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## *Interview*



# Slavery and Global History: Reflections on the 10th Anniversary of the *Journal of Global Slavery*

*An Interview with the Past, Current, and Incoming Editors*

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2025 marks the tenth anniversary of the *Journal of Global Slavery* (JGS). Time to pause and take a minute to reflect on its achievements, the development of the field, and the work that lies ahead.

A conversation with founding editor, Damian Pargas (DP), current managing editor, Ismael Montana (IM), and incoming managing editor, Juliane Schiel (JS), led by Viola Müller (VM), Book Review Editor.

## 1 Personal Experiences

**VM:** *Damian, in the editorial note to the inaugural issue in 2016, you spoke of the goal to advance an understanding of slavery as a global and globalizing phenomenon in world history. You set up the journal as a platform to showcase the variety of forms of slavery through time and space, and to stress its globalizing character as a connector of societies and continents “through warfare, power relationships, trade networks, and cultural exchange.”<sup>1</sup> Why did you think this journal was important?*

**DP:** I was a latecomer to the global turn in slavery studies, quite frankly. At the time we launched the journal I had just rejoined the faculty at Leiden University, where I noticed that there were several colleagues doing slavery in some capacity, not always in the Atlantic world, and that they didn't really come into contact with each other, whether in teaching or at conferences. I became more and more interested in looking across borders in order to better understand slavery in my own context (North America in the 18th–19th centuries). So at Leiden we launched the Leiden Slavery Studies Association, started collaborating in our teaching, and organized joint conferences on “global perspectives of slavery.” To our delight we found that our efforts really resonated with students and scholars from all specializations and disciplines. My experience until that point was that scholars of Atlantic slavery tended to talk to each other in a bubble—publishing in the same journals, attending the same conferences, etc. Sometimes these bubbles were even limited by national frameworks (especially in the US). I thought maybe it was time we started teasing out the commonalities and differences in slavery across time and space. Explore the connections. And I thought a new journal that really emphasized the global nature of slavery and the ways in which it has connected societies would help achieve that goal—the goal of getting scholars of slavery from different backgrounds in the same room with each other and into conversation with each other. The idea was to go beyond the Atlantic slav-

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1 Damian Pargas, “Slavery as a Global and Globalizing Phenomenon: An Editorial Note,” *Journal of Global Slavery* 1:1 (2016): 1.

ery paradigm and try to wrap our minds around this feature of human history that has existed since time immemorial. The traditional platform for publications on slavery (especially *Slavery & Abolition*), had been global in theory but in practice heavily focused on the Atlantic world. I thought maybe there was room for a complementary journal that would really emphasize the global scope.

**VM:** *In 2021, Damian stepped down as managing editor and was followed up by Ismael Montana, who had been JGS area editor for Near East and North Africa. Ismael, what has your experience been in the past five years? How do you look back on the work that you have dedicated to the journal?*

**IM:** I want to begin by acknowledging the *Journal of Global Slavery* (JGS) not only as the product of an impeccable scholarly contribution to our field of history, but also as the realization of the vision Damian Pargas, the founding editor, had for enriching our understanding of slavery as a globalizing phenomenon in world history. A vision that underscores his scholarly outreach as a historian.

This vision and scholarly outreach are clearly evident in the first issue of the journal, where leading historians of slavery from diverse geographical and temporal scopes contributed seminal essays on a range of conceptual, theoretical, and empirical issues that laid the foundations for the journal and for inviting historians around the globe to follow suit.

Having assumed the role of Managing Editor after an initial stint as a member of the journal's original editorial team and as Area Editor for the Near and Middle East, I cannot help but express gratitude for the solid internal structure that my predecessor, Damian, put in place for a healthy functioning and operation of the journal. This structure, which includes the working relationships within the editorial team, the handling of submissions, the peer review process, and the importance of providing substantive and stylistic feedback to prospective authors, has been essential for the journal's success. In addition to the collegial atmosphere among the editorial team, the journal's production team, especially our meticulous and indefatigable Desk Editor, Iedske van Coevorden, and the support staff of Editorial Managers, have all played key roles in realizing the mission of the journal.

In my time at the helm of the editorial team, I will say that my goal has been to maintain the elevated status of JGS as the leading journal for significant publications on global slavery. To achieve this, I strive for efficiency, although I acknowledge that relying on the goodwill and expert input of fellow academics—who are themselves burdened with heavy workloads—makes

achieving timely peer review turnarounds a daunting task. With that said, having a solid foundation to operate from has made my tenure as Managing Editor both fulfilling and rewarding.

