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HIST 273: The Penn and Slavery Project
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Spring 2019 Findings

Since the Fall of 2017, undergraduate researchers at the University of Pennsylvania began researching the University's connection to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. In the three semesters since the Penn and Slavery Project began under Professor Kathleen Brown, the body of scholarship on Penn's complicity in slavery has grown immensely, and as of spring 2019 nearly twenty undergraduate reports have been published. Similar to projects at other Universities founded in the colonial period, the project began by examining the early University trustees and their ties to slavery and slave trade.[1] In subsequent semesters, Penn and Slavery Project researchers have examined Penn's early funding campaigns, the original campus and its construction, enslaved people held by faculty members, and the early medical school. Research has also included information on Penn's landholdings and contemporary buildings named for slaveholders.

In seeking to understand the nature of Penn's connections to slavery, we reflected on the meaning and implications of institutional "complicity" in a slaveholding society. The absence of sustained institution-wide exploitation of the labor of enslaved Africans does not render Penn "non-complicit" in slavery. It must be noted that institutional "complicity" does not necessarily connote the University's active and persistent ownership of enslaved persons. Rather, complicity

[1] Gladney, VanJessica. "Penn and Slavery Project Report". Report. History, University of Pennsylvania. 2017. http://pennandslaveryproject.org/files/original/104bffb3df1910d98780f7aaec0533a1.pdf

encompasses the many ways in which universities as institutions of higher learning and epicenters of (supposed) intellectual progress relied on and contributed to America's slave society in the years prior to the Civil War.[2]

This paper builds on earlier research pertaining to the medical school, its graduates and its collections. Research surrounding the medical school and slavery began in the spring of 2018, when P&SP found that the early medical school had deep connections to the slaveholding class in the South. Past papers on Penn's medical school, founded under John Morgan in 1765, have focused on the recruitment of wealthy Southerners to the medical school,[3] the rise of race science and the "American School of Ethnology[4]," and the means by which Penn procured bodies for dissection during the antebellum era.[5] Important Penn physicians and professors who contributed significantly to the rise of race science include Charles Caldwell (MD 1796), Josiah Nott (MD 1827), and Samuel G. Morton (MD 1820, professor 1839-1843), whose works sought to create a racial hierarchy that was ultimately used by Confederate enslavers to justify slavery through scientific claims and empirical data. Although the work and opinions of individuals associated with Penn does not necessarily constitute the views of Penn as an institution, the work of these physicians and professors, when analyzed collectively, points to an academic and medical culture of racial othering.[6] As stated in previous reports, Penn's scientific and academic ties to slavery

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[2] The above statement on complicity was originally published in my Spring 2018 report. Every report from the Penn and Slavery Project has sought to define complicity in slavery/the slave trade as it pertains to Penn. As such, I've included it again here. See http://pennds.org/psp/files/original/12ac365b93d7e882a20ce4631ded247b.pdf

[3] See Spring 2018 report and findings by Dr. Alexis Broderick Neumann in her 2018 report to the faculty working group on Penn and Slavery.

[4] See Spring 2018 report, and Mitchell, Paul Wolff. "Morton Cranial Collection." Penn Museum. Accessed April 01, 2019. https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton/index.php.

[5] See Archana Upadhyay, Penn and Slavery Fall 2018 Research Report, report, Penn and Slavery Project, University of Pennsylvania (2018) as well as Carson Eckhard, *Penn Slavery Project Spring 2018 Findings,* report, Penn and Slavery Project, University of Pennsylvania (2018).

[6] See Eckhard, Spring 2018 and Fall 2018 reports.

constitute a distinctly different type of connections, as individuals associated with Penn published research that heavily influenced pro-slavery rhetoric during the antebellum period. Past papers have focused largely on the individuals who created this rhetoric; this report focuses largely on the anatomical and physical anthropology collections that enabled them to do so. In particular, this paper seeks to focus on the Horner-Wistar collection and the Morton Cranial Collection in a historical and contemporary context, as parts of both collections are still held by the University today.[7]

In conducting this research, I relied heavily on information found in the University Archives and the Library Company of Philadelphia, as well as Morton's papers at the American Philosophical Society. I also used the Ancestry genealogy database to search through relevant census and tax records. Correspondences between notable 19th century Penn Medical graduates and professors proved especially valuable in addition to their published works and lectures. Daina Ramey Berry's *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh* and Deidre Cooper Owens' *Medical Bondage* served as pivotal foundational texts in my research throughout the semester. Emily Renschler's 2007 dissertation on the Havana crania in the Morton Collection, "An osteobiography of an African diasporic skeletal sample: Integrating skeletal and historical information" also provided important context and osteological analyses of the crania from Cuba.

