



# Slavery Throughout History

## Almanac

Theodore L. Sylvester

Slavery throughout  
the history  
Almanac

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# Reader's Guide

Slavery is broadly described by the United Nations (UN) as the condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers connected to the right of ownership are exercised. We know that slavery has existed as an institution in human civilizations all over the world for thousands of years and that it continues to this day. But there is much we don't know. For the most part enslaved people throughout the world have lived and died without an opportunity to tell their own tales. Although slaves who found freedom were able to record their experiences, the records kept by slave holders are more often the only documentation left to us of many slaves' lives. How many millions of people in the world have lived their lives from birth to death in slavery and are now hidden from history is difficult to estimate and painful to imagine.

Through the records that do exist, though, it is possible to fill out our understanding of the people who lived in slavery, not only as victims of a terrible system, but in terms of their individuality, their ways of coping and surviving, their own stories, and their struggles to be free. The Slavery Throughout History Reference Library provides a unique forum for a student or general interest reader to approach this difficult subject. The *Almanac* presents the overall history of slavery throughout the Western world and beyond, with facts, figures, and plenty of contextual information



on the economics, politics, law, culture, religion, and social trends that developed around the institution. The *Biographies* volume presents slavery from the perspective of individual lives: the stories of people of diverse beliefs, personalities, and circumstances who were slaves themselves or who had a profound impact on the institution. Finally, the *Primary Sources* volume features the first-hand accounts of slaves, lawmakers, abolitionists, and slaveowners, offering the immediate voices of the times on the events, issues, and ideas that arose in the history of slavery.

## **Related reference sources:**

*Slavery Throughout History: Almanac* provides an overview of the institution of slavery from the time it developed among the earliest permanent settlers in Mesopotamia (perhaps as early as 3500 B.C.E.) to the present day. Civilizations covered in the volume include ancient Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome; western Europe and Africa in the Middle Ages; Latin America and the United States from colonial times through emancipation; and modern-day slavery worldwide.

Five of the twelve subject chapters in this volume are dedicated to slavery in the United States. Along with information about the commercial history of the vastly profitable slave trade, the draining of Africa, and the labor-intensive cotton industry, the reader will find stories of slave uprisings, black troops fighting in the American Revolution and the Civil War, the brutal punishments, the restrictive slave codes, the auction blocks, and the heroic abolitionist efforts. The final chapter presents examples of slavery still claiming millions of lives around the world at the end of the twentieth century.

One hundred fifteen black-and-white photographs, illustrations, and maps appear throughout the *Almanac*. A "Tact Focus" sidebar highlights key facts in each chapter. Other sidebars present information on a variety of interesting events, customs, and people. Cross references aid the reader in finding related material. *Slavery Throughout History: Almanac* begins with a Words to Know section defining key terms and a timeline of important events in the history of slavery. The volume concludes with a bibliography and a thorough subject index.

*Slavery Throughout History: Biography* presents biographies of thirty men and women who made an impact on the institution of slavery or were profoundly impacted by it. Featured are slaves and resistance fighters such as Moses, Spartacus, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, John Brown, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

*Slavery Throughout History: Primary Sources* features twenty full or excerpted documents pertaining to the institution of slavery, from the Code of Hammurabi to the American slave narratives to the United Nations 1956 declaration of intent to end slavery worldwide. Included are poems,

narratives, autobiographical essays, legal documents, speeches, newspaper articles, and other first-hand accounts of slavery. Ample introductory and sidebar information aid the reader in understanding the historical and biographical context of the primary source; black-and-white photographs and illustrations, glossaries, a timeline, a thorough subject index, and cross references provide easy and engaging access.

### **Special thanks**

Grateful acknowledgment is extended to Laurie J. Wechter and Maxine A. Biber for their editorial assistance with this book. Special thanks also to Sonia Benson, a perceptive, patient editor.

### **Comments and suggestions**

We welcome your comments about *Slavery Throughout History: Almanac* as well as your suggestions for other topics in history to be covered in this series. Please write: Editors, *Slavery Throughout History: Almanac*, U•X•L, 27500 Drake Rd., Farmington Hills, Michigan 48331-3535; call toll-free: 1-800-877-4253; fax to: 248-699-8055; or send e-mail via <http://www.galegroup.com>.

# Timeline of Events

- c. 3500 B.C.E.** Mesopotamians settle into permanent communities with successful agricultural techniques. Constantly at war with neighbors, the Mesopotamians begin to capture and enslave prisoners, forcing them into labor instead of killing them.
- 1780 B.C.E.** King Hammurabi becomes the sixth ruler of Babylon, a city in northern Mesopotamia. With Babylon as his capital, Hammurabi unites all of the competing kingdoms of Mesopotamia under one government. He establishes the Code of Hammurabi, a list of about 300 laws that regulate all aspects of Babylonian life, including slavery.
- 1570 B.C.E.** The Egyptians drive the ruling Hyksos from Egypt and enslave all foreigners who remain, including thousands of Hebrews, who are forced to work in the fields making bricks for the construction of new cities and temples.
- 597 B.C.E.** Nebuchadnezzar II captures the city of Jerusalem and sends most of the city's population, about 3,000 Hebrews, into slavery in Babylonia. The Hebrews, who are eventually freed in 539 B.C.E., call this period "The Great Captivity."

- 594 B.C.E.** Debt slavery for Greek citizens is outlawed in Athens, creating a demand for foreign slaves to do the work of the freed Greek debt slaves. At the same time, the introduction of coinage makes the slave trade easier, and slavery increases significantly.
- 431 B.C.E.** The city-state of Athens in Greece has so many slaves it becomes the world's first example of a slave society. Of the 155,000 residents of the city of Athens, 70,000 are slaves, 60,000 are citizens, and 25,000 are resident foreigners.
- 431-404 B.C.E.** The Peloponnesian War, a civil war between the Greek city-states Athens and Sparta, produces tens of thousands of slaves.
- 264-27 B.C.E.** Rome, during the second half of the Republic, fights many overseas wars that produce hundreds of thousands of slaves for central Italy. Giant agricultural estates develop—the world's first plantations—relying on slave labor.
- 73 B.C.E.** Roman gladiator/slave Spartacus leads a breakout of about seventy gladiators from their training school. The rebels build a vast army of runaway slaves and hold off the Roman army effectively for two years.
- 41-54 C.E.** The Roman Emperor Claudius makes it a crime to murder a slave or to turn a sick slave out to die. More laws follow that uphold the institution of slavery but take a more humane stand in the treatment of slaves.
- 476** The fall of the Roman Empire changes slavery in Europe dramatically. A new class of people develops, called serfs—peasants who are not allowed to leave the land where they work. If the land changes hands, the serfs stay, "bound" to the soil. Serfdom is hereditary: the children of serfs become serfs at birth. Beneath serfs on the social scale there is still a small population of slaves.
- 1000** As many as 80 percent of Europe's peasants are living on feudal estates. One-half of those peasants are free, able to live and work where they choose; the other half are serfs, legally bound to the land they work. The number of slaves is now very low, as descendants of slaves, through the years, have risen to the level of serfs.
- 1300** Europe emerges from the feudal era. The laws and customs of the villages are being replaced by the common law of entire kingdoms.
- 1441** Fourteen African slaves arrive in Lisbon, Portugal, beginning the network for shipping slaves from Africa to the New World. The Africans had been captured in a raid on one of the many voyages Portuguese explorers had made along Africa's Atlantic coast.
- 1455** The pope of the Catholic church approves slave raids and gives Portugal blanket permission to enslave all non-Christian people.
- 1481** The Portuguese establish a trading post at Elmina, Gold Coast.

- 1493** The pope grants Spain sole shipping rights to the New World, and throughout the 1500s, Spain dominates the Atlantic slave trade. Portugal continues the African part of the trade.
- 1494** Christopher Columbus sends 500 Indians to Spain as slaves.
- 1500** The Portuguese are taking 3,000 slaves a year from Africa's Atlantic coast.
- 1518** The first cargo of slaves from the Guinea coast of West Africa arrives in the West Indies.
- 1524** The Spanish bring slaves to Guatemala; by the end of the century they have shipped at least 60,000 Africans to Mexico.
- 1526** The first slave revolt in what is now the United States takes place in the first known settlement on mainland North America. Disease wipes out many of the 600 people—500 Spanish colonists and 100 African slaves—who arrive in modern-day South Carolina. The slaves revolt and flee to live with the local Indians. The surviving settlers flee to Haiti, leaving the rebel slaves as the first permanent immigrants in North America.
- 1538** The Portuguese bring slaves from the coasts of Africa to their colonies in Brazil.
- 1565** The Spanish settle Saint Augustine, Florida, the earliest example of an established colony using slaves on the North American mainland.
- 1574** The queen of England abolishes serfdom in her nation.
- 1600** About 367,000 African slaves have crossed the Atlantic to the Americas.
- 1619** Jamestown, Virginia, is the first English colony to receive Africans.
- 1630** The Republic of Palmares is established by runaway slaves in the heavy inland forests of northeastern Brazil. At its peak it has a population of 20,000. The Republic of Palmares is destroyed by the Portuguese in 1697—after surviving almost 70 years.
- 1638** A Salem ship named *Desire* unloads New England's first cargo of African slaves at Boston Harbor. A profitable New England slave trade has begun. Ships leave New England loaded with cargo to trade, sailing first to the West Indies, where they trade most of their cargo for rum. The "rum boats" then sail to Africa, where they trade the liquor for slaves. The ships then sail back to the West Indies, where they trade the freshly captured African slaves to the sugar islands for "seasoned" slaves and other products of the islands. These slaves are taken to New England slave ports, where they are sold in local markets, mainly to southern planters.
- 1641** Massachusetts is the first colony to officially recognize the institution of slavery.

- 1663** Planters are offered 20 acres for every African male slave and 10 acres for every African female slave they bring into the Carolinas.
- 1672** The Royal African Company is chartered by the British king and soon becomes the number-one slave trader in the world by securing, under an agreement with Spain, the exclusive rights to ship West African slaves to the Spanish colonies in the Americas. England becomes the dominant slave-trading force to the Americas.
- 1686** Carolina's colonial legislature begins creating laws that ensure the domination of black slaves by their white masters. In time, the slave code of the Carolinas becomes a model for the Black Codes that harshly regulate slaves throughout much of mainland North America.
- 1688** Pennsylvania's influential population of Quakers voice their religious opposition to slavery.
- 1739** A man named Jemmy leads a slave revolt in South Carolina, killing two warehouse guards and seizing weapons and ammunition. One hundred slaves join him as he marches south to Spanish-held Florida, where they hope to be free. Along the way they kill about 20 whites before entering into an intense battle with the local militia, in which about 50 slaves are killed.
- 1770** Runaway slave Crispus Attucks is the first man to die for the cause of the American Revolution in the Boston Massacre.
- 1775** As the American Revolution begins, the British governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, declares that all slaves who join the British side will be set free. After Dunmore's Proclamation, slaves run away by the tens of thousands. Hundreds of slaves join Dunmore, who forms all-black fighting units in what he calls his "Ethiopian Regiment."
- 1776** General George Washington, after learning that Lord Dunmore is enlisting blacks into the British troops, allows blacks to enter the war on the American side. Thousands of black soldiers fight against the British. Many states promise freedom after a set period to slaves who fight the war.
- 1780s** The Underground Railroad begins to take shape when Quakers in a number of towns in Pennsylvania and New Jersey assist slaves in their escape.
- 1787** At the Constitutional Convention, the new nation's founding fathers decide that the slave trade can continue for at least 20 more years, three-fifths of the slave population can be counted toward determining the number of each state's Congressional representatives, and all states are required to return fugitive slaves to their owners.
- 1787** Haiti, as the world's greatest producer of sugar and its by-products rum and molasses, brings in 40,000 slaves in this year alone to work on sugar plantations and in sugar mills. The island has more than 600

sugar plantations and more slaves in proportion to its size than any other place in the New World.

- 1787** Various British abolitionist organizations come together to form the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade.
- 1791** A rebellion in Haiti led by a slave named Toussaint L'Ouverture results in the abolition of slavery on the island in 1794 and ultimately to Haiti's independence from France in 1803.
- 1793** Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin. With just two people working it, Whitney's cotton gin cleans as much cotton as 100 workers could by hand, thus freeing up laborers for the cultivation of the crop. The rise of cotton as the number-one crop of the nation has a tremendous impact on the institution of slavery.
- 1793** The federal government passes the fugitive slave laws, which require that slaves who escape to a different state be returned to their owner by the authorities of the state to which they fled.
- 1794** Richard Allen founds the first independent church for blacks in America, the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.
- 1800** Gabriel Prosser prepares slaves for revolt in the city of Richmond, Virginia, hoping to ignite a widespread rebellion among all slaves. About 1,000 slaves arm themselves, ready to attack the city, but a severe storm stops them. Troops hunt them down, and at least 35 rebels, including Prosser, are hanged.
- 1807** The U.S. federal government officially abolishes the African slave trade. The law is poorly enforced and consequently ignored by the people who profit most from the trade—the New England shipowners, the Middle Atlantic merchants, and the southern planters.
- 1808** After great pressure from the abolitionists and repeated legislative attempts in the House of Commons led by William Wilberforce, the British Parliament outlaws the slave trade. Unlike the Americans, the British pass laws that contain harsh penalties for violators and rewards for those who catch them.
- 1815** The four Philadelphia branches of the Masons, a fraternal organization, pool their resources and build the country's first black Masonic Hall.
- 1816** Sixteen black Methodist congregations, from New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, come together for a convention at Richard Allen's Bethel AME church in Philadelphia—until then, the only black Methodist church in America. Together they withdraw from the white-dominated mother church and form the nation's first independent black church, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Allen is ordained a church elder and the AME Church's first bishop.

- 1816** The American Colonization Society (ACS) forms with a plan to ship blacks to land in Africa that will later be known as Liberia.
- 1819** Towns in Ohio and North Carolina join New Jersey and Pennsylvania in acting as way stations and shelters for fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad. Historians estimate that in the 50 years before the Civil War, at least 3,200 "conductors" help about 75,000 slaves escape to freedom.
- 1820-21** In a series of acts known as the Missouri Compromise, Congress admits Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state. It prohibits slavery in all other territory north of Missouri's southern boundary (the 36th parallel).
- 1822** Denmark Vesey, a freed slave and carpenter, prepares slaves around Charleston, South Carolina, for a major uprising after whites close down the African Methodist church he has helped establish. The planned attack, said by one of the witnesses to involve as many as 9,000 slaves, never takes place because information about it reaches the authorities and the leaders are hanged.
- 1827** Samuel Cornish and John Russworm start the country's first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*.
- 1829** David Walker, a free black in Boston, publishes *Walker's Appeal ...to the Colored Citizens of the World But in Particular and Very Expressly to Those of the United States of America*, which calls for blacks to violently rise up and defeat the forces of slavery.
- 1830** Richard Allen organizes the first Free People of Color Congress in Philadelphia. At that gathering, black delegates from six states begin what will come to be known as the National Negro Convention Movement. Every year until the Civil War, blacks convene in different cities "to devise ways and means of bettering our condition."
- 1831** William Lloyd Garrison begins publishing the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*.
- 1831** Nat Turner, a slave and preacher, leads a slave revolt in Southampton, Virginia. The rebels go from plantation to plantation killing whites. Within 24 hours, about 70 slaves have joined the revolt, and 57 whites—men, women, and children—are slaughtered. White troops force the group to scatter, and retaliation against all blacks in the area is severe.
- 1833** Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison helps establish the American Antislavery Society (AAS). Only 3 black people are among the 62 signers of the society's Declaration of Sentiments.
- 1835** The right for blacks, slave or free, to assemble in groups for any purposes without a white person present is denied throughout the Deep South.



- 1836** Sixty thousand slaves are brought to Cuba in this year alone, but not all of them will stay on the island to work the sugar plantations. Cuba has become the largest slave market in the New World, supplying African slaves to colonies far and wide.
- 1839** Anti-Slavery International (ASI), a London-based organization, is founded. It will continue to fight slavery into the twenty-first century.
- 1840** There are more than 100 antislavery societies in the free states of the North, with at least 200,000 black and white members. Abolitionists, however, are not well received in most places.
- 1845** The autobiography of Frederick Douglass, *Nanative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, becomes an international best-seller.
- 1847** Frederick Douglass begins publishing his abolitionist and reform-minded newspaper, the *North Star*.
- 1850** In the Compromise of 1850, Congress admits California as a free state, leaves the status of territories to be decided later, outlaws the slave trade in the District of Columbia, and puts real teeth into the fugitive slave laws of 1793.
- 1852** *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, an antislavery novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe, sells 300,000 copies in its first year and convinces many readers that slavery must end.
- 1853** William Wells Brown publishes his novel *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*, the first published novel written by a black person in the United States.
- 1854** The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 organizes Kansas and Nebraska as territories and leaves the question of slavery to be decided by the settlers when they apply for statehood. The act, in effect, erases the thirty-four-year-old prohibition of slavery above the Mason-Dixon line as established in the Missouri Compromise.
- 1854** After the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act (sponsored by the northern Democrats as a "compromise"), the northern Whigs unite with antislavery Democrats and Free Soilers (an antislavery political party formed in 1848) and found the antislavery Republican Party. The southern Whigs join the southern Democrats as a united party firmly on the proslavery side.
- 1857** Responding to Dred Scott's lawsuit, in which he contended that he and his wife should be free from slavery because they lived with their owner in territories where slavery was not allowed, the Supreme Court rules that blacks, free or slave, are not citizens of the United States; that slavery is a property right established by the U.S. Constitution and therefore owners still retain title to their slaves, even when visiting or living on free soil; that territories are common lands of the United States where the property rights of all citizens—

including slaveholders—apply. The court, in effect, declares the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional and opens all territories to slavery.

- 1859** John Brown, a white abolitionist, carries out a raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, hoping to capture the federal arsenal and arm slaves for a massive uprising to end slavery. The revolt is crushed, and Brown and his followers are hanged.
- 1860** There are about 4 million slaves in the United States at this time, 90 percent of them living in the rural South. The United States is producing more than 5 million bales of cotton annually. Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Georgia produce 70 percent of the cotton and are at the top of the list in the number of large slaveholders.
- 1860-61** When Republican Abraham Lincoln is elected president on an antislavery platform in November 1860, seven southern slaveholding states withdraw from the Union and form their own government. Those states—South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas—form the Confederate States of America.
- 1861** The Civil War officially begins on April 12, when Confederate soldiers open fire on Fort Sumter, a Union-held fort located in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Union forces surrender after a thirtyone-hour battle. The defeat costs the Union four more slave states, as Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas join the Confederacy.
- 1861** The Confiscation Act passed by the U.S. Congress states that any property used in aiding or abetting insurrection against the United States can be captured and kept as a prize of war. When the "property" consists of slaves, the law declares them to be forever free. Thousands of slaves seek refuge and freedom on the lands occupied and controlled by the Union armies.
- 1862** On June 19, the United States abolishes slavery in the territories. On July 19, an act proclaims that all slaves who make it into Union territory from Confederate states are to be set free. On September 22, President Abraham Lincoln issues a preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all slaves. At the same time, he allows the enlistment of blacks into the Union's armed forces. These acts mark a huge change of policy: the war's goal is no longer just to save the Union, but to crush slavery.
- 1863** President Abraham Lincoln issues the final Emancipation Proclamation, declaring approximately 4 million enslaved people in the United States free.

- 1865** The Civil War ends on April 9, when the Confederate army, led by General Robert E. Lee, surrenders at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia.
- 1865** By the end of the Civil War more than 185,000 blacks have served in the Union army. About 93,000 came from the rebel states, 40,000 from the border slave states, and about 52,000 from the free states. More than 38,000 black soldiers died in the war.
- 1865** The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which abolishes slavery in America, is ratified (officially approved by popular vote) by the states on December 18, 1865.
- 1865-66** Black Codes become the law of the land in the postwar South, gravely violating the rights of blacks.
- 1865** Congress establishes the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, or the Freedman's Bureau, to provide aid, such as food, education, medicine, and to help in resettling recently freed blacks in the South.
- 1866** The Republican-controlled U.S. Congress passes a Civil Rights bill that repeals the Black Codes of the South. The bill grants citizenship to blacks and equal rights with whites in every state and territory.
- 1867** The Reconstruction era begins when Congress passes a series of acts that divide the former Confederacy into five military districts under the command of army generals; strip the right to vote from most whites who had supported the Confederate government; order elections for state constitutional conventions; and give black men the right to vote, in some states by military order. Black voters soon make up a majority in the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Blacks are elected to state legislatures and, in much smaller numbers, to the U.S. House and Senate.
- 1868** The Fourteenth Amendment, which grants citizenship to blacks, is made law.
- 1870** The Fifteenth Amendment, guaranteeing the protection of U.S. citizens against federal or state racial discrimination, is ratified by the states.
- 1871** Brazil passes a gradual emancipation law.
- 1877** The withdrawal of all federal troops from the South in 1877 marks the end of the Reconstruction period; southern Democrats regain political dominance and restrict the rights of blacks.
- 1880** Cuba passes a gradual emancipation law, and the shipping of Africans across the Atlantic ends.

- 1885-1908** European powers grant King Leopold of Belgium the right to rule over the Congo Basin. He directs his troops in the Congo to round up whole communities of Africans. Millions of Congo people face inhuman conditions of hard labor—harvesting ivory and wild rubber and building facilities needed for trade—and atrocious brutality and violence at the hands of Leopold's forces. As Leopold's private African kingdom falls apart in the early twentieth century, his troops resort to wholesale slaughter of the Congo people as punishment.
- 1927-53** The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), ruled by the dictator Joseph Stalin, enslaves millions of Soviet citizens in labor camps in Siberia, Central Asia, and above the Arctic Circle.
- 1942-45** In Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler, millions of Jews are enslaved in concentration camps, where they are systematically murdered. At the same time, millions of foreigners are enslaved in labor camps.
- 1956** The United Nations (UN) defines slavery as the condition of someone over whom any or all of the powers connected to the right of ownership are exercised and dedicates itself to ending all forms of slavery, including chattel slavery, serfdom, debt bondage, child labor, child prostitution, child pornography, the use of children in armed conflict, servile forms of marriage, forced labor, and the "white slave" traffic, or sexual slavery.
- 1990s** In war-torn Sudan, human-rights groups estimate that in the 1990s, 30,000 to 90,000 Sudanese have been enslaved by a government-sponsored Arab militia. The militia regularly raids civilian villages and cattle camps in the south and hauls away hundreds of black Africans at a time to be marched north and sold into slavery.
- 1990s** Despite the ban on slavery in Mauritania, tens of thousands of blacks remain the property of their Arab masters.
- 1991-96** According to official figures from the Chinese, police in China catch and prosecute 143,000 slave dealers and rescue 88,000 women and children who had been sold into slavery, marriage, or prostitution. Human-rights groups claim the real number of enslaved women and children was much higher.
- 1992** It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of political prisoners are forced to work in slave-like conditions in China's vast network of labor reform camps, some of which are nothing more than secured factories staffed with inmates. For years the official policy of China has been to use prison labor to produce cheap products for export.
- 1993** The Pakistan Human Rights Commission estimates the number of bonded child workers in Pakistan is 20 million. (A child labor survey conducted in 1996 by the Pakistani government, however, declares that there are a maximum of 4 million bonded child workers in the

country.)

- 1996** The United Nations reports that children are being sold for prostitution, pornography, and adoption at increasing rates worldwide. In Asia alone, more than 1 million children are exploited sexually and live in conditions virtually identical to slavery.
- 1996** New York-based Human Rights Watch estimates that there are between 10 million and 15 million bonded child workers in India.
- 1996** The Pastoral Land Commission, a Catholic Church organization, reports 26,047 cases of slavery in Brazil, mainly involving Indians who work in charcoal production.
- 1998** The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates the number of children exploited in labor markets around the world is between 200 million and 250 million, with nearly 95 percent living in poor countries.
- 1999** Anti-Slavery International (ASI) estimates that there are more than 200 million slaves in the world. Most of the slaves, according to ASI, live in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

# Words to know

## A

**Abbot:**

The head or ruler of a monastery for men.

**Abolition:**

The act of getting rid of slavery. An abolitionist is someone who fights against the institution of slavery.

**Agricultural slaves:**

People owned as property by owners of farms and forced to labor in the fields.

**Amnesty:**

An official act of pardon for a large group of people.

**Antebellum:**

Before the war; particularly before the Civil War (1861-65).

**Apprentice:**

Someone who learns an art or trade by serving for a set period of time under someone who is skilled at the trade.

**Auction:**

A sale of property in which the buyers bid on the price, and the property goes to the highest bidder.

## B

**Baptism:**

A Christian ceremony marking an individual's acceptance into the Christian community.

**Benevolent societies:**

Organizations formed to promote the welfare of certain groups of people determined by the society's members. In antebellum America, benevolent societies were very important social, cultural, and economic organizations for free blacks.

**Black codes:**

Bodies of law that emerged in the states of the U.S. South that restrictively governed almost every aspect of slaves' lives.

**Black Death:**

A deadly contagious disease often called "the plague" that started around 1350 and killed about one-third of Europe's population and even more in Asia.

**Bondage:**

The state of being bound by law in servitude to a controlling person or entity.

**Branding:**

Marking something, or someone, usually by burning them with a hot iron with a particular mark that shows ownership.

## C

**Cacao:**

Seeds used to make chocolate and cocoa.

**Chain gangs:**

Groups of workers chained together at the ankles while performing forced hard labor.

**Chattel slavery:**

A permanent form of slavery in which the slave holder "owns" a human being—the slave—in the same way that property (chattel) is owned: permanently and without restrictions. Historically, chattel slaves had no legal rights and were considered property that their owners had the right to possess, enjoy, and dispose of in whatever way they saw fit. Slaves could be bought, sold, given away, inherited, or hired out to others. Slave masters had the right, by law and custom, to punish and, in some times and places, to kill their slaves for disobedience. Slaves were forced to work where and when their masters determined. They could not own property or freely marry whom they chose, and their children were born as slaves.

**City-state:**

An independent political unit consisting of a city and its surrounding lands.

**Coffle:**

A group of people chained together.

**Colonialism:**

Control by one nation or state over a dependent territory and its people and resources.

**Colony:**

A territory in which settlers from another country come to live while maintaining their ties to their home country, often setting up a government that may rule over the original inhabitants of the territory as well as the settlers.

**Commerce:**

The making and selling of goods for local and foreign markets.

**Commodity:**

Something that is to be bought and sold for a profit.

**Compromise:**

To arrive at a settlement or agreement on something by virtue of both parties giving up some part of their demands.

**Compromise of 1850:**

A decision by the U.S. Congress to admit California as a free state and that left the status of territories to be determined when they applied for statehood. It also outlawed the slave trade in the District of Columbia and strengthened the fugitive slave laws.

**Confederate States of America:**

Often called the Confederacy, the government established in 1861 when seven states of the South—South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, and Texas—seceded from the Union.

**Concentration camps:**

Prison camps where inmates are detained, often, historically, under severe conditions and for political or ethnic reasons.

**Concubine:**

A sex slave.

**Conspiracy:**

The act of two or more parties secretly joining together to plan an illegal action.

**Cotton gin:**

A machine invented by Eli Whitney in 1793 that separated cotton fibers from the seed. With just two people working it, Whitney's cotton gin cleaned as much cotton as 100 workers could by hand, thus freeing up laborers for the cultivation of the crop.

**Crucifixion:**

Being nailed or bound to a cross until death; any horrible and painful punishment.



**Crusades:**

A series of military expeditions from the eleventh century to the thirteenth century launched by the Christian powers to conquer the Holy Land from the Muslims.

**Curfew:**

A rule or regulation that forbids certain people from being out in public after a certain time of day.

## D

**Dark Ages:**

A period of the Middle Ages in western Europe from 500 to 750 when there was no central government, lords ruled over small territories, and education and the arts were minimal. The term is also used to mean the entire span of the Middle Ages (500-1500).

**Debt slavery:**

A form of forced servitude usually taking place when a person has borrowed money against a pledge, or a promise, of work. If the loan goes unpaid, the borrower or members of his family are enslaved for a period of time to the lender to clear the debt.

**Democracy:**

Government ruled by the people or their representatives.

**Democratic party:**

A party founded by Thomas Jefferson in the early days of the United States favoring personal liberty and the limitation of the federal government. In 1854 the political party names changed to reflect the proslavery forces of the South versus the antislavery forces of the North. The Democrats were the proslavery forces of the South; the Republicans were the antislavery party of the North.

**Domestic slaves:**

Slaves who worked in the homes of the slaveowners, usually cooking, cleaning, serving, or performing child care.

## E

**Emancipate:**

To free from bondage.

**Emancipation Proclamation:**

The 1863 order by President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War that freed all slaves in the rebel states that had seceded and were battling against the Union.

**Empire:**

A large political unit that usually has several territories, nations, or peoples under one governing authority.

**Essenes:**

A Jewish brotherhood in ancient Palestine that was opposed to violence, war, and slavery.

**Exodus:**

Departure.

**Exploitation:**

An unfair or improper use of another person for one's own advantage.

## F

**Feudalism:**

The system of political organization in the Middle Ages in Europe based on the relationship of lord and vassal. The king or ruler basically owned all the land in his realm, but he could not govern it all. Thus he partitioned it out to nobles for a pledge of loyalty and military service. The nobles then divided their lands among lords for their pledge of service. Peasants, serfs, and slaves lived and worked on the lords' estates.

