

HARVARD
UNIVERSITY



REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON

Human Remains in University Museum Collections

FALL 2022

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“We must begin to
confront the reality
of a past in which
academic curiosity
and opportunity
overwhelmed
humanity.”

LAWRENCE BACOW
President of Harvard University

INTRODUCTION

We live in a time in which it has become incumbent on the University to explore and understand, to the fullest extent possible, its relationship to and participation in the historically oppressive regimes of slavery and colonialism. This has been the essential promise of the Presidential Initiative on Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery, which was initiated by President Bacow in November 2019. During the research associated with this initiative's charge, it was found that the Peabody Museum possessed the human remains of fifteen individuals who may have been enslaved. Further, it was already known that the Peabody held one of the nation's largest collections of human remains of Native American individuals. Additional human remains are also held in the Warren Anatomical Museum of the Countway Library. As a result, President Bacow appointed our committee to assess issues of the procurement, provenance, preservation, and disposition of human remains in Harvard museums and collections. Our committee also was charged to propose recommendations for the care of these remains and our ethical and moral responsibilities for their future protection, possible return, and appropriate recognition and memorialization.

As members of this committee and the wider Harvard community, we have recognized that it is fundamental to our collective values, ethics, and morals to work to fully understand and assess the University's collections of human remains, especially those acquired under the structural violence of slavery and colonialism, as well as to determine our current moral and ethical responsibilities regarding these remains. Our collection of these particular human remains is a striking representation of structural and institutional racism and its long half-life.

Science and medicine, from time immemorial, have demonstrated a deep interest in the pursuit of knowledge of the human body. Since earliest times there have been powerful tensions between sacred rituals across all cultures with human remains and their use for inquiry. Ethical and moral standards about the dead body and its remains have no doubt varied over time. Nonetheless, the human remains under scrutiny in this report represent a specific case of appropriation: they were obtained under the violent and inhumane regimes of slavery and colonialism; they represent the University's engagement and complicity in these categorically immoral systems. Moreover, we know that skeletal remains were utilized to demonstrate spurious and racist differences to confirm existing social hierarchies and structures.

Full acknowledgement and study of this history, however, can only be a first step in coming to terms with these human remains in Harvard Museum collections. One of our committee members, Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr., consistently reminded us that we must always remember that "they were people too." That they ended up in our collections, owned by our university, demands our careful and conscientious attention to their care, commemoration, and where possible, their return to their ancestral peoples and tribes. This deep and abiding commitment is the basis for the report and recommendations that follow.

ALLAN M. BRANDT

Amalie Moses Kass Professor of the History of Medicine and Professor of the History of Science

“It is fundamental to our collective values, ethics, and morals to work to fully understand and assess the University’s collections of human remains, especially those acquired under the structural violence of slavery and colonialism.”

CREATION AND CHARGE TO THE STEERING COMMITTEE

In the spirit of continuing efforts to understand the legacy of slavery at Harvard, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology conducted a detailed assessment of human remains at the Museum, that revealed the remains of fifteen individuals of African descent who were or were likely to have been alive during the period of American enslavement. In a message to the entire University community on January 28, 2021, President Lawrence Bacow brought attention to the presence of these remains together with more than 22,000 others in Harvard's museum collections, principally the Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology and the Warren Anatomical Museum. The Warren had completed a similar survey of its collections and associated archives in 2016 and did not find remains with a connection to slavery still in the collection.

On behalf of the University community, President Bacow apologized for Harvard's role in collection practices that "placed the academic enterprise above respect for the dead and human decency." He continued by affirming that "our museum collections undoubtedly help to expand the frontiers of knowledge, but we cannot—and should not—continue to pursue truth in ignorance of our history." At the same time Peabody director Jane Pickering made a specific and [formal apology](#) for the practices that led to the Peabody's large collection of Native American human remains and funerary belongings and pledged to prioritize the urgent work of understanding and addressing the Museum's history.

To these ends, President Bacow appointed a University-wide Steering Committee on human remains in the University's museum collections, chaired by Evelyn Hammonds, Barbara Gutmann Rosenkrantz Professor of the History of Science and of African and African American Studies and Professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health.

The Steering Committee's charge was as follows:

- Undertake archival research on the remains of the fifteen individuals identified in the Peabody review and consider options for the return of these remains, as well as their burial or reburial, commemoration, and memorialization. These efforts will serve as a pilot to inform the remainder of the charge, namely:
 - The creation of a comprehensive survey of human remains present across all University museum collections, as well as their use in current teaching and research.
 - The development of a University-wide policy on the collection, display, and ethical stewardship of human remains in the University's museum collections.
 - The proposal of principles and practices that address research, community consultation, memorialization, possible repatriation, burial or reburial, and other care considerations.

For the purposes of this report, human remains are described in four ways:

Human remains refers to the physical remains of a human body, or any part thereof, whether or not naturally shed, freely given, or culturally modified. In some cultural contexts human hair may be considered human remains.

Human skeletal remains refers to bones or teeth. Both a complete skeleton of an individual and a bone fragment would be considered human skeletal remains and are referred to as an "individual" in this report.

Human remains under NAGPRA are ancestral remains that have been or will be returned under the [Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act](#).

University museum collections: This report covers human remains found in collections-holding entities at the University, that is the museums and libraries. It does not include tissue, DNA, or other samples that are in our affiliated hospitals or research laboratories or human remains acquired as part of the Harvard Medical School Anatomical Gift Program.

These and other terms used in the report are defined in Appendix 1. The membership of the Committee can be found in Appendix 2. The work of the committee was necessarily informed by existing efforts to implement the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. As detailed later in this report, it is the University's responsibility to return all ancestral remains to the appropriate tribal nation or nations through a federally-defined process. Consequently, this report's recommendations apply primarily to human remains not covered by NAGPRA. The Peabody Museum's NAGPRA Advisory Committee will use these recommendations as appropriate to guide NAGPRA activities.

The committee also drew on scholarly perspectives from across the University and intersected with the [Initiative on Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery](#), engaging a wide range of expertise to address timely questions about the responsibility of institutions to society.

A. Results of Survey of Human Remains in Museum Collections

President Bacow committed to a full review of all human remains in the University's museum collections and the Steering Committee contacted all collections-holding entities at the University. Most do not steward human remains and those that do have very small numbers which are mostly hair keepsakes or from an archaeological context. There are a small number of skeletal remains with provenances that need further investigation. The overwhelming majority of human remains at the University are stewarded by the Peabody Museum and the Warren Anatomical Museum.

Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology

In 1866, philanthropist George Peabody committed funding that led to the creation of the Peabody Museum, a place for the study of anthropology, which was a new academic discipline at that time. As one of the oldest museums of anthropology, the history of the Peabody is intricately linked to legacies of settler colonialism and imperialism both in the United States and around the globe. The Peabody was founded on the practice of collecting the cultural heritage and human remains of diverse communities. Harvard-funded exploration and research in the name of anthropological scholarship was the mechanism by which they were removed from home communities.

