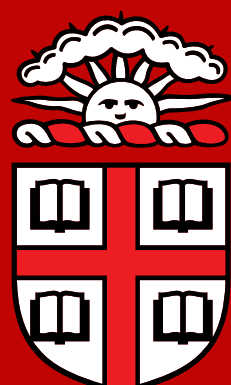
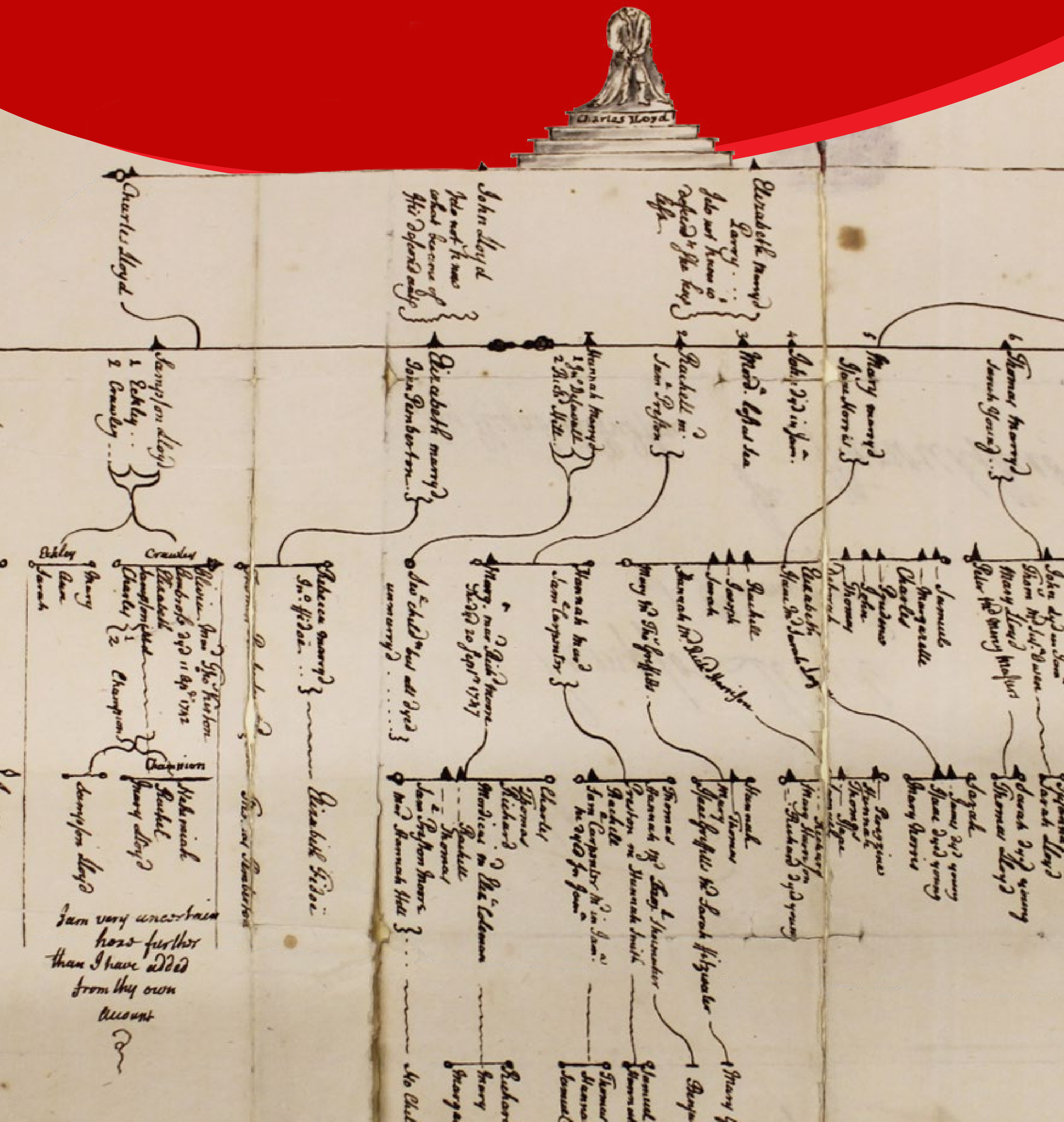


HISTORY

Brown University Department of History
Volume 39 Spring 2025

MATTERS



BROWN
Department of History

History Matters

Brown University Department of History / Volume 39 / Spring 2025

Table of Contents

A Word from the Chair 5

Recent Faculty Books..... 7

Exploration 9

Centering Black Women in the History of Human Rights |
Keisha N. Blain 9

The Two-Way Passage between Data Science and History |
Holly Case..... 11

Faculty Activities 13

Undergraduate Program 23

Reflections from the Director of Undergraduate Studies 23

Revival of the Brown Journal of History 25

Undergraduate Research Spotlight: Gabriel Ritter '25 .. 27

Award Recipients 28

Honors Recipients 29

Graduate Program 31

Reflections from the Director of Graduate Studies 31

Graduate Research Spotlight: Ola Morehead..... 32

Doctor of Philosophy, 2024-25..... 33

Master of Arts, 2024-25 33

Brown-HBCU History Collaboration Grants 34



Follow us on [Bluesky](#) (@brownhist.bsky.social), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) (@history_at_brown) and [LinkedIn](#)



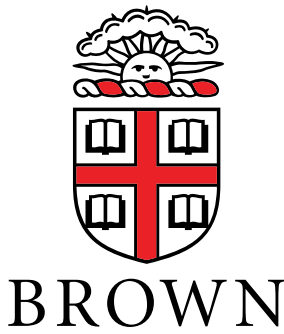
79 Brown Street
Providence, RI 02912

© 2025 Brown University

MAKE A GIFT TODAY!

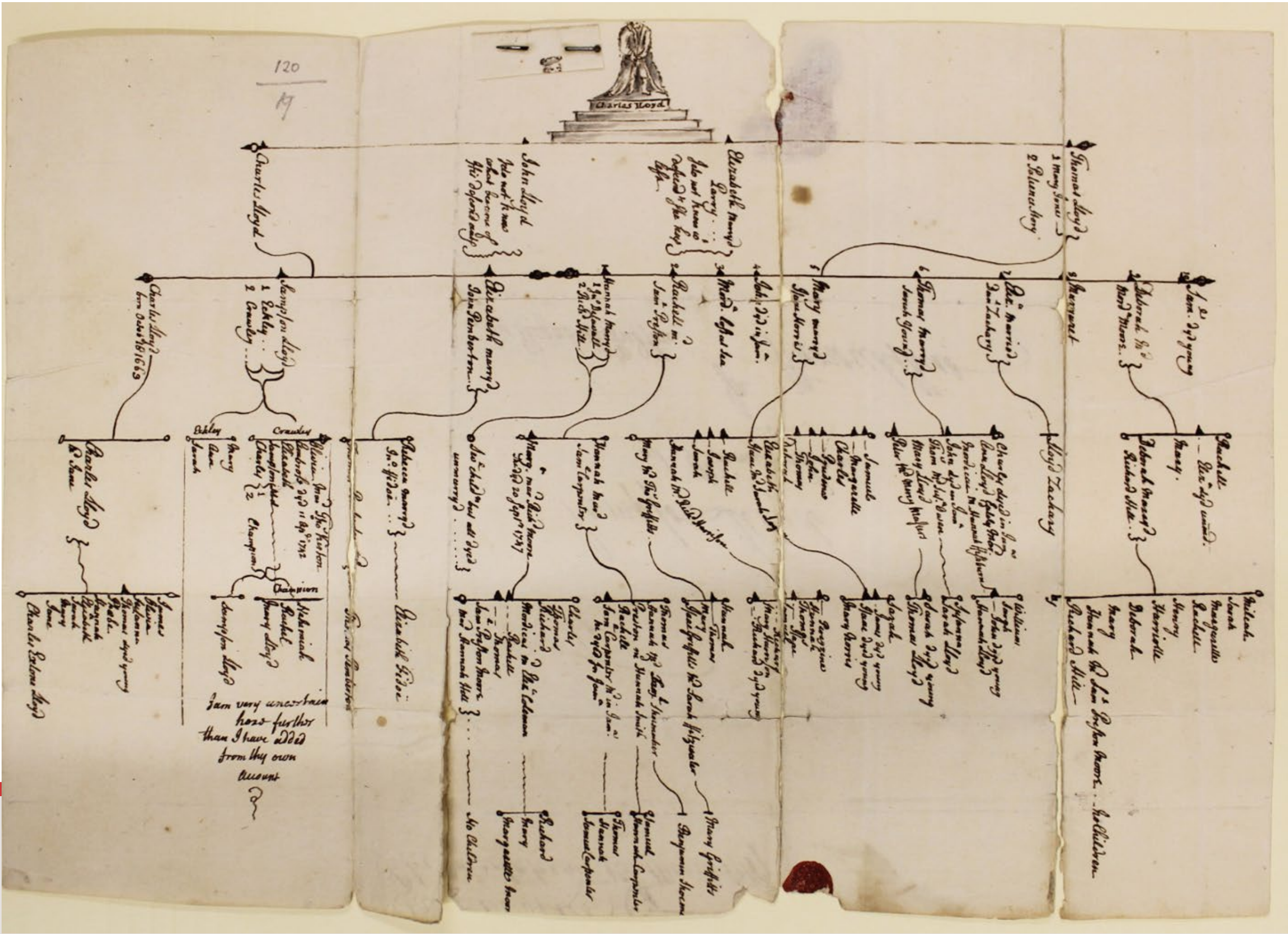
The department is happy to receive gifts in any amount to support undergraduate and graduate research. Please address any mailed checks to the Cashier’s Office at Brown University (69 Brown St., 2nd Floor). Contact ethan_pollock@brown.edu with any questions. Small amounts can add up and really make a big difference.

Thank you.



BROWN

“The Head of the Family.” This detail is from a family tree created by Isaac Norris of Philadelphia c 1747. Depicting his great-grandfather Charles Lloyd of Dolobran in Wales as the progenitor of a family of Quakers around the British Atlantic world, Norris sent it to cousins in Britain. At the Library of the Society of Friends, London.