**Forced migration:**

The movement of a large group of people by force.

**Free state:**

A state in which slavery is not permitted.

**Freedman's Bureau:**

Also called the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, an organization formed in 1865 by Congress to provide food, land, clothing, medicine, and education to the newly freed peoples of the South.

**Freedpeople:**

Former slaves.

**Fugitive:**

Someone who is running away or escaping from something.

**Fugitive slave laws:**

Federal acts of 1793 and 1850 that required the return of escaped slaves between states. Thus, a citizen of a free state was required to return an escaped slave to his or her owner in a slave state.

## G

**Gladiator:**

Trained fighters in ancient Rome who fought each other—and sometimes wild beasts—to the death in huge arenas in front of crowds of spectators.

## H

**Heathen:**

A disrespectful word for non-Christian people.

**Holocaust:**

Mass slaughter.

**Human rights:**

Rights that belong to every person by virtue of their being a human being; the idea that everyone should be provided with the civil, political, economic, cultural, and social opportunity for personal human dignity.

**Husbandry:**

The taming and raising of domestic animals as a branch of farming.

**I****Imperial slaves:**

Slaves owned by the emperor.

**Indentured servants:**

Servants who work under a contract, bound to their masters for terms usually between two and fourteen years. In American history the terms of service were generally part of the deal that paid for an indentured servant's passage from England to the New World. Upon completion of their contract, indentured servants were promised their freedom and perhaps some food, clothing, tools, or land.

**Indigo:**

A plant used for making dyes.

**Industrial Revolution:**

A period of great economic changes in Europe due to new technology, starting in England in the mid-1700s.

**Industrial slaves:**

Slaves who labored in factories, mines, quarries, and other fields of production.

**Infidel:**

A disrespectful word for a non-Christians.

**Insurrection:**

Rebellion.

**Irrigation farming:**

An agricultural system using ditches and canals built to bring water to dry fields from a river or lake in order to grow crops.

**J****Jim Crow laws:**

Laws passed in the South after the Reconstruction period (1865-77) that separated black people from white people in many public places.

**K**

**Kansas-Nebraska Act:**

An 1854 act that organized Kansas and Nebraska as territories and left the question of slavery to be determined by the settlers when they applied for statehood. This act, in effect, erased the prohibition of slavery north of the Mason-Dixon line as established in the Missouri Compromise.

**Kidnaping:**

The holding of captured people for ransom (money or goods paid for the return of the captured person).

**Knight:**

A trained soldier who fought on horseback in the service of a lord or superior, especially in the Middle Ages.

## L

**Labor camp:**

A prison camp in which forced labor is performed.

**Latin America:**

A vast region comprised of the countries of South and Middle America where Romance languages (languages derived from Latin) are spoken. Geographically, it includes almost all of the Americas south of the United States: Mexico, Central America, South America, and many of the islands of the West Indies.

## M

**Magna Carta:**

A British document created in 1215 by King John guaranteeing certain rights, but perhaps mainly guaranteeing feudal relations.

**Manor:**

In Medieval England, the castle and surrounding land belonging to a lord, who ruled locally.

**Manumission:**

Formal release from bondage.

**Mason-Dixon line:**

The boundary between the states of Pennsylvania and Maryland. Before the Civil War the Mason-Dixon line became the boundary between the free states of the North and the slave states of the South.

**Massacre:**

The act of killing a group of people who are not prepared to adequately defend themselves; the word connotes a cruel or atrocious act.

**Medieval:**

Relating to the Middle Ages (500-1500), particularly in Europe.

**Mestizos:**

People of mixed Indian and European ancestry.

**Middle Ages:**

A period of European history that dates from about 500 to 1500, beginning after the fall of the Roman empire in 476 and characterized by a unified Christian culture, economy, politics, and military and a feudal hierarchy of power.

**Middle Passage:**

The voyage from Africa to the Americas; the middle stretch of the slave-trading triangle that connected Europe to Africa, Africa to the Americas, and the Americas back to Europe.

**Militant:**

Ready to fight, or aggressively active.

**Militia:**

A unit of armed forces that is trained and ready to do battle or patrol in an emergency.

**Missionary:**

A person with a religious mission, usually a minister of the Christian church who tries to convert non-Christians to the faith.

**Missouri Compromise:**

A series of measures passed in 1820 and 1821 admitting to the Union Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state and prohibiting slavery in all other territory north of Missouri's southern boundary.

**Monasteries:**

Churches and residences for monks and nuns.

**Monk:**

A man who belongs to a religious order and lives in a monastery, where he serves the church and devotes himself to his religion.

**Mulatto:**

A word—used mainly in past times—meaning a person of mixed white and black ancestry.

**Muslims:**

Members of the Islam religion.

**Mutilation:**

The act of cutting something or someone in a way that is permanently disfiguring or removes an essential part of the body.

## N

**Narratives:**

Something that is told like a story. Slave narratives in the years before the Civil War were written personal stories about what life was like as a slave. They were either written by former slaves or told out loud by them and then written down by someone else. Either way, they were presented in the manner of a spoken story.

**Near East:**

A region of southwest Asia that includes the Arab nations.

**Nobles:**

Wealthy families of landholders in Europe, usually holding the titles

of dukes, counts, and lords.

## P

**Passive resistance:**

Not cooperating with authority by purposefully not doing what is expected of one, but without using violent or aggressive means.

**Patriarch:**

A tribal chief, or a man who is the father and founder of a people.

**Peasants:**

A class of people throughout the history of Europe and elsewhere who were poor and lived by farming the land, either as small landowners or laborers.

**Peculium:**

Money, such as wages, tips, or gifts, that slaves in ancient Rome earned by doing extra jobs; they were allowed to keep it after giving their master part of the income.

**Piracy:**

The seizure by force of people and property on land or water.

**Pharaoh:**

The supreme ruler, as a king, of ancient Egypt.

**Pillory:**

A wooden frame in which there were holes to lock up the head and hands used to punish and humiliate people.

**Plantation:**

A vast farming estate that is worked by a large staff living on the premises.

**Plebs:**

Short for plebeians; Rome's majority middle class.

**Pope:**

The bishop of Rome and head of the Roman Catholic church.

**Prostitution:**

The practice of engaging in sexual activities for payment.

**Public slaves:**

Slaves owned by cities or towns who did administrative, construction, public-safety, or maintenance work or worked in temples.

## Q

**Quakers:**

A religious body formally known as the Religious Society of Friends that originated in seventeenth-century England. Its founders believed that people could find the spiritual truth that was provided by the Holy Spirit within themselves, having no need of church services or its hierarchy. The Quakers believed in the equality of all human beings and were staunch abolitionists in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

**Quarry:**

A dug out pit from which stone, slate, or limestone is taken.

## R

**Ratification:**

The formal approval or confirmation of a document or act, such as an amendment to the Constitution.

**Reconstruction acts:**

Acts passed in 1867 by Congress that divided the former Confederacy into five military districts under the command of army generals. They stripped the right to vote from whites who had supported the Confederate government. Elections were ordered for state constitutional conventions, and black men were given the right to vote. Withdrawal of the federal forces in 1877 marked the end of the Reconstruction period.

**Reenslavement:**

Being forced back into slavery once one has achieved freedom from bondage.

**Republic:**

A form of government run by elected representatives and based on a constitution.

**Republican party:**

A party formed in 1854 by the antislavery forces of the North. The first Republican president was Abraham Lincoln, elected in 1860.

**Rural:**

Relating to the country, country people, and agriculture; the opposite of urban or city life.

## S

**Secede:**

To withdraw

**Segregation:**

The separation of people along racial lines. For example, in many churches before and after the Civil War, black people were forced to sit in separate sections than white people; in public transportation in some places there were separate sections for blacks and whites; in education; there were sometimes separate schools.

**Serfdom:**

From the Latin word for "servant," a form of servitude that differed from chattel slavery in that the enslaved were not considered "movable" property. Serfs were bound to the land they lived on, generation after generation, serving the owners of the land, known as lords. If the lord left the land, the serf served its next owner.

**Servile:**

Submissive, or slavelike; being always at the bidding of a controlling person.

**Sexual slavery:**

The control and ownership of one human being by another for the purpose of engaging in sexual activities with that person, often forcibly, or selling the person's sexual services to others.

**Sharecropping:**

A system of farming in which one person farms land owned by another in exchange for a share of the crop.

**Slave codes:**

The body of laws held by the states governing the slaves themselves and the ownership of them. Many slave code laws severely restricted slaves because of the slaveowner's strong fear of slave uprisings.

**Slave raids:**

Military expeditions for the purpose of capturing slaves.

**Slave trading forts:**

Sometimes called "slave factories," trading posts operated by Europeans mainly on the west coast of Africa with dungeons capable of holding thousands of captured Africans until they could be placed on the next ship to the Americas.

**Slaver:**

A person who is involved in the slave trade for profit.

**Supreme Court:**

The highest court of the United States, and the highest authority on all cases that arise under the Constitution, laws, and treaties of the federal government.

## T

**Territory:**

An area, or a vast stretch of land in eighteenth and nineteenth century America that had settlers and local communities but had not yet organized as a state of the Union.

**Terrorism:**

Attacks on unarmed civilians.

**Textile:**

Cloth, usually a woven or knit fabric.

**Therapeutae:**

A Jewish community in ancient Alexandria, Egypt, that opposed war and slavery.

**Tribute:**

A payment made by one group or state to another, either in acknowledgment of having been conquered or for protection.



## U

### **Underground Railroad:**

A secret network of people, black and white, who guided runaway slaves to freedom and sheltered them along their way in the eighteenth and nineteenth century United States.

### **United Nations (UN):**

An international organization established after World War II (1939-45) that includes most of the world's countries. The UN's mission is to maintain world peace and security, to achieve cooperation among countries in solving problems, and to promote international humanitarianism.

## V

### **Vassals:**

Lower nobles in medieval Europe who pledged loyalty and services to the local ruler, the lord.

### **Vigilante group:**

A group that organizes independently of official authority, setting its task to suppress or punish other people, for real or perceived offenses, without going through the due processes of law.

# Slavery Through the Ages (An Introduction)

## Many times, many peoples

When we think of slavery, most Americans picture the American South in the 1800s, before the Civil War. Our mental image probably includes hundreds of black slaves on a plantation, picking cotton in the hot sun under the watchful eyes of their white masters. This vision is slavery in its simplest form: one person owning another and forcing the slave to work on the owner's behalf. This form of slavery is known as chattel slavery. Chattel means property, capital, or livestock, and it has been applied to slaves through the ages.

What may surprise many of us is that this form of slavery is as ancient as civilization itself, and it was alive and thriving in various places in the world at the end of the twentieth century. Chattel slavery is one of five traditional forms of slavery that the United Nations (UN; an international organization including most of the world's countries), in 1956, dedicated itself to ending. The other four forms are serfdom, debt bondage, the exploitation of children, and servile (slave-like)

forms of marriage. As the twentieth century ended, the word "slavery" came to mean an even wider variety of human-rights violations, including forced labor and various forms of sexual slavery. Counting all the people in traditional forms of enslavement, as well as people in more modern forms of slavery such as child pornography, the UN estimated that there were still millions of people enslaved in 1999.

While our mental picture of American slavery is fairly accurate, it is only one snapshot in the history of human slavery. The U.S. model of slavery was just one of many slave systems the world has known. The social, economic, and political forces that shaped the ancient societies of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome; Western Europe in the Middle Ages; and the New World Latin American colonies all produced different systems of slavery. And still more ways of enslaving people were invented and practiced in the twentieth century, as the world became more industrialized, overcrowded, polluted, and dependent on technology.

## **The ancient world (5000 B.C.E.-500 CE.)**

### **The first slaves**

The institution of slavery has existed throughout recorded history. Exactly when people began to enslave other people is impossible to say, but historians believe it happened around 10,000 years ago. For perhaps 1 million years before that time, humans lived constantly on the move, always searching for food. When they fought with one another, they killed rather than enslaved their defeated enemies. As people slowly began to replace hunting and gathering with husbandry (the taming of wild beasts for food and labor) and farming, they began to produce enough food to stay in one place.

By 5000 B.C.E., the desert and mountain people of the Near East (a region of southwest Asia that includes the Arab

countries) were successfully farming the deserts of Mesopotamia, having constructed a vast system of canals and waterways to irrigate fields with water from the desert's only water sources\_its rivers. Historians believe that at that time people began keeping their prisoners of war alive, feeding them minimum amounts, and making them slave laborers. Having gained some control over nature through farming



and taming wild beasts, people turned to taming their own kind. Like cattle, sheep, or dogs, chattel slaves were trained to do the hardest and dirtiest work for the advancement of their masters.

When people started living together in villages and cities in Mesopotamia, around 3500 B.C.E., another form of bondage developed called debt slavery. Typically, a person would borrow money against a pledge, or a promise, of work. If the loan went unpaid, enslavement for a period of time was the only way to clear the debt. This form of enslavement was widespread in ancient societies right up to the Roman Empire

**Iberians (people from the Spanish peninsula) being sold as slaves by the Romans.** Engraving from a painting by R. Cogghe. The Bettmann Archive. Reproduced by permission

(27 B.C.E.-476 C.E.). Debt slavery was supposed to be temporary, but it often resulted in lifelong servitude for debtors and even their families. Extreme poverty also drove many people into selling their children and their families into slavery.

### **Person or property?**

In the most general terms, chattel slaves throughout the ancient world had no legal rights. Slaves were considered property that their owners had the right to possess, enjoy, and dispose of in whatever way they saw fit. Slaves could be bought, sold, given away, inherited, or hired out to others. Slave masters had the right, by law and custom, to punish and, in some times and places, to kill their slaves for disobedience. Slaves were forced to work where and when their masters determined. They could not own property, they were not allowed to marry, and their children were born as slaves.

In ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome, prisoners of war were the single greatest source of slaves. Children born to slave parents were the second greatest source. As slavery became more essential to the economies of the ancient world, the buying and selling of slaves became an important part of commerce. The Romans often sold their prisoners of war right on the battlefield to slave traders for transport and sale in the markets of central Italy. When wars could not keep up with the demand for slaves, piracy (the seizure by force of people and property on land or water) and kidnaping (the holding of captured people for ransom) thrived as profitable businesses.

### **Built on slave labor**

The number of slaves in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Israel was small compared with the slave societies of Greece and Rome. Ownership was generally limited to the ruling classes—the kings, the pharaohs (rulers of ancient Egypt), the high priests, and the wealthy. There were no kings in the "democracies" (governments ruled by the people) of Greece and Rome, but there were plenty of slaves. Both the Greeks

and the Romans built huge empires in Europe and the Mediterranean region, and in the process they enslaved millions of people from North Africa, Europe, and southwest Asia.

It was the Romans, though, who built the largest empire and held the most slaves of the ancient world. Every Roman who could afford to owned a slave or two—and that included peasants (poor people who lived off the land) and laborers. The wealthy owned hundreds of slaves, and Rome's rulers kept thousands. Between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E., between 30 and 40 percent of Rome's population were slaves.

## **Western Europe in the Middle Ages (500-1500)**

### **The rise of serfdom**

The dominant form of slavery in western Europe in the Middle Ages was serfdom. Serfdom was different from chattel slavery in that the enslaved were not considered "movable" property. That is, serfs (from the Latin word for servant) were bound to the land they lived on, generation after generation. Serfs served the owners of the land, known as lords. (Lords in turn served counts, counts served dukes, and everyone served the king.) If the land changed ownership, for whatever reason, the serfs worked for the new owners.

Chattel slavery did not entirely disappear with the end of Roman rule in western Europe and the Mediterranean. The Germanic tribes that moved into the territories of the old Roman Empire—such as the Franks, Angles, Saxons, Bavarians, Lombards, and Burgundians—set up a much different society from the Greeks or Romans before them. The process took hundreds of years, but the sharp distinctions between free people and slaves that were present in Greece and Rome slowly disappeared.

## Feudal equality

By the year 1000, chattel slaves made up only 10 percent of Europe's population. The vast majority of people—around 80 percent—were peasants. Half of the peasants were



**The Black Death, also known as the plague, killed nearly one-third of the population of Europe. This illustration of a dying plague victim with servants burning perfume in the sickroom comes from the *Fasciculus Medicinae, Venice, 1500*. Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.**

considered "free"; the other half were serfs. The slaves, serfs, and free peasants lived and worked side by side under very similar conditions. All were in one way or another dependent on the noble class of landowners for their safety and their livelihoods.

Free peasants had more personal freedom than serfs and slaves. They were allowed to move off the land, marry, and control their possessions. Free peasants and serfs received plots of land from their lord in exchange for part of their crops and a pledge of work. Serfs, however, could not leave the land without severe punishment (whipping or branding). Serfs could not

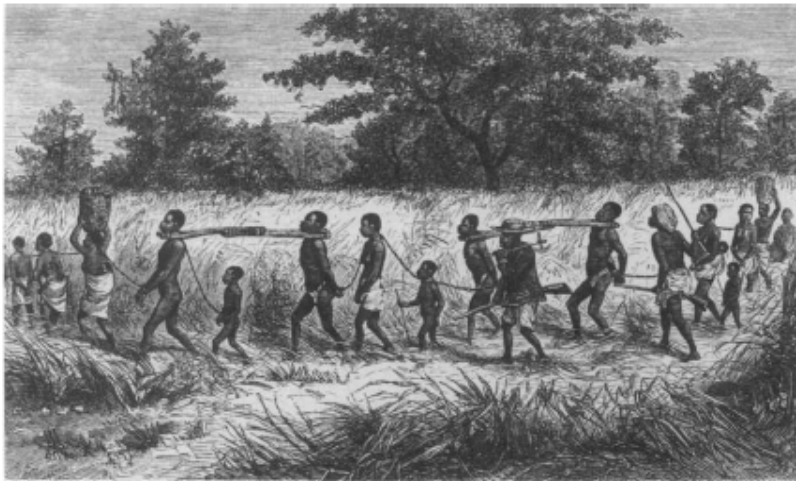
marry without their lord's permission, and all their possessions technically belonged to their lord. The small number of chattel slaves had no rights at all. They were the lord's property and could be sold independent of the land and punished at his will. They were allowed to marry, but only with their master's permission.

## Hard times for all

Most of the free peasants, serfs, and slaves lived in little one-room huts with their entire families. Their lives were full of suffering and hardship, and the differences among them in terms of personal freedom must have at times seemed minor. In times of war, it was their huts, not the lords' castles, that burned. When disease and hunger gripped the land, their children, their old, and their weak died first. Life was so

difficult that about two-thirds of all children in the Middle Ages died before the age of ten.

The Holy Crusades (a series of wars waged by Christians against Muslims from 1096 to 1204) and the Black Death (a deadly contagious disease, often called "the plague") both contributed to the end of serfdom in western Europe. Many serfs legally left their lands for the first time to serve in the Christian armies of Europe as they tried to take over parts of the Near East that were under Muslim control. The Black Death, starting around 1350, killed about one-third of Europe's population. The result was an extreme shortage of labor, which led to serfs gaining their freedom and ultimately receiving wages for their work. By the fifteenth century, serfdom in western Europe was virtually extinct.



**Africans chained and yoked in the slave trade. Slaves were often captured in the interior of West Africa and marched hundreds of miles to coastal forts from which they were shipped to the Americas.** The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.

## **The New World (1500-1900)**

### **The rape of Africa**

Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of the New World in 1492 led to the rebirth of large-scale chattel slavery and the largest forced migration in human history. Between 1441 and 1880, about 11 million Africans were transported to the European colonies of the Americas. The vast majority of slaves came from West Africa, although some East Africans



also made the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. Roughly 95 percent of all slaves taken from Africa, or about 10.5 million slaves, went to the Spanish, French, Dutch, Danish, and Portuguese colonies of Latin America (the West Indies, Mexico, and Central and South Americas). The other 500,000 slaves were taken to main-land North America—what is now the United States.

By 1600, about 367,000 Africans had been shipped to the New World. Although slavery had existed in Africa since ancient times, most slaves were prisoners captured in small wars between local tribes. When the Europeans began trading guns for slaves from West Africa's coastal tribes, tribal wars in Africa's interior increased in size and number. Slaves were captured hundreds of miles from the coastal European slave-trading forts. Many were bought and sold several times on their march to the slave ships. The voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, known as the Middle Passage, was a two-month nightmare for the captured Africans, and many of them died at sea from the inhumane conditions aboard the slave ships.

### **Slavery for profit**

Throughout the slave period in the Americas, the shipping of slaves from Africa across the Atlantic Ocean to the colonies was a very big business. The Spanish, British, and Americans at one time or another dominated the trans-Atlantic trade. Much of the commercial success of England and the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in fact, was based on profits made from trading in human cargo.

The New World colonists put their slaves to work on their vast plantations, growing crops such as sugarcane, tobacco, coffee, and cotton for export to Europe. The Spanish colonists at first tried to enslave the native Indian populations of the West Indies. There and elsewhere, the natives refused to be enslaved and were slaughtered in great numbers. The New World colonists, especially the British, also tried using white indentured servants from Europe as workers, but they were not available in the numbers needed for large-scale farming.

The vast majority of slaves in the Americas worked in agriculture and lived in rural areas. Slaves were also used in large numbers for industrial purposes. Some of the worst conditions and highest death rates were in mines, quarries, factories, and workshops. Slaves also worked as domestic servants for plantation owners and small farmers. In general, domestic servants—or house slaves—had better food and living quarters than agricultural and industrial slaves. Slaves who lived in cities enjoyed more personal freedoms than rural slaves. City slaves often were allowed to hire out their own labor and live in their own quarters provided that they paid their masters part of their wages.

### **Unequal before God**

Slaves were treated quite badly throughout the New World. In the West Indies, where most of the slaves were taken before being shipped on to the mainland colonies, about 30 percent died in their first three to four years due to overwork, poor diet, diseases, and severe and frequent beatings. In Brazil, where almost one-half of all slaves ended up, five out of six slaves worked on sugar, coffee, cotton, and cacao (seeds used to make chocolate and cocoa) plantations. The strategy of the slave masters in Brazil was to get as much out of their investment as quickly as possible. If twenty-five out of one hundred plantation slaves lived longer than three years, planters felt that they had gotten their money's worth.

Despite the brutality and high death rates of slaves in Brazil and the West Indies, slaves in Latin America were generally treated better than in British North America. This was due largely to the Catholic church's influence on Spain, France, and Portugal, the main colonizers of Latin America. The Catholic church demanded that the colonists baptize their slaves into the Christian religion. As Catholics, slaves attended Mass with their masters and participated in all the Church's holy rituals and sacraments, including marriage.

The British colonists—and, after the revolution, the American planters—never granted their slaves one iota of a chance of

being equal, even in the eyes of God. Marriages between slaves were never legal in the United States, and slaves began attending church with their masters only in the 1830s.

### **Possibilities of freedom**

In general, punishments for slaves in the New World were excessive and frequent. Slaves were whipped, beaten, branded, burned, mutilated, and killed throughout the Americas. The slave systems of Latin America, however, also offered the possibility of freedom to their slaves, hoping to secure their cooperation and good services by promising liberty as a reward. The manumission (formal release from bondage) of slaves by Latin American slaveowners, like the ancient Greeks and especially the Romans, resulted in a large number of freedpeople (former slaves) in these societies. Ex-slaves in Latin America immediately enjoyed the same rights and privileges as the free whites.

The long-term result of this practice was that Africans who gained their freedom in Latin America were able to integrate into society. In the United States, however, manumission for slaves was very rare. And if slaves found their way to freedom (usually by running away), they were often denied equal rights with free whites even in the "free" states of the North.

**The Death of Spartacus, a drawing of the renowned Roman gladiator (trained fighter) who led a huge slave uprising in 71-72 B.C.E.** Drawing by H. Vogel. Corbis-Bettmann. Reproduced by permission.



### **Resistance and rebellion**

Throughout history, slaves have resisted their masters by running away and rebelling. The penalties for both have always been the most severe possible—if for no other reason than to discourage other slaves from following their example. Slave rebellions in the Americas, however, were more frequent, more violent, and more successful at changing conditions than at any other time in history. There were more than 250 rebellions in the United States alone.

Although blacks lost more of their freedom after each failed revolt, the total effect of the bloodshed actually advanced the cause of abolition (the destruction of slavery) by forcing society to face the consequences of its unjust system.

The most successful slave revolt in history began in the French colony of Haiti in 1791. Inspired by the American Revolution (in which the colony won independence from Britain), Haiti's slaves rose up in arms against the French. After thirteen years and the death of 100,000 African slaves and 60,000 French soldiers and colonists, Haiti won its freedom and became the second independent republic in the Western Hemisphere. Haiti's slave revolution became a shining symbol to slaves throughout the Americas that freedom was possible, even if it came at a very heavy price.

## **The twentieth century (1900-1999)**

### **Modern monsters**

The abolition of slavery in all of the countries in the New World by 1888 and the freeing of millions of slaves in North and South America was a great step forward for the human race, but it was hardly the end of slavery. Slavery flourished in the twentieth century. One human-rights group estimated that in 1999, there were more than 200 million slaves in the world. That's *fifty* times more than the 4 million slaves who were freed in the United States after the Civil War (1861-65).

During the 1900s, as the world changed more rapidly than ever before, people found even more ways to enslave their fellow humans. King Leopold of Belgium (1835-1909) perpetrated the century's first holocaust (mass slaughter) on the people of central Africa. More than 10 million Africans lost their lives as Leopold drained the Congo Basin of its rubber and ivory through the mass enslavement and forced labor of its inhabitants.

## A Chronology of Abolition

**1794:** A slave revolt begun in 1791 results in the abolition of slavery in Haiti.

**1804:** Denmark abolishes the slave trade.

**1807:** Great Britain abolishes the slave trade.

**1808:** The U.S. Congress outlaws the importation of slaves.

**1813:** Sweden abolishes the slave trade.

**1818:** France abolishes the slave trade.

**1823:** Chile abolishes slavery.

**1829:** Mexico abolishes slavery.

**1833:** Great Britain passes the Emancipation Act, freeing all slaves in the British Empire after a five-year period.

**1848:** France abolishes slavery in its colonies.

**1850:** Brazil abolishes the slave trade.

**1863:** Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation abolishing slavery in the United States.

**1888:** Brazil emancipates all slaves.

**1948:** The United Nations issues the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* on December 10. Article 1 of the document proclaims "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

Millions of prisoners, including many political opponents of the state, were enslaved in labor camps in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from 1917 to 1991, and in the People's Republic of China since 1949. In addition to killing 6 million Jews in concentration camps (prison camps where inmates were starved, executed, or worked to death) in Nazi-

occupied Europe in World War II, German dictator Adolf Hitler had nearly 10 million non-German civilians and captured soldiers working as slaves in German arms factories, in farms, and as domestic servants in households.

Japan instituted another form of slavery from 1932 to the end of World War II in 1945. The Japanese systematically forced women from its occupied lands to go to its battlegrounds in China, the South Sea Islands, Korea, and other areas of conflict. There, the women were forced to serve the Japanese soldiers as sex slaves, often called "comfort women." About 200,000 women were drafted as comfort women, the majority of them Korean.

### **Slavery today**

As the twentieth century came to an end, there were millions of slaves in dozens of countries around the world. In 1999, most of the slaves in the world lived in Africa and Asia, with a smaller number in Latin America. For example, there were at least 100,000 chattel slaves in the West African country of Mauritania and almost as many slaves in the East African country of Sudan. In south Asia—in the countries of India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh—there were from 15 million to 20 million bonded child laborers working in conditions of virtual slavery, making carpets, sporting goods, and clothing. The chief markets for these slave-produced items were in the United States, Europe, and Japan—countries where slavery had been outlawed for years.

In 1999 the People's Republic of China continued to imprison thousands of political opponents in forced labor camps, where they made products for export to world markets—including the United States. And in Latin America, debt slavery was being practiced in the Amazon region of Brazil, where at least 26,000 Indians were trapped in a cycle of debt that forced them into slave labor on isolated charcoal-production farms.

The selling of children into slavery and wife-selling, both ancient Chinese practices, also continued throughout the

century in Southeast Asia. Child prostitution, child pornography, and child labor, all relatively modern forms of slavery, were widespread and growing in countries around the world, according to the UN. In 1996 there were 300,000 child prostitutes walking the streets of the United States, some as young as nine years old.

### **Looking ahead**

Of course, there are exceptions to every generalization about slavery made in this chapter. The treatment of slaves throughout history has always depended on the character of their master and the time, place, and circumstances of their relationship. Some slaves, we can be sure, were treated with human kindness somewhere along the way. But make no mistake: slavery involves the ownership of human beings by other human beings, and under any conditions, in any place or time, it is always wrong. To paraphrase an old saying, as long as there is one slave in the world, none of us is truly free. And with millions of slaves in the world at the end of the twentieth century, organizations such as the United Nations, Anti-Slavery International, the International Labor Organization, and many more were still working hard to rid the world of the monstrous institution and to raise the public's awareness and concern over the abuse and atrocities that are being practiced in our modern world.

# Slavery in Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Israel

## Mesopotamia (c. 3500-539 B.C.E.)

Mesopotamia (pronounced mes-oh-poe-TAY-me-uh) is the name of an ancient country in the southwest desert of Asia where people settled and lived on the land between two great rivers: the Tigris (pronounced TIE-griss) River and the Euphrates (pronounced you-FRATE-ees) River (in what is now a country called Iraq).