**VM:** *Damian and Ismael, what have been the academic contributions that surprised you the most? Which approaches do you find particularly noteworthy?*

**DP:** First of all, many thanks to this kind compliment from Ismael! I am very happy with the direction the journal has taken since he took over as Managing Editor. And honestly, all contributions surprise me and continue to fascinate me. It would be hard to choose one that I found the most useful. A couple of the special issues really did a good job at engaging global perspectives. The special issues edited by Alice Bellagamba (volume 2.1–2), Juliane Schiel and her colleagues (volume 5.2), and Pia Wiegink and colleagues (volume 9.1–2), for example, specifically made a point of advancing new conceptual frameworks that were meant to shed light on slavery in a wide variety of contexts.

But I am also delighted that we get so many submissions on the Atlantic world as well—it's precisely these scholars who tend to present their research within Atlantic forums, so that they are willing to enter into conversation in a journal dedicated to global perspectives suggests to me that we're coming a long way in achieving our goals.

**IM:** Surely, there have been so many cutting-edge contributions to the journal. From the standpoint of JGS, it is hard to single out one particular article or special issue. But personally speaking, one of the contributions that surprised me the most, in an exciting way, has been the opportunity to witness up close the ambitious and well-designed research agenda of the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies (BCDSS), which makes a compelling case for 'strong asymmetrical dependency' as a concept contrasting the binary of slavery and freedom. As someone whose area of expertise falls outside the dominant transatlantic model, I find alternative approaches to the transatlantic model's excessive reliance on the binary of slavery and freedom in the transatlantic experience refreshing.

## 2 Development of the Field of Slavery Studies

**VM:** *Juliane will take over the leadership of JGS from Ismael by 2026. Juliane, Ismael, and Damian, what are your views on how the field of slavery studies*

*and the history of slavery has developed in the last decade? What role has JGS been playing?*

JS: Since the early 2000s, the field of slavery studies and the history of slavery has undergone a fundamental transformation: from a history of slavery as the history of a specific economic form and social institution with a clear legal framework to a history of practices and logics of extreme exploitation; from a focus on the rise and fall of slaveholding societies and the socio-economic conditions for the introduction and abolition of slavery in those systems (M.I. Finley: “slave societies”) to the study of any society with slaves around the world (M.I. Finley: “societies with slaves”)—now with a particular interest in the ‘slaves’ in post-abolitionist societies (D. Tomich: “second slavery”; “hidden slavery”; K. Bales: “modern slavery”).<sup>2</sup>

While for three decades discussions on the conceptualization and analysis of slavery had referred to the Jamaican-American sociologist Orlando Patterson and his comparative attempt to systemize forms of slavery (“Slavery and Social Death”, 1985), the new generation of slavery researchers has made the book *The Problem of Slavery as History*, by historian of Africa Joseph C. Miller, the number 1 reference work: Inspired by postcolonial criticism and the global turn, they have advocated a conceptual and spatio-temporal expansion of the previous discussions of slavery.<sup>3</sup>

The mega-database *Slave Voyages*, which had been carefully built up over decades for the systematic collection and central consolidation of data on the transatlantic and inner-American slave trade, was followed by similar smaller database projects on other geographical areas, such as *Exploring Slave Trade in Asia* (ESTA) since 2016, and by high-profile, interactive websites for civil society awareness-raising on modern forms of slavery and exploitation, such as Slavery Footprint.org since 2011.

The founding of the *Journal of Global Slavery* in 2015 reflects this fundamental transformation of the research field and at the same time stands for the will of this new generation of slavery researchers to self-organize and network and to translate the new approach into something more visible and permanent. The traditional publication organ of international slavery research *Slavery &*

2 Moses Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (Cambridge and New York: Viking Press, 1980); Dale W. Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery: Labor, Capital, and World Economy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Kevin Bales, *Understanding Global Slavery: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

3 Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982); Joseph C. Miller, *The Problem of Slavery in History: A Global Approach* (Yale University Press, 2012).

*Abolition* was thus joined by a second English-language journal. While *Slavery & Abolition*, founded in 1980 and significantly shaped and coordinated by the Centre of Caribbean Studies at the University of Warwick (UK) up to today, had to deal with the changes in the field and adapt to a broader understanding of slavery, the *Journal of Global Slavery* stood for those changes itself. The British journal *Slavery & Abolition* followed the spatio-temporal expansion of slavery research and opened up to topics and contributions beyond the transatlantic history of slavery in the European colonial era. However, if the history of slavery in the Americas has remained the journal's most important focus to this day, this may not only be due to the composition of the editors and the editorial board but also to the persistence of the already firmly established profile of an internationally renowned journal.