In addition to its own active collecting, the Peabody is also a repository for human remains from across Harvard, reflecting academic practices in other areas of the University. In addition, the Peabody accepted human remains from other institutions to further its academic enterprise. Especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, human remains were often transferred from one entity to another, sometimes in an exchange between two institutions, to expand and develop the collections for the purposes of research and teaching.

¹ Numbers are presented as estimated number of individuals by catalog record in the museum database. This method tends to *overestimate* the actual number of individuals within an accession but is widely used for its consistency in approach.

By the 1980s, prior to the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), the Peabody cared for human skeletal remains from 10,000¹ individuals from the United States and the remains of 10,000 individuals from outside the United States. The remains came from sources spanning archaeological sites of deep antiquity to individuals "collected" to support racist science. Today there are remains of 6,500 individuals that have not yet been returned to tribal communities under NAGPRA.

Of the 10,000 individuals from outside the United States, more than 90 percent are from archaeological contexts, with a majority part of large archaeological expeditions supported by the Museum during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The remainder were largely offered to or acquired by the Peabody from other entities at Harvard and other universities and institutions. The Museum has not actively collected human remains since the 1970s, when there were a number of ongoing archaeological expeditions around the world led by Harvard faculty.

Individuals Covered under Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

The size and broad scope of the collections at the Peabody make it one of the largest and most intensive NAGPRA implementation efforts in the nation. NAGPRA requires the Peabody Museum and other institutions and federal agencies to repatriate affiliated Native American human remains, funerary objects, objects of cultural patrimony, and sacred objects. The statute, along with subsequent administrative regulations, sets forth a detailed regime that museums must follow, including the inventorying of relevant holdings, communications and consultations with tribal nations, publication of notices in the Federal Register, and eventual transfer of human remains and cultural items to tribal nations.

The Peabody has developed a systematic and comprehensive program to administer NAGPRA that includes communication with all 574 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and nations as well as many state-recognized tribes and other native groups, and has issued more than 170 Federal Register Notices. The current phase of implementation involves sections of the expanded regulations issued by the Department of the Interior in 2010.

Individuals from outside the United States

There are skeletal remains from close to 10,000 individuals originating from outside the United States. Ninety-three percent are from an archaeological context, most of which are likely to be more than 500 years old. Approximately 650 individuals are not from an archaeological context. Large archaeological collections include those from George Reisner's expeditions in Egypt during the early 20th century and excavations from cave sites on Mount Carmel in Israel that are between 10,000 and 100,000 years old. Harvard faculty have conducted research in Mexico and Central America for more than 100 years with particular emphasis on Maya and Aztec sites in Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras. Other excavations include European Iron and Bronze Age sites.

Of the approximately 650 individuals not from an archaeological context, more than half have no geographic information. The other individuals are from many different localities. Some were acquired in exchanges with other institutions and many were transferred to the Peabody from other parts of the University.

Warren Anatomical Museum

The Warren Anatomical Museum collection in the Center for the History of Medicine, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, cares for a historical collection of 3,200 skeletal,

900 fluid-preserved, and 200 anatomically prepared human remains. The Warren was initiated in 1816 to develop a collection of human remains to teach anatomy and pathology at Harvard Medical School. Most of the human remains in the collection have Massachusetts origins and often come from private or hospital-based clinical care environments. The remains are mostly anatomical components or represent a specific diseased area and, with few exceptions, are not whole bodies. At its height in the early 1900s, the Warren held more than 10,000 remains, but during the post-World War II period, the museum underwent a gradual contraction, and some of its holdings were deaccessioned permanently or transferred to other institutions. It was also during this period that the Warren largely ceased bringing in new human remains, only doing so on rare and specific occasions. In 2000, the Warren was transferred from the then-defunct Department of Anatomy into the Center for the History of Medicine, where it was stabilized and reintroduced to University teaching and research. While a small percentage of the overall collection, the Warren did collect racialized crania in the 19th century. Some of these human remains are still part of the collection, while others have been repatriated under NAGPRA or transferred to other institutions.

To support its teaching mission, Harvard Medical School has developed wide-ranging and diverse medical collections. While medical collections broadly were not the focus of the Steering Committee's work, the principles, infrastructure, and processes recommended should inform efforts toward their continued responsible stewardship. Maintaining vigilance and constant reflection on the purpose of medical collections and how they are used in teaching and research remains ever important.

Other Repositories at Harvard

In December 2021, the Steering Committee contacted the directors of all collections-holding entities at the University to ask about possible human remains in their collections.

The numbers are very small and are largely archaeological skeletal remains.

The following collections-holding entities care for human skeletal remains:

Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments

Twenty-one human teeth in labeled vials prepared for study at the (then) Harvard Dental School at the turn of the 20th century.

Dumbarton Oaks

Three human skulls decorated with a mosaic of turquoise and shell *tesserae* that were created by the Mixteca-Puebla during the Mesoamerican Late Postclassic period (1300–1520 CE).

Harvard Art Museums

The Department of Ancient and Byzantine Art & Numismatics cares for a small number of skeletal elements and ashes associated with funerary urns. The Harvard Art Museums also administer the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis: the excavated human remains and all finds belong to the Turkish government.

Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East

HMANE has a small collection of archaeological remains that date from c. 3000 BC to the Late Bronze Age.

Museum of Comparative Zoology

There are a total of 25 catalog numbers representing five skulls, eleven single-skeletal elements, four partial skeletons and five full skeletons. Associated provenance information

is minimal and almost all came to the collection in the late 19th or early 20th century. Approximately half came from the Boston Society of Natural History, three are associated with Alexander Agassiz, and three are associated with Jeffries Wyman. These remains will be assessed by the University's new Returns Committee. There is also a small teaching collection of thirty individual skeletal elements, including five crania, most of which have no provenance.

Harvard University Libraries

Houghton Library cares for *Des destin es de l'ame*, a 19th-century book bound in human skin, owned by Dr. Ludovic Bouland and donated to Harvard in 1954. There is a bone fragment purportedly of Saint Sebastian (ca. 3rd century) in a medallion reliquary.

B. Enslaved or Likely to Have Been Enslaved Individuals

In 2020, a review of the collection of the Peabody Museum documented the presence of the remains of fifteen individuals of African descent who were either definitely or possibly alive before the end of enslavement of people of African origin or heritage in the United States. The remains of these individuals came to the Museum between 1875 and 1964, a time when human remains were often exchanged between institutions. Many were transferred to the Peabody from other museums and entities at Harvard. The formation of the Steering Committee was founded on (1) the judgment that retaining the remains of enslaved people in Harvard's museum collections runs counter to our fundamental values, and (2) the immediate need to undertake the necessary activities to enable interment (in some cases (re)interment or repatriation) of the remains of these individuals.