### Land of invention and abundance

Mesopotamians were the first people to live in cities (c. 3500 B.C.E.), and one of the first cultures to use writing and to calculate in numbers. They invented the plow, the wheeled cart, and sailing ships. They discovered how to use metals and made tools, weapons, and art from copper, bronze, silver, and gold instead of the stone, bone, and wood used by their ancestors.

Mesopotamians were also one of the first peoples—perhaps as early as 5000 B.C.E.—to practice irrigation farming (a system of ditches and canals constructed to bring water to dry fields



from a river or lake in order to grow crops). The successful use of irrigation farming to grow food in the desert was an amazing achievement. For the first time, people could settle down in one place, no longer forced to move constantly in search of food.

### **Slavery: A step forward?**

With an abundance of food, Mesopotamians, who were always at war with one another over water and land, began enslaving rather than killing those defeated in battle. War captives were taken prisoner for life, kept alive with minimal rations of food, and put to work. In this context, some historians argue that slavery was a step forward in the development of civilization, reasoning that for prisoners of war, the loss of liberty and a life of hard labor were better than death.

Slaves in Mesopotamia may have been happy to be alive, but their lives must have been full of misery. In general, they did the hardest, most backbreaking work. Slaves dug the irrigation ditches, turned the potters' wheels, wove the cloth, and toiled in the fields, often working from dawn until dark.

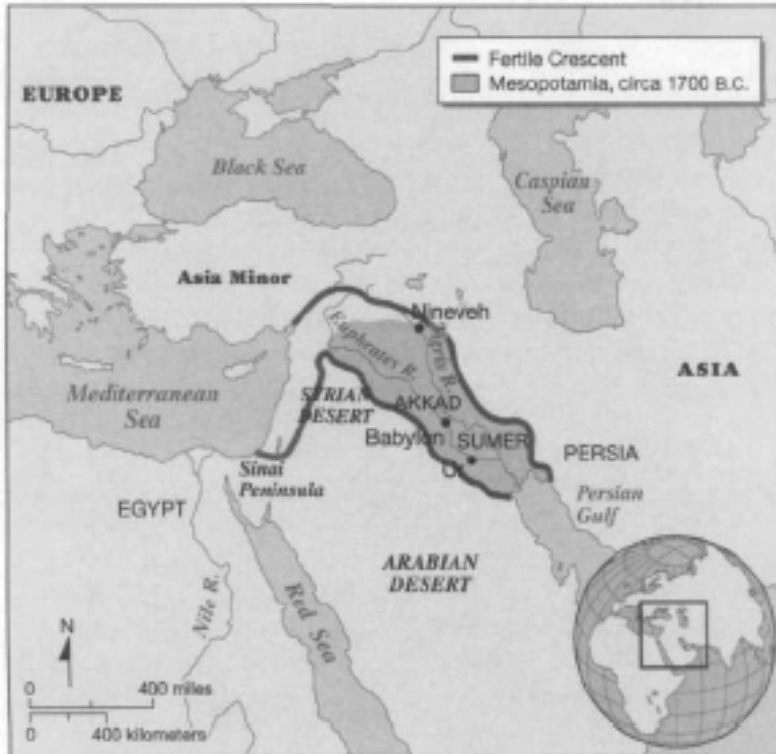
## **Fact Focus**

- Most of the slaves in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Israel were prisoners of war.
- Some slavery was permanent and lifelong. A form of temporary slavery was known as debt slavery.
- In Mesopotamia, kings and priests of the temples owned the most slaves. Under the Assyrians and Babylonians, however, some of the richer Mesopotamian households had as many as 100 slaves.
- The pharaohs owned all the slaves in Egypt and put many of them to work in their farms, factories, workshops, mines, quarries, bakeries, kitchens, wineries, and breweries.
- Slavery in Egypt reached its peak during the New Kingdom, when thousands of Hebrews and other foreign-born slaves were forced to work in the fields making bricks for the construction of new cities and temples.
- As a people, the Hebrews knew slavery from both sides: as the enslaved and as the enslavers.
- The earliest laws of the Bible's Old Testament prohibited the enslavement of Hebrews by other Hebrews, but in practice these laws were mostly ignored.

# Sumer (c. 3500-2000 B.C.E.)

## The growth of slavery

About 5000 B.C.E., people began to settle in Sumer (pronounced SOO-mare), an area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in southern



A map of Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent.

Mesopotamia, close to the Persian Gulf. The successful use of irrigation farming along the lower Tigris and Euphrates Rivers led to the growth of villages. By 3500 B.C.E., several of the larger villages in Sumer had come to resemble small cities, some with as many as 10,000 residents. By 2500 B.C.E., there were at least thirteen major city-states (a city and its surrounding lands) in Sumer. One city-state, Lagash, had 35,000 residents.

Sumerian city-states were politically independent, each ruled by its own king. Sumerian society was divided into two

distinct classes: a very small upper class of nobles and priests, and a very large lower class of farmers, laborers, craftspeople, and tradespeople. Outside these classes were the slaves.

At first, when people lived in small farming villages, there was little use for a huge labor force. Families relied more on their children than on slaves to provide labor for private households and farms. The use of slave labor increased, however, as the city-states grew larger and more labor was needed to build additional houses, temples, and palaces and to work on larger farms and in expanded workshops and factories.

Slaves in Sumer were mostly those captured in the frequent wars between the city-states. The captives belonged to the king of the victorious city-state, who disposed of them as he saw fit. Some slaves served the personal needs of the king and his family. Some were sent to work on the king's farms or in the royal workshops. The king also gave many slaves to the temples of the gods, where the priests put them to work on the upkeep of the temple or on temple-owned farms.

## **Permanent vs. temporary slavery**

Foreigners (people from another city-state) captured in war were subjected to lifelong slavery and were marked as such by branding, piercing, or special haircuts. Legally and socially they made up a specific class, with the least amount of rights and with very little hope for freedom for themselves or their children. Privately owned slaves, obtained on the open market or as gifts from the king, were sometimes adopted into the family or set free.

Another kind of less permanent slavery was also common in ancient Sumer: debt slavery. A creditor (moneylender) could enslave a free person for a period of time (three to six years) for failing to pay back a loan. Borrowers who were unable to pay off their debts were often forced to sell into slavery their sons or daughters, whom Sumerian society considered the father's property.

If found guilty of certain crimes, free persons could also be forced into temporary enslavement (rather than jail) as compensation to the victim. Permanent or temporary, slaves were considered to be property. They could be bought, sold, traded, given away, inherited, and rented out for use by others.

## Babylonia (c. 2000-539 B.C.E.)

### The First Dynasty of Babylon (c. 1800-1600 B.C.E.)

Around 2025 B.C.E., people known as the Amorites (pronounced AM-uh-rites) invaded Mesopotamia from northern Syria and formed the kingdom of Babylonia (pronounced bab-ill-OWN-ee-uh). In 1780 B.C.E.,



**Hammurabi, king of the Babylonian empire, presides at a trial.** The Bettmann Archive. Reproduced by permission.

King Hammurabi (pronounced ham-oo-RAH-bee), an Amorite, became the sixth ruler of Babylon, a city located on the Euphrates River in northern Mesopotamia. With Babylon as his capital city, Hammurabi united all of the competing kingdoms of Mesopotamia (including the Sumerian city-states) under one government.

The empire started by King Hammurabi grew to encompass an area more extensive than present-day Iraq. The First Dynasty of Babylon, as it came to be known, lasted for about two centuries (c. 1800-1600 B.C.E.) and is considered one of the world's first great empires.

## **The Code of Hammurabi and slavery**

King Hammurabi's Babylonian empire was prosperous, made rich by his efforts to expand both agriculture and trade. His vast kingdom required a large labor force to build and maintain a huge network of irrigation canals; to carry out trade; to bake and glaze bricks; and to construct temples, houses, and other buildings. Slaves, again mostly prisoners of war, were an important but not dominant source of labor in the Babylonian economy. As more individuals in the empire became wealthy, the number of privately owned slaves increased as well (but it remained fairly low in this time period).

Like the Sumerians, the Babylonians accepted slavery and regulated it in their laws, many of which are contained in the Code of Hammurabi. The code, a list of about 300 laws, dealt with every aspect of Babylonian life. Much of Hammurabi's written code was derived from the customs and laws of the Sumerians, which were passed as an oral tradition from king to king, generation to generation.

### **Slaves as private property**

Many of the laws governing slavery were for the protection and benefit of the slaveowner. Slaves were considered private property, and Hammurabi's code had very specific rules about buying, selling, and leasing slaves. As private property, slaves could be bought, sold, given away, exchanged, inherited, or rented out. Masters were allowed to brand, cut, or otherwise mark slaves, with harsh punishment for altering or removing such a mark. If someone caused a slave to lose an eye or break

a bone, they would pay a fine of one-half the value of the slave to the owner, not to the injured slave. The code did not prevent the sexual exploitation of female slaves by their masters. Slaveowners often fathered children by female slaves and were allowed to use their female slaves as prostitutes.

## Debt slavery

Free persons, such as farmers, craftspeople, merchants, and peddlers, sometimes needed loans to see them through lean times. A creditor could seize a borrower for failing to pay back a loan and turn him into a temporary slave until the debt was considered paid. The enslavement of the debtor's wife and children, in Babylonian society considered to be his property, was more often the result.

## Runaway slaves

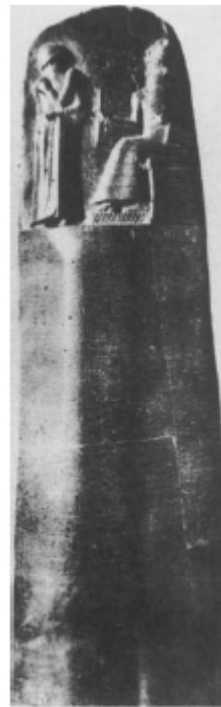
Hammurabi devoted six paragraphs of the code to the subject of runaway slaves. In Sumer, the punishment for aiding or harboring a runaway slave had been a fine. In Babylonia, under Hammurabi's rule, it was punishable by death.

## Manumission

The Code of Hammurabi recognized four legal ways that a slave could be granted manumission (formal release from bondage) independent of his master's wish. First, wives and children in bondage as debt slaves were freed after three years. Second, children born to a free woman married to a slave were considered free. Third, a female slave concubine (pronounced CON-cue-bine; sex slave) and her children were freed after her master's death. Fourth, a Babylonian slave ransomed from a foreign land—that is, the required price was paid to his or her captors—was a free person upon return to the native city.

However, it was very rare for a permanent slave to gain his or her freedom. It was far more likely

**A stele (an inscribed stone pillar) of the Code of Hammurabi, with a figure carved into the top depicting Hammurabi dispensing law to a subject. The codes are listed below the carving. The Bettmann Archive. Reproduced by permission**



**Restored Temple of Nineveh of the Assyro-Babylonian Empire, c. 900-601 B.C.E.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

that a free person would become a temporary slave by failing to pay a debt or a permanent slave by being taken as a prisoner of war.

## **Assyrian domination (c. 1100-612 B.C.E.)**



### **Slavery peaks in Mesopotamia**

By 1100 B.C.E., the Assyrians (pronounced ah-SEER-eeans), a people living in northwest Mesopotamia, started to dominate Babylonia. The Assyrians established their capital in the northern city of Ashur (pronounced ah-SHUR) and then moved it to Nineveh (pronounced NIN-eh-vuh), on the banks of the upper Tigris River. Although wars were a fact of life throughout Mesopotamian history, the Assyrians made war their trade, and they created their empire by brute force. The Assyrians, with their superior military power, had a simple formula for expanding their empire: invade, destroy, and enslave.

Since prisoners of war

(and the children they gave birth to) were the main source of slaves throughout Mesopotamian history, the number of slaves increased dramatically under the Assyrians. Records from one Assyrian ruler (c. 800 B.C.E.) list some of the riches taken from just one conquered city: "460 horses, 2,000 cattle, 5,000 sheep, the ruler's sisters, the daughters of his rich nobles with their dowries, and 15,000 of his subjects." (A dowry is the money or goods that a woman brings to her husband in marriage.)

Assyrian rulers put these huge slave-labor forces to work in state-controlled industry and agriculture. And, because war was so important and demanded such great resources, for a period of time the Assyrians even forced large numbers of slaves into their army.

## **The New Babylonian Empire (c 612-539 B.C.E.)**

### **Conquer and enslave: The trend continues**

The tyrannical Assyrian empire fell to the Babylonians and their allies in 612 and its conquerors divided up its lands. In 605 B.C.E., King Nebuchadnezzar II (pronounced ne-buh-cuh-DREZ-er) became the first king of the New Babylonian Empire. He restored the capital city of Babylon (destroyed by the Assyrians, c. 689 B.C.E.), and turned it into the greatest city the world had known.

The Babylonians were not as brutal as the Assyrians, but they were every bit as ambitious in their quest to rebuild their empire (see "The First Dynasty of Babylon," above). They repeatedly sent their armies to conquer and collect tributes (gifts or payments for protection) from cities far and wide in the Near East. On one such campaign (597 B.C.E.), Nebuchadnezzar II captured the city of Jerusalem (pronounced jeh-ROO-sah-lem) and sent most of the city's population, about 3,000 Hebrews, into slavery in Babylonia (see "Captive in Babylon," later in this chapter). The Hebrew slaves were



freed in 539 B.C.E., when Babylonia fell to the invading Persians (people from the east).

### **Assyrian and Babylonian slavery**

The number of slaves increased steadily during both the Assyrian and Babylonian empires (c. 705-539 B.C.E.).

Oddly, so did the level of independence that masters granted their slaves. Slaves in Babylonia during these two centuries were given many of the rights of free persons. Slaves could marry and own livestock, land, and other property (including other slaves). Slaves could become apprentices and learn a trade such as carpentry, shoemaking, baking, or weaving. They could carry on a profession or business, engage in trading and banking, and appear in court as witnesses.

**Babylon falls to the Persians, 539 B.C.E.**  
Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.



Throughout Mesopotamian history, wealthy families owned slaves but not in great numbers, usually from one to five (though in some cases as many as fifteen) slaves per household. The number of privately owned slaves, however, increased under the Assyrians and Babylonians. Some of the richer households had as many as one hundred slaves, and a middle-class family might own as many as five slaves

("Middle class" is a relative term; most people were too poor to own any slaves.)

## **Egypt (c. 3110-332 B.C.E.)**

### **Pharaohs, pyramids, and peasants**

Ancient Egypt, a country in the northeast corner of Africa, is known as the land of pharaohs (pronounced FAIR-rows) and pyramids—the tombs of the pharaohs. "Pharaoh" is what the Egyptians called their king; it means "great house" or "royal palace." The Egyptians considered their pharaohs to be both gods and kings. They ruled Egypt almost continuously for more than twenty-seven centuries and provided a political and spiritual unity to Egyptian society that was rare in ancient times.

Like the Mesopotamians (see "Land of invention and abundance," earlier in this chapter), the Egyptians settled close to water (the Nile River) and practiced irrigation farming. They built ships for trading, used writing, and knew how to use metals such as bronze, copper, silver, and gold. Unlike the Mesopotamians, almost all of the Egyptians lived in the countryside, not in cities.

### **One river, one kingdom**

From 5000 B.C.E. to 3110 B.C.E., before the reign of the pharaohs, Egypt was divided into two kingdoms along the Nile River: Lower Egypt and Upper Egypt. Around 3110 B.C.E., a king of Upper Egypt named Menés (pronounced ME-nees) united the two kingdoms.

Pharaohs ruled over Egypt from 3110 B.C.E. to 332 B.C.E. Historians divide this period into three parts: the Old Kingdom (3110-2258 B.C.E.), the Middle Kingdom (2000-1786 B.C.E.), and the New Kingdom (1570-1085 B.C.E.).

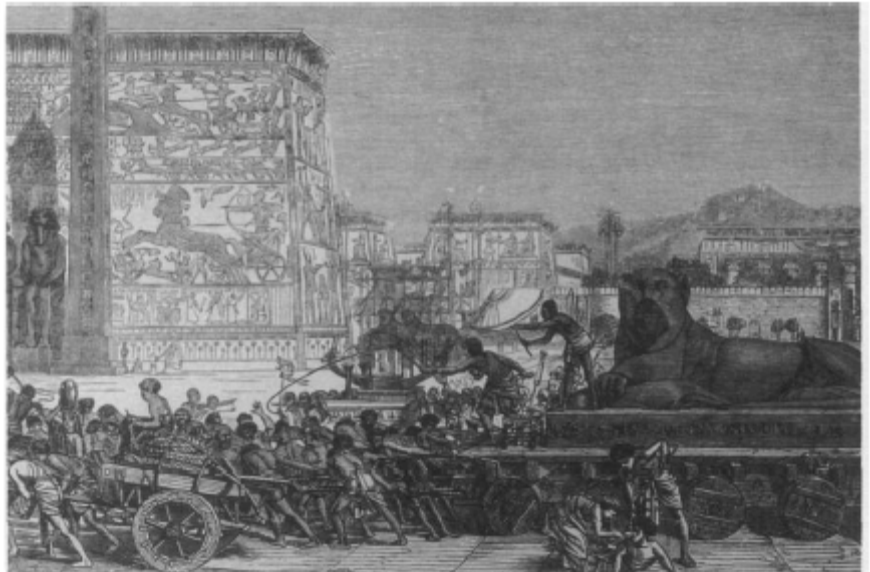
From 1786 to 1570 B.C.E., and again after 1085 B.C.E., Egypt was ruled by foreigners: people from neighboring lands such as the Libyans (pronounced LIB-ee-ans; people to the west of

Egypt), the Assyrians, and the Persians. The foreigners governed Egypt by assuming the position of pharaoh or by making the Egyptian pharaoh and his officials pledge their loyalty and pay tributes to them. In 343 B.C.E., the last native-born Egyptian pharaoh lost the throne. In 332 B.C.E., Egypt fell without a fight to the invading Greeks, led by Alexander the Great.

### **Slavery: A matter of degree**

The pharaoh and his queen (usually his sister, since pharaohs were allowed to marry only within the family) were at the top of Egypt's social pyramid. The pharaoh owned everything in Egypt: the land, the mines, the quarries, the factories, and the workshops. Below the pharaoh in status were the nobles (the pharaoh's relatives), the government officials (people who oversaw the pharaoh's business), and the priests.

**Men erecting public buildings in Egypt. Most often peasants—not slaves—were forced into service by the pharaoh for public works.**  
Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.



The nobles, officials, and priests were served by a class of scribes (educated men who could read and write). Below the scribes were workers such as soldiers, shepherds, tradespeople, craftspeople, and ship pilots. The bottom of the social pyramid, and by far the largest of all these groups, was a huge population of peasants.

Technically, peasants were not slaves (they were not owned, and they could not be sold), but they "belonged" to the land and its owner (either the pharaoh, the nobles, or the priests). The peasants worked the land as sharecroppers (they gave a portion of their crops to the landowner as rent). If the land was sold, the peasants stayed to serve the new owner.

Historians point to this large peasant class when they say that Egyptian civilization developed without the widespread use of slaves. In Egypt the peasants did most of the manual labor usually done by slaves. When they were not actively farming, peasants were regularly forced into service by the pharaoh. Ordered to various sites around the country, they went to work building pyramids, palaces, temples, roads, and canals. And, when the pharaoh needed soldiers for the army, he could draft them from the peasant class.

### **Slaves: "Bound for life"**

Slaves in Egypt were mostly foreigners who were captured during wartime and in military raids on neighboring lands. The Egyptian word for these prisoners of war meant "bound for life." All slaves in Egypt belonged to the pharaoh. Like the kings of Mesopotamia (see "The growth of slavery," earlier in this chapter), the pharaohs of Egypt gave slaves to the temples of the gods, where the priests put them to work. The pharaohs also gave away slaves as rewards, usually to government officials or army generals.

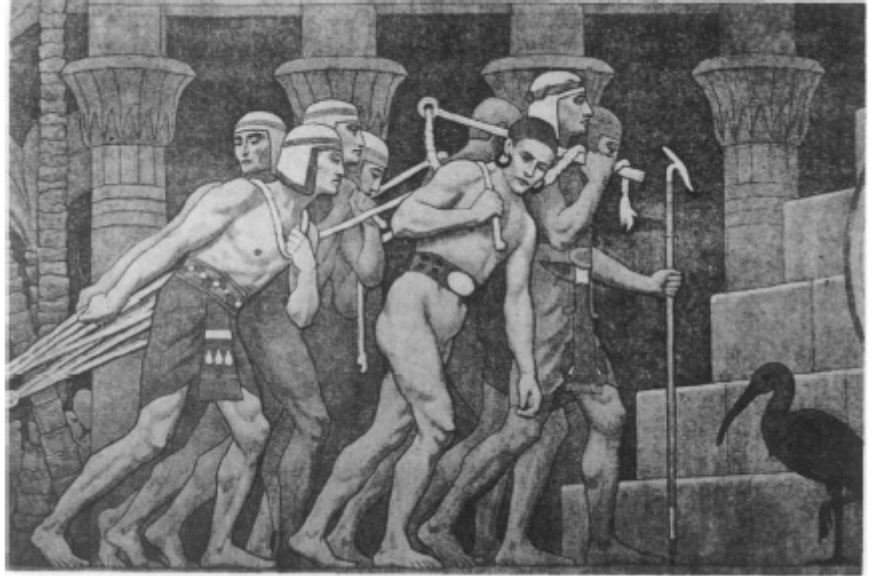
Slaves given to individuals by the pharaohs were considered "property" that could be sold or given to someone else. The slaves kept by the pharaohs were put to work on the royal farms and in the pharaohs' factories, workshops, mines, quarries, bakeries, kitchens, wineries, and breweries.

### **Slavery in the Kingdoms**

Military campaigns were rare in the Old and Middle Kingdoms. Since prisoners of war and their offspring were the main source of slaves in Egypt, the number of slaves remained low. Records from the Middle Kingdom provide the earliest

evidence of privately held slaves. Whether in possession of the state (the pharaoh) or private individuals, escaped slaves in this era faced death if they were caught. In contrast, peasants who deserted a construction project or the army were sentenced to life in a labor camp.

**"Egypt," a frieze in the Grand Palace of Fine Arts.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.



Slavery in Egypt reached its peak during the New Kingdom (1570-1085 B.C.E.), when Egypt had just recovered from its first invasion and foreign rule in fifteen centuries. From 1786 B.C.E. to 1570 B.C.E., Egypt was ruled by the Hyksos (pronounced HIK-rose), a nomadic tribe from Syria. When the Egyptians drove out the Hyksos, they enslaved all foreigners who remained. This included thousands of Hebrews (see "Captives in Egypt," later in this chapter). The Egyptians forced their Hebrew slaves, and thousands of other foreign-born slaves, to work in the fields making bricks for the construction of new cities and temples.

The New Kingdom was a time of empire-building for the Egyptian pharaohs. The pharaohs used their military power to enlarge Egypt's territory by conquering neighboring lands. These wars of expansion resulted in the capture of tens of thousands of slaves.

## **Ownership and status**

Slaveownership by private individuals also increased in the New Kingdom. Slaves could be bought from foreign merchants in the local slave market. Slaves were not cheap, but their ownership was not restricted to the wealthy. Such people as herdsmen, stable masters, merchants, and entertainers owned slaves.

Private slaveowners usually had only one or two slaves, but some had as many as ten. Many of the slaves in private households were females obtained for domestic work such as child rearing, cleaning, and cooking. All slaves were considered property that could be sold, traded, rented out, inherited, or given away.

In the New Kingdom, slaves participated more in the economic and social life of Egypt than in the past. They were allowed to own property, inherit possessions, bear witness in court, marry freewomen, and learn how to write. Slaves could also be granted manumission from their owners or gain the status of a free person by marrying a free person (sometimes their own master) or by being adopted by a free family.

## **Israel (c. 1850-539 B.C.E.)**

### **The enslaved and the enslavers**

The history of slavery among the Hebrews (also known as Israelites, or Jews) in the ancient Near East is unique. As a people, the Hebrews knew slavery from both sides: the enslaved and the enslavers. Twice they were enslaved, by the Egyptians in 1570 B.C.E., and by the Babylonians in 597 B.C.E.

The Hebrews also owned slaves. Slavery for non-Hebrews was permanent, and slaves' children were born slaves. Most slaves were foreigners captured in battle; some were bought from slave traders on the open market. Hebrews also enslaved other Hebrews in a form of debt slavery. By Hebrew custom, a moneylender could seize a free person for failing to pay back a

loan and turn the borrower into a temporary slave until the debt was considered paid. This form of slavery was supposed to be temporary—but it often wasn't. Various Hebrew laws tried to regulate the length of time a person was enslaved (see "Slave laws of the Old Testament," below).

## **Guests in Egypt**

Though the Hebrews are associated with the state of Israel in the ancient country of Palestine (pronounced PAL-eh-stine; a country on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea), their ancestors were tribes that wandered far and wide in the deserts of the Near East, constantly searching for food and water. The ancient Hebrews of 2000 B.C.E. possessed no land or cities. They worked as shepherds, artisans, and merchants, and were led by a tribal chief, known as a patriarch (pronounced PAY-tree-ark).

Around 1850 B.C.E., the Hebrew patriarch Abraham led one of the tribes of Israel (there were twelve), to the city of Hebron (pronounced HEE-brun) in central Palestine, where they settled. In 1700 B.C.E. Joseph, a descendent of Abraham, led a tribe of Hebrews from Palestine into Egypt at the invitation of the pharaoh. The Hebrews settled and prospered in northern Egypt, on the lands just east of the Nile River.

## **Captives in Egypt**

Generations later, the Egyptians enslaved the Hebrews. In 1570 B.C.E., Egypt drove out invaders (see "Slavery in the Kingdoms," earlier in this chapter) who had ruled their country for two centuries. The Egyptians then enslaved all remaining foreigners—including thousands of Hebrews, forcing them to work in the fields making bricks for the construction of new cities and temples.

The exodus (departure) of the Hebrews from their bondage in Egypt and their return to Palestine to establish the state of Israel is one of the most famous events in Jewish history, as told in Exodus, the second book of the Bible's Old Testament. Sometime between 1300 B.C.E. and 1200 B.C.E. (historians

are unable to fix a more exact date), a Hebrew lawgiver named Moses led a group of slaves in an escape from Egypt. After wandering in the Sinai Desert for "forty years," according to the Bible, Moses and his people reached the borders of the Promised Land (Palestine), at which point Moses is said to have died.

## One people, two kingdoms

Joshua, the next leader of the Hebrews, reunited and led the twelve tribes of Israel in the conquest of Canaan (pronounced KAY-nun; the name of Palestine at the time). This resulted in the establishment of the Jewish national homeland: Israel. Once settled (c. 1200 B.C.E.), the Israelites built cities and farmed.



**The bondage of Hebrews in Egypt: Israelite slaves making bricks for the construction of Egyptian cities.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

The leadership of the patriarchs gave way to elected chiefs, or "judges" as they were called. Then, about 1000 B.C.E., Saul established the first Hebrew kingdom. David, the next king, conquered the city of Jerusalem (pronounced jeh-ROO-sah-lum) and made it the capital. In 940 B.C.E. the kingdom split into two parts: Israel in the north, with Samaria (pronounced



The people of Jerusalem are taken captive by the king of Babylon, Nebuchadrezzar, and his army, c. 597 B.C.E. The Hebrews called their years of slavery in Babylon "The Great Captivity." Picture Collection, The Branch Libraries, The New York Public Library.



sah-MAR-ee-uh) as its capital, and Judah (pronounced JOO-duh) in the south, with Jerusalem as its capital.

In 722 B.C.E., Samaria fell to the Assyrians (see "Assyrian domination," earlier in this chapter), marking the end of the kingdom of Northern Israel. Samaria's fall led to the deportation of ten of the twelve tribes of Israel (more than 27,000 people) into Assyria. The Assyrians spared Jerusalem when the king of Judah sent the Assyrians a tribute that included his own daughters, as well as other treasures.

### Captive in Babylonia

In 597 B.C.E., Jerusalem and the nation of Judah fell to the Babylonian king Nebuchadrezzar II. Jerusalem's destruction resulted in the enslavement of some 3,000 Hebrews. Nebuchadrezzar sent the captured Hebrews to Babylonia to serve as slaves. The Hebrews toiled in Babylonia for almost fifty years; this period is known in Jewish history as "The Great Captivity."

The Israelites were not treated badly in Babylonia, but they longed to return to their homeland, and many of them did so when the Persians captured the city of Babylon in 539 B.C.E. and encouraged the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple and city.

## Slave laws of the Old Testament

Religion was very important to the Hebrews and played a strong role in how they viewed and practiced slavery. The Hebrews believed their laws were dictated by their god, Yahweh (pronounced YAH-way), through the Hebrew leaders and prophets. Many of the Hebrew laws about slavery can be found in the Bible's Old Testament. Biblical slave laws were rarely concerned with non-Hebrew slaves. Prisoners of war and other foreign slaves had about the same legal status as cattle or other private property.

The earliest laws of the Old Testament prohibited the enslavement of Hebrews by other Hebrews, yet in practice these laws were mostly ignored. People unable to pay a debt became the slaves of wealthy landowners, merchants, and moneylenders. Sometimes people were faced with such extreme poverty that they had to sell their children or even themselves into slavery.