In comparison, the *Journal of Global Slavery* quickly became the mouthpiece for a new generation of global slavery studies and offered a framework for new conceptual discussions and empirical case studies. Instead of expanding the existing field, the journal was able to define the field differently from the outset: In the spirit of Joseph C. Miller, it dedicated itself to the study of “the global and globalizing nature of slavery in world history”. This double claim—slavery as a “global” and as a “globalizing” phenomenon in world history—placed the established field of transatlantic slavery history on a par with other “emerging fields” of slavery history and necessarily also promoted the much-needed discussion about theoretical and methodological premises in the conceptualization of slavery and the possibilities and limits of comparing the various expressions of slavery across space and time. This fundamental decision is visibly expressed in the decision to nominate separate “Area Editors” for all regions of the world and to include colleagues from non-Anglo-American academic cultures on the Advisory Board.

**IM:** Quite frankly, Juliane answered this question very aptly and covered most of the developments in the field from the last decade. For the sake of emphasis, however, I would just like to add that the past decade has also been more of a ‘digital turn,’ thanks largely to transatlantic historians who led the way in integrating the robust digital humanities tools and methods into the field of slavery and its study. Even though historians of the transatlantic slave trade have long been at the forefront of constructing slavery databases, research in the field of global slavery in non-transatlantic contexts is also increasingly being shaped by the robust digital humanities tools and methods, albeit for structural reasons, there is still much to be done to bridge this gap. I think JGS can definitely play a role in minimizing this divide by encouraging submissions or special issues on digital humanities from areas other than the transatlantic slavery context.

DP: I fully admit that I agree with my colleagues' assessment here, so I don't feel that I have much to add. I recently argued in the introduction to the *Palgrave Handbook of Global Slavery throughout History* (co-edited with Juliane Schiel), which was published in 2023 and reflects a lot of the trends that lie at the heart of the JGS mission, that inevitable cross-pollination of slavery studies from such diverse and global perspectives has greatly influenced the ways in which historians and anthropologists talk and think about slavery around the world.<sup>4</sup> Long dominated by scholarship on the early modern Atlantic and classical Graeco-Roman case studies—which created the very framework for slavery studies, from its terminology to its theoretical approaches—slavery scholarship has in recent years been enriched with new insights into how slavery was understood in various settings, including how it functioned, how it was meant to function, how and why people moved in and out of conditions of slavery, how experiences of slavery were characterized, and how practices of slavery affected regional and interregional power relationships. Understandings of slavery have moved beyond static snapshots and abstract definitions. There is now more focus on situating practices of slavery along a broad continuum of coercion and extreme dependencies; understanding the constantly developing and changing nature of slavery practices across time and space; and appreciating what conditions of slavery meant for real people, both the enslaved and slaveholders.

I have noticed that despite the very clear differences in the practices and institutions of slavery that we all study, there are at least three broad themes upon which scholars are actually in agreement, all of which are characterized by calls to both broaden our understanding of slavery in light of its diversity in world history and clarify its position in relation to conditions of freedom and unfreedom. First, new global slavery scholarship has gone to great lengths to *situate slavery at the most extreme end of a broad spectrum—or continuum—of unfree and dependent conditions in various settings*. The Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies has very much pioneered new understandings in this regard. (One might even speak of the “Bonn School” of slavery studies.) Second, and very much related to the first theme, global slavery scholarship has underscored the need to *understand practices of slavery from perspectives that move beyond paradigms of “labor” and that embrace broader views of the various purposes and functions of slavery in diverse settings*. And a third theme that has arisen in light of new global slavery scholarship has been the call for

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4 Damian Pargas and Juliane Schiel (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Slavery throughout History* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023).

*a reassessment of the relationship between slavery and freedom, considering not simply what we mean by such categories but also what they meant to the enslaved.*

That is where I see the field in the current moment: converging around these kinds of themes, across disciplines and across time and space.

**VM:** *Juliane, as managing editor as of next year, what are your visions or directions you would like to see JGS take?*

**JS:** For me, the journal's founding promise to research "the global and globalizing nature of slavery in world history" is and remains the central guiding principle. This dual claim has proven to be very productive for the research field of slavery studies and history of slavery over the past ten years. The journal has been instrumental in shaping the profound transformation of the field in this sense.

