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Jada Q. Northover
Macalester College, jnorthov@macalester.edu

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**On the Backs of Slaves:
A Comparative Study on the Glamorization of Colonialism at the University of
Amsterdam, Harvard University and Georgetown University**

Jada Quinn Northover

Abstract

This capstone project explores the intricate relationship between colonialism, the slave trade, and higher education, focusing on the University of Amsterdam, Harvard University and Georgetown University. It argues that these institutions are deeply intertwined with slavery and colonialism, shaping their foundations and contributing to present-day structural inequalities in higher education. This essay highlights the perpetuation of elitism and exclusion by critiquing the University of Amsterdam for celebrating the Dutch East India Company (VOC) without acknowledging its connection to the slave trade. It also discusses Harvard University's historical ties to slavery and the slave trade, including the institutions use of slave labor and their scientific research that reinforced racial hierarchies. Georgetown University's connection to the Jesuit religion and their involvement in the sale and use of slaves is explored while also emphasizing the institution's recent efforts for acknowledgment and reparations. This capstone concludes by calling for a more inclusive and critical approach to higher education, recognizing the need for ongoing examination and acknowledgment to address the lasting impact of colonialism on academic institutions and advocating for increased accessibility and racial equity in higher education.

Keywords:

Harvard University, Georgetown University, University of Amsterdam, Reparations, Slavery, Colonialism, Dutch East India Company, Massachusetts Bay Colony

The relationship between colonialism, the slave trade and higher education is complex, intertwined and transnational. Understanding the impact of colonialism on higher education is essential for comprehending the structural inequalities and epistemological challenges that persist in educational systems today. In this essay I will compare the University of Amsterdam, Georgetown University and Harvard University. I will argue that these institutions are intrinsically linked with slavery and colonialism and that this connection is the foundation of these elite and inaccessible institutions.

As European powers embarked on imperial conquests to the Americas, the establishment of educational institutions emerged as a strategic component of their colonial endeavors. Driven by economic motivations, these powers utilized education to teach a local elite, promoting cultural assimilation, and reinforcing social hierarchies. Religious teachings and the creation of administrative classes were integral aspects of this educational strategy. By shaping educational teachings, colonial powers sought to legitimize their rule, perpetuate cultural dominance, and foster long-term economic exploitation. The deliberate combination of education with imperial projects shaped the social, economic, and cultural landscapes of the colonized regions during the Age of Imperialism. These imperial conquests were usually tied to the expansion of the slave trade and the wealth that was accumulated from it. The slave trade was not only financially supporting the emergence of colonies in America but also the establishment of power in European countries.¹ The Netherlands was home to one of these colonial powers that dominated during the Age of Imperialism. Named the Dutch East India Company, this company was a powerful group with administrative, legal, diplomatic and military influence. Established in 1602, the company was responsible for forming trade relations between the Netherlands and Asia. Their primary aim was to monopolize trade in the Indian Ocean.²

The Dutch East India Company, which translates to Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) in Dutch, was a prominent colonial company during the time, and

¹Jonathan A. Bush, "Free to Enslave: The Foundations of Colonial American Slave Law," *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 5, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 417-470

²Andrade, Tonio. "The Dutch East India Company in Global History: A Historiographical Reconnaissance." In *The Dutch and English East India Companies: Diplomacy, Trade and Violence in Early Modern Asia*, edited by Adam Clulow and Tristan Mostert, 239–56. Amsterdam University Press, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv9hvf2.14>.

played a significant role in the production of academia. The VOC financed many maritime expeditions in order to map more of the world. These endeavors led to the expansion of geographic knowledge. The maps of coastlines and new territories that the VOC encountered and documented played an important role in the expansion of the European understanding of the world. Leaders and members of the VOC often documented their encounters with local cultures, contributing to early ethnographic studies of other countries and continents. These documentations of different languages, social structures and customs helped to provide insight into new societies that the company encountered on their trade routes. These accounts were very Eurocentric and helped define European perceptions of non-Western cultures. The VOC often viewed the countries that they visited as less developed and this mentality aided in the feelings of superiority that Europe was developing. The VOC's documentation of different languages helped to facilitate trade interactions and contributed to the development of early linguistic scholarship. The economic and political influence that the Company held gave them the power needed to establish educational practices that served the interests of their colonial administration, such as the importance of trade and exploration, and in turn, allowed them to control the narrative to support their endeavors of expansion and control. The VOC has been credited as a significant actor in Dutch expansion and global trade. Historically, the Company has been celebrated for their impressive and profitable trade merchandise, yet one of their most profitable trading endeavors is less acknowledged today.³

