



# RENAMING THE EDWARD DEVOTION SCHOOL

Why A Name Change Matters

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# DEVOTION CLASS OF 1979

## MOST LOVE DEVO



# FAMOUS DEVO ALUM



# WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MANY LOVE “DEVO”

## Why Keep the Name

- School Pride
- Family
- Strong Attachment
- Solid relationships formed
- It was a safe place
- It gave people a strong footing to succeed
- Multi-generational attachment
- Part of Town's History
- Plenty of Emotions Associated With Name

## Why Change the Name

- Slavery was always about white supremacy
- Lie by omission
- Where do we acknowledge the contributions of people of color and women
- Plenty of Emotions Associated With Name

# WHAT ELSE I HAVE HEARD

## JUSTIFICATION FOR RETAINING THE NAME

- Slavery was legal then
- Everyone did it
- Slavery was different in the North than in the South
- How bad was Devotion's slave treated
- We don't even know the slave's name
- Could erase history
- Why are we talking about slavery
- How will people find the school
- He made a significant gift to the Town. No one else did
- The School is on his land
- Black slaves were treated better than some whites
- We are in a different time now, why look back
- Anyone who cares about Devotion's past died hundreds of years ago
- May be expensive to change the name
- It is happening too fast
- Africans participated in the slave trade

# WHAT WE WANT

A safe place for all children to go to school with honor and dignity

No sanctioning of racism

A presumption that every child entering is equal, regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, ability

*Moreover,*

*Do not erase Devotion,*

*Contextualize who Devotion was in his time as compared to now*

*Provide an open and inclusive process*



# WITH THE SCHOOL UNDER CONSTRUCTION, Why Not Change the Name Now



# NOW THAT YOU KNOW, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY...

TO A LITTLE AFRICAN AMERICAN  
CHILD ENTERING THE DEVOTION?



TO ANY OTHER CHILD?



**NOT EVERYONE  
APPROVED OF SLAVERY IN  
THE NEW COLONIES**

JOHN ELIOT



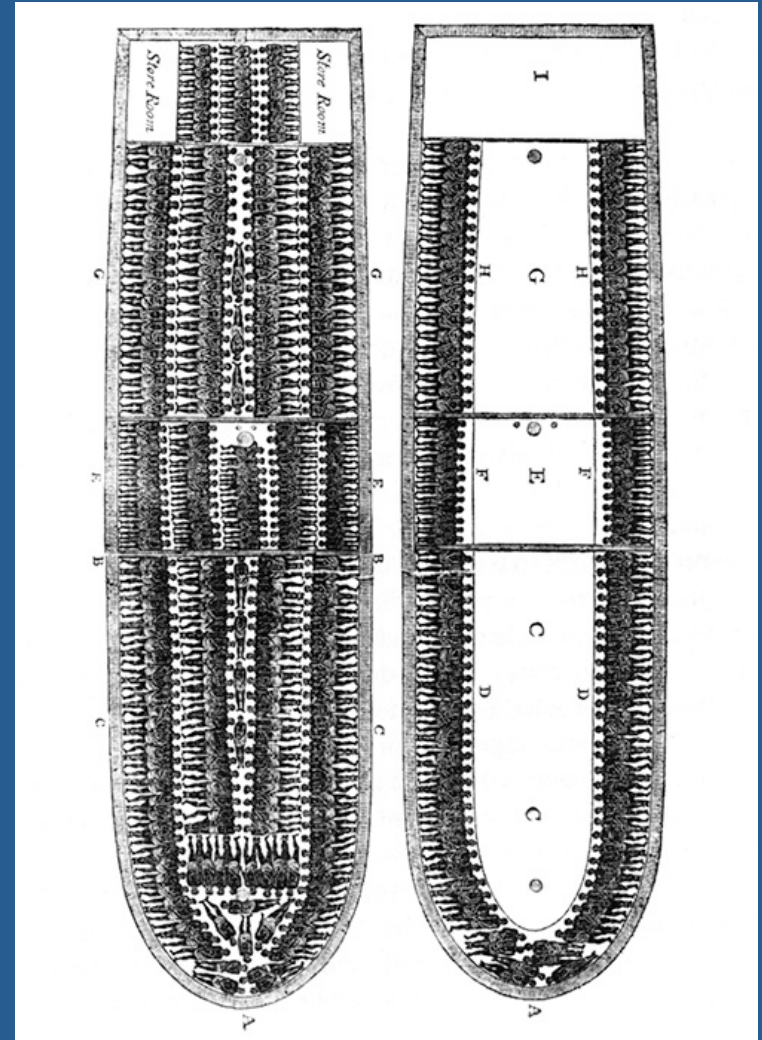
Slavery is and was exploitation.