## Softening the blow

Biblical slave laws recognized the existence of debt slavery in Hebrew society and tried to regulate some of its harsher practices. A master who killed his Hebrew slave was punished severely (not just fined), and slaves injured by their masters were granted freedom in compensation (this applied to non-Hebrew slaves as well).

## The First Abolitionists

Slavery was a fact of life in ancient times. Neither the kings of Mesopotamia, the pharaohs of Egypt, nor the kings and prophets of Israel condemned slavery or tried to abolish it. Organized opposition to the practice of slavery was virtually unheard of until the appearance in the first century B.C.E. of two Jewish sects (small communities of people who share common beliefs), the Essenes (pronounced eh-SEENS) and the Therapeutae (pronounced thair-ah-PUTE-eye).

The Essenes, who lived in secluded brotherhoods next to the Dead Sea near the river Jordan in eastern Palestine, and the Therapeutae, who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, did not own slaves. The Essenes and Therapeutae opposed violence and war, and they considered slavery unnatural.

The Essenes actively worked to end slavery by purchasing slaves from their masters and setting them free. The beliefs and practices of the Essenes were so similar to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles that some historians believe that one or more of the founders of Christianity may have been an Essene or influenced by their philosophy.

As for runaway slaves, Old Testament laws encouraged their protection, not punishment. In fact, if the Hebrews had obeyed this law to the letter, slavery would have ended. In general, Hebrew leaders and lawmakers encouraged owners to treat their Hebrew slaves as family. Slaves, like their masters, were to take a day of rest on the Sabbath. (Saturday, the seventh day of the week in the Hebrew calendar, was named by the Ten Commandments as the Sabbath, a day of worship and rest.)

### **Manumission**

Bondage for Hebrew debt slaves in Israel was not supposed to be permanent. Hebrew laws granting manumission to slaves tried to limit the time of the enslavement. Early Hebrew laws required masters to set their slaves free after seven years. Later laws required masters to set their slaves free after fifty years.

In early Hebrew law, female slaves did not have the same opportunity for manumission as male slaves. According to Exodus, the second book of the Bible's Old Testament, if a female was sold into slavery by her father, she was to remain in bondage for her lifetime: "she shall not go out like the male slaves do." Female slaves were often both manual laborers and concubines (used for sexual purposes) for their masters. Female slaves were eventually granted the same manumission rights as their male counterparts.

Slaves could also gain their freedom by purchase (somehow paying off the loan or debt, perhaps with help from free relatives). More common, however, was a commitment by slaves to serve their masters for life. After declaring their loyalty to their masters, slaves were marked by having an ear pierced with an awl (a pointed tool for making holes).

# Slavery in Ancient Greece and Rome

## Slavery in Greece (c. 1200-330 B.C.E.)

What little is known about slavery in early Greek history comes to us from Greek literature. The stories contained in the *Iliad* (pronounced ILL-ee-ad) and the *Odyssey* (ODD-iss-ee), written by the Greek poet Homer, depict a world of domestic life, farming, adventure at sea, and warfare and conquest abroad. Homer lived in the ninth century B.C.E. (900-800 B.C.E.) but wrote about the Greece of around 1200 B.C.E. Homer's stories are more about the ruling class of Greece than the peasants and slaves. Yet his epic poems contain many situations that involve slaves, from which historians are able to piece together what slavery may have been like in a period they call "Homeric" Greece (roughly 1200 B.C.E.-800 B.C.E.).

## Homeric Greece (c. 1200-800 B.C.E.)

In Homeric Greece, power in society belonged to a small number of family patriarchs (pronounced PAY-treearks). The patriarchs were wealthy men who owned estates (houses in the country with large amounts of land), which they used for growing crops and raising livestock such as cattle and pigs. Most of the work on these estates—in the house and in the fields—was done by slave labor. In between the slaves and the patriarchs was a large class of poor peasants (laborers and small farmers), very few of whom could afford to own slaves.



Creek poet Homer singing to the people, an illustration. Much of what we know today about slavery in ancient Greece comes to us through Homer's epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.  
Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

**Soldiers of misfortune** The main sources of slaves in Homeric Greece were wars and slave raids (military expeditions for the purpose of taking slaves and precious goods). The heroes of Homer's tales were groups of Greek warriors who traveled abroad, usually by ship but sometimes by land, to seek their fortunes by battling and conquering foreign "barbarians." Greek raiding parties sometimes resorted to piracy (attacking and robbing unarmed travelers on the high seas) and kidnaping (taking captives for ransom).

If successful, the warriors returned to mainland Greece with prisoners, livestock, and precious goods, such as rare metals or jewels. They divided up the spoils and disposed of their

"property" as they desired. The captured foreigners—mostly women and children, since the men were often killed in battle—were usually sold in the local slave market. Captives were sometimes sold abroad in exchange for supplies if the Greek raiding party was still traveling.

**Domestic and agricultural slavery** Wealthy landowners acquired slaves directly by force (as described above) or bought them from the local slave market. They used slaves on their estates for both domestic (household) and agricultural (farm) work. Female slaves generally performed household chores such as cooking, serving meals, cleaning, caring for children, and making clothes. Male slaves worked in the fields, tending the crops and looking after the livestock.

Slaves and the families they worked for often labored side by side, sometimes with hired help as well. Together they produced the food and clothing for everyone on the estate. Because of this system of shared labor, slaves in Homeric Greece were treated better than most slaves in ancient times. Slaves sometimes participated in religious rituals with their master's family and enjoyed some comforts, such as decent food and shelter.

A patriarch had the power of life and death over his slaves—and everyone else on the estate, including his wife and children. Slavery in Homeric Greece was permanent, with little chance for manumission. Children born to a slave mother and a free father, however, inherited the father's free status.

### **Archaic Greece (800-500 B.C.E.)**

The slaveholding practices of the Greeks changed dramatically in the period historians call archaic (pronounced ar-KAY-ick; ancient) Greece (800-500 B.C.E.). In general, commerce and trade (the making and selling of goods for local and foreign markets) grew rapidly as Greece began to take part in the economy of the entire Mediterranean region.

The great farms of the patriarchs increased in size and began to grow products for market, such as olives for olive oil and grapes for wine. With less land available and less labor needed for these crops, many peasants were forced to move to find work and food. These changes in the Greek economy ultimately led to the rise of Greek city-states (independent political units consisting of a city and its surrounding countryside), as peasants moved from the country into the city.

These changes also spurred a period of colonial expansion (the movement of Greek people to new settlements in neighboring lands) from 750 to 550 B.C.E. To the east, in Asia, numerous Greek colonies developed along the shores of the Black Sea. Many of these new settlements maintained ties to an older Greek city-state. To the west, in Europe, Greek colonies could be found as far away as mainland Italy. To the south, Greek-speaking people dominated the entire Mediterranean coast of northern Africa.

**The slave trade** Greek colonists often took land by force, either killing, driving off, or capturing the natives. Those captured were frequently sent to the cities of central Greece, where they were sold as slaves. Sometimes slaves were sold through a prearranged contract between a colony and a sponsoring city-state. Thus, the older Greek city-states became importers of slaves, and the colonies and their new city-states became exporters of slaves. The establishment of this trading network (which also included slave markets outside Greece) ultimately led to a rise in the number of slaves in central Greece.

The slave trade in Greece continued to grow in the sixth century B.C.E. (600-500 B.C.E.) because of two developments. First, slave trading became easier because of the introduction of money into the business world of the Mediterranean. Coinage (small, measured lumps of precious metal), not a shipload of manufactured or agricultural products, became all that was necessary to obtain slaves. Second, there was an increased demand for slaves in the old Greek city-states, especially in Athens (pronounced ATH-enz),

ancient Greece's most important city-state. In 594 B.C.E., an elected lawmaker named Solon (pronounced SOLE-ahn) outlawed debt slavery for Greek citizens in Athens. This created a demand for foreign slaves who could do the work of the freed Greek debt slaves.

**The birth of industrial slavery** The growth of the slave trade in archaic Greece corresponded with a general increase in commerce and trade. The need for increased production of goods (such as textiles, pottery, armor, and weapons) for markets in Greece and abroad led to a higher demand for labor—specifically slave labor.

A female slave, who in Homeric Greece may have served her master on his farm estate by making clothes for the family, was in archaic Greece making clothes for market in a workshop (a small factory) with other slaves. This is known as industrial slavery. Male slaves continued to be the main source of farm labor for the big landowners, but a much larger number of male slaves were used in industries: in the mines, quarries, and workshops and in the building of cities,

## Fact Focus

- There were five so-called "slave societies" in the history of the human race. Ancient Greece and Rome produced two of them. (Brazil, Cuba, and the United States were the other three.)
- Slaves sometimes made up as much as 40 percent of the total population of ancient Greece and Rome.
- In ancient Greece and Rome, prisoners of war—the main source of slaves—were sometimes sold to slave dealers right on the battlefield. The captives were then sold as slaves (for a profit) in Greek and Roman slave markets.
- Ancient Greek and Roman economies were dependent on the output (mostly grapes and olives) of their enormous farms. Slaves did most of the work on these farms.
- At different times, Greece and Rome dominated trade and commerce in the Mediterranean region. Most of the work in producing items for export (such as pottery, olive oil, wine, and weapons) was done by slaves in small factories.
- In Greece and Rome the wealthiest landowners owned the most slaves, but even "poor" people owned a slave or two. The emperors of Rome (27 B.C.E.-476) owned the most slaves—boasting staffs of more than 20,000 slaves.
- Slaves held a wide variety of jobs in Greek and Roman society, from doorman to doctor. The worst fate for a slave was to be sent to the mines and quarries or to the plantations of Rome.



monuments, and ships. In 550 B.C.E., there were as many as 30,000 slaves in the silver mines alone.

**Illustration of slave girls at a fountain in ancient Athens. There were more slaves than citizens in Athens, the largest slave-holding city-state of classical Greece.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.



### **Classical Greece (500-330 B.C.E.)**

By 431 B.C.E., the city-state of Athens had so many slaves that historians consider it the world's first example of a slave society. The number of slaves in Athens and central Greece in the historical period known as classical Greece

(500-330 B.C.E.) was greater than anything the world had seen before. Of the 155,000 residents of the city of Athens, 70,000 were slaves, 60,000 were citizens, and 25,000 were metics (pronounced METT-icks; resident foreigners). Athens was Greece's largest slaveholding city-state, but other Greek city-states, such as Delphi (pronounced DELL-fie) and Delos (pronounced DELL-ohs), had similar numbers.

**War and slavery** Prisoners of war were the single greatest source of slaves in classical Greece. The fifth century B.C.E. was dominated by two very long wars. From 500 B.C.E. to 449 B.C.E., a series of wars were fought between the independent but allied Greek city-states and the invading Persians from the east. The Greeks eventually won. A second war, the Peloponnesian (pronounced pel-eh-po-NEE-zhen) War (431-404 B.C.E.), was a civil war between two Greek city-states—Athens and Sparta—which Sparta won. Both wars produced tens of thousands of slaves. For example, one Athenian commander who battled the Persians in 468 B.C.E. put 20,000 slaves on the market.

These wars not only produced great numbers of slaves, but they increased the demand for slave labor as well. More workers than ever were needed in the war industries, as makers of armor, shields, weapons, and so forth. In addition, wars naturally shrank the supply of free labor since many Greek citizens were needed for military duty. Slaves were not allowed to be soldiers.

These wars turned the slave trade into a very big business. Trading alliances developed among generals, admirals, pirates, and various middlemen who carved out territories and divided up the slave markets among themselves.

**Who owned all the slaves?** Private citizens owned most of the slaves in classical Greece. Unlike other ancient countries, which had kings, pharaohs, and emperors (see Chapter Two), Greece had no higher political authority than the government of the independent city-state. Conquering armies (often a group of allied city-states) rarely kept the slaves they captured.

Instead they sold the slaves on the market, usually to slave traders, who would then sell them to private citizens.

The wealthiest private citizens owned most of the slaves. Slaves were considered an investment and could be used in a variety of ways: in households; on farms; or in mines, quarries, and workshops. Some of the wealthier Greeks purchased huge numbers of slaves and rented them out by the hundreds or even the thousands to mine operators, owners of industrial workshops (which made such items as pottery or beds), and government contractors. On the average, a rich household in classical Greece had about fifty slaves, and every free household that could afford it had between one and three slaves.

**Destruction of the Athenian army by the Spartans in the Peloponnesian Wars, which produced thousands of slaves.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.



Some slaves were publicly owned. City-states often purchased slaves and used them for administrative tasks, or as court ushers, prison guards, and even police officers. In Athens, slaves were used in the minting of coins and the construction of roads and public buildings. Compared with private ownership, however, the number of public slaves was not very great.

**Slave work and status** There were two things that slaves in Greece could never do: participate in politics (only citizens had such rights) or be a soldier (only free men could serve in the military). All other occupations or professions were possible for a slave, from doorman to doctor.

The status of slaves, and the conditions under which they lived, depended in part on what kind of work they did. Some slaves received a formal education and training and managed to attain executive positions in business and industry. Some became professionals, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, or bankers. Slaves in domestic, agricultural, or industrial service could also attain positions of management and oversee the work of other slaves in the households, farms, and workshops of their owners.

Other slave jobs included butler, maid, cook, potter, prostitute, weaver, messenger, artisan, musician, and laborer. Some of the hardest work for slaves was in the farm fields, but the worst possible fate for a slave was to be sent to the mines, where the hours were long, the work was backbreaking, and the air wasn't fit to breathe. Slaves in the mines led shorter lives.

**Opportunities for freedom** No matter what type of work a slave did, he or she was still owned by someone else. Owners were allowed by law to beat and torture disobedient slaves. In classical Greece, slaveowners could not, however, kill their slaves without facing prosecution. Slaves faced severe punishment for disobedience, but if they did their work well they could be rewarded with a promotion to manager or foreperson.

An even greater incentive for a slave than promotion was the possibility of manumission. Although slaves could not own property, some slaves, especially in the cities, paid a rental fee to their owners and kept the rest of their earnings. Slaves who saved enough money could purchase freedom from their master for the market value of a slave.

## Liberty and Slavery in Athens

Athens, ancient Greece's most important city-state, is known as the world's first democracy (government by the people) *and* the world's first slave society. Historians have debated for years how it was possible to have a rapid growth in democratic liberty and an equally rapid growth in slavery at the same time (700-500 B.C.E.).

Some historians argue that the growth of slavery in Athens made democracy *possible* by providing slaveowners the time to participate in politics and government. For Athenian citizens, "freedom" meant freedom from having to work.

Other historians argue that the growth of slavery in Athens made the birth of democracy *essential*. The free people of Athens, the argument goes, pressed their lawmakers for certain rights and privileges that would distinguish them from the slaves who were all around them. Democracy, therefore, was invented in order to protect the majority of free people from being treated as slaves by the minority of rich and powerful landowners who had ruled Greece for generations.

A slave could also be granted manumission through the master's will after his death or by public declaration during the master's lifetime. Manumission of slaves, individually or in groups, by private or public owners, occurred in archaic Greece but became more common in classical Greece.

In classical Greece, manumission of a slave officially made the ex-slave a freedman or freedwoman, a status somewhere between a slave and a freeborn Greek citizen. The freed-person gained liberty of movement and freedom from reenslavement but often remained obligated to serve their former master in some capacity, such as payments of fees or labor. Citizenship in an ancient Greek city-state, which entitled a person (males only) to vote and participate in politics, was reserved for the native-born or could be awarded to a foreigner for special services. Citizenship was rarely granted to freedpersons.

## Slavery in Rome (509 B.C.E.-476)

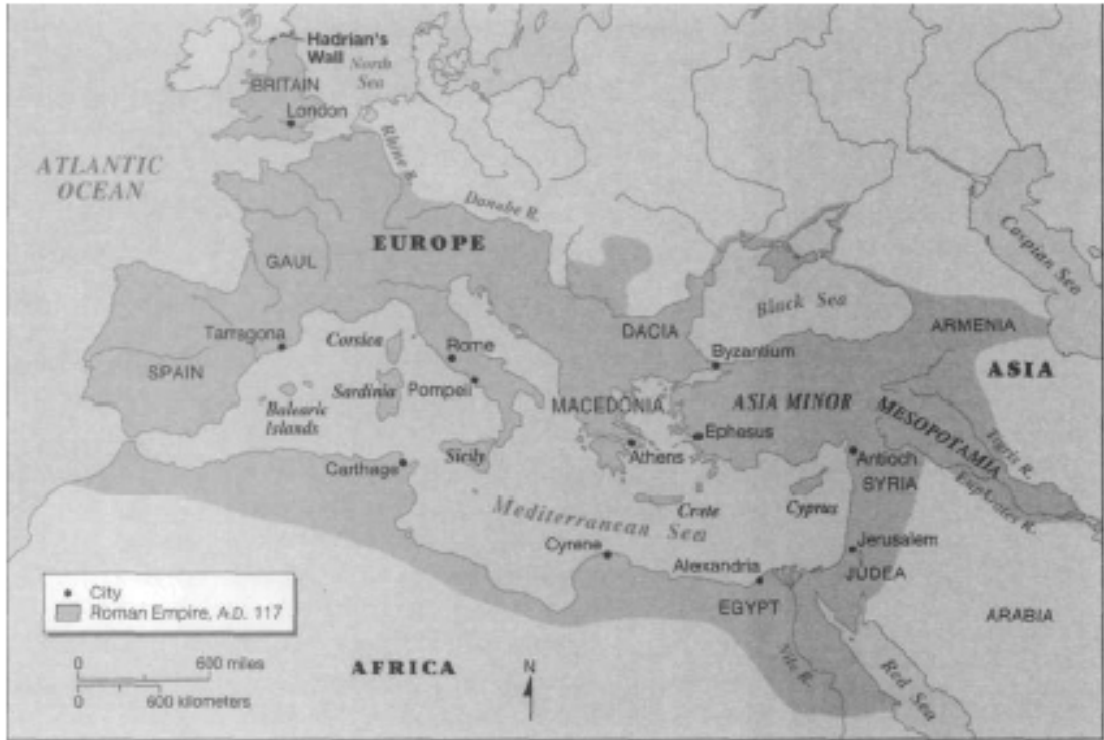
### One thousand years of government

The city of Rome, located in central Italy on the Tiber River (pronounced TIE-bur), was founded in 753 B.C.E. by the

Etruscans (pronounced eh-TRUSS-kens), people from Asia Minor (a peninsula on the Mediterranean) who had migrated to Italy around 1200 B.C.E. In 575 B.C.E. the Etruscans made Rome the capital of their kingdom. Etruscan kings ruled over the many different tribes and peoples of Italy with the help of the Senate, a group of men chosen from the class of patricians (pronounced puh-TRISH-ens), the heads of wealthy and powerful landowning families.

In 509 B.C.E., the Senate overthrew the king and established the Roman Republic (a republic is a form of government that is run by elected representatives and based on a constitution). The patricians replaced the king with two magistrates (pronounced MAJ-iss-trates; the Roman word for "master"). The new heads of state were elected each year by the people but drawn exclusively from the Senate. In 471 B.C.E., the plebs (Rome's majority middle class) set up their own assembly of elected representatives and officers. In 287 B.C.E., the laws and decisions of the assembly of plebs were declared binding on the whole Roman people.

The last century of the Republic was marked by civil wars, economic crises, riots in the cities, and wars against pirates and rebellious slaves. Out of the political chaos emerged the first emperor of the Roman Empire, Augustus (who reigned from 27 B.C.E. to 14). Under the Empire, the Senate and the assembly of plebs remained, but the real power belonged to the emperor. In 395, the empire of Rome was divided in two: the East and the West. The Western Roman Empire ended in 476. The Eastern Roman Empire, with its capital city of Constantinople, continued into the fifteenth century.



A map of the Roman Empire, c. 117 C.E.

### **Ancient Rome's slave society**

Slavery under the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire was so widespread that ancient Rome is known as one of the five "slave societies" in the history of the human race. The other slave societies were ancient Greece, Brazil, Cuba, and the United States. Rome's slave population in Italy (not necessarily in all Roman-occupied lands), from about 200 B.C.E. to about 200, is estimated to have made up between 30 and 40 percent of the total population.

Virtually everyone in Roman society in this period owned slaves, from the peasants (who had a few) to the very wealthiest (who owned hundreds or even thousands). The abundance of slaves at all levels of Roman society—from the lowest laborers to the highest executives—meant that the slave experience in ancient Rome was as diverse and complex as Roman society itself. Slaves had opportunities to lead lives ranging from great comfort (some slaves achieved significant

wealth and power) to utter despair (many slaves worked in chain gangs, groups of workers chained together at the ankles, on huge farms or in the mines).

## **Slave sources**

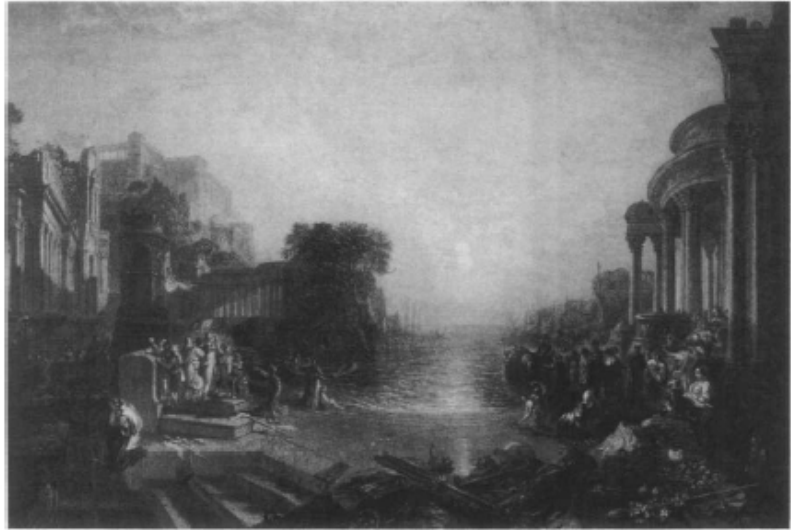
**War** The greatest source of slaves under the Roman Republic was prisoners of war. During the fourth century B.C.E. (400-300 B.C.E.), Rome fought many wars of territorial expansion with its neighbors in central and southern Italy. The number of slaves rose greatly as the Romans perfected their method of warfare for territorial gain and profit: capture a city, divide its lands among Romans, and sell its entire population into slavery or hold them for ransom (a payment in return for their safety). These wars sometimes produced tens of thousands of slaves.

Rome fought many overseas wars in the second half of the Republic (264-27 B.C.E.). These wars of expansion produced hundreds of thousands of slaves for central Italy. In the first of Rome's three wars against Carthage (pronounced CAR-thidj; a city in northwest Africa), one battle in 256 B.C.E.) produced 20,000 slaves. The third war against Carthage ended in 146 B.C.E. with the enslavement of 55,000 Carthaginians. In 102 to 101 B.C.E. a Roman general fighting the Germans put 150,000 captives on the slave market. Julius Caesar (pronounced JOO-lee-us CEE-zer; Roman general and statesman, 102-44 B.C.E.) reportedly captured more than 500,000 prisoners in his nine years in Gaul (France).

Even though Rome's first emperor, Augustus Caesar, ended Rome's wars of expansion, warfare continued to be an important source of slaves in the first two centuries of the Roman Empire. When the Jews rebelled in 66, the Romans responded by destroying the city of Jerusalem in 70, taking 97,000 prisoners for the slave market. In 198, a Roman emperor



Greek poet Homer singing to the people, an illustration. Much of what we know today about slavery in ancient Greece comes to us through Homer's epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.



enslaved 100,000 prisoners after the destruction of just one city in a border war in the eastern part of the empire.

**Slave trade** The Roman government technically owned all prisoners of war, but the commander in the field had the authority to dispose of captives as he saw fit. Captives were sometimes sold on the battlefield to slave dealers who trailed the armies or held for ransom if that would be more profitable. Under the Republic, the profits from selling prisoners of war usually went to the public treasury in Rome. Under the Empire, the profits mostly went to increase the emperor's personal wealth.

In addition to selling prisoners of war to slave dealers, Rome also bought significant numbers of slaves from the international slave market. For example, there is evidence to suggest that from around 200 B.C.E. to the end of the Republic (27 B.C.E., Rome exchanged Italian wine for as many as 15,000 slaves a year from Gaul. Slaves from distant lands continued to pour into Rome for many centuries, having been sold as captives by foreign rulers or forced into slavery by their extreme poverty.

**Piracy** Victims of piracy were another significant source of slaves for ancient Rome, more so under the Republic than

under the Empire. Piracy on the open seas was a fact of life in ancient times, but by 150 B.C.E., the raiding and looting of coastal cities in the eastern Mediterranean Sea had become an organized and profitable business. Delos, a tiny island in the eastern Mediterranean, was the largest of several markets where pirates could sell their captives from eastern lands such as Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt to Roman slave dealers for sale in Italy. Before Delos was destroyed in a civil war in 88 B.C.E., its huge docks could receive and send out 10,000 slaves a day.

Pirates became so powerful that in 69 B.C.E. they even raided Rome's own port town of Ostia (pronounced AH-steeuh). In 66 B.C.E., the Romans waged a short, successful war against the pirates. In forty days the Romans killed 10,000 pirates (and captured many more alive), seized 377 pirate ships, and liberated 120 cities and fortresses under pirate control. Piracy was not completely wiped out, however, and it continued to provide small numbers of slaves to Rome for centuries.

**Natural reproduction** Another major supply of slaves for Rome, beginning in the last two centuries of the Republic (c. 227-27 B.C.E.), was natural reproduction among the existing slave population. Under Roman law, a child born to a slave mother was considered a slave, even if the father was free. Before Rome's wars of the third century B.C.E., there were more male slaves than female slaves, primarily because male slaves were needed in greater numbers for farming and herding.

By the second century B.C.E. the movement of Rome's rural population (rich and poor) to the cities created the need for more female slaves for domestic work. Accordingly, female slaves became more numerous on the slave market. (The destruction of Carthage in 146 B.C.E. produced 25,000 female slaves, for example.)

Under the Roman Empire, when warfare and piracy declined as steady sources of slaves, natural reproduction became an extremely important source of new slaves. It became legal to

sell the newborn infants of slave mothers, and the practice of breeding slaves for profit rose significantly.

### **Ownership**

**Private** After Rome's wars of the third century B.C.E. flooded Italy and Sicily (pronounced SISS-ill-ee; a large island off the southern tip of Italy) with slaves, private slave ownership increased significantly. Even some of Rome's poorest citizens—its peasants, army privates, and laborers—owned a slave or two. A Roman of only moderate wealth probably owned as many as 400 slaves. The son of the Roman general and statesman Pompey (pronounced POM-pee; 106-48 B.C.E.), sent 800 slaves as a gift to his father's army in Greece. Crassus (pronounced CRA-suss; c. 115-53 B.C.E.), another Roman general and statesman, owned as many as 20,000 slaves, whom he hired out to industries, such as mining.

**Imperial** The number of slaves owned by private individuals remained very high under the Roman Empire, but few could boast of owning as many as the emperors. A staff of 1,000 or more slaves was common for some of the more powerful Romans, but the emperors were known to have staffs of 20,000 or more slaves to serve their needs. Imperial slaves (slaves owned by the emperor) catered to his every domestic need, from polishing eating utensils to tending to every aspect of his appearance. Imperial slaves also served as clerks, record keepers, and financial agents in the administration of the empire and as craftspeople (such as weavers, carpenters, goldsmiths, and jewelers). Occasionally, imperial slaves rose to important posts in government and business, achieving great wealth and power.

**Public** Roman cities and towns also owned slaves. Public slaves worked in such jobs as clerks, secretaries, and tax collectors. They also worked with priests in the state-run temples and shrines, helping with ceremonies and upkeep. Other functions of public slaves included building and repairing roads, fighting fires, and maintaining the public baths and water supply.



Slaves in ancient Rome were responsible for most of the labor involved in building elaborate monuments, such as those in Via Appia, pictured here. Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

## Work

**Agricultural Slavery** Rome's wars of conquest made some of its citizens very wealthy, especially those who had the means to invest in land and slaves. By the second century B.C.E. (200-100 B.C.E.), farming and ranching estates were huge. Most had more than 1,000 acres of land and used thousands of slaves to work the land and to herd livestock. Life for a slave on one of these giant estates was often brutal. Slaves were forced to live in barnlike housing (locked in at night), given minimal rations of food, and often worked the fields in chain gangs. In the last two centuries under the Republic, slaves were so numerous on these giant estates—the world's first plantations—that one historian estimates it was the greatest concentration of slave labor in ancient times.

By the time of Augustus, there were many of these plantations in Italy, Sicily, Sardinia (pronounced sar-DIN-eeuh; the second-largest island in the Mediterranean), and on the coasts of North Africa. Massive numbers of slaves worked in the vineyards and olive groves. Slaves by the thousands, often branded with their owner's mark, tended the enormous herds (hundreds of thousands) of sheep, goats, oxen, and cows that grazed on plantation pasturelands.

**Industrial slavery** Hundreds of thousands of slaves worked in horrible conditions in mines scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Great wealth in the form of precious minerals such as copper, gold, and silver continuously flowed to Italy from mines in Spain, Britain, Gaul, and Egypt. The silver mines in Spain alone (in the second century B.C.E.) had more than 40,000 slaves. The Greek historian Diodorus (pronounced DIE-oh-door-us) wrote about the conditions he observed in the mines of Spain and Egypt of the first century B.C.E. Men, women, and children, he wrote, many of them without shoes or clothing, were kept in chains and forced to work under threat of the lash (a whip). Thousands of slaves also worked in the many stone quarries of the Roman Empire in conditions similar to the slave miners.