The Committee began the necessary provenance research to identify these individuals and their communities of origin, and it acknowledges that in some instances we may find that their identities and stories cannot be recovered. Such research involves detailed examination of available museum documentation, including ledger entries, catalog cards, accession files, and correspondence. These documents provide clues for research outside Harvard, with examples being census records and other institutional archives. This effort was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as many archives have only recently reopened to external researchers. However, the Committee has made some progress, most recently through the work of Inequality in America Postdoctoral Fellow Dr. Aja Lans.

The Steering Committee has undertaken further research on skeletal human remains from individuals of African descent from the Caribbean and Brazil to identify enslaved or likely enslaved individuals associated with the transatlantic slave trade. This research found four additional individuals who were enslaved or likely to have been enslaved, of whom two have clear provenance that they were enslaved.

For too long, these remains have been separated from their individuality, their history, and their communities. To restore those connections will require further provenance research and community consultation. In addition, research might include DNA or other analysis for the express purpose of identifying lineal descendants.

The efforts of research and return undertaken for these nineteen individuals provide an opportunity to develop a roadmap to address the remains of other individuals in which the associated provenances suggest that they should also be reviewed for respectful return. To accomplish this requires an institutional infrastructure to support what is a long-term, resource-intensive endeavor. It requires the assistance of professional staff with research expertise and funding to support associated costs, such as consultation with affected communities, and to effect timely and respectful interment, reinterment, appropriate return to descendant communities, or repatriation.

More Details on Remains of Enslaved or Likely to Have Been Enslaved Individuals

Fifteen Individuals of African Descent from within the United States

The Museum has begun to identify, to the greatest degree possible, the identities of these individuals and any lineal descendants or descendant communities. Access to archives outside of Harvard has been limited, until recently, due to restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, when many archives were closed, and the work is continuing. At this time, research has suggested that of these fifteen individuals, one was enslaved and one was extremely likely to have been enslaved; eleven individuals have provenances that indicate they may have been enslaved, and two were born after 1865, when the 13th Amendment to the Constitution abolished slavery in the United States. More information follows here:

Four individuals were accessioned from the Boston Society of Natural History (BSNH); one is confirmed to have been enslaved and the others may have been enslaved. The BSNH was founded in 1830. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Society dispersed much of its collections to other institutions including several donations to Harvard. In 1939, the Society became the Boston Museum of Science. One individual is named; was enslaved by Bernard Peyton of Richmond; was accused of assaulting, with attempt to kill, overseer Thomas B. Goodman; and was executed in 1847. A second individual from Richmond, Virginia, was almost certainly enslaved and was part of the collection donated to the BSNH by Jeffries Wyman, who was Professor of Anatomy at Harvard College and the first curator of the Peabody Museum. Two individuals are associated with James C. White (1833-1916), one of the founders of the BSNH, a professor at Harvard Medical School and Curator of Mammalogy & Comparative Anatomy at the Society. One cranium was catalogued September 18, 1861, as part of a large acquisition upon the passing of Dr. John Foster Williams Lane, an 1837 graduate of Harvard College and 1840 graduate of Harvard Medical School; the other was given by Detective G. Revere Curtis to White in 1865. The University is committed to further research to try to identify lineal descendants and/or home communities for these individuals.

Two individuals are part of the Terry collection, which is composed of skeletal remains collected from the gross anatomy dissection labs at Washington University Medical School in St. Louis, Missouri between 1898 and 1941. Both are nearly complete human remains. Most of the Terry collection is now at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. The individuals at Harvard were accessioned in 1956, having been sent to William Howells, then Professor of Anthropology. One individual is named, was born in June 1872 and died in December 1937. Very little is

currently known about the second individual who was born in 1864 and died in 1934. The University hopes that further research may help identify this individual.

Cranial remains of two individuals were part of the collections at the Warren Anatomical Museum. One was likely donated by Charles H. Stedman, a resident surgeon at the Chelsea Naval Hospital and later a practicing surgeon in Boston, before 1847. The second individual has very little provenance information but was likely from a dissecting room and may have come to the museum at the turn of the 20th century. Both are likely to have been from the Boston area.

Cranial remains of one individual were uncovered during a public works project in 1961 near the intersection of Linnaean Street and Avon Street. After consultation with the Cambridge Historical Commission, it is likely the cranial remains were buried before Avon Street was constructed, so likely prior to 1845. The land was owned by a Josiah Parker or A. Stimpson; further research is required on the landowners to determine if they may have enslaved individuals who could have been buried on the site.

One individual was transferred from the Marksville Museum in Louisiana. There is no provenance information on when the cranial remains came to the Peabody or to the Marksville Museum, then a state museum, but no longer in existence. It is possible that this individual was found during excavations of the Marksville site in Ayolles Parish, an 18th-century Tunica grave site.

Cranial human remains from one individual were removed from a peat bog in Delaware and identified by Peabody Museum staff as being of African descent. This individual was likely born before the end of slavery in the United States. As of the date of this report, there is no further information.

Human remains from one individual who was buried on the University of Oklahoma's grounds in the late 1890s were uncovered while excavating for a building foundation. Professor W. Stovall sent the remains to Stanley J. Olsen at the Museum of Comparative Zoology in 1962. Further provenance research will be carried out in Oklahoma to learn about the construction project and history of medical instruction.

Cranial remains of two individuals are subject to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). One individual has been repatriated to two federally recognized Tribes and the second individual is part of an ongoing consultation with tribal communities to enable repatriation.

Finally, there is a hair sample obtained from a named individual child born in 1902 who has been identified through census records to have lived in Pike County Mississippi. The University hopes to identify lineal descendants to make a decision about the lock of hair.

Four additional individuals from the Caribbean Islands and Brazil

Peabody staff undertook preliminary documentation of 92 individuals with geographical information connecting them to the Caribbean Islands or Brazil and possibly the transatlantic slave trade. Available museum documentation was examined, including ledger entries, catalog cards, accession cards, and accession files. The research indicates that four individuals at the Peabody from these geographic areas were enslaved or likely to have been enslaved.

Cranial human remains from one individual from Cuba came as part of an accession from the BSNH in 1916. Given the high probability that the remains are from the 19th century, there is a likelihood the individual was enslaved.

The cranial human remains from one individual from Martinique may have been associated with La Maison Lavallette, Paris, which supplied osteological and anatomical models to French medical schools and other institutions in Paris during the late 19th century and early 20th century. The cranium was donated to the Peabody by Dr. Ferdinand Brigham through Carleton S. Coon in 1941. Depending on the exact dates, this individual may have been enslaved.

Cranial human remains from an individual from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil came to the Peabody from the Museum of Comparative Zoology in 1870. The remains were exhumed from the "streets of Rio de Janeiro" by "Hunnewell," likely Walter Hunnewell, a student of Louis Agassiz who accompanied him on the Thayer Expedition to Brazil from 1865-1866.

Cranial human remains were sent by Gideon T. Snow to J. C. Hayward in Boston, who donated them to the collection of the Boston Society for Medical Improvement prior to 1847; this collection was officially accepted by the Warren Anatomical Museum in 1889. This individual is confirmed to have been enslaved. He is an unidentified African man from the Nago tribe who was injured during the Malé uprising in Bahia, Brazil, in January 1835 and taken to the Jerusalem Hospital near Bahia, where he died.

