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Navigating the Past: Brown University and the Voyage of the Slave Ship Sally, 1764-65

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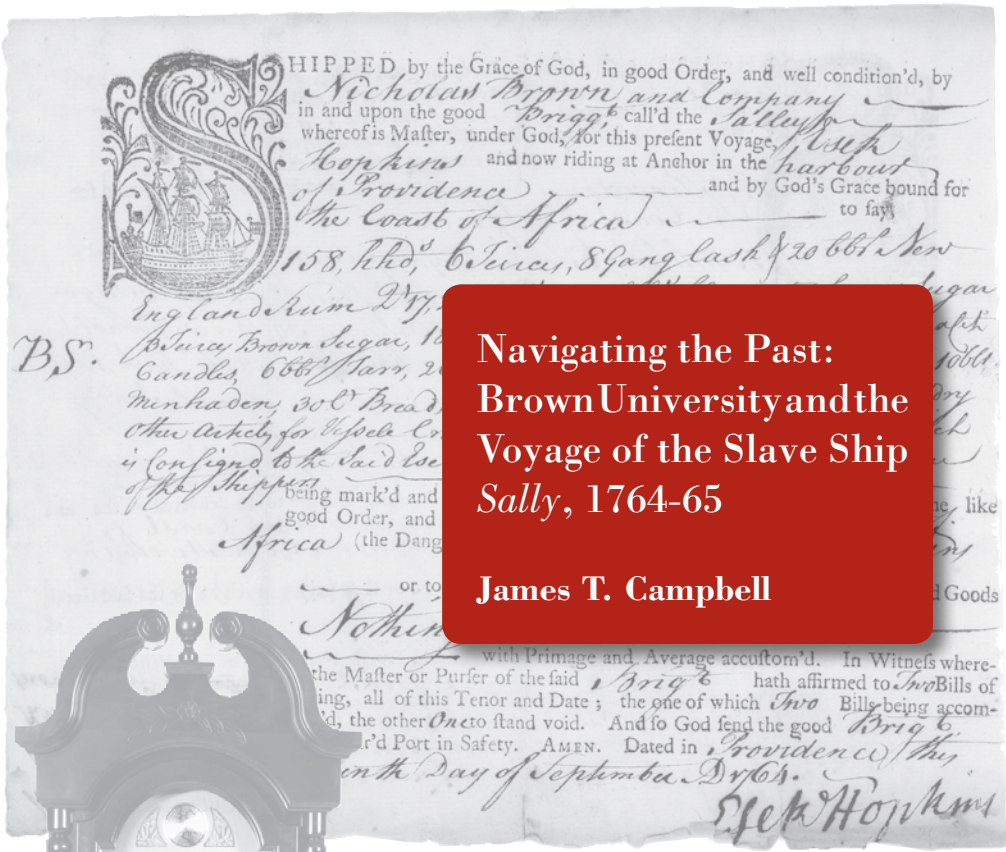

Navigating the Past: Brown University and the Voyage of the Slave Ship *Sally*, 1764-65

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Foreseeable Futures #7
Position Papers from
Imagining America
Artists and Scholars in Public Life

Dear Reader,

I am honored to introduce *Foreseeable Futures # 7,* James Campbell's *Navigating the Past: Brown University and the Voyage of the Slave Ship* Sally, *1764-65.* Campbell was chair of Brown University's Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, charged by President Ruth Simmons in 2003 to investigate the University's historical relationship to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

The narrative around which Campbell organizes the Committee's findings here is the 1764 voyage of the slave ship *Sally* from Providence to West Africa, where Captain Esek Hopkins "acquired" 196 men, women, and children intended for sale as slaves in Rhode Island. The *Sally* was owned by the four Brown brothers, benefactors of the College of Rhode Island, which in 1804 was renamed Brown University in recognition of a substantial gift from one of the brothers' sons.

The Committee's willingness to resurrect that sober history and more, to organize public events to reflect on that legacy, exemplifies what Chancellor Nancy Cantor of Syracuse University calls scholarship in action. The Committee also issued concrete recommendations regarding ways that Brown students, faculty, and staff can continue to respond to that legacy in the present. The recommendations arise from Brown's identity as an educational institution, "for the history of American education," writes Campbell, "is inextricably bound up with the history of slavery." Speaking to the crisis in American education, and the particularly dire state of Providence's public school system, Campbell asserts, "One of the most obvious and meaningful ways for Brown to take responsibility for its past is by dedicating its resources in a substantial and sustained way to alleviating this crisis."

Acknowledging Brown's historic ties to the slave trade is painful, writes Campbell, but necessary: "The first step in any confrontation with historical injustice is facing the past squarely, insisting on the full truth of one's history, against the inevitable tendencies to deny, extenuate, and forget. The story is of special interest to this audience because it speaks to the question of 'Imagining America'—not simply to the concerns of this organization but to broad questions about how we imagine our nation's past, its present, and its possible future."

We hope you will share this compelling essay with faculty and staff colleagues, students and community partners. The keynote on which it is based was the centerpiece of Imagining America's 2007 conference at Syracuse University, "Citizenship for a Just World." Imagining America is a consortium of some 78 colleges and universities that share a commitment to the civic mission of higher education. If your institution is not already a part of our community of publicly engaged artists and scholars, we urge you to find out more about us by visiting *www.imaginingamerica.org.*

Jan Cohen-Cruz

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Director, Imagining America

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I don't know if the joke will translate outside of New England, but a colleague of mine claims that the secret to public speaking is the same as the secret to Puritanism: both require striking the proper balance between presumption and humility. I hope he's right, because I feel both sensations very keenly today. I feel more than a bit presumptuous speaking about an initiative in which I was just one participant of many. And I feel humble standing before this audience. This is my first experience at an Imagining America annual conference, and I've spent my time marveling at the extraordinary projects that you have created on your campuses and in your communities. There is little that I can say about scholarship, public life, and the relationship between them that each of you doesn't already know.[1]

I am here to talk about Brown University's Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice. I'm not sure how familiar you are with the committee, so let me begin with a bit of background. We were appointed in 2003 by Brown's president, Ruth Simmons, and charged to investigate the university's historical relationship to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. We were also asked to organize public programs that might help the campus and the nation to reflect on the meaning of this history in the present, on the complex legal, political, and moral questions posed by any present-day confrontation with historical injustice and its legacies. In particular, the president asked the committee to organize events "that might help the nation and the Brown community think deeply, seriously, and rigorously about the questions raised" by the national debate over reparations for slavery.[2]

One might think that such an initiative would be uncontroversial—this is, after all, the kind of thing that universities are supposed to do. Universities pursue knowledge. They explore difficult questions, and teach students how to discuss them in reasoned, rigorous ways. They are also profoundly conservative institutions, taking pride in their lineages and honoring forbears with portraits and plaques and in the names given to buildings. What could be more in keeping with this character and mission than a university examining its own history and engaging its students in a reflective dialogue about the significance of that history to them?

But, of course, the initiative was not uncontroversial at all, for reasons all of us know. You don't have to be an historian to know that conversations about race in this country have long been and remain sensitive, awkward,

and contentious. And the difficulties increase geometrically when such conversations brook the question of "reparations," a term as polarizing (and consistently misunderstood) as any in our current political lexicon. At Brown, the risk of misunderstanding was compounded by the fact that President Simmons is herself (as news reports seemed invariably to put it) a "descendant of slaves." Perhaps not surprisingly, some observers put two and two together and got five, concluding that the president had a reparations "agenda," that Brown was somehow about to liquidate its endowment and start handing out checks to—well, it was never quite clear to whom, but you get the idea. In her charge to the committee, and in a subsequent public statement, President Simmons made clear that the steering committee would not determine whether or how Brown might pay monetary reparations, nor was it intended to forge a consensus on the reparations question. Its object, rather, was "to provide factual information and critical perspectives to deepen understanding" and enrich debate on an issue that had aroused great public passion but little constructive public dialogue. She might well have added that the controversy provoked by the committee's appointment, the suspiciousness, anger, and defensiveness that immediately rose to the surface, was itself proof of the value, and indeed urgency, of the kind of open dialogue that the committee hoped to facilitate.

The public controversy soon subsided—the American media tends, for better or worse, to have a short attention span—and we went about our work. Over the course of five semesters, members of the committee gathered information about Brown's past, drawing on both published sources and various historical archives. The committee also sponsored some three dozen public programs, including lectures, panel discussions, town meetings, and two international conferences, including one co-sponsored with Yale's Gilder-Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition. In all, we heard from more than one hundred distinguished scholars, speaking not only about American experience but also about a panoply of international comparisons and contexts—about the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Holocaust, and the ongoing controversy in Australia over the propriety of a national apology to Aboriginal children abducted from their homes as part of a government-sponsored forced racial assimilation policy, to mention only a few examples. Recognizing the interest in our work in the wider community, we organized programs beyond the university gates, including workshops for local teachers and students, a traveling museum exhibition, and a new high school curriculum, "A Forgotten History: The Slave Trade and Slavery in New England," which we were able to distribute to every high school history and social studies classroom in our state. It was a busy few years.[3]

The steering committee delivered its final report, with recommendations, in October, 2006. Following a period of discussion and public comment, President Simmons and the Brown Corporation, the governing body of the university, issued a formal response in February, 2007, outlining the specific steps that the university would take in light of the committee's findings. Both the report and the university's response can be found on the committee's website *(www.brown.edu/slaveryjustice)*. The site provides additional information about the committee's work, including video excerpts of sponsored events and a treasure trove of relevant historical documents. I hope that you'll take a look. And for those who still prefer paper to pixels, printed copies of the report are available from the university, without charge.

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So that's the background. What I'd like to do today is to share one story from our work, along with a few of the historical documents that we used to reconstruct it. The story begins in 1764, the year that the College of Rhode Island, what is today Brown University, was founded. It is a painful story, but that is part of the point: the first step in any confrontation with historical injustice is facing the past squarely, insisting on the full truth of one's history, against the inevitable tendencies to deny, extenuate, and forget. The story is of special interest to this audience because it speaks to the question of "Imagining America"—not simply to the concerns of this organization but to broad questions about how we imagine our nation's past, its present, and its possible future.

Let me begin in the same way that we began our report: with a clock. Most of the steering committee's meetings took place in the office of the Dean of the College, who was a member of the committee, and, more important, the only one of us with a table big enough to seat sixteen people. In the corner of the office stood an antique grandfather clock, identified by a silver plaque on the cabinet as "The Family Clock of Admiral Esek Hopkins." Such heirlooms abound on a campus like Brown's, and it was several months before any of us bothered to read the plaque or to recognize the clock's significance.

Though less renowned than his older brother Stephen, a colonial governor and signer of the Declaration of Independence, Esek Hopkins is familiar to Rhode Island historians. A Providence ship's captain, he served as the first commander-in-chief of the Continental Navy during the American Revolution. Following the war, he served in the state legislature, as well as on the Board of Trustees of the College of Rhode Island, on which he remained for twenty years. His memory is enshrined today in the several public places, including the Esek Hopkins Middle School, Esek Hopkins Park, and Admiral Street in Providence,

where his old house still stands. There is even an Esek Hopkins Pond, where generations of young Rhode Islanders have learned to ice skate.