Slaves were also present in large numbers in other industrial enterprises. By the beginning of the first century, production of goods outside the home became an important part of the Roman economy. Slaves were used to manufacture such items as pottery and bricks, and in the workshops that produced bronze and copper. Many slaves were trained artisans and worked in the gold and silver workshops.

**Domestic slavery** Slaves were used extensively in Roman households under the Republic and the Empire. For legal purposes, they were divided into two categories: rural (country) slaves or urban (city) slaves. Rural slaves worked either in the household or in the fields of an estate. Their jobs were often defined very precisely. Slave jobs in the rural household had such names as maidservant, water carrier, valet, kitchen maid, sweeper, and furniture supervisor. Slave jobs in the fields of a rural household had such names as plowman, tree pruner, poultry keeper, pig breeder, and goatherd.

Urban slaves worked in households in the city and had such jobs as cook, waiter, secretary, weaver, barber, tailor, gardener, and groom. Some of the wealthier urban households had slaves with such jobs as architect, singer, comic actor, silversmith, doctor, servant in charge of statues, and pedagogue (teacher of children).

Many of Rome's wealthy citizens considered politics, farming, and soldiering as honorable occupations, while occupations involving the business world and marketplace were beneath their status. Thus, by the time of Augustus, Roman commerce was conducted in large part by slaves who acted as agents for their owners. Slaves also managed their masters' businesses, farms, workshops, and offices. The menial jobs necessary for the master's business were done by slaves as well, sometimes alongside free, hired labor. Slaves were also bakers, porters, fishermen, shipbuilders, shoemakers, and shop clerks (selling meat, fish, bread, or wine).

### **Slave conditions**

**Legal status** Slaves under the Roman Republic had no legal rights. They were not allowed to marry or own property. A slaveowner could whip, beat, maim, torture, and even kill a slave without being prosecuted. However, if a slave killed his or her master, all the slaves of the household were, by law, condemned to death. If caught, runaway slaves could face crucifixion (being nailed or bound to a cross until death). If not killed, runaway slaves were branded or made to wear a slave collar with their master's name inscribed on it. Roman law did not protect slaves, male or female, from sexual assault by their masters. Disobedient slaves could be left out to starve or sent to die in the arena fighting gladiators (men trained in fighting; see "*Spartacus*" box, on pages 54-55).



**A Roman gladiator in the arena fighting animals for the pleasure of the spectators.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

Slaves under the Roman Empire slowly acquired some legal rights. Augustus restricted the practice of taking legal testimony from slaves under torture (a common practice in ancient times). The Emperor Claudius (who ruled from 41-54) made it a crime to murder a slave or to turn a sick slave out to die. Other emperors continued the trend: selling female slaves into prostitution was banned (c. 75); mutilating slaves was prohibited (c. 88); and killing slaves except by judicial authority (with the court's permission) was outlawed (c. 127).

It should be noted that the more humane laws of the Empire did not necessarily mean that slaves were treated well. The most important factor in that regard was still the character of the slaveowner, for a master still had tremendous power over the day-to-day life of a slave.

**Manumission** Manumission of slaves in ancient Rome was a common practice. The manumission of a slave officially made the ex-slave a freedman or freedwoman, a status somewhere between a slave and a freeborn Roman. Under the Republic, Roman law did not grant full citizenship rights to the freed slave for two generations, which meant that the grandchildren of ex-slaves were the ones who finally gained the status and privileges of the freeborn. Under the Empire, freed slaves were granted immediate and full citizenship in Roman society, which for male ex-slaves included the right to vote and participate in politics (females were not allowed to vote in any ancient society).

A slave could be granted manumission by the owner's declaration, either during the master's lifetime or through the master's will. Often slaves were allowed to purchase their freedom from their master as a reward for good service, the price being the market value for a slave. Even though a slave could not legally own anything, some slaves saved what was called peculium (pronounced peh-COOL-ee-um). Peculium was money, such as wages, tips, or gifts, that slaves earned by doing extra jobs; they were allowed to keep it after giving their master part of the income.

Manumission became so commonplace that Augustus made laws restricting the number of slaves that could be set free at one time by one master (no more than 100). At the same time, Augustus granted more rights to freedmen and freedwomen, such as the right to marry or to hold high office, a trend that emperors would continue for centuries.

## ***Spartacus* and the War of the Gladiators**

When *Spartacus* was made in 1960, it was the most expensive movie ever made. The film is a fact-based tale of a slave rebellion in ancient Rome led by a gladiator named Spartacus. The movie is a very good dramatization of what slavery might have been like in Rome. Director Stanley Kubrick provides a stark view of the cruelty and violence of Rome's slave-based society.

The historical records tell us that Spartacus was born to a slave mother in Thrace, a region of southeast Europe. Spartacus was eventually brought to Rome and sold, along with his wife, to a slave trader who ran a training school for gladiators. As early as 400 B.C.E., gladiators in ancient Rome fought each other—and sometimes wild beasts—to the death in huge arenas. One of the larger arenas, the Colosseum in Rome, could hold 50,000 spectators. Gladiators were chosen for their potential fighting abilities from slaves, war captives, and criminals. "Death in the arena" was the sentence for crimes such as murder, treason, and robbery.

In the spring of 73 B.C.E., Spartacus led a breakout of about seventy gladiators from their training school. The rebels set up a base camp near Mount Vesuvius (pronounced veh-SOO-vee-us; a volcano in southern Italy), and attacked nearby towns, freeing slaves and killing slaveowners, sometimes by forcing them to fight each other to the death. As word spread, the gladiator-led revolt attracted thousands of runaway slaves to the rebel camp. By the time Rome sent a small military force to Vesuvius to end the rebellion, they faced thousands of liberated and runaway slaves. The Romans were soundly defeated.

For two years the rebels roamed Italy, first to the Alps, a mountain range in the north, and then to the very southern tip of the country. They fought and defeated the Romans in battle after battle, gaining wealth from looting cities and country estates along the way. In 72 B.C.E., disagreements among the rebel leadership (Spartacus was only one of three leaders) led to a split in the rebel forces and the defeat of one faction of 20,000 slaves by the Romans.

In the winter of 72 to 71 B.C.E., Spartacus and his followers found themselves trapped on the southern Italian peninsula by the Roman army. Having been betrayed by pirates who were supposed to supply a fleet of ships for their escape off the mainland, the rebels were forced into a decisive battle with the Romans. By the spring of 71 B.C.E., Spartacus and most of his 70,000 followers were killed by a massive Roman force—ten legions (each one made up of 3,000 to 6,000 foot soldiers with a cavalry) under the command of Marcus Crassus, and the armies of Pompey and Lucullus (recalled from foreign wars to fight Spartacus). The 6,000 surviving rebel slaves were crucified alongside the road that led from Capua (where the revolt began) to Rome.



However, even though many slaves were freed and integrated into Roman society, not all slaves had the same opportunity for manumission, nor were most slaves ever set free. And, for every slave who was freed from bondage, a new slave probably took his or her place, until the third and fourth centuries, when freed slaves were more likely to be replaced by the cheap labor of the poor and plentiful peasant class.

# **Western Europe in the Middle Ages (500-1500)**

## **Serfdom: A new form of slavery**

Slavery in western Europe changed dramatically after the fall of the Roman Empire in 476. As it was practiced in Italy, France, Germany, and England under Roman rule, slavery was a very organized institution, with distinct differences in society between slaves and free people. Slaves basically had no legal rights, and their lives were controlled by someone else. Free people were citizens who could live and work where they chose and who had access to public courts of law and the right to participate in politics.

During the Middle Ages, the distinctions between free people and slaves were a lot less clear. Over time, slaves came to live more like free people, and free people, in a way, lived more like slaves. A new class of people arose called serfs. "Serf" is a French word derived from the Latin word "servus," which means slave. Technically, serfs were not slaves, but they were often treated that way, and what few rights they had were mostly ignored.

French peasants mowing, raking, and stacking hay on the outskirts of Paris; from the fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Tres Riches Heures* of Jean, Duke of Berry. The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.



### **A new world order**

The Germanic tribes that took over much of the former Roman Empire by the year 600 brought with them their own form of government. For example, a Germanic tribe called the Franks established a vast kingdom in Gaul (France) and western Germany. The king owned all the land but could not possibly govern and defend it without help. In exchange for a pledge of loyalty and military service, the king gave parts of the kingdom to the highest nobles (wealthy families of landholders). These nobles were called dukes and counts. The dukes and counts, in turn, divided their land among lower nobles, or lords. Dukes, counts, and lords constantly fought one another—and sometimes even the king—over land and power. The services of knights (trained soldiers who fought on horseback) became very important to the nobles as these conflicts became more numerous.

Lords ruled at the local level, meaning that the vast majority of people were under their direct control. In times of peace, peasants lived and worked on small plots of land on the lord's manor (the castle and surrounding land). In times of war they sought the protection of the lord's army and castle. How these peasants were treated depended on the customs and laws of the manor, and on their status as free, serf, or slave.

### **Fact Focus**

- The masses of Germanic peoples who settled on the territories of the old Roman Empire had no written version of their tribal languages.
- In a period called the Dark Ages (500-750), there was no central government. Kings were supposed to be in charge, but dukes and counts were often more powerful.
- About 80 percent of the population were peasants. About half of the peasants were serfs. Serfs were like slaves but had a little more personal freedom.
- Slaves made up about 10 percent of the population in the Middle Ages.
- In general, whoever held the land ruled it. In western Europe the nobility and the church held the most land.
- The people of western Europe in the Middle Ages, from kings to slaves, were almost all Christians.
- The largest armies of the Middle Ages were assembled in the Christian "holy wars" known as the Crusades.
- Around 1350, a plague known as the Black Death killed as much as one-third of the population of western Europe—nobles and peasants alike.
- About two-thirds of all children in the Middle Ages died before the age of ten.

### **Free and unfree peasants**

Free peasants received a plot of land from the lord in exchange for "rent" (part of their harvest, or work on the lord's fields, bridges, or castle). Free peasants could move off the manor, control their possessions, and marry. If a free peasant had a dispute with his lord or another person, he could take his case to the court of the manor and have it judged by the lord and his vassals (other, lower nobles who had pledged loyalty and services to the lord).

Unfree peasants, or serfs, received a plot of land from the lord in exchange for part of their harvest and work on the lord's

fields as well. Serfs did not serve in the lord's army. By law they were not allowed to leave the land where they worked. If serfs ran away and were caught, they were punished severely, by whipping and branding. If the land changed hands, the serfs stayed, "bound" to the soil. A lord controlled a serf's private property, and his permission (usually gained by paying a fee) was needed for marriage. A serf could not sue his lord directly but could bring other disputes to the manor's court of justice. Serfdom was hereditary: the children of serfs became serfs at birth.



**French farm workers in the Middle Ages.**

The Granger Collection, New York.

Reproduced by permission.

**Hutted slaves and peasants**

Beneath this huge class of peasants were a small number of slaves—probably around 10 percent of the population. Some slaves worked in the lord's household, doing jobs like cooking and cleaning. Some slave families actually lived in their own huts and farmed a plot of land owned by the lord. The lord took most of their harvest, leaving the slaves a small portion for their own consumption. Whatever their jobs, slaves had to work where and when their lord desired. Slaves were considered the lord's property and could be sold, given away, or

inherited independent of the land the slaves worked on. By law, slaves had no rights. The lord was a slave's judge, jury, and executioner. Slaves could marry, but only with their master's permission.

Slaves, serfs, and free peasants all had a hard life. Together, they produced the entire food supply for the nobles, the priests, and themselves. Their work was rough and their tools were crude. They lived in small, one-room, wooden huts with dirt floors and thatched roofs. Windows were openings in the walls

stuffed with straw in the winter. There was enough room in the hut for a fire pit and a straw bed, where the whole family slept together for warmth. Their food was poor; it was illegal for them to hunt or fish on the lord's manor (and breaking the law could cost them a hand), so there was little or no meat. Life was particularly hard for the young. About two-thirds of all children died before the age of ten.

## **Europe's religious unity**

In a period of the Middle Ages known as the "Dark Ages" (500-750), western Europe was a patchwork of competing kingdoms, duchies (pronounced DUTCH-ees, the territories of dukes), and counties (the territories of counts). The masses of Germanic peoples who settled on old Roman territories had no written version of their tribal languages. There was no central government and very little trade and commerce between the kingdoms. Kings ruled the land only in theory; in practice, the dukes and counts had bigger armies and controlled more land. But the kings, dukes, and counts were too busy fighting one another and fending off foreign raids and invasions to conquer and unify Europe politically.

The people of Europe in the Dark Ages, however, were united in their common belief in Christianity. From kings to slaves, people converted to Christianity in large numbers and looked to the church for guidance on how to live a Christian life. Some of the actions of the church contributed to the perpetuation of slavery and serfdom, and some helped lead to slavery and serfdom's eventual decline.

## **The church as feudal landlord**

In the Middle Ages, the general rule was whoever held the land ruled it. The largest landholders in Europe were the nobility and the church (which received most of its land from the nobility). The leaders of the church, like the feudal nobles, became landlords. The church's authority, also like that of the feudal nobility, was set up as a chain of command, with the pope (the bishop of Rome and head of the Roman Catholic

church) at the top. Bishops and abbots (rulers of monasteries—churches and residences for monks and nuns) served the pope. Monks and priests served the bishops and abbots.

Not only did the church not oppose slavery in the Middle Ages, but the church itself also owned many slaves. The church often received slaves as gifts from the French king and nobles. Pope Gregory I (590-604) used hundreds of slaves on his estates. Like the nobles, the church used a combination of free, serf, and slave labor on its manors. Early in the eighth century, one monastery in France had 8,000 slaves; another had 20,000. Under King Charlemagne (pronounced SHAR-leh-mane; ruled 768-814), each priest was allowed two slaves, one male and one female.

### **Christianity's contradictions**

Some of the church's teachings seemed to support the practice of slavery as part of the natural order. In the Bible's New Testament, Jesus says in one of his parables (stories with a moral): "Blessed is the slave whom his master, returning, finds performing his charge." In other words, slaves should obey their masters at all times. The Bible does not portray Jesus as an abolitionist (someone who favors banning slavery), and neither were the leaders of the church. In 630, for example, the church declared that any slaves fleeing their master were to be denied communion (a holy ritual) until they were returned to their owner. Christians in the Middle Ages considered slavery God's will and part of a divine plan to serve his ends.

At the same time, the church was influential in making day-to-day life easier for slaves by preaching about the brotherhood of man and how people should treat others as they would like to be treated themselves. In other words, slaves should be treated as humans, not animals. Some of the church's rules also contributed to the decline of slavery. The most important church law about slavery was that Christians should not enslave other Christians, which severely limited the source of slaves, since almost everyone in western Europe was a Christian. The church also opposed the enslavement of

Christians by non-Christians but did not object to Christians enslaving non-Christians. The church encouraged slaveowners to free their slaves, promising they would be rewarded in the afterlife.

## **War and slavery**

Throughout ancient times, war captives were the main source of slaves. The ancient Greeks and Romans had huge empires, waged many battles, and enslaved millions of prisoners of war. In general, wars in the Middle Ages were on a much smaller scale, with much of the fighting taking place between lower nobles over small parcels of land. And although some captives were turned into slaves, their numbers were very low compared with those in ancient Greece and Rome.

The average manor in Europe did not find slave labor profitable because of the large population of serfs (see "Free and unfree peasants," earlier in this chapter). When land was conquered in battle, the victor also won the right to rule over the people who lived there. Slaves and serfs were considered too valuable to kill, and it made no sense to move them off lands where their work produced a profit. The powerful simply occupied the land and ruled over the weak, meaning that slaves remained enslaved and serfs remained enserfed. Often, free peasants lost their land to the new lord and were reduced to serf status.

## **Charlemagne and the Holy Roman Empire**

Not all battles in the Middle Ages were local or small, but even larger wars sometimes failed to produce a new supply of slaves and serfs. When King Charlemagne united the different Germanic tribes of Europe into the Holy Roman Empire, he conquered and Christianized a huge area that included France, Italy, most of Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, yet the conquests produced few slaves.





**Charlemagne (742-814), king of the Franks and founder of the Holy Roman Empire.** Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

King Charlemagne, a Frank, viewed his conquest of the other Germanic tribes—the Saxons, Burgundians, Bavarians, and Lombards—as his Christian duty. Some of these conquered tribes worshiped non-Christian gods. Charlemagne gave them a choice: convert to Christianity or die. On one Christmas Eve, he had 4,500 rebel Saxons beheaded for refusing to be baptized.

On Christmas Day in the year 800, the pope of the Roman Catholic church declared Charlemagne the first emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Charlemagne shared his power with the church, dividing up control of the empire between the nobility and the clergy. Charlemagne also gave nearly two-thirds of the lands he

conquered to the church. The church set up an extensive network of abbeys (huge monasteries), and in 787 Charlemagne ordered that they be turned into schools for his subjects—not just for the nobles, but for serfs and free peasants as well.

### **Rise of the knights**

In 869, Charlemagne's empire was broken into two parts—the Frankish kingdom (modern-day France and Belgium) and the German Empire (Germany, part of Italy, and Austria). Louis the German, Charlemagne's grandson and the German emperor, enjoyed the support of the Roman Catholic church and the stability it brought to his rule.

But in the Frankish kingdom, with Charles the Bald (another of Charlemagne's grandsons) as king, a period of feudal conflict that would last more than 300 years was just beginning. Feuds between nobles over land and invasions and raids by Vikings from the north, Hungarian warriors from the east, and Muslims (members of a religion called Islam) from

the south made for very violent times and led to significant changes in medieval society.

By the year 900, knights became very important. Every lord in France was fighting over land, and they all needed knights for their armies. Lords began to recruit knights by awarding them land to rule over in exchange for their military skills. Knights began to appear in the courts of justice of the great lords—the dukes, counts, and viscounts—and were recognized as members of the ruling class. As lords of small estates (villages of less than 100 people), knights also held their own courts, usually to settle disputes among peasants.

### Land of burning huts

Historians estimate that by the year 1000, as many as 80 percent of Europe's peasants were living on feudal estates. One-half of those peasants were free, able to live and work where they chose; the other half were serfs, legally bound to the land they worked. There is no telling how many slaves there were, but their numbers were very low, as descendants of slaves, through the years, had risen to the level of serfs.

Lords came and went, but the peasants—free or unfree—stayed. Tied to the land for generations, they were at the mercy of more powerful forces around them. Though peasants did little, if any, of the actual fighting, they were greatly affected by the constant warfare. As one eleventh-century knight quoted in Timothy Levi Biel's book *The Age of Feudalism* said: "When two nobles quarrel, the poor man's thatch [hut] goes up in flames."



Armor worn by a French or Italian knight in 1527. A great deal of battling and feuding took place during the Middle Ages. Although knights did the actual fighting, peasants and serfs were victimized by the wars. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission.

**Harvesting under the supervision of a bailiff in fourteenth-century England.** The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.



## Anglo-Saxon England

Germanic tribes known as the Angles and Saxons invaded England in 449. After defeating what was left of the Roman occupiers and enslaving or enslaving much of the native Celtic population, the Anglo-Saxons set up a system similar to the early Frankish kingdoms. The king ruled over landowning nobles known as earls and thanes. Like the dukes and counts of Germany and France, earls and thanes owed military service and counsel (service in the courts of justice) to the king. The thanes ruled over the churls (free peasants), the serfs, and the slaves.

Slaves in the Anglo-Saxon era (449-1066) tilled the land alongside the serfs and the free peasants. Slaves also performed specific jobs such as herdsman, dairymaids, blacksmiths, weavers, cooks, carpenters, and tailors. Slaves could be flogged for minor offenses and mutilated or executed for major crimes. Slaves guilty of thieving faced death: males by stoning and females by burning. Some of the slaves were descendants of the native Celts. Some were captives from petty wars between England's nobles. Most, however, were free people who were being punished for certain crimes or for failing to pay fines or debts.

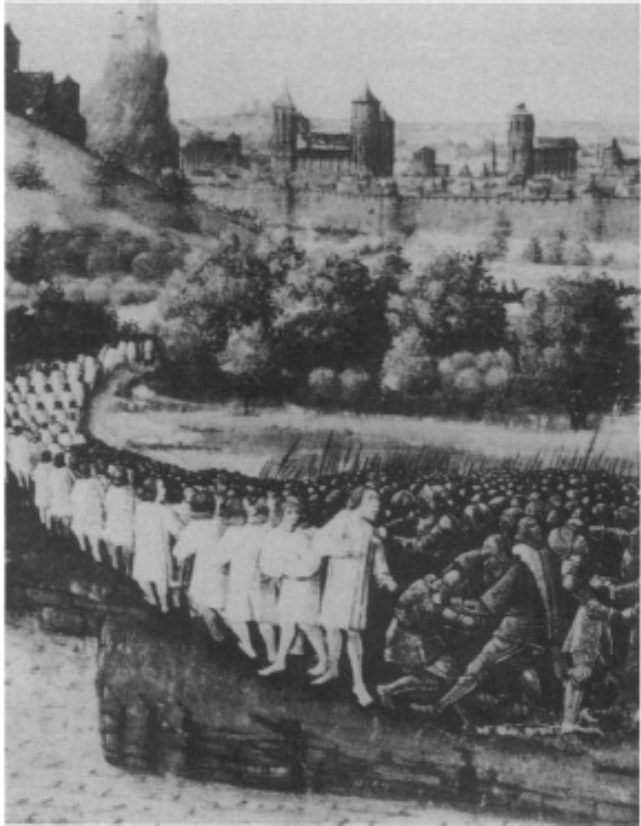
## English feudalism

Anglo-Saxon kings ruled until 1066, when an army from France, led by Duke William of Normandy, invaded England. Normandy, an area of northwest France, was the land of the Normans (or Norsemen), who were descendants of people from the north we call Vikings. The Vikings came from Scandinavia—what is now Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. The Vikings had been raiding the coasts of England and northern France for more than a century when in 911, fearing that the Vikings might overtake his whole kingdom, the French king made Rollo, a great Viking chieftain, the first Duke of Normandy. In time, the dukes of Normandy became more powerful than the kings of France.



On Christmas Day in 1066, after Duke William's army had defeated the Anglo-Saxons in battle, William I was crowned king of England. One of the first things the new king did was take stock of his conquered territory. When the census, known as the Domesday Book, was finished in 1085, it showed that 9 percent of the population in England were slaves, or "personal serfs."

**Duke William of Normandy, later known as William I, the Conqueror (c. 1027-1087), and his soldiers.** Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



**The Peasants' Crusade.** As Crusade fever hits Europe in the twelfth century, peasants by the thousands follow the troops to war in Jerusalem. Picture Collection, The Branch Libraries, The New York Public Library.

Personal serfs were bound to their masters by blood: their parents were slaves and their children were slaves. As on the European continent, most of the people in England were peasants, and about one-half of the peasants were "tenant serfs," bound to their land (see "Free and unfree peasants," earlier in this chapter). By 1200, there were very few slaves left on England's farms. Most of the field work was done by serfs and free peasants, and what few slaves remained worked mostly in the lords' households.

## The Crusades

Three major religions influenced medieval Europe: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Christians considered Jews and Muslims to be "infidels" (a disrespectful word for non-Christians). Pope Urban II began the First Crusade in 1096 when he called for a "holy war" by Christians to liberate the city of Jerusalem from Muslim control. Jerusalem, a city in Palestine on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, was considered a "holy city" by all three religions. The nobles of England, France, Germany, and Italy rallied around the pope's call, and the largest army of feudal times was assembled.

The pope traveled France for nine months recruiting his army for the holy war. He promised, in the name of the church, to protect the lands of any nobles who joined the Crusade. The pope also permitted serfs to be soldiers in the army, attracting thousands of peasants who had been bound to their land for generations. The pope forgave taxes and debts and pardoned (set free) criminals. All people had to do was sign up to march on Jerusalem.

A force of 30,000 Crusaders, mostly peasants who were untrained in war, left France in 1096. In 1099, 12,000 reached Jerusalem (many Crusaders died during the long march). Still, the Crusaders easily captured the city and proceeded to massacre thousands of local Muslims—men, women, and children. The pope had promised the Crusaders something else: to kill infidels, or to be killed fighting infidels, was a sure ticket to heaven. But by 1150, all the lands conquered by the First Crusade were taken back by Muslim armies.

By 1204, there had been four major Crusades. All of them failed to secure Jerusalem under Christian control for any great length of time. The great lords of Europe, however, founded and abandoned several feudal kingdoms in Palestine and Syria. The nobles returned to Europe with new tastes for eastern products such as silks, sugar, and spices, for which they traded English wool, German steel, and Italian fabrics.



In the Third Crusade (1189-92), Richard I, the Lionheart, watches the execution of Muslims after taking the city of Aker in the Holy Land, 1191. Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced

## The decline of serfdom

Rapid changes followed the Crusades. Some lords—including many knights—returned to Europe to find that wealthier and more powerful nobles had taken over their lands. Some lords found their villages without serfs because many of them had joined the Crusades or had moved to cities to take jobs making goods for trade with the east.



***The Peasant Wedding***, painting by Flemish painter Pieter Bruegel (c. 1525-1569).

Photograph by Erich Lessing.

Reproduced by permission of Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.

One historian estimates that in 1200, 90 percent of the population in France and southern Germany were rural peasants, and more than half of those were serfs. By 1300, only 70 percent of the people were living in rural villages, and most of them were free.

By 1300, Europe was emerging from the feudal era. The laws and customs of the villages were being replaced by the common law of an entire kingdom. For example, the Magna Carta, signed by King John of England in 1215, guaranteed everyone in the English kingdom "due process of law." Kings still had dukes and counts, but they were no longer relied on

to raise an army or to help with governing the land. Instead, kings hired soldiers and public servants and paid them with money.

## **The end of serfdom**

Another factor in the decline and eventual end of serfdom in western Europe was the Black Death. The plague started in central Asia, and in 1348 it found its way to Italy and the rest of western Europe in a shipment of rat-infested grain. A disease for which there was no medicine or cure, the Black Death killed from one-quarter to one-third of the population—nobles and peasants alike. Sometimes whole villages were wiped out. Many rich estates fell into ruin. The economy of Europe took a down-turn. With an extreme shortage of labor and fewer goods being produced, prices on almost everything rose.

Peasant workers were now in great demand in both rural areas and cities. Landlords even welcomed runaway serfs, illegally granted them freedom, and leased them land made vacant by death. Likewise, peasants were welcomed in depopulated towns, where their status—free or serf—was not challenged.

As more and more serfs tasted freedom and realized how important their labor was to society, they became less and less likely to accept the traditional limits and duties forced upon them by the ruling nobles. In England in 1380, when landlords tried to impose harsh and unfair taxes, the peasants responded with armed rebellion. That revolt and another one in 1450 failed. But the idea that all people should be free had taken seed, and in 1574, the queen of England abolished serfdom.

The cry for freedom was heard throughout Europe, and over time, serfdom slowly disappeared. The number of serfs in Italy declined steadily beginning in the twelfth century, and by the fifteenth century serfdom had virtually vanished. In Germany, serfdom ended in the eighteenth century. And in France, serfdom officially ended with the revolution in 1789.



# Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade

## The impact of slavery

Both slavery and the slave trade existed in Africa long before the Portuguese and Spanish began their explorations by sea of Africa's Atlantic coast in the mid-1400s. Most historians agree that the Africans practiced a milder form of slavery than the ancient Romans or Greeks, and nowhere near as harsh as what awaited Africans in the European colonies of the Americas (South and North America).

For centuries before African slaves were shipped across the Atlantic Ocean, the peoples of West Africa had exported slaves, gold, and other goods by way of overland trade routes (through the Sahara Desert) to European and Near East (a region of southwest Asia that includes the Arab nations) countries. The peoples of East Africa also traded slaves and other goods to the Arabs and to merchants from other eastern destinations, such as India.

It was the common people of West Africa who suffered the most from the effects of the Atlantic slave trade. Their rulers, on the other hand, grew rich. They exchanged slaves mostly for such luxuries as guns, liquor, fine fabrics,



**Muslim traders transporting captives to coastal ports.**  
*Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.*

and other items for their own benefit, not for the improvement of their subjects' lives. The European slave traders, especially the British, also grew incredibly rich from the transport and sale of millions of Africans to New World colonies.

## **Africa**

### **Slavery in the Middle Ages**

In the absence of any records, there is no way of knowing for sure how many slaves there were in West Africa in the Middle Ages (500-1500), but there were probably relatively few. Prisoners of war were the main source of slaves, and wars were infrequent and mostly local and small. There were exceptions, of course, as African empires (a number of united kingdoms) waged war on each other from time to time. In addition to losing prisoners taken in battle, conquered tribes were often forced to pay a tribute (a periodic tax for losing) in the form of slaves or goods.

People guilty of crimes, and people rejected from their tribes for various reasons, were another source of slaves. Slaves were usually considered the property of the chief of the tribe or the head of the family. Some slaves were kept for domestic and farming work, some were sold and exported to other countries, and some were sacrificed (killed in a religious ceremony) by kings in the worship of their royal ancestors.