The Puritan missionary [John Eliot](#), who converted Indians to Christianity, decried the treatment of the African slaves. He "lamented . . . with a bleeding and burning passion, that the English used their Negroes but as their Horses or the Oxen, and that so little care was taken about their immortal Souls."

That said, people of color have been working to name, analyze and dismantle racism in the United States for centuries.

# THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

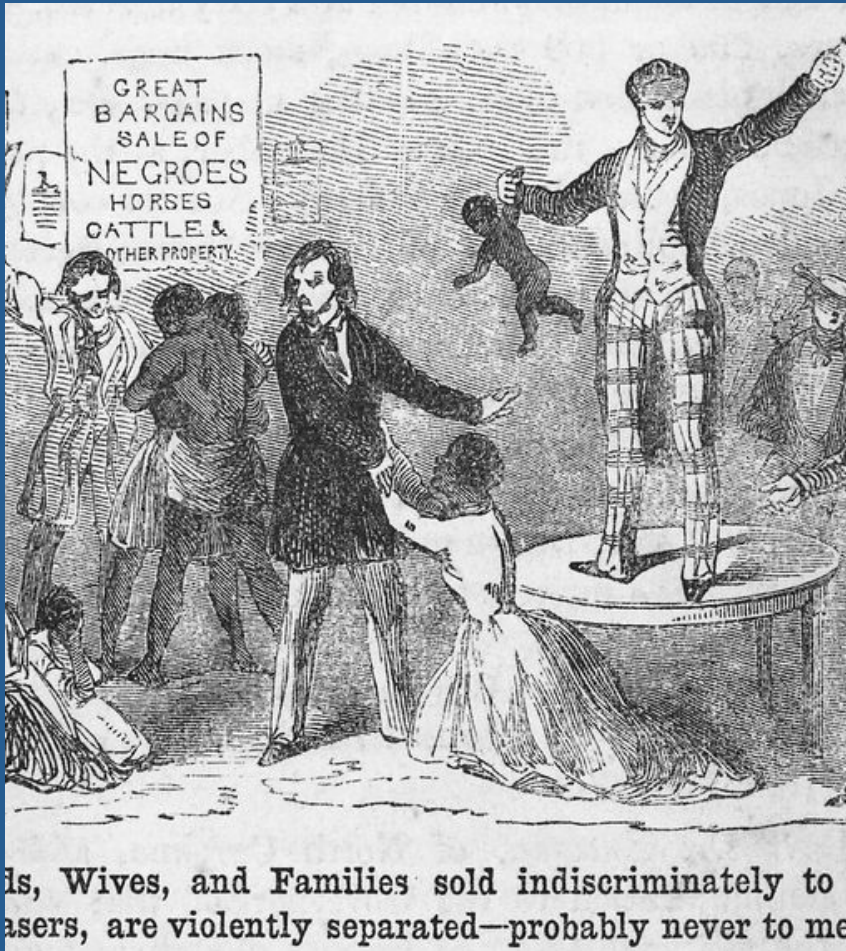
- On the sea voyage from Africa to the Americas hundreds of captive Africans were crammed into tight quarters below deck in terrible conditions
- Millions died from disease, brutal mistreatment, and suicide on the trip



# BASIC FACTS ABOUT SLAVERY IN THE US AND NEW ENGLAND

- The first Africans at Jamestown were purchased as indentured servants from the Dutch. Over the course of two centuries, however, most Africans in the Americas were bought and sold as a source of slave labor, were denied the most basic human rights and were often subject to abusive treatment.
- Slaves accounted for as much as 30 percent of the population in South Kingston, Rhode Island, and were a significant presence in Boston (10%), New London (9%), and New York (7.2%).
- Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island were the three New England states with the largest slave population. Rhode Island had the largest proportion of slaves. It is likely that by the mid 1700's, there were as many as one African for every four white families in these three states.

# ECONOMIC IMPACT OF SLAVERY IN NEW ENGLAND



In New England, slavery allowed expansion from small-time farms to large agricultural production, the expansion of local and regional markets, widespread entrepreneurial activity, and the rise of manufacturing.

Slaves replaced the household head's labor, which often enabled the household head to develop a profession or a craft, which would raise the status and income of his family.

# A SLAVE'S LIFE

- Families were ripped apart.
- Most slaves had Sundays off and they went to church.
- Most slaves could not read or write, and it was illegal for them to learn.
- Slave Codes: They could not leave their home without a pass, carry a weapon, gather in groups, own property, legally marry, defend themselves against a white person, or speak in court.

