



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE TASK FORCE ON UNTOLD STORIES & DISENFRANCHISED POPULATIONS

SUBMITTED AND COMPILED BY:
PAUL ROOT WOLPE AND YOLANDA COOPER
ON BEHALF OF
THE MEMBERS OF THE TASK FORCE
4/1/2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary and Recommendations	1
What We Learned	8

Executive Summary and Recommendations	1
What We Learned	8

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

The Task Force on Untold Stories and Disenfranchised Populations serves in an advisory capacity to President Gregory L. Fenves. It was charged with reviewing opportunities for recognizing, observing, and memorializing the contributions of two disenfranchised populations to Emory University—the enslaved persons whose labor helped build the campus and their living descendants, and Native nations and their peoples, on whose lands Emory's campus was erected. (see “Process Overview” on Page 12 for the history and charge of the Task Force). The Task Force, made up of faculty, staff, students, and community members, engaged in research, community outreach, and much discussion to formulate a series of recommendations offered in the following summary. Supplemental information in appendices includes in-depth subcommittee reports and further details, often important ones, that expand on our recommendations.

The Task Force investigation confirmed that most of the original faculty and officers of Emory College were slave owners, as were most of the Methodist clergymen who settled in Oxford, Georgia. Both African American and Native American individuals were enslaved by people connected to the college's founding. The economic fortunes of those who founded Emory and guided the development of the college in its early years rested upon the institution of slavery.

Emory's Atlanta and Oxford campuses are located on Muscogee (Creek) land, and the institution was founded during a period of the forced removals of the Muscogee (Creek) and Ani'yunwi'ya (Cherokee) peoples from Georgia and the Southeast.

It is imperative for Emory University to acknowledge and commemorate this past, learn from it, and apply those lessons in an ongoing way. To build an inclusive environment and future for the university, Emory must reach out to the living descendants of these communities, as well as other surrounding communities, and work to implement transformative initiatives.

As a first phase, the Task Force recommends:

Honoring the Labor of Enslaved Persons:

- Appoint a working group of faculty, administrators, staff, trustees, and students (from Atlanta and Oxford campuses) **to develop and circulate a “Request for Proposals” (RFP) to architects/designers/design firms to design and construct Twin Memorials to honor the labor of enslaved individuals** who helped build Oxford College and Emory University. The twin linked memorials should articulate the shared narrative of both campuses.
 - The Twin Memorials working group **will develop plans for continued memorialization** of Emory's enslaved laborers through annual rituals, campus-wide programming, annual pilgrimages for new students to the Oxford and Atlanta

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

campuses, and named recognition of those who continued work on the Atlanta and Oxford campuses following emancipation. The working group will collaborate with various stakeholders (including staff within Emory's libraries, Emory's Center for Digital Scholarship, the Offices of Admission in Atlanta, and Oxford, et alia) to launch sustainable initiatives that contribute to making Emory's past known to internal and external audiences and bring individuals to the memorials on the Oxford and Atlanta campuses on an annual basis.

- **Create a website dedicated to the Twin Memorials** that communicates updates to community members within and beyond the Emory University community. This site should connect directly to, and be integrated with, broader social justice efforts and related online resources.
- **Establish an annual university-wide week of programming within the academic term that honors university staff and hourly employees hosted by the president for both campuses.** The week will culminate with a Community Leadership Awards banquet attended by staff, students, faculty, administrators, trustees, and alumni to recognize “unsung heroes” in the Emory community and offer named awards that uplift central figures in Emory's history that have previously been unrecognized. Awardees should receive a financial gift and recognition during the university commencement ceremony.
- **Develop a standing committee of faculty, administrators, staff, and students to work with and advocate for hourly employees.** Given the power differentials and racial disparities between hourly and contracted workers, this standing committee will work alongside all relevant offices and the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to ensure Emory upholds a standard of equitable working conditions and offers opportunities for professional development to these valued Emory employees. This committee should also partner with Campus Services to design paths for advancement (including continuing education, GED training, professional development) and propose strategies to improve the well-being of contracted Emory staff.