At the onset of the semester, a group of students working on the project, including Nate Coonts, Brooke Krancer, and Archana Upadhyay and I began examining the 1851 edition of the Horner-Wistar Collection catalogue with the help of Paul Wolff-Mitchell of Penn's Anthropology Department. The catalogue lists the animal and human specimens that comprised

[7] Note that much of the research in this paper regarding the crania in the Morton collection is also featured in my paper "The Remains of Enslaved People and the Construction of Race Science: Toward a Restoration of Stolen Personhood" (2019)

the Horner-Wistar Collection, which eventually became the Horner-Wistar Anatomical Museum. Our initial goal was to ascertain the provenance and current location of the specimens listed in the catalogue, and to subsequently to determine which, if any, came from enslaved people. Within a few weeks, we were able to create a digitized spreadsheet of the catalogue contents. However, cross-referencing bones in the catalogue with those in the Museum's physical anthropology collection proved difficult, as many of the bones have no labels identifying them. As a result, the working group relied on Wolff Mitchell to identify the bones, while students attempted to create an ordering system for the specimens. Given the sparse catalogue entries, we were not able to positively identify any of the Horner-Wistar osteological specimens as belonging to enslaved people. However, we hope that greater archival research paired with continued osteoanalysis and examination of wet specimens at the Mutter Museum will yield more conclusive answers.

The other major specimen collection from the 19th century is the Morton Cranial Collection, named after Samuel George Morton (1799-1851), a Penn professor and race scientist. During his time as a faculty member, Morton taught anatomy and lectured on ethnology.[8] Morton amassed 867 human skulls during his lifetime. A proponent of polygenesis, the theory that each human race is distinct in its origins and inalterable in its nature (contrasted with monogenism of Biblical tradition, which posited the descent all living people from a common ancestral pair), Morton began collecting human crania in 1830. Morton published *Crania Americana,* an ethnological text explaining his racial hierarchy based on cranial capacity, in 1839 while a professor at Penn Medical College. After this death in 1851, Morton's collection

[8] For more information on Morton, see Spring 2018 report or Mitchell, Paul Wolff. "Morton Cranial Collection." Penn Museum. Accessed April 01, 2019. https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton/index.php.

was given to the Academy of Natural Sciences; in the 1960s, it was loaned to the Penn Museum, to whom it now legally belongs.[9] Seventy-seven of the crania belonged to people of African descent.[10]

Two crania within the collection likely belonged to enslaved Americans. The first, obtained by Morton in 1846, belonged to an enslaved woman.[11] Listed in *The Catalogue of Skulls* as cranium 1320, Morton received this crania, which he labeled a "Negress of South Carolina," from Dr. James F.E Hardy.[12] Although Morton's catalogue implies that the woman was enslaved in South Carolina, it is more probable that she was in fact from North Carolina, as Hardy lived and practiced medicine near Asheville, NC.[13] Hardy owned and traded enslaved people throughout his lifetime. According to the 1830 census, Hardy held six enslaved people, including four women aged 10-23.[14] According to the Buncombe County Register of Deeds Office, Hardy owned enslaved women named Delphia, Eliza, Adalaid, Mary and Sarah (Mary's daughter).[15] It is not clear if the woman whose cranium is in the collection is one of the women listed in Hardy's records. Given that he was a physician, it's likely that he treated many enslaved

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[9] Mitchell, Paul Wolff. "Morton Cranial Collection." Penn Museum. Accessed April 01, 2019. https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton/index.php.

[10] Renschler, Emily S, "An osteobiography of an African diasporic skeletal sample: Integrating skeletal and historical information" (2007). Dissertations available from ProQuest. AAI3260972.

[11] "Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia," volume 3, 1846-1847. https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/17669#page/142/mode/1up

[12] Morton, SG, (1849) *Catalogue of Skulls of Man and the Inferior Animals in the Collection of Samuel G. Morton,* 3rd edn, Philadelphia, PA: Merrihew & Thompson., page 64

[13] Ancestry.com. U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Findagrave.com. Accessed May 06, 2019. https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/125776310/james-freeman_eppes-hardy.