About the Cover Image

Karin Wulf

Beatrice and Julio Mario Santo Domingo Director and Librarian,
John Carter Brown Library; Professor of History

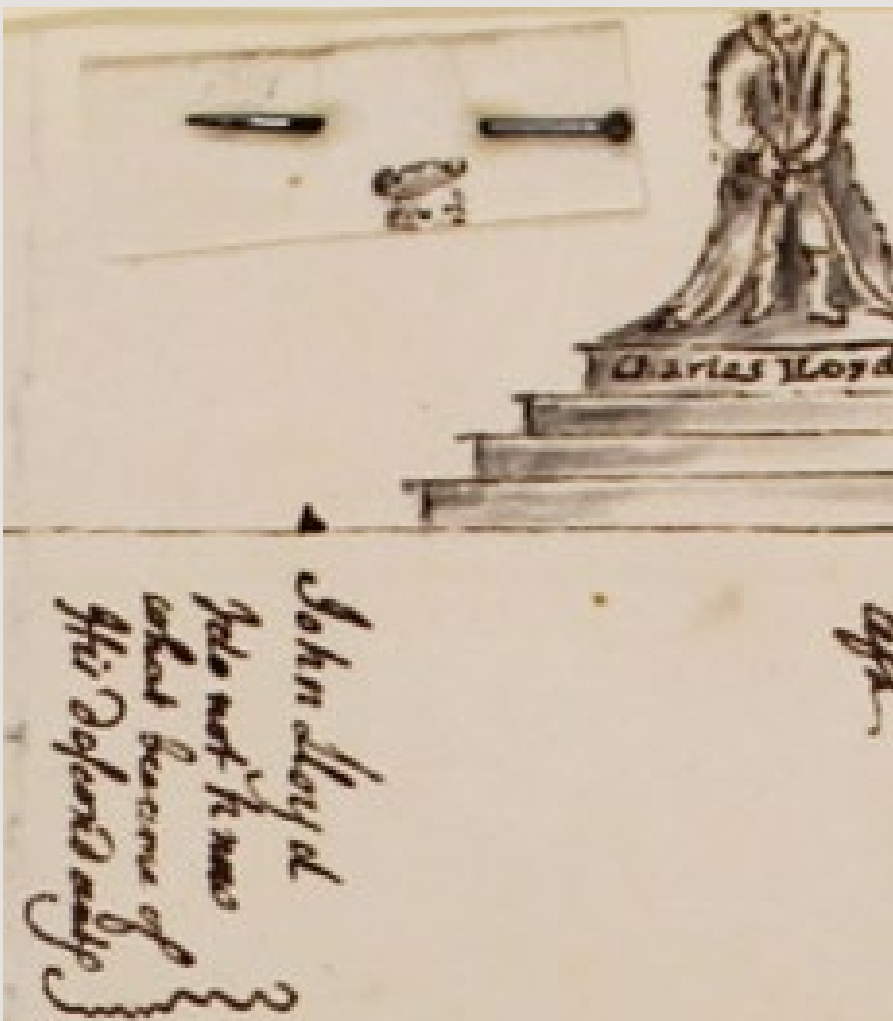
Their patriarch Charles Lloyd’s head, penned in iron gall ink and then after much folding and refolding pinned onto the page of this thick rag linen paper, represented so much to his transatlantic family. Quakers who had suffered incarceration for their faith, the two principal branches of the family were divided across the ocean in the late 17th century. The family of the eldest son, also Charles Lloyd, stayed in Wales and England; another son, Thomas Lloyd, took his family to William Penn’s newly established colony of Pennsylvania. But over generations their descendants stayed in close touch through letters and visits, always exchanging family information — including genealogy charts like this one — that rooted them to a common ancestor and, in their regular telling, their common identity as early and stalwart Quakers.

In my new book, *Lineage: Genealogy and the Power of Connection in Early America*, which will be published by Oxford University Press, I show how foundational genealogy was both

as a way of thinking and a practice in British America. Central to legal, governmental and religious ideas and structures, genealogy was a requisite feature that reached into the lives of the European settler population, like the Lloyd descendants, but also of African and African descended and Indigenous people.

This 18th-century document seems to reflect what we already think about genealogy. It was a product of elite circumstances; Isaac Norris II, a powerful and wealthy political leader in Pennsylvania, created and sent it across the ocean to his well-established Quaker kin. It looks like the work of a family’s private, leisured interests. And we might dismiss such objects, as historians have long done, as of merely antiquarian interest.

But objects like this one also did much more than confirm a transatlantic Quaker family’s origin story in a patriarchal head, pinned to the page. They help us to see genealogy less as a hobby of individuals and their families and more as a complex phenomenon that drew on deep cultural ideas about authority, and that helped to wield power across their world. Genealogy was then and remains of central interest to the state and other powerful institutions; collecting and deploying information about people and their familial connections was not only, as it was for the Lloyds, a way to facilitate economic and social networks, but it was also the central mechanism for hereditary slavery and a central pillar of Indigenous land dispossession through British American laws of property and inheritance.



Few of the materials in *Lineage* look like this one. Research across the 18th century and across British America has taken me into tiny local historical societies as well as into well-established collections to recover family histories in the myriad situations and genres in which they were crafted. Genealogies unfolded in court cases as poor families were assigned as the responsibility of their “home” local governments, as enslaved families asserted their freedom, and as descendants wrestled for the right to even the most modest property of immediate or extended kin. Family histories as texts were tucked into account books, almanacs or tiny folded bits of spare paper. They were sometimes kept in Bibles. They were embodied in the meaningful objects people passed from one to another. And, of course, they were created by descendancy itself: the cycles of birth and death provoked both official and intimate acts of memory and recording.

Genealogy is not a universal historical phenomenon. Though most cultures have created systems for defining and recording family connections, they are quite historically specific. The one I describe for British America was particular to its specifically patriarchal law, government and religion. What made genealogy so potent then, however, and is its hallmark still, is its twin capacity for deep meaning-making and as an instrument of power. Both of those capacities can be elicited and wielded by the people directly concerned and by institutions observing them.

A Word from the Chair

Ethan Pollock

Chair, Department of History

Amidst all the pressure on universities this year, it is a pleasure and relief to turn my attention to the core of our work — producing historical knowledge and sharing that knowledge with others through our writing, teaching and engagement with our communities. Measured in those terms, this was a banner year for the department. Our faculty produced seven monographs and two edited volumes and co-authored two additional books, covering topics from slavery, economics, and the American Civil War, to earthquakes in Japan; from third-century South China to educational inequality in America, the Black freedom struggle, and the politics of understanding the Cuban Revolution. (See p.7 for a full list of our recent books.) Add in all the articles, talks, podcasts and posts our faculty have produced and you'll begin to get a sense of the vitality and range of our intellectual community. I hope some of this comes through in the pages that follow.

This year our department was further enriched by the arrival of one new faculty member, Aparajita Majumdar, who came to us from Cornell, where she received her Ph.D. in history. Majumdar works on environmental history and indigenous knowledge in South Asia. She was hired jointly with the Institute at Brown for Environment and Society (IBES) — and serves as a wonderful example of the productive ways the department works with other units on campus. The department also welcomed this year our first two departmental postdocs: Yewong Dongchung, a cultural historian of early modern Tibet and China; and Ellis Garey, an intellectual and social historian of labor and anti-colonialism in the modern Middle East. Funding for these postdocs came in part from generous donations from an alumna who created the Abbott Gleason Fund in her will as a testament to Gleason, her history teacher and mentor at Brown.

Our work was further enriched by the presence of other postdoctoral fellows. We welcomed Tarisa Little, a Mellon Foundation postdoc who is also affiliated with the Cogut Institute for the Humanities and the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative. Little works on indigenous knowledge in the context of Western-style schooling. We also are hosting two



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

prestigious Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellows: Amanda Valdés Sánchez, from Spain, who works on the politics of devotional culture in early modern Castille; and Teresa Bernardi, from Italy, who works on female mobility and migration in the early modern Adriatic. Finally, we have taken advantage of the Gleason Fund to financially support scholars and students from Brown and historically Black colleges and universities who are working together on joint research projects. Together the energy and ideas that our postdocs and collaborators bring to our department help to make us a more vibrant and innovative place to think and work.

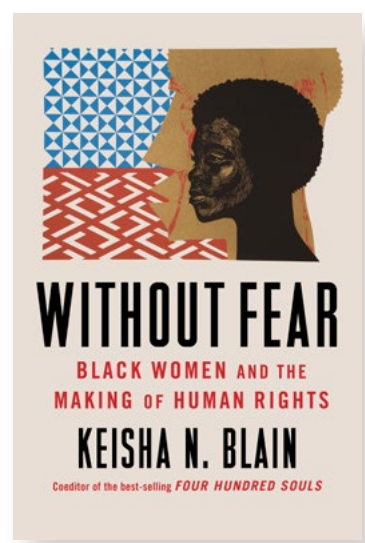
If you ever come to Brown, please stop by the History Department to say hello and learn first-hand about our work. While you are here you may notice a large wooden table and wooden benches on the ground floor of Sharpe House. These were made from the wood of an old beech tree that used to stand majestically between Sharpe House and Peter Green House and was felled to make room for the new Performing Arts Center. We were sad to see the tree come down and, eager to repurpose at least some of its wood, we commissioned the furniture. The table stands in communal space, overlooking the McLoughlin Terrace, named for a renowned scholar (13 books!) and teacher from our department. The tree is gone. Professor McLoughlin is gone. The table and chairs remain as does the legacy of our predecessors whose lessons live in their students and with those who read their books or articles. I wax a bit sentimental, I know. I do so because I both recognize the struggles ahead and seek comfort in the tremendous scholarship we produce and the care we show for our community. And, as usual, I’m pleased to share a bit of what we are up to with all of you, the extended community of people concerned with the Brown History Department.



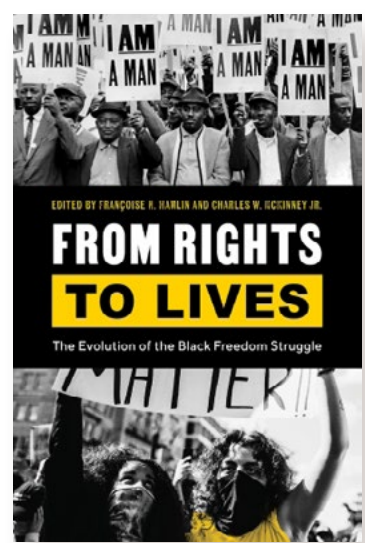
[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Recent Faculty Books

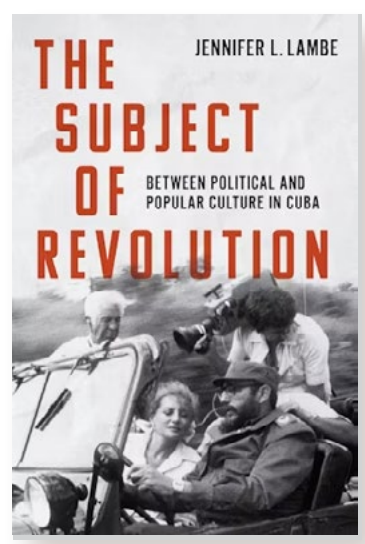
New Books



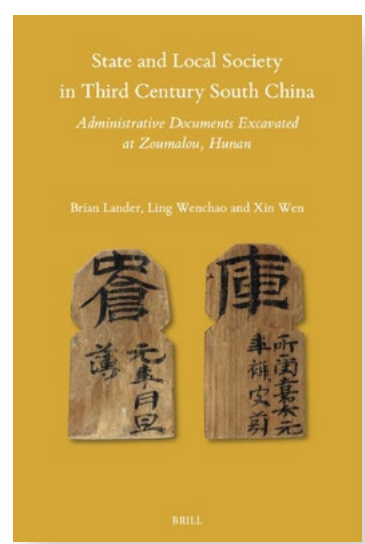
Keisha N. Blain
Without Fear: Black Women and the Making of Human Rights
W.W. Norton (September 2025)



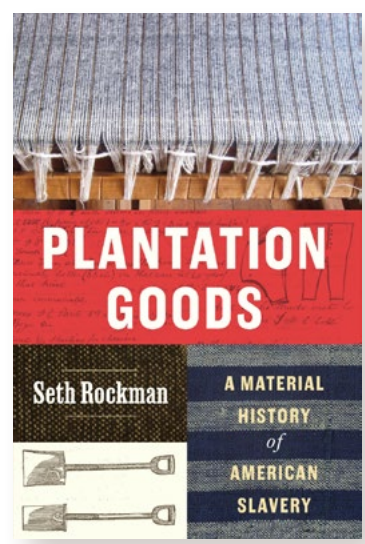
Françoise Hamlin
From Rights To Lives: The Evolution of the Black Freedom Struggle
Vanderbilt University Press (March 2024)