Recommendations Concerning the Nineteen Individuals

Recommendation: For the individuals who have been identified as being enslaved, or likely to have been enslaved, the University employ provenance research and appropriate consultation with communities or lineal descendants, to implement interment, reinterment, return to descendant communities, or repatriation of remains.

Recommendation: For the individuals who have been identified as not being enslaved, the new Human Remains Returns Committee employ provenance research and consultation to determine appropriate action.

Provenance Research

Essay by Dr. Aja Lans, Postdoctoral Fellow, Inequality in America Initiative

As a Black woman and bioarchaeologist of the African diaspora, my research begins with the dead and objectified Black body, often as it appears in museum and university collections. For centuries, the remains of “others” have been collected in the name of scientific progress—science of the sort that accepted their bodies as simple data, objects to be measured. But in my hands, they are something different. They are evidence of Black suffering and death and an invitation to explore Black “livingness,” what it meant to live a Black life at various moments in the past. In searching for the Black lives behind these Black bodies, I grapple with the vestiges of scientific racism that continue to shape the conception of Blackness in science and in society and to look for new paths to new ways of knowing.

My educational background in biological anthropology has given me tools and frameworks for my research, but it did not give me language to describe what I felt while working with these remains. In fact, my discipline discouraged that sort of reflection in order to maintain objectivity. To find that language, I needed to become somewhat undisciplined, reaching outside my field to the work of Black women creatives and scholars. I found

in them powerful articulations of the many emotions I was feeling as I analyzed the remains of people who I imagined to look like my family, my friends, and like me. It was through their decolonizing perspectives that I realized that no scholarship is neutral, including my own.

**“For centuries, the
remains of ‘others’ have
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to be measured”**

Gender studies scholar Katherine McKittrick explains that “Black intellectual life is tied to corporeal and affective labor (flesh and brains and blood and bones, hearts, souls).”² This union of bodies, experience, and labor is quite evident in the work of bioarchaeologists, as we labor to excavate, curate, and analyze remains. At the same time, my identity and career is contingent upon the skeletonized remains of individuals who in most instances never consented

to the act of being studied. Does my research continue a history of forcing labor from these bodies, subjugating them anew to my intellectual curiosity? Or is my work, with its efforts to uncover individual lives, histories, and experiences part of a process of repair? What I oftentimes come back to is a question: who will find these stories if I don’t do this? And what will these researchers say about our bodies? I doubt I will ever come up with a satisfactory justification for my chosen occupation, as anthropology did, of course, begin as a colonial endeavor. But perhaps there are ways to move forward that will address the violence that has been inflicted upon the bodies of “others” and bring a form of healing to the communities that researchers have long exploited.

In order to make change, as academics and gatekeepers, we must make an effort to slow down and engage with the communities who are impacted by our work.³ This need for engagement has become painfully obvious to me over the past few years, as the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and structural racism laid bare the disproportionate harm experienced by Black and Brown communities. I reached a breaking point when in a top anthropological journal, I came

² Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 3.

³ Isabelle Stengers, *Another Science Is Possible: A Manifesto for Slow Science* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018).

across an article discussing indications of structural violence found on the skeletal remains of unidentified individuals who died attempting to cross the United States–Mexico border. Why not ask people who are still alive and actively suffering? Why not talk to individuals who have been deemed “illegal” rather than investigating the unconsenting dead? Looking for answers in the distant past is an easier path to an academic publication—at least if you are a forensic anthropologist—but it leaves us continuing a process of scientific objectification. Instead, the path less taken runs to our living ethical stakeholders, the people who are directly implicated in the topics and categories of our research projects.⁴ That’s the path I want to walk in my work.

Many scholars are hesitant to deal with what is messy, what doesn’t fit into neat categories.⁵ But if the last few years have shown us anything, it is that we will have to own up to our past mistakes and the legacies of our academic forebears. This is not to say we are guilty of the crimes committed by our academic ancestors, but we are

implicated in what we choose to do or not do with the people and artifacts we have been tasked with caring for. It is because of this that I advocate for transparency while undertaking these sorts of projects. I believe it is imperative that we rebuild trust with the communities and stakeholders who have suffered from the science advanced by exploiting unconsenting bodies. Nearly every historical skeletal collection in the United States was started by a desire to define and categorize the Other. That does not mean we have to perpetuate this narrative moving forward. By slowing down we might restore personhood to the remains in our care and develop solutions for what was previously considered too difficult to deal with.

Interdisciplinary artist and cultural producer Ashley B. Wormsley reminds us, “There Are Black People in the Future.”⁶ I focus so much on the past and its ties to the present that I often forget to think about what lies ahead. It is easy to be swallowed up by the centuries of death and suffering that are so central to my research. But it is vital that I do not fall into the trap of defining Black life only by racism and

death, and instead consider the various forms our knowledge production and liberation take.⁷ I view my work with the skeletal and archival remains of Black people as one way forward. Once we overcome old fears of losing control, giving up data, and prioritizing one way of knowing over another, we can actually ask new questions that might restore personhood, and perhaps lay these individuals to rest. At the same time, we have the opportunity to learn far more about these persons and their experiences. Skeletal data provide data and insights into people’s bodies that is unique to bioarchaeology, offering a powerful and nuanced understanding of how inequality and discrimination are embodied.

⁴ Jennifer A. Lupu, “Sex Workers as Stakeholders: Incorporating Harm Reduction into Archaeological Praxis,” *Archaeological Papers of the American Anthropological Association* 31 (2020): 66-79.

⁵ Stengers, *Another Science Is Possible*.

⁶ Alisha B. Wormsley, “There Are Black People in the Future,” 2011-Present, <https://alishabwormsley.com/there-are-black-people-in-the-future>

⁷ McKittrick, *Dear Science*

C. Return of Other Human Remains

Human remains covered by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

The Peabody Museum has developed a systematic, comprehensive, and collaborative program to administer requests for human remains under NAGPRA. The remains of these individuals and their funerary belongings belong with Native American tribes and are transferred according to the process outlined by federal regulations through repatriation or disposition. This requires careful work to ensure the best possible decisions. Such consideration is a form of respect, both to the ancestors and to the important practice of tribal consultation, and diligence is a crucial aspect of care and collaboration to advance the goal of the return.

The University has recently initiated significant efforts in developing new approaches to its NAGPRA implementation as it strives to fulfill its responsibilities to federally recognized Tribes across the United States together with other tribal communities. However, the remains of close to 6,500 individuals continue to be present at the Museum. The Committee recommends that the Peabody's NAGPRA efforts be accelerated while continuing to respect tribal timelines. It also recommends that NAGPRA implementation remain separate from the return of other individuals and continue to be overseen by the Peabody and its NAGPRA Advisory Committee. While following the legal process is necessary, the Museum and Committee should be mindful of the recommendations of this report wherever possible.