[14] 1830; Census Place: Buncombe, North Carolina; Series: M19; Roll: 118; Page: 239; Family History Library Film: 0018084

[15] Register of Deeds - Genealogy - Slave Deeds. Accessed May 06, 2019. https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/depts/register-of-deeds/slave-deeds/default.aspx.

people in Buncombe County, as many Southern physicians did.[16] At this time, no additional information on the identity of individual 1320 has been uncovered.

Although the exact identity of cranium 1320 is unknown, analyzing her "osteobiography" provides useful information in contextualizing her life and existence outside the Morton Collection.[17] Her dentition shows that she was over eighteen years of age, though likely not past thirty. Linear enamel hypoplasia on her molars suggests severe nutritional deficiency throughout childhood.[18] Additionally, asymmetry (a depression) on left cranial vault of the skull suggests a potentially complicated birth or compression of her cranium in first couple years of her life. Both of these observations, as well as her youth, provide valuable information about her life as an enslaved woman in America. Lastly, the texture of her bone suggests that she was buried and then disinterred.

The other cranium belonging to an enslaved American was likely added to the collection after Morton's death by James Aikens Meigs, Morton's successor. Analysis of his cranium reveals that he was an adult male, likely in his early or mid twenties.[19] Labeled cranium 1975, the skull belongs to an enslaved man from Delaware.[20] According to a note written on the skull, he was hanged in Southampton, Virginia on charges of rape in 1839. Death penalty records from Southampton indicate that two Black enslaved men, Jeff and Frank James, were executed on

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[16] See Deirdre Cooper Owens' *Medical Bondage* (2017).
[17] Osteoanalysis provided by Paul Wolff Mitchell, PhD candidate in Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania
[18] Linear enamel hypoplasia (LEH), the presence of linear defects of dental enamel formed during periods of growth disruption, is frequently analyzed in physical anthropology as evidence for childhood health in the past. Hassett, Brenna R. "Missing defects? A comparison of microscopic and macroscopic approaches to identifying linear enamel hypoplasia." *Am J Phys Anthropol*. 2014 Mar;153(3):463-72. doi: 10.1002/ajpa.22445. Epub 2013 Dec 3. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24323494
[19] Osteoanaylsis provided by Paul Wolff Mitchell, PhD candidate in Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania
[20] Cranium 1975, The Morton Collection, courtesy of the Penn Museum

March 13 of that year.[21] Given the lack of due process granted to enslaved people, there are no records of any trial. Individual 1975's presence in the collection speaks to the history of the criminalization of black bodies, and the utter lack of agency enslaved people held over their bodies both in life and death. At present, no other records pertaining to the identity of cranium 1975 have been discovered, and further research into his identity and background is necessary to confirm his identity.

Of the 77 African-descended crania that Morton obtained, 53 originated on the Vedado Plantation, near Havana, Cuba.[22] Shipped to Philadelphia via the "Elizabeth," from Cuban physician Jose Cisneros, the Havana crania were the largest single addition to Morton's collection at the time that he received them. In his "Catalogue of Skulls" (1851), Morton recorded the Havana crania as numbers 901-929 and 958-980, though all were included in the same shipment.[23] Morton labeled each of the Havanese crania "Negro Born in Africa," indicating that these individuals survived the Middle Passage before arriving in the Caribbean.[24]

These African people were shipped to Cuba at the onset of "second slavery", the "systemic redemployment and expansion of Atlantic slavery during the nineteenth century," particularly in the Caribbean.[25] As the demand for sugar continued to rise, Cuba imported enslaved Africans to maintain the Cuban economy. Slavery in Cuba was notoriously brutal, and

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[21] Blanco, Juan Ignacio. Executions in Virginia - 1831-1900 - DeathPenaltyUSA, the Database of Executions in the United States. Accessed May 09, 2019. http://deathpenaltyusa.org/usa1/state/virginia4.htm.

[22] Morton Papers, American Philosophical Society.

[23] Renschler, Emily S, "An osteobiography of an African diasporic skeletal sample: Integrating skeletal and historical information" (2007). Dissertations available from ProQuest. AAI3260972. https://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI3260972,pages 24-25

[24] Ibid, 6.