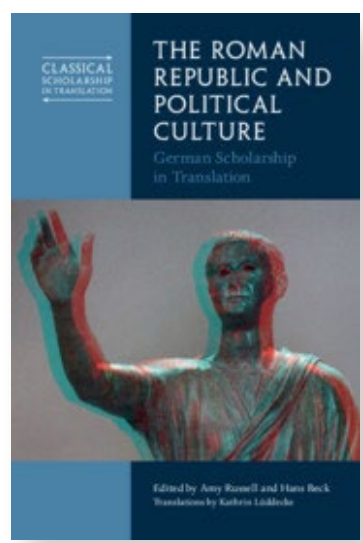
Jennifer Lambe
The Subject of Revolution: Between Political and Popular Culture in Cuba
University of North Carolina Press (August 2024)



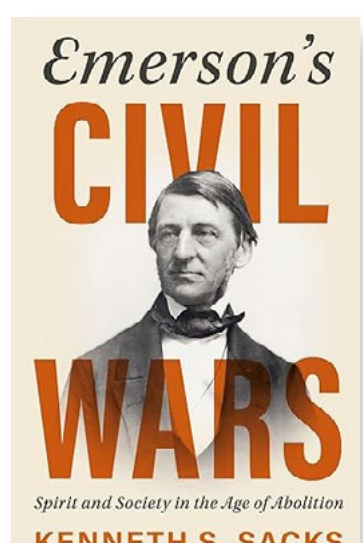
Brian Lander
State and Local Society in Third Century South China: Administrative Documents Excavated at Zoumalou, Hunan
Brill (March 2024)



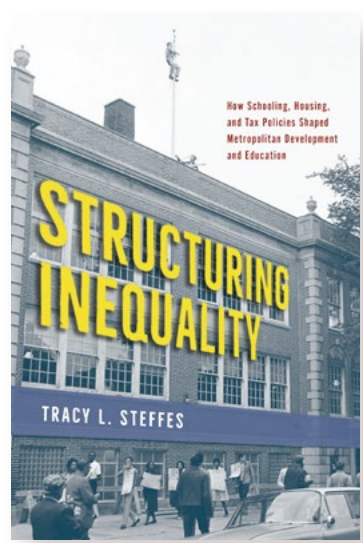
Seth Rockman
Plantation Goods: A Material History of American Slavery
University of Chicago Press (November 2024)



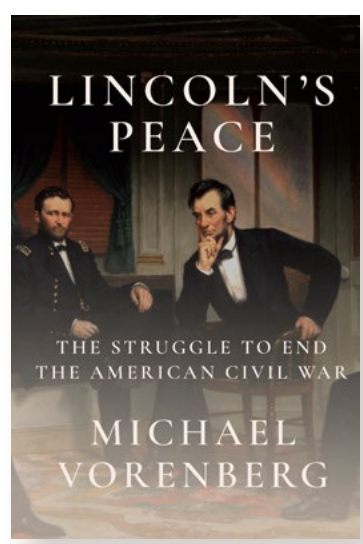
Amy Russell
The Roman Republic and Political Culture: German Scholarship in Translation
Cambridge University Press (January 2025)



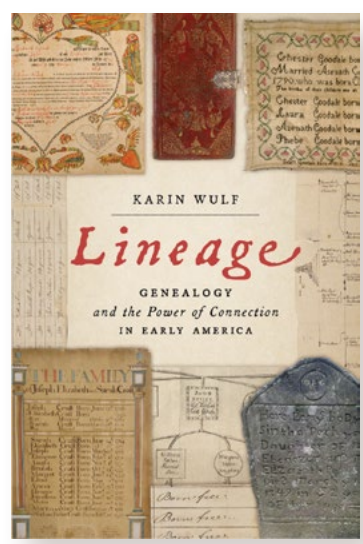
Kenneth Sacks
Emerson's Civil Wars: Spirit and Society in the Age of Abolition
Cambridge University Press (November 2024)



Tracy Steffes
Structuring Inequality: How Schooling, Housing, and Tax Policies Shaped Metropolitan Development and Education
University of Chicago Press (April 2024)



Michael Vorenberg
Lincoln's Peace: The Struggle to End the American Civil War
Alfred A. Knopf (March 2025)

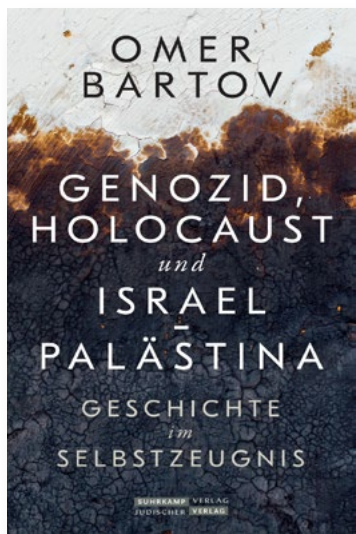


Karin Wulf
Lineage: Genealogy and the Power of Connection in Early America
Oxford University Press (July 2025)



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

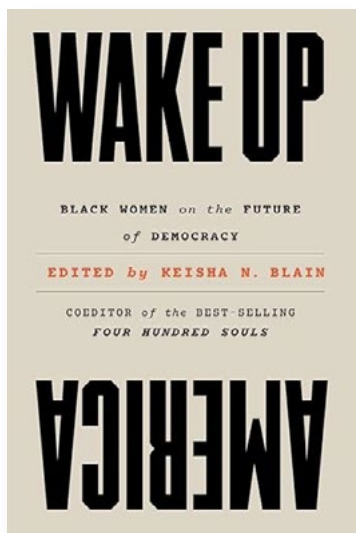
Reprints, Paperback Editions & Translations



Omer Bartov
Genozid, Holocaust und Israel-Palästina Geschichte im Selbstzeugnis
Suhrkamp (German translation, April 2025)



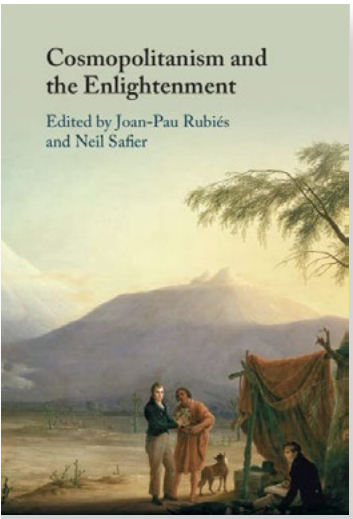
Tim Harris
复辟：查理二世和他的王国 (Fùbì: Chárlǐ èr shì hé tā de wángguó)
Folio (Beijing) Culture &Media Co. Ltd (Chinese translation, April 2024)



Keisha N. Blain
Wake Up America: Black Women on the Future of Democracy
W.W. Norton (Paperback, September 2025)



革命：王朝的危机与变革 (Gémìng: Wángcháo de wéijī yǔ biàngé)
Folio (Beijing) Culture & Media Co. Ltd (Chinese translation, May 2024)



Neil Safier
Cosmopolitanism and the Enlightenment
Cambridge University Press (Paperback, February 2025)



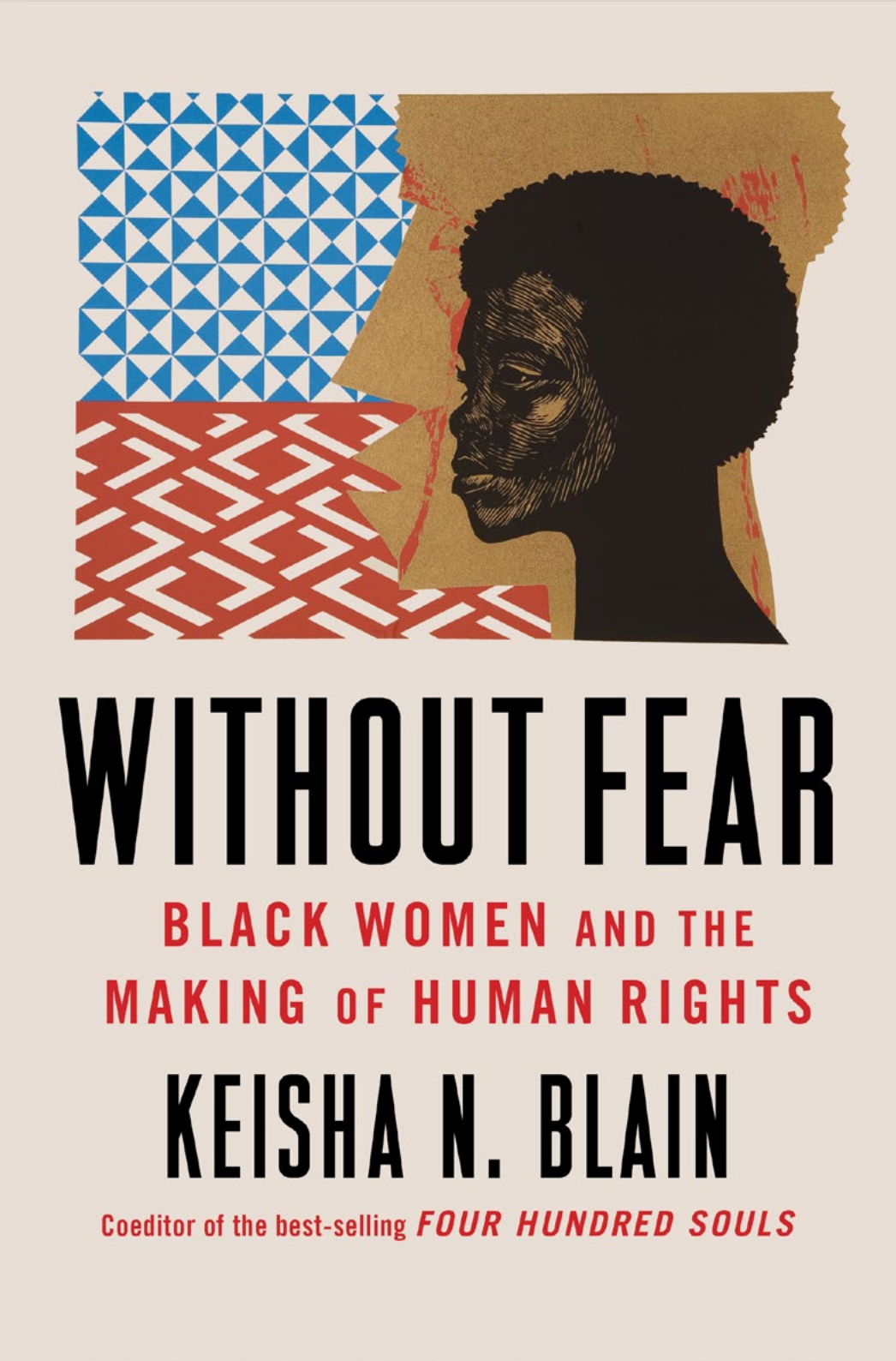
[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Exploration

Centering Black Women in the History of Human Rights

Keisha N. Blain

Professor of History



My new book, *Without Fear: Black Women and the Making of Human Rights* (W.W. Norton, 2025), offers a sweeping history of human rights told through the ideas and experiences of Black women in the United States.

