Talking Reparations with Bishop John Selders

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Intro Voice Artist: Welcome to the Primus project podcast. The mission of the Primus project is to explore the relationship between Trinity College, white supremacy and slavery. The purpose of this podcast is to empower the Trinity community to think through the college's challenging histories and begin efforts of repair the Primus project podcast is recorded in Trinity's Rather Library studios in Hartford, Connecticut.

00:42
Nicole Ankrah: We're so excited to have you here for our second episode. While this is our second overall, it also marks the beginning of a special series on reparations. In this unprecedented time, we invite you to listen with an open heart and mind and with the ambition to contribute to the ongoing work of systemic repair at Trinity College and beyond. I'm Nicole Ankrah, a junior at Trinity College, majoring in American Studies and Human Rights Studies. I'm also a researcher for the Primus Project Podcast, and I can't wait to dive into this important conversation with you. Let's get started.

01:17
Scott Gac: And I'm sitting next to Nicole. I'm Scott Gac, Professor of History and American studies at Trinity College, and one of the co-directors of the Primus project, before we dive in, I want to remind everyone that the Primus Project has produced three reports on the founding of Trinity College. One explores the economic forces behind the college's establishment. Another examines its religious and institutional history, and the third looks at the broader political landscape of the 1820s in Connecticut and beyond, highlighting how race exclusion and the trajectory of higher education in the state were deeply entwined. Now, I have to admit Nicole and I have started and stopped this episode more times than we can count. Instead of giving you the long version, I'll just say this, the sudden and forceful attacks on social justice efforts, especially racial justice, have thrown the Primus project podcast into a bit of a scramble. Our original plan for this episode was to focus on religion and race and the Episcopal Church and the founding of Trinity College. And don't worry, we will continue with episodes on Trinity's early history. But today, as Nicole already mentioned, we are shifting gears, given the swift and severe backlash against justice based initiatives under the Trump administration, which took office in January 2025 we feel it's critical to have a conversation about racial reparations, justice and what that means, or what that might mean at Trinity College. So let's get into it. First. We need to start with a little bit of what an old swim coach of mine used to set aside a little time at the beginning of each workout to discuss what kind of needs to be shared in the room before we can dive into the meat of the conversation. So Nicole, we've been in this studio a bunch in the last few weeks. Why don't you kick us off with what's hanging in the air that's getting in the way of us having this conversation, right?

03:12
Nicole: So I call these unprecedented times because of the recent attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion, otherwise known as DEI initiatives that have been far stronger and more swift than earlier challenges to like affirmative action for example, DEI efforts and affirmative action efforts are part of a long history of programs instituted to correct systemic injustices that have shaped American society. And with that said, I think it's important to acknowledge a common criticism from many conservatives regarding the term systemic injustice or systemic racism. I think that some argue that these phrases suggest that all white people, or even the country as a whole, are inherently racist, but I think that's a misunderstanding of what systemic racism actually is, or what it means. Systemic racism isn't about blaming individuals. It's about recognizing how racial disparities have been built into the very structures of society over generations, policies and practices like slavery, segregation, redlining and discriminatory policing, they didn't just appear that systemic these effects continue to shape opportunities today, particularly for black Americans, especially those from low income backgrounds, as well as other communities of color. And I think that it's important to emphasize that understanding systemic injustice isn't about assigning personal guilt, it's about acknowledging the historical realities that created inequality and working towards solutions that foster a more just society.