During the height of the VOC's power and monopoly in trade, the Company was successfully operating in the business of forced human migration, otherwise known as the human slave trade.⁴ In the article *The Dutch East India Company and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelago Worlds, 1602–1795*, the author, Matthias van Rossum, writes that "The VOC was not only a 'merchant' company but also functioned as military power, government, and even agricultural producer. In these roles, the VOC was involved in the forced relocation (and forced mobilization) of people in direct and indirect ways. This entailed commodified slavery, in which persons were

³Andrade, "The Dutch East India Company in Global History: A Historiographical Reconnaissance."

⁴ ibid

considered property and sellable, but also a wider landscape of forced relocations (deportation, non-commodified transfers) and coerced labor regimes (corvée, debt, and caste slavery).”⁵ The Dutch slave trade was expansive and “acquired the majority of their slaves indirectly through purchase from indigenous suppliers, which, similar to the other universal religions of Buddhism and Islam, was rendered in religious humanitarian terms as a ‘work of Christian compassion’ based on the alleged material and spiritual salvation of the individual slave’s body and soul”⁶ The VOC were also able to capture slaves during their many conflicts abroad and were responsible for transporting thousands of enslaved people to various Dutch colonies in South Africa, the East Indies and the Caribbean. Using VOC ships, slaves were transferred and traded for various goods and commodities along the trade routes. They were also sold into private households and used as general laborers in the colonies. These slaves were treated awfully; not only were they ripped from their homes and separated from their families, they were subject to violent physical abuse, sexual exploitation, inhumane living conditions, and forced labor at the hands of the VOC. The Dutch East India Company has been memorialized and celebrated in the prestigious University of Amsterdam today, ignoring their violent past and deep connection with the slave trade.⁷

The University of Amsterdam (UvA) has a sprawling campus with buildings nestled all around the small city of Amsterdam. Founded in 1632, the university currently enrolls more than 30,000 students and has an endowment of almost 500 million euros, making UvA one of the largest and most comprehensive universities in Europe.⁸ Inside this prestigious university is the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie Room, a physical display of colonial and elite power in Amsterdam. The VOC room was built in 1990 as a replica of the original Dutch East India Company headquarters, which stood in the same place that is now one of the many academic buildings for the

⁵Rossum, Matthias van. “The Dutch East India Company and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean and Indonesian Archipelago Worlds, 1602–1795.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, 2020, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.403>.

⁶Vink, Markus. “‘The World’s Oldest Trade’: Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century.” *Journal of World History* 14, no. 2 (2003): 131–77. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2003.0026>.

⁷Andrade, “The Dutch East India Company in Global History: A Historiographical Reconnaissance.”

⁸Amsterdam, Universiteit van. “Facts and Figures.” University of Amsterdam, April 20, 2022. <https://www.uva.nl/en/about-the-uva/about-the-university/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures.html>.

University of Amsterdam.⁹ The room is used for graduation celebrations, guest speakers and academic classes. The University of Amsterdam glamorizes their country's racist history by their memorialization of the Dutch East India Company in the form of the VOC room. I studied abroad last Spring at the University of Amsterdam, where I took a class entitled *The Netherlands in the World* which held some of its lectures in that room. It was in that class that I wrote an essay entitled *Glamorizing Colonialism: The Relationship Between Higher Education, The VOC and the Slave Trade*. This paper was poorly received by my professor, as it called attention to the racist history of the VOC and the way in which the university was celebrating that history instead of condemning it. My paper called attention to aspects of the city's history that they have chosen to ignore and my professor was taken aback by the content of my paper as it called out so many of the issues Amsterdam has chosen to avoid. When writing this paper I found many similarities in the ways that the University of Amsterdam and prestigious American universities were built on the backs of the slave trade. Writing that paper during my semester abroad in Amsterdam was what inspired me to pursue this capstone project.