Although I had been dabbling with the idea for quite some time, I started writing the book in earnest in 2020 — shortly after I finished my biography of Fannie Lou Hamer. A year-long fellowship at Harvard’s Carr Center for Human Rights Policy helped to catapult the project. My conversations with faculty and staff as well as other fellows impressed upon me the need for a book that would articulate how Black women in the U.S. conceptualized human rights and how they worked to advance it over the course of 200 years.

Much of our understanding of the history of human rights has been shaped through a focus on diplomatic relations, international laws, nation-states and nongovernmental organizations. My book offers a different perspective, capturing human rights thinking and activism from the ground up, with mostly excluded actors at the center of the narrative. By moving across the local, national and global, the book depicts the dynamic interplay of ordinary individuals (who were often invisible) with the public officials (mostly white and male) who have dominated the discourse on human rights.

Without Fear highlights the lives and experiences of a diverse cast — from well-known Black women, such as Ida B. Wells, Madam C.J. Walker and Lena Horne, to those who are still less known, including Pearl Sherrod, Aretha McKinley, Marguerite Cartwright and Kadi Diallo.



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

EXPLORATION

My goal is to illuminate how a historically marginalized group effectively made human rights theirs — moving beyond an esoteric concept to an active, organizing principle that fueled local, national and global activism.

Drawing on a wealth of sources — such as speeches, writings, archival material, oral histories and historical newspapers — my book pulls into focus the life stories and ideas of both historical and contemporary figures, revealing how they pioneered a human rights agenda aimed at dismantling systems of oppression.

The women who take center stage in this book — some eminent and notable and others who worked in relative obscurity for all their lives — labored to redefine the rights and dignity of all people. And they did so, in the words of African American educator Mary McLeod Bethune, “without fear and hesitancy.”



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

The Two-Way Passage between Data Science and History

Holly Case

Professor of History



When the director of Brown’s Data Science Institute (DSI) approached me a little over two years ago to become one of its co-deputy directors, she explained why she felt a historian should be involved. Everyone does data science, she said, some people just don’t know it yet.

The statement sounded familiar, echoing Carl Becker’s famous 1931 presidential address to the American Historical Association, “[Everyman His Own Historian](#).” Becker defined history as “the memory of things said and done,” which makes “Everyman” a historian insofar as “he has performed all the essential operations involved in historical research.” So I took the job to convince my colleagues at the DSI that everyone does history; some people just don’t know it yet.

This spring, I have been team teaching a course on the History of Artificial Intelligence together with Suresh Venkatasubramanian, a computer scientist and current interim director of the DSI. At first, he wondered repeatedly and incredulously why so many of the readings on the syllabus were “old,” but after the halfway point, he became fascinated by what we read, started drawing out connections, and bubbled with thoughts about it.

Since I was reciprocally inspired by Suresh’s interest in AI governance issues, I organized an event on “Data in the Trump/DOGE Era” in April. The event featured panelists from five

EXPLORATION

disciplines (economics, population studies, computer science, international and public affairs, and epidemiology) and was hosted by the Cogut Institute for the Humanities and moderated by a historian. The convergence of disciplinary interests on the event — and the overflow attendance — was indicative of the outsize importance data has assumed in our lives and work.

Observing how data collected by previous U.S. administrations is being discontinued, deleted or repurposed under the current one, my colleagues at the DSI have begun taking a keener interest in how and why data has been gathered and used in the past. As part of a reading group on “Politics of Scale and Universality in Technology” run by a computer scientist, Harini Suresh, I recently read a text on the history of Hull House in Chicago, an early experiment in data gathering and education. I was the only historian in the room; the others were all students in computer science.

Meanwhile, many of us in history are beginning to think more deliberately about data as a historical phenomenon. In a reading group on Data Sovereignty and Democratic Futures for AI in the Global South run by history graduate student Kate Creasey, we discussed a text in which the authors stressed both the benefits of data collection as well as past and potential future harms. My own training as a historian of modern Eastern Europe has made me acutely aware of this ambivalent character of data collection and use. Census and other official data have often lent visibility and recognition and made state services available to many people, but have also been wielded by states — including the Soviet Union under Stalin and Nazi Germany and its European allies — to target particular groups for persecution, internment, even extermination.

One of our graduate students in history, Giorgi Tsintsadze, plans to explore what became of the data gathered by the Tsarist Russian and Soviet states following their collapse. While working for an environmental NGO in Tbilisi, Georgia, prior to coming to Brown, he had observed how “Regular sampling of soil had stopped sometime in the mid 1980s, making it impossible to determine the timing, as well as the responsibility for, metallic pollution; hydrometeorological stations were taken apart and sold in the chaos of the 1990s, producing decades-long gaps in discharge and water level data that now limited the reliability of climate change-related projections; maps of underground shafts and mines had disappeared without a trace.”

Though I don’t think my tenure as deputy director of the DSI has made me into a data scientist or them into historians, we have undeniably come to appreciate how much we have to learn from one another. I’m grateful to my colleagues at the DSI for giving me a view into their world and a part in shaping it, but also for lending a different shape to some of my own thinking about history.



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Faculty Activities

Tiraana Bains



Tiraana Bains’s second year at Brown was marked by various firsts, including teaching a graduate seminar for the first time and a first brush with departmental administration thanks to her time on one of the department’s committees. Over the past year, she has continued to work on her book manuscript on the making of a British imperial state in South Asia and the Indian Ocean during the 18th century. This project — tentatively titled *Instituting Empire* — reflects her interest in locating South Asia in the global British Empire, including in relation to colonies in the Atlantic world. She shared some of her work-in-progress at conferences such as the American Society of Legal History annual meeting as well as the North American Conference on British Studies. She also had the opportunity to comment on a number of new books on campus and elsewhere. Her article on British imperialism in Sumatra was published in the *Journal of British Studies*, and her chapter on British and South Asian discourses of sovereignty in the 18th century appeared in an edited volume. Finally, she has enjoyed co-organizing the European History Workshop alongside Benjamin Hein as well as a series on “Covering Islam” with colleagues at the Cogut.

Omer Bartov



This past year, Omer Bartov’s book *Genocide, the Holocaust, and Israel-Palestine: First-Person History in Times of Crisis*, published originally in 2023, came out in Japanese and German translations. Additionally, *Tales from the Borderlands: Making and Unmaking the Galician Past*, published originally in 2022, came out in a Polish translation. A Hebrew translation is forthcoming later in 2025. Finally, the French translation of Bartov’s book *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz*, published originally in 2018, has been reissued with the prestigious Champs series at Flammarion. In terms of forthcoming work, in March 2025 Bartov submitted the manuscript of a new book, titled *Israel: What Went Wrong*, to the publisher Farrar, Straus and Giroux. The book is expected to come out by the end of 2025. He is now writing a second book for the same publisher, titled *The Broken Promise: A Personal Political History of Israel and Palestine*, with a publication date of late 2026 or early 2027.

In his role as holder of the Dean’s Chair in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, in April 2024 Bartov hosted a conference on “Iconographies of the Holocaust: Visual Representations and Migrating Materialities of War and Genocide Since 1945,” which gathered some 25 senior and junior scholars from around the world for two days of intensive discussions. The next conference, on “The Spatial Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Studies: Space, Place and Mapping,” took place in April 2025. He has begun discussions on a conference on “The Future of Holocaust and Genocide Studies after Gaza” scheduled for April 2026.

Throughout 2024 and the early months of 2025, Bartov was heavily engaged in public-facing media interventions, interviews and writing in the U.S., Europe, Turkey, China, Japan, India and Israel, writing for or speaking on such news outlets and newspapers as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, *The New Yorker*, *The Nation*, *Le Monde*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Der Spiegel*, *TAZ*, *Avvenire*, *El Mundo*, *El Pais*, CNN, MSNBC, Democracy Now, BBC, Deutsche Welle and TRT (Turkey). Revised versions of some of these essays are included in the forthcoming book *Israel: What Went Wrong?*

In Spring 2024, Bartov taught an undergraduate seminar on the Holocaust and the Nakba to a class of over 30 undergraduates. Despite the fraught atmosphere surrounding the events in Israel-Palestine, the course went very well and students from different backgrounds and persuasions interacted with each other in an open and constructive manner. In Fall 2024, Bartov taught a graduate seminar on Oppression and Resistance, which included two new graduate Ph.D. students in the history program, Vesta Burk and James Osorio, as well as second-year graduate student Jakob Lippert (all working with Bartov), a graduate student from Latin American studies and two advanced undergraduates who have taken many of his classes in the past. In Spring 2025, Bartov is teaching an undergraduate lecture class on Modern Genocide and Other Crimes Against Humanity to a class of almost 90 students.



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

FACULTY ACTIVITIES

Keisha N. Blain

During the 2024-25 academic year, Keisha N. Blain completed a new book, *Without Fear: Black Women and the Making of Human Rights*. It will be published by W.W. Norton on September 16. The paperback edition of her 2024 collection *Wake Up America: Black Women on the Future of Democracy* (W.W. Norton) will also be published on the same day. It features an updated introduction and a new epilogue. Blain received several awards and accolades during the academic year. Most recently, she was elected to the Society of American Historians. The society promotes literary distinction in the writing of American history and biography. Blain will be on a book tour during the next academic year, with planned events at the New York Historical Society, the National Civil Rights Museum, the Museum of African American History-Boston, the Museum of the City of New York and more.

Holly Case

This past year, Holly Case has thought a great deal about how historians register the shock of events as experienced by people of the past. There have been several formal and informal occasions to do so, both while presenting her writing on the subject at Princeton, Cornell, Yale and here at Brown, and also while interacting with students and colleagues from various disciplines in a handful of reading groups. This was the inaugural year for a three-year collaborative humanities lab Case is co-leading with a colleague in computer science and data science, Suresh Venkatasubramanian. The theme of the lab is Models-Scale-Context: AI and the Humanities, for which they have seeded 10 reading groups on various themes and hosted several talks and a workshop on models and are co-teaching a lecture course on History of AI. In her capacity as deputy director of the Data Science Institute, Case has also sought to raise awareness of recent data integrity, privacy, access and continuity concerns, including with an event on “Data in the Trump/DOGE Era” that she organized in early April. The event featured panelists from five disciplines (economics, climate science, computer science, international affairs and public health). Case very much enjoyed participating on a faculty panel on “Rurality in the Ivy,” which included students from rural areas attending Brown, Dartmouth and Harvard. Though this spring has been challenging in many respects, Case is deeply grateful for the inspiring intellectual and human communities of colleagues, students and staff that surround her at Brown. Their lively minds, dry humor and tireless care for the wider world we all inhabit constitute the strongest argument for the continued existence of universities more generally, and for this university in particular.

Caroline Castiglione

Caroline Castiglione gave two talks related to her research on the political thought of Moderata Fonte, “Writing Wrongs: Law Courts, Unreliable Relatives and the Life of Moderata Fonte (1555-92),” at the Renaissance Society of American (Chicago) and “Reading Moderata Fonte’s ‘The Worth of Women’ Across the Generational Divide(s)” for the conference New Perspectives on Moderta Fonte at University of St. Andrews in Scotland. She continued her research in archives of Venice and the Veneto region with a research award from the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation. She also advanced her project on the difficulty of commemorating women, co-presenting some of her findings with fellow historian Alessandra Franco, “The Afterlife of a Roman Princess: A Widow on Her Own in Rome and in the Hereafter,” for the Early Modern Rome Conference, in Rome.