04:55
Scott: So we're in a really unusual historical moment. We're seeing a direct federal attack on diversity equity and inclusion efforts, efforts designed to address the very historical injustices that Nicole just outlined. But this isn't just about affirmative action or specific policies being dismantled. It's about a broader push to erase discussions of systemic inequality altogether. One of the main arguments we hear from critics is that we should strive for a so called colorblind society, right? A society in which race is supposedly irrelevant. And that's a nice idea in theory, but in reality, it ignores the deep structural inequities that still shape our society, and let's not forget, the same administration pushing this colorblind ideal has also pardoned individuals involved in the January 6 insurrection, a group that was overwhelmingly white and male. And at the same time, these critics claim that merit is the big key word right now, right? That merit should be the determining factor in who succeeds arguing that people should advance based solely on their abilities. But here's the thing, no one is arguing against merit when making arguments about systemic injustice. Right? The problem is the assumption that everyone starts from the same place or on a so called level playing field. History and our current reality show us that's simply not true. Wealth, race, class have always shaped access to opportunity, and yes, we've actually heard these same arguments before. In the late 1800s millionaires were making the same claim, right, that hard work alone determines success, but we know better, right? People work incredibly hard their entire lives and still struggle to achieve basic economic security and let alone the prosperity that they deserve now, Nicole and I, and I'm sure many of our listeners have been feeling a lot of frustration in this moment, and speaking of frustrating moments, I was really disappointed to see the NFL quietly remove the end racism signs from the back of the end zones for the Super Bowl, signs that had been instituted been placed there right back in 2021. Seeing such a massive corporate entity walk back its public stance on racial justice is discouraging, and it's hardly, hardly, hardly the only example at the same time, there are some examples of corporate commitments to justice based initiatives that are ongoing. But I know Nicole has something to say about this, and I'd love to hear more of her thoughts and frustrations on this moment.

07:28
Nicole: Yeah, like honestly, I can't say I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude towards these corporations that claim to be committed to dei because to me, that's just the bare minimum. It's what they should be doing, prioritizing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion shouldn't be a public statement. It should already be embedded in their values and the way they operate every single day. What really stands out to me is this language about resilience, companies saying they remain resilient, or that dei will somehow make them resilient. That just sounds like a way to reframe and justify something deeper. The reality is that many of these corporate entities are sustained by the labor of black and brown workers, much like how past economic systems relied on the exploitation of marginalized groups. It feels like a modern continuation of that history of deriving value from black and brown bodies for a capitalist profit. And at its core, this is about reinforcing a system where corporate exploitation ends up fueling economic gain. So by doing that, they concentrate wealth at the top, while those doing the labor remain undervalued. So when we're listening to these corporations, or like seeing their statements online making, like polished statements about resilience and commitment, I'm asking myself, who is that actually benefiting? Because if real equity was the goal, we wouldn't need the press releases to prove it.

09:05
Scott: And if I can build on that for a second, right? There's this 2020, study from the Government Accountability Office right the GAO, which found that Walmart and McDonald's are among the top employers of people receiving federal aid like Medicaid and food stamps. In other words, these companies pay their workers wages so low that taxpayers effectively subsidize their business models through essential poverty based support programs. And it's not just McDonald's and Walmart, though they are marked in that study as the worst offenders. Amazon, Kroger, Dollar General also on the list, right from my perspective, if those corporations can't afford to pay livable wages, they need to rethink their business models, a model that relies on government assistance to sustain poverty level wages, isn't truly competitive. It isn't truly sustainable. Unfortunately, rather than addressing the root issue, corporations paying workers too little, the Trump administration seems to be focused on cutting the very programs that help people survive. That approach doesn't fix the problem. It's just going to make life even harder for those already struggling. I want to share one more thought. As a historian of the 19th century, after the Civil War, the federal government took significant steps toward justice, including dedicating a large portion of the Justice Department's budget to cracking down on white supremacist groups. But after a pivotal midterm election, when control of Congress shifted dramatically from the racially progressive Republican Party, the party of Abraham Lincoln, to the racially Conservative Party, the Democrats those efforts to combat white supremacy came to an abrupt halt. The result black voters, especially in the south, were left vulnerable to brutal political and social repression.

10:51
Nicole: So in other words, we've seen before what happens when movements for justice are undermined. History shows us that the stakes are high and the consequences are very, very real. Yes. And I would add that watching how cautious leaders in higher education have suddenly become around even the appearance of sanctioning dissent or protest or diversity in the United States is stunning. One of the things that I've seen recently was this new disclaimer that showed up on the Bard College

website, and just let me read this real quickly. It says, Bard has a long history of creating inclusive environments for all races, creeds, ethnicities and genders. We will continue to monitor and adhere to all federal and New York state laws and guidance.

