

Yale Talk: Conversations with Peter Salovey

Episode 43: Uncovering Yale's History and Legacy of Slavery

Guests: Sterling Professor of History David Blight, chair of the Yale & Slavery Working Group and Director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale; Charles Warner, Jr., a member of the Yale & Slavery Working Group and chair of the Dixwell Congregational Church History Committee

Description: In recognition of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the Yale and Slavery Working Group's David Blight and Charles Warner, Jr. join President Salovey to discuss their work to study Yale's history in the service of a stronger, more inclusive university for the future.

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FULL TRANSCRIPT

Peter: Hello everyone. I'm Peter Salovey and thank you for joining me for this Martin Luther King Jr. Day edition of Yale Talk. If we are to go forward, if we are to make this a better world in which to live, Dr. King once proclaimed, we've got to go back. We've got to rediscover. Today, Dr. King's legacy inspires us to rediscover the long struggle for Black civil rights in this country, as we rededicate ourselves to the ideals of racial justice. Here in New Haven, and around Yale's campus, members of the Black community struggled for freedom and equal rights nearly two centuries before Dr. King took up the fight. To uncover, understand, and communicate this history, I convened the Yale and Slavery Working Group in October 2020. Since then, the group has made enormous strides toward its scholarly objective of investigating Yale's historical roles in and associations with slavery, the slave trade, and abolition. To discuss these findings, I've invited two members of the Yale and Slavery Working Group to join me today. Its chair, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David Blight, Sterling Professor of History, of African American Studies, and of American Studies. Professor Blight also serves as director of the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale MacMillan Center, and in the coming weeks, he will publish a book on how slavery and resistance to it have shaped Yale. Professor Blight was joined in this work by other members of the Yale and Slavery Working Group, including my second guest today, Charles Warner Jr. Charles serves as the chair of the Dixwell Congregational Church History Committee. He is an advisory board member of Uncovering New Haven and a member of the Amistad Committee. David, Charles, I'm delighted to welcome you today. Thank you both for joining me on Yale Talk.

David: Thanks, Peter.

Charles: Thanks, Peter, for having me.

Peter: Yeah. Thank you for coming in. So let's begin with the earliest roots of the civil rights movement in New Haven. Maybe you could both tell us a little bit about it. And in a nutshell, what is the story of New Haven's early abolitionists and African American activists?

Charles: Peter, I'd say that the earliest abolition efforts stem from a group of citizens who had actually taken part in the American Dream by having roots in the revolution itself. You have

people like William Lanson, like Prince Duplex, who were leaders in the New Haven Black community, who were the sons of men who had literally fought for the creation of the United States. And so certainly they would have had an investment and known that they, too, were entitled to the dream and been undaunted in making sure that all citizens, particularly Black citizens who had been denied, had access to that dream.

David: I'd only add, as Charles just indicated, that you could date what we're calling civil rights activity in New Haven or in Connecticut from an enormous petition campaign that occurred even before the American Revolution, especially during and because of the American Revolution. There were dozens of petitions all over New England, and many of them right in Connecticut, by former slaves. Some of them already free, but most of them not, demanding in the same language as the revolutionary leaders themselves, the natural rights tradition, and demanding the first principles of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, even before Jefferson wrote it. There was a fascinating petition that was produced in 1774 before the revolution breaks out, led by a man named Bristo Lambee for a whole group of Connecticut Blacks that reads like a precursor of the Declaration of Independence, demanding all of their liberties before God, liberties before nature, just as Jefferson would express it two years later. So there is this use of protest tradition already as early as the late 18th century. That will evolve in other forms in the 19th century.

Peter: Now, Charles, I understand that the African Ecclesiastical Society, which was really the precursor to the Temple Street Congregational Church, was very involved in this period, or at least sometime thereafter, and that they were dedicated almost by charter to uplifting the Black community. What was the role of that society and that church?

Charles: Well, this is a collection of men who have been considered leaders in the community, and certainly they're meeting together to plan and to take care of the community. But they were also in contact with a very influential White New Haven citizen by the name of Simeon Jocelyn, who believed that it was part of his spiritual mission to uplift this Black community that was downtrodden and sort of left out of society. And so, working with Simeon Jocelyn, the Ecclesiastical Society was taking different projects on really focused on the spiritual and moral development of New Haven's Black population, and that group grew to become Temple Street Congregational Church.