Developing Criteria and Processes for Awarding Scholarships:

- **Establish two scholarships** (for Emory or the applicant's chosen school) based on Plan One and Two (see Appendix B). If an eligible recipient is not available in a given year, funds should be leveraged for a graduate program or to “substantially reduce” debt incurred by a descendant (see Plan 3, Appendix B). Scholarship recipients should be given opportunities to continue their education at Emory's graduate and professional schools. Eligibility guidelines are noted in Appendix C.
 - **Name the scholarship in memory/honor of one of the descendants.** Suggestions include Catherine Boyd (considered one of the already noted descendants on the Oxford campus), or a lesser known name from the listing of

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

possible descendants' names. Each student should be designated a "Remembrance Scholar." (For example, one student could be the "Catherine Boyd Remembrance Scholar" and another the "Augustus Wright Remembrance Scholar.")

- **Engage in an evaluation of the current campus environment** to determine the need for actions/activities to prepare the campus community to embrace this inclusivity effort to create a welcoming and inviting environment for scholarship recipients.
- **Create connections with all campus departments to create a web of care and wrap-around services for Remembrance Scholars.** As an ongoing effort, these connections should be strengthened and enhanced. Identify a person in the Scholars Office who is the main point of contact for the scholars.

Acknowledging the Contributions of Indigenous Peoples:

- **Establish an Office of Native American Initiatives** that has designated staff, an advisory council, and ongoing financial support. This office would function as an integrating force across campuses and help organize efforts within the university and beyond based on Task Force recommendations.
- **Establish a university-wide fund that subsidizes departments to successfully hire Native American and Indigenous faculty** members in a tenure line, and develop a faculty hiring committee that urges departments to submit Native American and Indigenous candidates' names. To obtain guidance, organize a symposium featuring speakers with demonstrated success in hiring Native American professors.
- **Actively recruit and support Native American and Indigenous students** through developing the staff and infrastructure to uplift Native American presence, knowledge, and experience. **Provide scholarships** for students who are members of Southeastern and other U.S. tribes, and **work to create a path to the university** for Native American students. **Create wraparound services to support Native American and Indigenous students** and develop physical spaces for convening and peer and multi-generational support networks.
- **Establish meaningful and improved relations with the Southeastern tribal nations**, especially the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, at the highest governance levels. To show the university's commitment to ongoing dialogue and respect for Native nations, Emory should reach out to the leadership of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Create structures such as the proposed Office of Native American Initiatives to manage this new relationship, and organize a delegation to meet with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation's leadership. A standing Native American Advisory Council could aid in coordinating and elevating the ongoing relationship.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Develop an ongoing strategy to support work that examines Emory's history regarding Native American land and people.** Encourage collaborative research about Emory's history in relation to Native American nations of the Southeast and the way that these histories are intertwined with African American history.
- **Develop physical reminders and remembrance rituals on campus such as a Muscogee (Creek) Language Path** that highlights Muscogee language and knowledge in relation to the campus environment, history, and places for sharing knowledge such as the Robert W. Woodruff Library, School of Law, School of Medicine, etc.
 - **Add the names and biographies of Indigenous people in Emory's history** as well as information about lands and treaties to the university website.
- **Emory's campuses should be transformed so that students, faculty, and staff encounter thoughtful and challenging encounters** with Muscogee (Creek) history as they move through their daily lives, including prominent video displays as in the lobby of Convocation Hall.
 - **A presidential commission should be appointed** to review establishing living memorials, pedagogical experiences, and other encounters with both enslaved peoples and Native and Indigenous peoples as faculty, staff, students, and visitors transverse the Emory campus. Utilize architectural and landscape professionals with experience creating living encounters to create unique and meaningful experiences that provide a constant, living reminder of Emory's history and fosters pedagogy of place to demonstrate the university's commitment to social justice.

Developing Educational and Experiential Opportunities:

