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BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY EXAMINES SLAVERY AND ITS LEGACY IN MONTH-LONG SERIES

“400 Years of Inequality: Slavery, Race, and Our Unresolved History” includes panels, screenings, family programs, professional development for educators, and a curated selection of books related to race and history at the museum shop

Among the featured speakers are Michael Eric Dyson, Heather McGhee, Edward Baptist, Mary Travis Bassett, Rachel Swarns, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, and Richard Rothstein

(September 10, 2019) Brooklyn, NY --- In October 2019, Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS) shines a spotlight on 400 years of racial inequality, joining institutions from across the country in acknowledging the many centuries of our nation’s unresolved legacy of slavery.

Seven public programs, a Saturday morning family event, and two educator professional development sessions will be offered throughout the month, along with a special selection of featured books at the shop. BHS will partner with leading institutions including Facing History and Ourselves and the Vera Institute for Justice to present a range of conversations about racial inequity, including discussions on housing, healthcare, criminal justice, and reparations. Two programs will examine the state of race and racism in America today; a conversation between Georgetown University professor Michael Eric Dyson, author of *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*, and Brooklyn Community Foundation Fair and Just Fellow Heather McGhee; and a screening and talkback of the film *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*, produced by Katrina Browne who testified in June at the House Judiciary Committee hearing on reparations.

For families, Irondale Theater Ensemble will present an adaptation of its play about Brooklyn abolitionists, *Color Between the Lines*. Two professional development workshops for educators offered by BHS and Facing History and Ourselves, will look at the meaning of and controversy around confederate monuments, and the memorializing of Brooklyn’s slaveholding past in the names of familiar Brooklyn streets, including Hicks, Remsen, and Bergen. Throughout the month visitors can peruse a curated selection of books related to race and history in a special section of the gift shop, all 10% off for October.

“400 years ago a ship carrying more than 20 enslaved Africans landed in Jamestown, its human cargo sold into bondage. In this immersive series of reflection, analysis and discussion, BHS

explores the ensuing history of slavery in the United States and its ramifications today,” says *400 Years of Inequality* project director and Brooklyn Historical Society Executive Vice President Marcia Ely. “By examining how racism and inequality continue to cling to our institutions we hope to help reframe the telling of America’s story in order to shape a more complete narrative for the future.”

"Although this anniversary holds special resonance for those of us who descend from the enslaved men and women who largely built this nation, all Americans have a stake in learning about the legacy of slavery and how it connects to their lives today," says Brooklyn Community Foundation Fair and Just Fellow, Heather McGhee.

BHS has gathered a distinguished roster of program partners whose expertise bring depth to the series. They include Brooklyn Community Foundation, Coming to the Table. Facing History and Ourselves, Social Science Research Council, and Vera Institute of Justice.

Here is a complete list of program descriptions and participants:

Public Programs

Sowing Resolution: The Case for Reparations in Action

Wed, Oct 2, 6:30 pm

[Reservations](#)

As a national conversation about reparations takes root, BHS and the Social Science Research Council gather a panel of experts to unpack the notion of reparations broadly, examine various forms that reparations might take, and look at one concrete example happening today. In 1838, Georgetown University sold 272 enslaved people ‘down river’ to secure its financial health. What is owed to their descendants, and how has Georgetown made amends? *The New York Times* contributing writer **Rachel Swarns** leads a conversation with **Adam Rothman**, GU historian and principal curator of the *Georgetown Slavery Archive*; **Mélanie Short-Colomb**, a student activist and descendant of the GU272; and **Katherine Franke**, author of *Repair: Redeeming the Promise of Abolition*.

The Stacked Deck: Race and America’s Unjust Criminal Justice System

Thu, Oct 10, 6 pm

[Reservations](#)

Biased policing. Discriminatory sentencing. Over-incarceration of black people. America’s long history of segregation and structural racism has led to today’s racialized criminal justice system. How do we address the roots of a system designed to perpetuate racial subjugation? Can we realize a just and equal future? **Nick Turner**, president and director of the Vera Institute of Justice, **Khalil Gibran Muhammad**, author of *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime and the Making of Modern Urban America*, and others look at centuries of racial injustice, and how white Americans have reaped the benefits while black Americans have paid the price.

The Impact of Slavery and the Myth of the Free North

Tue, Oct 15, 6:30 pm

[Reservations](#)

The slave economy is largely associated with images of Southern plantations, but it played a major role in the Northern states and cities nationwide, becoming a fundamental building block of the country. Cornell University professor **Edward Baptist** author of *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, and NYU professor **Michele Mitchell** discuss the history of the institution of slavery, what was different between its incarnations in the North and the South, and what was tragically similar. Moderated by BHS vice president of curatorial affairs and collections, **Julie Golia**.