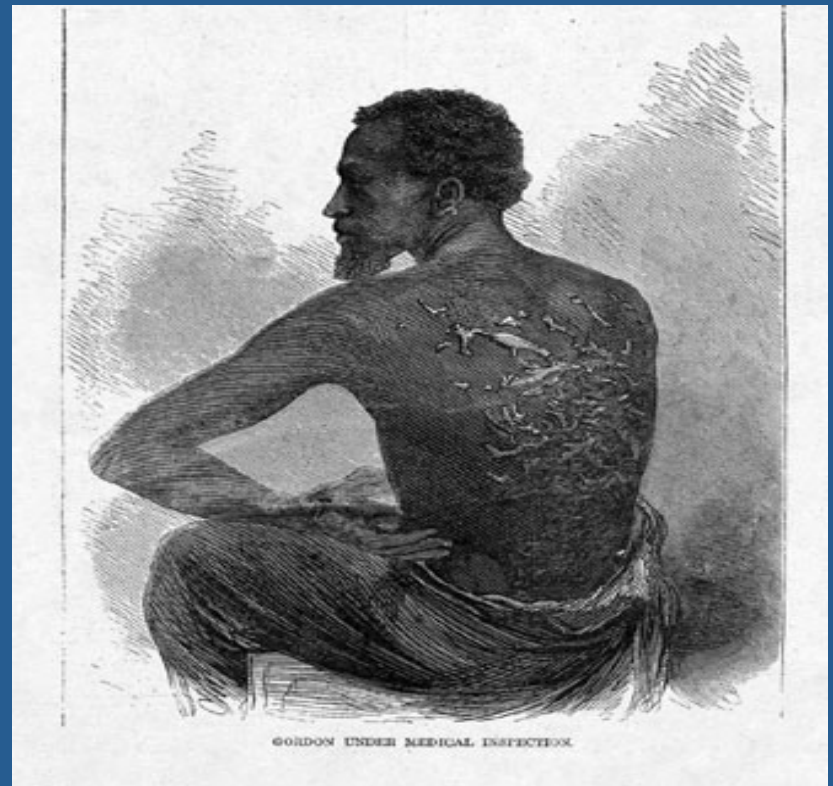
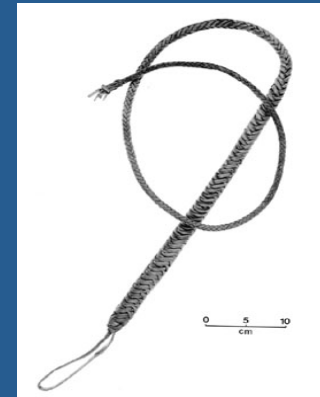
# MORE RULES

Massachusetts passed laws between 1720 and 1750 such that slaves could not buy provisions at a market, carry a stick or cane, keep pigs or walk on a street after dark or on Sunday.

When slaves got old, tired and lame, their masters often set them free so the town had to take care of them. In 1703, Massachusetts passed a law forcing masters to post a £50 bond for every slave freed.

# PUNISHMENT

- Slaves were often brutally punished for breaking rules.
- Punishments included: whipping, branding, being sold, gagging (silence), and other torturous methods



# SLAVERY ON THE BOOKS ENDED IN MASSACHUSETTS

- The rhetoric of the American Revolution inspired many people to question the morality of slavery. And many slaves earned their freedom during the war by fighting for either side
- Enslaved Africans took matters into their own hands in Massachusetts.  
[Quock Walker](#) and [Elizabeth Freeman](#) sued for their freedom in 1781. The Massachusetts courts decided "the idea of slavery is inconsistent with our own conduct and [the Massachusetts] Constitution."

# WHY WE DISCUSS SLAVERY

- ONCE LEGAL SLAVERY ENDED, RACISM TOOK ON ADDITIONAL FORMS BECAME THE DOMINANT TOOL FOR OPPRESSING PEOPLE OF COLOR

# SLAVERY IS NOT WITHOUT LASTING SCARS, IT CONTINUES TO BE TRAUMATIC

- Historical trauma is most easily described as multigenerational trauma experienced by a specific cultural group.
  - Historical trauma can be experienced by “anyone living in families at one time marked by severe levels of trauma, poverty, dislocation, war, etc., and who are still suffering as a result” (Cutler, n.d.)
- Historical trauma is cumulative and collective. The impact of this type of trauma manifests itself, emotionally and psychologically, in members of different cultural groups (Brave Heart, 2011).
- As a collective phenomenon, those who never even experienced the traumatic stressor, such as children and descendants, can still exhibit signs and symptoms of trauma.

# SOME STATISTICS

**BLACK STUDENTS ARE**

**3X**

**MORE LIKELY THAN WHITE STUDENTS  
TO BE SUSPENDED  
FOR THE SAME INFRACTIONS.**

**AFRICAN-AMERICANS ARE**

**2X**

**AS LIKELY TO BE  
UNEMPLOYED.**

# SOME MORE STATISTICS

- Blacks make up 13% of the population, they represent about 40% of the prison population.
- White families hold 90% of the national wealth, Latino families hold 2.3%, and black families hold 2.6%.
- 30% of black drivers are likely to be pulled over
- People of color are told about and shown fewer homes and apartments than whites. Black ownership is now at an all-time low (42%, compared to 72% for whites).