Human remains not covered by NAGPRA

The University cares for a diversity of human remains in terms of the nature of the remains, the rationale for and circumstances of acquisition, the extent of provenance

information, geography, temporal context, cultural beliefs, and funerary rites. This means acting appropriately and in an informed manner is complex and takes time, respect, and sensitivity. A single comprehensive policy for returns would not support this type of approach and the University must consider this an ongoing long-term endeavor that needs to be adequately resourced to expedite action.

The Steering Committee believes that to proactively and respectfully plan for the return of individuals, the University must convene a Human Remains Returns Committee that has appropriate staffing and resources to support its work. The first task of the Returns Committee will be to implement the recommendations for the nineteen individuals. This includes additional provenance research, identification of lineal descendants and/or descendant communities, and implementation of returns.

Additionally, the Committee will have responsibility for maintaining the criteria for additional circumstances in which individuals should not remain in University collections. Those criteria include circumstances of enslavement as well as individuals from communities that have clearly established their wish to repatriate ancestral remains.⁸ The Committee may identify other circumstances that will expand these criteria and will serve as a resource to Harvard museums as they consider issues of ethical stewardship of human remains.

Employing provenance research and consultation, the Committee will oversee and implement these returns. While this is likely to be a small number of cases, it is a time-consuming process to ensure careful decision-making and return. As soon as cases are identified to be under the Committee's purview, they should be immediately subject to a research and teaching moratorium.

⁸ This aligns with the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that supports the rights of Indigenous communities to the repatriation of their human remains.

The only exception to this moratorium would be research for the explicit purpose of identifying the best possible action of return. For example, techniques such as DNA analysis might be undertaken, unless the descendant community is known to disapprove of such research for this purpose.

Options for return would include transfer to lineal descendants or descendant community; interment at an appropriate cemetery (e.g., cemetery in home community); repatriation of individuals to their home communities; and, in some situations, continued care at the University. In situations where provenance research and other analysis fail to provide adequate information, the Returns Committee will determine appropriate and respectful action, with the assumption that interment would be the default option.

Members of the Returns Committee, collectively, should have expertise in provenance and other historical research, bioarchaeology, curatorial work, bioethics, spiritual leadership, community consultation, repatriation, and funerary arrangements. Given the involvement of multiple Schools, the impact on research and teaching, and possible international relationships, the Steering Committee recommend that the Returns Committee and its supporting administration be situated in the Provost's Office.

Recommendations for Returns of Other Human Remains

Recommendation: The University immediately establish a Human Remains Returns Committee and appropriate supporting administration to oversee and implement returns that fall outside the framework of NAGPRA. This Committee should exist as long as is needed in order to complete its work and should be situated in the Provost's Office.

Recommendation: The University commit to the continued investigation of the acquisition and presence of the remains in the museums and further commit to repatriating, (re) interring, or returning remains where the provenance precludes them from ethical teaching or research use by the University, based on criteria determined by the Returns Committee.

Recommendation: The University should continue and accelerate its implementation of NAGPRA legislation and the ethical and moral imperative it represents. Since NAGPRA mandates a certain process that may not be applicable in other situations, this should be overseen by the Peabody and its NAGPRA Advisory Committee while being mindful of the recommendations of this report.

Learning from NAGPRA

Essay by Philip Deloria, Leverett Saltonstall Professor of History

I started working on repatriation issues shortly after the 1990 passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). My role has mostly been on oversight boards and policy-formation task forces, critical but unglamorous work with institutions such as the Denver Art Museum, Colorado Historical Society, University of Michigan Museum, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, and most recently, the Harvard Peabody Museum. Over that time, I've come to understand a few things.

First, NAGPRA has undeniably been burdened by complicated administrative procedures. But while that proceduralism can feel like a barrier created intentionally, it also has productive dimensions. Good procedure requires precision and focus, and that means paying close attention to human remains, traveling goods, cultural patrimony, and sacred things that might otherwise function as abstract numbers in a catalogue. Focus means care, and over time a careful administrative approach to those catalogue entries transforms deliberate speed into a form of respect. Repatriation work can literally shape one's humanity, forging humility in the process. At the same time, the administrative labors required by NAGPRA demanded that Native tribal nations develop expertise and capacity that has served them well.

Along with humility, then, one finds in this work a sense of tribal confidence, courage, and pride. Museums have also developed new capacities, and the consultations that have followed created opportunities for tribal-institutional partnerships. Indeed, an institution that has not done well with NAGPRA cannot successfully engage tribal nations. That is as it should be and serves as a lesson for relationships with other communities.

“We question, debate, condemn, and sometimes absolve our predecessors, realizing that while we may not be responsible *for* their history, we are very much responsible *to* it. History is not inert; it demands action.”

Second, an institution in possession of human remains must engage its own history, explain its collections and collecting, and ask difficult but ultimately productive questions about how those people ended up in boxes on shelves. We question, debate, condemn, and sometimes absolve our predecessors, realizing that while we may not be responsible *for* their history, we are very much responsible *to* it. History is not inert; it demands

action. Third, such action is required because repatriation poses questions of ethics, values, and morality that cut to the heart and soul of an institution—as an entity in and of itself—and of we the people who constitute it. There are the obvious questions, which tend to stem from the history. Who has a right to the bodies of the dead? For what purposes? Under what conditions? What wrongs come down to us? With what obligation for repair? But there are also the less obvious ones, often generated out of the proceduralism. To whom exactly should one repatriate? Determined how? And what to do about the gaps, uncertainties, and ambiguities that arise when the questions stop being abstract? Tribal nationhood has offered a politically grounded community for working through such questions. With no equivalent community at hand for the remains of African American and African-descended people in the Peabody Museum, such questions take on an additional layer of complexity. To what extent should Harvard lead? Should it help constitute a community? How, and with whom?

Finally, I have now seen enough repatriation—including the psychic challenges to those working in the trenches and the transcendent power of moments of physical return—to have a felt understanding of the spiritual dimensions of these labors. Human remains are not simply

scientific specimens, administrative objects, or spurs to ethical debate and historical accountability, though they function as all those things. They have a gravity and meaning of their own. Add this to the ledger, then: along with the legacies of enslavement and of nonconsensual collecting of remains, there is also a spiritual challenge posed to our committee, not easily defined but present all the same. I understand that not everyone sees it this way, but I do. It is one of the things that has kept me committed to repatriation work for the last three decades—and to moving the work forward as Harvard considers its accountability to the legacies of slavery and colonialism.

D. Ethical Care

Human remains at the Peabody Museum are presently in a climate-controlled secure area, accessible only to a small number of staff. The Warren similarly maintains human remains collections in secure, monitored, and climate-controlled storage that is accessible only by specific staff. Since its transfer into the Center for the History of Medicine in 2000, the Warren has focused its resources on inventorying its collection in order to better center its ethical stewardship on the remains in its care. Both museums have invested significant effort in creating publicly accessible descriptions of the collections.

