

# Slavery in the Archives: Mapping the campus discourse surrounding slavery from the 1890s to present day

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Throughout American history, dating back to the Revolutionary War era, slavery has been used as a metaphor. Peter A. Dorsey, who writes about the use of the slavery metaphor in revolutionary America, has stated, “[slavery] operated powerfully as a metaphor. One recurring definition of the trope, as Hayden White explains, is that it ‘explicitly asserts a similarity in a difference and, at least implicitly, a difference in a similarity.’... the trope’s greatest power came from its invoking a resemblance between the political crisis and the hereditary system of forced labor that existed in the colonists’ midst. While Whigs in England may have seen little difference between chattel slavery, serfdom, and other forms of political oppression, to Americans in all thirteen colonies slavery was an intimate reality and thus a unifying experience for those whose economies, climates, and ways of life were frequently quite diverse.”[1] Throughout his book *Common Bondage*, Dorsey argues that the term is particularly powerful when used in reference to other things as a result of its history and slew of implications in America.

While my research within the Columbia Spectator begins in the 1890s, it remains true that slavery has operated as a powerful metaphor to talk about other historical events and injustices, especially on Columbia's campus. I found that, no matter what decade I was researching, slavery was almost always used in order to refer to something else: war, the draft, women's rights, and even unpaid internships. At the same time that students and faculty used the language of slavery to draw attention to things having little to do with the institution, there were efforts from students (and especially from black students) to turn the conversation more towards the actual institution of slavery and its lasting effects on the lives of black people on campus and in America more generally. The discourse surrounding slavery began to change around the 1960s, when more black voices began to show up in the Spectator and connect the institution of slavery to the ways in which it affected actual black students at the University. A second spike in the discourse happened in the 1990s and 2000s, with a great deal of conversation focusing on debates surrounding affirmative action, reparations, and Columbia's own duty to address its history with slavery following the launch of Brown University's project.

While newspaper archives cannot fully capture the wide variety of discourse that was happening on campus throughout the years, it is important to consider the impact that black students writing in the Spectator had in terms of changing the conversation surrounding slavery to include mentions of reparations and the ways in which our University is still connected to this institution. These records also tell us a lot about when and to what degree it became necessary to augment the conversation surrounding slavery, and when it became okay once again to address these (often difficult) questions of history and responsibility. In the pages that follow, I will walk through each decade and highlight articles that exemplify each time period, and will offer my analysis throughout.

## 1890s and 1900s

In the 1890s, 5 of the 6 mentions of slavery in the Spectator archives referenced actual enslaved people or the institution of slavery. Most of the mentions were senior thesis topics, including ones written on “Calhoun and Slavery,” “The History of Slavery in the Thirteen American Colonies,” “The Effect of Slavery on the Roman Character,” and the “Influence of Uncle Tom's Cabin on the Abolition of Slavery.”

In the 1900s, Slavery was mentioned in the Spectator 19 times. Many of these mentions indicate an increased interest in scholarship surrounding the topic of slavery during this time period: articles ran announcing the addition of books to the library, including Spalding: “Laws Relating to Slavery.” Nieboer: “Slavery,” Siebert: “Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom,” and Armstrong—“Christian Doctrine of Slavery.” Senior thesis topics continued to touch on slavery, including one in 1904 by a student named A. Harcourt which addressed the topic of “White slavery in Virginia,” advised by Professor Dunning (whose involvement in Columbia's history of slavery will be addressed later in this paper). Additionally, a senior in 1908, Henry Windels, received the Chanler Historical (sic) Prize in 1908 for his historical essay on “Daniel Webster and the Slavery Question.”[2]

During this decade there was also an interest in the idea of “current-day slavery”[3] as indicated in several articles including one from 1909, which mentions a lecture by “Mr. Joseph Burtt of London, who gave a lecture on ‘the modern African slave trade, carried on in connection with the cocoa industry in Portuguese Africa.’”[4] Slavery was further mentioned in reference to colonization in Latin America, and “Spanish slavery” was given a passing mention in reference to Phillip II in an lecture about the “Rise of the Dutch Republic.”

Another article worth mentioning from this time period was published in 1907 by Jacob Riis. Riis, author of “How the Other Half Lives,” was well known for writing about the conditions of tenements during this time period, and in this article he continued to talk about them in reference to New York City and the breakdown of the family unit. Towards the end of the article he mentions “slavery in the tenement cigar-making

industry,”[5] which is notably one of the first mentions of “wage slavery” in the Spectator archives.