Jonathan Conant



A pilgrim’s plaque along the Camino de Santiago, Galicia, Spain

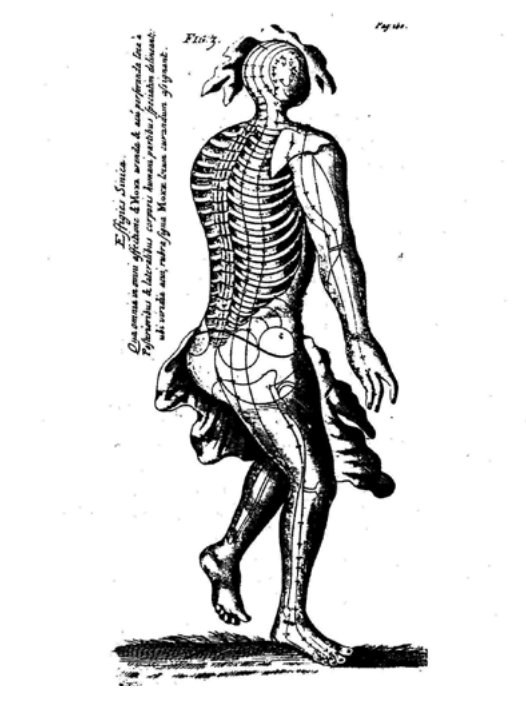
This year, Jonathan Conant’s research focused on three main projects. The first is a book, *Early Medieval Europe, 300–1100*, which will be the first volume of the Cambridge History of Europe series. Conant presented two chapters from that book, one on the late Roman world and another on the people Romans called “barbarians,” to different seminars here on campus in the fall. The second project is a paper on women and their management of property in northwest Africa, to which Conant is contributing a volume on the Vandal kingdom (ca. 429–534 CE). Conant was also delighted to deliver an early version of that paper at a colloquium at the Hay Library in December, held to celebrate


[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

FACULTY ACTIVITIES

the career of Bill Monroe, the longtime librarian for the Department of History, who retired from Brown last July. The third project is a paper looking at the understanding and attitudes that North Africans living along the Mediterranean coast had toward the Sahara, its ecologies and its inhabitants in late antiquity, which Conant delivered to the annual Spring Symposium in Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks, in Washington, D.C., in April 2025. After his sabbatical last year, it was a real treat to get to teach The Long Fall of the Roman Empire again in the fall, and to work with two wonderful thesis students all year. This year, Conant also served as director of the Program in Medieval Studies, and so team-taught that program’s class, The Body: Medieval Perspectives. Last summer, at the end of his sabbatical, Conant and his family walked one of the many Caminos de Santiago (see image).

Hal Cook



An image on acupuncture channels conveyed from 17th century Japan.

Hal is now teaching half-time — which he continues to enjoy — with full retirement coming in another year. His book manuscript is almost finished and is now under contract. It is on the subject of the first books in Europe, from the 17th century, on “the medicine of China,” which was sourced not from China itself but from Japan and Southeast Asia. Pulse medicine was already on the move. He has two other projects going, as well; published another article on Descartes’s philosophy; and is otherwise keeping busy with research and writing, reviewing books and working with several graduate students. Together with Professor Nummedal he co-hosted an October conference on campus, The Global History of Knowledge, organized by the European organization Scientiae. Thanks to a tip from Professor Fisher he also completed a course on navigating in coastal seas using old and new instrumentation.

Bathsheba Demuth



Left to right: Gwich’in Elder Stanley Njootli, UTRA student Elizabeth Duke-Moe, Bathsheba Demuth and UTRA student Ifadayo Engel-Halfkenny

Bathsheba Demuth had an amazing year working with the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative as faculty director, alongside an amazing group of staff and students. She also taught what might be her favorite class ever, HIST1820: Sovereignty and Ecology, which looked at the intersections between the environment and law through the history of the Yukon River over the past 200 years. The course grew out of research for her second book, an environmental history of the Yukon River watershed. In summer 2024, three Brown undergraduates joined her to conduct research in the north, working in Whitehorse archives and, along with Stanley Njootli, Demuth’s longtime collaborator, traveled hundreds of miles on the Yukon by boat. Between research trips and teaching, Demuth published in *Granta*, did radio pieces for CBC and Alaska Public Radio and adopted a third dog.

Linford Fisher



Fisher on the Great Wall of China

Linford Fisher enjoyed a full year of teaching, research and writing, despite a summer sailing injury that caused a significant setback. He taught classes on slavery and the digital humanities; a graduate readings course on Native American history (co-taught); and an introduction to public humanities (co-taught). He has enjoyed incorporating his research projects into the classroom, especially the tribal collaborative project [Stolen Relations: Recovering Stories of Indigenous Enslavement in the Americas](#), which will finally go live in early May 2025. Fisher also gave talks at various conferences and universities, including a jointly presented keynote talk at the National Humanities Conference. One of the highlights of the year was a trip to China to teach at a summer institute. He also submitted his book manuscript, *Stealing America: The Hidden Story of Indigenous Slavery in American History* (Liveright / W.W. Norton), which will come out in Spring 2026.

[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

FACULTY ACTIVITIES

Christopher Grasso



Christopher Grasso spent the past academic year focused on an old and a new course and an old and a new book project. The old course was Early American Lives, examining historical biography and grounded in archives at the Hay and JCB libraries. The old book was his *Teacher, Preacher, Soldier, Spy: The Civil Wars of John R. Kelso* (Oxford University Press, 2021): the indie effort to turn this into a film, sadly, stalled (though there still may be hope). The new book project is *The Chisolm Massacre: Reconstruction and the Politics of Violence*, to be published by Brown University Digital Publications and the University of Virginia Press. That project connects to the new course on Reconstruction and the Politics of Violence. Grasso, a carpetbagger interloping on new historiographical terrain, continues to find chilling parallels between the Reconstruction era and our current fraught political moment. Much of the rest of his time was spent tending to Margaret (see photo).

Françoise Hamlin

Françoise Hamlin is the director of graduate studies in the Department of Africana Studies and continues to advise undergraduates and graduate students in two departments, and co-chair the Faculty of Color Network that she co-founded in 2015. She appeared in the University’s Instagram series #BrownCurious in May to talk about the history of Juneteenth. Beyond Brown, she is the co-editor of Boundless South, a book series at the University of North Carolina Press, and she serves as the editor-in-chief of the new journal, *The Journal of Black Military Studies*. Hamlin also co-chairs the Southern Association for Women Historians’ Program Committee to plan the 2025 Triennial Conference, and is an advisory board member for the Gary L. McDowell Institute, Jepson School of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond. In March 2024 she published a co-edited volume, *From Rights To Lives: The Evolution of the Black Freedom Struggle*, with Vanderbilt University Press under their Black Lives and Liberation Series. In November it was named as one of the top books in Black studies.

Tim Harris

Tim Harris spent the winter and summer breaks in England working on his forthcoming book with Oxford University Press on the British revolutions of the 17th century and three articles: one concerning a slave-trader and kidnapper in 1680s England; another about a riot and firearms case in south Devon in 1670; and a third on Ireland’s role in the British empire under the later Stuarts. He is editing a collection of essays on early modern Ireland and the wider world (deriving from a conference at the Huntington Library) and is engaged in a collaborative project on Restoration England for Oxford University Press with professors Kate Loveman (University of Leicester) and Stephen Taylor (Durham University). He attended the Bangor (Wales) Conference on the Restoration last July and the North American Conference on British Studies in Denver in November. His books *Restoration* and *Revolution* were published in simplified Chinese in 2024 by Folio (Beijing) Culture & Media Co. Ltd. He continues to edit the book series Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Social History for Boydell Press, which has now published 56 titles, and serves as president of the American Friends of the Institute of Historical Research, London. In August he made a couple of guest appearances with his daughter’s rock band The Duke Boxers in Auvergne, France.

Nancy Jacobs



Nick Byaba and Nancy Jacobs in Bigodi, Uganda

This year brought Nancy Jacobs closer to finishing her next book, *The Global Grey Parrot* (under contract with the University of Washington Press). In summer, she went to Uganda, Ghana and Liberia to research the conservation efforts that will feature in its final chapter. She also gave two invited lectures on animal history, at “The Past, Present and Future of Animal History” conference at the Koç University Research Center for Anatolian Civilization (ANAMED) in Istanbul in May, and “Parrot Terristories: Rethinking More-than-Human History,



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

FACULTY ACTIVITIES

Conservation, Care and Colonial Legacies,” at the Tieranatomisches Theater in Berlin in December. Jacobs published a public-facing article summarizing a project that distracted her in the late 2010s — the story of Washington Okumu, a Kenyan who mediated an agreement that rescued South Africa’s first democratic elections from probable disaster. [Appearing on The Conversation](#), a website that “democratizes knowledge by helping academic experts to write for the public,” the article’s 25,000 views far surpass the reach of anything Jacobs has ever written.

Besides writing and teaching, Jacobs continued with her second year in the presidency of the American Society for Environmental History (ASEH). In the past two years, the society surpassed its fundraising target by receiving \$160,000, all contributed from generous members. The funds will go to travel grants and fellowships intended to make the field of environmental history more accessible and more inclusive. As ASEH president, Jacobs also spearheaded efforts to increase connections between environmental historians. ASEH now has two remote programs that will supplement its yearly meeting — ASEH Connects, a series of remote conversation on professional, pedagogical and political issues, and ASEH Presents, a series of formal research presentations for those who cannot or choose not to attend the annual conference. Finally, with colleagues from southern New England, Jacobs founded a local environmental history workshop, the New England Workshop on Environmental History (NEW EH). As her ASEH presidency ends this spring, Jacobs exits the office with great appreciation for her generous and committed colleagues and satisfaction about having helped strengthen the community among them.

Jennifer Lambe

In the third year of her term as director of graduate studies, Jenny Lambe relished the opportunity to advise, teach and learn from the department’s outstanding doctoral students. She was also thrilled to work with new Student Affairs Manager Emily Greenberg, who has proven to be a tremendous addition to the History Department’s graduate student support team. This year also saw the publication of Lambe’s book *The Subject of Revolution: Between Political and Popular Culture in Cuba* (University of North Carolina Press, 2024).

Brian Lander



Brian Lander spent much of the year editing a sourcebook of newly translated texts from 3,000 years of China’s environmental history that will provide material for teaching. It has been fun to work on because it includes a wide variety of genres, including poetry, medicine, essays, cookbooks, science fiction and religious tracts. He contributed translations on fish farming and on early Chinese environmental thought. The highlight of his year was the summer spent doing research in Japan, whose environmental history has many similarities with that of China, and some fascinating differences. For example, after doing research on the history of deer in China, it was interesting to visit the famous tame deer of Nara, Japan (see image), which have been protected in part because of their association with Buddhism.

Steven Lubar



“Little Compton Connected: A Local Transportation History,” at the Little Compton Historical Society, was based on work by Brown and RISD students.

Steven Lubar submitted his manuscript on the history of tools to MIT Press. Tentatively titled *Hands On: Eighteen Tools that Shaped Our World*, it is based on several years of historical exploration of hand tools as a case study of technological knowledge and cultural understanding as well as what he learned from teaching hands-on courses about skills and boatbuilding in the Brown Design Workshop. He began work on his next book, a reflection on writing local history.