[25] Tomich, Dale, and Michael Zeuske. "Introduction, the Second Slavery: Mass Slavery, World-Economy, and Comparative Microhistories." Review (Fernand Braudel Center) 31, no. 2 (2008): 91-100. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40241709.

the high mortality rate and low fertility rate among enslaved women necessitated a consistent influx of enslaved Africans.[26] It is significant that the people whose remains constitute the Havana subset were born in Africa and survived the Middle Passage, as the trauma of the Middle Passage and the abuses of slavery are evident even in their remains. Renschler found that the crania sent to Morton included a broad range of ages, from children to old adults, and both males and females. Attention to skeletal and dental markers of pathology shows that many of the individuals in the collection bear indelibly embodied signatures of their oppression in the course of the Middle Passage and in the bondage of slavery at a Cuban sugar plantation. These include indications of sustained nutritional deficiency and stress, from early life until the time of death. One specific cranium, number 960, shows the fusion of the uppermost vertebra of the spine to the skull, likely caused by the pressures of bearing a yoke around the neck.[27]

Given the transitory nature of freedom during the early 19th century, it is not certain how many African-descended individuals in the collection experienced slavery during their lifetime in addition to the fifty-five people examined in this paper. However, given that Morton obtained the crania with the intention of creating a racial hierarchy, the existence of the collection is predicated on the erasure of marginalized individuals and their identities. As such, it is imperative that the University and the Penn Museum consider the implications of the Morton Collection in both a historical and contemporary context, including repatriation when descendent populations can be plausibly identified.

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[26] Fraginals, Manuel Moreno. "Africa In Cuba: A Quantitative Analysis Of The African Population In The Island Of Cuba." Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences 292, no. 1 Comparative P (1977): 187-201. Accessed April 5, 2019. doi:10.1111/j.1749-6632.1977.tb47743.x.

[27] Renschler, Emily S, "An osteobiography of an African diasporic skeletal sample: Integrating skeletal and historical information" (2007). Dissertations available from ProQuest. AAI3260972. https://repository.upenn.edu/dissertations/AAI3260972

That the collection continues to bear Morton's name is significant. Although some may argue that removing Morton's name from the collection permits further erasure of the collection's implications, it is important to consider the way in which the invocation of Morton's name enables his continued subjugation of those individuals whose personhood was stolen for the sake of Morton's scientific pursuits. In light of this, removing Morton's name from the cranial collection would allow greater emphasis on the individuals within the collection, rather than the man who profited from the unethical collection of their bones. [28]

In the coming semesters, I hope to examine Penn's role in the production of race science further, as well as the extent to which this science influenced racial thought both before and since the Civil War. Questions that arose from this semester's findings include: To what extent were the publications on the treatment of enslaved people tied to racially-informed curriculum of the medical school? Which professors, aside from Morton, were the most prominent instructors in racial "science"? Can we find more information about the Havana crania and the crania belonging to enslaved Americans? Additionally, I would like to further examine the provenance of the specimens in the Horner-Wistar collection.

Of course, the ethical questions that emerge from this research are just as important as those pertaining to continued historical research. Primarily, the moral and ethical questions pertaining to the findings in this paper concern the role of the cranial collection today. How should the University address the continued ownership of a physical anthropology collection that includes the remains of enslaved people?

[28] From "The Remains of Enslaved People and the Construction of Race Science: Toward a Restoration of Stolen Personhood" (2019)

Penn is not the only university navigating questions such as these. Earlier this year, a lawsuit was brought against Harvard University by Tamara Lanier, a direct descendent of Renty and Delia, two enslaved people who appear in a photograph owned by the university.[29] The daguerreotypes, commissioned by Morton's contemporary Louis Agassiz for the purpose of illustrating racial difference and Black inferiority, legally belong to Harvard, just as the crania legally belong to Penn. Similar to the crania collection at the Penn Museum, the daguerreotypes are kept by the Peabody Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology. The lawsuit references Morton and his cranial collection as a pivotal point in Agassiz's adoption of race science and polygenesis theory. The questions raised by the Harvard lawsuit: How should an institution atone for producing knowledge (albeit false knowledge) that justified immense oppression and cruelty? What happens when the institution in question still holds the items that enabled such an ideology to be considered science? Who should own such items now?