There is another aspect of Esek Hopkins's story that is not reflected in any of the public memorials. In 1764, Hopkins was master of the *Sally,* a one-hundred-ton brigantine that sailed from Providence to West Africa on a slaving voyage. The *Sally* was owned by Nicholas Brown and Company, a partnership of four brothers, Nicholas, John, Joseph, and Moses Brown. As you will doubtless surmise, the brothers were important benefactors of the College of Rhode Island, which in 1804 changed its name to Brown University, in recognition of a gift from Nicholas's son, Nicholas Brown, Jr.[4]

Many people today are shocked at the idea of a slave ship sailing from Rhode Island, so effectively have we been conditioned to regard slavery as a "southern" institution. But we should not be surprised. Rhode Islanders dominated the North American portion of the transatlantic slave trade, mounting over a thousand African slaving voyages in the century between 1707 and the formal abolition of the trade in 1807 (and scores more illegal voyages thereafter). While this total is far smaller than the number of voyages amassed by the British or Portuguese, it is extraordinarily high in American terms, representing something between fifty and sixty percent of all slaving voyages launched from North America. In all, over 100,000 Africans were borne into New World slavery on Rhode Island ships.[5]

Some of the people thus transported were brought back to Rhode Island; the streets of Newport, the colony's main port, were literally paved with revenues from a duty on imported Africans. But most were carried to the Caribbean, to labor on the slave plantations of Jamaica, Barbados, Cuba, Hispaniola, Antigua, and other islands. There they produced sugar and molasses, which were carried to New England and distilled into rum; the city of Newport alone boasted twenty-two distilleries in the 1760s, all churning out the high-proof liquor that gave Rhode Island ships their contemporary moniker: rum men. A portion of this rum was shipped to Africa, where it was exchanged for captives, who were carried to the Caribbean to produce more sugar, more rum, and more slaves. Between this "triangle" trade and the equally lucrative bilateral trade between New England and the Caribbean, it is difficult to imagine any eighteenth-century Rhode Islander whose fortunes were not dependent, directly or indirectly, on slavery.

Placed in this context, the *Sally's* voyage was nothing out of the ordinary. But there are reasons to attend to it, starting simply with synchronicity: the voyage coincided exactly with the establishment of what is today Brown University. There are lots of universities in the world whose histories and fortunes are entangled with slavery and the transatlantic slave trade—given the economic centrality of the institution and the trade in the history of the Atlantic

World, it is hard to imagine any institutions of that vintage that are not so entangled—but rarely is the relationship revealed so dramatically.

The *Sally's* voyage also has the distinction of being one of the best documented of the nearly 35,000 African slaving voyages for which there is some surviving trace. As we shall see, the Brown brothers were only minor players in the African slave trade, at least by the standards of Rhode Island merchants, but when it came to documenting their business affairs, they were absolutely unsurpassed. There is an old family story about the brothers' father, Captain James Brown, who scandalized his community not only by choosing the profession of merchant over the ministry, the calling of three generations of his forbears, but also by entering the birthdates of his children in a ledger book rather than in the family Bible. The brothers learned double entry bookkeeping at the age at which other children learned to read, and they passed that skill onto the next generation. More remarkable still, the records of most of Brown family enterprises survive, something between three and four hundred thousand manuscript pages in all. If you sold the Browns a consignment of tobacco in 1764, I could almost certainly find an invoice specifying your name, the date, and what you received in payment. And if some of that tobacco found its way onto an Africa-bound slave ship, I could tell you that, too.

But the significance of the ship's voyage extends beyond a single family or university. The year 1764 also marked the beginning of the American Revolution. As every schoolchild learns, Great Britain emerged from the Seven Years War against France—what Americans traditionally call the French and Indian War—with a substantial debt, which Parliament sought to defray by levying taxes and duties on the American colonies. The action provoked bitter opposition, articulated in the celebrated cry: "No taxation without representation." The conflict escalated in the ensuing decade, culminating in armed revolt and a formal declaration of American independence in 1776. But there is more to the story than most of our textbooks tell us. The legislation that ignited the controversy was the 1764 Sugar Act, which imposed a three-penny-per-gallon duty on molasses imported from non-British colonies. Technically, such imports had long been subject to duty, but Americans had rarely if ever paid them; now the British proposed to collect. The colonists' reaction reflected not only concerns about an unwarranted expansion of Parliamentary power, but also fears that the new duties would choke off the lucrative commerce with the slave colonies of the Caribbean, upon which the economy of mainland North America depended.

Appropriately, it was Rhode Island, the state most invested in the Caribbean trade, that led the opposition. Even before the Sugar Act had secured final passage, a group of Providence merchants, including the Brown

brothers, had drafted a "Remonstrance," which was personally carried to London by Stephen Hopkins, the colony's governor and chancellor of the new College of Rhode Island. The proposed duty, the Remonstrance warned, would cripple the local economy, destroying not only direct trade with the Caribbean but also the African slave trade—a trade, the authors noted proudly, that had grown to eighteen ships per year. "[W]ithout this trade, it would have been and will always be, utterly impossible for the inhabitants of this colony to subsist themselves, or to pay for any considerable quantity of British goods," the document concluded.[6]

The Rhode Island Remonstrance encapsulated the great contradiction of American history, the paradox of a nation simultaneously committed to values of liberty and equality and to an institution and commerce that flagrantly contradicted those values. The contradiction was even more striking in *The Rights of Colonies Examined,* a pamphlet published by Stephen Hopkins shortly after his return from England. In this influential treatise, Hopkins set out what soon became the orthodox colonial position on the limits of Parliamentary authority. He also introduced one of the American Revolution's most potent metaphors, decrying Parliament's attempts to tax the colonists not simply as an assault on their rights but as an attempt to reduce them to slavery. "Liberty is the greatest blessing that men enjoy, and slavery is the heaviest curse that human nature is capable of," he wrote, adding: "those who are governed at the will of another, and whose property may be taken from them … without their consent … are in the miserable condition of slaves." Hopkins, who was a slaveowner at the time, evidently saw no irony in the argument. Nor did the Brown brothers, who forwarded a copy of the pamphlet to the governor's brother Esek, who was then on the coast of Africa aboard the *Sally.*[7]

All of which, I hope, goes some way to explain why the *Sally* is worthy of our attention, and also why discovering Esek Hopkins's clock standing in the corner of the office in which we were meeting was such a powerful experience for those of us on the steering committee. As an historian, I am chary of entering the precincts of metaphor, but the clock is irresistible. Standing there, unobserved, it symbolizes the history that we own and, more important, the history that we do not own, that which we see and that which we choose or have been conditioned not to see. What happens if we see our past whole? How might we take full ownership of our history, not only of the aspects that are gracious and honorable but also of those that are grievous and horrifying? What responsibilities, if any, rest upon us in the present as inheritors of this mixed legacy? Brown's Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice represents one institution's attempt to answer these questions.

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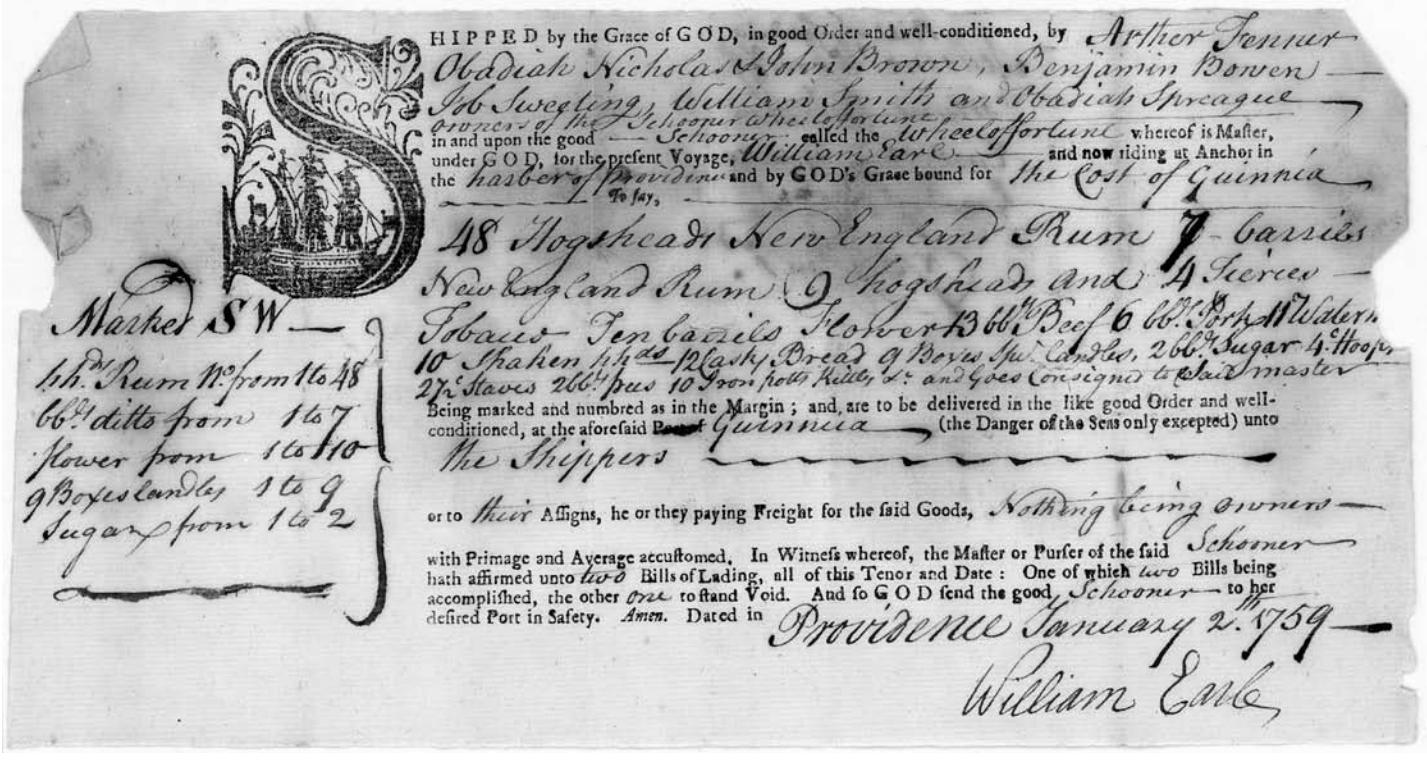
Let me return to my story. I mentioned earlier that the Brown brothers were not major players in the slave trade, but they were not completely inexperienced, either. In 1736, Captain James Brown sent a vessel, called the *Mary,* to Africa. The *Mary,* which appears to be the first slave ship to have sailed from Providence, successfully carried a cargo of Africans to the West Indies, returning home with several slaves for the family's own use. For the next twenty-three years, the Browns made no direct investments in the transatlantic trade, though their ships sometimes carried small lots of captives to and from the Caribbean. The family returned to slaving in 1759, when James's oldest sons, Nicholas and John, and their uncle Obadiah invested in an Africa-bound schooner, the *Wheel of Fortune.* [Fig. 1] With the Seven Years War still raging, it was a risky venture and it ended badly. The *Wheel* reached Africa in good order, but on the return journey she was captured by a French privateer. Obadiah had taken the precaution of insuring the voyage, but the venture still represented a severe financial loss to the family. The capture presumably made little difference to the captives on the ship, who likely found themselves in the French rather than the British Caribbean.