Amsterdam as a city prides themselves on their racially colorblind society. The progressive Dutch culture in the city promotes racial equality and believes that in order to be racially equal one should not acknowledge racial differences. The Netherlands has a long tradition of liberal politics and has been at the forefront for some extremely liberal agendas such as the decriminalization and tolerization of soft drugs (ex. marijuana and mushrooms) and the laws surrounding legalized assisted suicide.¹⁰ Yet, the Netherlands liberal society and self proclaimed racial color blindness has allowed them to become tolerant to traditions that exemplify overt racism and have become so embedded into their culture that they don't even realize its implications. On November 16th, in preparation for Christmas, Dutch children will crowd the streets to celebrate the arrival of Sinterklaas (Saint Nicholas) and his "black faced helpers: 'Black Petes,' or 'Zwarte

⁹Amsterdam, Universiteit van. "Project Launched on Colonial Past of VOC-Zaal." University of Amsterdam, December 8, 2022. <https://www.uva.nl/en/shared-content/faculteiten/en/faculteit-der-geesteswetenschappen/news/2022/12/project-launched-on-colonial-past-of-voc-zaal.html>.

¹⁰Buruma, Ybo. "Dutch Tolerance: On Drugs, Prostitution, and Euthanasia." *Crime and Justice* 35, no. 1 (2007): 73–113. <https://doi.org/10.1086/650185>.

Pieten.”¹¹ The racist display of white Dutch people dressed in clown-esque outfits with black afro wigs, overdrawn red lips and black painted skin is accepted and celebrated on this holiday. The absence of rejection against this blatantly stereotypical and racist character exemplifies the blindspots of racial color blindness. Under the guise of color blindness, there is the ignoring of issues of racism in the country which demonstrates their lack of acceptance of their own internal issues with racial equity. The same societal ignorance is exemplified in the way the Dutch East India Company is celebrated at the University of Amsterdam.

The replica of the VOC room was built in 1990 but was closed by the University of Amsterdam in 2022 due to the growing uneasiness about the meaning behind the room. Despite these negative feelings, the room was reopened again in 2023 with the purpose to both celebrate the history of the Dutch East India Company as well as educate about colonial history. The argument for the replicated VOC room to remain at the University of Amsterdam is for the sake of education.¹² This argument leads to the discussion of education vs. glorification. The replica does not acknowledge any of the connections between the VOC and the international slave trade and instead serves as a beautiful room to hold celebrations and classes. Without the proper acknowledgement, the room stands in a place of higher education that promotes elitism and exclusion, and encourages the celebration of colonialism and slavery. The university attempted to use the room for educational purposes surrounding colonial education, yet the very existence of the room in the university is harmful and perpetuates a narrative of tolerance towards to the violent history of the VOC and its role in the slave trade. The University of Amsterdam preaches acceptance of all people regardless of race yet they continue to memorialize the violent history of the VOC. The creation of the VOC replica room in the University of Amsterdam is a blatant display of colonial celebration and in turn, a celebration of the history of slavery and brutality that the VOC holds. The VOC’s involvement in the international slave trade is not a history that should be celebrated. When examining the way that Amsterdam approaches race and racial equity I have

¹¹Groot, Nadja, and Eefje De Kroon. “Read about the ‘Black Pete’ Debate in the Netherlands.” Open Society Foundations. Accessed December 19, 2023.

<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/black-pete-and-legacy-racism-netherlands>.

¹²Amsterdam, Universiteit van. “Project Launched on Colonial Past of VOC-Zaal.”

found that it is very different from the way in which the United States does, lacking the hyper-awareness around race that is seen in America.

When I came back to school after studying abroad, I wanted to look into the relationship between American universities and the slave trade. During the 17th century, in the United States, slave traders and merchants were the backbone of the colonial economy, making up the elite population in the colonies which were responsible for the development of colonial institutions of the time, such as churches, libraries and universities. The authors of the book *Slavery and the University: Histories and Legacy* write that “Colonial academies were born in the slave economy, and the same economy funded the expansion of the educational infrastructure in the early years of the United States.”¹³ The academy has become “a beneficiary and defender of slavery and colonialism.”¹⁴ The connection between higher education and colonialism sheds light on the intricate interplay between knowledge production, power dynamics, and the enduring legacies of colonialism within academic institutions. In the South, plantations supported the economy and the wealth accumulated from them helped to fund the creation of universities such as The University of Alabama.¹⁵ Although there were not established plantations in the North, the Northern economy in America and their establishment of economic institutions were still deeply rooted in the slave trade.¹⁶

Harvard University was founded in 1636 as a small Puritan school in New England. It was modeled around traditional English universities and taught ministers in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In teaching ministers, Harvard was responsible for educating the social and political leaders in Massachusetts during its early years as a religious colony. The Massachusetts Bay Colony wanted to establish themselves in New England and relied heavily on the Caribbean slave trade for wealth and power. The Colony looked to import slave goods, such as molasses and sugar, from the Caribbean islands in exchange for lumber, ships, rum and fish. They also participated directly in the exchange of Caribbean slaves who were responsible for growing the goods that they

¹³Brophy, Alfred L., James T. Campbell, and Leslie M. Harris. *Slavery and the university: Histories and legacies*, 22 Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2019.