In order to make sense of these first two decades, we might turn first to the 1904 thesis on “white slavery” that was advised by Professor Dunning[6]. William A. Dunning, who studied under John W. Burgess, was well known in academic spheres in the late 19th century as the founder of the “Dunning School of Reconstruction.” He was outspoken in his views of reconstruction as a failure, and was actively opposed to African American suffrage. Dunning taught and advised many grad students, especially those from the South as there was an influx of Southern student to the school during this time period, and the Columbia and Slavery website further asserts, “Through their scholarship and teaching, Dunning’s students perpetuated a racist interpretation of slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction, that helped to unify the North and South in supporting, both tacitly and openly, principles of white supremacy in the Jim Crow era.”[7] The 1904 thesis mentioned was not focused on the institution of slavery, but rather, it was focused on the phenomenon of “white slavery,” which presumably in the early 20th century referred to the the forced prostitution and sex trafficking of (white) women that caused a panic during this time period. At the same time, we can consider the consequences of the use of this term and how it, similarly to the slavery metaphor in Revolutionary America, utilizes a familiar institution in order to invoke a sense of outrage and panic about something else entirely. Mary Ann Irwin has written about this phenomenon in an article titled ‘White slavery’ as metaphor anatomy of a moral panic,” in which she argues “The metaphor ‘worked’ because it succeeded in forcing separate and unrelated ideas into a single conceptual framework. This success was rooted in the social and material conditions of Victorian society; for men and women anxiously regarding signs of corruption and moral decline, the white slavery metaphor organized a number of nameless fears into a unitary moral framework. The tensions created by economic depression, political upheaval, social reorganization, and demographic imbalance found voice in the seemingly endless debate over private morality, and set the stage for the evolution of the white slavery metaphor and the panic its rhetoric fueled.”[8]

Irwin continues on to write about the specific implications of the term of for black women, arguing,

*the term 'white slavery' was intended to distinguish female sexual slavery from the enslavement of Africans, but it was also meant to draw a moral comparison between the two types of exploitation. In comparing the taking of black slaves for labor with the enslavement of white women for sex, writers often placed higher value on the sufferings of the women, whose purer natures made sexual contact particularly abhorrent. Anti-regulationist Alfred Dyer, for example, wrote that the entrapment of English girls was 'infinitely more cruel and revolting than negro servitude' because it was slavery 'not for labor but for lust; and more cowardly than negro slavery' because it fell upon 'the young and the helpless of one sex only.' This assessment undervalued the humanity of blacks and ignored the sexual exploitation of black women as it described a moral universe in which the misuse of white women constituted an evil far more heinous than perpetual slavery.*

These first two decades work to set up a trend which continues throughout the archives up until the current day. No matter the time period and no matter the historical context, slavery is consistently referred to throughout the archives as an institution that still exists *somewhere else*. During this time period, the places referenced include South Africa and Latin America, but as the years go on it is referred to in various other locations: Sudan, China, Hungary. We might begin to consider how the references to slavery during this time period begin to set up a trend where slavery is constantly used as a metaphor to refer to *something else*, whether that thing be harsh working conditions, sex trafficking, or human rights violations in other places. Referring to it in this way and constantly attributing it to other places is also a particularly effective way of shifting blame and responsibility onto another entity rather than facing the ways in which slavery's legacy is integral to the United States. While slavery was occasionally referred to as an American institution which had real consequences and long-lasting effects, at least some of these mentions were made during a time period where scholarship regarding slavery argued against reconstruction and suffrage and sought to perpetuate theories of white supremacy that remain even today.

## 1910s and 1920s

In the 1910s, references to “wage slavery” continued to show up in the Spectator archives. There were also several instances of “white slavery” being used, though not quite as frequent. The first mention of “prison slavery” came in 1914, in an article titled “Osborne to Speak on Campus Today.” Thomas Mott Osborne is described in the article as “the millionaire philanthropist, who last year spent several weeks as a voluntary prisoner and who has just been appointed Warden of Sing Sing Prison.”[9] Slavery was also brought up a few times in the context of World War I with the use of the term “germany slavery.”

A few mentions of slavery compared to something entirely unrelated were present in the archives during this time period, including an article in 1924 which bid farewell to the current senior editors of the Spectator “After more than three years of slavery to Campus journalism.”[10] Another source from 1927 mentioned that students would refer to the school of architecture building, Avery, as “Slavery,”[11] presumably because students were “slaving” away as they worked on their projects and assignments, or perhaps simply as a joke.