With the war's end in 1763, the Browns began to consider another African voyage. (Obadiah had died in the interim, leaving the family business in the hands of James's four surviving sons, trading under the name Nicholas Brown and Company.) The timing seemed propitious. Wartime disruption of transatlantic commerce had created a backlog of demand for enslaved labor in the Americas, leading to high prices, even as the rest of the North American economy remained mired in postwar recession. The possibilities were especially enticing to the Browns, who needed a large infusion of capital to purchase whale oil for their spermaceti candle works, as well as for a new iron foundry they hoped to open. A slaving voyage, while expensive to mount and potentially risky, seemed just the answer.

Surviving documents from the time do not reveal any of the brothers objecting to the idea of a slaving venture. Moses, the youngest, would later recall expressing moral qualms, only to have them swept aside by his brothers, who noted the hypocrisy of his disdaining the trade while owning slaves himself. "[T]he convictions of my own Conscience were such as to be averse to the Voyage," he wrote in 1783, "yet in reasoning upon that Subject with those who were for pursuing it, my holding Slaves at that time so weakened my arguments, that I suffered myself . . . to be Concern'd." Given that Moses's intention in the letter was to indict rather than to exonerate himself, there is reason to give credence to this recollection.[8]



SHIPPED by the Grace of GOD, in good Order and well-conditioned, by Arthur Fenner Obadiah Nicholas John Brown, Benjamin Bowen Job Sweeting, William Smith and Obadiah Spreague owners of the Schooner Wheeloffortune in and upon the good — Schooner — called the Wheeloffortune whereof is Master, under GOD, for the present Voyage, William Earl — and now riding at Anchor in the harbor of Providence and by GOD's Grace bound for the Cost of Guinnea To say,

48 Hogsheads New England Rum 7 barrels New England Rum 9 Hogsheads and 4 Tierces Tobacco Ten barrels Flower 13 66/ Beef 6 66/ Pork 11 Waters 10 Shaken 4 hhds Plank Bread 9 Boxes Spr. Candles 266 Sugar 4 Hoops 27 Staves 266 pcs 10 Iron pots Kettle &c and Goes Consigned to said Master

Being marked and numbred as in the Margin; and, are to be delivered in the like good Order and well-conditioned, at the aforesaid Port of Guinnea (the Danger of the Seas only excepted) unto the Shippers

or to their Assigns, he or they paying Freight for the said Goods, Nothing being Owners

with Primage and Average accustomed, In Witness whereof, the Master or Purser of the said Schooner hath affirmed unto two Bills of Lading, all of this Tenor and Date: One of which two Bills being accomplished, the other one to stand Void. And so GOD send the good Schooner to her desired Port in Safety. *Amen.* Dated in Providence January 2. 1759

William Earle

Market SW

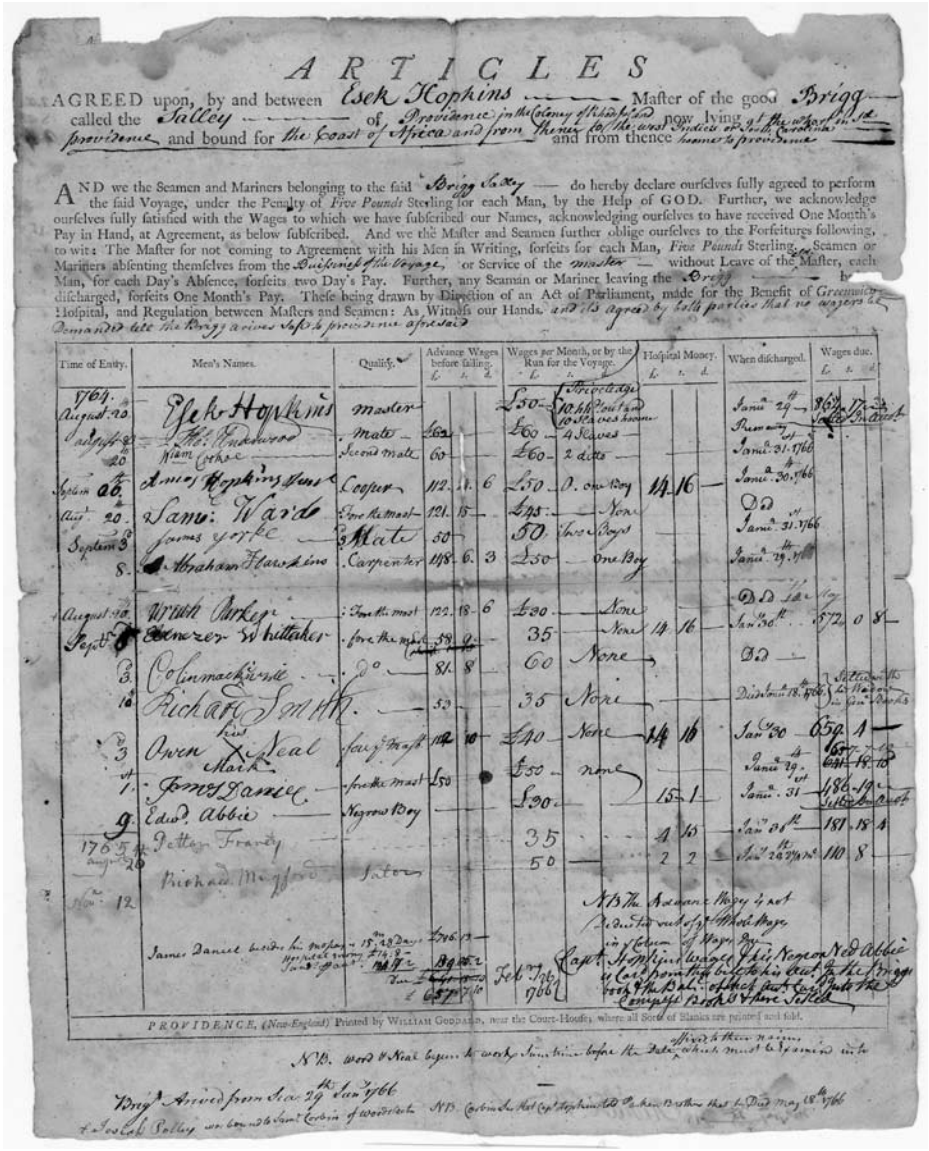
4 hh. Rum No. from 16 48
66 ditto from 16 7
Flower from 16 10
9 Boxes Candles 16 9
Sugar from 16 2

Figure 1
Shipping paper of the **Wheel of Fortune**

The first step in mounting an African voyage was hiring a captain. Finding their first choice already committed to another ship, the brothers offered command of the *Sally* to Esek Hopkins. Hopkins had successfully commanded privateers during the war, but he had never been to Africa, a potentially serious liability, as at least one correspondent warned the Browns. For his services, he was offered a wage of £50 per month, plus a "privilege," or commission. Standard captain's privilege on a Rhode Island slaver was "four on a hundred and four"—meaning that, for every one hundred and four captives delivered alive, the captain was permitted to sell four on his own account. Hopkins was offered a more generous package: ten barrels of rum on the outboard journey, and ten slaves on the return.

Hopkins proceeded to assemble a crew, including mates, ship's carpenter, cooper, and ordinary seamen. [Fig. 2] Each man signed (or marked) an "articles of agreement," specifying his duties, wages, and the date of discharge or death. In contrast to the massive slavers sailing out of Liverpool, Rhode Island ships tended to be quite small, with lower carrying capacities and much smaller crews. Smaller crews reduced costs but they also increased the risk of insurrection, as the number of captives grew and as crewmen succumbed to the fevers endemic to the West African coast. (Three of the fourteen original members of the *Sally* crew perished during the voyage, a fairly typical mortality rate for a slave ship.) At least one of the *Sally's* crew was black—the cabin boy, Edward "Ned" Abby, listed in the ship's articles as "Negro Boy." The notation in the bottom right corner of the document directs that Abby's wage of £30 per month be paid to Hopkins's account. In other words, Abby was Esek Hopkins's slave.

Outfitting a slave ship took weeks, even months, and engaged the energies of an entire community. Sail lofts and rope walks required canvas and rigging. Caulkers scraped and sealed the hull, which was then sheathed in copper, to protect it from the organisms living in the warm waters of the West African coast. Blockmakers and ironwrights installed fittings. Carpenters built platforms and compartments below deck for the human cargo to come. (On most slave ships, men were loaded in separate compartments from women and children.) Local provisioners supplied beef and pork, tobacco, tar, salt fish, onions, and bread, while distilleries churned out the high-proof rum for which Rhode Island ships were renowned. Even the neighborhood apothecary played a part, supplying laudanum and other elixirs for the ship's medicine chest. (British slave ships typically carried ship's surgeons to tend to their human cargoes—by the late eighteenth century, they were required to do so by law—but doctors were a luxury not afforded on the smaller Rhode Island ships.) The *Sally* also carried thirty large crates of spermaceti candles, manufactured in the Brown's



ARTICLES

AGREED upon, by and between Esek Hopkins ——— Master of the good Brigg called the Sally ——— of Providence in the Colony of Rhode Island now lying at the wharf in Providence and bound for the Coast of Africa and from thence to the West Indies or North Carolina and from thence home to Providence

AND we the Seamen and Mariners belonging to the said Brigg Sally —— do hereby declare ourselves fully agreed to perform the said Voyage, under the Penalty of *Five Pounds* Sterling for each Man, by the Help of GOD. Further, we acknowledge ourselves fully satisfied with the Wages to which we have subscribed our Names, acknowledging ourselves to have received One Month's Pay in Hand, at Agreement, as below subscribed. And we the Master and Seamen further oblige ourselves to the Forfeitures following, to wit: The Master for not coming to Agreement with his Men in Writing, forfeits for each Man, *Five Pounds* Sterling. Seamen or Mariners absenting themselves from the Business of the Voyage, or Service of the master —— without Leave of the Master, each Man, for each Day's Absence, forfeits two Day's Pay. Further, any Seaman or Mariner leaving the Brigg ——— before discharged, forfeits One Month's Pay. These being drawn by Direction of an Act of Parliament, made for the Benefit of Greenwich Hospital, and Regulation between Masters and Seamen: As Witness our Hands. and it is agreed by both parties that no wagers demanded after the Brigg arrives safely in providence aforesaid