At present, the university holds the remains of fifty-five people known to be enslaved in their lifetimes.[30] At this time, Penn is the only American university known to knowingly hold the remains of enslaved people in an anthropology collection. Although other universities, including the University of Virginia and the University of Georgia have discovered the remains of enslaved people on their grounds,[31] the crania at the Penn Museum were consciously obtained and continue to be intentionally held by the University. Unlike those interred at Southern

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[29] Lanier v. Harvard (Middlesex County Superior Court March 20, 2019). https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/harvard-photos.pdf

[30] Note that two of the crania from the Havana collection were lost, likely when the collection was transferred from the Academy of Natural Sciences to the Penn Museum during the 1960s. Originally, the remains of fifty-seven enslaved people were in the collection.

[31] It's important to note that the University of Georgia and the University of Georgia have discovered the remains of enslaved people on their grounds. See Bromley, Anne. "U.Va. Group Honors Unknown Slaves at Burial Site, Sets Stage for Future Work." UVA Today. November 10, 2015. Accessed May 05, 2019. https://news.virginia.edu/content/uva-group-honors-unknown-slaves-burial-site-sets-stage-future-work.

universities, the remains of enslaved people at Penn do not represent the last wishes of these individuals. Contrarily, the enslaved Black people whose remains comprise the Morton crania collection were stolen from their graves and collected with the goal of empirically proving their inferiority to other "races." The University community must therefore ask itself several questions: What should Penn do with a collection that was collected with such an intention? To whom do these crania truly belong? How/Should they be displayed? How might we find descendent populations of these enslaved people?

These are not easy questions to answer, and there is no clearly correct solution. However, based on the information in this paper demands that the University take action of some kind regarding the Morton collection and its presence on campus. As suggested earlier, removing Morton's name from the collection would allow for greater focus on the people whose remains comprise the collection. Additionally, the collection and CT scans of the collection continue to be used in scientific and anthropological research.[32] Recent projects have included "Population differences in the shape and form of the skull for forensic science, patterns of trauma on the skull and non-metric features of the skull associated with ancestry.[33]" Given that the collection and the works that emanated from it were reliant upon the theft of marginalized bodies and the erasure of their personhood, the continued use of these remains in research ultimately perpetuates the exploitation of these individuals.[34] Furthermore, placing the collection within the context of race science and modern racialized medicine would allow for a stronger understanding of how

[32]"History of the Morton Collection." Penn Museum. Accessed May 01, 2019. https://www.penn.museum/sites/morton/collection.php.
[33] Ibid
[34] Also expressed in The Remains of Enslaved People and the Construction of Race Science: Toward a Restoration of Stolen Personhood"

the crania collection and the research that resulted from it influenced national conversations on slavery, and later efforts to socialize science and medicine.[35]

In light of these findings, Penn must reaffirm its commitment to continuing this research. More importantly, Penn must affirm its commitment to taking steps towards reparative actions. In addition to the above suggestions, Penn should formally join the Universities Studying Slavery coalition, and engage in conversations regarding reparations with other universities. Moreover, conversations surrounding the nature of these actions must not be limited to the University administration. Instead, such discussions should include members of the Penn community, as well as the Philadelphia community and other organizations working toward reparations in America.[36]

[35] E.g. Consider placing the crania alongside explanations of race sciences' implications in both a historical and modern context. See Dorothy Roberts' *Fatal Invention* (2011).
[36] E.g. organizations like Color of Change or the Equal Justice Initiative

Suggestions for Augmented Reality Work

In considering the use of augmented reality (AR) technology to illustrate the connections between Penn's Medical School, its faculty, and its graduates to slavery, it is essential to center the individuals whose personhood was stolen from them, rather than the physicians and students who profited from doing so.

In light of this, I think that using AR to perform facial reconstruction on the individuals whose remains comprise the collection could be an evocative means of telling their stories. Morton's writings (and thus his collection of crania) depended on stripping people of their humanity and using them as type specimens for their "race." To paraphrase Arielle Brown, a Public Programs Developer at the Penn Museum, it is essential that we don't force these bodies to continue to do this work, or uphold the burden of explaining their exploitation. Because of this, I think that any use of AR pertaining to the Morton Collection should be apart from the physical crania themselves. Instead, I think that scanning an image of people (not crania) representing the collection before allowing these people to tell their stories would be incredibly powerful. Rendering the images based on individual crania themselves would further allow for the stories of *people,* not stories of Morton or his science, to be told.

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