Recommended policies for respectful and responsible care are outlined in Appendix 4 of this report. Most are consistent with long-standing museum procedures. They include access protocols and review of information available in online databases to balance transparency with cultural sensitivity and privacy issues with display governed by careful consideration given to the context of the acquisition of the remains and the teaching rationale for their exhibition.

The Steering Committee believes that the University should create an on-campus, purpose-designed space to support the stewardship of human skeletal remains falling within the scope of these recommendations. This space must foster reflective and thoughtful consideration with private, restorative areas as well as a space for community consultation visits. It should also include appropriate storage, research facilities, and classroom spaces that promote respectful scholarship and learning.

Recommendation for Ethical Care

Recommendation: The University construct a purpose-designed, on-campus space to support respectful treatment of human skeletal remains falling within the scope of these recommendations, including areas for consultation, research, and teaching.

E. University Research and Teaching

Research that is based on human remains from the University's museums is mostly associated with the archaeological collections at the Peabody Museum. This includes about five Harvard student projects each year and 15–20 external research visitors from the United States and abroad. On average, 1–5 Harvard and external researchers access human remains in the Warren collection per year. Both the Peabody Museum and Warren Anatomical Museum also regularly provide access to digital resources, such as CT scans, image or 3D print files, and archival information.

Human remains that do not fall under the consideration of the Returns Committee may be available for research. All research requests that require use of human skeletal remains that fall within the scope of these recommendations and are located within the Harvard museums should be reviewed by a Research Review Committee on a case-by-case basis. The Committee may, in the course of its work, identify cases that should be referred to the Returns Committee, in which case the remains in question would be placed under an immediate research and teaching moratorium.

The majority of the Faculty of Arts & Sciences (FAS) teaching that employs human remains from the University's museums is associated with teaching in the departments of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology, Human Evolutionary Biology, and Anthropology (archaeological courses). These typically serve 250–300 students a year. For many courses, replicas or skeletons that have been donated with consent for research and teaching, and technological tools such as 3D scanning and augmented reality (AR) would provide suitable support for pedagogical goals. There are some classes, especially those concerned with human variation, historical disease, or taphonomy (physical processes that alter remains in the archaeological record) that require the use of human remains from museum collections. In these cases, the remains must

be treated with respect; existing procedures at Harvard Medical School for anatomical teaching provide an excellent model for this.

Since 2019, the Warren has developed strong curricular ties to the human anatomy courses of Harvard Medical School's Program in Medical Education. In addition to instances requiring the use of primary human remains for medical education, 160 students each year have used 3D printed surrogates of human remains from the museum collection in their head and neck learning studios. The Warren also recently transferred a teaching collection of remains preserved in fluid to the anatomy faculty to facilitate future instructional integration.

The faculties of Harvard's Schools are encouraged to develop curricula around the histories of collections of human remains and other associated cultural items, the ethical dimensions of their presence, and how they reflect the complex history of the University. A good model is the Peabody Museum's class Challenging Collections which addresses the histories of specific collections in the Museum and their relationship to the production of anthropological knowledge at Harvard.

Recommendations for Research & Teaching

Recommendation: The University establish a Human Remains Research Review Committee to work with Museum staff on assessing requests to use human skeletal remains for research by Harvard and external scholars.

Recommendation: For teaching purposes and in lieu of using human remains falling within the scope of these recommendations, faculty should make use of new technologies, high-quality replicas, anatomical models, or skeletal elements from sources that involve donor consent whenever possible. Historical collections should only be used for specific classes that require them, and in this case the human remains must be treated with dignity and respect.

Recommendation: In furtherance of its pedagogical mission, the University encourage faculty to develop curricula around collections of human remains and how they reflect the University's history.

F. Community Consultation

Community consultation is fundamental to ethical treatment of human remains, especially in regard to care, returns, and memorialization. Community members are knowledge keepers and experts and their involvement is essential to confront difficult truths and move towards meaningful repair. Building these relationships takes time, humility, and ongoing attention.

As noted elsewhere in this report, the University stewards individuals with very different cultural beliefs and funerary customs. Given this diversity, it is not respectful to have a “one-size-fits-all” approach to consultation on actions around human remains. Therefore, the Committee does not recommend setting up a single community group to advise on the disposition of all types of human remains. Rather it is important that the proposed Returns Committee be a group that includes sufficient expertise and experience to enable it to develop a robust and thoughtful plan for consultation. Members should include individuals with experience in community engagement and facilitating difficult conversations.

Careful provenance research is a necessary first step. The best outcome of provenance research would be identification of lineal descendants but, if that is not possible, research should aim to ascertain descendant or affinity groups that have a direct social, emotional, family, or place-based connection to the individual, meaning people who feel a direct responsibility or interest in the individual themselves. We acknowledge that this effort can place a significant burden on community members that must be recognized and include, where appropriate, recompense for people’s time and expenses.

The Committee also recognizes that there is a larger community, including members of the Harvard community, who feel a general responsibility for this work through their engagement in wider, closely related issues (e.g., social justice). In particular they may be consulted in regard to issues around memorialization, as outlined later in the report.

Recommendations for Community Consultation

Recommendation: The proposed Returns Committee should include members who have the experience and expertise to enable meaningful descendant community participation in decision-making, including identification of the proper community partners and culturally appropriate methods for consultation.

Recommendation: The University commit to consulting with appropriate community representatives and being transparent in its actions and decisions while considering the rights and wishes of community partners, particularly in the case of lineal descendants.

G. Memorialization

The Steering Committee had initial discussions about memorialization. Ideas included a dedicated space and memorial on campus, and ceremonies and programs (some of which may be similar to the long-standing, annual ceremony held by the Harvard Medical School Anatomical Donors Program to honor individuals who have donated their bodies for research and teaching). Such activities are complex, especially since the human remains come from individuals from many contexts and under different circumstances. The University's focus should be on restoring individuality as far as possible through provenance research to open the possibilities of engaging specific, appropriate communities to consider memorialization.

The presence of individuals who were enslaved or likely to have been enslaved in Harvard's museum collections is one manifestation of our institutional connection to slavery. As the University considers memorialization through the Initiative on Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery, we recommend the inclusion of the enslaved or likely enslaved individuals whose remains have been held in Harvard's collections.

Recommendations for Memorialization

Recommendation: As the University honors the legacy of slavery in the University's history through memorialization we recommend the inclusion of the enslaved or likely enslaved individuals whose remains have been held in Harvard's museum collections.

Recommendation: The process of return will include the consideration of appropriate memorialization of the individual in Harvard's collections as part of the consultation with lineal descendants or descendant communities.