Time of Entry.	Men's Names.	Quality.	Advance Wages before sailing. £ s. d.	Wages per Month, or by the Run for the Voyage. £	Hospital Money. £ s. d.	When discharged.	Wages due. £ s. d.
1765. August 20	Esek Hopkins	master		£50	Primage	Janu. 29th	86 17 3
	Thos. Anderwood	Mate	£60	£60	4 Slaves	Do	
20	Wm. Cotter	Second Mate	60	£60	2 ditto	Janu. 31. 1766	
Septem 26	Amos Hopkins Junr	Cooper	112. 11. 6	£50	0. one Boy	Janu. 30. 1766	
Augt 20	Sami: Warde	Steward	121. 15	£45	None	Janu. 31. 1766	
September 3	James Yorke	Mate	50	50	two Boys		
8.	Abraham Hawkins	Carpenter	118. 6. 3	£50	One Boy	Janu. 29th 1766	
August 20	Wm. Parker	Foremast	122. 18. 6	£30	None	Do Do 12	
Septr 6	Ebenezer Whittaker	fore the mast	58 0	35	None	Janu. 30th	572 0 8
3.	Colinmackenzie	do	81. 8	60	None	Do	
16	Richard Smith		52	35	None	Dismist 18th 1766	
3	Owen Neal	fore Mast	112 10	£40	None	Janu 30	65 1
1.	James Daniel Mark	fore the mast	£50	£50	none	June 29th 1766	65 19 8
9.	Edwd. Abbie	Negroes Boy		£20	15 1	Janu. 31	186 19
1765 August 20	Peter Francy			35	1 15	Janu 30th	181 18 4
	Richard Mefford	Sailor		50	2 2	Janu 29th 1766	110 8
Nov 12							

N.B. The Advance Wages is not deducted out of the Wages in the Return of Wages &c.

James Daniel hath his wages in 15 days from the date hereof and Joseph Bayard his wages in 28 days from the date hereof

Capt. Hopkins wages & Wm. Negroes & Edwd Abbies to be deducted out of the Wages in the Return of Wages &c.

Feb. 7th 1766

PROVIDENCE, (New-England) Printed by WILLIAM GODDARD, near the Court-House, where all Sorts of Blanks are printed and sold.

N.B. Word & Neal bound to work Sometime before the Date which must be Expressed into

Affixed to them names

Brigt Arrived from Guinea the 29th Janr 1766

N.B. Carbine Jr. Red Capt Hopkins told Mr. Baker Brother that he Died May 18th 1766

Joseph Sally an Indian

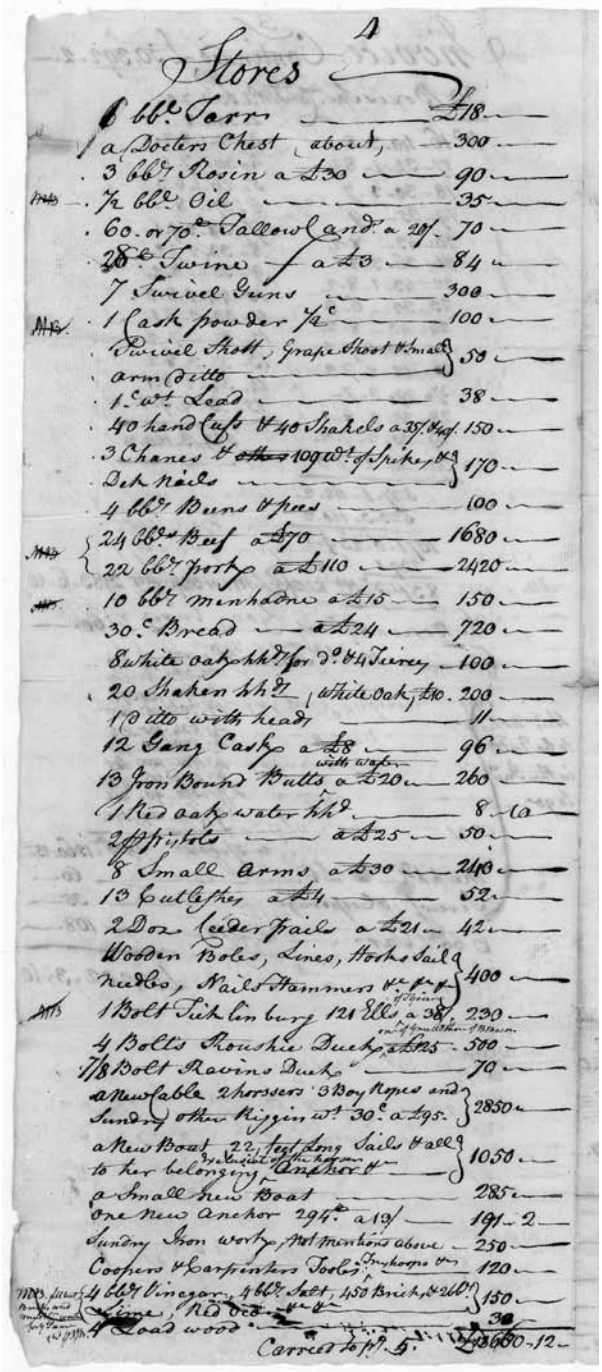
Figure 2
Articles of the **Sally**

own Providence chandlery. As one Rhode Island historian has written, the slave trade literally was the business of "the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker."[9]

The fitting-out finished, Hopkins produced a detailed inventory of everything aboard ship, down to the exact number of gallons in each hogshead of rum—17,274 gallons in all. [Fig. 3] The list included what historian Marcus Rediker has called "the hardware of bondage"—the implements required to confine and control the enslaved Africans to come. In addition to guns and cutlasses, powder and grapeshot, the *Sally* carried seven "swivel guns," small cannons that could be trained outboard at approaching ships and inboard at Africans when they were exercised on deck. The inventory also included several lengths of heavy chain, as well as "40 hand Cufs & 40 Shackels." There were competing theories about keeping enslaved Africans in irons. Chaining captives reduced the danger of insurrection, but it also hastened their physical and psychological deterioration, lowering their value at sale. On most ships, women and children were left unchained while men were shackled in pairs, at wrist and ankle. The hardware loaded on the *Sally* would thus have been enough to restrain eighty men.[10]

Hopkins acquired his first captives on November 15, a few days after the *Sally's* arrival on the coast, trading 156 gallons of rum and a barrel of flour to the captain of another slave ship for two Africans, "1 boye" and "1 garle." After a brief layover at James Fort, the large British slave factory at the mouth of the Gambia River, he proceeded south, along what traders at the time called the "Upper Guinea Coast." It is difficult to establish the *Sally's* exact location, but it appears that the ship spent most of its time anchored near the mouth of the Grande River, in what is today Guinea-Bissau. A page from Hopkins's account book details his early negotiations with the local "king," or chief, who controlled the slave trade in the area. [Fig. 4] Over the course of five days, he dispensed more than five hundred gallons of rum in gifts and "customs" to the chief and his retinue. Only then did the chief agree to "open trade." Business proved excruciatingly slow. Judging from the account book, much of the trading Hopkins did was with passing slave ships, supplying the rum that they would need to conduct business further down the coast and receiving in exchange manufactured goods like cloth, iron, and guns that he needed to trade with the locals.

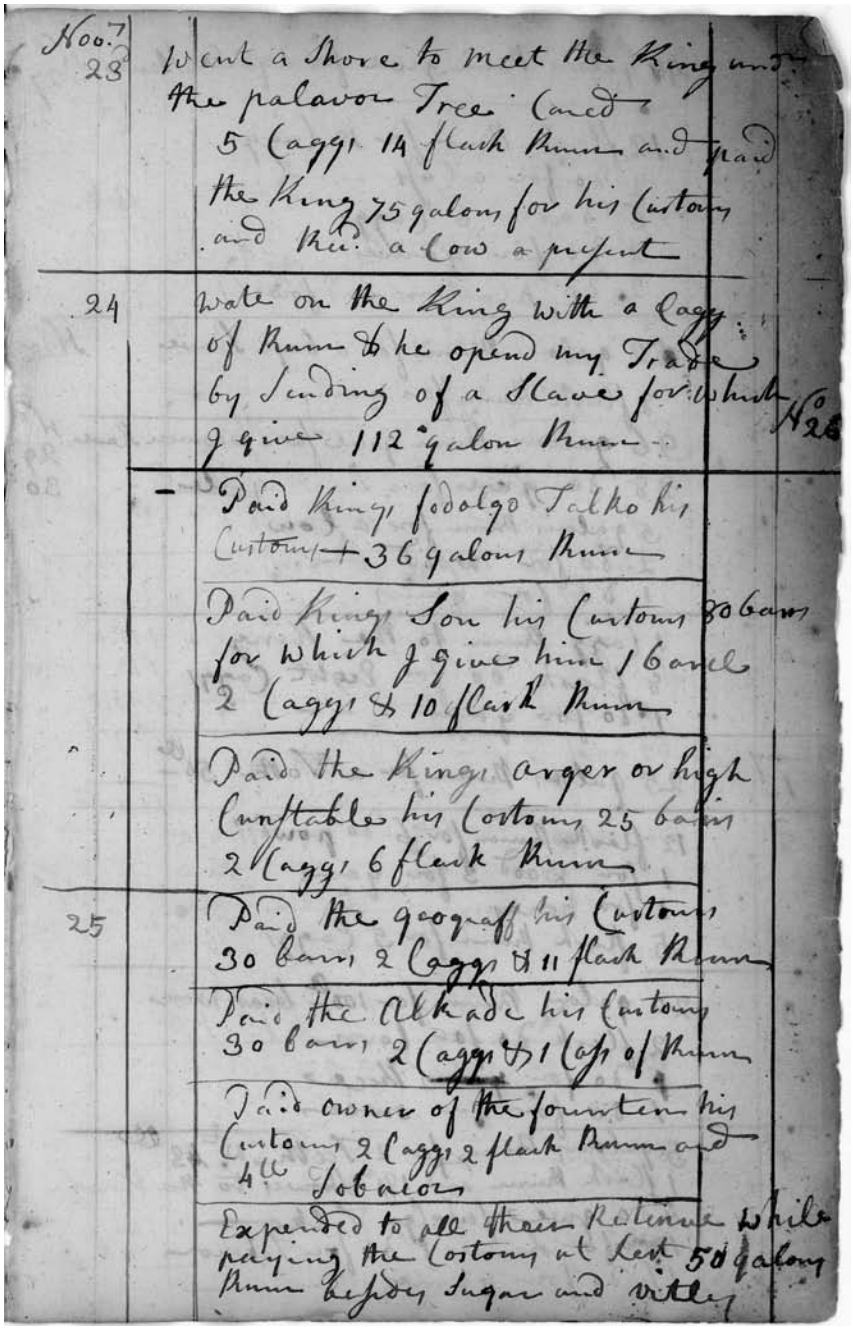
As the foregoing suggests, Hopkins and the *Sally* faced a seller's market. Unfortunately for the Browns, slave traders across Europe and the Americas had recognized the same opportunity that they had; Rhode Island alone cleared two dozen ships for West Africa in the fall of 1764. By the time the *Sally* arrived, the coast was awash in rum and slave ships, and captives were