¹⁴Wilder, Craig Steven. Essay. In *Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities*, 2. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014.

¹⁵Brophy, Campbell, and Harris. *Slavery and the university: Histories and legacies*

¹⁶Wilder,. Essay. In *Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America's Universities*,

were trading. While the plantation slave regime that was seen so heavily and held so much power and influence in the South didn't exist in New England, The Massachusetts Bay Colony encouraged the slave trade in the North and introduced the practice to Harvard University.¹⁷

Harvard University was established by the Massachusetts Bay Colony whose wealth and power were deeply connected to slavery, establishing the connection between Harvard University and the slave trade. The connection ran deeper than just monetary funding for the university; prominent philanthropists, professors and leaders of the university had slaves. Harvard professors, such as Increase Mather (1685 - 1701) and Benjamin Wadsworth (1725 -1737), had slaves. While it was not directly stated in historical documents about the university, it was also more than likely that slaves were used for manual labor, such as cooking and cleaning, at the institution. The current estate awarded to the president of the college at Harvard, Elmwood, was built by Thomas Oliver. Oliver was the "heir of a prominent Antiguan sugar plantar and slave owner."¹⁸ Oliver lived briefly at Elmwood with the slaves that he owned and while it is not completely clear if slave labor was used to build the estate, Elmwood is still used to this day. Oliver was one of the many wealthy families that amassed their fortune through the sugar plantations and slave trade.¹⁹ The Royall family was another family whose wealth was tied to the Caribbean sugar plantations. The Royall family was responsible for the establishment of the law curriculum at Harvard. The family left a small fortune to Harvard in order to establish the law school, a fortune acquired through the labor of their slaves in a plantation in Antigua. The Royall family coat of arms was the Harvard Law School emblem until, after months of student protests, it was removed in 2016.²⁰

In 1850, in the classrooms of the elite institution that is Harvard University slaves Alfred, Delia, Renty, Fassena, Dran, Jack and Kem stood naked, being photographed for a Harvard Professor, Louis Agassiz. Agassiz, one of the natural science professors,

¹⁷"Slavery in New England and at Harvard." Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University. Accessed December 20, 2023.

<https://legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/report/slavery-in-new-england-and-at-harvard>.

¹⁸Brophy, Campbell, and Harris. *Slavery and the university: Histories and legacies*

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰Mackey, Robert. "Harvard Law School Wants to Remove Slaveholder's Crest from Logo." *The Intercept*, March 8, 2016.

<https://theintercept.com/2016/03/07/harvard-law-school-wants-to-remove-slaveholders-crest-from-logo/>.

used these photographs as part of his research to support his claim that African people were a separate species and that those of European descent were part of the superior race. This research was a part of the many scientific claims that came out of Harvard reinforcing racial hierarchies and black inferiority. These claims were then used to support movements against Reconstruction after the Civil War.²¹

Harvard became less directly entangled with the slave trade in the wake of the Revolution and the outlawing of slavery. In the beginning of the 19th century, Harvard changed from a Calvinist university to a Unitarian one, reflecting a push towards more liberal education policies. This push led them away from the more obvious ties to slavery and marked their emergence as a more modern institution. This, however, did not stop Harvard from accepting donations from families who made their fortunes on trading slave produced goods as well as slaves themselves.²² In order to encourage reparations and acknowledgement of their racist history, Harvard created the Harvard & The Legacy of Slavery Documents and Archive in 2019. This open source archive is available on the Harvard website and serves as a place where any historical documents regarding Harvard's involvement in the slave trade can be found. The university also released a report full of suggestions for reparation practices such as honoring enslaved people through research, memorialization and curriculum and developing further partnerships with Black colleges and universities. The university pledged \$100 million in order to fund the implementation of these suggested reparations.²³ While Harvard University has made strides towards reconciliation there is still a lot of progress that needs to be made in the American system of higher education. Harvard University was not unique in its connection to slavery, many other institutions of higher education in America hold ties to the slave trade, such as Georgetown University in Washington, DC.