Moving into the 1920s, mentions of wage slavery continued, with one of the most notable sources being an ad for General Electric. The ad, which ran several times in 1927, featured an image of an enslaved (black) person carrying a large tree trunk on their back, and the heading of the ad reads “SLAVES” in large bold font, accompanied by a quote by Oscar Wilde: “The fact is, that civilization requires slaves. The Greeks were quite right there. Unless there are slaves to do the ugly, horrible, uninteresting work, culture and contemplation become almost impossible. Human slavery is wrong, insecure, and demoralizing. On mechanical slavery, on the slavery of the machine, the future of the world depends.” Further text underneath the image reads,

*Electric light, heat, and transportation have also contributed their part to the freeing of men. These are America's slaves. Through their service American workers do more, earn more, and produce quality goods at lower cost than anywhere else in the world. The college-trained man is the first to grasp these facts which raise man from a mere*

*source of physical power to be a director of power, thus realizing the true economic value of the human mind.[12]*

It is important to unpack the ways in which imagery of enslaved people and references to those who labor as “slaves” were used during this time period, especially in the context of an advertisement for mechanical equipment. Looking at the picture that is attached to the ad, there is no question that it catches the eye. Beyond simply being used for shock value, however, the terminology in this ad makes it clear that the weight of the term “slavery” was not being used lightly — in fact, one could argue that its connotations in American society were used in order to draw more attention to the ad, and to make a stronger point.

Helga Kristin Hallgrimsdottir and Cecilia Benoit have written about the evolution of the term “wage slavery” as well as its implications during this time period,

*In postbellum America, references to wage slavery drew on both the historical memory of slavery and indenture as well as on a racialized meaning in which color was brought in to overlay and heighten critiques of work conditions for white workers (Roediger 1991: 72-73). While indentures for white workers had become very rare by 1880, reluctance to endorse emancipation practices by slave owners in many states meant that many black people remained enslaved or indentured as late as the mid 1880s. This concurrence helped to intensify the racialized meanings of slavery. Processes of urban migration, in which concurrent waves of white and black workers migrated to cities and competed for primarily unskilled industrial jobs only served to amplify race as a potent signifier of skill, class and manhood divisions within the working class and to undermine use of slavery as a global descriptor of those who worked for wages (Greene 1998:22; Roediger 1991).[13]*

This analysis echoes Mary Ann Irwin’s ideas regarding “white slavery,” and acknowledges the ways in which wage slavery had very different meanings for workers depending upon their race. One might even be able to argue that, by using the term “wage slavery” to refer to workers, the actual meaning of slavery is trivialized, given that all forms of work are referred to as “slavery.”

Another notable source from this time period is an article from 1919 titled “Negro Student Says ‘Darkey’ is Insult and Source of Violence.” Written by a black student named Herman Dreer, this article is one of the first times in this particular search through the archives that black voices began to come into the conversation regarding slavery. The article responds to an article that was ran in the Spectator 5 days earlier which referred to black students as “darkies.” Dreer writes further that the word had been used in talks on campus, by his professors and by his classmates, and claims that Columbia (and the country at large) cannot be a democracy when there exist “expressions of animosity as, “darkey” for Negro, “dago” for Italian, “Jap” for Japanese, “chink” for Chinese, and “cracker” for the poor white of the South are the common vocabulary of cultured folk. As long as this exists, America is no democracy, but an aristocracy, with its slavery and vices reigning without a rival.”[14]

Not only is this article one of the only sources written by a black student during this time period, but it is also one of the only sources to refer to slavery as a fundamentally American institution that continues to exist and function in a way that affects the lives of real people, specifically people of color and especially black people. Whereas many sources during this period sought to designate slavery as something that existed in the past and was abolished for the betterment of all society, or sought to simply compare it to something else entirely, this is one of the first times that we see it referred to in the context of present-day racism that affects real lives. This article foreshadows a trend that continues on in the archives, especially as more black students arrived on campus in the 1960s and were published in the Spectator in the midst of the protest and civil rights movements during this time.