However, ten years of successful editorial history is also a good moment to pause and reassess this dual objective. Looking back, it seems to me that the first part of the claim, "the global nature of slavery", was and is much easier to implement than the second: "the globalizing nature of slavery".

The success story of the first part of the promise runs relatively parallel to developments in the broader field of "global history and global studies". We have juxtaposed well-researched forms of slavery with new case studies of little-known forms of slavery in other world regions and historical periods and deconstructed, decentered, provincialized traditional master narratives of slavery history. The continual expansion of this tableau of examples of slavery in the past and present has made the insight that slavery has (potentially) existed and still always exists in all societies almost a commonplace.

The scientific organization of this expansion movement is also well advanced: the Editorial Board consists of specialists for various regions of the world and eras and has become increasingly internationalized beyond the English-speaking Anglo-American academic community. I would like to continue and further expand this expansion movement in terms of content and scientific organization. I see a particular need for the integration of colleagues working on past and present forms of slavery in Europe and Asia. In the German-speaking countries of Switzerland, Germany and Austria in particular, a great deal of national research funding has flowed into the study of ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary societies and cultures in Central and Eastern Europe, in the Scandinavian and Baltic countries as well as in all major regions of the Asian continent over the past two decades (cf. Zurich, Heidelberg, Bonn, Vienna/Innsbruck, etc.). This collaborative research has produced an entire generation of specialists who—equipped with the appropri-

ate language skills and the methodological-theoretical tools of postcolonial critique—are in a different position to contribute empirical research to the general discussion on “the global nature of slavery”. The EU-funded network “Worlds of Related Coercions in Work” (WORCK), which I had the pleasure of leading from 2019 to 2024, also brought together young academics from all academic cultures and language communities in Europe to discuss all forms of coercion, violence and exploitation in a comparative global perspective. My aim would be to involve these colleagues more closely in the dual objectives of the *Journal of Global Slavery*.

The much more difficult task, however, remains the implementation of the second objective: researching the “globalizing nature of slavery in world history”. This is not only about expanding our conventional understanding of slavery, but also about explaining the phenomenon of slavery. And it is about explaining historical change. In my opinion, historical and social sciences have not only lost interpretative power because of post-colonial criticism, but they have also actively given up the will to interpret and explain. Global history, and with it the new generation of slavery researchers, has rightly and very successfully pushed the old master narratives of the modern West off the altar of history. This new generation has become a master of complication. Dissertations and monographs on the history of slavery (as well as from the field of global history and global studies in general) often formulate as their most important insight that historical facts are more complex and contradictory than previously assumed. We have learned to turn over the beautifully embroidered carpets of history and to reveal the many tangled threads on the reverse side and to describe them densely in detail. We can tell complex stories without main actors and non-negotiable structural frameworks, but we have forgotten how to interpret and explain what we see underneath the carpets we study, and we prioritize the synchrony of different cases over the diachronic observation of successive patterns.

It seems to me that the second objective of this journal has a potential that we have so far underutilized and that would not only benefit historical and social sciences as they stand today but could also make a difference for the global challenges of our time. If we not only collect lost and forgotten pieces of the mosaic by putting them side by side, but if we also put together pieces that belong together, distinguish them from pieces of other mosaics and bring them into a spatio-temporal chronology, we must also differentiate phenomena from each other and explain change and transformation over time.

The globalized world of the 2000s was not the same as the one we live in today. The world at the turn of the 21st century was a world of openness turned towards the crossing of boundaries and the transcending of borders—not only

of markets, but also of people. The world today is one of demarcation, division and polarization, searching to set boundaries and draw borders. At the beginning of the millennium, multiple and diverging perspectives on one and the same issue could be experienced as a profitable expansion. Today, politics and society demand and practice positioning. If slavery research (like historical scholarship in general) persists in the descriptive complication of perspectives and does not relearn to weigh, judge and interpret based on its expanded empirical basis and conceptual understanding of slavery practices around the globe, it leaves the interpretation of current developments to forces that rely on votes, followers and algorithms and that flatten the understanding of the historical development of social conditions and deepen political rifts of the present.