Stores

1 bbl. Tarr — £18
a Doctors Chest about — 300
3 bbl Rosin a £30 — 90
½ bbl Oil — 35
60. or 70. Tallow and a 20/ — 70
28 lb. Twine a £3 — 84
7 Swivel Guns — 300
1 Cask powder ¼ c — 100
Swivel Shott, Grape Shott & Small } 50
arm Ditto
1 c.wt Lead — 38
40 hand Cuffs & 40 Shakels a 3/6 & 4/ — 150
3 Chanes & other 10 qr. wt. of Spike, &c — 170
Deck Nails
4 bbl Buns & Peas — 100
24 bbl. Beef a £70 — 1680
22 bbl Porke a £110 — 2420
10 bbl Minchdne a £15 — 150
30 c. Bread — a £24 — 720
8 White oak hhd for D.o & Tierce — 100
20 Shaken hhd (White Oak, £10. 200
1 D.o ditto with head — 11
12 Gang Casks a £8 with water — 96
13 Iron Bound Butts a £20 — 260
1 Red oak water hhd — 8. 10
2 Pistols — a £25 — 50
8 Small arms a £30 — 240
13 Cutlashes a £4 — 52
2 Doz Cedar Pails a £21 — 42
Wooden Bowles, Lines, Hooks Sail } 400
Needles, Nails Hammers &c. &c.
1 Bolt Tick Linburg 121 Ells a 3/ — 230
4 Bolts Rousshie Duck, 2 bolts — 500
7/8 Bolt Ravins Duck — 70
a New Cable 2 horsers 3 Boy Ropes and } 2850
Sundry other Rigging wt 30 c. a £95.
a New Boat 22 feet long Sails & all } 1050
to her belonging Anchor &
a Small new Boat — 285
One new Anchor 294 lb. a 13/ — 191. 2
Sundry Iron work not mentioned above — 250
Coopers & Carpinters Tools Grindstone &c — 120
4 bbl Vinegar, 4 bbl Salt, 450 Brick, & 260 } 150
Lime, Red Ochre
4 Load wood — 30
Carried to p.g. 5. £3660. 12.

Figure 3
Inventory of the **Sally**


Nov. 7
23 I went a Shore to meet the King under the palavor Tree Carried 5 Caggs 14 flask Rum and paid the King 75 galons for his Customs and Rec. a Cow a present

24 Wate on the King with a Cagg of Rum & he opend my Trade by Sending of a Slave for which I give 112 galon Rum — No 28

— Paid King Jodolgo Talko his Customs + 36 galons Rum

Paid King Son his Customs 80 bars for which I give him 16 and 2 Caggs & 10 flask Rum

Paid the Kings Arger or high Constable his Customs 25 bars 2 Caggs 6 flask Rum

25 Paid the geograff his Customs 30 bars 2 Caggs & 11 flask Rum

Paid the Alkade his Customs 30 bars 2 Caggs & 1 Cag of Rum

Paid owner of the fountain his Customs 2 Caggs 2 flask Rum and 4 lb Tobacco

Expended to all theirs Retinue while paying the Customs at Least 50 galons Rum besides Sugar and Vittles

Figure 4
Hopkins's account book

scarce and expensive. Hopkins succeeded in "making a cargo"—he eventually acquired 196 Africans—but it took him more than nine months to do so, an extraordinarily long time for a ship to remain on the African coast, especially for those confined below deck.

There is a paradoxical quality to historical records from the transatlantic slave trade, well illustrated by the next document. [Fig. 5] On one hand, records are voluminous and often exquisitely detailed, reflecting the immense sums at stake in the trade. On the other hand, existing records reveal very little about the human beings trafficked in the trade—about their names and social origins, their pathways into enslavement, their experiences aboard ship, or their subsequent fates. This entry from Hopkins's account book enables us to reconstruct precisely the commodities traded for captive number 107, an African boy. As with most such exchanges, it was a mixed bag, including rum, guns and powder, cutlasses, an assortment of British textiles, and half a dozen large and small "Iron barres." Iron was an important trade good on the Upper Guinea Coast, which had few iron deposits of its own; Africans used it to make weapons and agricultural implements. Such was iron's importance, in fact, that most exchanges were calculated in terms of it; thus "boye Slave" number 107 was valued at 96 "barres." Yet who he was and what became of him we will never know. Notice also the notation at the bottom of the page: "a begua woman Slave hanged her Self between Decks," followed by "No 2," entered in the debit column.

The horror was only beginning. By the time the *Sally* left the coast on August 20, 1765, nineteen captives had perished. A twentieth, a woman, was left for dead on the day the ship sailed. The toll mounted as the ship began the long journey across the Atlantic. [Fig. 6] "1 garle Slave Dyed" on August 21. "1 boye Slave Dyed" on August 22. "1 woman + 1 boye Dyed" on August 27. On August 28, a week out, an insurrection erupted on the ship, a fact conveyed in a terse entry in the account book: "Slaves Rose on us Was obliged fire on them and Destroyed 8 and Several more Wounded badly 1 thye + one Ribs broke." While the evidence is sketchy, it appears that the *Sally's* crew had been so depleted that Hopkins was forced to rely on some Africans to man the ship. Ensuing events are unclear, but the upshot was eight, and eventually ten, more deaths.

Death was thereafter a daily visitor on the ship. In a letter to the Browns, Hopkins explained that the captives had become "so Despirited" after the failed insurrection that "Some Drowned themselves, Some Starved and others Sickened and Dyed." Each death was dutifully recorded in Hopkins's account book. Each body was unceremoniously deposited in the sea. In all, 68 captives perished in the seven weeks between the *Sally's* departure from Africa and its

