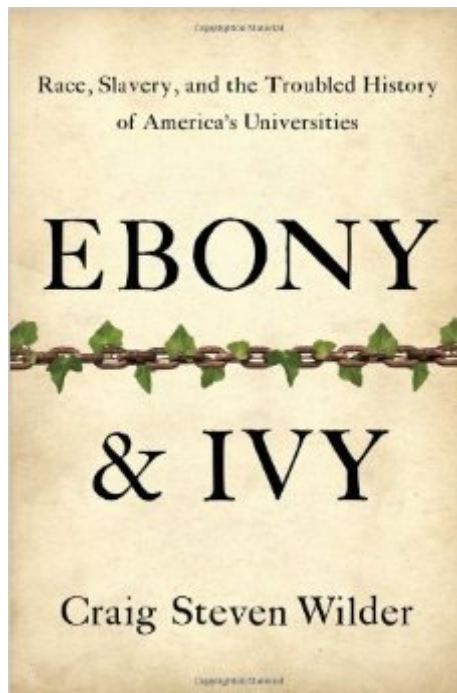


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# Ebony And Ivy: Race, Slavery, And The Troubled History Of America's Universities



## Synopsis

A 2006 report commissioned by Brown University revealed that institution's complex and contested involvement in slavery-setting off a controversy that leapt from the ivory tower to make headlines across the country. But Brown's troubling past was far from unique. In *Ebony and Ivy*, Craig Steven Wilder, a rising star in the profession of history, lays bare uncomfortable truths about race, slavery, and the American academy. Many of America's revered colleges and universities—from Harvard, Yale, and Princeton to Rutgers, Williams College, and UNC—were soaked in the sweat, the tears, and sometimes the blood of people of color. The earliest academies proclaimed their mission to Christianize the savages of North America, and played a key role in white conquest. Later, the slave economy and higher education grew up together, each nurturing the other. Slavery funded colleges, built campuses, and paid the wages of professors. Enslaved Americans waited on faculty and students; academic leaders aggressively courted the support of slave owners and slave traders. Significantly, as Wilder shows, our leading universities, dependent on human bondage, became breeding grounds for the racist ideas that sustained them. *Ebony and Ivy* is a powerful and propulsive study and the first of its kind, revealing a history of oppression behind the institutions usually considered the cradle of liberal politics.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Despite its poetic title, this is a very serious book discussing a less than pleasant topic — the permeation of slavery throughout the early history of the English colonies, and ultimately the United

States, and its influence in establishing the American academic community. To say I enjoyed the book is to demean the brutal circumstances discussed in the book. Let me say instead, that the book reads like an unpublished doctoral thesis: It is well written and achieves its goal of educating the reader, nay, inducting the reader, into an awareness of the skillfully disguised, little disclosed, underlying roots of the history of education in America. Fully one-third of the book consists of notes and citations. And yet, while clearly an academic work, the book is woven in such a way as to grasp the attention and interest of the reader. Dr. Wilder documents the stories of real people with a style that takes seemingly dry facts and fashions a wholeness of reality. Then, based on seeing reality in that way, the reader can recognize the veracity of the disheartening thesis. Interestingly enough, I believe that what makes this work so powerful is that where some authors would be most emotional (and emotionally attached to the thesis), Dr. Wilder simply piles more facts on the table. The reader cannot help but nod in acknowledgement of the obvious. The financial foundation of the American educational system is indeed traceable to the profits gained from the ownership of enslaved people and the suppression of the native peoples of America. Why do we need to know this? We do not need to know this in order to feel guilty, but instead, to understand that nothing happens in a vacuum. We need to know this in order to feel grateful to all who have contributed to our society.

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