- **Offer incentives to encourage faculty to integrate Emory's unique historical experiences with disenfranchised populations into their courses** and to provide training and resources to support the pedagogical initiative. While many courses at Emory discuss disenfranchised populations, few use Emory's own history as a pedagogical strategy. The university should embrace and promote its history of being situated on Muscogee (Creek) land and its early exploitation of enslaved labor during classes where those elements add an important sense of pedagogy of place and connection to the lived reality of those populations.
 - Using the [Piedmont Project](#) as a model, a **training course** should be offered to all willing faculty to allow them to gain expertise in content and in strategies to integrate Emory's history with these populations into the curriculum. The initiative should include undergraduate, graduate and professional studies as well.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **All Emory students should have access to a course or module that includes Emory's history related to disenfranchised persons.** Offer incentives to faculty in all programs to incorporate Emory's history into their courses. Provide information and resources to aid faculty in designing courses or course components about Emory's history. Develop an ethics curricula component related to Emory's history for graduate and professional students.
- **Develop historically accurate and more coherent curriculum and programming about Native American and Indigenous Nations, peoples, and related topics** across the university. Emory's current curriculum lacks adequate research opportunities and course offerings on Native American and Indigenous. Dedicating resources for educational experiences by establishing a fund to provide grants to encourage collaborative research with Indigenous scholars, including with the citizens of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, would help to address the gap in educational and research opportunities.
 - **Create a portal of web resources** to inform new courses and research on Emory history. Digitize select archival records related to Emory's history to provide access to educators and researchers, and create a portal for faculty to share their experience, syllabi, and sources. This site should connect to the higher-level social justice site.
- **Hire additional staff to meet increased demand for access to Emory University archives and consider expanding the archive space.** The Rose Library currently provides outstanding assistance to teachers, students, and researchers. Increasing interest in Emory history will increase demand for archives assistance and could require more space. Emory should not encourage more use of the archives without ensuring that there is staff and space to accommodate increased demand.
- **Provide resources to the already existing Emory Oral History Program and establish a collection of stories from individuals descended from the families whose members helped to build parts of Emory's original campus,** now Oxford College, in the nineteenth century. The [Oral History Program](#) should be expanded to include a significant effort to collect stories of Emory faculty, students, staff, and alumni from underrepresented groups, including having an Oral History Collection Booth (à la StoryCorps) at every alumni event. Such efforts would lead to understanding cross-generational transmission of experiences that reflect struggles and triumphs of descendants of enslaved workers. Scholars, especially within linguistics and other fields of study that deconstruct language narratives, could be encouraged to engage in a content analysis of the oral history transcripts and other methods that contextualize psychological and emotional experiences of those persons.
- **A moment should be created for new students from all programs and schools to reflect on Emory's history related to enslaved and Indigenous persons,** and Emory's

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

values of inclusion, as they begin their academic experience. We recommend a reflection inspired by the induction ceremonies at HBCUs, which are experienced by students as a powerful moment of initiation into their new institution. Mandating an inaugural ritual gives students a sense of solidarity and belonging to the university and unites the Emory community through a clear expression of its values.

- **Establish two or more campus-wide moments of silence** to bring the entire community on both campuses—faculty, staff, and students—to a full halt to commemorate and honor Indigenous peoples and enslaved peoples and their descendants. Recommended timeframes include Indigenous People’s Day or Native American Heritage Month and a day during Black History Month (as students are not on campus in Juneteenth).
- **Create an annual lecture on Emory’s history related to enslaved and Indigenous persons**, and encourage all members of the Emory community to attend. The lecture should be broadly publicized.

Recommendations to Build Foundation and Sustainability:

- **To ensure the Emory campus environment is conducive to inclusion and belonging there should be a strong commitment to anti-racism and social justice expressed and enacted at Emory.** There are numerous activities in progress, but the work is inconsistent and should be coordinated and/or compiled to send a consistent university-wide message.
- **All implemented recommendations and efforts should be coordinated to produce a sustainable comprehensive program of attention to disenfranchised populations in Emory’s history that is integrated across physical, virtual, and educational platforms.** The focus on enslaved peoples and Indigenous peoples is the beginning of the untold stories that must be acknowledged and shared. The Task Force believes this is ongoing work that should continue into the future to positively impact the campus community in the long-term.

To establish a comprehensive program the Task Force recommends the following:

- **Appoint staff and allocate resources** to plan, manage, coordinate, and ensure the long-term sustainability of this work.
- **Immediately implement the recommendations in this report.** Resources should include training, faculty and staff hiring, and the development of incentives for new course offerings all noted in the recommendations. A funding commitment will ensure that the labor involved in implementing these recommendations will not

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

be an “add on” for current staff and faculty and hinder progress. This will signal a serious priority for the university.