# RACISM IS TRAUMATIC

- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression are common outcomes of trauma exposure and are understudied in black community
- Blacks people of all ages are more likely to be victims of serious violent crime than are non-Hispanic whites.
- One study reported that over 25% of Black youth exposed to violence met diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Black people are 20% more likely to report having serious psychological distress than non- Hispanic whites

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Services , 2010

- 30% of inner city kids suffer from PTSD

# EPIGENETICS OF SLAVERY AND RACISM

## Racism Hurts for Generations

Certain individuals are more susceptible to stress and trauma, as well as the physical and mental health consequences following such exposure, including risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This differing vulnerability is likely to be influenced by genetic predisposition and specific characteristics of the stress itself (nature, intensity and duration), as well as epigenetic mechanisms.

Some key genetic risk factors have been identified for PTSD, and there is evidence that **epigenetic processes might play a role in the biological response to trauma, as well as being potential biomarkers of PTSD risk.**



# PAINFUL LEGACY OF SLAVERY AND RACISM

## ITS MANIFESTATIONS, INCLUDING FEAR

- Reasons for Fear
- Slave labor
- Forced migrations
- Stolen property
- Dehumanization
- Mass incarceration
- Torture
- Medical experimentation
- Discrimination
- Race riots
- Police Brutality
- Racial Profiling
- Lynchings
- Mass murder
- Long-lasting psychological effects (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) on survivors and descendants.

# RESILIENCE MATTERS



WE CLEARLY HAVE A ROLE

- LEAD
- MAKE TOUGH DECISIONS

# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

- **Restorative justice** is an approach to [justice](#) that personalizes the crime by having the victims and the offenders mediate a restitution agreement to the satisfaction of each, as well as involving the community.
- A way to enhance quality of life despite historical trauma
- Acknowledge and confront the historical trauma
- Work on understanding the historical trauma
- Focus on healing of oneself as well as healing within and among the group

# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

- WHAT CAN BE DONE . . . MAKE PEOPLE FEEL
  - THE PLACE IS WELCOMING
  - CREATE A SENSE OF:
    - Safety
    - Trustworthiness and transparency
    - Collaboration and mutuality
    - Empowerment
    - Voice and choice
    - Peer support and mutual self-help
    - Resilience and strengths-based
    - Inclusiveness and shared purpose
    - Cultural, historical and gender issues
    - Change process

# DEVOTION DOES NOT MEET PRESENT DAY NAMING STANDARDS

- A person/organization of excellent reputation and character who/which has set an example of outstanding citizenship and/or has made an exemplary contribution of time, service, or resources to or on behalf of the community.
- A national noteworthy public figure or official.
- An event of historical or cultural significance.
- A significant donation or bequest, establishment of a trust, or other similar action.

# DEVOTION DOES NOT MEET SCHOOL'S NAMING STANDARDS

The School Committee may desire to dedicate a space or to place a plaque in a school building or around the grounds of a school to:

- a national (public) figure who represents a core value of the system;
- an individual who has demonstrated lengthy and/or exemplary service to the students of Brookline;
- an individual or group for whom the contributors(s)donator(s) significant funds to recognize, memorialize, or honor that individual of group;
- a person or person(s) who donate significant funds.

# WE DON'T NEED TO REINVENT THE WHEEL

- Schools Removed Offensive Native American Names
- The Cambridge School Committee voted unanimously to strip the name of famous 19th century Harvard professor Louis Agassiz
- Yale
- Harvard Law School
- Many others

# WHAT WE BELIEVE

*As President George W. Bush said at the dedication ceremony for the National Museum of African American History & Culture, “A great nation does not hide its history. It faces its flaws and corrects them.”*

Taken From Mitch Landrieu Speech

# BE THE JUSTICE LEADER FOR THE REGION

- Use GARE as a roadmap
- The Town should, and encourage other communities to, strategically strengthen their capacity to think critically about the role race plays in their relationships, programs, organizations and institutions and take bold action to build a more equitable community.
- Identify and name racism for what it is, a stain on all of our souls
- Enhance individual and collective racial equity programming throughout the community
- Place greater emphasis on partnerships with organizations led by people of color
- Evaluate all Town programs including strategic planning, programs, construction, training, recruitment, retention and events through an anti-racist lens
- Create a culture of reflection and accountability toward addressing interpersonal and institutional racism
- Measure success

# CONCLUSIONS

- CHANGE THE NAME OF THE DEVOTION SCHOOL TO ONE BEFITTING OUR VALUES
- DO SO IN AN INCLUSIVE AND TIMELY MANNER
- DO NOT DRAW OUT THE PROCESS
- LEAD BY EXAMPLE

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