11:42
Nicole: Today, we're diving into the growing movement for reparative policies. This modern movement has been building since at least the 1990s where corporations faced increasing pressure to investigate and acknowledge their historical ties to slavery in the United States. However, while some acknowledge their role taking real reparative action has often been where progress stalls. A good example is Hartford insurance companies that issued policies tied to slavery in the 1840s and 1850s admitted to this history, but didn't follow up with concrete reparative steps. Similarly, newspapers like the Hartford Courant acknowledged profiting from publishing ads that facilitated the capture of enslaved people, and while they made changes to the coverage of communities of color, they didn't further reparative action. This disconnect between recognizing harm and actively working toward repair is at the heart of our conversation today, why does this gap persist and how do we move beyond acknowledgement to meaningful action? In recent years, we've seen reparation efforts emerge in places like Tulsa, Oklahoma, Evanston, Illinois, the latter being one of the first places to distribute direct payments to descendants of enslaved people. Amherst, Massachusetts, the state of New Jersey also have initiated programs. Each of these efforts is unique, shaped by local histories and local circumstances. The Tulsa movement, for example, arose from efforts to reckon with the Tulsa race massacre, which was previously called the Tulsa race riot. One key outcome of this new movement has been a shift in how we talk about what happened, recognizing it as a massacre rather than a riot. Similarly, institutions like Georgetown University, Princeton Theological Seminary and the Episcopal Church have publicly acknowledged their ties to slavery, with some taking significant steps to address these past injustices, speaking specifically here of providing scholarships and access to the institutions for historically disadvantaged communities here at the promise project, we're dedicating a series of episodes to exploring what reparations might look like, both broadly and within the Trinity College community. But before we get into the specifics, let's start with a fundamental question, what are reparations? Before we define reparations from different perspectives, we want to acknowledge the excellent podcast, what is owed by GBH news. The seven part series examines reparations efforts in Boston and explores what meaningful reparations might look like in a major American city. It's been a major influence on our work, and we highly recommend checking it out. We'll post a link on the promise project podcast page for those interested.

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14:31
Scott: Yes, Nicole Sarayah Wintersmith at GBH news, has done a tremendous job on reparations. I encourage everyone who's listening to this to listen to her podcast series A key starting point right in understanding reparations is the United Nations basic principles and guidelines on the right to a remedy and reparation. It's a comprehensive document, very large document. It breaks down reparations, though, into five main categories, and we will bounce around in them a little bit today. The first category is Cessation and Assurance of non-repetition. It's ensuring that the harm has stopped and that it will not

return again. The second category, the UN lines out, is restitution and repatriation. This is to address displacement and loss. The third category is Compensation, providing financial or material reparations. The fourth category is called Satisfaction, acknowledging the harm in a way that meets the needs of affected communities. And the fifth category is called Rehabilitation, supporting long term recovery and healing. One of the things that I take away from the UN document, it's a very powerful principle, and that's when the UN document states that reparations should be proportional to the gravity of the violation and the harm suffered. In theory, the UN document lays out principles that are clear, that are just and that are necessary in practice, however, enacting them as a policy often meets significant resistance, both from opponents and even from some proponents with differing views on what reparations should look like. Today, Nicole and I are going to quickly walk through two active reparations organizations in the United States. The first is N'Cobra, the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America?