## 1930s and 1940s

There were 47 mentions of “slavery” in the 1930s. As the beginning of World War II approached, slavery was on occasion referred to in reference to the draft (i.e. “the draft is slavery”). There were also mentions of anti-semitism as “mental slavery,” and anti-war demonstrations consistently utilized the phrase “war is slavery” to argue in favor of peace. One article, titled “The Year Before Us” and written in 1935 summed up



these sentiments, stating, "War or peace, freedom or slavery, it is for this generation to decide.[15]" During this time period, mentions of women as "slaves" also began to show up. One article published in 1930 argued in favor of gender equality and stated, "Woman was a slave before slavery as a political institution and social organization existed."[16]

Though the mentions of slavery began to grow more serious and tended to reference actual socio-political events during this time period, there were still some mentions of less serious subject matter in reference to slavery. One article, from the Spectator's "Communications" section and written by a student named Hugh Ryan Jr. in 1934, responded to an article written by Aristo Caldis that had criticized the working conditions in the Columbia dining halls. Ryan writes, "If blustering about this subject were of any avail, the capitalists would not still be forcing our football squad into slavery in the John Jay Grill, and Mr. Caldis would be in a more significant position today."[17]

In the 1940s, slavery was only referred to 17 times, and many of these mentions referred to the actual institution. The NAACP was referenced in relation to the subject for the first time in 1948, in an article titled "NAACP Hears Lecture On Slavery Tomorrow," which further elaborates, "The provocative subject "Who Were the Slaves in the South?" will be explored by Dr. Richard B. Morris, Visiting Professor of History."[18]

"White Slavery" is mentioned once in a 1948 review of 'Oklahoma' on Broadway, in explaining the plot of 'Oklahoma,' the article states, "There is a large six-foot rabbit named "Harvey" in the show and it seems as if someone is drunk and winds up in the sanitorium claiming that he is being sold into 'white slavery.' The point of the remark about "white slavery" is evidently that everyone is wearing white coats for the forenamed person, as we have explained before is in a sanitorium."[19]

Another notable article from this time period was published in 1949, titled "Columbia Professors Answer: Communists Teach at Colleges? Should the C.P. Be Outlawed?" Text underneath the headline explains that the Spectator had requested statements from several different Columbia professors regarding whether the communist party should be allowed in the United States and whether members of the

party should be allowed to teach at universities. Harry J. Carman, the Dean of Columbia College at the time, wrote the communism should *not* be taught in colleges and universities, and explained, “Any person who is a member of the Communist party is not free to seek or disseminate the truth. He or she is under rigid discipline to adhere to and disseminate communist gospel even though the gospel is opposed to truth. An atmosphere of slavery and not freedom prevails.”[20]

## 1950s

In the 1950s, slavery was mentioned 32 times. Ranging from talks on the “New South” to additions of books in the library, many of these mentions were in reference to the actual institution of slavery. Most of these instances also mentioned Lincoln and the Civil War, which may have had to do with the approaching 100th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. There were also numerous mentions of “political slavery” in many different places. One article, published in 1956, reported on a rally that Columbia students had to raise money to support students from Hungary following the Hungarian revolt. It told of the amount of money that had been raised in support of these students and also recounted the speeches that took place at the rally — in the middle of one of the speeches, a Hungarian student is quoted as having said that, “confronted with a choice between freedom and slavery, the students of Hungary ‘chose freedom.’” The article continues, “All three students declared their disappointment that ‘the revolution was not successful “for -the time being,” but were proud to have ‘torn the mask off false coexistence with dictatorship.’”[21] Continuing with the trend of using slavery as a reference point for any sort of current event, another article written by David Van Epstein in 1959 that reported on the Van Doren affair, a game show controversy at the time, concluded his statement with a pivot by saying, “How about letting Charles Van Doren solve his own problems in peace, and getting to work instead on a job that really needs to be done: saving this country from slavery to the butcher Khrushchev.”[22]

Slavery was also referenced in terms of atomic energy: In 1951, John R. Dunning was featured in an article titled “Dunning Speaks on Science's Advances” In the article, he echoes some of the sentiments made in the 1927 GE ad mentioned earlier by

arguing that machinery has the potential to help the human race by liberating us from “slavery,” and stating that countries like China are less advanced because they do not have the mechanical advancement that allows us to liberate people from “slavery.” Following with this theory, he “stressed the great importance of atomic power in supplying energy necessary for mankind's achievement of freedom, dignity and security.”[23]

Another notable article published in 1995 quoted “a longtime member of the 7th Detective Division, which handles cases involving public morals, gambling and vice along the upper west side of Manhattan.” as saying, “There is no longer any white slavery or organized prostitution, whatsoever, in the 24th Precinct.” The article, which was 10th in a series of articles focused on crime in the Columbia area, then proceeded to investigate the prostitution that still exists in the Morningside Heights area.[24] This was one of the last times that the term “white slavery” was used in the Columbia Spectator archives.