- **Convene a Social Justice Leadership Council** to continue this work and advise and assess the implementation of all recommendations.
- **Provide funding to the libraries and museum** to oversee research and collection building by students and faculty related to the university’s on-going history and culture.
- **Keep communications related to this effort at the highest level of the institution.** This effort was initiated by the president and interim provost, and should continue to be generated at that level to indicate Emory’s commitment to these efforts. Others will contribute to the content, but this initiative should live with the president and/or provost. Create a social justice web presence (example from Columbia) to communicate all recommendations, efforts, and progress. The site should link/connect to all related programs and operate as a portal to access all activities and outcomes.
- **Revise the university’s Statement of Regret to an apology statement** and link it to the main website. The current message is buried on the History and Traditions site, which is no longer maintained and the committee no longer exists.
- **Adopt an official, meaningful Land Acknowledgement** with protocols to acknowledge that Emory is located on the homelands of the Muscogee (Creek), with an accompanying protocol document that provides resources to incorporate that history into teaching, extra-curricular, and professional activities (see Appendix D). Commit to building toward an inclusive, respectful, and responsive future by actively recruiting and supporting Indigenous faculty, staff and students and cultivating dialogue and collaboration with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and other Southeastern tribal nations.
- **Establish deeper connections with the Atlanta and Newton County school systems (and all surrounding areas) to create a bridge program to Emory.** This effort would allow students in Atlanta and Newton County to participate in a comprehensive program that includes assessment of their academic needs as well as classes and tutoring to address areas that impact success, including helping people complete GEDs. Upon successful completion of the program, students will be admitted to Emory. The program. should have access to substantial funding and dedicated personnel. Consider developing a summer bridge program on the Oxford campus to introduce students to college-level opportunities and to showcase Oxford and Emory as welcoming and inclusive environments for students with diverse backgrounds. We also recommend that hourly workers at Emory be given high priority as potential bridge students.

WHAT WE LEARNED

What We Learned

The work of the Task Force was done over a very short period of time, but the work was extensive and included the review of books, articles, archives, websites, and oral histories. The subcommittees participated in viewings of property and listening sessions with students, staff, faculty, community members, city officials, and relevant experts. The information in this section includes only a brief overview of the individuals engaged and the material explored during this work. More details can be found in the minutes and final reports of the subcommittees in the appendices of this document.

Honoring the Labor of Enslaved Persons:

Over the years, Emory University has attempted to address its historical connections to slavery, including a 2011 Statement of Regret issued by the Board of Trustees. These good-faith efforts to redress this history have catalyzed university committees, think tanks, task forces, and communal programming like the Transforming Community Project of the early 2000s to reflect on the structures of deep-seated racism. Through listening sessions, the Task Force has resolved that decisive action is necessary, especially given that far too many reports by prior committees have been “shelved” and recommendations to squarely face these issues have not been implemented over the years. In fact, one member recommended that we change the Task Force name from “Untold Stories” to “Unheard Stories.”

Listening sessions and subcommittee research further revealed the necessity to reckon with “revisionist history” and sanitized stories in the university’s lineage. Particularly important within such acknowledgment are Emory’s foundational ties to slavery—in terms of both 1) the Methodist Episcopal Church, the 1844-45 schism within the church over the issue of slavery, which involved Methodist Bishop James Osgood Andrew, Emory’s earliest leaders such as Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, and an enslaved woman by the name of Catherine Boyd (also known as “Kitty”) and 2) the role of enslaved persons in constructing the earliest buildings of Emory, Phi Gamma Hall and Few Hall, located on the Oxford campus. Multiple peer and aspirant peer universities across the US South and nation have been contending with similar histories and engaging in significant memorialization efforts for many years now. However, simply put, Emory has fallen behind in this regard.

Developing Criteria and Processes for Awarding Scholarships:

The idea for scholarships for the descendants of enslaved persons was publicly proposed in 2000 by Dr. Eugene Emory, a descendant of Bishop John Emory, at the opening ceremony for an exhibition curated by Mark Auslander and Oxford students. “[Dr. Emory] then proposed that the best way to honor the memory of those who had labored as chattel on and around the Emory

WHAT WE LEARNED

campus was to establish a full tuition scholarship for their descendants.”¹ While this suggestion has been considered over the years, the subcommittee feels this is the best way to repair the past and generate positive outcomes in the future for descendants, the Emory community, and the Oxford community.

Emory has identified funding to support future scholarships with a preference for undergraduate students. The initial scholarships are sufficient to support two undergraduate scholarships per year. Subcommittees discussed the need to acknowledge those who may not want to attend Emory, but are still seeking a college education, those who may want to further their education through a graduate program, and lastly those descendants who have already completed their higher education but have incurred debt in doing so. The subcommittee believes the university should be flexible to fully address the varying life scenarios of current and future descendants.

The Task Force explored the many scholarship programs offered by Emory and other institutions and believes the university should put forward the best web of care for the descendants and provide the most flexibility in program. The [Woodruff Scholars](#) was noted as an elite scholarship program we can model and build upon because the needs for this scholarship will be unique and should be custom built for the recipient.