16:21
Nicole: Yeah. So N'Cobra has been leading the fight for reparations since the late 1980s advocating for full reparations for Black African descendants in the United States and its territories. The argument is rooted in the international human rights law, recognizing that reparations aren't just about an apology. They're about repairing harm and restoring communities that have been historically and systemically disadvantaged

16:45
Scott: Exactly, and what's important to emphasize here is that reparations are not a charity but a legal and moral obligation. N'Cobra argues that just like in domestic law, where parties are held accountable for damages they've inflicted, governments and corporations should be held responsible for the harm caused by things like enslavement, like things like Jim Crow, by things like systemic racism, the things that persist to this day. One of the reasons we're seeing such strong push back against histories that expose systemic racism is the uncomfortable moral reckoning that they demand. These stories challenge long held narratives, prompting difficult but necessary conversations about accountability and justice.

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Nicole: Yeah, that's a key distinction I'd like to raise about N' Cobra. They don't just talk about reparations in abstract terms. They're presenting a real strategy, which they spent years outlining. They've organized their work into nine commissions covering everything from economic development and legal strategies to legislation and International Affairs. And their goal isn't just a financial payout, which I think many people think of first when they hear people talking about reparations. That's just not what it is. N'Cobra's vision includes structural change, things like economic development, education policy shifts and ensuring that reparations lead to long term transformation, rather than just one time compensation.

18:15
Scott: Right. N'Cobra is about repairing the damage holistically, whether that means land restoration, community investment or addressing disparities in wealth, healthcare and education that still exist today

because of systemic racism, before we move on to our next organization, it's also very important to highlight who is included in encoders vision of reparative justice.

18:40
Nicole: Yeah. N'Cobra sees reparations as a global movement, and they work in solidarity with international groups fighting for reparative justice, recognizing that African descended peoples worldwide have similar histories of exploitation and displacement.

18:56
Scott: Now, that's a very large and inclusive group. ADOS, the next organization we're going to talk about has a much narrower vision of reparations.

19:05
Nicole: One of the biggest distinctions in the ADOS reparations plan is who qualifies ADOS--A, D, O, S--stands for American Descendants Of Slavery. Unlike some other reparations proposals, ADOS is very clear that eligibility should be based on lineage, not just race.

19:23
Scott: So what does that mean by lineage?

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Nicole: So for American Descendants Of Slavery, to qualify for reparations, individuals must meet three key criteria. So one, be a US citizen and have consistently identified as Black or African American on government documents. Two provide documentation, things like birth certificates or census records showing that they have a direct ancestor who identified as black before 1965 and three trace their ancestry to at least one person who was enslaved in the United States between 1776 and 1865...so this means that someone who is Black but immigrated from, say, Jamaica, and who had an ancestor once enslaved in Jamaica, wouldn't qualify under ADOS. The program is specifically for Descendants of enslaved people who built the United States.

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Scott: And that's been a point of controversy. Right? Some critics argue this approach excludes too many people who have also experienced anti black discrimination in the US. But ADOS leaders say this is about specific justice right, repairing the generational harm inflicted on a specific group. And this is a significant fault line in the reparations movement, whether it is whether reparations should be a race-based justice initiative for Black communities broadly, or a more specific movement for justice, more directly traceable to enslavement in the United States. So beyond cash payments, what does ADOS propose?

20:50
Nicole: Well, one big piece is land and educational resources. So that would be by allocating land and investing in schools and programs that would help build wealth and stability for ADOS communities. Then there's mental health support recognizing the generational trauma caused by slavery and systemic racism. And finally, and it's tough to say this as we witness the deliberate dismantling of the

federal government, but ADOS is calling for a federal agency. They're calling for a federal agency dedicated to overseeing the reparations process, verifying eligibility, administering payments and ensuring the program is implemented effectively.

21:29
Scott: It is tough to imagine a new federal agency at this point, but I'd like to bring in a little historical perspective on this. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 significantly expanded federal authority, empowering U.S. Commissioners to oversee the capture, adjudication and re enslavement of Black men and women who sought freedom. It ultimately established a federal agency to capture runaway enslaved persons. Establishing a federal agency as ADOS proposes to oversee reparations, could symbolically acknowledge and work and repair that legacy. However, given the current political climate where we are witnessing internal attacks on the federal government itself, the idea of creating a new agency seems almost unimaginable. It's also important to recognize that the reparations remain a deeply debated issue. Some fully support ADOS plan, while others advocate for different approaches, such as universal basic income or broader racial justice policies. And of course, there are those who oppose reparations altogether, arguing that today's taxpayers shouldn't be held accountable for past injustices, despite the fact that the consequences of those injustices persist. There's also the concern that if reparations discussions gain traction, other marginalized groups or harmed groups will step forward right with their own claims for justice. In fact, we're already seeing a divergence between indigenous demands for reparations and those led by African Americans. Do you have any ideas on that, Nicole?