While the mentions of slavery during this time period tended to reference world events following World War II, there still remained a few uses of the term slavery in reference to campus life during the 1950s — one article, published in 1952 and written in support of a new residence hall policy, quotes Stanley H. Pretorious, a student from the Teachers College, as having said “Get down to earth Mr.Pacifist! History has proven, innumerable times, that people favoring your ideology have lived in slavery and died in poverty.”[25]

## 1960s

Beginning in the 1960s, the use of the term slavery changed significantly. The term was used 34 times; ads frequently ran featuring the slogans “TAXATION IS ROBBERY! CONSCRIPTION IS SLAVERY! WAR IS MURDER! support your local anarchist!” Another ad from 1969 reads, “national service is SLAVERY. dig it, Hayakawa! ‘that government is best which governs not at all.’

Slavery was also talked about quite a bit in reference to the civil rights movement — in talking about the racism and economic disenfranchisement that affected black americans at the time, slavery was identified as a source of these issues, as an institution with long-lasting effects. One article, published in 1963 on a 246 page report from the United States Commission on Civil Rights wrote that “We have come a far journey from a distant era in the 100 years since the Emancipation Proclamation. At the beginning of it, there was slavery. At the end, there is citizenship.”[26] Other articles, like one written by Marvin Kelly in 1968 titled “We Know the Man is Up to No Good” specifically referenced the economic circumstances of black americans, arguing:

*In the days immediately following the Emancipation certain free black men were compelled by circumstance to remain on the plantation as laborers, for which they were paid wages. With this money they had to purchase from their former slave masters food and clothing at prices which left them either with no money or, more often, with a debt to the white man. This system, which was only nominally distinct from actual slavery, persists presently in black communities where workers are paid wages (invariably unequal to the labor expended) by one white man, while others who control the economic interests of all black communities take the money from them for ridiculous rents, unfair time payments and other white-controlled necessities.[27]*

There was continued scholarship on the topic of slavery which showed up a few times in the archives. In 1967, for example, a new course was advertised by Professor Shenton on the “historical and sociological analysis of slavery.” Given that the women’s movement was also taking off during this time period, there were more mentions of slavery in reference to women’s subjugation — a 1969 article titled “Letters to the Masculine Ego” argues, “Can these young oafs really believe that the delights of their company are so irresistible that any ‘groovy responsible female’ would sell herself into domestic slavery as their “housekeeper and apt. mate” for a lousy forty-five dollars a month?”[28]

While mentions of slavery in the 1960s were very much moving away from the use of the term as a metaphor to address other social problems, there were still a few instances of the term being utilized to talk about something else. One of the most

notable mentions is an article from 1969, which argues that the prohibition of marijuana “amounts to the collective exercise of a kind of property rights over the individual—of an indirect, subtle use and disposal. Subtle or not, it amounts to slavery.”[29]

From the 1960s and onward, it becomes clear that, as black voices began to come more into the conversation and were given space to publish writing in the *Spectator*, the mentions of slavery became much more explicitly connected to the actual institution and its lasting effects on bodies and livelihoods. At the same time, while mentions of “slavery” still persisted well into this time period and beyond, around the 1960s these instances were much less likely to reference events on campus or less serious issues and much more likely to reference seemingly-serious debates of the time period.

## 1970s and 1980s

In the 1970s, slavery was mentioned 50 times. Mentions of its relation to the draft were far more frequent, likely in response to the draft for the Vietnam war and the widespread anti-war movement that followed. Ads continued to utilize the slogan “conscription is slavery,” one from 1971 for example utilized the slogan “Conscription is slavery, taxation is robbery, war is murder! Smash the state!” under the *Spec*’s classified advertisement section. Another article from this year which published the farewell statements of the senior *Spec* editors stated, “Military conscription is at best slavery, and at worst, murder.”[30] Another article[31], published in 1970, addressed the Selective Service Act, which was set to expire on June 30th of that year. The article called for the draft to be ended permanently and continuously referred to it as “selective slavery.”

On the other hand, some articles in the *Spectator* during this time period used the language of and discourse surrounding slavery to write in support of the Vietnam war by comparing it to the Civil War. One ad, which ran in the May 1972 *Spectator* to advertise a free copy of the *National Review*, stated: “THE VERY REVEREND Henry Aliord, Dean of Canterbury, denounced the United States for ‘ifs reckless and fruitless

maintenance of the most cruel and unprincipled war in the history of the world.' We are used to such hyperbolic condemnations from clergymen nowadays; but the Dean made this particular statement in 1863, and the war he denounced was the one that ended slavery.”[32] Slavery was also evoked in a human rights context, more specifically to refer to apartheid in South Africa and to address the question of divestment. On article, written in 1979 after Columbia divested \$2.7 million from banks that were related to South Africa, called for the institution to divest even more and stated, “The apartheid regime is the institutionalization of oppression and injustice as unconscionably evil as anything that existed in the American South during slavery and Jim Crow days.”[33]