AFTERWORD

“They were people too”⁹

On a bright, cold day in November 2021, I walked over to the Peabody Museum to visit the room where human remains are kept. I had never been in a room that held remains such as these. The room is well-lit, with tables at one end for the examination and study of the remains. This room is not large. It has shelves on which lie grey boxes that resemble ones used to store other precious objects in museum basements. Many of their labels are handwritten. A few skeletons stand. They look familiar to me but are not as tidy as the ones I am used to seeing on display. The staff here consistently spoke quietly and the signage on the door included a note that asked any visitor to be respectful of the fact that there were human remains in the room. I asked to see one of the mummified remains and they were nothing like what I had expected. I also asked to see what was inside one of the boxes on the shelves. Rather than a complete skeleton, the box contained pieces of bones that appeared to my nonexpert eyes to be from different parts of a body. As I walked around I noticed a light chemical smell in the air. My visit lasted less than thirty minutes.

I walked back to my office shaken by my experience. My visit confirmed for me in a deep and profound way that a museum is not and should never be a place for the remains of humans. It is not a mausoleum. It is not a sacred place. It is not a culturally significant resting place for any of our ancestors on this planet. In fact, how people are kept in a museum may be antithetical to practices of caring for the dead of the communities whose “remains” are “stored” in museums. In the room that I visited that day in November there are no visible signs of human life—only remains. This room is not a place for any visitor, researcher, or museum worker to pay their respects to the humanity that surrounds them.

This committee was charged with three important tasks: to produce a comprehensive survey of human remains present across all of the University Museum collections as well as their use in current teaching and research; the development of a University-wide policy on the collection, display, and ethical stewardship of human remains in the University’s museum collections; and to recommend principles and practices that address research, community consultation, memorialization, possible repatriation, burial or reburial, and other care considerations.

The human remains in the Harvard Museum Collections are quite extensive. The first responsibility of the committee, however, was to address questions related to the nineteen people who have been found in the University collections—nineteen people who were formerly enslaved or likely to have been enslaved during their life. And to extend our attention as well to any other formerly enslaved or likely to have been enslaved people who might subsequently be identified through further research on the current collections.

Throughout this report, we have focused, in all the recommendations, on the need, or rather, the requirement, to treat these nineteen people as *individuals*. Given the amount of provenance work that needs to be done, we recommend that the University establish a Human Remains Returns Committee to ensure that these individuals and, in fact, all individuals in our collections be treated with the dignity and respect which undergirds the University’s commitment to repatriating, (re)interring, or returning remains where possible and as appropriate.

A second important recommendation we have made is the establishment of a dedicated space on campus that supports the respectful, dignified, and responsible care of the individuals in our collections. This space must sit outside of

⁹ Comment by Henry Louis Gates Jr.

any of the existing museum spaces and must make visible the University's accountability for the presence of these individuals in our collections. It must be a place to reflect on how and why these people are in our care.

Lastly, this must be the end of the beginning of the necessary work that Harvard University must do to face the history of its collection, display, research, and stewardship practices in its museums, especially with respect to human remains. Any institution with a history as long as Harvard's will inevitably find itself in the position of needing to continue to care for some remains "...in trust': in trust not for the present, but for the future."¹⁰ This responsibility is the result of the dearth of information available on particular people. This means that the University does not know their descendants or know where to repatriate them, and as a result must for the time serve as caregivers and caretakers. As a result, we who are responsible for them must consider all aspects of what that duty to care entails.¹¹ The duty to care for the people we hold in trust is to care for our own humanity now and in the future. We will need to continue to wrestle with the questions we began with on this Committee for decades to come.

I thank all the members of this committee, our advisors and the staff and other individuals in the museums, and members of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Harvard Medical School who have supported this work.

I hope our ancestors whose remains are in our care will see that we have begun our journey along the path that leads toward justice.

EVELYNN HAMMONDS

Barbara Gutmann Rosenkrantz Professor of the History of Science and Professor of African and African American Studies, Faculty of Arts and Sciences

Professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health

Steering Committee Chair

¹⁰ Alexandra Fletcher, Daniel Antoine and JD Hill, eds. *Regarding the Dead: Human Remains in the British Museum*, (The British Museum, 2014).

¹¹ Ibid.

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APPENDICES

- 1. Definition of Terms Used in this Report**
- 2. Membership of the Steering Committee**
- 3. Warren Anatomical Museum**
- 4. Care and Access Policies for Human Remains in University Museum Collections**

APPENDIX 1

Definition of Terms Used in this Report

Descendant Community: Descendant or affinity groups have a direct social, emotional, family, or place-based connection to the individual, meaning people who feel a direct responsibility or interest in the individual themselves.

Human Remains: For the purposes of this report, *Human remains* refers to the physical remains of a human body, or any part thereof, whether or not naturally shed, freely given, or culturally modified. *Human skeletal remains* refers to bones or teeth. Both a complete skeleton of an individual and a bone fragment would be considered human skeletal remains and are referred to as an “individual” in this report. *Human remains under NAGPRA* are ancestral remains that must be returned to Native American tribes under NAGPRA legislation.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA): NAGPRA was enacted on November 16, 1990, to address the rights of lineal descendants, Indian Tribes, and Native Hawaiian organizations to Native American cultural items, including human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony. The Act assigned implementation responsibilities to the Secretary of the Interior, and staff support is provided by the National NAGPRA Program.

Provenance Research: Provenance is information on the place where the human remains originated and their subsequent history. Determining the provenance of human remains encompasses archival research together with, in some instances, studying the remains themselves. Research to discover provenance information is the critical first step to ensure all parties have confidence that the best possible decisions can be made.

Returns: The generic term “return” is used to cover all likely circumstances including (re)interment, repatriation (which in some cases has a specific legal meaning), or transfer to another institution (only if requested by descendant community).

University Museum Collections: This report covers human remains found in collections-holding entities at the University, meaning the museums and libraries. It does not include tissue, DNA, or other samples that are in our affiliated hospitals or research laboratories or human remains acquired as part of the Harvard Medical School Anatomical Gift Program.

APPENDIX 2

Membership of the Steering Committee

Allan M. Brandt, Amalie Moses Kass Professor of the History of Medicine and Professor of the History of Science

Philip Deloria, Leverett Saltonstall Professor of History

Henry Louis Gates Jr., Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research

Dominic Hall, Curator, Warren Anatomical Museum

Evelynn Hammonds, Chair, Barbara Gutmann Rosenkrantz Professor of the History of Science and Professor of African and African American Studies, Faculty of Arts and Sciences; Professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health

Randall Kennedy, Michael R. Klein Professor of Law

Tiya Miles, (spring 2021), Michael Garvey Professor of History and Radcliffe Alumnae Professor

Jane Pickering, William and Muriel Seabury Howells Director, Harvard Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology

Scott Podolsky, Professor of Global Health and Social Medicine and Director of the Center for the History of Medicine

Matthew Liebmann, Peabody Professor of Archaeology, Department of Anthropology

Robert Truog, Frances Glessner Lee Professor of Medical Ethics, Anaesthesiology & Pediatrics and Director of the Center for Bioethics

Christina Warinner, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology and Sally Starling Seaver Associate Professor at the Radcliffe Institute

STAFF

Ellen Berkman, Office of General Counsel

Nina Collins, Associate Dean and Chief of Staff to the FAS Dean

Rachael Dane, Director of Media Relations, FAS

M. William Lensch, Associate Provost for Research (formerly Strategic Advisor to the Dean of Harvard Medical School)

APPENDIX 3

Warren Anatomical Museum

In 2016, the Center for the History of Medicine at the Countway Library of Medicine initiated a review of the Warren Anatomical Museum's connection to enslavement as part of President Emerita Drew Faust's Harvard and Slavery initiative. In addition to the remains of individuals with evidence of former enslavement, the Center expanded this original objective to include the cases of remains and representations of individuals collected and used to undergird scientific racism. To achieve this goal, the curator researched the Museum's published catalogues, archival records, and the database entries for the remains of (and representations related to) every individual of African descent. This research included cases that were both extant and nonextant (note that a significant portion of the collection has not survived intact), those that were transferred to other museums (including the Peabody Museum), those related to individuals enslaved within and outside the United States, and all types of Museum holdings, not just human remains.