Lubar’s teaching continues to focus on museum work. Last year’s class on history curatorship resulted in a lovely exhibit at the Little Compton Historical



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

FACULTY ACTIVITIES

Society on local transportation history. This year, again working with a RISD course on exhibition design, students in the course (co-taught with Professor Linford Fisher and American studies Ph.D. student Allyson LaForge) will curate two exhibits, one at the Tomaquag Museum and one at the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice.

This is Lubar’s last faculty update. He’s retiring this year, after 21 years at Brown.

Aparajita Majumdar



Students from the ENVS 0722 course Multispecies Histories and Decolonial Thought work with collections at the Nature Lab at RISD.

This academic year has been immensely special because I started my journey at Brown as a new assistant professor. I am touched by the warmth and generosity of my colleagues in History and IBES, and by the intellectual liveliness of Brown’s students. As an international scholar, navigating a challenging political climate in the US, I deeply value this camaraderie on campus. In terms of research, I was able to write a new journal article titled ‘Earthly Rural’ (currently under review) that deals with colonial state-making and ‘opacity’ of nature-culture worlds in the rainiest place on earth—the Khasi hills in India-Bangladesh borderlands. I was also able to start working on my book manuscript tentatively titled, “Planting Recalcitrance: Nature, Knowledge, and Heritage in a South Asian Borderland.” In terms of teaching, I designed two new undergraduate courses for History and IBES dealing with South Asian environments, multispecies histories and decolonial thinking. My ENVS 0722 course titled, ‘Multispecies Histories and Decolonial Thought,’ (offered Spring 2025) encouraged students to think historically and collaboratively about the multispecies collections at RISD’s Nature Lab. Beyond research and teaching on campus, I delivered several invited talks and participated in round tables at Harvard University, Tufts University, Annual Conference of South Asia, and Annual Conference of Association of Asian Studies.

Elias Muhanna



Over the past year, Elias Muhanna has made progress toward completing a long-running book project about the history of the Arabic language. His research has led him into archives around the Middle East as well as to some less familiar sites, such as Qatari computational research institutes, Emirati cultural foundations and Saudi media conglomerates, with the goal of understanding the factors influencing the future development of the language. This year, Muhanna also assumed a new position as director of the Center for Middle East Studies at Brown, where he has sought to expand the programs available to support faculty and student research, to raise an endowment for the Center, and to oversee a busy event schedule. A regular attendee of the History Department’s Medieval and Early Modern History Seminar (MEMHS), Muhanna looks forward to offering his first graduate seminar in the department next year.

Rebecca Nedostup

At writing, no sector of education is free from the current tumult in the U.S., and Brown is no different. The relationship between the University and the Choices program, which Nedostup has been proud to work with during the past four years, is ending. For over three decades Choices has provided high-quality history and social science curricula to secondary educators and their students. Its unique selling point is that Choices staff write this material to reflect up-to-date scholarship, disseminating the ideas and words of faculty in the Department of History and beyond to an audience they typically would not reach on their own. Nedostup hopes that Choices crafts a new future for this important work. At this moment she also finds comfort in collaborative spaces at Brown, such as the Modern Asian History Working Group and the reading group on access, labor and equity in Digital Asian Studies. She also is learning a tremendous amount alongside student researchers Abby Berwick, Aimee Cheng, Renee Kuo, Izzy Wei, Zoe Yu, Gabi Yuan and Hank Zhou, and honors thesis writer Audrey Wijono. The coming year will be devoted to completing a long-gestating book on displaced persons during wartime and the communities they made.



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

FACULTY ACTIVITIES

Tara Nummedal



Zwinger Palace, Dresden, Saxony, Germany

This year, Tara Nummedal once again taught her course on Nature, Knowledge and Power in Early Modern Europe, in which she had the pleasure of introducing students to early modern printed books on the history of science in the Hay Library, many of which became the foundations for final research papers. She also continued to develop her current book project, *Familiar Bodies*, on embodied spirits in early modern Northern Europe, visiting an archive in Dresden, Germany, last summer and presenting her research in Berlin and at Brown. She also continued her position as the faculty director at the Center for Digital Scholarship (CDS), where she collaborates with colleagues and students on research projects and publications that take advantage of digital tools and methods. In that capacity she continued to teach a seminar, Introduction to Digital Humanities, for graduate students pursuing a doctoral certificate in digital humanities or considering digital humanities careers, and organized a bi-weekly digital humanities salon for sharing works in progress. In May, she is looking forward to a [Symposium in the Library](#) celebrating the 30th anniversary of CDS and the 10th anniversary of Brown University Digital Publications, which supported the creation of her recent digital book with Donna Bilak, [Furnace and Fugue](#).

Emily Owens



Emily Owens was delighted to get to support a second cohort of students through the honors thesis process in history this year, and has enjoyed learning alongside them about topics from the religious experience in late Antique Egypt to the social world of migrants in San Francisco’s Gold Rush era. She was honored to have won this year’s John Hope Franklin Award for best book in American Studies, and she enjoyed celebrating with friends and loved ones at the annual meeting of the American Studies Association in Baltimore. The Gender History Workshop continues to truck along, and she remains energized by the community of graduate students who have offered their work in the space. She is excited to spend next year on sabbatical, during which time she looks forward to balancing time between the archives, the woods and the garden.

Amy Remensnyder



Captive Muslims (Palermo, Porta Nuova, 16th century)

This year, Amy Remensnyder enjoyed teaching her courses and being the graduate admission director for the History Department. She also continued her work as director of the Brown History Education Prison Project and organized a course called History Through Images, which she team-taught with some other members of the department in the medium security facility of the Rhode Island state prison system. Her own research increasingly focuses on the history of captivity and slavery as it intertwines with the environment, something she talked about when she delivered the Edward King Memorial Lecture at the Sewanee Medieval Colloquium this past February. She also wrote another chapter of her book, a study of the tiny central Mediterranean island of Lampedusa — today an epicenter of Europe’s refugee crisis, but between 1550 and 1750, a famed, uninhabited, no man’s island whose more-than-human natural attributes converged with the geopolitics of piracy to make extraordinary encounters between Europe and the Maghreb ordinary, even necessary, there. She explores how during the golden age of early modern Mediterranean piracy, when hundreds of thousands of people lost their liberty to corsairs, the needs of captors and captives alike worked together with Lampedusa’s natural attributes in ways that benefitted both them and the island to create an exceptional, shared, green oasis edged with violence. Remensnyder will be on sabbatical in 2025-26 and is looking forward to having time to devote herself to this book project.



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

FACULTY ACTIVITIES

Lukas Rieppel

In addition to directing the [Brown Science, Technology and Society Program](#), Lukas Rieppel spent the past academic year continuing to research the deep history of Lakotan treaty lands. During summer 2024, he was involved in several collaborative projects to commemorate an infamous expedition by the U.S. into Lakotan treaty lands that took place exactly 150 years earlier (in 1874). Working with Craig Howe, the founding director of the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies, a Native-owned nonprofit in the Pine Ridge Reservation, Rieppel wrote a series of 11 weekly columns for the *Lakota Times* newspaper. Each week, they mined the rich archive of documentary records produced by this expedition for insights about Lakotan history and culture. In addition, Rieppel and Howe produced [an interactive GIS-website](#) so readers of the Lakota Times could track the expedition in real time, following their movement into and out of their treaty lands. Finally, Rieppel and Howe published [an article in Nature magazine](#), urging practicing scientists and museum curators to return specimens that were illegally collected during the summer of 1874. More recently, Rieppel and Howe have been working on a traveling museum exhibition to document the deep history that connects Lakotan people to their treaty lands.

Seth Rockman



Signing books at a talk at University of South Carolina, February 2025

Seth Rockman completed his second year as director of undergraduate studies and enjoyed the opportunity to work with remarkable students in his Early American Republic lecture course and Early American Money seminar. Much of this year, however, was devoted to launching *Plantation Goods: A Material History of American Slavery* (University of Chicago Press, 2024). Starting in November, Rockman traveled widely to share his book with public audiences, attending some 30 events at bookstores, museums, libraries and on college campuses. A highlight was the Brown launch event at the John Carter Brown Library, a recording of which can be found on YouTube. But when all is said and done, perhaps the best thing that happened this past year was accompanying his teenage daughter to see Taylor Swift on the Eras Tour in Indianapolis.

Amy Russell



Amy Russell spent her sabbatical year partly at Brown participating in the Cogut Institute’s interdisciplinary humanities programming and partly in Dresden, Germany, as a Dresden Fellow. She has moved forward both of her major projects, on the monuments built by the Roman imperial Senate and the definition of The People: this second theme has become increasingly timely, and Russell spent much of the year engaging with other scholars working on populisms through historical lenses.

Kenneth Sacks



In 2024-25, Kenneth Sacks published *Emerson’s Civil Wars: Spirit and Society in the Age of Abolition* (Cambridge University Press, 2024) and continues to work on two books: *Necropolis by the Bay: Burial Practices and Urban Politics in Colma California, 1880-1950* and *The Abbot Affair: Harvard, Freedom of Speech, and the Making of the Modern American University*.

FACULTY ACTIVITIES

Neil Safier



Taking pictures of Amazonian artefacts at the Academia das Ciencias de Lisboa

Neil Safier spent the 2024-25 academic year on research leave at the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas in Madrid. Aside from finishing an article on plantation economies in colonial Brazil, he spent the bulk of the year researching a new project on Amazonian artefacts in European museum collections, beginning in Hamburg and eventually leading to Barcelona, Lisbon, Vienna, London and Oslo. He met with curators, collectors, archivists and museum professionals, as well as Indigenous artists and anthropologists from the Amazon region. While in Spain, he also took advantage of the many Amazonian-related exhibitions happening throughout Europe (and especially in Spain) and presented on his research to colleagues at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, the Universidad Complutense, Sorbonne Université (Paris) and the CSIC (Madrid and Seville).

Robert Self



While continuing to draft chapters of his new book on houses, cars and children (it’s *this* close), Robert was happy to see the arrival of the 11th edition of his co-authored textbook *America’s History* (Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2025).

Kerry Smith

Kerry Smith started work on his next book project, a history of wealth and the wealthy in modern Japan, and very much enjoyed getting to know the students in his first-year seminar (on Catastrophic Japan) as well as those in his two other lecture courses.

Tracy Steffes

In the past year, Tracy Steffes gave talks on her recent book *Structuring Inequality: How Schooling, Housing, and Tax Policies Shaped Metropolitan Development and Education* (University of Chicago Press, 2024) and conducted research on her new book project, tentatively titled *Education Inc.: For-Profit Businesses in the History of American Education*. She continued to co-edit a book series, *Histories of American Education*, at Cornell University Press and served on awards and planning committees for the History of Education Society. She also continued to serve as chair of the Education Department, which completed a self-study and external review.

Michael Steinberg

Michael Steinberg has two books in progress: *The Democratic Unconscious* (a sequel to *The Afterlife of Moses*, 2022), and a collection of essays on European music and intellectual history from 1750 to the present. He chairs the academic affairs committee of the Bard College Berlin board of governors and continues to serve on the board of the Barenboim-Said Foundation (USA).