22:54
Nicole: I think that divide is worth unpacking. Indigenous communities have long fought for sovereignty, land back initiatives and treaty enforcement, whereas African American reparations efforts are largely focused on financial restitution and economic justice, the two struggles are deeply connected in their opposition to settler colonialism and racial capitalism, but they're also distinct in their historical grievances and demands. And then there's this question of political feasibility, if even a narrowly focused reparations plan like ADOS faces resistance, what does that mean for broader discussions on repair and restitution? Like, are we looking for an incremental approach where different groups push for reparations on separate tracks, or is there a possibility for a coalition based movement that unites these struggles under a broader call for historical justice.

23:43
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23:46
So how do we imagine a repair effort at Trinity College? First, we need to deal a little bit with the history. As our research reports have shown, Trinity College was founded on monies directly linked to human enslavement in the United States and in the West Indies, it perpetuated a system of exclusion in the 19th century, not only of Black men, but of course, of all women, and, at times, certain religious groups, such as adherents of Judaism. Members of the Trinity community, in their role as politicians and community leaders, used their power to remove the right to vote for Black men in the state of

Connecticut (that was in 1818), supported Black removal from the state via colonizationist efforts and hindered, underfunded, and segregated schools for Black children in the state.

24:34
Nicole: The first Black degree recipient at Trinity College, then called Washington College, was Edward Jones. Jones received an honorary master's degree from the College in 1830 and it's important to note that, as an honorary degree recipient, Jones did not attend class with Trinity College students, though he did attend classes with Trinity faculty who taught in the African Mission School. And the African Mission School was a colonizationist project on campus set up by Bishop Brownell to help remove Black bodies from the United States and bring Christianity to Africa. We'll have a more focused research coming out on Jones. But the real concern here is who was the first Black student at Trinity College?

25:09
Scott: And that's a really great question. If I could refine that a bit, it's important to acknowledge the search for black students as a search for students who identified as black in their lifetime. For example, there is Alexander Lucius Twilight, who graduated from Middlebury College in 1823, he is now roughly understood as the first man of color to receive a degree from a higher educational institution in the United States. But Twilight doesn't appear to have ever identified as black, right though his father was a free mulatto man, and his mother was marked as a Quadroon. That said the 1810 census in Vermont marked his family as White, and Twilight himself moved through the Middlebury campus as a White man. In terms of the Trinity College context, we just don't know who the first Black student to attend the college was .

26:01
Nicole: But it looks like the Trinity student community was tracking Black students after the Civil War in the United States.

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Scott: So one of the things our ongoing research has shown right is that in 1876 for instance, the Trinity Tablet, the student newspaper, talked about an uproar made by White southerners at Princeton when Black students attended a lecture. Indeed, the Trinity students called out the racist behavior of the White Princeton students in that situation, and later in the 1880s the paper will note of a Black student at Yale, but the paper never calls for the admission of a Black student into Trinity, nor does it mention a Black student at Trinity. We have a 1908 column that does note that the janitorial staff at the college has almost always consisted of Black men.

26:44
Nicole: Our research on this is still unfolding, but so far, we haven't found evidence of a Black student presence at Trinity until 1950. That year, Edmund T. Moore, a graduate student economics and a World War II veteran, wrote a letter to the Tripod responding to a proposed exclusion of Jewish and Black students from campus fraternities. It wasn't until the 1960s and early 1970s that we see a significant increase in policies and programs aimed at supporting Black students and a tremendous wave of black

student activism. So while the college is nearly 200 years old, the history of black student enrollment and engagement is relatively recent and still developing.