Not all slavery was on a small scale. In one kingdom in Benin (pronounced beh-NIN), the ruler forced slaves to work on large plantations in conditions similar to New World slavery. In southeastern Nigeria the Ibo (pronounced EE-bo) tribe used an organized slave-labor force for growing crops. Their neighbors to the west, the Ashanti (pronounced ah-SHON-tee), also used slaves on their farms and demanded a tribute of 2,000 slaves a year from one defeated tribe.

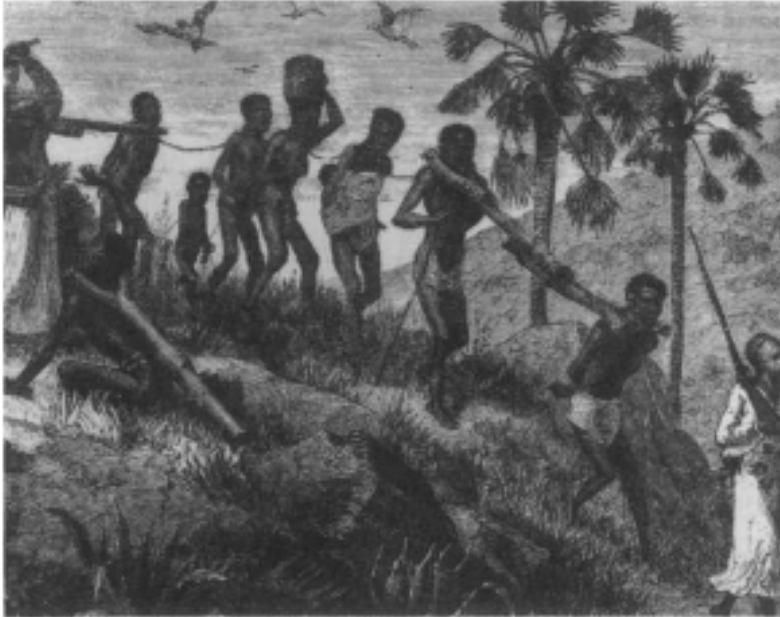
## Fact Focus

- Prisoners of war were the most common source of slaves in West Africa in the Middle Ages.
- By 1500, the Portuguese were importing 3,000 slaves a year to Europe from West Africa.
- Africans who lived on the coast were rarely enslaved.
- Guns played a major role in increasing the number of slaves obtained through raids and warfare between African tribes.
- The first slaves to cross the Atlantic Ocean on European ships were Indians, not Africans.
- In 1492, there were 300,000 Indians in the Spanish colony on the Caribbean island Christopher Columbus named Hispaniola. By 1548, a mere 500 were alive.
- By 1600, about 367,000 African slaves had crossed the Atlantic to the Americas.
- The voyage from West Africa to the West Indies, known as the Middle Passage, took about two months. Many slaves died at sea from the brutal conditions on ships.
- From 1451 to 1870, at least 11 million African slaves were imported to the Americas.

## Slaves in society

Slaves, as usual, did the hardest work in African society. But Africans enslaved by other Africans during the Middle Ages did not lose all of their rights and were not denied a place in

society. Traditions allowed slaves to marry and have families, with the opportunity for those families to become



**Captives, yoked and chained, in a forced march from the interior to the coastal markets.** The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.

part of their master's extended household. Though they could never be as close as kin (people related by blood), slaves were, in a sense, "adopted" into families and sometimes rose to be leaders—chiefs, kings, and even emperors.

R.S. Rattray, a historian who studied the Ashanti noted that among these forest-dwelling people, "a slave might marry; own property; himself own a slave; swear an oath; be a competent witness; and ultimately become heir to his master." The historian as quoted in Milton Meltzer's *Slavery: A World History* also found that "an Ashanti slave, in nine cases out of ten, possibly became an adopted member of the family; and in time his descendants so merged and intermarried with the owner's former kinsmen that only a few would know their origin."

### **Slave trading: It takes two**

In the 1500s, the growth of plantations in the New World colonies of Spain, France, England, and Denmark fueled the

demand for African slaves. The profits that could be earned by supplying slaves to satisfy that demand—by both Europeans and Africans—transformed the slave trade into a very big business. Wars between African tribes increased.

**The Fort of Judah, or Ouidah, founded by the French to protect the slave trade and hold captives before transporting them overseas. The fort was destroyed in 1726 by the army of the king of Dahomey (now Benin). *The Grange Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.***



They were no longer minor local skirmishes over land or honor but major battles for slave-taking and profit.

Most of the slaves taken to the Americas came from West Africa. Europeans built forts and trading posts along a 3,000-mile stretch of Africa's Atlantic coast, from Senegal in the north to Angola in the south. About 70 percent of the slaves taken from West Africa came from north of the Congo River and south of the Sahara Desert. The coastal countries now known as Benin, Ghana, and Nigeria supplied a large share of the captives.

At first, the trade was a cooperative effort between the European merchants and the coastal African tribes. The Europeans built their trading posts only with permission from the African rulers who controlled the coastal lands. The Europeans also had to pay rent to the Africans on their trading posts and forts.

## **Draining Africa's heartland**

Africans who lived on the coast were rarely enslaved. Instead, coastal tribes, through warfare, raids, and trade, obtained slaves from other tribes located farther inland. In turn, those tribes took slaves from tribes even farther from the coast. Most raids and wars for the purpose of capturing slaves took place within 500 miles of the Atlantic coast.

For example, on Africa's Gold Coast (a region of West Africa on the north shore of the Gulf of Guinea), the Europeans rented their trading posts from the local Fanti (pronounced FAN-tee) or Akan tribes. The Europeans traded for slaves from the Fanti, who, through warfare or trade, took slaves from the Ashanti to the north. The Ashanti in turn obtained slaves by warfare or trade with their up-country neighbors.

## **More guns, more slaves**

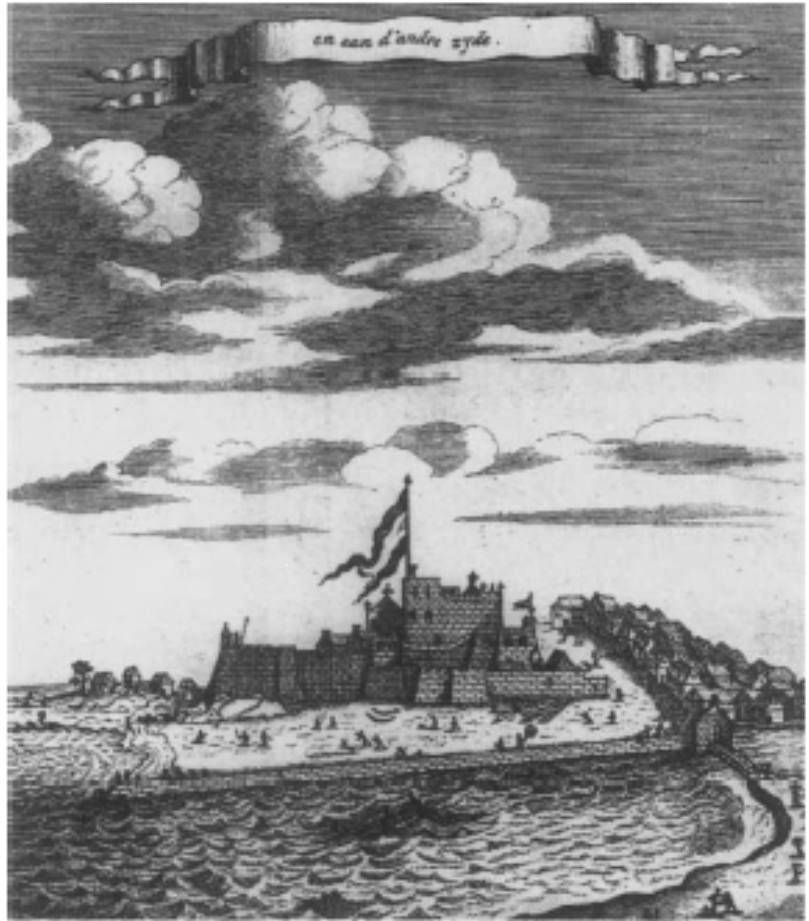
Most of the common people of Africa, the small family farmers, did not own slaves and were too busy bartering with their neighbors for the necessities of daily life to care much about the slave-trading business. It was the rich people of Africa, the royal courts of nobles and lords who lived in the cities, who wanted the European goods that the slave trade provided. The list of items brought into Africa was long and included such things as wine, brandy, bars of iron, glass beads, tobacco, hats, linen, carpets, silks, satins, kettles, pans, dishes, plates, knives, and fishing hooks.

There were two other items that Africans traded slaves for that took the slave trade to a higher level: guns and ammunition (gunpowder). Africans sold slaves for guns and used those guns to take even more slaves. Guns played a major role in increasing the number of slaves obtained through raids and warfare between tribes. Africans without guns were forced to trade slaves for weapons to defend themselves.

In addition to more frequent raids and wars, Africans were increasingly enslaved by other traditional means. African chiefs and kings expanded the list of crimes punishable by enslavement to include thievery, adultery by women, and even "plotting against the king."

By the end of the 1600s, Africans were commonly kidnaped by roving gangs of both black and white slavers. Whole villages sometimes fell victim to these kidnapers, but it was mostly women and children who were stolen in this fashion. Faced with occasional famine, and frequent warfare

This Dutch line engraving of 1704 depicts Elmina, a Portuguese slave-trading fortress on the African Gold Coast, taken by the Dutch in 1637. *The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.*



and violence, poor African families were sometimes forced to sell themselves or their children into slavery.

# The Atlantic slave trade

## Building the network

The development of the network for shipping slaves from Africa to the New World began in 1441 with the arrival of fourteen African slaves in Lisbon, Portugal. The slaves were brought as a gift to Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460), the son of the king of Portugal. The Africans had been captured in a raid on one of the many voyages Portuguese explorers had made along Africa's Atlantic coast. Being a Christian, Prince Henry sought the pope's approval for more raids. The pope not only approved more slave raids, but in 1455 he also gave Portugal blanket permission to enslave all "heathen" (a disrespectful word for non-Christian) people.

Without a great need for additional labor on the continent, European traders were at first more interested in African gold, ivory, leather, spices, and perfumes than in slaves. Initially, Arab traders of the south Sahara Desert acted as middlemen. The Arabs traded horses, silks, and silver for slaves, gold, and other goods from black African rulers. The Arabs then traded the slaves to the Portuguese for more gold, silks, and silver.

By the late 1400s, the Portuguese were importing about 1,000 West African slaves a year from the port of Arguin (an island off the West African coast). By 1500, the Portuguese were taking 3,000 slaves a year from Africa's Atlantic coast, from as far south as Angola. By then, the Portuguese were trading directly with African coastal tribes. The slaves, having been captured in raids or warfare or by trade between tribes, were marched to the coast from inland Africa, bound together and carrying such items as ivory, gold, iron, and spices. The slaves and goods were sold to the tribe in charge of the coastal lands, who in turn traded them to the Portuguese.

The Portuguese were great explorers at sea. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they financed many of their naval expeditions from the profits they gained by using large amounts of African slave labor on their island sugar



plantations off the coasts of Europe and Africa. Some African slaves were imported to the European mainland and were mostly used for domestic work in the households of the rich. By 1552, there were 10,000 African slaves in Lisbon, a city of 100,000 people.

### **A failed experiment**

The first slaves to cross the Atlantic Ocean on European ships were "Indians," not Africans. On October 12, 1492, Christopher Columbus (an Italian explorer, 1451-1506) reached Watling Island in the West Indies (a group of islands on the edge of the Caribbean Sea between North and South America).

**Christopher Columbus with Indians in Hispaniola during an eclipse of the moon. Columbus sent 500 Indians to Spain as slaves in 1494.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.



Believing he had sailed far enough west from Spain to have reached the eastern shores of India (which is what he set out to do), Columbus declared the people he found to be "los Indios," or the Indians. The three ships of his first voyage, the *Niña*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria*, also visited Hispaniola (pronounced hiss-pan-YO-la; an island in the West Indies) and Cuba.

In 1493, Columbus sailed on a second voyage to the New World with a fleet of seventeen ships. He explored Puerto Rico and parts of the Leeward Islands and established a Spanish colony on Hispaniola. In 1494, Columbus sent a dispatch to his Spanish sponsors, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, proposing to send Indian slaves back to Spain. Despite their lack of enthusiasm for the idea, Columbus captured 1,500 islanders, picked what he considered to be the "best" 500, and sent them to Spain. When the ship arrived in 1495 there were only 300 Indians left alive. The surviving slaves were sold but most of them died within a short period of time. France and England also tried unsuccessfully to profitably import Indian slaves to Europe from the West Indies.

### **Genocide in the West Indies**

Ferdinand and Isabella made Columbus an admiral and the governor general of all new lands in the Spanish colonies. Columbus oversaw the distribution of land and villages to Spanish soldiers and colonists and granted them rule over the inhabitants. Columbus and the colonists forced the conquered Indians to pay them a tribute in the form of gold dust, which could be mined from the island's riverbeds. The work needed to produce the large sums demanded by the colonists was brutal. Many Indians revolted or fled. Some took poison. Diseases brought to the island by the Europeans also killed many of the Indians. Most, however, probably died from working under such horrible conditions.

The Spanish conquest of Hispaniola was disastrous for the native population. When the Spaniards invaded the island and captured cities and villages, they slaughtered all in their path—men, women, and children. They then enslaved the survivors, forcing the men into fourteen-hour workdays in the mines and making the women and children household slaves or putting them to work on the farms. Historians estimate that in 1492, when Columbus arrived, there were 300,000 Indians on Hispaniola. By 1494, one-third of them had died. In 1508, only 60,000 Indians were left, and in 1548, a mere 500 remained.

## Africans replace Indians

With most of the native population of the West Indies wiped out, the colonists needed a new source of slaves for their plantations, mines, and households. They turned to West Africa. In 1518 the first cargo of slaves from the Guinea coast of West Africa arrived in the West Indies.

**African slaves working on a sugar plantation in the Spanish West Indies.**

Copper engraving, 1596, by Theodore de Bry. The Granger Collection, New York.

Reproduced by permission.

The full-scale use of African slaves instead of Indian slaves was due in part to the efforts of a Dominican missionary named Bartolomé de Las Casas. In 1510, Las Casas became the first priest to be ordained in the New World. Like other Spaniards, he owned Indian slaves. Las Casas traveled throughout the islands and witnessed the destruction of the Indians at the hands of the Spanish colonists. He gave up his own slaves and appealed to the Spanish king to spare the remaining Indians by bringing African slaves to the colonies.



In 1517, the king of Spain formally granted permission for colonists to import twelve African slaves each. By 1540, the West Indies were receiving 10,000 African slaves a year, and

still more were going to Mexico and South America. By 1600, about 367,000 African slaves had crossed the Atlantic to the Americas. Europe's demand for sugar skyrocketed in the next century, leading the Dutch, French, and British to establish colonies and sugar plantations in the West Indies. By 1700, another 2.75 million African slaves had been imported to the Americas.

The network for slave trading in the Atlantic was now complete. Cheap manufactured goods from Europe were shipped to Africa and traded for slaves. Slaves were shipped across the Atlantic to the colonies where they were traded for sugar, tobacco, cotton, and minerals. Finally, the produce of the colonies was shipped back across the Atlantic to the markets of Europe. Slave trading in this manner became very profitable, with each voyage delivering and picking up goods—and thereby generating profits—in three different ports.

## **Sharing the New World**

Shortly after Columbus claimed the islands of the West Indies for Spain, the Portuguese began competing with Spain for control of the slave-shipping trade to the colonies. Since both countries were Christian, their rulers turned to the pope to resolve the dispute. In 1493, the pope granted Spain sole shipping rights to the New World, and Portugal was forced to confine its naval commerce to Africa.

In the 1500s, Spain dominated the Atlantic slave trade. The Spanish were the main supplier of slaves to all the European colonies at the time. In the course of the century they brought hundreds of thousands of slaves to the West Indies, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Peru, Mexico, and Panama. In the 1600s, the Dutch, Danes, French, and English started to compete with the Spanish, all wanting a part of the riches of the New World and the profits from supplying it with slaves.

## Slave factories

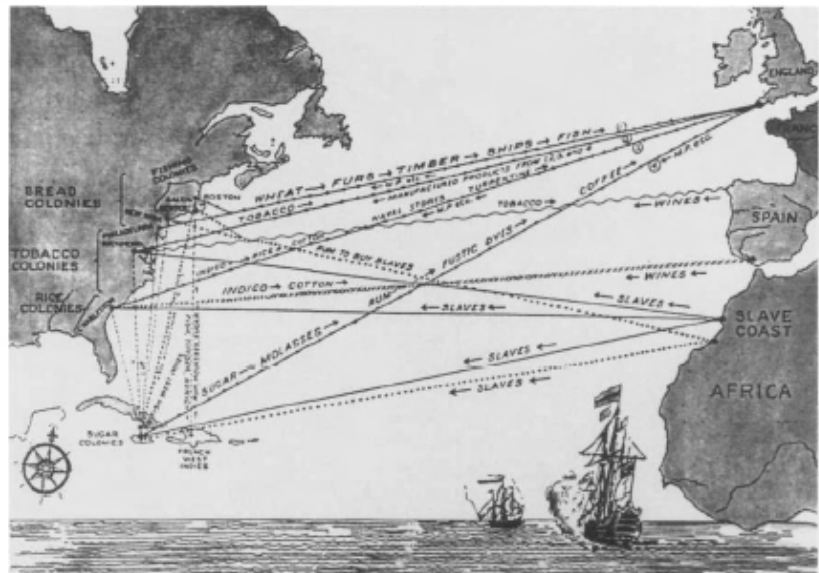
In 1481, the Portuguese built the first European fort on the Gold Coast of West Africa at Elmina (pronounced el-MEEN-a; "the mine"). By the 1700s there were more than forty European forts and other outposts on the coasts and nearby islands of West Africa.

The forts had little military value. They were built only with the permission of whichever African ruler was in charge of that part of the coast and could not have withstood a determined military attack. The forts were essentially trading posts—slave factories—with dungeons capable of holding thousands of captured Africans awaiting the next ship to the Americas. Not all slaves were processed through the European trading posts. Some were simply sold from shore, held there by a coastal tribe and paddled out in canoes to the buyers' ships.

## British dominance

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries most of the great ship owners of Europe made fortunes in the trans-Atlantic

Map of the "Triangular Trade" between England, its American colonies, and Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.



slave business. The monarchy, the church, the government, and the public approved of the slave trade. Almost everyone

had a stake in the slave trade—kings, dukes, earls, countesses, lords, knights, bishops, mayors, and even some of the general public. In slave-trading port cities, it generated thousands of jobs. Slave trading was a fact of life, and most of European society was invested in it, in one way or another.

It was the British, however, who ended up dominating the Atlantic slave trade. In the late 1600s, the city of Liverpool became the largest port in the world and the home base of ten companies that controlled two-thirds of the Atlantic slave-trading business. The largest of those companies, the Royal African Company, was chartered by King Charles II in 1672. The Royal African Company became the number one slave trader in the world by securing, under a thirty-year agreement with Spain, the exclusive rights to ship West African slaves to the Spanish colonies in the Americas.

By 1800, Liverpool-based trading companies were shipping 35,000 African slaves a year across the Atlantic. The 120 British ships sent annually carried about 90 percent of the slaves exported from Africa. The profit margins on each voyage ranged from 30 percent to 100 percent—a fantastic amount of money. Liverpool, and much of England's commercial wealth in this period, was built on the enormous profits from the Atlantic slave trade.

### **The Middle Passage**

The British were able to make such huge profits because they were willing to cut corners on costs, no matter what the human consequences were. The voyage from Africa to the Americas was called the "Middle Passage" because it was the middle stretch of the slave-trading triangle that connected Europe to Africa, Africa to the Americas, and the Americas back to Europe. In pursuit of higher profits, the British overloaded their ships with slaves, packing in as many Africans as possible for the two-month voyage.

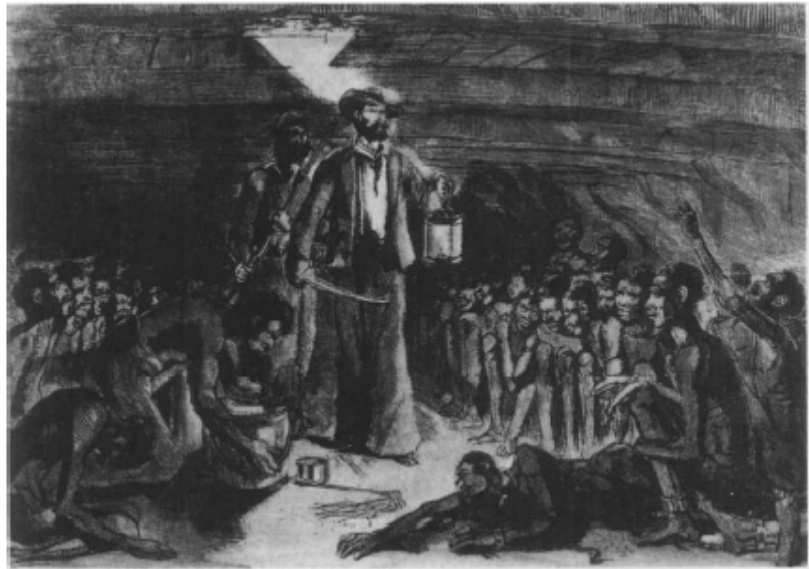
Most of the time, the slaves were kept in the ship's hold. They were allowed on deck for only a few minutes a day for fresh

air and forced exercise. Otherwise, they were chained and locked belowdecks in extremely small spaces. The space for an adult male slave was five-and-a-half feet long, sixteen inches wide, and two to three feet high—in effect, smaller than a coffin. Sometimes there was only eighteen inches of vertical space between slave decks. The British Parliament (legislative body) tried to limit the number of slaves allowed on ships, but their rulings were mostly ignored.

### **Merchants of death**

The conditions aboard the ships were so bad that many slaves died before they ever reached the other side of the Atlantic. On the voyage, slaves were fed just enough to keep them alive (if they survived the trip, they were fattened up before being put on the market). Spoiled food; stagnant water; diseases such as smallpox and dysentery; and dark, damp, and dirty quarters all took their toll. For example, from

**An 1850s engraving of a scene in the hold of the slave ship *Gloria*, in the Middle Passage.**  
The Granger Collection, New York.  
Reproduced by permission.



1680 to 1688, the Royal African Company picked up 60,783 slaves from Africa but only delivered 46,396 in the Americas. The Middle Passage, in eight years, claimed the lives of 25 percent of the slaves—14,387 Africans. Over the next century the number of slaves killed during the Middle Passage fell from 25 percent to 12.5 percent.

Slaves did not always cooperate with their masters. There is no telling how many slaves committed suicide by jumping off ships at sea or by refusing to eat. Slave revolts aboard ships were not uncommon either, with at least fifty-five recorded from 1690 to 1845.

African slaves faced the possibility of death at every stage of the forced migration from their homeland to the New World. Some died as fresh captives on the march from the central forests to the coasts of Africa. Still more died while being warehoused on the Atlantic coast waiting for slave ships. Of those slaves who survived the Middle Passage, 4 to 5 percent died in the harbors of the New World, waiting to be unloaded and sold. Thirty-three percent of those slaves who made it ashore died before they became "seasoned" (broken in) workers. One historian estimates that no more than half of the slaves who were taken from Africa ever became "effective" workers in the New World.

How many African slaves did the Europeans bring across the Atlantic? For the period from 1441 to 1880, historians calculate that the Europeans made more than 54,000 voyages, transporting more than 11 million Africans to their colonies in the Americas. Roughly 95 percent of all slaves taken from Africa, or about 10.5 million slaves, went to Spanish, French, Dutch, Danish, and Portuguese colonies in Latin America (the West Indies, Mexico, and Central and South Americas). The other 500,000 slaves were taken to mainland North America—the United States.



# Colonial Latin America

## Slaves come to the Americas

The first African slaves arrived in the Americas (North and South America) in 1518, shortly after the king of Spain granted Spanish colonies in the West Indies permission to import 4,000 Africans. The Spanish brought slaves to Guatemala as early as 1524, and by the end of the century they had shipped at least 60,000 Africans to Mexico. The Portuguese colonies in Brazil began importing African slaves in 1538. The Spanish settlement in Saint Augustine, Florida, used slaves since its founding in 1565.

Twenty-five years after the arrival of the first slave ships, Africans were being shipped to the Americas at a rate of 10,000 a year. By the end of the century, according to one historian, a total of 367,000 African slaves had been brought to North and South America—mostly to Latin America.

In the 1600s, other countries in Europe—England, France, Denmark, and the Netherlands—joined Spain and Portugal in seeking riches in the New World. The Europeans established gigantic farms in their colonies that depended on large-scale

production and huge amounts of cheap labor to make a profit. For the most part, colonists succeeded in growing sugar, tobacco, cotton, coffee, indigo (a plant used for making dyes), and cacao (pronounced ke-KAY-oh; a bean used for making chocolate). An increased appetite for those products in Europe (especially sugar) led to a steep rise in the number of slaves needed. By 1700, an additional 1.8 million slaves had been taken from Africa and brought to the Americas.

With European colonies and their plantations in place throughout Latin America, and with the growing presence of the British in North America by 1675 (see Chapter 7), African slaves poured into the colonies in the next two centuries. One historian estimates that in the 1700s, 6.2 million more slaves arrived from Africa. In the 1800s the number of imported slaves totaled 3.3 million. From 1500 to 1900, an estimated total of 11.67 million Africans were brought across the Atlantic Ocean as slaves for the New World colonies of Europe.

### **Latin America**

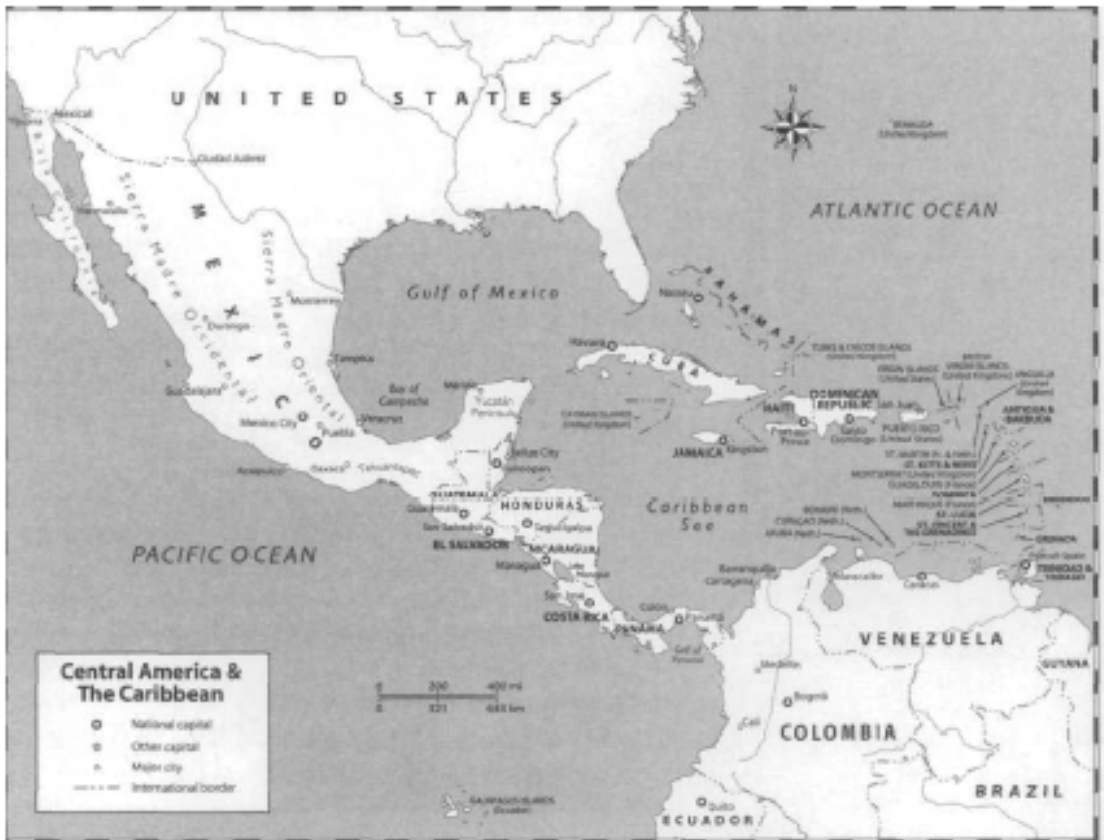
Latin America is made up of the countries of South and Middle America where Romance languages (languages derived from Latin) are spoken. Geographically, it includes almost all of the Americas south of the United States—Mexico, Central America, South America, and many of the islands of the West Indies.

Spanish is the dominant language of Latin America. The Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America are Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Latin America also includes Portuguese-speaking Brazil, French-speaking Haiti, and the French West Indies.

# The West Indies

## Up for grabs

In the 1600s, Spain lost control of many of its island colonies in the West Indies. Denmark, Holland, France, and England all wanted a piece of the New World and moved into the West Indies with their government-supported slave-trading companies. The Dutch West India Company, the French Company of the Islands, and the Royal African Company (of England) established colonies on behalf of their mother countries and imported African slaves to work on their plantations and in their mines and homes.