FACULTY ACTIVITIES

Adam Teller



Over the last year, Adam Teller spent most of his free time researching and writing his new book, *Genocidal Regime: A Social History of the Holocaust*, devoting himself to the unenviable task of writing a chapter on the social history of Auschwitz-Birkenau. He was delighted to see a new edition of the 17th century Hebrew Chronicle, *Yavein Metsulah (Abyss of Despair)*, published in Jerusalem, Israel, with a comprehensive new introduction written by him. In addition, he contributed an article to a new volume, *Refugee Politics in Early Modern Europe*, published by Bloomsbury Academic. He presented fresh research on early modern transregional Jewish networks at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, and responded to a paper on the state of Jewish studies in contemporary eastern Europe given at Boston University. Finally, he bookended this busy year with online presentations: in January, he led a webinar for Columbia University titled, “Jewish Hostages in Captivity: A Historical Perspective,” and, in December, he gave the inaugural podcast in the series Jewish Studies Unscrolled titled “Hostages and Nathan Hanover’s, ‘The Abyss of Despair.’”

Michael Vorenberg



Michael Vorenberg speaks about his new book *Lincoln’s Peace* at Ford’s Theatre in Washington, D.C.

Most of my efforts this past year were directed toward seeing my new book through to production. The book is *Lincoln’s Peace: The Struggle to End the American Civil War* (Knopf), and it was released on March 18, 2025. The book has been getting widely reviewed, and I have been giving a number of talks and interviews about it. Meanwhile, I have continued my work on a book about a little-known but large and significant military prison during the U.S. Civil War and Reconstruction. It’s quite isolated, about sixty miles west of Key West, Florida, and it has been aptly called the Guantanamo Bay of the nineteenth century.

Karin Wulf



Margaret and Karin (briefly) matching for St. Patrick’s Day

Karin Wulf’s most important work is directing the John Carter Brown Library; in the wee hours she is also researching and writing about early American history and the humanities. She has consulted and written for the accompanying volumes for two major exhibits for 2026, “The Two Georges” at the Library of Congress and “Give Me Liberty” for the Virginia250 commission, which opened at the Virginia Museum of History and Culture. Wulf has published or is in the process of publishing four scholarly essays that are extensions of research from her book *Lineage: Genealogy and the Power of Connection in Early America* that will be released in July. Wulf is enjoying social media where she gathers and publishes research bits on Instagram under @VernacularGenealogy. She is writing reviews and other pieces, including wrapping up 10 years blogging for the Society of Scholarly Publishers. Her latest piece this spring is “Humanities as the Canary: Understanding this Crisis Now.” On campus she is co-chairing Brown2026, the University initiative to mark the 250th anniversary of the United States, with a focus on the role of research universities in and for democracy.

Undergraduate Program

Reflections from the Director of Undergraduate Studies

Seth Rockman

Associate Professor of History, Director of Undergraduate Studies

The History Department is a remarkable place. You already knew that (which is why you’re reading our annual newsletter), but I’d like to use this opportunity to tell you more about the things that distinguish us on Brown’s campus. By way of introduction, I am writing here in my capacity as director of undergraduate studies, currently completing the second year of a three-year appointment. If my first year on the job involved getting to know the intricacies of our concentration requirements, this year allowed for some higher-level evaluation of our department’s place within the undergraduate curriculum at Brown.

Our department clearly serves the spirit of Brown’s Open Curriculum by welcoming students from countless other concentrations into our courses. By one recent count, nearly 40 percent of undergraduates take a history course during their time on campus. These students come not only for our compelling introductory lecture courses like Professor Remensnyder’s *Locked Up* but also for very niche upper-division seminars. We see a surprising number of seniors from such concentrations as computer science-economics and biology who “finally” have space in their schedules to take a course like *Early American Money* or *China’s Environmental History*. Another notable fact is that more than half our concentrators supplement their history education with a second concentration. While the history-econ or history-political science combination might be predictable, we take particular pride in having just as many history-applied math double concentrators as history-English ones: five, in fact, last year.

How do we explain this? For one, our faculty take undergraduate pedagogy very seriously. This is something we see in the quantitative course evaluations compiled each semester. On questions like “Overall, I rate this course as effective,” our students assessed History



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

Department classes significantly above those being offered in other social sciences departments and in the University as a whole. Good teaching is part of our faculty culture. Over this spring, for example, colleagues gathered for lunchtime discussions regarding such issues as AI in the classroom, the structure of our capstone courses, and the texts we typically assign to showcase our discipline’s methodological commitments.

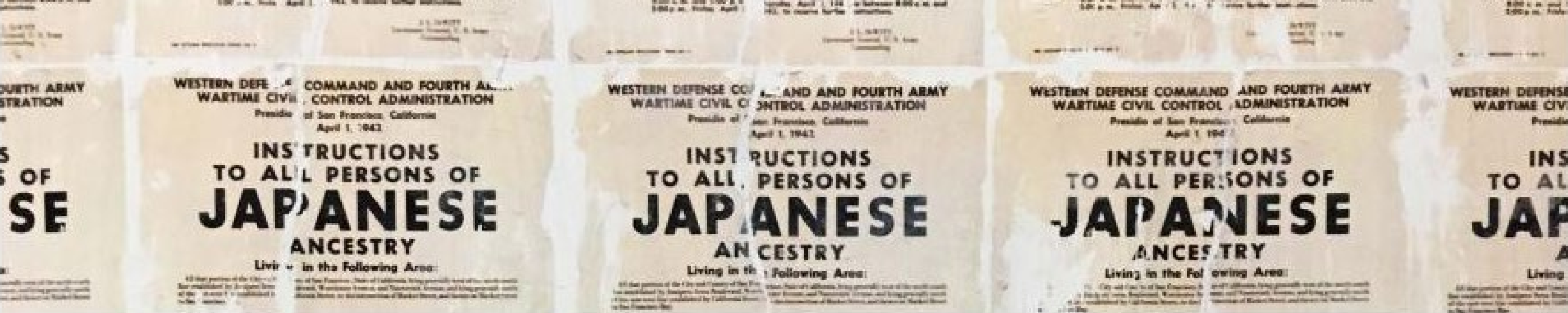
I would also want to flag the breadth of our curriculum, as we continuously add classes that both “meet the moment” and ground students in the complexity and variety of human experience. This year, Professor Rodriguez launched a new seminar on race and incarceration, Professor Grasso revived a course on Reconstruction, and Professor Case co-taught a History of AI lecture course with a colleague in computer science. Professor Majumdar brought new courses into our curriculum on South Asian environmental history. Next year, we’ll see new courses on Southeast Asian history, as well as a range of fascinating offerings — on labor history, on Indigenous history, and on the Afro-Asian origins of woodblock printing — from our postdoctoral fellows. Also next year, Professor Mumford is taking up the history of childhood in a seminar, and Professor Nummedal will once again guide students through *The Enchanted World: Magic, Angels, and Demons in Early Modern Europe*.

Overall, the last academic year was a good one for our undergraduate program. Let me close with thanks to my colleagues Nancy Jacobs, Benjamin Hein, Tim Harris, Brian Lander and Jeremy Mumford for serving as concentration advisors. Emily Owens did a spectacular job stewarding our honors students to the completion of their theses. And all of us received wonderful support from Mary Beth Bryson in keeping everything organized and running.

Have a wonderful summer!



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Brown Journal of History

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

Revival of the Brown Journal of History

Tyler Tjan '26 and Maria Gomberg '26

The Brown Journal of History is an undergraduate publication that has long been a feature of the History Department. For the past 10 years, undergraduate editors and contributors have worked to create an annual issue of an academic journal completely built by Brown undergraduates for Brown undergraduates' work. Unfortunately, the last few issues never reached publication in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, leading the department to begin efforts to revive the publication. That is how, this past fall, the journal came back together. With the support and mentorship of Professor Benjamin Hein, we built a new issue of this journal, set to launch in May 2025.

Over the span of the academic year, we have built a staff of six associate editors, and selected four rigorous pieces demonstrative of the level of academic writing that is currently being produced by undergraduate researchers at Brown. Having received a large number of applications for the editing position, as well as a wealth of pieces seeking publication, we found ourselves incredibly impressed by the skill, diversity and talent across the history concentration.


[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

This year’s issue, titled “Journeys,” includes a wide variety of papers spanning swaths of time and space. “Finding Rosicrucianism in Descartes’ Writings,” by Jazz Carlson ’25 traces evidence of Descartes’s alleged involvement in the Rosicrucian Brotherhood across his body of work. In “Shielding Choice in Silence: The Women’s Escort Service in Providence (1980s–1990s),” Maja Mishevskaja ’27 draws on oral histories and the University archives to tell the story of Providence activists — many of them Brown students — who accompanied women to abortion procedures and consultations in order to shield them from protestors. Owen Blair ’26 writes about Medieval werewolf masculinities in “The Body, the Bed, and Bisclavret: An Examination of Medieval Masculinity Through the Chivalrous Werewolf of Marie de France’s Lais.” Lastly, Desi Silverman-Joseph ’27 details in “Roxbury Cowrie: The Shell that Traversed the World” the story of a shell discovered in 2022 on the grounds of the Shirley-Eustis home in Boston, where it likely belonged to an enslaved resident.

Despite the many learning curves that came with the revival of a publication, the support, diligent effort and enthusiasm of the editors and contributors alike has not only allowed us to produce a new edition of a publication after a long hiatus but also to revive a space for students of history to mingle, collaborate and learn from one another.



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Undergraduate Research Spotlight: Gabriel Ritter '25



Gabriel Ritter at the hearing of Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent (Courtesy of Getty Images)

Of all the ways Brown has contributed to my academic growth, by far the most impactful has been bringing me to an understanding of the meaning of the phrase “deep research.” Over the last four years, in History Department courses focusing on topics ranging from early modern England to 20th century Indian nationalism, professors, each in their own way, taught me how to conduct textual and contextual analysis demanding a commitment to nuance, particularity and evidence-based argument. Writing a thesis on how parties in English courts during the “long 18th century” understood and related to a marginalized, but not entirely alien, group — Jews — helped me hone these skills by requiring me to map a scholarly field and draw out patterns from beneath the surface of a vast number of challenging texts. At a time when what constitutes “fact” and “reasoned analysis” has become intensely political and controversial, and misinformation (as well as disinformation) is rampant, I am grateful for the truth-centric approach to research, analysis and persuasion I learned from the Brown History Department.

This semester, I was fortunate enough to have the chance to apply these skills as an intern with the U.S. Senate Finance Committee’s Democratic minority staff. The committee covers policy areas including tax, trade, health care and Social Security. In addition to developing legislation and preparing for and holding hearings, its staff members draft investigative letters, Questions for the Record for Cabinet nominees, policy memoranda and public statements. While assisting the committee with these tasks, I found the method of research and analysis I learned studying history at Brown has been invaluable in evaluating policy, political and legal questions and presenting conclusions in a clear and compelling manner. Whatever the specific field I ultimately work in, I know that it will involve using the skills I learned researching the past to help forge a more just future.