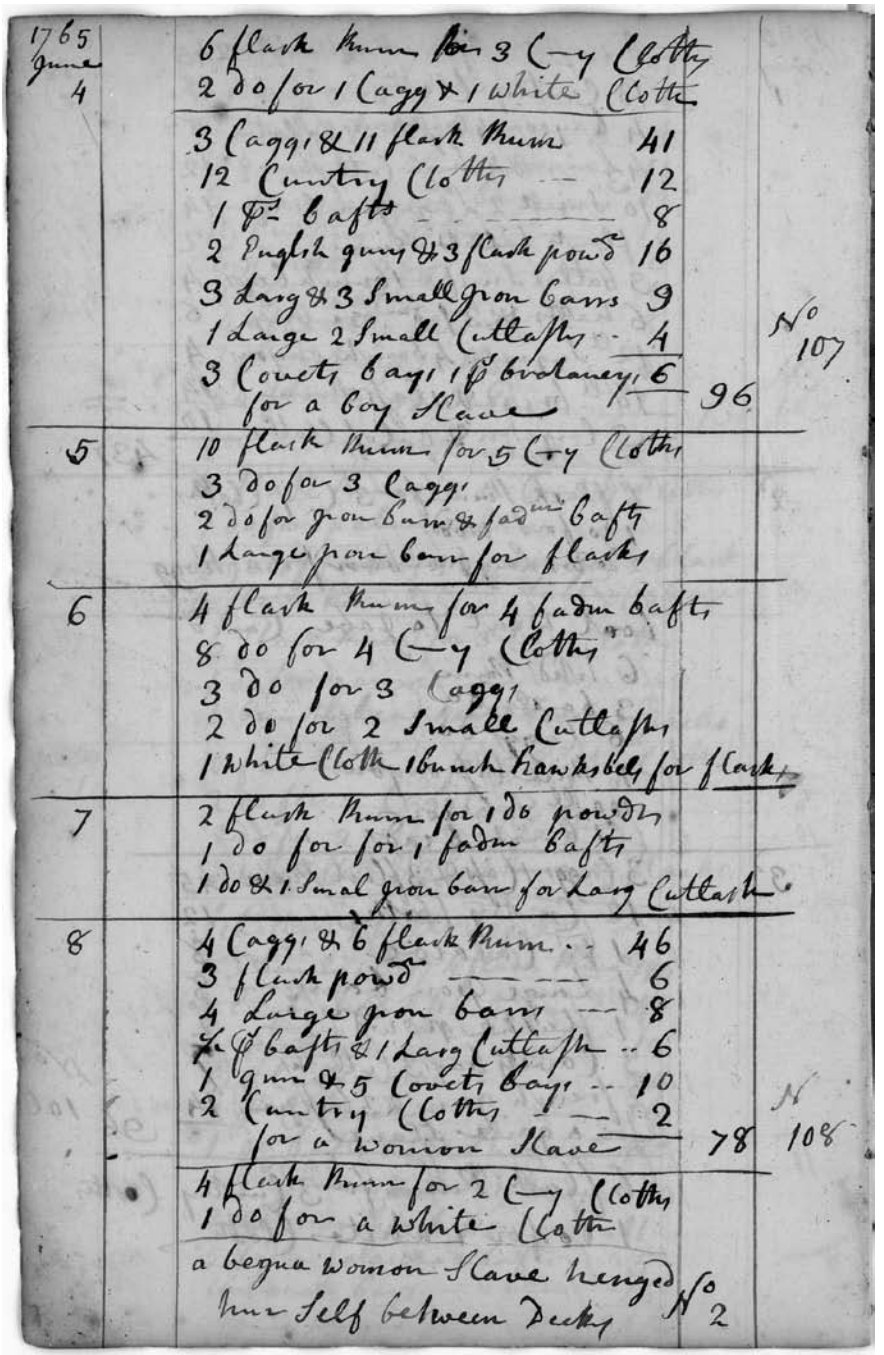
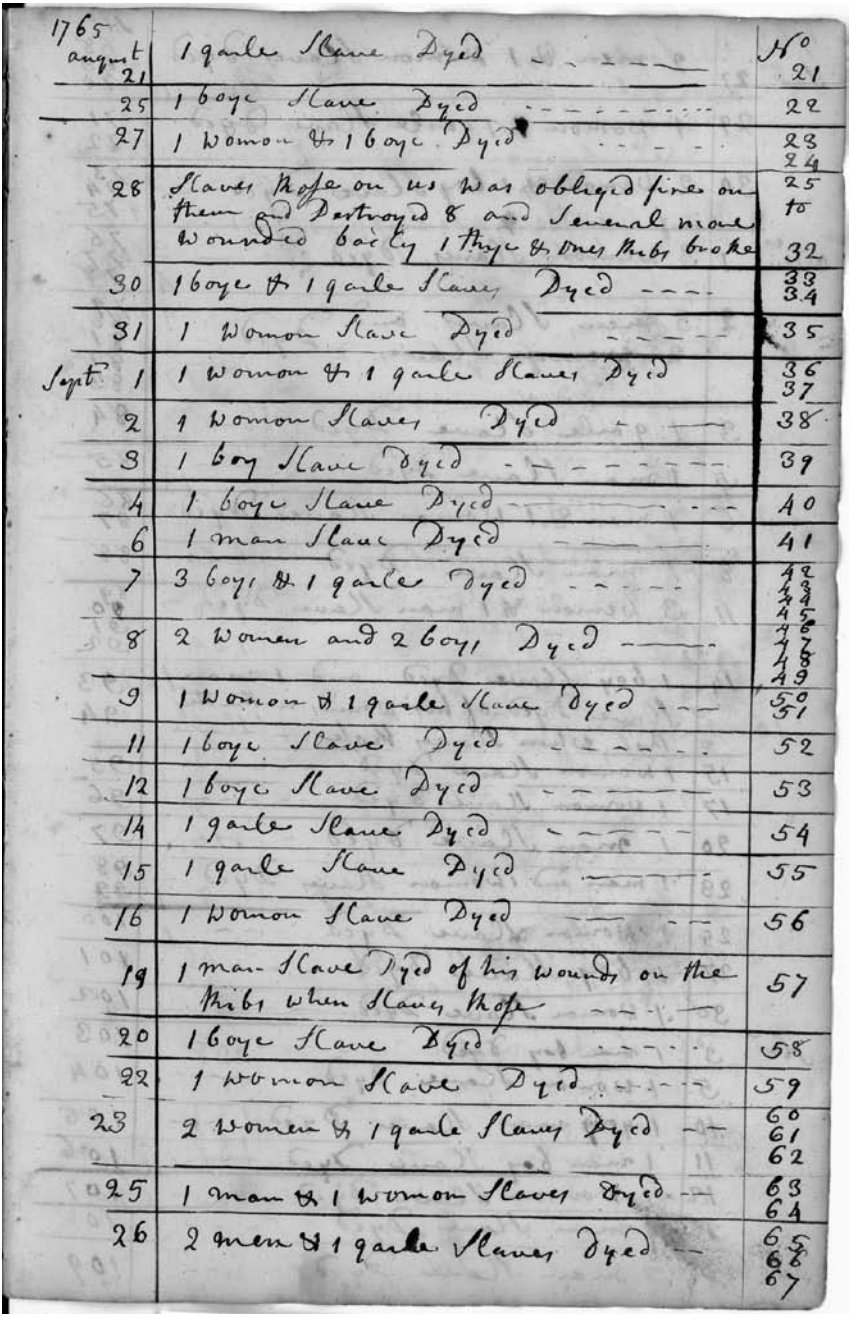
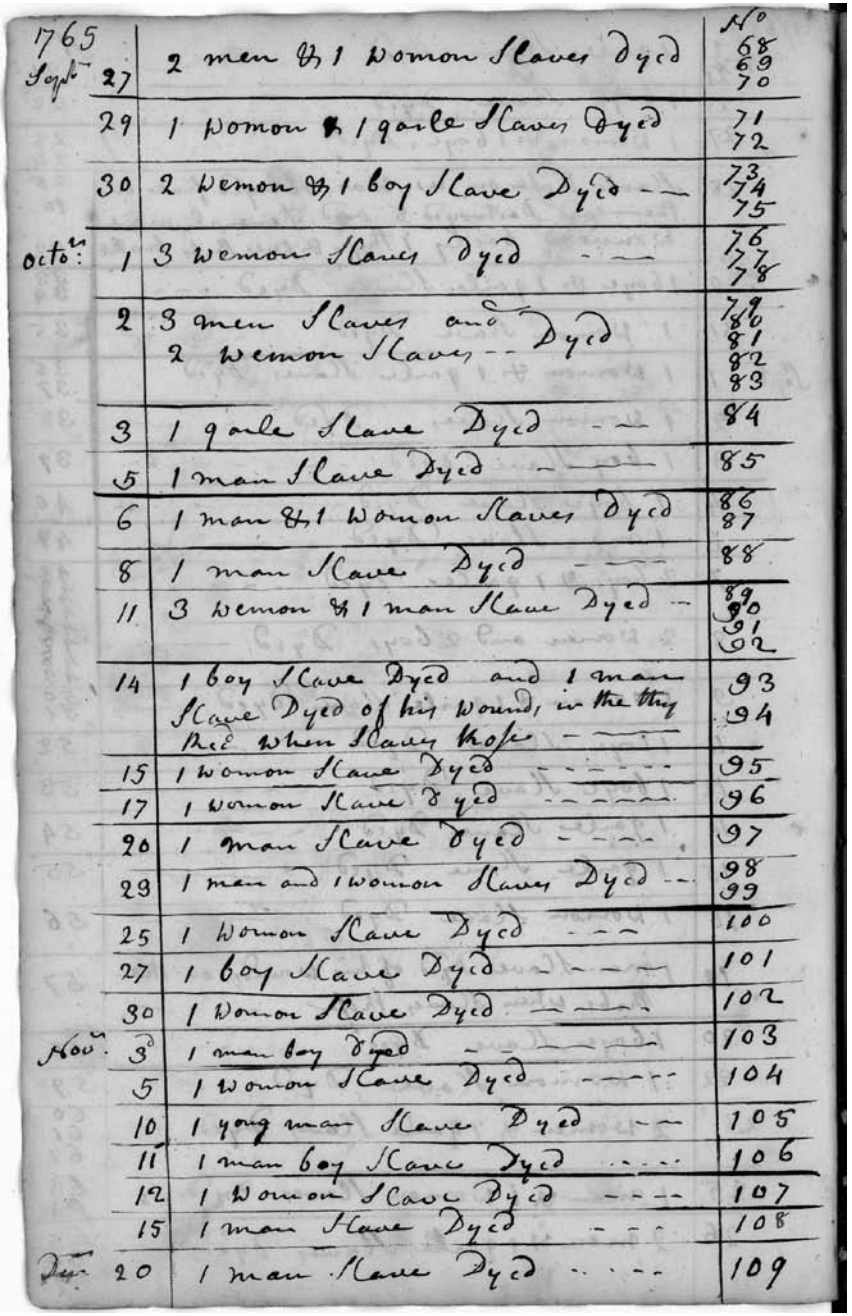


Figure 5
Hopkins's account book



1765 augst 21	1 garle Slave Dyed	No 21
25	1 boye Slave Dyed	22
27	1 Womon & 1 boye Dyed	23 24
28	Slaves Rose on us was obliged fires on them and Destroyed 8 and Several more wounded badly 1 Thye & ones Ribs broke	25 to 32
30	1 boye & 1 garle Slaves Dyed	33 34
31	1 Womon Slave Dyed	35
Sept 1	1 Womon & 1 garle Slaves Dyed	36 37
2	1 Womon Slaves Dyed	38
3	1 boy Slave Dyed	39
4	1 boye Slave Dyed	40
6	1 man Slave Dyed	41
7	3 boys & 1 garle Dyed	42 43 44 45
8	2 Women and 2 boys Dyed	46 47 48 49
9	1 Womon & 1 garle Slave Dyed	50 51
11	1 boye Slave Dyed	52
12	1 boye Slave Dyed	53
14	1 garle Slave Dyed	54
15	1 garle Slave Dyed	55
16	1 Womon Slave Dyed	56
19	1 man Slave Dyed of his wounds on the Ribs when Slaves Rose	57
20	1 boye Slave Dyed	58
22	1 Womon Slave Dyed	59
23	2 Women & 1 garle Slaves Dyed	60 61 62
25	1 man & 1 Womon Slaves Dyed	63 64
26	2 men & 1 garle Slaves Dyed	65 66 67

Figure 6
Hopkins's account book



1765			No
Sept.	27	2 men & 1 Woman Slaves Dyed	68 69 70
	29	1 Woman & 1 girle Slaves Dyed	71 72
	30	2 Wemon & 1 boy Slave Dyed	73 74 75
Octo.	1	3 Wemon Slaves Dyed	76 77 78
	2	3 men Slaves and 2 Wemon Slaves Dyed	79 80 81 82 83
	3	1 girle Slave Dyed	84
	5	1 man Slave Dyed	85
	6	1 man & 1 Woman Slaves Dyed	86 87
	8	1 man Slave Dyed	88
	11	3 Wemon & 1 man Slave Dyed	89 90 91 92
	14	1 boy Slave Dyed and 1 man Slave Dyed of his Wounds, in the Ship Rice when Slaves Rose	93 94
	15	1 Woman Slave Dyed	95
	17	1 Woman Slave Dyed	96
	20	1 man Slave Dyed	97
	29	1 man and 1 Woman Slaves Dyed	98 99
	25	1 Woman Slave Dyed	100
	27	1 boy Slave Dyed	101
	30	1 Woman Slave Dyed	102
Nov.	3	1 man boy Dyed	103
	5	1 Woman Slave Dyed	104
	10	1 young man Slave Dyed	105
	11	1 man boy Slave Dyed	106
	12	1 Woman Slave Dyed	107
	15	1 man Slave Dyed	108
Dec.	20	1 man Slave Dyed	109

Figure 7
Hopkins's account book

arrival in Antigua. [Fig. 7] Another twenty died in the month that followed, before they could be sold, bringing the toll to 108. (A final fatality, number 109, occurred in December, on the ship's journey to Providence.)[11]