Redlining and its Repercussions

Wed, Oct 16, 6:30 pm

[Reservations](#)

Redlining—the systematically racist banking practice of denying loans to people of color in post-WWII urban neighborhoods—is often portrayed as a closed chapter in the nation’s history of structural inequality. Yet intense discrimination persists as non-white communities face continuous exclusion from the “American Dream” of homeownership or are targeted by predatory lending practices, further widening the racial wealth gap. UC Berkeley’s **Richard Rothstein**, reveals the findings of his recent book, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. The conversation moves to a local focus when **Sarita Daftary-Steel**, founder of the East New York Oral History Project, **April de Simone**, co-creator of the Undesign the Redline project, and **Catherine Green**, Founder and Executive Director of ARTs East NY and Founding Steering Committee Member of the Coalition for Community Advancement, join for a conversation moderated by **Kai Wright**, host of WNYC podcasts *The Stakes* and *There Goes the Neighborhood*.

The Color of Healthcare: Mary Travis Bassett and Harriet Washington in Conversation

Thu, Oct 17, 6:30 pm

[Reservations](#)

Two giants in their field explore the complicated history and ramifications of our county’s race-based health inequalities. **Mary Travis Bassett**, former NYC Commissioner of Health and currently Director of the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University, and **Harriet Washington**, author of the award-winning *Medical Apartheid* and, most recently, *A Terrible Thing to Waste: Environmental Racism and Its Assault of the American Mind*, share their insights, analysis, and thoughts on righting centuries of wrongs.

Michael Eric Dyson and Heather McGhee: Reckoning with Racism

Fri, Oct 18, 6:00 pm

[Reservations](#)

White Supremacy. Microaggressions. Black Lives Matter. Reparations. The issues are urgent, the conversation moving at breakneck speed, but is our country heading forward, or backward? Author, speaker, preacher and Georgetown University professor **Michael Eric Dyson** is joined by **Heather McGhee**, former head of Demos and Brooklyn Community Foundation Fair and Just Fellow, for this discussion on these essential questions about race and racism in America.

Screening and Discussion: *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*

Sun, Oct 20, 4:00 pm

[Reservations](#)

When filmmaker **Katrina Browne** discovered that her New England ancestors were the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history, she and nine cousins retraced the Triangle Trade and gained powerful new perspectives on the black/white divide. Browne, who testified in June at the House Judiciary Committee hearing on reparations, will discuss issues of racism today following the screening.

Family Programs

Sun, Oct 20, 10:30 am and 11:30 am

Reservations

This family-friendly adaptation of Irondale Ensemble Project's *Color Between the Lines* uses song and story to look at oft-forgotten Brooklyn abolitionists who fought to free enslaved Africans. Each 25-minute performance is followed by a hands-on, storytelling art activity. *Color Between the Lines* was originally produced by Irondale Theater Ensemble in 2012, as part the *In Pursuit of Freedom Project*, a collaboration with Brooklyn Historical Society and Weeksville Heritage Center.

Professional Development Sessions for Educators

Brooklyn Historical Society and Facing History and Ourselves are approved providers of NYS CTLE credits. Participating teachers will receive 2 hours of CTLE credit for each workshop.

Mapping Freedom and Slavery: Brooklyn Abolitionists

Wed, Oct 2, 4:00 pm

Presented by Brooklyn Historical Society Education Department

Reservations

Today many Brooklynites underestimate the extent of Brooklyn's slave-holding past, but historians who study nineteenth century New York have labeled Kings County a "slaveholding capital." Brooklyn had the largest concentration of enslaved people of any county in New York State. Its slaveholding percentages exceeded those of South Carolina.

Today those slave-holders' names are immortalized in the very streets that Brooklynites walk. Hicks, Remsen, Boerum, Sands, Nostrand, Bergen – each of these streets bears the name of a slaveholding family from Brooklyn's past. But what of those Brooklynites who engaged in abolitionist activities? How are their legacies memorialized today?

This session uses historical maps, documents, and census records to explore freedom and slavery in nineteenth century Brooklyn, uncovering the names of slaveholders in the borough, and those of the individuals who fought for freedom.

The Legacy of Reconstruction: Monuments and Public Memory

Wed, Oct 16, 4:00 pm

Presented by Facing History and Ourselves

Reservations

In 1965 James Baldwin wrote, “the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do.” Baldwin’s powerful reminder of history’s lasting and daily impacts raises particular questions when history takes the form of memorials and monuments in our communities.

How do societies decide which history to remember -- and what form that memory should take? How can we empower students to engage with Reconstruction memorials critically, through a lens of historical knowledge and ethical reflection?

This session will use resources from Facing History and Ourselves’ case study *The Reconstruction Era: Fragility of Democracy* to investigate how schools can engage with the monument debate that continues to impact communities across the country. We will model discussion strategies that support an analysis of historical perspectives and provide space for students’ emotional reactions.

Project funders

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About Brooklyn Historical Society

Founded in 1863, Brooklyn Historical Society is a nationally recognized urban history center dedicated to preserving and encouraging the study of Brooklyn's extraordinary 400-year history. Located in Brooklyn Heights and housed in a magnificent landmark building designed by George Post and opened in 1881, today's BHS is a cultural hub for civic dialogue, thoughtful engagement and community outreach. In May 2017 BHS opened a second site in DUMBO’s Brooklyn Bridge Park.

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