This initial review into the remains of individuals of African descent and related collections yielded 149 case records, representing extant and nonextant collections and including human remains, nonhuman biologicals such as calculi, and objects and images. At its height in the early 20th century, the Museum's legacy collection was composed of approximately 14,000 cases and these 149 cases related to individuals of African descent represented 1.06 percent of that historical total.

Ten of the 149 cases were found to have direct evidence of former enslavement. Of these cases, four were human remains (one cranium, two hair samples, and one hypertrophied uterus), three were plaster casts, two were images, and one was a wax model, representing nine individuals in total (one of the casts was from the same hypertrophied uterus, removed during surgery). Of these ten records, only two (potentially three) are known to still exist

within Harvard's holdings: a plaster phrenological cast of Eustache Belin, enslaved in Haiti; a plaster cast of the head of Sturmman Jantjes, enslaved in Massachusetts, that may still exist among the several copies of that cast in the Peabody Museum; and the cranium from a man enslaved in Brazil that was transferred to the Peabody Museum in 1959. Research is ongoing and the group of remains of enslaved individuals connected to the Museum could be revised.

In the summer of 2020, President Lawrence Bacow's Initiative on Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery brought renewed attention to the original work conducted reviewing the links between the Warren and enslavement. Conversations with the Steering Committee and the Peabody Museum about search criteria led the Warren to redeploy the research data from the 2016 effort to find all the extant human remains within the Museum relating to individuals of African descent with either direct evidence of enslavement (of which there were no extant examples found in 2016 or 2021-2022) or provenance suggesting a birth date prior to 1865 and a location within the United States. Based on that criteria, there are 28 extant remains relating to individuals of African descent from the United States where it is possible that they were born prior to 1865. Of these 28 remains of individuals, 27 have Massachusetts-based provenances and one is from Richmond, Virginia. Eighteen of the remains are limbs, five are spines and ribs, two are crania, one is a brain, one is a jaw, and one is a tumor preparation.

Eighteen of the remains of individuals are late 19th- or early 20th-century dissection room subjects. The remains of these individuals were collected and anatomically prepared by Harvard Medical School anatomist Thomas Dwight (1843-1911), presumably after the 1898 passage of Massachusetts' An Act Relative to the Promotion of Anatomical Science.¹³ Little is known of these individuals' lives prior to anatomical

dissection and it is difficult to determine if they were old enough¹⁴ at the time of death to be born prior to 1865. Five of the remains of individuals were removed during hospital-based clinical interventions. Four of the remains were removed from patients after autopsy and one cranium was removed after an execution. All of these remains require continued research to determine if the individuals from which they were derived were enslaved during their lifetime.

¹³ This act made it mandatory for public institutions in Massachusetts to transfer the unclaimed dead to medical school anatomists and led to significant growth in subjects being provided to the HMS anatomy labs. Harvard, specifically Dwight, led the effort to pass the act. At the time, the Tewksbury Almshouse and Bridgewater State Farm provided many of the anatomical subjects for Harvard Medical School.

¹⁴ The ages or age categories of many of these individuals are known, which would rule out most as being born prior to 1865. However, the possibility does exist that they were not collected via the 1898 Act and/or Dwight had the remains long before donating them to the Warren. Dwight had been teaching anatomy since 1872.

APPENDIX 4

Care and Access Policies for Human Remains in University Museum Collections

These recommended policies are consistent with long-standing procedures at the Museums

Collecting

The Museums do not actively collect human remains and will continue that policy. Recent museum acquisitions have been almost exclusively human remains recovered from spaces at the University outside of the Museums. In these cases, the Museums have assumed stewardship for the University. In exceptional circumstances, the museums may take physical custody of human remains from a third party if that party is unable to properly care for the remains in an ethical manner while decisions are made about their future disposition.

Collections Care

Standard care procedures are detailed in the individual museums' Collections Management Policy and entail maintaining a clean, safe, and secure environment for collections including management of humidity, temperature, light, and pests; following all relevant Environmental Health and Safety guidelines; and appropriate security protocols. Stewardship of human remains follows procedures that are common to all museum collections, with the following additional recommendations for respectful and responsible care:

- Human remains should be stored in a secure, temperature and humidity-controlled, limited-access location. Storage spaces should be easily accessible by designated staff and routinely inspected.
- Human remains should be housed using appropriate archival-quality materials.
- Specific staff should be designated and trained to manage human remains and they should be informed of the nature of these collections as much as possible prior to interacting with them.
- All handling of human remains within museum collections should be kept to a minimum. Handling protocols include use of gloves and specialized supports. Conservation is limited to activities needed to stabilize the remains.
- The Museums will consider and wherever possible, implement descendant community-informed care and handling requests.

Collections Access

Access to human remains within museums includes procedures common to all museum collections with additional considerations and restrictions. Standard access procedures are detailed in the individual museums' Collections Management Policy and cover physical access through examination and handling of collections. In addition, the general policy outlines procedures for intellectual access, for example through exhibitions, publications, and electronic media.

The nature and conditions of the use of human remains must be consistent with the museum's commitment to respectful care and handling. Special consideration for human remains should include:

- Security access to the human remains collections storage area is restricted to essential personnel. All other museum or university staff, as well as contractors, must be accompanied by a staff member with security access, e.g., for facilities maintenance needs.
- Access by researchers and students requires staff supervision to ensure respectful and careful handling of human remains.

- Staff will be prepared to handle the complex emotional and cultural questions that may be raised by providing access to human remains.
- Faculty who wish to use human remains from museum collections for teaching purposes must justify the importance of using such remains in their course and whether alternatives have been considered.
- Display will be governed by careful consideration given to the context of the acquisition of the remains and the teaching rationale for their exhibition.
- The Museums are systematically updating records to remove racist terminology and classifications from standard publicly accessible database fields to restricted fields that will preserve the historical record. In addition, the Museums will, where appropriate, add contextual data to public records, including detailed acquisition history, to provide a fuller understanding of ethical concerns.

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