Against this backdrop, we must also re-examine our understanding of slavery. In recent years, the new generation of slavery studies and slavery history has deliberately refrained from (hastily) defining slavery. Instead, an open understanding of slavery was assumed, which was to be filled with content through empirical case studies. The effect of this inductive approach (in addition to the productive expansion of the field of research just discussed) was a concept of slavery that has diffused far into other forms of violent oppression and, not least, has also become a political term of struggle against the exploitative conditions of global neoliberalism and turbo-capitalism today. In many cases, adhering to the concept of slavery to describe current working conditions was also a very conscious decision by leading representatives of slavery studies and the history of slavery to raise awareness of the omnipresence of social oppression measures in the past and present. Today, however, the term, which has been watered down as a result, threatens to become a plastic word that can be instrumentalized by polarizing forces of all camps at any time for their own cause. For the work of the *Journal of Global Slavery*, I would like to see a new discussion about the understanding and use of the term by the actors in the academic world and the role and responsibility of slavery studies and slavery history in the globalized world of the 2020s.

**VM:** *Is research of slavery becoming more global or globalizing? Do you see differences in different scholarly traditions, for example, are scholars in certain regions more or less critical when it comes to (the promises of) global history?*

**JS:** In my opinion, global history is in crisis. On the one hand, it has been overtaken by its own success. On the other hand, it has not really moved beyond the critical power of deconstruction. Criticism of the master narratives of the mod-

ern West has become a commonplace today. The subversive veneer of decentering and provincializing and the constant reflection of the various ‘centrism’ of one’s own observer’s point of view are now part of the good tone of historical narratives, regardless of whether I am researching the history of the European Middle Ages or the history of African slaves on the Spanish plantations of Central America. Following the successful establishment of chairs for global history at all the world’s major universities, the question now arises as to what the global historical approach should achieve in the future beyond the deconstruction of master narratives and the reflection of the historians observer’s point of view.

If the achievements of the global turn are to withstand the political hostility of the new political right, as it is currently forming on both sides of the Atlantic, we would be well advised to take the next step and harness the critical power of global history from the deconstruction of old narratives to the construction of new interpretations and explanations. The new generation of empirical slavery researchers should look for new ways to abstract from the concrete case study and to relate, compare, weigh and interpret empirical findings from different spatio-temporal contexts.

**DP:** I fully agree with Juliane’s points here. I think that to a certain extent the limits of “global history” as such are being reached. What I think is still very useful is the influence that global *perspectives* on slavery can have on very localized case studies. Even in my own research on 18th and 19th-century North America, it is helpful to know about West African practices of slavery in order to understand the experiences of enslaved Africans who ended up in the Americas, where things developed quite differently. Indeed, in my opinion a strong case can be made for “Atlantic exceptionalism” when it comes to slavery. Capitalism and race and settler colonialism really develop into a “unique” (to put it mildly) cocktail in the Americas, something that really does seem to depart from most other practices of slavery in world history. And only *global* understandings of slavery can help historians of the Atlantic world understand just what was so exceptional about American practices and institutions of slavery.

**IM:** I totally agree with Juliane and Damian. For the Near East and North Africa, however, global history research in the field of slavery as it exists in Europe, the Caribbean, North, and South America never really developed in the same scale. The field is, however, slowly developing and has been on the upward trajectory toward becoming more globalized. In addressing the dichotomous approach that once heavily characterized the field of slavery in this region, historians such as Joseph Miller, Paul Lovejoy, Ehud Toledano, and Benedetta Rossi not

only stressed but also demonstrated the necessity of placing slavery in Muslim Africa and the Near East within their global contexts. Prior to this, the dominant approach to slavery had been what Miller once lamented as ‘private ends of polemics,’ at the expense of formal methods that study slavery as a global institution, regardless of specific cultural contexts. Today, the developments in the field of slavery are very promising, with several historians working in this region attuned to bridging the local, regional, and global gaps.

### 3 Reception around the World

**VM:** *JGS is a living testament to the growing academic involvement in slavery studies. At the same time, public interest in historical slavery and its afterlives is increasing. How does this play out in the respective places and periods that you study (as well as in the countries that you live in)?*

**DP:** As a historian of US slavery, I see the effects of this increased awareness in a variety of ways. Obviously, in the US, racial tensions have exploded in recent years, and that has gotten people more interested in the history of slavery. In the public sphere, American history as a whole is becoming redefined—no longer an “exceptional” story of unfolding rights and liberty, now it’s framed (more accurately) as a history full of oppression, and slavery has taken center stage in this reinterpretation. *The 1619 Project* has helped publicize this trend, but we also see it in the toppling of Confederate monuments, the rewriting of textbooks for school, etc. Not all of the public discourse has been 100% historically accurate, however, even when it’s been well-intentioned, and that’s a problem. Ira Berlin famously warned about the difference between “slavery as history” and “slavery as memory.” When “memory” gets too emotional, and descends too much into questions related to blame, it tends to polarize society and turn segments of the population against learning more about that history. And that’s what we have been witnessing in the US—the increased awareness of slavery history has gone hand in hand with a vicious backlash against that history. Many (White) Americans resent accusations of “guilt,” resent attacks on more traditional heroic interpretations of American history, resent their children learning that their country’s history has been marred by the history and legacies of slavery. This has driven a wedge in American society, and I fear that will only going to get worse in the current political climate. In my opinion, an enhanced appreciation of slavery should lead to more fruitful objective public discourse—“blame” and “guilt” are of little use in an age when all the slaveholders and enslaved are long gone. What Americans should do is focus on

what slavery did, the central role it played in American history, how it laid the foundations for racial discrimination and segregation, and how the effects of this institution continue to impact large segments of society today. I think that would be a healthier and more fruitful approach. But I don't live in America, so I'm saying this as an outsider. For what it's worth, I think that's how the public discourse should be in the Netherlands too (where I live, and whose public discourse is in many ways similar to that in America).

**IM:** Thanks largely to two recent developments in the Near East and North Africa, public interest in the historical study of slavery has reached unprecedented levels. The first of these developments, the Arab Spring, which began in Tunisia in 2011 and spread throughout the Middle East, gave a platform to voices that had previously been silenced for fear of breaking the taboo surrounding slavery, racism, and anti-Blackness. The second development that contributed to the growing public awareness of the historical study of slavery and its contemporary implications was the global outcry sparked by the Black Lives Matter movement. This movement, which gained significant traction worldwide, galvanized intense public and civic interest racial justice issues.

Without a doubt, across the Indian Ocean region, Central and South America, the historical consciousness engendered by this movement has stimulated increased research interest into the contemporary legacies of slavery and post-slavery. This interest is on the rise, and JGS should actively encourage submissions from these regions on these important issues.

**JS:** My observations are very much in line with what Damian and Ismael just said. In recent years, medievalist slavery studies and the history of the global Middle Ages have become highly politicized and polarized under the influence of postcolonial criticism and even more so of critical race theory, particularly in the USA, but increasingly also in Europe. Literary scholars and historians working in the field of medieval studies are often at odds with one another. Sometimes the reference to one's own cultural, religious or ethnic identity or ancestry, which is so strongly inflamed in political debates, also finds its way into the academic debate in an unpleasant way. We all have a responsibility here to distinguish between scientific controversies and political positions, between commitment to science and political activism. Slavery researchers can (and perhaps should) do both, but they need to be clear to themselves and others about the level of controversy (scientific or political) at which they are operating.

**VM:** *Scholarly and public debates of slavery and its legacies revolve around different questions or concerns in different parts of the world. Can you give us an example that reflects current social concerns?*

**DP:** I am specialized in the history of slavery in North America, especially the United States. One example I have noticed in the past couple of years is the scholarly interest in the role of the slavery in the development of American democracy—in the development of various types of “illiberal” democracies during the age of slavery itself, for example, but also in the continuation of illiberal democratic impulses throughout the period since emancipation and right down to the present day. Obviously, this is related to the anti-democratic moment that American society is currently experiencing. I think it is accurate and fruitful for historians to delve into the origins of such trends in American political history, and slavery indeed played a fundamental role in that sense.

**IM:** In Northwest Africa, the Near and Middle East, several issues have indeed arisen from the scholarly and public debate and discussions of the legacies of historical slavery and their contemporary effects on Black communities in these areas. The most pressing of these issues for me is the question of citizenship. By citizenship, I mean not merely the lack of recognition particularly of the descendants of enslaved Africans as members of a given country or a nation state, but their denial of full and equal respectability as an equal citizen. In the Sahel region of West Africa, North Africa, and parts of the Middle East, for instance, descendants of enslaved Black Africans face marginalization and, in some cases, overt or covert practices *analogous to* enslavement and with many scholars and civic organizations working diligently to address these lingering challenges.

**VM:** Very clearly, slavery plays a relevant role in answering pressing questions of the present day as well as of the past. I hope that JGS continues to be a frequented platform for this kind of knowledge production and discussion. Thank you all for your passionate work for the journal, and many thanks for the interview!