The slave trade and Georgetown University are inextricably linked. During the 16th, 17th and 18th century, the Society of Jesus, also known as Jesuits, were one of the largest slaveholding institutions in America. The Jesuits arrived in Maryland in the

²¹Bishop, Thomas R. "Harvard Has No Right to Own the Images of the Enslaved: Opinion: The Harvard Crimson." Opinion | The Harvard Crimson. Accessed December 20, 2023. <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2022/2/28/bishop-agassiz-daguerreotypes-bhm/>.

²²"Slavery in New England and at Harvard." Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.

²³ "Harvard & The Legacy of Slavery." Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University. Accessed December 20, 2023. <https://legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/>.

1630's in order to escape religious persecution in England. In order to sustain themselves, they began opening and operating tobacco farms and by 1838 the Jesuits owned six major plantations in Maryland which covered nearly 12,000 acres and held hundreds of slaves.²⁴ The Jesuits were responsible for funding some of the most prestigious institutions of higher education in America using the money that they made through their tobacco plantations. Georgetown University was founded in 1789 by Archbishop John Carroll and is the oldest Jesuit and Catholic institution of higher education in the United States²⁵. Archbishop John Carroll owned slaves, as did many of the founders and benefactors of the university. From the time of Georgetown's opening until emancipation in Washington, DC in 1862, enslaved people worked on the campus. The presence of slaves on campus was substantial. In 1814, almost 1 in 10 people on campus were enslaved. Some enslaved people were owned by Jesuits who worked at the school and others were 'rented' by student's families or locals in Georgetown. They served as cooks, maids, carpenters and valets for the students. Students and faculty gave "moral legitimacy to the slave economy"²⁶ by accepting it into their daily lives. Their endorsement of slavery was not surprising at the time. Georgetown was in support of the Confederacy during the Civil War and they had a large majority of students and alumni who fought on the Confederate side. In 1838, the priests who had established Georgetown were deeply in debt due to their operating expenses and poor financial decision-making and as the first Catholic institution of higher education, the prospect of closing was not an option. The heads of school at the time believed that the only way to save the school was to sell their slaves. In 1838, Georgetown University sold 272 enslaved people in order to raise money to fund the continuation of the institution. The amount made from the sale would amount to around \$3.3 million today. The use of slave labor and trade money to sustain one of the most prestigious institutions of higher education in America proves that "The original 'institutional morality' of Georgetown, the

²⁴"The 1838 Jesuit Slave Sale: Finding Your Roots." PBS LearningMedia, March 5, 2021. <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/1838-jesuit-slave-sale-video/finding-your-roots-season-six/>.

²⁵"Georgetown University History." Human Resources, November 15, 2023. <https://hr.georgetown.edu/>.

²⁶ Bhabha, Jacqueline, Margareta Matache, and Caroline Elkins. Essay. In *Time for Reparations: A Global Perspective*, 38. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021.

Jesuits, the Catholic Church, and much of the antebellum United States was, in a word, proslavery.”²⁷

In September of 2015, Georgetown University constructed the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation in order to acknowledge and take steps towards reparations for the descendants of enslaved people at Georgetown. The group has met with many descendants of those enslaved on Jesuit plantations during the 18th and 19th centuries in pursuit of “trust-building, truth-telling, racial healing, and transformation”²⁸. For a year the group conducted these meetings and did historical research into the role that Georgetown played in the support of slavery and in September of 2016 presented the president of the university with a 100 page report on their recommendations for reparations. They identified five specific categories of focus for these reparations - Archives, Ethics and Reconciliation, Local History, Memorialization, Outreach and used these categories to make suggestions for reparations. The university also donated \$27 million dollars to the Descendants Truth & Reconciliation Foundation which is a private nonprofit organization created by the Society of Jesus and the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation in order to make reparations directly to the descendants of the 272 slaves sold to keep Georgetown’s doors open.²⁹ Georgetown University has taken strides to acknowledge their racist past as well as made efforts towards reconciliation yet these efforts can not unlink America’s higher education system to the slave trade.