Another notable article from this time period was written by a white student in 1975 arguing in favor of affirmative action. Ray Patient writes, “In my own case, both branches of my family arrived here well after slavery ended and labor movements triumphed. Nevertheless, because I am WASP, I have a greater chance at upward mobility than, say, most blacks or Latinos, because the bottom-rung position of those groups as a whole places even my own immigrant-status above their status. In a sense then, anything I gain I owe in part to people who were never beholden to me. Affirmative action may be an oppressive evil, but because it is the sole certain guarantee of equal opportunity, it is a necessary evil.”[34] It is interesting to consider the ways in which this student acknowledges their economic and racial privileges and ways in which they are related to the institution of slavery, identifying themselves as a WASP while simultaneously exempting themselves from the institution of slavery itself. At the same time, this source is interesting as it is one of the first times in the Spec archives that we begin to see an acknowledgment of the privilege that white people have in society in relation to social mobility and how it connects back to the necessity of affirmative action.

In the 1980s there were 67 mentions of slavery. Comparisons of the draft and of apartheid to slavery continued, but all in all, mentions of slavery during this decade tended to refer more to the actual institution and its lasting effects on black lives on campus. For instance, in 1982, slavery was first brought up in reference to the question of reparations in an article titled “Do You Take Credit Cards?,” which begins, “The government of the United States of America owes the Black nation in this country its

God-given lands. This country owes the Black nation trillions of dollars by virtue of Civil Reparations. These Reparations are based on 244 years of slave labor.” [35]

There were also more mentions of black womens’ experiences specifically. In 1983, for example, an article titled “Bible interpretations may be sexist” reported on a day-long program at Barnard called “Women and Religion: Feminists of Faith” which featured various speakers. One speaker, Reverend Kate Cannon of the Union Theological Seminary, who was the first African-American woman ordained in the United Presbyterian Church[36], “called black women “the most vulnerable, exploited members of American society,” because they have been subject not only to sexism but to racism and slavery. ‘Spirituality can only be understood in enlightenment of the black woman's past,’ she said.”[37]

While many Spectator articles during the 1980s began to talk more specifically about the actual institution of slavery, its effect on black students, and on current efforts for black liberation, there was also backlash evident in the archives regarding institutional criticism. Particularly striking is an article from 1988 which ran on April 1st as part of the April Fools edition of the Spectator, the “Columbia Mashed P’tator.” The article, titled “No Comment Pollack Wants a Cracker,” features a drawing of Robert E. Pollack, the Dean of Columbia at that time, on the body of a parrot. Written by Winston Vanderbilt Morgan IV, the article mocks those who were presumably criticizing Columbia for its history of racism, sexism and imperialism, stating:

*Take the names of the buildings in which we are forced to live and study: John Jay Hall (a white, bourgeoisie, slave owner); Marcellus Hartley Dodge (another one); Nicholas Murray Butler (a fascist Hitler wanna-be); and East Campus (by not calling this building South Campus, Pollack is implicitly denying the roles that African and Latin American people have played in the foundation of modern society). Perhaps Pollack thinks that having one building named after the incognegro Alexander Hamilton is representative enough. He's wrong.*

*Littered about this campus are sculptures of bourgeois white males. Where are the oppressed women? Where are the victimized people of color? Where are the exploited*

*poor? We demand fair and equal representation of our culturally diverse community—in life and in marble! We demand that Pollack erect new statues, representative of all the oppressed people in the world. If this demand is not met within the next three minutes, we demand that Pollack personally take down all the statues and construct a new Museum of the Oppressors in which to house them.*

Morgan concludes, “Columbia's founding day—which Pollack publicizes at every conceivable opportunity—is a date in which the United States was still openly endorsing the racist, derogatory, imperialistic, oppressive institution of slavery. Why does Pollack repeatedly and proudly call attention to this time period which makes a sham of the very principles Columbia purports to uphold?[38] While there are many different ways in which this article could be interpreted, it is interesting to consider the fact that, while institutional criticism is parodied in the article, it is also acknowledged that many of the founders of Columbia for whom the buildings on campus are named owned slaves and perpetuated harmful ideologies, which demonstrates that there was at least some awareness on campus during this time of Columbia’s involvement with the institution of slavery, and that activists and students were beginning to speak out against it to the point that this parody article would be worth writing and publishing in the Spectator.