Georgetown University created a similar [opportunity](#) to honor descendants: [GU272 Memory Project](#) and [guidelines](#). The subcommittee reviewed this information and developed clues for descendants (see Appendix B), but also engaged with administrators at Georgetown to determine what we can learn from their process and experience.

Reverend Avis Williams has engaged with Newton County officials and residents and was able to articulate an overview of past and present perceptions. There is work to do in ensuring that Emory is a place where students from these communities will be welcomed and have a feeling of belonging. Emory admissions databases reveal indications that relevant Newton County applicants have applied to Emory, but the numbers are small. Deeper evaluation by Emory’s Enrollment Management Division will be needed going forward and the university must consider specific actions to address both the lingering perceptions, and the specific needs, of descendants.

Acknowledging the Contributions of Indigenous Peoples:

Native American people and their history are invisible at Emory, and over the years there has been strong resistance toward addressing these issues. However, current efforts to correct this include recruitment efforts spear-headed by Admissions, the Native American and Indigenous Student Initiative (NAISI) Ad Hoc Committee, work at the Carlos Museum, James Weldon Johnson Institute programming, and multiple departments organizing interdisciplinary programs with support from Vice Provost Carol Henderson, Dean Michael Elliott, and Dean John Latting.

¹ Auslander, Mark, *The “Family Business”*, p.294

WHAT WE LEARNED

Due to this advocacy, President Greg Fennes and Interim Provost Jan Love recognized Indigenous Peoples' Day in October 2020 for the first time in Emory's history, acknowledging that Emory is located on the homelands of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. To build upon these efforts and counter the systemic problems, the Task Force recommendations of a memorial and land acknowledgment are important but insufficient, and Emory needs to work toward improving campus culture, first by creating an institutional structure to oversee and carry out change.

At the retirement of Dr. Craig Womack this year, there will soon be only two Native professors left at Emory, both in the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing. This lack of representation distinguishes us from peer institutions in an unfavorable light. The successful implementation of the Task Force recommendations for Indigenous Peoples will help to remedy this unfortunate and unacceptable reality. Departments already teaching Native subject matter need to come to grips with the fact that it is unacceptable to teach this subject matter on a permanent basis without Native professors on campus.

Developing Educational and Experiential Opportunities:

In regard to educational opportunities, there are very few courses at the university that focus on Emory's own, unique history related to disenfranchised populations, or use that history in a comprehensive way. There are many courses, however, for which a segment on Emory history could be relevant to course objectives. Tying teaching about social justice into the very place the students learn can give them a sense of their own connection to what they are learning, a pedagogy of place. A concerted effort by the university to train and encourage integration of Emory's history into appropriate sections of a wide swath of classes will assist in fulfilling the mission of revealing untold stories.

Emory lacks campus-wide encounters that acknowledge and reflect on Emory's history related to enslaved and Indigenous persons. One can spend four or more years on this campus and never encounter in a meaningful way Emory's history with enslaved populations or that the campus is built on the ancestral lands of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Emory must become an interactive campus, where people engage with living reminders, learning opportunities, and creative displays that challenge them to think about the land on which they stand and the buildings they inhabit.

Conclusion

In each of the areas noted in our charge we have learned through our research of social and racial injustices in Emory's history involving enslaved and Indigenous peoples. These injustices are in some cases accessible, but they are also hidden in the untold (or unheard) stories of those impacted and the archival records of founders, presidents, and community members. The records and resources that are available are not adequately organized, visible, remembered, shared, or acknowledged to fully bring these experiences to light. While learning of this history is difficult and

WHAT WE LEARNED

painful, advancing this effort and uplifting diverse voices and information provide tremendous opportunity for the University to address the present circumstance and develop transformative ways to increase knowledge of this history, build upon the accomplishments of those impacted, and increase pathways to generate success for the future of Emory and the broader community.

Critical pedagogy of place is an important intellectual force in higher education now, and Emory is behind in honoring its intent and harnessing its power. We hope that the work of this Task Force, in all its recommendations, is a step towards transforming Emory's campus and pedagogy to unite the community in honoring its history and creating a new legacy for people that have been too long neglected.

We believe that the recommendations noted in this report outline the initial steps needed to create and advance a sustainable and comprehensive program that encourages exploration, celebrates and acknowledges Emory's history and moves the campus and broader communities towards repair and healing. There is still more work to do in this and other areas.

Going forward, the University should use the recommendations from this report to take immediate action, but they should also continue to discover and address the still untold stories in Emory's history to ensure a more inclusive future.