27:23
Scott: We're going to take a deep dive into that pivotal era, the 60s and 70s in another episode. But for today, let's focus on the big question, how do we begin to imagine efforts to repair nearly two centuries of a history tied to an institution deeply intertwined with American slavery. This is a college founded during the height of slavery's expansion, a time when its own leader, Bishop Brownell, actively worked to grow the Episcopal Church in the Deep South, taking advantage of slavery's exponential rise in Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana, all while serving as the college's president. How do we reckon with a founder who was a state leader in the colonizationist movement advocating to send black Americans to Africa, and how do we reconcile the fact that even as other colleges and universities began admitting men of color, this institution resisted for much longer. These are tough questions, but they are necessary ones, and today, we're going to outline what a real effort for repair might look like.

28:30
Nicole: Back in spring of 2024 we invited Bishop John Selders into the podcast studio. He offered us some advice on how to frame this conversation on repair at Trinity College. I'll let Bishop soldiers introduce himself in his roles in the Church and at Trinity College.

28:44
John Selders: I am a member of the Office of Student and community life, aka the Dean of Students Office, and have been around Trinity College both as a chaplain and now Dean for the last almost decade before That, taught at Yale Divinity School as a adjunct lecturer, and have spent the vast majority of my career either in the ministry in the pastorate and or in higher ed, doing some version of teaching and now as an administrator.

29:14
So yeah, the first step Bishop Selders emphasized was diving into the historical research before we can even start a conversation about repair, we need to fully understand the history that brought us here. He put it best when he shared his thoughts on the Primus Project Reports. Here's what he had to say:

29:30
John Selders: What was news, however, was the proliferation of the individuals in and around Trinity College who you would think they were great liberal minds. I'm saying that a bit facetiously, but that white supremacy reigned true and supreme here in the North just as much as we would think it was in the south. So it was great to have like names, and you know, young people say it now, receipts. We got receipts. So that's facts, right? You can argue about, you know, some other stuff, but you got a receipt or two. You can go, like, pow! and slam that on the table. So that's my take as an intellectual. I'm thinking, yeah, look at that name. Oh, look at that. Oh, I know that one. I know a bit of that story. So, you were dropping bread crumbs, that's what I'll call them, along the way. That just reinforces what, as a student in history myself and a would be scholar, would say, Yeah, this is good stuff.

30:31

Scott: Now, those are absolutely some powerful insights. Bishop Selders encouraged us to think about reparations through the lens of community, justice, and values, reminding us that this isn't just about policy, but about how we care for and restore each other. In this next clip, he draws from the wisdom of two influential Christian theologians and activists, Howard Thurman and Yvonne Delk to deepen our understanding, why don't we take a listen?

31:01
John Selders: I gotta figure out what does this really mean today, you know? So I'm always doing the give and take of it all. So I go to my spiritual guru and teacher, guy by the name of Howard Thurman. He has a quote. It's of a, you know, it's a part of a longer piece that says it's a strange freedom to be adrift in the world of men and women without a sense of anchor anywhere, everywhere, there's a need for more. He says, everywhere, there is a need for a firm grip on something that's rooted in something (not my words), something that's beyond yourself, yet connected to oneself. There's a need for all of us, both as individuals, to be connected to groups and affinity groups, community, in other words, and something that cannot be denied. My spiritual mom. Her name is the Reverend Doctor.... the Reverend Mother Doctor, Yvonne Delk. She would say it this way. She said, What has touched you. Who has touched you, what has reached you in your coming to who you are today, that you're not free to walk away from? Alright? So for me, this question of, what does it mean 200 years later, 205 years, if we say 1818, you know, opens up a doorway to Washington College being birthed. What do we say that we can't walk away from that we have to grapple with day for day for me, when asked about the cannons on the quad, for example, do you want to just get rid of them? No, I want the truth to be told about them.