## 1990s & 2000s

The use of the term slavery really began to take off in the 1990s, with 175 mentions. It was brought up quite a lot in reference to the question of abortion, with some anti-choice individuals comparing abortion to slavery. There was also pushback against this particular usage of the word — one article published in 1990 by a Barnard Student named Kathy Everly addressed this phenomenon directly, “Secondly, to equate abortion laws with slavery is tasteless and insulting to all involved. Abortion is a human right. Slavery is an archaic system exercised by those members of a completely distinct mindset than that of modern men and women.”[39] Everly’s statement is particularly poignant as it is one of the first times in the archives that we begin to see a direct criticism of the misuse of the term “slavery” in order to talk about other things.



The debate surrounding affirmative action continued, as one article quoted Roxanne Smithers, the president of BSO at the time, “There's no way 500 years of slavery, racism, Jim Crow, rape, murder, and poverty can be erased by 25 years of social programs.”[40] Another continued debate was the question of whether or not the confederate flag should have been allowed on campus. One article addressed this in reference to slavery, stating, “They seem to forget (or have they?) that the Confederate flag is a symbol of the slavery that existed before the Civil War; it is also the rallying symbol for Ku Klux Klan members. So who says hateful speech does not lead to hateful actions?”[41]

Slavery was also mentioned in reference to other parts in the world: in this case, events in Sudan were compared to slavery, as were the conditions in Thai and Chinese sweatshops. Many new books were added to the library as an interest in scholarship regarding the topic of slavery returned to campus, and Professor of History Barbara Fields was mentioned during this era, including during a panel that addressed the presence (or lack thereof) of minorities in the academic curriculum at Columbia. During the panel, Fields is quoted as having said, “Slavery is part of the white man's history. Slavery is not something African-Americans created by themselves.”[42]

Protests against Columbus Day also started to gain traction during this era, and slavery is mentioned for the first time in reference to the treatment of indigenous people in the United States. In an article critiquing the celebration of Thanksgiving in America, Daryl Scott, a Columbia Professor of African American History, is quoted as having said, “Now, a lot of liberal folks like to talk about how terrible slavery was. Where are the tears for the Indians? We're talking about genocide, folks.”[43] We might begin to delve into the implications of such a statement, especially coming from a black professor of African American History during a time period when slavery was beginning to be talked about much more as an institution that continues to have lasting harm on black people in America rather than simply a thing of the past. Professor Scott's statement implies that there was a decent amount of talk on campus regarding the horrors of slavery during this time period, but it also hints at further injustices that were being consciously ignored. It is also interesting that he references specifically “liberal folks,” perhaps

hinting at a performative disavowal of slavery by white elites in order to gain some sort of social or academic capital during this time period.

While the 1990s marked the beginning of an increase in mentions of slavery in the *Columbia Spectator*, the 2000s saw an even greater increase, with 236 mentions during this decade. The vast majority of these mentions came after Dr. Ruth Simmons appointed a Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice at Brown, with many many mentions calling into question whether or not Columbia should take steps to address its own ties to the institution of slavery. One article, titled “Columbia and Slavery,” and written by Alfred L. Brophy talked about the discoveries at Brown and began to address Columbia and Barnard’s own connections to the institution of slavery.

Within the debate around Columbia’s history with slavery, there was also a great deal of discussion surrounding the topic of reparations. One major topic of controversy was over an article written by David Horowitz, titled ““Ten Reasons Why Reparations for Slavery is a Bad Idea —and Racist Too,” and published in the California State University at Long Beach newspaper. The *Spectator* frequently published information surrounding protests to this statement as well as responses to the article during the 2000s.

In addition to these discussions, there was advocacy for an ethnic studies program at Barnard, and several classes were added at Columbia on the topic of slavery, including ones called “Slavery and Emancipation In the Atlantic World” and “Slavery, liberty, and the U.S. Constitution.” The protests against Columbus day continued, and one student responded to them with an article titled “Columbus: As American as Apple Pie.” In the article, Michael Ricci makes an argument for the ways in which Columbus day can be celebrated as a testament to the strength of immigrant groups while also acknowledging that Columbus was harmful figure who represents a genocidal and colonial history. He begins the article with a disclaimer, “Before I continue, let me set the record straight: Christopher Columbus is responsible for the advent of Western slavery, to some degree.”[44] While the article ultimately argued in favor of Columbus day and the yearly barbeque that the Columbia College Republicans would hold each year in honor of it, Ricci’s statement “setting the record straight” might

indicate the ways in which the discourse surrounding colonialism had shifted on campus, to the point that anyone writing in support of the day would feel the need to give such a disclaimer. Throughout the article, Ricci also makes it clear that he supports the right of those protesting the Columbus Day Barbeque to speak their minds and hold their ground, again giving indication to the type of discourse that was happening on campus during this time.