Peter: Whose presence we still feel today, right?

Charles: Absolutely. I would say the current Dixwell Congregational Church is certainly a direct vestige of the work that those early men in the African Ecclesiastical Society put in then. Dixwell stands today because of it.

Peter: David, those petitions that you referred to, those were petitioning the court.

David: They were.

Peter: The English courts.

David: Yes. And the colony of Connecticut itself.

Peter: Was any of it successful?

David: In some ways, you could say in the long run, yes. They were successful to the extent that the revolution itself, when victorious, would lead to emancipation—slowly, gradually, in all of the New England colonies and all the Northern colonies. But this petition tradition then became one of the roots, too, of what later is called the Black Convention movement, which isn't forged fully until the 1830s. But the precursors of that movement, which will last on and off for thirty years leading up to the Civil War, is in this revolutionary-era tradition of public activism for human rights, or what generally was always called natural rights. And that really needs to be stressed, because the language of the American Revolution is the language of the natural rights tradition. And these Black leaders, this community, New Haven and many other places around New England, knew that language. They actually appropriated two great traditions. One was the enlightenment natural rights tradition, the other was Christian virtue. And they combined both of those into a demand for their human rights. Now, how successful that is, is, of course, the way we always end up having to measure how successful was the abolition movement, generally, before emancipation in the Civil War. But it led to a tradition of activism. It was both religious and secular. It was making demands on the state. It was making demands on the morality of their society. And it was passed to actually two more generations before we ever get to the Civil War. In a community small, but very active, like New Haven.

Peter: Now, one of those petitions by the Temple Street Congregational Church was about tax exempt status. An issue that we still talk about.

Charles: Well, this is an example where you have two leaders in the New Haven Black community. If you follow the trajectory of their individual lives, you see that they had wider networks outside of New Haven, but certainly two key players in New Haven: Bias Stanley and William Lanson. Also two men who were original members of the United African Ecclesiastical Society, petitioning the Connecticut legislature to absolve property-owning Black men from having to pay taxes because they had been denied the right to vote. So clearly, you have two people basically saying, 'We went to war with England under the battle cry of no taxation without representation. And here we are in America, having gotten freedom from England, and our cry is the same cry.' And so this petition went before the Connecticut Legislature. There was no historical direct response, but the response was to further codify preventing African American property-owning men from not being able to vote.

David: There was a great Black historian, Benjamin Quarles, who taught all of his life at Morgan State. You just reminded me of this right now, Charles. He said, 'No one refused to not allow the revolution to be de-revolutionized as much as Black Americans in the North.' And that's really what this small community in New Haven was about. They were saying, 'Hey, we're going to

take this tradition of the revolution, of its ideology, of its principles, and apply it to ourselves.' They had a faith in that, that is going to be sorely tested, of course, over two more generations. But without that faith, religious and secular, without that enlightenment and that Christian tradition, it's hard to imagine how they would have sustained that faith against the odds, although they didn't have a lot of choices.

Charles: And when you think about the influence of the Congregational Church on society, and then directly in the lives of these two men, William Lanson and Bias Stanley, what you're saying Dr. Blight, shows up clearly in this effort.

David: And then a lot of other leaders are going to pass through New Haven.

Charles: Yes, yes.

Peter: In a way, all politics is local, right? That's it.

Charles: Yes.

Peter: Good example. So your book is coming out, *Yale and Slavery*, in February, and we will have a book launch and make sure that copies are spread far and wide in our community, and we're all looking forward to that. David, maybe you could tell us from the perspective of writing that book where, for better or for worse, Yale fits into the overall narrative about the abolitionist struggle in New Haven, in Connecticut, in the country. I do know about one of the low points in our history concerns the proposal in 1831 to build the country's first college for Black men right here in New Haven. Of course, it didn't happen, and there may be other disappointments, too.