32:45
For example, you know, if we don't get rid of Seabury as a name of, alright, I'm stepping in it, right? If we don't, could we tell the truth and not just gloss over it as if it's, you know, it doesn't have any meaning? It has some meaning. Could we tell the truth around James Williams and I know, I do not call him professor.

33:11
Scott: Now, if you've been following this podcast, this might sound familiar. One of the key categories in the UN statement on reparations is satisfaction, essentially acknowledging harm in a way that truly meets the needs of affected communities. Bishop Selders's call for truth telling about the individuals and symbols that line the college's iconic Long Walk is a powerful example of this, and let's not forget Nicole's response to this comment during our interview. It was a moment that really underscored why this kind of reckoning matters.

33:46
Nicole (from earlier interview): That's a very interesting response. And as you were talking, I just thought back to freshmen me walking on the long walk, sitting in Seabury, thinking nothing of it, and just thinking about how there's been a shift in the way that I walk through the Long Walk or sit in Seabury today. And I just remembered a particular moment, I was walking at night, and I was like looking at the figures, the like the carvings on Seabury, and just like staring very intently at it, and just thinking about how if 200 years ago, if I was walking through this campus how I would be received by this individual,

and it was honestly very haunting. And I just, I think it's important to emphasize truth here, because I was able to learn more about this through my research and also just talking with people like you [Bishop Selders], people like Professor Gac, (Scott), but freshman Nicole had no clue about the building I was sitting in the building I was walking past every day. And I think that's exactly why truth needs to be emphasized, especially for people like me, Black students.

35:00
[Long Pause]

35:00
Nicole: What I meant by that back then was that Seabury Hall is named after Samuel Seabury, an 18th century Episcopalian leader and importantly, an enslaver in Connecticut. Our research has also uncovered that Abraham Jarvis, another prominent Episcopalian leader and the namesake of a dormitory on the Long Walk was also an enslaver during the same period. It's a sobering reminder of how deeply entwined these histories are with the institutions we interact with every day.

35:30
Scott: And to wrap up our discussion on the Long Walk, here's something else you might want to think about. We have a statue on campus honoring Thomas Church Brownell, a college founder who was also a colonizationist and a supporter of slavery, that brings up an important question, how do we approach repair and reckoning when it comes to our campus spaces? Who do our buildings and monuments celebrate? What stories are missing? If certain names or statues remain, how do we provide fuller context and ensure the space feels truly welcoming to all students.? These are the kinds of conversations that can help transform our campus into a place of inclusion, reflection and progress.

36:12
Nicole: I remember in the interview, we talked about ways to reshape the institution's trajectory, things like updating official college histories and creating a more truthful, engaging script for campus tours. It was a great conversation about how history isn't just something we preserve, it's something that alters our vision of the future.

36:31
Scott: Absolutely, Nicole, I totally agree that reshaping college environments plays a key role in fostering repair on campus, but I also have to admit, I'm a little old school in some of my thinking, right? I believe that real change comes down to where the money goes. Sometimes redirecting college resources in meaningful ways isn't just symbolic, it's a concrete step toward broader social repair.

36:56
Nicole: Yeah, and that's exactly what Bishop Selders talked about. Here was his take:

37:01
John Selders: Here I am as an administrator, and I'm a part of a core group of us that are asking questions of our institution. Do we really believe and are we willing to put, you know, our money and our resource other than money, I think we need money, but our resource where our mouth has been for

a minute about what it is. I mean, we did crash the glass seating and hiring a Black woman president that glass ceiling is busted now, and for the last decade, she came the same year I came here. So almost a decade, she's significant. I think some significant movement has begun to happen right around change and these institutions that, you know, happen slowly, but they have to be deliberate. Change has to be practiced, and it's got to be deliberate. And here we, I think we can push from the inside, you know, and from the outside and from all the sides there are to say, we got to do something. We got to do some meaningful, intentional, significant change has got to come. The next 200 years. Cannot based on this history. Cannot just kind of, you know, go somewhere, find some sand, find some dirt, and stick your head in it. Right to do that means that all of the work we've put in, we've invested into trying to find these receipts and tell these stories with go for naught, and I'm one willing not to do that.