There were numerous discussions of Black History Month and MLK day in the archives, and some articles began to discuss the experiences of black students in the classroom. One article, titled “Many Say They Feel Racism,” addressed the ways in which racism appears on campus and how it moved students to stay within their racial groups in academic and extracurricular settings. The article begins by stating, “Ebony Wiresinger, BC '04, said that when slavery comes up in class discussion, all eyes turn to her. ‘It’s as though I was in slavery yesterday,’ she said, laughing. Then she paused. ‘It’s hurtful.’”

While the majority of the mentions of slavery during the 2000s pertain directly to the institution and its after effects, it is worth mentioning that there were still some articles which continued to use the term as a metaphor. A 2007 article by a student named Jennie Morgan, for example, titled “I’m a Slave for You” (likely a reference to the Britney Spears song “I’m a Slave 4 U” which came out 6 years prior) compares unpaid internships to slavery, stating, “In ancient times, you had to go down to Egypt for slavery, or be conquered by the Romans. But in modern times, we are the first generation to have voluntarily chosen this lifestyle, and luckily, it’s available right here in New York City.”[45]

## 2010s

In the 2010s, discourse surrounding slavery died back down, with only 62 mentions. Some were in reference to the election of Barack Obama and the film “12 Years A Slave,” and more passing mentions of the topic showed up during this decade. A few articles from 2010 mentioned the fact that Eric Foner had won that year’s Pulitzer

Prize for his book, “The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery.” There were also a few mentions of expanding the core curriculum and some hits associated with the affirmative action debate sparked by the major 2012 Supreme Court case. Articles continued to criticize Columbus day during this era, and a seminar was added to the Columbia curriculum with the same name as Eric Foner’s Pulitzer Prize winning book.

There were multiple different mentions of hip hop, including an article that identifies Kanye West’s “Yeezus,” released in 2013, as “[rapping] about slavery” and one that addresses the intersection of hip hop and gender, stating, “We have been emasculated so long as a people. It goes way back, back to the days of slavery—it was an emasculating experience, especially for the men. We’d been stripped of our manhood.”[46]

While there were almost no comparisons of slavery to something else during this decade, one notable exception is a 2014 article features an interview with Eric Foner. Liz Landsdale, the Columbia student who interviewed Professor Foner, asked “Is history being put to any new uses?” to which Foner replied that history is a very democratic field, one which can be put to use by essentially anyone. He went on,

*Historical analogies are also bandied about by political leaders, often imperfectly. [Ben Carson] recently said “Obamacare” is the worst thing to happen since slavery, and some conservative politician ran with that...These kinds of things are often very misleading when applied to the current world. I’m afraid the job of the historian often is to be a killjoy; to say “No, no, what you’re saying doesn’t make much sense.”[47]*

## Conclusion

Foner’s quote is a fitting note to end on, as he acknowledges the ways in which “imperfect analogies” are utilized in order to make a point, often falsely, as well as the historian’s responsibility to step in and say something when history is being put to use in the wrong ways. Throughout the Columbia Spectator archives, “Slavery” was used as a

metaphor in many many different ways and for many different reasons. In some cases, it was used to make national and international tragedies and crises seem more relevant, and in other cases it was used to draw attention to inhumane labor conditions. It was used to evoke moral panic in relation to sex trafficking and was even utilized when calling for the legalization of marijuana. While the discourse on campus surrounding slavery often avoided the subject itself, black voices, especially in the 1960s and beyond, helped to steer the conversation in order to talk more explicitly about the institution of slavery and its ties to Columbia. This was especially evident in the 1990s with the arrival of prominent black professors on campus, and the conversation became centered even more around reparations and Columbia's specific ties to slavery during the 2000s as a result of the crucial project that Dr. Ruth Simmons launched at Brown University. As the 2010s come to a close, we may begin to think about the ways in which we use language to talk about slavery and enslaved people, as well as the ways in which we are *not* talking about these things. While mapping discourse patterns in a campus newspaper makes it difficult to draw concrete conclusions, in my research it has become extremely clear that when black voices are brought into conversations regarding slavery, the term takes on a very different meaning and is rarely appropriated in order to talk about other things — making it clear that these voices are absolutely crucial in thinking about how Columbia as an institution can continue to acknowledge and address its own ties to slavery in the years and decades to come.

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