David: The struggle here in writing this book was not only the scale and scope, but it was to try to show how there's an 18th century Yale, there's a 19th century Yale, there's a 20th century Yale. That 18th century Yale was, of course, a theology college. By and large, that was its purpose. It became the most important place that clergymen all over New England were trained in the Puritan tradition and its various revisions. We tried here to make this a book that is a history of Yale. It's sort of an institutional history, but it's also the history of New Haven, and of Connecticut, and of the surrounding worlds in which Yale lived. And one of those worlds is, of course, massive Atlantic trade with the West Indies, which tells us a great deal about the nature of the colonial and then revolutionary era and even early 19th century economy of Connecticut. But then it's also a story of Yale's various faculty, presidents, donors, rectors, the people who created Yale and led Yale. And eventually that's some truly great educators. We kind of touch on all of the major figures, from Benjamin Silliman to Theodore Woolsey, who created this college that becomes a university in the 19th century, a university that teaches the sciences and begins to create professional schools and so on. But it evolves out of a world of slaveholding in the North in ways most Americans still don't fully grasp. It evolves out of a world where it was common for those 18th century ministers, many of them, to own one or two slaves. It was just a common practice. Sometimes they were Native American slaves. Generally they were African or African

American enslaved people who ended up here in Connecticut. Eventually, it becomes a serious philosophical moral problem by the time of the American Revolution. Revolutionary ideology mixed with their own Christian theology becomes a problem. In the age of Ezra Stiles and Ezra Stiles's presidency, who was himself a slaveholder early but becomes mildly anti-slavery. By the early 19th century, you have a Yale that is in many ways growing as a very conservative institution, deeply steeped in a kind of moderation on all social issues, not least of which was slavery, always trying to sustain, in good Puritan tradition, the social order or what sometimes was called the regular order. And then by the 1820s, 30s, 40s, Yale becomes a place that slavery is debated. But there is a normative mainstream position, probably best represented by Leonard Bacon, who pastored Center Church for almost forty years and represented this solid, moderate approach to all things. Not everybody, but most Yale leaders, faculty and so forth, through the early 19th century, would probably have called themselves opponents of slavery. And yet, their much-preferred solution, not unlike a lot of Americans, was removal of Black people from North America. It was rooted in a negative, despairing vision of race: this belief that Black people were inferior, and they could never fully compete or live within a truly biracial society, so that ultimately it had to be a system of removal. Now, we can look back at that in retrospect and say, that was not possible. How could they think this? Well, they did think this. In fact, Leonard Bacon was one of the leaders of the Connecticut Colonization Society, the New England Colonization Society, and so were many Yale faculty by the 1840s and 1850s. And Yale will have some very open disputes over slavery within its own ranks. But it's a fascinating window into a highly educated Northern community struggling to figure out what to do about this system of slavery, and frankly, never coming up with a collective solution other than removal of Black people from the United States.

Peter: Wow. So an alternative view would have been, build a school. A real alternative view would have been integration, but we're not going to integrate. So let's build a Black college,

Charles: Literally, build a society.

Peter: So in 1831, that idea's on the table.

Charles: Yes.

Peter: But Charles, what happens?

Charles: Well, the idea is put to rest. And the reasons why the idea was put to rest is probably the most compelling part. There are definite plans to make this first institution of higher education for Black people in America. They're very real plans with real money, with real support, a purchased building. This could happen without interference. And then once people, I think, realize the truth and the actuality of what is to be, there's a rallying cry, 'Let's put this thing down.' As you see with some of the proceedings during this time, there are actually some physical attacks related to the 1831 college idea. And so whether or not it's the university officially that called for the ouster of the idea, clearly there are a bunch of people who graduated

from Yale University—faculty, people who are pivotal to the growth of Yale—who were also pivotal to the destruction of the idea. There's an article where someone is mentioning that if this institution is allowed to happen, that it would be like a hive for all of these Black people who'd be like bees flocking to New Haven, and then what does that mean? You have a bunch of strange college-aged Black people in town with Yale students.

David: Being educated.

Charles: Yes, being educated. Learning to be out of their “place,” and then also interacting with a bunch of female students who were here at various institutions.

Peter: And that's always lurking just below the surface, right? This idea that there'd be relationships between Black and White.

Charles: Absolutely.

Peter: Very threatening idea at the time.

David: And the citizens gathered right on the green, the old State House, and voted it down. What is it? 700 to 4. And it got wide coverage, in the country, and anti-slavery papers, and so on. So it was one of those almost ‘what if’ situations that wasn't.

Peter: I always try to imagine what it would have been like for the first, what we would now call Historically Black College or University, HBCU, in America to have been built in 1831, and what kind of partnerships would have been developed between Yale University and this college?

Charles: It was intended that professors from Yale would also do some sort of cross-professorship at the 1831 College for Colored Youth. And so the intended idea was one of cooperation and affiliation and support and mutual uplift. But when the Reverend Peter Ray and Simeon Jocelyn bounced this idea back and forth, and then the idea was written down, clearly the intention was that not only would the College for Colored Youth thrive, survive, and the Black people benefit, but that there would be some benefit to the entire town, to Yale University.

Peter: Even though it's a separate school. And we have to begin with that. The idea is clearly a certain amount of integration. If it's faculty sharing and student sharing, you could imagine, in modern parlance, cross-registration.

David: That's a pivotal moment in the history of abolition. That's the year William Lloyd Garrison first publishes his famous paper, *The Liberator*. Anti-Slavery societies were beginning to become more radical. In fact, that seven hundred people who gathered on the green, we don't know exactly what they were thinking, but they were worried that this abolitionism was growing too fast. They feared abolitionism. They feared it as a radical movement that was going to overturn the social order. And hence, don't let that college start.

Peter: This relates, Charles, to a comment that you made in another context. You said that early Black activists in New Haven had a very layered relationship with members of the Yale community. Is that what you meant by a layered relationship? It was a push and a pull, and sometimes from the same people.

Charles: Absolutely. You have a figure like Leonard Bacon, who is the leader of the most important ecclesiastical institution in New Haven, being the pastor of New Haven's First Congregational Church. The same Leonard Bacon who disagrees with the idea of slavery but says Black citizens should be sent back to Africa. It's also the same Leonard Bacon who you see performing marriages for some of these early Black citizens. It's the same Leonard Bacon who then creates the African Improvement Society that supports the efforts of the Temple Street Congregational Church. Some of these same figures put down the idea for the College for Colored Youth in 1831. You can go to Beinecke now and look at a letter of reference for Bias Stanley, who was one of these leading Black figures in New Haven, signed by some of the same people who were proponents of doing away with the Negro college idea. So it says to me that maybe I don't consider myself a person who's bad and/or racist. I'm doing something larger. I'm saving New Haven. I'm saving the social order. So at the same time, I'm writing this to support individuals, I'm also knocking down institutions that could really benefit the community.

Peter: It's so interesting. So there were some early students at Yale shortly after this period. People have heard about Edward Bouchet, and more recently people have heard about the Reverend James Pennington. And maybe we could talk a little bit about those two stories. They're both inspiring. They're also deeply troubling. And maybe, David, you could tell us a little bit about Pennington and maybe Charles, you could tell us a little bit about Bouchet.

David: Well, Pennington became a great abolitionist. He was born a slave, Eastern Shore of Maryland, escaped from slavery. His actual original name was Pembroke. He chooses a new name. He was tremendously aided by groups of Quakers. He ends up in the North, living much of his life essentially between Hartford, New Haven, and New York, pastored at least two famous churches. But he comes here to Yale and attended for about three years, theology lectures at the School of Theology, especially with this professor, Nathaniel William Taylor, who was himself a fascinating figure, very conservative, a kind of neo-Edwardian in the sense that he was a staunch Puritan, but he allowed free will. Anyway, Pennington was allowed to, in his terms, 'audit' these lectures. He was not allowed, by his account, to check out books or to even ask questions in class. But for almost three years, he attended theology lectures, and indeed it was a significant part of his training. He would have learned about homiletics. He would have learned a lot of theology, Old Testament and New Testament, and he became a bit of a theological writer. After he leaves here, he starts writing essays that were not just theological, they were political for the *Colored American*, one of the early Black newspapers. And he becomes a very important participant in the Black Convention movement. In fact, he wrote essays advocating this. Pennington is so interesting, always has been to me because he is himself somewhat moderate. He never became a radical militant. He never advocated violence. He never advocated

emigration out of the country. He believed in these American principles and demanded them. But he became a staunch advocate of Black rights. And he's a classic illustration of an antebellum Black minister who becomes the political activist, which is kind of the model for Black leadership for the rest of American history, all the way to Martin Luther King and so many others. And now, of course, thanks to the dedication you led, Peter, he now has a posthumous degree that he was not allowed to achieve then. He also was supported so much by the Black community, by the church. And in effect, he is one of Yale's first Black students. In fact, he used to argue in his essays that what Blacks had to develop out of their religious community were what he called political talents. That may be his central legacy. And Bouchet grows up in that same community that Pennington had encountered here.

Charles: Absolutely. And I think that's the other strength of the history and the legacy of the African Ecclesiastical Society that we talked a bit about earlier, was the formal establishment of the Temple Street Congregational Church. Now, this undertaking was one of the first of its kind. And when people think about Black church, they think about singing and prayers, and certainly that would be a big part of it. But there's also this other piece where there's entire community development. Everything a city, a society would need was developed and fostered inside of the Black church because they had no other spaces or places to do this. So you did have political speeches, and musicals, and lyceums, and visiting speakers. And at Temple Street, Amos Beman talks about some fugitive enslaved people.

David: Beman was the minister there.

Charles: Yes. Seeing the light of day for the first time in a long time, freely, in Temple Street Congregational Church. And so you have this tradition of teaching and learning and activism out of that institution. Interestingly enough, this is an institution where Edward Bouchet grows up. The first attempt at any kind of formal schooling for Black people in the city was through something called a Sabbath School out of Temple Street Congregational Church, aided by the White Congregationalists. Certainly, they were doing religious instruction, but they were also doing rudimentary education. But Edward Bouchet comes out of this institution. He would have known the family of Courtlandt Van Rensselaer Creed, who earned a medical degree from Yale in 1857. So it wouldn't have been anything strange for him to know that there was a possibility, even if it was slim, that he could attend Yale, and graduate from Yale, and become a professional person, and use his mind instead of having to do some sort of labor work.

David: His father did.

Charles: Yes, absolutely. There is some lore that the father was also interested, William Bouchet, in education. Now, the Bouchets say that their time in Connecticut comes from William Bouchet accompanying a future judge and Mayor Robertson to New Haven from South Carolina. Coming from South Carolina, enslaved as a servant to a student, and then becoming free. And then in the next generation, you have the opportunity to attend Hopkins, attend Yale, become the first Black

person to graduate from Yale College, then earn a Ph.D. in physics. So they say at the time, and I believe the first Black person to earn the doctorate degree. Period. What a life.

Peter: Yeah. That's amazing. And there's now an award named for him here at Yale and a society of graduate students in his memory that has been developed here. He had this PhD in physics, and he can't get a job teaching physics at a college or university, right. He ends up teaching at a high school for Black students.

Charles: Yes. And the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia was a place where other Black people who had had a relationship to New Haven taught. Ebenezer Bassett, who also studied at Yale as a student,

David: became a famous diplomat.

Charles: Yes. His father-in-law, Robert Park, had strong ties to Yale University, so there were ties between Institute for Colored Youth and New Haven. But it's my contention that that also leads back to that idea for the Negro College in 1831. So you have all of these cross connections and through lines. And the interesting thing about Bouchet, and I learned this more recently, in his Yale University alumni file, there is a document showing that Edward Bouchet pursued a professorship at Yale, with glowing recommendation.

David: But they don't appoint him.

Charles: Right. I don't know what the details are, but clearly what we know, by, history is that it didn't pan out for him. He ended up dying early, in his childhood home, financially wasn't in a good state. But this is a man who is certainly a historical figure, top credentials, trained by the very best, and couldn't find a place to practice.

Peter: I know it's an amazing story, and I hope for those who are listening from out of town, when you come to New Haven, look for the portraits of Edward Bouchet and James Pennington. Visit Edward Bouchet's grave, which is here in New Haven. If you're in Washington and you go to the Museum of African American History and Culture, that's part of the Smithsonian, you can see Reverend Pennington's Bible. I was just walking through the museum, and it's an incredibly emotional experience to visit that museum, in general, but to come across an object that relates to your hometown. For me, I've been here 42 years, so I think of New Haven as my hometown. It's really something. It really grabs you when you see that. So as I mentioned at the beginning of our conversation, your book, David, *Yale and Slavery: A History*, will be released on February 16th. The book presents a narrative of the Yale and Slavery Working Group's research findings. Tell us, just in closing here, a little bit about this book and how it moves from really the 17th century to 1915, but then stops.

David: Well, first of all, it isn't just my book. There was a team of people, particularly Michael Morand and Hope McGrath, who helped write this, certainly. Edited it for sure. And then we had

a research team, which your office, Peter, supported tremendously. It does go from the 17th century to 1915. It begins with a chapter in the 17th century. And what happened to the Native American communities in Connecticut, and how the two wars, the Pequot War and King Philip's War, by and large, liquidated Native peoples from Connecticut, which in part made possible the creation of a tiny little college here, by 1701 first, and then 1718. But then we have whole chapters on the period of the American Revolution and how it transformed Yale, both educationally and to some degree, morally. And then we have a whole chapter on the early republic, the long period of Theodore Dwight's presidency. And then we have a whole chapter on antebellum Yale, which is where you get into a rich diversity of Yale people on both sides of the slavery question, a whole chapter on the Civil War itself, and how that transformed Yale, to say the least. And then we have two entire chapters on the late 19th century, which are mostly about the Black community of New Haven, its relationships to Yale, how so many Black New Haveners has worked at Yale—the famous sweeps, but also all kinds of other people. Bouchet's own father was a janitor, custodian, etc. There's some beautiful surviving photographs, by the way, which we used in the book. Now, we do end in 1915, to get to your point, partly because the book got too long and partly because it makes a very logical ending to this story of the struggle over slavery and abolition. We end with the story of Yale's Civil War Memorial, which is in Schwarzman Center, Woolsey Hall. That war memorial, which we have tremendous records for, was a creation out of the culture of national reconciliation of North-South reunion, done at the expense of Black rights and of Black people. But we have an entire chapter on that process of Yale using that war memorial and many other measures to, in effect, recruit White Southerners back to Yale in the late 19th and early 20th century. And there were a whole variety of ways they did this. But that memorial, as our book shows, is in effect, the most significant memorial on Northern soil to the Lost Cause tradition of the Confederacy. And we're in the process now, as a whole team working on this, not only creating a new app and tour of campus related to this book and the story, but there's going to be some new signage, that's in the process of being imagined and created as we speak, around that memorial. Never take it down is my position. I don't think you can. It's aesthetically too important in that space, but most people walk by that every day on this campus, and don't have a clue why it's there, how it was formed, what its function and purpose was. And I'm hoping that with new signage and new interpretation, we can show the context out of which that memorial came. It's ultimately the purpose of this book, Peter, as you well know. This is what universities exist for. We exist to face reality, face the past, face new knowledge, take new knowledge out into the world. And in this case, we're taking new knowledge about ourselves out into the world. And as Charles knows, because he was part of our research, this is by and large, a story that has always been here in the Yale libraries. Ninety percent of our sources come right from our own archives, which are fantastic. And it's a story that's kind of been waiting to be told. Another volume could be done now. It would be less about slavery, obviously, than about race relations and everything related to it, right into the 21st century. But that's a second volume. This book is long enough. Only one of the reasons we quit in 1915. There was a logical reason to quit then, too, because it comes right after the Yale bicentennial and a lot of commemorative events. And as I've learned in studying memory for years, if you have a commemoration, it makes a good story.

Charles: And actually, it's also a very important year in the history of the Black community and race relations, because it's also the year that Booker T. Washington, the great American figure, he dies in 1915.

David: With an honorary degree from Yale.

Charles: Yes. And he dies a short time after visiting New Haven and speaking at Yale.

David: In fact, his last public speech we think may have been right here in New Haven.

Charles: Well, it's interesting because some Black students from Yale picked Booker T. Washington up at Woolsey Hall and drive him up Dixwell Avenue to what is now Varick AME Zion Church. And that is where Booker T. Washington addresses the Black community. He leaves that speech; he heads back to New York. He's ill and goes into the hospital. Knowing that he's going to die, he requests to die at home in Alabama. And so he gets on the train, and as the train pulls into the station in Tuskegee, he dies.

David: Which is about three months after the unveiling of the war memorial. Once we realized all this, I thought 1915, that's where we end.

Peter: That's the year. That's the year. Well, let me end this conversation by taking us to 2024. How do you reflect on all of this history that has been uncovered, sitting there in the Yale archives, but now told as a story, as a narrative, what does it mean for our community and our country today? Just a final word, final thought.

Charles: Repair. Collaboration. Understanding that as separate as histories can be amongst American people, we have a common purpose, a common origin—with the formation of this country, with all of us being here in New Haven, with the fact that the older Black religious institutions, which are the oldest Black institutions in the New Haven community, come out of White churches that were downtown. So while we are separate and different in our histories, if you go back to the beginning, there's a common origin point and a point where we were all starting out together. So there's some education that needs to happen. Community education. There's obviously some repair work that's going to need to be done, but what it should do is galvanize us to work together. There's so many opportunities for research and learning, and for lifting up some of these institutions that are still around today that come out of a lot of this older work. One of my most proud roles is as chair of the Connecticut Freedom Trail, which are close to 170 sites across the state of Connecticut that have ties, much like Gilder Lehrman, to abolition, resistance, and the period of enslavement, and then also civil rights activism in the state, 170, and those are only recognized sites at this point around the state. And there are more. So we live here in New Haven with our history. So really, I invite folks to come, learn, research, and then get into some of this work of repair and righting past wrongs.

David: Well, that's hard to follow, but I would only add to what Charles has just said that you so well know, Peter, universities these days are constantly in our national conversation. What are they now? What's the model of the university? What's happening to the humanities in universities? But what this project, at least for me, has shown, among many other things, is that a university is a shared memory community across many generations. It's a chaotic, diverse, complex institution that you know better than anybody as a president of a university. But it can actually stop for a moment, a historical moment, look at itself, explain itself, and write its own history, even against the jaded attitudes that we sometimes face in our society. This project was telling a story. That's why when you and I first talked about this, Peter, I said, I don't want to write a report. I want to write a real history. Let's dig it out, see what we find, and just tell the truth. Which is, all clichés aside, the function of a university. And by the way, it's why I use the mission statement in the epilogue. Because in that mission statement, which is, of course, very general, there is that language that Yale will take itself out to the world, out to the world, out to the world. And that's what this book, I hope, does. You said it, Charles. There's going to be a research portal here that we're in the process of creating. This is only the beginning. People can come and use this research, and there can be books written about sections of this book by students, by others who may come along and say, well, that's interesting. There could be a book done on late 19th century New Haven and Yale just by itself. We only have two chapters on it. So that research portal is being created by Michael Lotstein, the university librarian, and his resources that will be there, we hope, forever.

Peter: Well, we will have your book and we will have a website, and we hope that many of you will take advantage of those resources and come and visit and look at our campus and look at our town through an interesting and different lens. You know, Charles, your comment about there's a common history really resonated, right? This was a history whose roots were in our archives already. And a group comes together, of both university citizens and New Haven citizens, Town and Gown, to work on that archive, to write this history, and then to work together on how we can make both our campus and our city of New Haven better places for everyone to live. And that's what we can all do together. Thank you also, David, for quoting our mission statement there. The first sentence is that Yale's primary purpose is to improve the world today and for future generations. It happens to be the case that I wrote that sentence, and I'm very flattered that you quoted it.

David: Well it seemed important to have it there because, okay, why are we doing this? Well, if you're going to have a mission statement, it might as well mean something.

Peter: Exactly. Well, David, Charles, I want to thank both of you so much for joining me today on Yale Talk, for your exceptional service on the Yale and Slavery Working Group. And David's book, *Yale and Slavery: A History*, will be released next month. And I want to end by reaffirming what I wrote in its preface: "our vital work to uncover and address the deep history of racism and its ongoing repercussions across the United States is far from done. There remains much to be accomplished in the years ahead, both in terms of revealing and coming to terms with injustices of the past, but also in confronting current wrongs." But members of the Yale Slavery Working

Group, including my two guests today, have provided us with a deeper, more honest understanding of who we are and how we got here. A necessary foundation from which to build a stronger, more knowledgeable, and more vibrant university and society.

To friends and members of the Yale community, thank you for joining me for Yale Talk. Until our next conversation, best wishes and take care.