

## **Origins: Researching the Identity of Africans Pulled into the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1819-1845**

### **Investigators:**

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Over four centuries of the transatlantic slave trade, approximately 11 million people of African descent were forcibly transplanted to the Americas. Yet little is known about who they were or from where they came. In “Origins: Researching the Identity of Africans Pulled into the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1819-1845,” investigators David Eltis, Robert W. Woodruff Professor of History, Edna G. Bay, Associate Professor in the University’s Institute of Liberal Arts, and Martin Halbert, Director of Digital Innovations at Emory University, are creating an interactive, freely available Web-based resource about the migration histories of Africans. When completed, this study will present geographic, ethnic, and linguistic data on movements of peoples from Africa to the Americas, as well as foster collaboration between scholars and African Diaspora communities.

Using as its base detailed data on 67,000 liberated Africans (taken from Courts of Mixed Commission slave registers between 1819 and 1845), this project is producing an African Origins Database containing the names, audio files of name pronunciations, descriptions of tribal markings, countries of origin, ports of embarkation, planned ports of disembarkation, and other relevant data for thousands of Africans. The Collaborative Grants in the Humanities is funding an expansion and continuation of this project, which has prior external support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Emory award will support liaison work with African diasporic communities, testing and modification of the African Origins Portal, development of historical maps of ethnic regions and design of an online mapping system for displaying and gathering feedback on these regions, and additional analysis of African names and descriptions of tribal markings in the historical records.

Eltis, Halbert, and Bay’s combined expertise in history, digital research, and African Studies provide a prime opportunity to apply interdisciplinary scholarship toward the advancement of new knowledge—in particular, new understandings of African migration patterns established in the transatlantic slave trade. When it is finished, the interactive resource will be used by researchers, students, and the broader public, creating a new model for collaborative public scholarship between academic and diasporic communities. The resulting resource promises to enhance and challenge our understanding of the transatlantic slave trade and, as such, to challenge broader assumptions in such diverse fields as history, sociology, anthropology, African American studies, African studies, and genealogy.