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Amistad Exhibition opens in the Arnold Bernhard Library

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Quinnipiac University's Arnold Bernhard Library hosted a seminar for the opening of the new Ireland, the Amistad Trials and Freedom exhibit Oct. 20.

The Amistad Trials occurred from 1839-1841 after Africans from modern-day Sierra Leone were illegally brought to Cuba to become slaves. The Africans revolted and were taken to the United States, where their trial made it to the Supreme Court. The court, which included Former President John Quincy Adams, ruled in favor of the Africans and ensured they would be free.

This historical event has local roots, as the Africans stayed in a New Haven jail before their trial and eventual freedom.

"What I love about this, it's both a very local story because it's New Haven…, but it's also a global story because the British Empire was involved," Professor of History and Director of Ireland's Great Hunger Institute Christine Kinealy said.

Kinealy and David Valone, both Professors of History, presented on Ireland's connection to the abolition movement and the Amistad Trials, respectively. Students also presented during the seminar and had their work displayed in the exhibit itself, which brought different voices to the event.

"I created one of these posters to present my research in the new exhibition in the Lender room in the library," junior history major Hayden Glover said. "And I gave a presentation on the role of John Quincy Adams in the Amistad Supreme Court case."



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Attendees listen as Professor of History at Quinnipiac University David Valone discusses the student projects featured in the Amistad Trials and Freedom exhibit.

Glover stated how this event involved different groups, both inside and outside the history department.

"I think it's a great way to bring everyone together in the library," Glover said. "There's a lot of people here from different organizations."

Kinealy also worked with Angelisa Gillyard, director of theatrical production and programming, to add a theatrical element to the seminar.

"Professor Christine Kinealy actually approached me about doing something specifically for the events today because of the history of the Amistad here in the United States and in Connecticut, and she wanted to add some creative element to it," Gillyard said.

Gillyard wrote a short play about the Amistad, which was read by four students during the seminar.

"It's engaging my history students; it's engaging theater students," Kinealy said. "And again I think just all those collaborations are really great."

Gillyard stated that she wants the play to grow beyond its current form in the future.

"I want to expand it to be a full play with music, with an ensemble, full ensemble, movement, etcetera," Gillyard said.

Along with members of the Quinnipiac community, Vice Consul General of Ireland in the New York consulate Deniz Ozturk also attended the event.

"I think it was an amazing event," Ozturk said. "It was very informative, very accessible. It got to the perspectives of the story of the Amistad, but also the various people that were involved in it… It was fascinating. I felt like I learned a lot."

The Lender Room in the Arnold Bernhard Library has featured various exhibits focused on Irish history in the past. This started with donations from Quinnipiac alumni Murray and Melvin Lender, inspired by former Quinnipiac President John Lahey, an Irish-American himself.

"The brothers offered John Lahey a gift, a financial gift, but to actually refurbish the library," Kinealy said. "But…part of the condition was money also had to be used to tell the story of Ireland's famine because they felt it really deserved to be better known."

An abolitionist from Ireland, Richard Robert Madden, testified on behalf of the illegally captured Africans during the Amistad Trials, creating a link between this event and Ireland. Kinealy became interested in Ireland's relationship with abolitionism after studying and writing about American abolitionist Frederick Douglas.

"I've written a few books on Frederick Douglas and his time in Ireland," Kinealy said. "And that really got me into the wider abolition movement."

Kinealy stated that she hopes people will learn certain lessons from visiting the exhibit.

"If there's injustice, you need to speak out against it, as Richard Martin did, as the enslaved people did; they took action against it," Kinealy said. "And that we shouldn't be passive when something wrong is happening to us, or to somebody else."

CAMERAS from cover

the world, like, on where they are?"

Prezeszlowski, meanwhile, emphasized the technology's potential benefits, saying, "The main benefit is that it can be a tool to clear crime more efficiently."

The ability to collect and search large amounts of vehicle data has raised concerns about how much information is stored, where it is shared and how it can be used beyond its original purpose.

Law enforcement officers nationwide have been found misusing powerful ALPR networks. Most importantly, those operated by surveillance company Flock Safety have been used by some officers to illegally spy on and stalk romantic interests, ex-partners and strangers, raising concerns nationally.

"The scale right now is concerning just because of how much information they're able to retain," Prezeszlowski said.

Concerns have become increasingly relevant in Connecticut. The use of automated license plate readers has drawn interest from the public over data sharing and restrictions on access to recorded information.

In August, Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont called for a review of safety cameras and license plate reader technology and urged municipalities to pause installing new equipment until state officials could develop additional guidance on privacy protections.

The state of Connecticut has also enacted Public Act No. 26-14, establishing additional requirements for automated license plate reader data, according to the Connecticut General Assembly. This includes limits on sharing information and protections against its use in certain immigration related crimes.

The law generally limited data retention to 21 days; Prezeszlowski stated that there are "exceptions."

The Flock camera company suggested a seven day retention, but the law overrules that idea, widening it to three weeks.

The debate is not limited to how long the data remains available. Access to the systems and the decisions investigators make using the information can also affect how the technology is used.

"What we're seeing in Connecticut is that everyone sort of has authority to use the databases, and it's more decentralized," Prezeszlowski said.

Zak Knight, a first-year engineering major, voiced opinions after seeing other additional cameras in active places of town. Following this, he further investigated what these cameras entailed and believes it is an "overstep."

"I feel like if it isn't accurate, then it could falsely identify things, and then you can get in more trouble than if you just were able to identify the license plate," Knight said. "If you're trying to figure out who's driving the car,with all this, AI and advanced technology, you need to make sure that it's actually, doing what it should, and is really accurate and is really good at what it's supposed to be doing. For it to be something that you would want to implement."

As Connecticut continues to establish rules for the technology, the challenge will be balancing its investigative rule with safeguards that protect residents' privacy.

"Our policy has to keep evolving with that, and so do the laws," Prezeszlowski said.



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ALPR cameras are growing increasingly prevalent across Connecticut giving police departments the upper hand.