38:26
Nicole: Now we know that the college has devoted resources to marginalized and disadvantaged students in the last 50 or so years and in the present, but what I feel it hasn't done well is to highlight some of those efforts. Now, today, this sounds like a pipe dream given the current political climate, but in the future, I hope to push a college to highlight those stories, in addition to acknowledging its darker past. Of course, in terms of resources, scholarships and in college support are just the tip of the iceberg. In response to demand for moja coalition, one of the oldest black affinity groups on campus, the College had a recent effort to hire faculty from historically marginalized groups, and now it needs to spend time and effort to retain those faculty members. But Dean selders envisioned one more specific possibility to address the college's history, and for this, he returned to Edward Jones, the black degree recipient from the college in 1830 Jones had a falling out with Bishop Brownell over his refusal to support the colonizationist movement, and so instead of heading to Africa as a missionary of the Episcopal Church, he did so under the auspices of the Anglican Church. Jones then led an institution of learning in Sierra Leone for some decades, and Bishop sellers has laid out a way for Trinity College to partner with the institution that Jones built. Here's that clip,

39:36
John Selders: And yet, we also have a record of an Edward Jones, who then goes from here through that colonization process. We can, you know, now we got receipts that part of what that African missionary schools real work was to get black folk from here to go back to Africa and get out of here and so that we can go on and build our, you know, our society, that's exactly right. And yet he went there and for his whole life, in three, four generations afterwards, it was the university, now westernized, though it may have been, and it was today. It's a part of the legacy of the University of Sierra Leone, and it's there. How come we can't have a relationship today and maybe be driven to have that relationship, and maybe possibly forge a new way of being and take that serious in the way that they took seriously the American Colonization Society and that project, right? I'm willing to challenge, and I've talked to some of our colleagues, to say, hey, what might it mean if a few of us go to Sierra Leone show up and say, Hey, we want to be a part of building something out that makes sense as a bicentennial tribute to some of what got twisted up and went wrong. You got to make restitution. You got to make it right. And let's do some of that, and do that not in a colonized do for way. Let's partner up everybody's you know, you bring your tool. And for me, it's spit and Scotch tape: you can do a lot with spit and Scotch tape....as long as you hold your mouth right, and then you can make it work right. So

what can we bring that we all contribute to something that's new. You know, I'm committed to taking students across the country, to Africa and the African diaspora. And let's talk about the ways in which what you learn here has some real world connection. And let me be very clear, Black students and students of color, let me be very clear. The White ones can come along if you act right. But for real, and I'm saying that out loud, that here's an opportunity that we have to do something different. Join me in that project.

42:05
Scott: I hope we can all take inspiration from Bishop Selders and join him in that project. This isn't just history, it's justice, and we'll be continuing our deep dive into reparations here at Trinity College, exploring the histories and movements that have shaped and continue to shape these efforts in future episodes.

42:27
Nicole: Yes, this is just the beginning of our exploration of preparations and their connections to Trinity College. Thank you all for joining us on this journey. If you found today's discussion insightful, be sure to subscribe so you won't miss our next episode. We've got some incredible conversations ahead.

42:40
Scott: And if you have thoughts, questions or stories to share, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out at Primus-Project@trincoll.edu

42:49
Nicole: And let's keep the conversation going until next time. Take care, stay curious and keep pushing for justice. See you in the next episode.

42:57
[Music]

42:57
Outro Voice Artist: The research of the Primus project was made possible by the Henry Luce Foundation and at Trinity College, the Office of the President, the Office of the Dean of the Faculty and the public humanities collaborative. Please search Primus project Trinity College in your browser to find more information about the project, including its research and contact details. Thank you for listening to the Primus project podcast. We look forward to connecting with you in our upcoming episodes.