The historical connection between colonialism and higher education unveils a complex relationship that has shaped educational systems within colonized territories. Higher education has historically been tailored to the elite, perpetuating exclusion and marginalization of certain communities. At the University of Amsterdam, this exclusionary nature is reflected in the lack of diversity among the undergraduate level, highlighting the ongoing challenges of accessibility and inclusivity. Attending higher education is a privilege that many are not afforded and while the University of

²⁷Rothman, Adam. “Slavery and Institutional Morality at Georgetown.” Wiley Online Library. Accessed December 20, 2023. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1468-4446.12600>.

²⁸“History: Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation at GU.” Georgetown University, September 6, 2022. <https://www.georgetown.edu/slavery/history/>.

²⁹“Georgetown Reflects on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation.” Georgetown University, April 19, 2023. <https://www.georgetown.edu/slavery/>.

Amsterdam is considered one of the more affordable universities in Amsterdam it has an acceptance rate of 4%, showing that it is not an institution that is readily accessible to everyone.³⁰ There are not any publicly documented statistics surrounding the racial breakdown of the student body and this noticeable gap demonstrates how racial dialogue is not a critical focus of the University. Being a student of color at the University of Amsterdam for the semester, I can speak to the lack of diversity at the undergraduate level, seeing as though I was the only black person in all of my classes during that semester. The presence of the VOC replica room within the university, celebrating the history of the VOC, raises concerns about glorifying a colonial past and disregarding the brutal realities of the slave trade. While the argument for the room's existence may be rooted in education, the lack of acknowledgement of the Dutch East India Company's role in the slave trade and the promotion of elitism and exclusion within higher education underscore the harmful effects of celebrating colonial history.

Georgetown University and Harvard University both reflect the elite and exclusive values that they held during their start. Both with acceptance rates of under 13%, these institutions continue to be inaccessible to the general public and even less to African American students.³¹ The Supreme Court's ruling on affirmative action rejected the programs in place at Harvard University, writing that "the race-conscious admissions programs at Harvard...were unlawful and sharply curtailing a policy that had long been a pillar of higher education."³² Harvard University's student population is currently only 6.21% Black or African American while the percentage of white students is 34.6%, demonstrating the lack of diversity present at this elite institution.³³ With the lack of affirmative action programs and initiatives in place to combat these inequalities, the gap in accessibility for people of color, specifically African American people will continue to

³⁰Wekker, G, M Sloomman, Rosalba Icaza Garza, Hans Jansen, and R Vazquez. "Let's Do Diversity. Report of the University of Amsterdam Diversity Commission." Erasmus University Rotterdam, January 1, 1970. <https://pure.eur.nl/en/publications/lets-do-diversity-report-of-the-university-of-amsterdam-diversity>.

³¹Smith, Ryan, and Al Abdulkadrov. "Harvard vs. Georgetown: Detailed Comparison." College Reality Check, November 28, 2023. <https://collegerealitycheck.com/harvard-vs-georgetown/>.

³²Liptak, Adam. "Supreme Court Rejects Affirmative Action Programs at Harvard and U.N.C." The New York Times, June 29, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/29/us/politics/supreme-court-admissions-affirmative-action-harvard-unc.html#:~:text=The%20Supreme%20Court%20on%20Thursday,a%20pillar%20of%20higher%20education>.

³³"Harvard University." Data USA. Accessed December 19, 2023. <https://datausa.io/profile/university/harvard-university/>.

widen. Georgetown University's racial breakdown reflected the same issues as Harvard's with only 7% of their student population being Black or African American and 45.4% white.³⁴ These institutions of higher education reflect the same inclusionary practices that they were built on and without conscious and concerted efforts towards reparations and reconciliation, these institutions will continue to be inaccessible to people of color, specifically Black and African American students. It is crucial to foster a more inclusive and critical approach to education, one that acknowledges the past and actively works towards dismantling the legacies of colonialism within academic institutions.

The historical roots of slavery and colonialism have indelibly shaped the trajectory of institutions like Harvard University, Georgetown University and the University of Amsterdam, casting a long shadow on their prestige and accessibility. These elite institutions, built on foundations tainted by the exploitation of marginalized communities, reflect a complex legacy. The echoes of the past persist in present disparities, highlighting the imperative for ongoing examination and acknowledgment, in order to foster a more inclusive and equitable future.

³⁴“Georgetown University.” Data USA. Accessed December 19, 2023. <https://datausa.io/profile/university/georgetown-university/>.

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