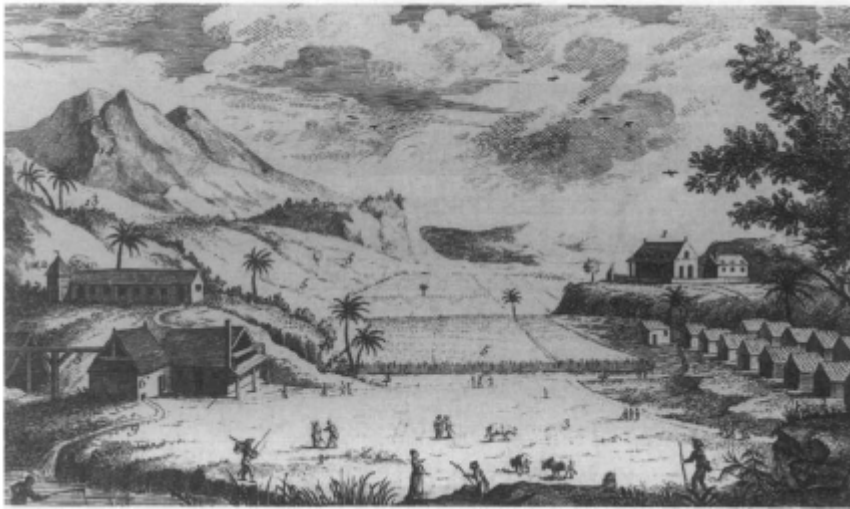
Map of Central America and the Caribbean in modern times.

In 1655, the Spaniards lost Jamaica, the "jewel" of the West Indies, to the British. And a 1695 treaty between Spain and

France gave the western part of Hispaniola (pronounced hisspan-YO-la) to the French. The Spanish were left with Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the eastern part of Hispaniola, now known as the Dominican Republic.

## Sugar islands

At first, slaves worked on tobacco plantations. But when the European markets became flooded with tobacco by 1639, prices dropped, and the planters turned to cotton and indigo. It was sugar, however, that proved to be the biggest moneymaker; European markets just couldn't get enough of it. More sugar plantations meant more slaves. In British Barbados, the first of the islands to grow sugarcane, the African slave population increased from a few hundred in 1640 to 20,000 in 1650, and to more than 80,000 by 1700.



A sugar plantation, probably in what is now Haiti, depicting the main house and the slave quarters on the right. The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.

The next two centuries saw an even greater growth of sugar plantations and slave populations in the West Indies. For most of the 1700s Haiti was the world's greatest producer of sugar and its by-products, rum and molasses. By the middle of the century the island had more than 600 sugar plantations and was importing about 10,000 African slaves a year. In 1787 alone, Haiti brought in 40,000 slaves. By the 1790s, no other

place in the New World had as many African slaves in such a small area of land.

Cruelty was common in Haiti, and the living conditions in general were very poor. Slaves lived in windowless huts and were given small rations of rice or oatmeal, herring (from New England, and usually spoiled), crackers, and molasses. Slaves and poor people in Haiti did not know how to read or write because neither their French masters nor the Catholic church made an effort to teach them (see "Catholic colonies," later in this chapter). Manumission (a formal release from bondage) was rare in Haiti, and few slaves could afford to buy their freedom.

At the end of the 1700s, Cuba became the number one sugar producer in the West Indies. The effect on the slave population was dramatic. In 1763, there were about 60,000 slaves on the island. By 1790, another 40,000 had arrived. From 1791 to 1825, at least 320,000 more slaves were imported to the island. In 1836 alone, 60,000 slaves were brought to Cuba. Not all the slaves stayed in Cuba. The greatest sugar island in the West Indies also became the largest slave market in the New World, supplying African slaves to colonies far and wide.

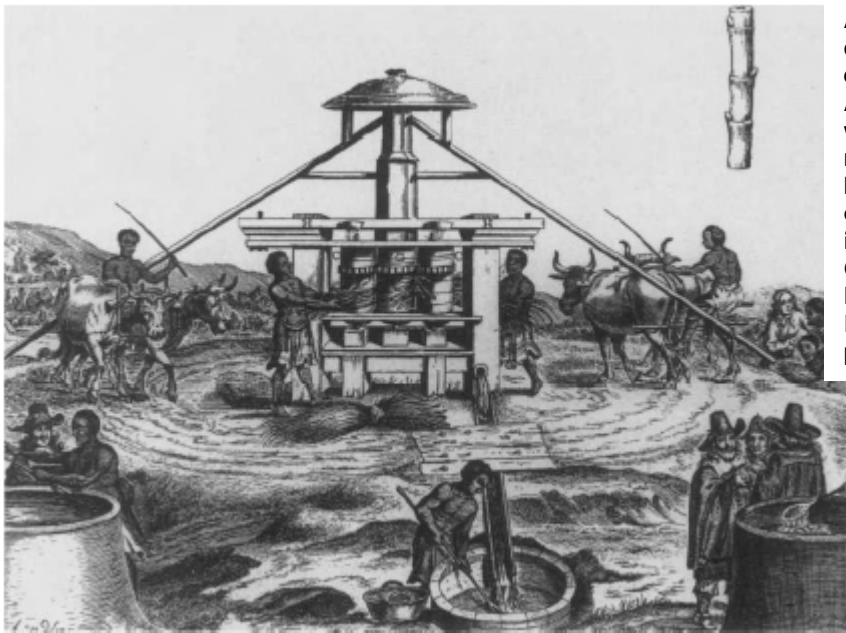
### **Worked to death**

One of the reasons planters in the West Indian colonies overpopulated their islands with slaves is that many of the slaves were eventually shipped to other European colonies on the mainland. The islands served as a kind of training ground, a place where slaves were broken in and made accustomed to their new, harsh way of life—or where they were killed by it. The death rate for slaves in the West Indies in their first three to four years was as high as 30 percent in some places. The terrible working conditions—poor diet, diseases, a new climate, and severe and frequent floggings—took their toll.

Slaves worked on the sugar plantations six days a week, from daybreak to sundown, with a two-hour period set aside for light labor during the hottest part of the day. At harvesttime,

they worked eighteen-hour days—twelve hours at the sugar mill's boiling house (where the sugarcane was processed into sugar) and another six hours in the fields.

Male and female slaves were required to work the same hours in the fields and mills and were subject to the same punishments if they failed in their duties. Pregnant women (who were forced to work until they gave birth) and women caring for their children in the fields were lashed with cart whips like everyone else if they failed to keep pace with the other slaves.



A seventeenth-century line engraving of African slaves working at a sugar mill in the West Indies, probably on a Dutch-owned island. The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission

### **The law of the whip**

On many islands of the West Indies, black African slaves far outnumbered the white colonists. In Jamaica in 1724, for example, there were 32,000 slaves and 14,000 colonists. In St. Christopher, by 1700 the population was more than 20,000, with blacks outnumbering whites twenty to one. The ratio of black slaves to free whites made the colonists uneasy. The fear of mass slave rebellions or breakouts in the West Indies led to

the passage of some of the most severe slave codes in history. The passage of the "Act to regulate the Negroes on the British Plantations" in 1667 gave planters the legal power to control their slaves "with strict severity."

Under the code, slaves could not, for any reason, leave the plantation on Sundays (for many slaves their only day off work). During the workweek, leaving the plantation required a pass. Slaves were not allowed to carry weapons, and they could be severely whipped if they struck a white Christian. A second offense was punished by branding the slave on the face with a hot iron. Slave owners, however, faced neither a fine nor imprisonment if they "accidentally" whipped a slave to death.

**A nineteenth-century wood engraving depicting the flogging of a slave in the West Indies.** The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.



Spain, Portugal, and France had similar laws that were designed to prevent slaves from revolting or running away. The codes allowed the planters to control the slave population with the crudest punishments imaginable for the slightest disobedience or crime. Slaves were commonly flogged—

lashed with a whip made of braided cowhide—for the slightest offenses (100 lashes for petty thievery, for example). Making slaves fear punishment, the Europeans thought, was the best way to keep them in line.

## Rebels and runaways

Slave codes reserved the worst punishments for slaves who revolted. In one French colony in the 1790s, slaves found guilty of planning an uprising had all their bones

broken with clubs and then were fastened to a wheel, faceup to the sun, and left to die. Finally, their heads were cut off and put on public display.



**Slaves in Haiti revolt against plantation owners.** The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.

Despite the horrible price of failure, there were runaway slaves and revolts on almost every island. When the British took over Jamaica from the Spaniards in 1655, many slaves ran away to



the mountains. Other fugitive slaves joined the rebels, known as Maroons. They stole from planters, traded goods with slaves (a crime), and encouraged other slaves to run away.

Even though they faced the possibility of being burned, whipped, or hanged if caught, in 1733 slaves in the Danish islands seized a fort of the Danish West India Company. For several days, the slaves murdered all the whites they could find before the local army brought the rebellion under control.

In Haiti, thousands of slaves constantly ran away to the forests and mountains to join groups of other fugitives. By 1700, there had been at least six recorded slave revolts. The seventh rebellion, in 1791, turned into the largest and most significant slave uprising in the West Indies. Led by a slave named Toussaint L'Ouverture (pronounced too-SAHN loo-ver-chur, c. 1743-1803), the revolution resulted in the abolition of slavery on the island in 1794 and ultimately to Haiti's independence from France in 1804 (see "Haiti's Slave Revolution" box).

### Fact Focus

- For most of the 1700s, Haiti was the world's greatest producer of sugar. It also had more slaves, for its size, than any other colony in the New World.
- The death rate for slaves in the West Indies in their first three to four years was as high as 30 percent in some places.
- On many islands of the West Indies, black African slaves far outnumbered white European colonists.
- In the 1700s, the highest concentrations of slaves in mainland Spanish America were in Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela.
- In Haiti in 1791, what started as a slave uprising led to a revolution, the abolition of slavery in 1794, and the island's independence from France in 1804.
- From 1538 to 1828, the Portuguese imported at least 5 million African slaves to Brazil.
- On coffee plantations in Brazil, a slave's workday began at three o'clock in the morning and lasted until at least nine o'clock at night.
- The longest-running slave rebellion in the New World took place in Brazil. It lasted almost seventy years, from 1630 to 1697.
- The Catholic church had great influence in Latin America. It demanded that all African slaves be baptized within a year of their arrival in the Americas.

## **Haiti's Slave Revolution**

There had been slave uprisings in Haiti before—four in the 1500s and two in the 1600s—but nothing like what happened on August 14, 1791. The rebellion had been brewing for some time. In September 1789, the National Assembly of France had granted independence to the whites of Haiti, giving them control of their own government and taxes. In 1791, the rights granted to the whites were also given to Haiti's mulattos (pronounced muh-LAH-toes; persons of mixed white and black ancestry) and free blacks—but not to the slaves.

Hundreds of years of pent-up hatred for their brutal masters exploded on that August night in 1791. Rebellious slaves torched everything: the cane fields, the sugar mills, and the properties and homes of the planters. Armed with machetes and knives, they killed white men, women, and children. France responded by sending 6,000 troops to the islands to try to restore order.

The slave uprising was a genuine revolution, led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, the grandson of a West African king. Toussaint's father, a slave, had been captured in a war in Africa and sold to Haitian planters. Toussaint was a baptized Catholic who, encouraged by his master, read history, politics, and military science. Toussaint built a small army of 600 men and with them fought the French and the planters in fierce battles. Under Toussaint's leadership, the slave army became better at fighting and grew larger as every battle hardened the troops and attracted new recruits. In a short time, the rebel army grew to a force of 100,000 soldiers.

The revolution was won when, on February 4, 1794, the French Assembly abolished all slavery in their colonies. Toussaint was eventually appointed governor-general of the island, marking the first time an African slave had won power in a European colony. In France, however, the dictator Napoleon I Bonaparte (1769-1821) came to power. He sent 20,000 veteran troops to retake Haiti, and in 1802, Toussaint was captured, taken to France, and thrown in a mountain dungeon where he died on April 7, 1803. Toussaint had the last word, however, when on the last day of 1804, Haiti declared its independence from France. The French, having lost 60,000 troops, gave up and went home.

## **Spanish and Portuguese America**

### **Spanish America**

Spain colonized many parts of the Americas and imported millions of African slaves into the New World. Slaves arrived in Spanish ports in the West Indies (see above), Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Argentina, and Peru, where they were

used locally or taken to Spain's many other colonies in North and South America.

Throughout Spanish America, slaves were mostly agricultural workers on the many plantations that grew sugar, tobacco, cacao, maize (corn), cotton, and indigo. Most of the plantations were located in the Atlantic and Pacific coastal regions. Some slaves were sent inland to work on plantations, cattle ranches, or gold mines. Others performed domestic services in cities, where the wealthier planters kept them for their own households or hired them out to others. Some slaves in the cities worked in small household workshops producing goods for market.

**Map of South America in modern times.**



## **From Mexico to South America**

By 1700 the Spanish had imported more than 200,000 slaves to Mexico and Guatemala, part of an area known as the Viceroyalty of New Spain. Slaves were not a large part of the colonial population, but they played an important role on the region's indigo plantations and cattle ranches.

The largest concentration of slaves in continental Spanish America was in the Viceroyalty of New Granada—the modern states of Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador. In the 1700s, the ports of Caracas (pronounced ka-RAH-kus; a city in Venezuela), Cartagena (pronounced kar-ta-GAIN-ah; a city in Colombia),

and Panama became some of the largest slave markets in the world.

The Viceroyalty of New Granada was divided into three parts. Census figures from 1810 show that in the combined area of Panama and Colombia, there were 210,000 blacks and mulattos, both slave and free, in a population of 1.4 million. In Venezuela, there were 493,000 blacks and mulattos in a population of 900,000. And in Ecuador, blacks and mulattos numbered 50,000 in a population of 600,000.

In the Viceroyalty of Peru (modern-day Chile and Peru), some slaves came directly from Africa on ships that sailed around Cape Horn (the southern tip of South America) and up the west coast. Other slaves were shipped in from the north, from Panama and Cartagena. Peru's port of Lima (pronounced LEE-ma) became a large slave market for planters and ranchers from all over Venezuela, Ecuador, Chile, and Peru. A 1791 census showed that in Peru, in a population of 1.25 million, there were 40,000 blacks and 135,000 whites. The rest of the people were Indians and mestizos (pronounced meh-STEE-soes; people of mixed Indian and European ancestry). In Chile, there were 30,000 blacks and mulattos in a population of 500,000.

The Spanish also brought many slaves to the Viceroyalty of La Plata (modern-day Uruguay and Argentina). There are no reliable census figures for this region, but Montevideo (pronounced mon-te-ve-DAY-oh; a city in Uruguay) and Buenos Aires (pronounced bway-nus-AR-ees; a city in Argentina) were both major ports of entry for slave traders. By 1805, an estimated 2,500 slaves were imported yearly through these cities.

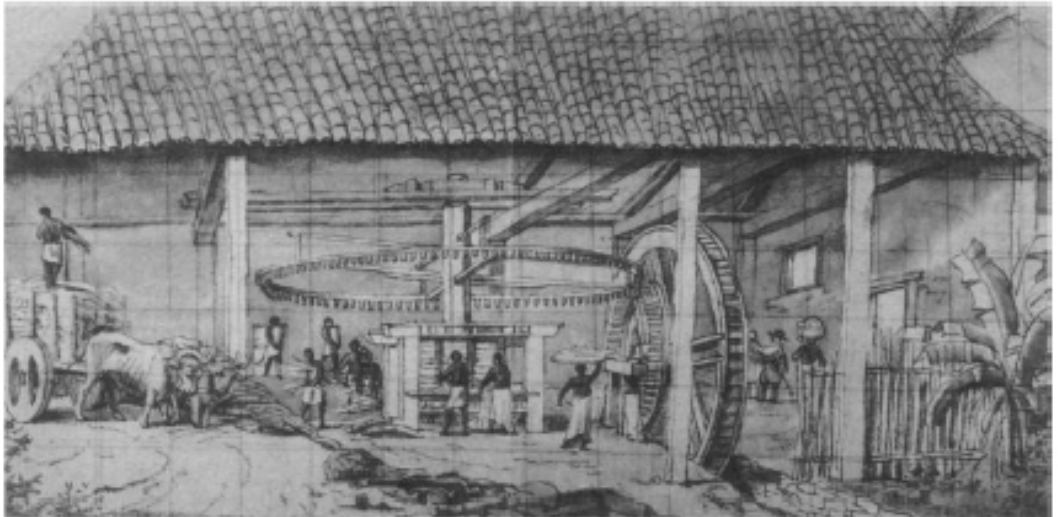
### **Portuguese America**

The Portuguese brought slaves from the coasts of Africa to their colonies in Brazil as early as 1538. Once sugar plantations were established in 1540, the number of slaves increased steadily. In 1585, there were 14,000 slaves in the colony out of a total of 57,000 people. By 1625 there were 121 sugar plantations, and Brazil was supplying Europe with most of its sugar. In the 1600s, according to one estimate, 44,000

slaves were imported annually. The number rose to 55,000 a year in the 1700s.

The first reliable figures come from a 1798 census. In a population of 3.25 million, there were 1.58 million slaves and 406,000 free blacks. Twenty years later, the African slave population had risen to 1.9 million. There were also 585,000 freed blacks in a total population of 3.8 million.

How many slaves were brought into Brazil altogether? Estimates for the years 1538 to 1828 vary from a high of 18 million slaves to a low of 5 million slaves. Brazil declared its independence from Portugal in 1822, abolished the slave trade in 1850, and emancipated all slaves in 1888.



**African slaves working in a sugar mill in Brazil.** Pen and wash drawing, 1640, by Frans Post. The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.

### **Brazil's slave machines**

In Brazil, five out of six slaves worked on plantations growing sugar, coffee, cotton, and cacao. On coffee plantations a slave's workday began at three o'clock in the morning and lasted until at least nine o'clock at night. The aim of the Portuguese planters was to get as much profit from their slaves' labor in the shortest period of time possible. To that

end, the field bosses used their whips constantly to make the slaves work harder and faster. The result was a very high death rate for the overworked and underfed plantation slaves. If twenty-five out of one hundred slaves lived longer than three years, the planters figured they were doing well.

After gold was discovered in Brazil in 1695, plantation owners rented out a large number of their slaves to mine operators in the interior regions of the huge colony. Slave miners were treated, housed, clothed, and fed poorly. Many died of diseases. The mine operators expected their male slaves to survive about twelve years, but one missionary estimated that slave miners were lucky to live for seven.

A small number of slaves worked in the cities. Slaves in Rio de Janeiro (pronounced REE-oh-day-juh-NAIR-oh) and Sao Paulo (pronounced sow-PAW-loh) worked as servants in homes and shops and were sometimes rented out for services and errands. Some slaves hauled crates of produce and 200-pound sacks of coffee beans, finding their work on a freelance basis and paying their master a set fee. If a slave was able to read and write, and some could, they could earn fairly good wages. By scrimping and saving, some of these slaves eventually earned enough money to buy their freedom.

## Catholic colonies

Cruel and inhumane treatment of slaves was common in the colonies of Spain and Portugal. The two countries, however, shared something that made a huge difference in the everyday lives of their slaves: the influence of the Roman Catholic



**Slaves mining diamonds in eighteenth century Brazil.**  
Iconografico SA, Archivo. Reproduced by permission.

church. The Catholic church demanded that all African slaves be baptized within a year of their arrival in the Americas. As Catholics, slaves attended mass and participated in all of the holy rituals and sacraments of the church, including marriage.

The Catholic church, in effect, gave the slaves something in the eyes of their owners that the Anglican church (the Protestant Church of England) denied them: a soul. The result was that Spanish and Portuguese colonists thought of their slaves as more human.

In general, racism was less extreme in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies than in the British colonies. Marriages and unions between the different peoples—the African slaves, the European colonists, and the native Indians—were more numerous and generally more accepted by society. Children of mixed unions, often between slave women and free men, were also treated better by the Spanish and Portuguese than they were by the British colonists in North America (see "Religion and race," Chapter 7).

## **Easing the burden**

In the process of trying to make good Catholics out of the slave, the church, through its many missionaries (such as the Dominicans, Franciscans, Jesuits, and Carmelites), taught some slaves how to read and write. Slaves with these basic skills could often escape the hard physical labor of the plantations, gold mines, and urban workshops. These slaves worked as teachers (mostly of white children), merchants, dentists, barbers, architects, cooks, musicians, and entertainers.

The church also lightened the burden of slavery in other ways. Masters were not allowed—though some did anyway—to work their slaves on Sundays or on certain Catholic holy days (about thirty days a year). In Brazil, the church strongly encouraged slaveowners to grant their slaves manumission, telling them that freeing slaves was a generous act of a holy person. Slave women's children who were fathered by a member of the household (sometimes the master himself) were

usually set free in the master's will. Devoted nurses, favorite personal servants, and, by custom, slave women who had given birth to at least ten children were also set free. Spanish and Portuguese laws and customs, together with the policies of the Catholic church, resulted in large numbers of freed Africans in Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Freed black slaves, including those who managed to raise the money to buy their own liberty, were immediately entitled to the same rights and privileges as free whites. Freed slaves could serve in their country's army, become wealthy, own slaves themselves, and become leaders in government and the church. By the eighteenth century, Brazil had African priests and bishops.



### **Masters of cruelty**

The policies of the Catholic Church did not always have a positive effect on slavery in colonial Latin America, however. The church never formally opposed slavery. In fact, the same religious orders that taught slaves to read and write (see above) all owned large amounts of land and many slaves. Their slaves were housed and fed better than most, and they were rarely sold, which meant that slave families were not broken apart and life in general was more stable. Still, the burden of slavery was heavy, and some slave masters of the church were as cruel as any in Latin America.

Slaves in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies were in general treated very poorly. They worshiped the same god as their masters, but for the most part they were treated no better than animals. Slaves had few rights. They were considered the property of their owners and could be bought, sold, given away, inherited, or rented out for use by others. Slaves lived in small, crowded huts and were given minimum amounts of

**"The Apostle of the Negroes," Saint Peter Claver (1581-1654), a Spanish Jesuit missionary who worked with recent captives from Africa at the slave trade center of Cartagena, Colombia, helping the sick and converting and baptizing the new slaves into the Catholic church.**  
Corbis-Bettmann.



food and water. They were punished for any sign of fatigue, laziness, or illness—flogged, branded, mutilated, burned, and generally abused at the whims of their masters.

### **Brazil's Independent Slave Republic**

One of the most successful examples of slave resistance in all of the Americas was the establishment of the Republic of Palmares (pronounced paul-MAR-ays) in northeastern Brazil between 1630 and 1697. Fleeing coastal towns and plantations, slaves settled in communities in the area's heavy inland forests. They lived in clusters of huts, designed as fortresses against attack. They were ruled by a king who lived in Cerca Real do Macaco, the republic's capital city. The king was assisted by ministers of justice, guards, and civil and military servants.

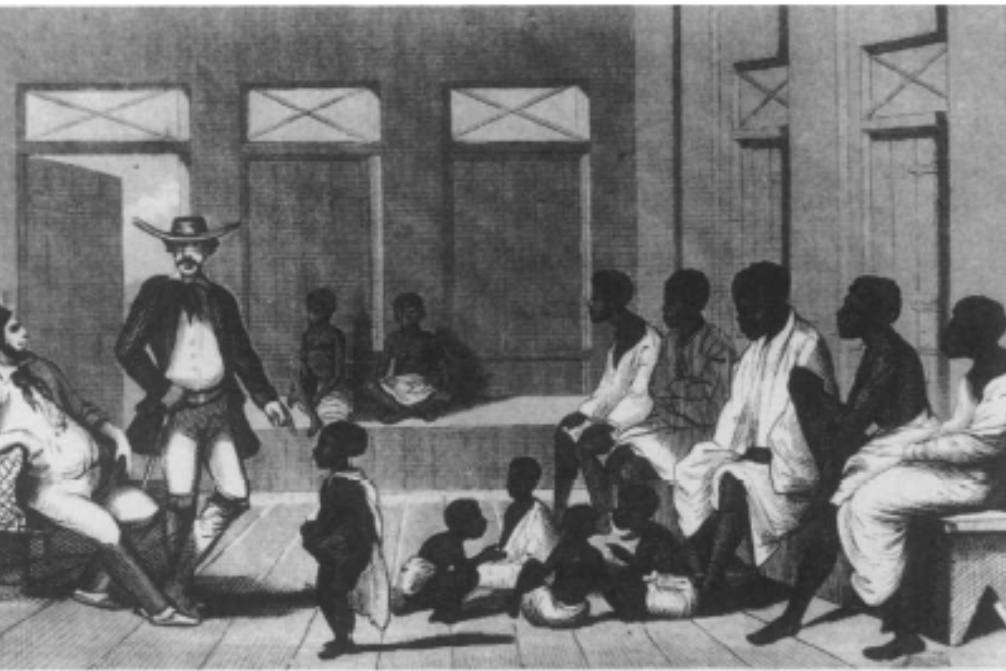
Palmares was a magnet for fugitive slaves and at its peak had a population of about 20,000. The rebel slaves developed their own system of laws in which murder, robbery, and adultery were punishable by death. They traded agricultural products such as bananas, sugarcane, and beans with neighboring villages for utensils, arms, and ammunition.

Palmares was destroyed twice—first by the Dutch in 1644, as they attempted to occupy that part of Brazil, and again in 1676 by the Portuguese army. Each time, the communities quickly rebuilt. Finally, in 1696, Portuguese soldiers laid siege to the capital city. The longest-running slave rebellion in the New World ended in 1697 when soldiers finally penetrated the city's walls and the king and his closest advisers jumped to their death from a cliff rather than face capture.

In the Spanish colonies, many of the harshest laws were designed to keep slaves from running away or revolting. Laws in place by 1536 in Lima forbade African slaves to be on the streets at night unless they were with their master. The first offense was punishable by 100 lashes and the second offense by mutilation. Slaves who ran away for less than six days were mutilated. Those gone for a longer period of time were often hunted down and killed (for a reward).

In Portugal's colony of Brazil, slaves on the plantations were worked the hardest and treated the worst. They were

constantly under the threat of being whipped by their white overseers in the fields. Though there were laws to protect slaves from cruel masters, they were mostly ignored. The Portuguese invented unique devices and ways to punish and torture their slaves. One such device was made of wood or iron and was designed to restrict the arms and legs of slaves for several days. Other cruelties included a punishment where a slave was tied facedown and beaten for nine (*novenas*) or thirteen (*trezenas*) consecutive nights.



## Breaking the chains

Despite the terrible price if they were caught, slaves in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies ran away from their masters as often as possible. Sometimes they fled to the cities, hoping to find work and blend in with the population of freedpeople. Slaves also fled to the mountains or other remote regions to join groups of other fugitive slaves. Some groups of runaway slaves established organized communities. They harassed the colonial planters and encouraged other slaves to run away or revolt.

An illustration of the Brazilian slave trade around 1850. The plantation owner, seated in his home, looks over prospective slaves a man if offering for sale. Corbis-Bettmann. Reproduced by permission

In Santa Maria, Colombia, in 1550, slaves burned the city and terrorized the white population. A few years later an African slave calling himself a king led a violent uprising of slaves. Both rebellions were crushed, and a series of laws and royal decrees were enacted to try to keep slaves in order.

The greatest slave rebellion in Brazil lasted almost seventy years (see box titled "Brazil's Independent Slave Republic"). From 1630 to 1697, runaway slaves lived in organized communities in the forests of northeastern Brazil. They had their own government, legal system, and friendly trading relations with neighboring villages. The Portuguese army destroyed them in 1697.

# Colonial America

## Slaves come to North America

African slaves first came to the North American mainland in 1526 when a Spanish explorer tried to colonize some land in what historians believe was South Carolina. He brought with him 500 Spanish settlers and 100 African slaves from Haiti (an island in the West Indies). The expedition's leader soon died, the slaves revolted, and the colonists fled to Haiti. The earliest example of an established colony using slaves on the mainland was in Saint Augustine, Florida, which the Spanish settled in 1565.

Slaves did not come to the British colonies of mainland North America in great numbers until the last quarter of the seventeenth century (1675-1700). After having unsuccessfully tried different sources of labor—Indian slaves and white and Indian indentured servants—the colonists ultimately turned to African slaves. The New World planters reasoned that the supply of Africans was plentiful, they were easily identified by the color of their skin if they ran away, they were cheap to buy and maintain, they could be controlled, and they were bound to serve for life.

The southern colonies needed as much labor as possible for their large-scale tobacco, rice, and indigo (a plant used for making dyes) farms. (Cotton did not become an important crop until 1800.) The middle and northern colonies, especially New England, were more interested in slaves as commodities—things to be bought and sold for a profit—than their labor potential. Thus the greatest concentration of slaves in the British colonies of mainland North America was on the plantations of the South. The southern colonies, where black slaves often outnumbered the white colonists, had much harsher slave codes than the northern colonies.

### **Indentured Servants**

Indentured servants worked under a contract, bound to their masters for terms between two and fourteen years (the average term was from four to seven years). For the white servants, the terms of service were part of the deal that paid for their passage from England to the New World. Upon completion of their contract, indentured servants were promised their freedom and perhaps some food, clothing, tools, or land.

Indentured servants were part of the labor force in every colony. The whites who came to the New World as indentured servants were a mixed group, mostly from the poor and rural classes of England. Many of them were unemployed farmhands, convicted criminals, or prisoners taken in English wars against the Irish and Scots. Others had been kidnaped by men who specialized in the trade, much like the raiders of West Africa's coasts had been doing for years (see "Draining Africa's heartland," Chapter 5). Sometimes sheer poverty drove whole families—men, women, and children—into selling themselves into servitude.