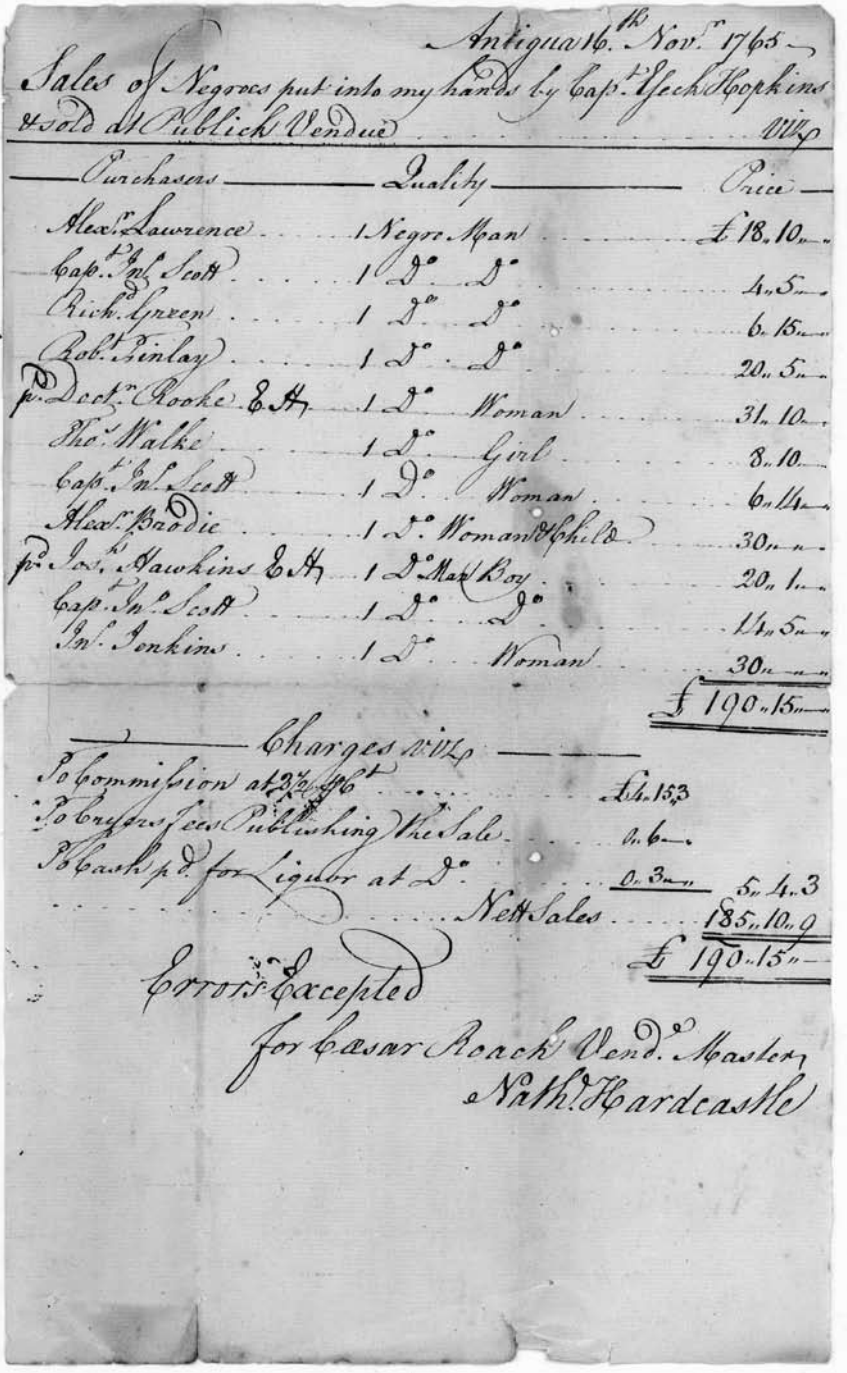
Surviving records from the *Sally's* misbegotten voyage include several bills of sale. Of the 170 odd men, women, and children who had embarked from Africa, just two were marketed as "prime slaves," fetching £50 each. Others from the ship were sold for as little as £5 or £6, an indication of their desperate physical condition. [Fig. 8] From the perspective of buyers, such people, known as "refuse slaves," could be a profitable investment. Like investors in "junk bonds" today, purchasers of refuse slaves only needed to have one or two survive in order to earn a good return. But from the perspective of the seller, in this case the Brown brothers, the low prices were a disaster. So disappointing were the returns that one of the agents handling the sales wrote a letter of apology to the Browns. "I am truly Sorry for the Bad Voyage," he wrote. "[H]ad the Negroes been young and Healthy I should have been able to sell them pretty well. I make no doubt if you was to try this Market again with Good Slaves I should be able to give you satisfaction."[12]

One other aspect of this document is noteworthy. In all records from the voyage, enslaved Africans are characterized in one of just four ways: man, woman, boy, girl. This auction record is the sole exception. As you can see, one Alexander Brodie paid £30 for a "Woman & Child." I cannot be certain, but I suspect that this refers to an infant born on the ship.

• • • •

The Browns never availed themselves of the Antiguan agent's offer. Following the *Sally* debacle, three of the four brothers—Nicholas, Joseph, and Moses—never again invested directly in the transatlantic slave trade. What evidence there is suggests that their decision was prompted less by moral concerns than by financial prudence: they had now invested in two African voyages and lost their shirts both times. One of the four, John, remained persuaded that the trade could be pursued profitably. Over the next three decades, he would sponsor at least four more African voyages. His determination to continue in the trade likely contributed to the other brothers' decision to separate their trading interests from his.

In time, at least one of the brothers would repent of his involvement in the trade. In 1773, Moses Brown lost his wife, Anna, an event that he came to interpret as divine retribution for his earlier involvement in the African slave trade. He manumitted his slaves—he owned six, and held a quarter-interest in four others—and joined the Society of Friends, or Quakers, the



Antigua 16th Nov.r 1765

Sales of Negroes put into my hands by Capt.n Isaac Hopkins & sold at Publick Vendue ... Wm

Purchasers	Quality	Price
Alex.r Lawrence	1 Negro Man	£ 18.10
Capt.n Jn.o Scott	1 D.o D.o	4.5
Rich.d Green	1 D.o D.o	6.15
Robt.t Finlay	1 D.o D.o	20.5
p.d Doct.r Rooke & Co	1 D.o Woman	31.10
Tho.s Walke	1 D.o Girl	8.10
Capt.n Jn.o Scott	1 D.o Woman	6.14
Alex.r Brodie	1 D.o Woman & Child	30
p.d Jos.h Hawkins & Co	1 D.o Mat Boy	20.1
Capt.n Jn.o Scott	1 D.o D.o	14.5
Jn.o Jenkins	1 D.o Woman	30
		£ 190.15

Charges Wm

To Commission at 3½ p.r Ct	£4.13.3	
To Cryers Fees Publishing the Sale	0.6	
To Cash p.d for Liquor at D.o	0.3	5.4.3
Nett Sales		185.10.9
		£ 190.15

Errors Excepted

for Caesar Roach Vend.e Master

Nath.l Hardcastle

Figure 8
Bill of sale

first sect in the Anglo-American world to renounce slavery. He threw himself into the embryonic anti-slavery movement, exhibiting the same energy and entrepreneurial imagination that had characterized his business activities. Moses helped to secure the passage of Rhode Island's 1784 gradual abolition act, as well as of a 1787 law prohibiting residents of the state from participating in the slave trade—a law that unfortunately proved to be a virtual dead letter. He also lobbied on behalf of federal laws in 1793 and 1800 that barred Americans from carrying slaves to ports outside the United States. These laws, too, were routinely violated, nowhere more flagrantly than in Rhode Island, where merchants continued to dispatch slave ships to Africa right up to (and in some cases beyond) the Congressional ban of 1807.

Ironically, Brown's chief adversary in his campaign was his older brother, John, who emerged as the slave trade's most vociferous defender even as Moses emerged as its most outspoken opponent. Surviving family papers include several moving letters between the brothers, with Moses urging John to search his conscience and John insisting that he had done so and found no cause for concern. "[W]henever I am Convinced, as you are, that [slave trading] is Rong in the Sight of God, I will Immediately Deassist," he wrote in a 1786 letter, "but while its not only allowed by Supreme Governour of all States but by all the nations of Europe … I cannot thinke that this State ought to Decline the Trade."[13]

The conflict between the brothers erupted into the public sphere in 1789, following the creation of the Providence Abolition Society, an organization created by Moses to prosecute violators of the state's new anti-slave trade law. Writing under the pen name "A Citizen," John Brown published a searing attack on the society, denouncing abolitionists as both religious fanatics, intent on imposing their moral beliefs on others, and thieves, determined to deprive others of their lawful property. The letter sparked a vitriolic exchange in the Rhode Island press. By the time the dust finally settled, the state's mercantile elite had been arrayed into opposing factions. Significantly, both sides in the dispute sought to drape themselves in the authority of the American Revolution. For abolitionists, slavery and the trade that sustained it were patent violations of the Declaration of Independence, with its professions about human equality and unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. For John and other defenders of the trade, the whole purpose of the Revolution had been to secure an individual's sacred right to property. Trafficking Negroes was "right, just, and lawful," he insisted, adding in one memorable letter: "[I]n my opinion there is no more crime in bringing off a cargo of slaves than in bringing off a cargo of jackasses." In 1789, as in our own time, there were clearly different ways of imagining America.[14]

The dispute, waged in newspaper columns and courtrooms, town meetings and taverns, inevitably spilled onto the campus of the College of Rhode Island, what is today Brown University. The steering committee was able to count approximately thirty members of the college's governing Corporation who either owned or captained slave ships. At the same time, members of the Corporation were prominently represented among the members and officers of the Providence Abolition Society, helping to draft the state laws against slavery and slave trading and pressing for the prosecution of those who violated them. Some of the first prosecutions for illegal slave trading in American history were brought by members of the college Corporation against other members, including an unsuccessful prosecution of John Brown in 1796.

The dispute also divided students, who debated the merits of slavery and abolition in classrooms, commencement orations, and debating societies. Among the documents uncovered by the steering committee was an address by a student, James Tallmadge, at the 1798 commencement ceremony. For Tallmadge, who would later earn distinction as an anti-slavery spokesman in the U.S. House of Representatives, the slave trade was not only "repugnant to the laws of God" but also contrary to the principles of the Declaration of Independence, which stated "that *liberty* was the birth right, the Palladium of every individual." In his address, Tallmadge systematically rebutted the arguments advanced by slave traders (some of whom were doubtless sitting in the audience), including the "specious" claim "that one who was formed with a dark complexion is inferior to him, who possesses a complexion more light." That Americans at the time could seriously entertain such ideas, he added, was a matter "for future generations to investigate." It took more than two hundred years, but we at Brown have finally accepted that invitation.[15]

• • • •

There is a great deal more to say about all this—about the Brown family, about the university that today bears their name, about slavery and the slave trade and the indelible imprint they have left on the society in which we live. Some of these issues are discussed in the Slavery and Justice Committee's final report, which I hope I may have enticed you to read. Let me use the limited time remaining to pursue the question that I imagine is on all of your minds: What now? Knowing what we now know about the history of our institution—and, by implication, the history of our nation—what ought we to do?

While you wouldn't know it from what I have said today, the majority of the committee's final report is dedicated to that question. One of the signatures of the post-World War II era, and of the last twenty years in particular, has been the emergence of an international consensus on the importance of confronting

traumatic histories, as well as the development of a variety of mechanisms for doing so. These include not only monetary payments to individuals (the focus of most discussions of the issue in the United States today), but also truth commissions, national and institutional apologies, the creation of public memorials and rituals of remembrance, educational initiatives, and a wide array of monetary and non-monetary reparations programs. One of the main goals of our report is to examine these approaches, to identify their possibilities and potential pitfalls, as well as some of the specific circumstances in which they have been or might be used. As you might expect, much of the discussion focuses on the slavery reparations issue. In keeping with the committee's charge from President Simmons, we do not endeavor to resolve the reparations debate but rather to enrich it, to provide factual information and critical perspectives that might help everyone, regardless of his or her political persuasion, to discuss the issue more openly and thoughtfully.

We could have stopped there. Our initial charge from the President did not require us to make recommendations. But after spending so much time investigating the history of our university, state, and nation, and even more time exploring various modes of addressing and redressing historical injuries, I think we all felt it was incumbent on us to offer some suggestions about what Brown might do. So we added a final conclusion, accompanied by a set of recommendations directed specifically at the university.