Award Recipients

The John Thomas Memorial Award

To the best thesis in the history department
Lia Ortner

The Skidmore Family and Friends Thesis Prize

To the best thesis in Latin American Studies
Emily Saxl

The Skidmore Family and Friends Thesis Prize (2024)

To the best thesis in Latin American Studies
Deven Kamlani

The Christian Yegen History Thesis Prize

To outstanding honors theses in the history department
Lucas Galarza
Isabel Greider
Christopher Martens
Gabriel Ritter

The Marjorie Harris Weiss Memorial Premium in History

To an outstanding undergraduate student concentrating in history
Hayden Deffarges

The Gaspee Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution

To the student who represents the best paper written as a class assignment in an American history course
Samuel Dunn
Alexandra Mork

The David Herlihy Prize

To the best student in Medieval or Renaissance history (ancient history is included)
Eric Gottlieb

The David Herlihy Prize (2024)

To the best student in Medieval or Renaissance history (ancient history is included)
Susannah Paine

R. Douglas Cope Memorial Award

To honor Professor R. Douglas Cope’s legacy of service
Sofia Barnett

Herbert and Claiborne Pell Medal for U.S. History

Awarded annually to one student for excellence in U.S. history
Sally B. Hirschwerk



Honors Recipients

Jodie A. Aguirre
“Viva Los Hijos De La Raza: The Experiences of Mexican American Migrant Working Children in the 20th Century”
Advisor: Mark Ocegueda

Aboud Al-Ashhab
“Ottoman Centralization and the Druze, 1780-1860: Judge Ahmad Taqi al-Din and Druze Engagements with Ottoman Reform”
Advisor: Alex Winder and Beshara Doumani

Adam Bollt
“July Crises: Approaching the Abyss of General War in 1863”
Advisor: Benjamin Hein

Hayden Deffarges
“‘Riotous Living’: Gender, Morality, and the Crucible of Culture in Gold Rush San Francisco”
Advisor: Emily Owens

Lucas M. Galarza
“‘Spanish Jews and Poor Bedouins’ Ottoman Jewish Immigration and Integration in Early 20th Century Mexico”
Advisor: Adam Teller

Eric Gottlieb
“A Text Without Context: Situating the Manichaean Psalmbook Within the Religious, Political, and Socioeconomic Milieu of Fourth to Fifth Century Egypt”
Advisor(s): Jonathan Conant and Jae Han

Isabel S. Greider
“Fed Up: School Lunch Reform and Community Control in New York City”
Advisor: Tracy Steffes

Sally B. Hirschwerk
“(Re)claiming Religion: An Exploration of the Development of Clinical Pastoral Education and its Impact on Religious Chaplaincy during the AIDS Pandemic”
Advisor: Françoise Hamlin

Owen B. Hwang
“The Underappreciated Role of Church and Community: In the 1968 Black Student Walkout from Pembroke and Brown”
Advisor: Naoko Shibusawa

Adit Kadakia
“Speculating on the Nation: Bombay’s Financial Markets and the Making of Indian Nationalism, 1860-1900”
Advisor: Tiraana Bains

Deven Kamlani
“Beneath the Red Sun: Imagining China During the Brazilian Military Dictatorship”
Advisor: James Green

Andrew Li
“Becoming Christian and Becoming American: Untangling the Relationship Between Christianity and the Chinese in the Northeastern United States During the 19th and Early 20th Century”
Advisor: Evelyn Hu-DeHart

Aditya Lodha
“Marbles of Empire: The Amaravati Marbles and the Makings of the British Museum”
Advisor: Tiraana Bains

Mica B. Maltzman
“‘Local Co-op Has Interesting Background’: Constructing Jewish Communism in the Bronx”
Advisor: Benjamin Hein



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Honors Recipients

Christopher G. Martens

“‘Bring them to where they shall gain and they will fight against their fathers’: Irish Involvement in the Early British Empire, c. 1620-1690”

Advisor: Tim Harris

Alexandra G. Mork

“State-Crossed Lovers: Evasive Interracial Marriages in 19th Century Virginia”

Advisor: Michael Vorenberg

Lia S. Ortner

“The Invention of Historical Fiction in Medieval Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Historia Regum Britanniae”

Advisor(s): Jonathan Conant and Mariah Min

Gabriel P. Ritter

“Considered and Treated as a Peculiar People: A History of Jews in English Legal Discourse from Readmission to Emancipation (1655-1858)”

Advisor: Tim Harris

Grace Samaha

“Racing the Law: Arab American Identity Formations from 1880-1925”

Advisor: Shelley Lee

Emily M. Saxl

“‘¡Venceremos!’ (We will prevail!): Investigating the Allure of the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement”

Advisor: Evelyn Hu-DeHart

Samuel W. Schwartz

“The Wilderness of Mirrors: Nikolai Bukharin and Soviet Subjectivity during Stalin’s Purge”

Advisor: Ethan Pollock

Ellen S. Silverman

“Reshaping Traditions: How Women Challenged Familial Structures and Governance in Zürich, Switzerland”

Advisor: Caroline Castiglione



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Graduate Program

Reflections from the Director of Graduate Studies

Jennifer Lambe

Director of Graduate Studies, Associate Professor of History

This year, as always, one thing has remained constant: our history Ph.D. students have continued to pursue trailblazing research, teaching and public outreach. Their efforts have been recognized in the form of prestigious research funding, postdoctoral fellowships and tenure-track jobs. It has been an honor and a privilege to guide them in pursuing their professional and intellectual goals.

This year the department launched a new fifth-year chapter workshop to provide additional support for students in the dissertation writing process. But perhaps the most exciting development in the history Ph.D. program was the hiring of Emily Greenberg, a full-time student affairs manager, to accompany and support doctoral students from matriculation through graduation. Emily has been an invaluable addition to our team, and we are truly fortunate to have her with us.

I would like to express my gratitude to Director of Graduate Advising Michael Vorenberg, Graduate Admissions Director Amy Remensnyder and History Department chair Ethan Pollock, as well as Cherrie Guerzon, Julissa Bautista and Mary Beth Bryson, for everything they do to support our graduate students. I am also deeply appreciative of the work of the outgoing and incoming co-presidents of the History Graduate Student Association (Haley Price and Georga-Kay Whyte, and Sigi Macias and Claudia Ojeda, respectively). They and other HGSA officers have served as a model in their engaged, collegial and supportive efforts to build community among graduate students.

In the final semester of my term as director of graduate studies, I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with and learn from our talented graduate students over the past three years. I look forward to seeing where their academic and professional work takes them in the years to come!



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Graduate Research Spotlight: Ola Morehead



Ola Morehead with Greta

about how to present the Holocaust’s environmental history in public-facing settings, while sharpening my approach to integrating ecological material into academic historical research.

Beyond the archives, I spent much of my time with the museum’s education team, whose daily work with students and survivors was deeply moving. I was inspired by their commitment to Holocaust education and the fight against antisemitism and racism, including programs that bring together Holocaust and Aboriginal voices. I’m currently developing a teaching resource for New South Wales schools on Jewish life in Rovno before, during and after the war. A personal highlight was meeting Greta, a brilliant clinical psychologist and the stepdaughter of my fellowship’s namesake. I’m grateful for the opportunity and look forward to returning to the museum to share my findings this winter — or during Sydney’s summer!

From September to December 2024, I had the privilege of holding the Severyn and Frieda Pejsachowicz Memorial Research Fellowship at the Sydney Jewish Museum. During my time there, I worked closely with the museum’s curatorial team, analyzing materials from the Special Investigations Unit of the Australian War Crimes Commission’s excavation at Serniki, Ukraine. These artifacts — evidence of Nazi efforts to conceal mass killings — offer powerful insights into how the Holocaust unfolded in the forests of Eastern Europe.

Equally formative was my collaboration with the museum’s resident historian, Konrad Kwiet. His pioneering research on the role of forests in the Final Solution helped shape my own approach to the forest not just as a setting, but as an active force in the wartime experience of Jews, Soviet partisans and Nazi forces. His notes, compiled during his testimony for the War Crimes Commission, now form a key part of my dissertation on the environmental history of the Holocaust in regions of Belarus, eastern Poland and northwestern Ukraine. The museum’s collections also helped me think more deeply

Doctor of Philosophy, 2024-25

Anil Askin

“The Order of Extraction: Capital, Debt, and Violence in Central Anatolia (1720-1799)”

Director: Beshara Doumani

Julia Gettle

“Political Life in the Shadow Years: Arab Nationalists and Popular Mobilization in the Eastern Mediterranean, 1948-1975”

Director: Beshara Doumani

Takuya Maeda

“Settler Technocracy: Artificial Islands and the Construction of the Postwar Transpacific”

Director: Naoko Shibusawa

Sarah Pearlman Shapiro

“Women’s Communities of Care in Revolutionary New England”

Director: Seth Rockman

Lillian Tsay

“Sweetening the Empire: Sugar and Western-style Confectionery in Modern Japan and Taiwan”

Director: Kerry Smith

Stephanie Wong

“Materialities of the Spanish Pacific”

Director: Tara Nummedal

Yekai Zhang

“The Dutch Wars and the Politics of the People in Restoration Britain and Ireland, 1664-1674”

Director: Tim Harris

MASTER OF ARTS,
2024-25

Diana Buendia

Arif Erbil

Courtney Fitzpatrick

Nicholas Gandolfo-Lucia

Montagu James

Jakob Lippert

Christen Macias

Ria Modak

Claudia Ojeda

James Carl Osorio

Sam Washington

Amelie Zeroug



Brown University and
Howard University

Brown-HBCU History Collaboration Grants

Daniel Rodriguez

Associate Professor of History

This year marked the inauguration of the Brown-HBCU History Collaboration Grant. The project builds upon Brown’s historic ties to Tougaloo College and a desire to support opportunities for deeper cross-campus collaboration between the History Department and faculty and graduate students across the historically Black colleges and universities. Made possible by the Abbott Gleason History Department Discretionary Fund — itself made possible by a generous gift from [Ruth Kissin Helman ’73](#) — the Brown-HBCU History Collaboration Grant provides funding for an array of activities that further such collaboration. Potential activities could include faculty travel between our campuses to discuss shared teaching and research interests; short-term research trips for students or faculty; funding for course development, travel for class visits or other forms of teaching collaboration; or seed funding to develop future conferences.

The initial year will support 10 projects that connect scholars from Brown with scholars from Tougaloo College, Albany State University, Spelman College, Howard University, Morgan State University, Morehouse College and Jackson State University. The projects are wide-ranging, from an interdisciplinary environmental history of leprosy in 19th century



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Hawaii, to a project on the historical legacies of the Three-Fifths Compromise on debates over African American citizenship, and an oral history project on school integration in South Carolina.

The forms of collaboration are also varied: a week-long “residency” at Brown in Fall 2025, with public lectures and class visits, to shorter campus visits from scholars at the early stage of conceptualizing new research projects. Other projects focus more on graduate and undergraduate education. Seth Rockman and Professor Lawrence Peskin from Morgan State University — together with three graduate students — will travel between campuses for a series of workshops and events where they will present research related to the history of slavery, capitalism and the racialized economic development of the United States. Francoise Hamlin will mentor a Ph.D. student from Howard University on the practice of oral history. And Christopher Grasso is working with a group of undergraduate students from Tougaloo College who will gain research experience at the Mississippi State Archives, helping Professor Grasso on his upcoming book project *The Chisolm Massacre: Reconstruction and the Politics of Violence*.

With additional support from the University, the History Department hopes to build on the success of this initial round of Collaboration Grants and expand this project in the coming years, including opening the grants to scholars at Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) and Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs). Beyond enriching academic life here at Brown and fostering connections with scholars from across the country, the project aims to build a pipeline in which students from across these institutions will see Brown University as a place where they can pursue their graduate education.



[RETURN TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



BROWN
Department of History