to support white supremacy.

Based on these difficult truths, the Report included seven broad recommendations which call on Harvard to be accountable for its history. To advance this work, the University created the Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery Initiative. Led by Sara Bleich, vice provost for special projects and Professor of Public Health Policy at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the H&LS Initiative works to understand and cast light on Harvard's legacies of slavery and address enduring consequences through purposeful change. The work is grounded in Harvard's educational mission and the recommendations from the Report. The implementation work is supported by a \$100 million endowment.

Strategic Priorities

In the coming years, the Initiative will focus its work on three strategic areas:

1 | Memorialization and education: The H&LS Initiative's Memorial Project Committee is developing a process that will guide the design of a campus memorial which will recognize and honor the legacies of enslaved people whose labor facilitated the founding, growth, and evolution of Harvard.

2 | Advancing partnerships with historically Black colleges and universities: The H&LS Initiative is building and deepening partnerships with research-intensive HBCUs to provide opportunities for Harvard and HBCUs to learn from one another, engage in scholarship and teaching, and advance the mission of higher education.

3 | Supporting descendant communities: The H&LS Initiative's ongoing work with descendant communities focuses on two areas: the Reparative Grant Program and continuing meticulous research to identify those enslaved by University leaders, faculty, and staff and their direct descendants.



Harvard & the Legacy
of Slavery Initiative



Attendees listen to a speaker at the Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery Initiative's Inaugural 2024 Symposium in the Richard A. and Susan F. Smith Campus Center. Photo by Thunder Road Projects, Cambridge, MA.

Learn More and Get Involved

Whether you are new to Harvard's legacy of slavery work or have been a partner since the start of the University's efforts, the resources below offer opportunities for individuals and groups to learn, discuss, and start processing a journey of repair.



Participate in the Tours

Visit legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/tours

Guided: The Harvard & the Landscape of Slavery Tour is guided by Harvard Chaplains to create space for reflection and ritual, silence and slowing down, and honoring the past, present and one another. This tour covers six stops in Cambridge over 1.6 miles and is 120 minutes.

Self-Guided: The Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery Tour Experience explores the University's entanglements with its institution of slavery through 10 stops in Cambridge.



Watch the Film

Visit legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/film

This short film offers an introduction to the Report and Harvard's entanglements with slavery. It is accompanied by downloadable discussion and conversation guides.



Learn about the Initiative

Visit legacyofslavery.harvard.edu

The mission of the H&LS Initiative is to understand and cast light on Harvard's legacies of slavery and address enduring consequences through purposeful work. The work is grounded in Harvard's educational mission and the Report's recommendations.



Read the Report

Visit legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/explore-report

Prepared by the Presidential Committee on Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery in 2022, the Report advances the quest for understanding through scholarship about the University's ties to slavery - direct, financial, and intellectual.



Get Connected

Sign up at mailchi.mp/harvard/sign-up-for-our-newsletter

Join the H&LS Initiative's mailing list to receive the latest updates on programming, announcements, and events.