I don't want to speak for others on the committee, but I think it's fair to say that, in drafting our recommendations, we were guided by a few basic principles. We wanted our recommendations to be ambitious but also focused and realistic. Everyone on the committee had things that he or she wished to see the university do differently—we're academics, after all—but we wanted to be sure that our recommendations related directly to the historical issues we had examined in the report and that each of them had some reasonable chance of implementation. We also believed that our recommendations should reflect Brown's specific nature as an educational institution. What universities do best is learning and teaching, and this seemed to us to be the arena in which Brown could most appropriately and effectively make amends. Finally, we wanted to avoid anything smacking of self-congratulation or self-righteousness, which are besetting dangers in these kinds of enterprises. What begins as guilty hand-wringing about the sins of our forebears can all too easily turn into patting ourselves on the back for our own superior wisdom and righteousness. We wanted no part of that.

Our thinking was also shaped by what we had learned from studying other reparative initiatives from around the world. Every exercise in retrospective justice is unique and none is ever adequate. No actions today can restore the

lives shattered by the transatlantic slave trade, the Holocaust, the Cambodian genocide, apartheid, or any of the other grievous crimes that litter human history. But there are still things that we can do, some of which work better than others. It seemed to us that the most successful initiatives generally combined three elements: formal acknowledgement of an offense; a commitment to truth telling, to ensure that the relevant facts are uncovered, discussed, and properly memorialized; and the making of some form of amends in the present to give substance to expressions of regret and responsibility. The committee believed that Brown's response should partake of all of these elements.

You can read our recommendations at the end of our report and judge for yourselves how well we succeeded in meeting these goals. As you'll see, we began by recommending that the university acknowledge formally the participation of many of its founders and benefactors in the institution of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, as well as the benefits that the university derived from them. We also suggested a variety of measures to ensure that this aspect of Brown's history is not forgotten, including the commissioning of a new university history and the erection of a slave trade memorial. Other recommendations pertained to the way in which Brown does its business today. These included: maintenance of the highest possible standards in regard to investment and gifts; expanded opportunities at Brown for those disadvantaged by the legacies of slavery and the slave trade (including not only African Americans but also students from Africa and the Caribbean, the historic points of origin and destination for most of the people carried on Rhode Island slave ships); and the creation of a dedicated academic center to foster research and teaching on issues related to slavery and other forms of historic and contemporary injustice, as well as the continuing struggles against them. Universities express their priorities first and foremost in the topics that they choose to study and teach. We believed that Brown could and should become an international leader in studying and teaching about justice. I am happy to report that virtually all of these recommendations have been endorsed by President Simmons and the Brown Corporation and are in the process of being implemented.

Last but not least, we advocated a broad array of initiatives with local public schools, challenging Brown to use its resources to help ensure a quality public education for the children of our Rhode Island. The importance of these initiatives will, I am sure, be apparent to this audience. Few people understand the problems facing American public education and the urgency of addressing them better than the members of Imagining America. Yet these initiatives have a particular significance in this context, for the history of American education is inextricably bound up with the history of slavery. It is a truism but

it nonetheless bears repeating that in much of this country it was once a crime to teach a black person to read. With the coming of abolition, many Americans, black as well as white, recognized education as essential to repairing the legacy of slavery and equipping the formerly enslaved for the full enjoyment of their rights as free people. Yet at every juncture this promise has been betrayed. Rather than promoting equality and common citizenship, public schools have all too often become vehicles for perpetuating inequality and segregation.

As it happens, the first chapter in this long history of betrayal happened in Rhode Island. The 1784 Rhode Island Gradual Abolition Act required towns to provide the free-born children of enslaved mothers with publicly-funded instruction in "reading, writing, and Arithmetic," a provision that clearly reflected the influence of Moses Brown. A year later, however, the legislature rescinded the requirement, after towns had protested that providing "Support and Education" to the children of slaves was "extremely burthensome." The guarantee of publicly funded education for the newly free simply fell away. This betrayal would be repeated, on a vastly greater scale, in the aftermath of the Civil War, where promises of an equal education for the newly free were swept away by the collapse of Reconstruction and the onset of Jim Crow, with its specious doctrine of "separate but equal." Segregation in public education was finally declared unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954, yet today, more than half a century later, American public schools continue to be characterized by *de facto* racial segregation, as well as by profound disparities in school quality and student achievement.

As the steering committee noted in its report, the city of Providence provides a limpid illustration of the problem. At the time the report was issued, forty-eight of the city's forty-nine schools failed to meet federally-mandated minimum standards for academic achievement, including the one, Hope High School, that sits on the edge of the Brown campus. One of the most obvious and meaningful ways for Brown to take responsibility for its past is by dedicating its resources in a substantial and sustained way to alleviating this crisis. The committee offered several specific recommendations about how to do so, including summer study programs for school children, professional development opportunities for local teachers, curricular support, administrative collaborations, incentives for Brown faculty and students to work with public schools, support for Brown's new Urban Education Policy Program, and enhanced funding for the Master of Arts in Teaching Program, including full tuition remission for students who commit to working in local public schools. Virtually all of these recommendations, I am pleased to report, have been endorsed by President Simmons and the Brown Corporation. Indeed, President Simmons went beyond our recommendations, announcing the creation of a

"Trust Fund for the Children of Providence," to be raised and maintained in perpetuity as part of the Brown endowment and used to fund programs to enrich the education of local school children.

I am sometimes asked to assess the significance of what we tried to do at Brown. I wish I had an answer. I am certainly not naïve enough to believe that the programs we have launched are sufficient to correct the inequities in American public education or to redress the other profound legacies that slavery has bequeathed to our nation. But I do not think that our work was trivial, either. Perhaps it is just an occupational hazard of being an historian, but I happen to believe that history matters, that the way in which we tell the story of our past shapes the matrix of political possibility in the present. To follow the *Sally* on her voyage to perdition, to plumb the conflict between John and Moses Brown, to ponder the relationship between children skating on Esek Hopkins Pond and the nameless African woman who hanged herself between decks of his ship: such reflection challenges our understanding of our nation's history. It also invites us to think in fresh ways about our own time, about the moral and political choices that define our lives, about what generations to come might say about us. When we re-imagine America's past, we take an important first step toward re-imagining its future.

Thank you very much.

James T. Campbell is associate professor of American Civilization, Africana Studies, and History at Brown University. His research focuses on African American history and the wider history of the Black Atlantic. He is the author of two books, *Songs of Zion: The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States and South Africa,* and the recently published *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005,* which won the Mark Lynton History Prize and was a finalist for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in History. He is also co-editor of an anthology, *Race, Nation, and Empire in American History*. Campbell has received numerous fellowships and awards, including the Carl Sandburg Literary Prize for Non-fiction and the Organization of American Historians' Frederick Jackson Turner Prize. Before coming to Brown, he taught at Northwestern University and at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. From 2003-2006, Campbell served as chair of Brown University's Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice.

End Notes

[1] I wish to thank Jan Cohen-Cruz and other officers of Imagining America for the invitation to deliver this address. I also wish to acknowledge and to thank my colleagues on the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice for their extraordinary energy, acumen, and generosity. This talk is adapted from the committee's collaboratively written final report, published in 2006 and available online at *www.brown.edu/slaveryjustice*. The report includes a full scholarly apparatus, including references to specific documents (many of which are displayed on the committee's website) and suggestions for further reading.

[2] The President's charge can be found, along with other materials detailing the committee's assignment and activities, on the committee's website.

[3] The committee's website includes video excerpts of sponsored events, as well as information about the Choices curriculum.

[4] For a full reconstruction of the *Sally's* voyage, including all surviving documentary records, see the steering committee's website. Special thanks to Brown's Scholarly Technology Group and Center for Digital Initiatives for building the website, and to the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University and the Rhode Island Historical Society for permission to display documents from their collections. All documents featured in this pamphlet are from the Brown Family Business Papers in the John Carter Brown Library and appear with the library's gracious permission.

[5] The classic work on the Rhode Island slave trade is Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade 1700-1807* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981).

[6] "Remonstrance of the Colony of Rhode Island to the Board of Trade, 1764," in Elizabeth Donnan (ed.), *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America, Volume III: New England and the Middle Colonies* (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1932), pp. 203-205.

[7] Stephen Hopkins, *The Rights of Colonies Examined* (Providence: The Rhode Island Bicentennial Foundation, 1974, orig. pub. 1764).

[8] Moses Brown to Clark and Nightingale, August 26, 1783, Rhode Island Historical Society, Moses Brown Papers, MSS 313, Box 3c/f63.

[9] Rachel Chernos Lin, "The Rhode Island Slave Traders: Butchers, Bakers and Candlestick Makers," *Slavery and Abolition* 23,3 (2002), pp. 21-38.

[10] Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007).

[11] Hopkins's explanation is recounted in a circular letter that the Browns sent out to ship captains in their employ on November 15, 1765; a copy is in the Brown Papers at the John Carter Brown Library, Box 536/f3.

[12] Alex Millock to Nicholas Brown and Co., November 25, 1765, Brown Papers, Box 674/f3.

[13] John Brown to Moses Brown, November 27, 1786, Moses Brown Papers, Box 4c/f84.

[14] For a sampling of the debate, see *Providence Gazette and Country Journal,* February 14, 1789, February 21, 1789, and March 14, 1789; and *United States Chronicle,* February 26, 1789, February 28, 1789, and March 26, 1789.

[15] James Tallmadge, "An oration upon the infringement of the rights of man, to be delivered at the commencement of Rhode Island College, September 5th, 1798," Brown University Archives, Collection of Student Essays, MS-1N-1.

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"What happens if we see our past whole?

How might we take full ownership of our history, not only of the aspects that are gracious and honorable but also of those that are grievous and horrifying? What responsibilities, if any, rest upon us in the present as inheritors of this mixed legacy? Brown's **Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice** represents one institution's attempt to answer this question."

In this essay, originally given as the keynote address for Imagining America's 2007 conference, **James Campbell** examines the university's historical implication in slavery and injustice. Campbell details the reliance on the slave trade of both the Brown family, for whom the university is named, and of the entire Providence business community. Slave ships departing from that port required the services of riggers, caulkers, ironwrights, distillers, butchers, bakers, candlestick makers, apothecaries, surgeons, and more. In his description of the preparations for the middle passage, Campbell draws scrupulously on historical documents to narrate the suffering, deaths, and insurrections on board one particular voyage of the *Sally,* in 1764-65, commissioned by the Brown family.

As Campbell writes, "There are lots of universities whose histories and fortunes are entangled with slavery and the transatlantic slave trade—given the economic centrality of the institution and the trade in the history of the Atlantic World, it is hard to imagine any institutions of that vintage that are not so entangled—but rarely is the relationship revealed so dramatically." By applying the scholarly tools of the academic trade to an encounter with Brown University's own history and contemplating the subsequent responsibilities such history entails in the present, Campbell, on behalf of the entire Committee, invites all of us to hold our institutions accountable to their pasts.

James T. Campbell is Professor of American Civilization, Africana Studies, and History at Brown University. His research focuses on African American history and the wider history of the Black Atlantic. His most recent book, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787-2005,* won the Mark Lynton History Prize and was a finalist for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in History. From 2003-2006, Campbell served as chair of Brown University's Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice.