Tending to Neglected Histories: Using Exhibits to Re-Focus Institutional Narratives on Black Experiences and Communities

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Abstract

Exhibits present a uniquely visible opportunity for academic libraries and archives to reframe institutional narratives about race, diversity, and equity. This session focused on two recent exhibits intended to surface Black institutional histories, bringing into relief the ways library and archival practices have contributed to the neglect of these stories. Black Spartans (1907-1948) (https://library.sjsu.edu/exhibits/black-spartans), which celebrates nineteen of the earliest Black students at San José State University, features digital portraits by artist Yeab Kebede which draw on materials from the university's archives. Research for the exhibit helped to identify education student Lucy Turner Johnson, who is believed to have been the first Black student to graduate from San José State, along with a wealth of new information about the earliest generations of Black students at the institution. Robert Morris: Civil Rights Lawyer & Antislavery Activist (https://bc.edu/robert-morris) is a digital exhibit created by faculty and librarians at Boston College to bring the story of Robert Morris to a secondary school audience. Morris was the second Black lawyer in the United States, and an important figure in the abolitionist and civil rights movements in Boston. In addition to risking his own life to assist fugitives from slavery, Morris argued significant civil rights cases like Roberts v. City of Boston, a school desegregation case which presaged both Plessy v. Ferguson and Brown v. Board of Education. Morris was also an early benefactor of Boston College, donating his personal library to the fledgling institution, but his important contributions have rarely been celebrated adequately. These exhibits challenge dominant narratives about institutional histories, in ways that are sometimes obvious but sometimes more subtle. Participants will discuss the process of creating the exhibits,

with a focus on the opportunities and challenges of addressing aspects of institutional history that do not fit neatly into dominant campus narratives and mythologies.

Introduction

Exhibits present opportunities for libraries and archives to tell the stories of their institutions. Those stories, however, are rarely simple, neutral, or uncontested. Dominant narratives about an institution's history or values may ignore the experiences of people and groups who have been marginalized within the institution. This presentation focused on two exhibits that attempt to re-focus institutional histories on Black experiences and communities: *Black Spartans* (1907-1948) at San José State University (SJSU), and *Robert Morris: Civil Rights Lawyer & Antislavery Activist* at the Boston College Law Library.

An important first step in confronting institutional narratives is to make those narratives explicit. This presentation began by discussing the shape those dominant narratives take at each school, and then focused on the stories that each of the exhibits tells and how those stories challenge the dominant narratives. The presentation also addressed the process of creating each exhibit, the impacts of the exhibits on each campus and in the broader community, and continuing efforts and impacts at each institution.

Inspirations for the Exhibits

In considering how to make Black histories more accessible at our institutions, we drew inspiration from several digital projects that model the wide variety of possible approaches. Some of these, such as Harvard Library's "Slavery, Abolition, Emancipation, and Freedom" (n.d.) document Black histories through a national lens. Others, such as James Madison University's "Black & White on Bluestone Hill" (n.d.) look more narrowly at the history of the institution. Still others, such as Cal State Fullerton's "Temperature Rising" (CSUF Experts Exam Racism, Social Justice and Police Reform, n.d.) put the institution into conversation with world events of the past and present. In considering how to organize and present biographic information on a historical figure, we also drew on Mount Vernon's website exhibit on Martha Washington (Martha Washington, n.d.). These and other related projects informed the decisions we made about how to present the information in our exhibits.

Methods

Dominant Institutional Narratives at San José State University and Boston College
Boston College (BC) was founded in 1863 as a Jesuit institution with an initial focus on educating the local Irish Catholic population. This Jesuit, Catholic heritage remains central to BC's identity; a strong emphasis is placed in university communications on the Jesuit values of education, service, respect, and most

relevantly, diversity (e.g. Boston College, 2022). While diversity may be overtly valued in public messaging, the recorded history of BC focuses mainly on a lineage of white men, particularly Jesuit priests, who are considered the founders and main actors in the development of the university. These individuals, such as John S. McElroy, SJ, Robert Fulton, SJ, and Thomas I. Gasson, SJ, are the figures who have buildings named for them on campus and paper collections in the university archives. The focus on these white, Jesuit men limits the scope of the university's own understanding of its history, crucially missing out on the much more diverse community and ecosystem that allowed Boston College to begin and develop through the past century and a half.

San José State University engages in similar messaging around diversity. It is rightfully known as a "majority minority" campus. Diversity plays a central role in the institutional narrative, as demonstrated by a short video telling the story of the campus titled "Diversity University" (Stevenson, 2016). This concept of SJSU as a diverse community impacts understanding of the university's history. For example, when incoming University Archivist Carli Lowe asked people on campus if anyone knew who the first Black students were, several people answered that the student body had always been diverse. Additionally, Black students in present times are frequently exposed to the message that the university supports Black students, while the lived experiences of Black students do not consistently reflect that support.

The Narrative of Black Spartans

Black Spartans is the first exhibit at SJSU to spotlight the experiences of the earliest enrolled Black students at the University. The goals of this exhibit included establishing a narrative that factually describes the accomplishments of these students while acknowledging that the university has not always accurately chronicled what life was like for Black students during time periods when the student body was majority white. This point was brought further to light while we engaged in the research portion of exhibit preparation. The students we highlighted in this exhibit were chosen because we were able to surface enough information about their college careers, while other Black students from the same time period were not included because the records on them were sparse. These students' endeavors were regularly left out of yearbooks, student press, and departmental records, while white students engaged in similar activities (such as being members of campus affinity groups) were spotlighted.

According to our research, the first Black student, Lucy Turner (Johnson) began her studies in 1905 at SJSU when it was a teacher's college known as the California State Normal School. This information immediately challenged the university's narrative of itself as *always* having been a diverse campus, since it was 48 years after the school was established in 1857 that Lucy Turner was admitted. The fact that we were only able to find enough information to spotlight nineteen Black students during the 41-year time period we focused on speaks volumes about the diversity of the campus during the

91-year period since the school's founding until 1948, where our research for this exhibit concluded. Some of our research pointed to why there was a diversity gap, such as the redlining of local neighborhoods, which included covenants forbidding Black and Asian residents from owning homes in San José, as well as the pervasive structural and social racism that may have discouraged prospective Black scholars from considering SJSU as a safe and welcoming place to enroll.

The Black students highlighted in the *Black Spartans* exhibit engaged in many different campus activities, from learning to fly planes at the university's aviation school (San José State University, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, 1939) to performing plays as a member of the campus acting club (San José State University, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, 1934). In many cases, these students were the only Black person in their respective departments or groups, and were forced to contend with their fellow students engaging in racist activities that included blackface and minstrel shows. Despite the pervasive bigotry displayed by their peers, many of the students' accomplishments were quite remarkable. Post-university, Roger Romine was trained as a Tuskegee Airman and received multiple medals for his bravery during WWII; Willie Steele won gold in the long jump at the 1948 London Olympics; Henrietta Harris founded the African-American theatre group Aldridge Players-West; and Edward Soulds wrote a memoir about his long history serving in the military, and the racism he encountered while doing so (Lowe & Steffens, n.d.).

Another goal of the *Black Spartans* exhibit was to reclaim Black student history from its legacy of being told through the eyes of their white counterparts. It was important to us that the information we presented was factual, and respected the individual journeys of each student, while acknowledging that much of the information we found was presented through publications authored by a white student body and faculty. For example, we were excited to learn that in the 1930s, along with a campus Verse Speaking Choir, there was a Negro Verse Speaking Choir operating at the same time. Our enthusiasm was dampened by the discovery that the (largely white) Verse Speaking Choir was featured in yearbook photographs and the student newspaper, but the Negro Verse Speaking Choir had no similar images showcasing their work and members. One of the ways we sought to counter this lack of equal representation was to seek out information that came directly from Black Spartans, some of which we were able to find in books and articles authored by students included in the exhibit. In addition, *Black Spartans* includes a public call for community participation, as we continue to surface details about the life stories of these students.

Robert Morris & Boston College

Robert Morris (c.1825-1882) was a trailblazing 19th-century civil rights activist and lawyer. Though never nationally known to the extent of contemporaries like Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison, Morris was a well-known litigator,

antislavery agitator, and champion of full and equal rights in his time. Like Douglass and Garrison, Morris also amassed an impressive personal library. Those books became part of the Boston College Libraries collections and were the initial impetus for exploring Morris's relationship with BC.

Morris was born in Salem, Massachusetts around 1825. Slavery had been legally abolished for decades but segregation was firmly in place. Morris attended the town's segregated school for children of color. Opportunity for further education and professional success came when he met Ellis Gray Loring, a white abolitionist lawyer from Boston who took Morris on as a legal apprentice in his Boston law office. In February 1847, around age twenty-two, Morris became the second Black person in the United States to be admitted to the bar (Kendrick & Kendrick, 2004).

Morris flexed his activist muscle early, attending antislavery meetings and filing petitions in 1843 to desegregate Boston and Salem schools. The Salem efforts succeeded in 1844 (Baumgartner, 2022). Soon after his admission to the bar, Morris was hired to handle the first major school desegregation case in the country. In April 1848, he filed suit against the City of Boston on behalf of five-year-old Sarah Roberts, who had been ejected from an elementary school near her home due to her race. She had to walk past five white-only public schools in order to attend one of the only schools that served African American children (Kendrick & Kendrick, 2004).

The highest court in Massachusetts ultimately ruled against Roberts, adopting a a separate but equal principle that allowed for segregated schools. However, the arguments made by Morris and his co-counsel Charles Sumner anticipated those eventually embraced by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* (Gillerman, 1987).

Morris continued to agitate against slavery and fight for full and equal rights. He was an active member of the Boston Vigilance Commitee, a group that aided fugitives from slavery, and was tried but acquitted for violation the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 for his role in the highly-publicized escape of Shadrach Minkins. Additionally, his law practice flourished, with mainly BIPOC and Irish Catholic clients. He even became known as "The Irish Lawyer," a remarkable title at a time when relations between Boston's Irish Catholic and Black communities were particularly tense.

These professional relationships, along with Morris's attendance at a Catholic church at his wife Catharine's behest, set the stage for his relationship with Boston College. Extant correspondence indicates a close relationship with Robert Fulton, SJ, a Jesuit priest and early President of BC. Morris converted to Catholicism at the church connected to BC in 1870, and his funeral was at the same church in 1882. Morris donated his personal library to the school, and his wife Catharine named BC's church the residuary beneficiary of her will (Davis & Bilder, 2019).

Morris' relationship with BC and his family's contributions to its survival in its earliest days have been overlooked. An early BC publication notes that his books were

a foundational part of the library's collection in American and English literature. Most of the books received a BC bookplate with Morris's name as donor, but they were misattributed in BC's library catalog for years to a different Robert Morris, a white Boston stonemason. One of the main goals of this website project--and the related project of identifying and exhibiting his books--is to properly situate and uplift Morris as an important figure in the history of Boston College, along with highlighting his many contributions to the ongoing fight for full and equal rights in this country.

Choices that Shaped the Exhibits: Robert Morris

Early in the process of creating the *Robert Morris* exhibit, the Boston College team made the decision that the primary audience of the site would be secondary school students. In particular, the team focused on the informal user persona of a student who had been assigned a biographical paper on an historical figure. A key goal of the site would be to provide the information that would make Morris a feasible subject for this hypothetical assignment.

This particular emphasis reflects the fact that this exhibit is part of a series of efforts to raise Morris' profile at Boston College and beyond. A 2017 physical exhibit (Boston College Law Library, 2017) and a 2019 article (Davis & Bilder, 2019) presented Morris' story to a local and scholarly audience, respectively. The digital exhibit presented an opportunity to reach a broader audience, and imagining a high school student as the site's intended user helped the team present Morris' story in an accessible and engaging way.

In practice, this decision strongly influenced the writing style chosen for the site, arguing for a straightforward and web-friendly style of writing, with shorter paragraphs and appropriate use of headers and other layout elements to guide the reader's eye. The choice of audience also influenced the decision to tell Morris' story in multiple formats. The site features a timeline and an interactive story map, created using TimelineJS and StoryMapJS from the Knight Lab (Knight Lab, 2022a and Knight Lab, 2022) and also uses an interactive profile gallery to present Morris' social and intellectual circle, providing brief biographies of the people who influenced his life and activism. A bibliography page, titled "How Do We Know?" supplements a list of sources with suggested research strategies intended to help students learn more about the historical context. These complementary features make Morris' story accessible and engaging to a broad audience who are not necessarily familiar with the context of 19th century Boston.

Choices that Shaped the Exhibits: Black Spartans

The purpose of *Black Spartans* (1907-1948) is to celebrate and remember the everyday lives of Black students so that they can inspire future generations and inform understandings of SJSU history. The past and present stories of Black Spartans have

not been adequately acknowledged by SJSU, even as the campus community advocates for diversity and inclusion. Many stories of Black student triumph and excellence have been ignored.

As we worked to envision what an exhibit focused largely on institutional sources like newspaper clippings and yearbook photos would look like, we knew that we needed compelling visuals to bring each of the nineteen Black Spartan's experiences to life for a broad audience. The materials available for the exhibit largely consisted of black and white photographs and newspaper text, and could potentially be considered quite dry if exhibited on their own. SJSU Library's Marketing Team recommended we reach out to the Art Department, where a professor of Digital Media Arts connected us with a Black student artist named Yeab Kebede. There is an ongoing lack of representation of Black culture in the visual arts. Engaging with a current Black Spartan to create visuals around our research materials brought this exhibit full-circle, establishing a sense of continuity between contemporary Black student perspectives and Black student history. Kebede's bright and colorful art wove in symbolism related to each Black Spartan, along with her own culture and experiences, leading to a vibrant affirmation of Black student life that had previously been told only through monochrome textual records.

Results: Impacts and Future Projects

The Robert Morris digital exhibit has received significant interest and positive feedback since its launch on November 12, 2021. The website team received the Innovation in Technology Award from the American Association of Law Librarians (AALL) and will present at their annual, national conference. The site also will be included in an upcoming digital exhibition associated with the Peabody Essex Museum's current physical exhibit entitled Let None Be Excluded: The Origins of Equal School Rights in Salem. Members of the Boston College community—including students, staff, faculty, and alums—have expressed their appreciation for learning about Morris as a historical figure in his own right, as well as his connections to BC. For example, one faculty member wrote the following:

"What a wonderful, informative, and interesting resource you all have created! I had never heard of Morris before. Thanks for shedding light on such an exceptional person and period, with a special connection to BC. . . . I'm confident that I will have my future students learn about Robert and Catherine Morris and their community." (personal communication, January 7, 2022)

Team members gave a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Table Talk to faculty and staff on invitation from BC's Office of Institutional Diversity. We also presented our project to the entire law school community, and delivered customized presentations for multiple courses and student groups. We regularly post about the website and BC's

Morris collection on our social media and hope that continued presentations and online outreach will bring in an even broader audience.

The *Black Spartans* project has so far succeeded in its goal to surface undertold Black histories. One example of this is the story of Willie Steele, who won a gold medal at the 1948 London Olympics. Though Steele is widely known as a graduate of San Diego State, several scholars contacted SJSU Special Collections & Archives upon viewing the *Black Spartans* (1907-1948) exhibit, expressing surprise that Steele had begun his lauded track career at SJSU in 1942 (Lowe & Steffens, n.d.). One researcher shared the following:

"Poking around the SJSU library site, I found an amazing piece by Carli Lowe and Kate Steffens on Willie Steele. Lowe and Steffens' work includes clips from original source documents that show conclusively that Steele competed for SJSU in Varsity Track in 1942 and Varsity Football in 1943 . . . I'm going to use Lowe and Steffens' work to update Steele's Wikipedia Entry as well as my proposed write up for the San Diego State Athletic Hall of Fame Write Up" (Rick Reaser, personal communication, February 7, 2022).

Other scholars expressed surprise to learn how early SJSU had begun recruiting Black athletes. The exhibit was well received by Black communities on campus and throughout San José. Those who viewed the exhibit expressed their enjoyment of the content, and the ways the exhibit prompted them to reflect on the past and present.

Black Spartans is an ongoing project of SJSU Special Collections & Archives. We continue to seek opportunities to make the information we surface more available to communities on and off campus, and we continue to seek resources within and beyond our collections that will allow us to better understand Black histories at SJSU.

Conclusion

These two exhibits, though different in subject and execution, share a common goal: to draw attention to the often overlooked histories of Black people within institutions of higher education. Each exhibit encountered challenges due to existing institutional records which failed to adequately capture or represent that history, but each exhibit team was able to overcome those challenges by applying creative and innovative approaches to their exhibits.

Dominant narratives communicate the values of an institution and can shape the way people within the institution interact with one another. When those stories diverge from both historical truth and the current experiences of Black students, this dissonance may represent an obstacle to student success and an impediment to institutional goals in regards to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Helping to re-focus those narratives on

Black experiences is one way that libraries and archives can contribute to institutional change.

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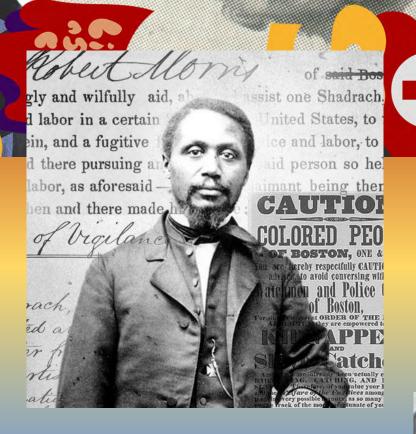
Appendix A: Presentation Slides

The following pages contain slides used while presenting at the California Academic & Research Libraries 2022 Conference.

Tending to Neglected Histories:
Using Exhibits to Re-Focus Institutional Narratives
on Black Experiences and Communities

CARL 2022 Conference | March 31, 2022

Avi Bauer, Boston College Law School
Laurel Davis, Boston College Law School
Yeab Kebede, San José State University
Carli V. Lowe, San José State University
Kate Steffens, San José State University
Nick Szydlowski, San José State University





Presentation Outline

- Dominant institutional narratives at San José State University and Boston College
- The stories that our exhibits tell and how they reframe those narratives
- The process of creating the exhibits
- Impacts of the exhibits and next steps



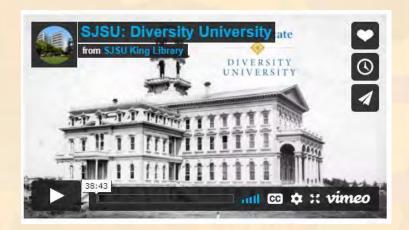
Dominant Narratives at SJSU

- We've always been diverse
- We've always stood for inclusion
- We support our Black students

#13

Top Colleges for Diversity in the Nation

Ranked by Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education (WSJ/THE) among colleges and universities in the nation for diversity in school environments.







Dominant Narratives at Boston College

- Founded 1863 as a **Jesuit** institution to educate the local **Irish** Catholic immigrant community.
- Places emphasis on its **Jesuit, Catholic** heritage and the Jesuit,
 Catholic values of education, service, respect, and **diversity**.

Jesuit education is rooted in a world view that respects all cultures and faith traditions. Boston College strives to ensure that all students, faculty, and staff feel they are valued members of our University community.

https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/campus-life/diversity.html



Dominant Narratives at Boston College

• Yet the history that we have preserved (building names, archival collections), are limited to a few select **white Jesuit men**.



<u>Fr. John S. McElroy.</u> <u>Founder of BC</u>



Fr. Robert Fulton, 3rd president of BC



Fr. Thomas I. Gasson, 13th president of BC





Robert Morris June 8, 1825 - Dec. 12, 1882

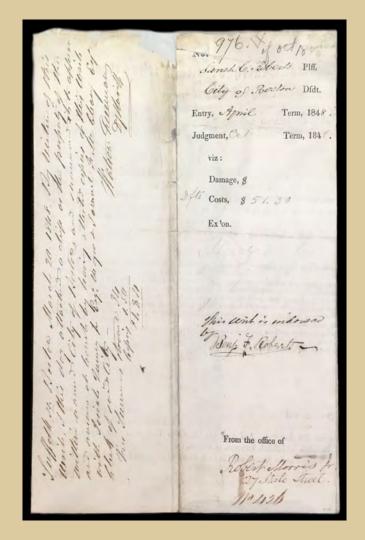
- Born in Salem, MA
- Apprenticed with Ellis Gray Loring
- Admitted to Mass Bar on Feb. 2, 1847
- Involved in antislavery & civil rights activism from an early age
- Married *Catharine H. Mason Morris* (c. 1825-1895) on March 30, 1846
- Son Robert Jr. (1848-1882) became a lawyer



<u>The Harriet Hayden Albums.</u> <u>Boston Athenaeum</u>

Roberts v. City of Boston

- Filed one year after admission to bar
- Hired to represent 5 year old Sarah Roberts
- Had worked on school desegregation in Salem
- Morris hires Charles Sumner to help on appeal
- Loss at Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court
- Connection to Plessy and Brown v. Board
- Eventual success with legislature





The Rescue of Shadrach Minkins

- Fugitive Slave Act of 1850
- Fugitive from slavery in Virginia
- Arrested by Feb. 15, 1851
- Morris & others go to courthouse
- Escape followed by multiple indictments & trials

BCLAW LIBRARY

CAUTION!!

COLORED PEOPLE

OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,

You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and advised, to avoid conversing with the

Watchmen and Police Officers of Boston.

For since the recent ORDER OF THE MAYOR & ALDE F. EN, they are empowered to act as

KIDNAPPERS

AND

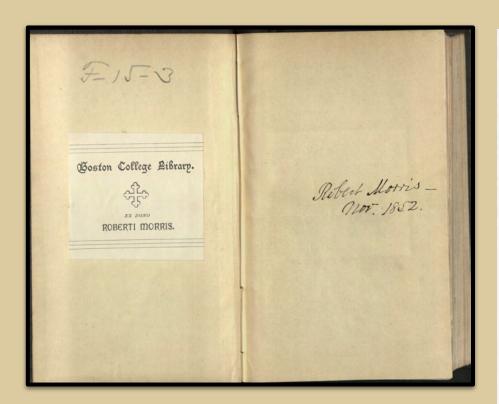
Slave Catchers,

And they have already been actually employed in KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING SLAVES. Therefore, if you value your LIBERTY, and the Welfare of the Fugitives among you, Shum them in every possible manner, as so many HOUNDS on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

Keep a Sharp Look Out for KIDNAPPERS, and have TOP EYE open.

APRIL 24, 1851.





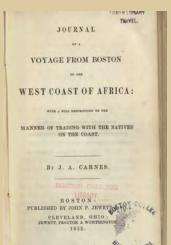


Learning of the Morris Collection at BC

Morris's Library

- One of the only extant, antebellum
 African American-owned libraries
- Law books haven't been found
- Poetry, novels, history, politics, antislavery, etc.









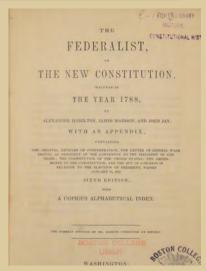
EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION:

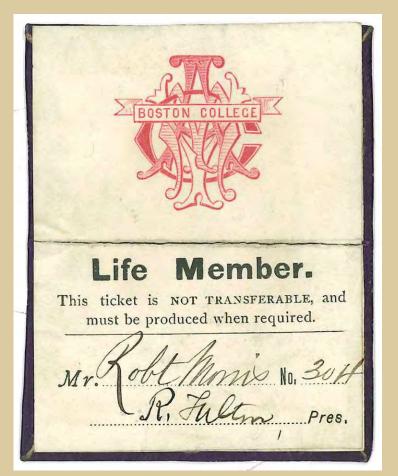












BCLAW LIBRARY

Boston College, Saunday.

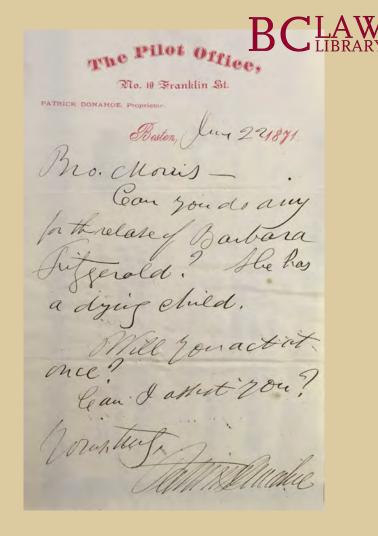
my Sear Mr. Morris, I sent to Mr. Baker to prouve a map. I did wh It any answer till last night - and I go to Philadelphia on Sunday night mr. Is. reported that the Harber Commissioners Ado him the matter beloged to the harbor committee. and the latter Saw it belonged to the former, of h-Committee is correct, a bile may have to be parted though the legis lation, and it is too late to bring in her maller. Better leave the thing when it is al bresant, as the Fairhaven Senatur him take it you. I am now the les, obliged to you. Sorry to hear non. M. has han sick .
Sin and fun Robert Lilen

Robert Morris Papers, Boston Athenaeum

The Irish Lawyer

- Edwin G. Walker eulogy: about
 75% of Morris's clients were Irish
- Joining the Catholic Church





all the residue of my property & guie to the Church of the Emmaculate Conseption on Harrison avenue in said Boston. I monimate John B. manning of Boston to be executor of this will and I request that he beexempt from giving swrety or swreties on his bond assuch executor. In testimony whereof I hereunto set my hand and in the presence of three witnesses declare this to be my last will this third day of november a. D. 1895.

Cothorine morris.

Purses of gold were awarded as follows:—

Twenty-five dollars for Declamation to Michael Glennon.

Twenty-five dollars for Reading to Stephen J. Hart.

For the best Centennial Ode,

a prize (the gift of Robert Morris, Jr., Esq.) was awarded to Patrick H. Callanan.

of Irish genius, and a goodly treasure of Irish History and Biography. On the death of Robert Morris, Esq., in 1882, another department became a fortunate heir. As yet no provision had been made for the ordinary literature of our language; it was done by the studious and noble-hearted lawyer whose least title to remembrance is that he was the respected protégé of the Lorings, the Danas, the Sumners and Phillipses.

Within the last year Miss Edith Agnes, the daughter of the late venerable Doctor Richard Henry Salter, has presented to the College we remember, is as follows: A couple of assassins had penetrated into the royal palace to slay the young prince. In the room of the queen there was a copy of the Kazanski Boje Matre, held in highest veneration by the Muscovites. At the sight of the murderers the mother seized her son, held him up before this picture and invoked Our Lady of Kazan, and instantly rays of keen and brilliant light darted from the eyes of the Madonna, dazed and blinded the ruffians, and enabled the queen to make her escape with her child.

Our picture is a piece of tapestry of fair design and gorgeous coloring, worked by the Oblate Sisters of Providence, in Baltimore, and donated to the college by Mrs. Catharine Morris, widow of the late Robert Morris, Esq.

The Morrises as BC Benefactors



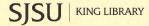
- First Black student entered 48 years after school's founding
- 25 more years until the next Black student attends

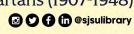


Lucy Turner (Johnson) 1905-1907



Faricita Hall (Wyatt) 1932-1935

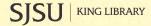




- Acknowledged for one-dimensional accomplishments
- Unwelcoming atmosphere on campus



Hall Capers 1943



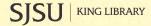




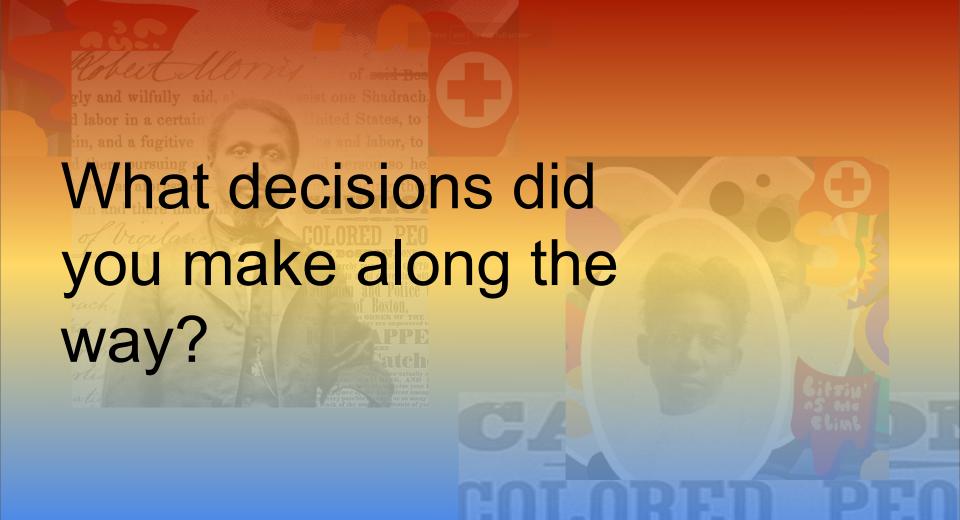
Often not pictured or pictured but unnamed in documents



1935 La Torre Yearbook, page 144







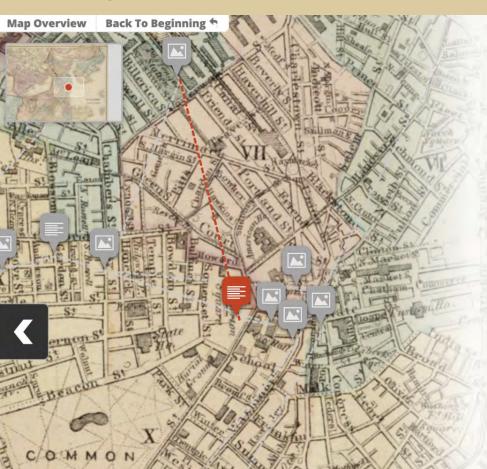


A digital exhibit for high school students

- Part of a series of efforts to raise the profile of Morris at BC and beyond
 - Uncovering of Morris' books
 - Physical exhibit in 2017
- Secondary school audience
- Present information in different formats
 - StoryMap
 - Timeline
 - Morris' Circle
 - How Do We Know? page

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StoryMap



Freedom Seeker Arrested at the Cornhill Coffee House

On February 15, 1851, Shadrach Minkins was arrested by federal marshals pursuant to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Minkins had escaped from slavery in Virginia in May 1850 and settled in Boston. But his enslaver, John DeBree, and DeBree's agent, John Caphart, hunted him down and sought a warrant for his arrest and re-enslavement under the act. The arrest occurred around 11:30 a.m., while Minkins was working as a waiter at the Cornhill Coffee House, an upscale hotel restaurant. The marshals walked Minkins across the square to the courthouse.



Timeline





Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Archives

Original writ filed by Morris in Roberts v. City of Boston, with his signature and address.

April 1848

Fighting for School Integregation

Morris files a lawsuit against the City of Boston on behalf of Sarah Roberts, alleging that the child has been unlawfully excluded from the public school closest to her home. Morris was hired by Sarah's father, Benjamin Roberts, a local printer and activist.

A Crushing Loss March 1850

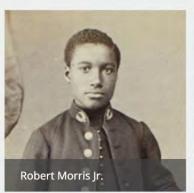


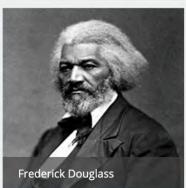
Morris's Circle

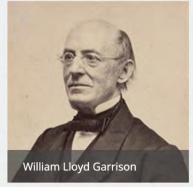
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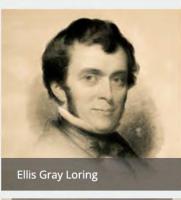
Morris's Circle



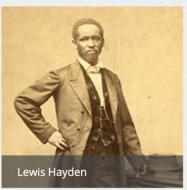


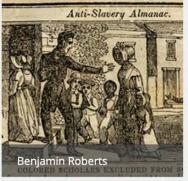




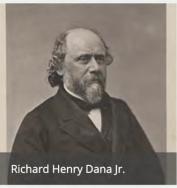












How Do We Know?

- For high school students:
 - Strategies for further research into Morris or related topics
 - Bibliography of relevant sources



How Do We Know?

Continuing the Search

Strategies for Further Discovery

Newspaper-Searches: Searches in library historical newspaper databases can lead to articles that discuss Robert Morris and other historical figures of interest. The Boston Nerold, for example, covered many of Morris's cases. Try searches such as "Robert Morris," Robert Morris' and course, "Robert Morris' and course," Robert Morris' and course, "Robert Morris' and course," Robert Morris' and ceutry. The North Star) reported constantly on antislavery and civil rights activism.

Genealogical Records: Databases like Ancestry.com contain a wealth of information including census records, what records (e.g., birth, death, and marriage), wills, and city business directories. Researchers can learn a great deal about historical figures like Morris, as well as family members, colleagues, and clients, by using these resources.

Digitized Book Collections: In addition to searching library databases and catalogs, researchers can get leads to valuable sources by searching digital book collections like Google Books, Internet Archive, and HathiTrust for key terms like "Robert Morris" and lawyer and Boston. Library catalogs and resources like Google Books allow users to narrow search results by publication date, so researchers can focus, for example, on books published in the 19th century.

Researching His Circle: Research on historical figures like Morris can be expanded by examining materials focused on people in his life, such as Eliis Gray Loring, William Lloyd Garrison, Lydia Maria Child, and Charles Sumner. This material might include archival collections containing items like diares, letters, and account books, as well as biographies and published collections of letters. Keep in mind that in the age of communication via physical letters, Morris's letters likely would have survived only in the collections of the recipient.

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- The state of the s
- Account Book of Francis Jackson, Treasurer: The Vigilance Committee of Boston, 1850-1861 (Massachusetts Historical Society)
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Black Spartans (1907-1948)

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Black Spartans

- Creating inclusive processes
- Locating resources
- Reaching out to a student artist

Contributors

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Yeab Kebede, Portraits

En Yu Ma, Graphic Design

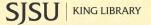
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Lesley Seacrist, *Project Management & Promotional Strategy*

Diane Malmstrom, Digital Assets

Elena Casteneda, Davier Floyd, Eilene Lueck, & Michael Lara, Research

Library Marketing Team, Marketing and Promotions



- Drawing on the research
- Highlighting individuality
- Developing symbology

Black Spartans (1907-1948)



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next steps?

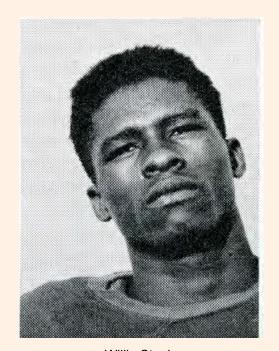
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Impacts

- Surfacing undertold histories
- Enhancing existing and ongoing research

Next Steps

- Exploring future exhibition possibilities
- Continuing research on Black Spartans
- Continuing community outreach
- Building on the Black Spartans model



Willie Steele 1942-1943

Black Spartans (1907-948)







Robert Morris

Impacts

- Variety of presentations for different audiences
- Campus-wide DEIB conversations that the Law Library can spearhead
- Expanding knowledge of Morris to alums and beyond BC (e.g., Peabody Essex Museum exhibit)

Next Steps

- Ongoing efforts for a scholarship in Morris's name
- Working to identify more Morris books to best preserve his role in BC history
- Aid in identification of other overlooked BIPOC figures in BC's history