The trip across the Atlantic for white indentured servants was not much different from the Middle Passage endured by black slaves shipped from Africa (see "Merchants of death," Chapter 5). The same things that killed many African slaves on their Atlantic voyage—rough seas, overcrowding, lack of safe (uncontaminated) food and water, unsanitary conditions in general, and disease—also killed many whites. The death rate for whites on the trip from England to the colonies was sometimes as high as two-thirds of the passengers.

Whether white, black, or Indian, once they reached the New World, indentured servants were treated like slaves in many ways. They received no wages, only room and board and maybe the chance to learn a trade. They had no control over their working hours or conditions. Punishments were determined by their masters and included beatings, whippings, branding, and chaining.

# Southern colonies

## Virginia

In 1619 Jamestown, Virginia, was the first English colony to receive Africans. The twenty blacks a small Dutch warship left at Jamestown technically were not slaves. The first Africans in Virginia were, like about one-half of the white immigrants at that time, indentured servants (see box titled "Indentured Servants").

By 1650, there were only 300 blacks in Virginia. Records show that some of the blacks were free and had been granted land after completing their terms of indentured service. As Africans trickled into the colony in those early years, their status as equals with the white servants began to change. In 1640, a black servant was sentenced to life service for running away, a punishment never before used on white servants. After 1640, contracts with black indentured servants, if they existed at all, started to define the length of their service as "perpetual," or "for life," and included their future children as well. By 1661, laws in Virginia recognized the legality of hereditary lifetime service, or slavery, for blacks.

From 1675 to 1700, slave importation into Virginia increased sharply. At the close of the century, African slaves were arriving at a rate of more than 1,000 per year. By 1708, there were 12,000 black slaves and 18,000 white colonists. In 1756 there were 120,156 black slaves and 173,316 white colonists. Slaves at that time made up about 40 percent of the colony's population and actually outnumbered colonists in many of Virginia's counties.

As in the West Indies (see "The law of the whip," Chapter 6), where slaves also far outnumbered the colonists, by 1700 a strict slave code was enacted in Virginia to try to keep the large slave population in line. Slaves were not allowed to leave their plantation without a pass. Slaves guilty of murder or rape were hanged. Robbery of a house or store by a slave was punishable by sixty lashes from the sheriff. After the

whipping, the slave was placed in a pillory (a wooden frame used to confine prisoners) with his or her ears nailed to the post for a half-hour. Then their ears were cut off. Petty offenders were routinely whipped, maimed, or branded.

### Fact Focus

- Massachusetts, not Virginia, was the first colony to legally recognize slavery as an institution.
- The first Africans in the colony of Virginia were indentured servants, not slaves.
- The death rate for white indentured servants on the voyage from England to America was sometimes as high as two-thirds of the passengers.
- New England slave traders controlled most of the slave trade in the New World from 1700 to 1750.
- In 1765, there were 90,000 slaves in South Carolina, or about 69 percent of the colony's total population of 130,000.
- Thomas Jefferson was the first highly regarded thinker of the era to put in writing the idea that black Africans were biologically inferior to white Europeans.
- Of the 300,000 American soldiers who fought in the War of Independence, 5,000 were black.
- George Washington, during his two terms as president, held 317 slaves on his vast tobacco plantation, Mount Vernon.

### South and North Carolina

Settlers were encouraged to bring slaves to the Carolinas from the beginning. In 1663, planters were offered twenty acres for every African male slave and ten acres for every African female slave they brought into the colony. The business interests in the Carolinas of several members of the African Royal Company, England's government-supported slave-trading company, also contributed to the colony's use of slaves. These very powerful colonial investors sought profits from both the slave trade and the use of slaves on their own plantations.

In 1708, the population of the Carolinas was split almost equally between free and slave: there were 4,100 black slaves and 4,080 white colonists. In 1715 there were 10,500 black slaves and 6,250 white colonists. In South Carolina in 1739, the slaves outnumbered the whites by almost four to one: 35,000 slaves compared with only 9,000 colonists. In 1765, the slave population was 90,000, while the colonists numbered only 40,000. Slaves at that time made up about 69 percent of the colony's population.

Beginning in 1686, Carolina's colonial legislature passed laws that ensured the domination of black slaves by their white masters. In time, the slave code of the Carolinas became a model for much of mainland North America. Blacks were not allowed to engage in trade of any sort with whites. Slaves were not allowed off their master's property between sunset and sunrise without a pass. In 1722, white patrols were granted the authority to search and whip blacks deemed to be a threat to peace and order.

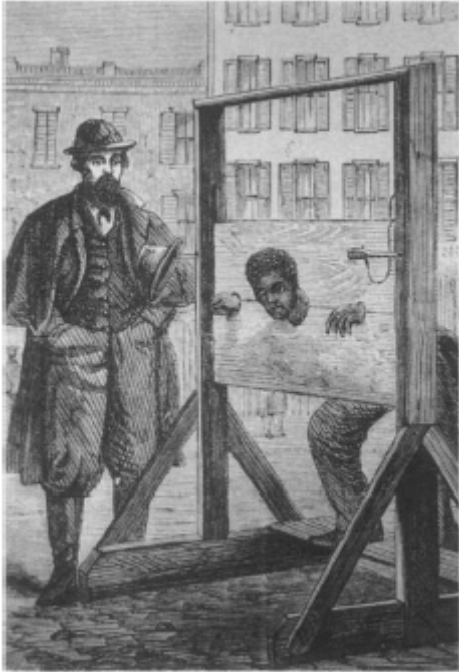
For slaves, crimes punishable by death included murder, burglary, arson, robbery, and running away. For stealing things like hogs or chickens, slaves were branded on the face with the letter "R." A thief caught for a second or third time faced the death sentence.

North and South Carolina shared the same slave code until North Carolina broke away and in 1741 enacted its own laws concerning slaves and servants. In 1756, the population of North Carolina included 19,000 slaves and 60,000 whites. The



**An illustration of the introduction of African slavery into Virginia.**  
Archive Photos, Inc.  
Reproduced by permission.





**A male slave confined in stocks in Florida.**

Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

presence of Quakers, a religious group opposed to slavery, and the lower number of slaves compared with colonists made slavery in North Carolina a little less harsh. The colony's slave code at least tried to establish procedures by which slave offenders were tried. Even though the panel of jurors consisted of four slave owners and two justices (nothing close to the modern concept of a jury of peers), it was a step forward in the protection of slaves from their masters' crueller abuses.

## **Maryland**

It is unclear how many slaves were in Maryland in the early years of the colony, but records indicate their presence as early as 1638. In 1663, Maryland legally recognized the institution of slavery. The

slave population increased at a rate of a couple of hundred each year in the first decade of the 1700s. By 1750, however, there were about 40,000 black slaves in the colony's population of 140,000. In 1790, there were 100,000 black slaves and 200,000 white colonists. Slaves were about one-third of Maryland's population.

Just as everywhere else where slaves were present in great numbers, Maryland enacted strict laws to try to maintain order. Special punishments—whipping, branding, or death—were reserved for blacks guilty of such crimes as murder, arson, burglary, theft, associating with whites, and disorderly conduct.

## **Georgia**

The southernmost colony, Georgia, had a unique beginning. Its earliest settlers were Englishmen who were released from prison in order to help their mother country develop the New World. The colony's trustees forbade three things: free land titles, alcoholic beverages, and slaves. Georgia was supposed

to supply England with goods such as silks, oils, dyes, and drugs—products that did not require a slave-labor force.

The Georgian colonists, however, only had to look to their northern neighbor, South Carolina, to see how profitable it was to own slaves. In 1750, after many pleas and petitions from the planters of Georgia, the prohibition on slaves was lifted and free land titles were granted (alcohol had been allowed in 1742). By 1760, there were 3,000 black slaves and 6,000 white colonists. In 1773, there were 18,000 white colonists and 15,000 black slaves. Slaves at that time were about 45 percent of the colony's population.

Georgia's slave code, like many of its new colonists, came mostly from South Carolina. In Georgia, no more than seven blacks were allowed to congregate unless a white person was present. Slaves could not possess canoes, horses, or cattle. Under no conditions were slaves to be taught to read or write. And finally, as a gesture to protecting their health, no slave was to work more than sixteen hours a day.

## **Middle colonies**

### **New York**

Before the English captured New Netherland and renamed it New York in 1664, the area was mostly controlled by the Dutch and their government-supported slave-trading firm, the West India Company. The Dutch brought a steady supply of black slaves from Africa and Brazil to work their farms in the Hudson River valley. The Dutch colonists in New Netherland treated slaves relatively well. There were few restrictions on their movement, and manumission (a formal release from bondage) was possible as a reward for their good services.

The Dutch apparently never got around to developing a slave code. The English, however, passed laws in 1665 and 1684 that made slavery an accepted legal institution. New York's slave code was similar to the codes of the other colonies. Laws passed in 1702 prohibited any trade between colonists and

black slaves. Slaves were not allowed to meet in groups of more than three. And a "common whipper" was appointed to carry out sentences of the courts.



**Slaves appear in court in New York, defending themselves against charges of being involved in arson in a slave uprising in 1741. Although there was no hard evidence, eleven slaves were burned and eighteen were hanged.** Courtesy of the Library of Congress

In a short time, New York City, with its excellent harbors, became an important slave market for the region. The city's merchants competed with the English traders for the slave trade's profits. The result was that the number of African slaves rose steadily. In 1698, there were 2,170 African slaves in New York's population of 18,067. By 1771, the number of slaves climbed to 19,883 in a total population of 168,007. Slaves at that time were about 12 percent of the colony's population.

The New York colonists used slaves in a variety of ways—on farms, in households, and in small factories. A very wealthy landowner might own between twenty-five and sixty slaves. Small

farmers, tradespeople, and craftspeople might own a slave or two. Slaves earned their keep in a variety of ways. Many slaves became skilled craftspeople, capable of doing any kind of work a city or rural area needed. They sometimes competed with white artisans for work as carpenters; masons; blacksmiths; weavers; goldsmiths; and makers of shoes, sails, brushes, and candles.

The skilled slaves in New York enjoyed a few benefits and liberties that were denied to their mostly unskilled counterparts in the southern colonies. They had better food, clothing, and medical care. Some slaves could acquire private property. The more slaves were valued by their masters, the greater their bargaining power was in seeking freedom through a fixed term

of service. Some slaves saved enough money to purchase manumission from their masters.

## **New Jersey**

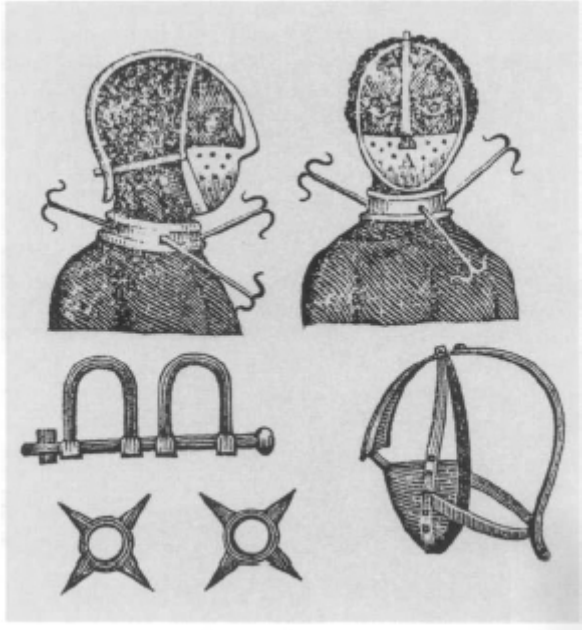
New Jersey had the second-highest slave population of the middle colonies, next to New York. In 1726, there were 2,581 black slaves in a total population of 32,422. By 1745, there were 4,606 black slaves and 56,797 white colonists. At that time slaves made up about 8 percent of the population. By 1790 New Jersey had 11,000 slaves. Slaves worked on New Jersey's farms, mines, lumberyards, shipyards, ports, and docks.

The colony's early Dutch and Swedish settlers had very few black slaves. When the English took over in 1664, they granted new settlers seventy-five acres of land for every slave or servant brought into the colony. The English also brought with them some very strict laws and harsh punishments for slaves. Petty theft was punished by whipping and grand larceny by branding; rapists were castrated, and murderers were put to death.

## **Pennsylvania and Delaware**

African slaves were present in Pennsylvania as early as 1639, but only in small numbers. The German, Dutch, and Swedish settlers had little use for slaves on their small farms, and white laborers resented the competition for work that slaves would bring. There was also considerable antislavery sentiment in the colony for moral and ethical reasons (questions of right and wrong). Pennsylvania's influential population of Quakers voiced their religious opposition to slavery as early as 1688.

The slave population grew slowly in the 1700s. In 1721 there were an estimated 2,500 to 5,000 blacks in the colony. In 1751, there were about 11,000 blacks in Pennsylvania, with 6,000 in Philadelphia alone. And in 1790, out of 10,274 blacks in the colony, 3,737 were slaves and 6,537 were free, attesting to the strength of the Quakers' persistent pleas for the manumission of slaves.



**Woodcut of slave-catching apparatus: mask and shackle.**  
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

In 1700 slavery was recognized in a code of laws very similar to New Jersey's. Despite laws restricting their movements, blacks in Pennsylvania moved about freely to visit with friends. Pennsylvania's slaves were fed, clothed, and housed better than most colonial slaves. The Quakers taught many slaves to read and write in the course of providing religious instruction.

Delaware was part of Pennsylvania until 1703, and much of its early history of slavery is tied to its larger neighbor. In 1722, Delaware

enacted its own slave code, which was very similar to the other middle colonies'. Over the years, however, without a large number of Quakers in the colony, Delaware became more like its southern neighbors than its mother colony.

## Northern colonies

### New England's slave traders

As a group, the northern colonies of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire are known as New England. In 1638 a Salem ship named *Desire* unloaded New England's first cargo of African slaves at Boston Harbor. The slaves were brought from Haiti, where they had been "seasoned" (broken in) on the island's plantations. The *Desire* also unloaded other goods from the West Indies, including cotton, salt, and tobacco.

The *Desire* was the first of many ships to sail into New England's harbors carrying slaves and goods from Africa and the West Indies. Once the slave trade began in earnest near the end of the 1600s, Massachusetts became the leading slave-

trading colony of New England, ahead of Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, in that order. New England's slave traders had smaller ships than their European competitors, such as England's Royal African Company, but they managed to control most of the slave trade in the New World from 1700 to 1750.

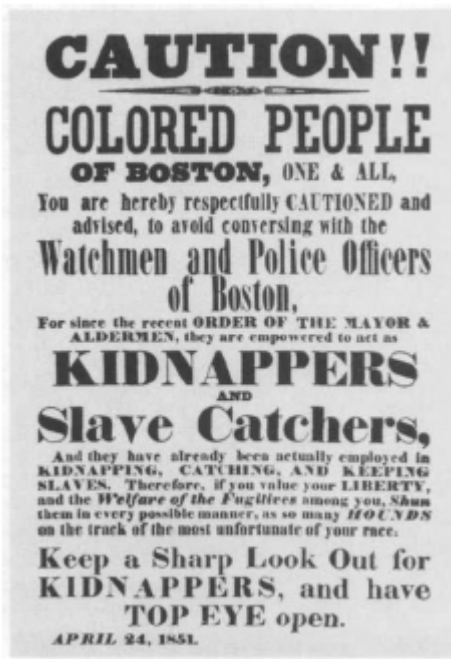
Ships left the harbors of New England loaded with items such as beans, peas, corn, fish, dairy products, horses, hay, lumber, lead, steel, iron, shoes, candles, dry goods, and muskets (guns). They sailed to the West Indies, where they traded most of their cargo for rum. The "rum boats," as they were called, then sailed to Africa, where they traded the liquor, along with iron bars, beads, and cheap jewelry, for slaves (in 1756, a male African slave was priced at 115 gallons of rum and a female at 95 gallons). The ships then sailed back to the West Indies, where they traded some, if not most, of the freshly captured African slaves to the sugar islands for "seasoned" slaves, more rum, sugar and molasses (to make yet more rum), cocoa, and other products of the islands.

From the West Indies, the ships sailed up the Atlantic coast to New England's major slave ports: Boston, Salem, Marblehead, Newburyport, Portsmouth, New London, Newport, and Bristol. The slaves were sold in the local markets, where New Englanders bought some of them to work in their fields, forests, shipyards, workshops, and households. Most of the slaves brought to New England ports, however, were purchased by southern planters and transported to their tobacco and rice plantations in Virginia and South Carolina.

### **Fewer slaves, less punishment**

The land, climate, and soil of the northern colonies were not suited for large-scale farming, and thus only a small number of slaves were needed compared with the South. In 1700, when New England's total population was around 90,000, there were only about 1,000 slaves in the region. The black population of Massachusetts, the largest slaveholder in the area in 1764, was only 5,235 compared with 218,950 whites. In Connecticut in

1756, there were 3,587 black slaves and 128,212 white colonists. Rhode Island had the highest percentage of slaves compared with colonists in the region, but they amounted to no more than 5 percent of the population. New Hampshire, as late as 1773, had only 674 slaves.



A handbill posted in Boston in 1851 warning black people, free or enslaved, to watch out for slave catchers. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

In 1641, Massachusetts was the first colony—even before Virginia—to recognize the legal institution of slavery. In the last quarter of the century, the other New England colonies followed suit. Rhode Island actually passed a law banning slavery in 1652, but it was ignored.

Slave codes did not appear in New England until the late 1700s, and they were not nearly as harsh as in the southern colonies. As in almost every colony, whites were forbidden to trade with blacks and restrictions were placed on the movement of blacks. However, few crimes were punishable by a death sentence, and branding and maiming were seldom used. Instead, whippings were the punishment of choice for most of New England's masters and colonial officials.

## Education and marriage

The slaves of New England were probably the best-educated and best-trained in all the colonies. In the early years, the Puritans (Protestant settlers) taught slaves and Indians to read the Bible. Some Puritans, such as Cotton Mather (1663-1728; a clergyman and author), opened small schools with evening classes for the general instruction of Indians and blacks. The New England Quakers supported the education of young blacks and opened small schools for them as well.

Blacks, slave or free, were not just allowed to marry in New England, they were required to do so just as any other persons who wanted their union to be legal. The institution of marriage made life more stable for New England's slaves, and it was a law that blacks did not seem to mind obeying, given the many records of marriages between black couples, black-Indian couples, and even a few black-white couples.

## **Race and slavery**

### **Law and race**

The twenty Africans traded for food and supplies by a Dutch warship in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619 were most likely stolen at sea from Spanish slave traders. As captives of the Spanish, the Africans had been baptized as Roman Catholics and given Christian names. As Christians, these first Africans in the American colonies, by custom, could not be enslaved for life. They were, like most of the rest of America's first immigrants, made servants for a fixed period of time, usually four to seven years (see "Indentured Servants" box on page 110).

From the time the first Africans arrived to the time each colony made slavery a legally defined practice, the definition of who could be enslaved slowly changed. Beginning with the first black indentured servant who was sentenced in Virginia to a lifetime of servitude in 1640, the laws in the colonies started shifting. Faced with a severe shortage of permanent workers—for indentured servants did not stay long—the colonists basically decided that being a baptized Christian no longer saved black Africans from lifelong enslavement.

### **Religion and race**

The change in the legal status of blacks over the years reflected a belief among the British colonists that black Africans were inferior to white Europeans. As Christians, some colonists turned to the Bible to justify their prejudices. Christian legend taught that Ham, the son of Noah, fathered the African peoples. In the Bible's Old Testament, Ham



incur the curse of his father for being disrespectful. The descendants of Ham and Ham's son Canaan, according to Noah, were to be servants of all men. It was therefore right and proper, reasoned some British colonists, to enslave people of a race already condemned by Scripture to servitude.

Unlike the colonists of Latin America, who were influenced by the Roman Catholic church, the Protestant British were under no obligation to baptize their slaves in the New World. Slaves were not allowed to worship with their masters in the British colonies until the 1800s. Although baptism into the Christian faith did not save black Africans from lifelong enslavement in Latin America, it at least resulted in Spanish and Portuguese slave masters seeing their slaves as human beings—people with souls, and equal before the eyes of God (see "Catholic colonies," Chapter 6).

Marriages between whites and blacks, more frequent and accepted by society in Latin America, were very rare in colonial North America. In Latin America, a child born to a black slave woman and fathered by a white man (usually the master or a member of his household) was often treated well; some were even sent to Europe for a formal education. In colonial North America, mulatto (pronounced muh-LAH-toe; of mixed white and black ancestry) children were often sold by their ashamed masters with little hesitation.

Of course, not all British colonists were mean or evil people who ignored their Christian convictions in order to make profits from the sweat of other human beings. Most colonists, in fact, did not even own slaves. The influence of religious movements, such as the Quakers and the Puritans, was important in some of the American colonies and lessened some of the harsher effects of racial slavery.

### **Biology and race**

The British colonists viewed Africans not only as morally inferior but biologically inferior as well. Africans were seen as physically a lesser breed than white Europeans. To many white

colonists, black Africans were alien and foreign, even mysterious and threatening. The pigment of their skin, the shape of their faces, and the texture of their hair all set Africans apart to the whites and fueled their contention that Africans were a race that was somehow suited to enslavement.

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), the principal author of the Declaration of Independence and the third president of the United States, was the first highly regarded thinker of the colonial era to put in writing the idea that black Africans were biologically inferior to white Europeans. In a 1793 book entitled *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson also put forth the idea that blacks and whites were too different from one another, by nature, to be able to live together in peace.

## **The American Revolution**

### **Cry for freedom**

By 1750, slavery was a fact of life in colonial America. There were few slaves in the North, but the profits of the slave trade were essential in developing thriving industries connected to the trade, such as shipbuilding, iron foundries, sawmills, rum distilleries, and sail making. In the South, where a vast majority of the slaves lived, slavery on the plantations was a way of life for Africans, from cradle to grave and from generation to generation. About two-thirds of the slaves in the colonies at this point had been born on American soil.

In the Declaration of Independence, published on July 4, 1776, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "All men are created equal." At the time, neither the writer nor the Declaration's signers intended those five words to apply to anyone but an elite group of landowning colonists who sought their independence from England. Yet the notion of equality, the cry for freedom from oppression, was heard and understood by the hundreds of thousands of African slaves as well. At the same time that the colonists were demanding their freedom from King George III of England, the slaves repeatedly petitioned the colonial assemblies and courts for their freedom, asking simply: How

can you shout "Liberty or death!" while holding at least half a million human beings in slavery?

### **Fighting for freedom**

Blacks were involved in some of the earliest battles of the American Revolution. On March 5, 1770, a forty-seven-year-old runaway slave named Crispus Attucks was the first man to die for the cause in a hail of British bullets known as

the Boston Massacre. In the spring of 1775, blacks fought alongside the white militia in the battles of Lexington and Concord, the first examples of armed resistance to the British.

**Crispus Attucks, an escaped slave, led a group of angry colonists in taunting British soldiers. One soldier panicked and opened fire; Attucks and four others died in the Boston Massacre, on March 5, 1770. National Archives and Records Administration.**



Also in the spring of 1775, General George Washington (1732-1799) formed the Continental Army on the outskirts of Boston. In November 1775, Washington decided not to allow the enlistment of blacks—free or slave—into his troops. A few days earlier, however, the British governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, had declared that all slaves who joined the British side would be set free. When Washington learned of Dunmore's Proclamation, he reversed course, and in January 1776, blacks were allowed to enlist.

Dunmore's Proclamation had an almost immediate effect on the huge slave population of the South. Slaves ran away by the

thousands. In 1778, an estimated 30,000 slaves ran away from their masters in Virginia. South Carolina lost about 25,000 slaves between 1775 and 1783. And by the end of the war, 11,000 of Georgia's 15,000 slaves had fled. Hundreds of slaves joined Dunmore, who formed all-black fighting units in what he called his "Ethiopian Regiment." Their motto: "Liberty to Slaves."



Revolutionary war hero Peter Salem (c. 1750-1816) standing behind Lieutenant Grosvenor in a painting of the Battle of Bunker Hill (1775). Salem, a Massachusetts slave, turned the tide of the battle when he shot and killed the commander of the British troops as they advanced on the colonists. Associated Publishers. Reproduced by permission.

By the end of the war, all the states except Georgia and South Carolina had enlisted slaves and free blacks in their state and Continental armies. The slaves joined with the understanding that they would have their freedom after three years of service. The government compensated their masters with money for their "loss." Of the 300,000 American soldiers who fought in the War of Independence, 5,000 were black. Blacks served alongside whites in the army as well as the navy and were engaged in almost every military battle between 1775 and the British surrender at Yorktown in 1781.

## The aftermath

There is no doubt that blacks helped colonial America gain its independence from the British. At the war's end, however, most of America's blacks were still not free. Black soldiers in the North and South went home with their personal freedom but little to show for their effort. Many fugitive slaves from the South were rounded up and returned to their plantations (with help from the northern authorities). Still, tens of thousands of slaves made it to freedom; how many is impossible to know. At least 13,000 blacks made it onto British ships as they retreated from Charleston, Savannah, and New York in 1782, but some of those were reenslaved in the West Indies.

**George Washington with slaves and an overseer at Mount Vernon, his tobacco plantation in Virginia.** The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.



The immediate effect of the Revolution on the South was to increase the number of slaves that were needed on the plantations due to wartime losses. The importation of slaves, which had been banned as a wartime measure in 1776, was resumed with a vengeance as the planters of Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia sought to refill their plantations with African slaves.

By 1787, when delegates from twelve of the thirteen colonies met in Philadelphia for the Constitutional Convention, many

of the northern states had already outlawed slavery in their own constitutions. On the federal level, however, the largest slaveholding states of the lower South prevailed on the issues of slavery. The slave trade could continue for at least twenty more years, three-fifths of the slave population could be counted toward determining the number of each state's Congressional representatives, and all states were required to return fugitive slaves to their owners. The federal Constitution was ratified on June 21, 1788.

### **Founding Fathers**

On April 30, 1789, the person who had presided over the Constitutional Convention, General George Washington, was sworn in as the first president of the United States. At the time, one in five Americans were living in bondage. Ninety percent of the country's 700,000 slaves lived in the South. The president's home state of Virginia led the nation with a slave population of 304,000. The president himself, during his two terms in office, held 317 slaves on his vast tobacco plantation, Mount Vernon.

In 1793 Thomas Jefferson, the writer of the famous words "All men are created equal," was secretary of state and the owner of more than 130 slaves on his Virginia farming estate, Monticello (pronounced mon-te-CHELL-oh). In his eighty-three-year lifetime, Jefferson freed just three of his slaves. When he died on July 4, 1826, he granted freedom to five more.

There is little doubt that the black slave population of America did not benefit from the bloodshed of the American Revolution in the same way as their white masters. Although slavery was on the decline in the North and legally abolished in many places there, in 1790 there were still slaves in every state except Massachusetts and Vermont. The promises of the American Revolution, and the rights guaranteed in the federal Constitution—freedom and equality—were still denied to all but a few black Americans. The goals of the antislavery forces

were strengthened by the Revolution but would have to wait many more years before bearing fruit.

# Slave Life in Antebellum America

## Turn of the century

The era between 1800 and the beginning of the Civil War (1861) is known as the antebellum period (pronounced anteh-BELL-um), which means "before the war." The early 1800s was a time of great change brought on by the invention and use of various machines in the workplace. The Industrial Revolution in England (a period of great economic changes in the late 1700s) had a major effect on the newly created United States and, ultimately, on the large population of slaves in the South. The invention of weaving and spinning machines in England dramatically changed the textile industry by making it easier to produce cotton goods. Consequently, the price of cotton products went down and the demand for cotton—raw and processed—significantly increased.

The planters in the southern United States had experienced hard times in the decade since the American Revolution



(1775-1783). The markets were not as strong for their staple crops of tobacco, rice, and indigo (a plant used for making dyes), and they were eager to switch to cotton. England's textile mills would buy as much as they could grow and pay a fair price for it. There remained a problem, however. Separating the fragile cotton fibers from the seed—a process known as ginning (pronounced JIN-ing)—could only be done by hand, which made it labor-intensive and costly.

## **The machine that changed everything**

Eli Whitney (1765-1825), a young white schoolteacher from the North, found the solution in 1793. While visiting a plantation in Georgia, Whitney learned of the planters' desperate need for a machine that could separate cotton fiber from seed. In a matter of days he made a model, and in a matter of weeks he worked out the mechanical difficulties and began making plans to manufacture his invention. With just two people working it, Whitney's cotton gin cleaned as much cotton as 100 workers could by hand, thus freeing up laborers for the cultivation of the crop.

The invention of the cotton gin led to a tremendous increase in cotton cultivation on the plantations of the Deep South and to the rise of an industrial economy in the North centered on the manufacture of cotton products. U.S. cotton production increased from 3,000 bales in 1793 to 178,000 bales in 1800. In 1825, American plantations were producing 500,000 bales of cotton a year, and by 1840, three-fourths of the world's cotton was coming out of the South.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Carolinas and Georgia grew most of the cotton (Virginia continued to grow tobacco), but the area of cotton cultivation pushed westward as people migrated by the thousands into Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana by 1820. By 1840, the cotton belt stretched from the Atlantic coast to Texas. In 1834, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana were producing almost two-thirds of the cotton grown in the United States.



## Cotton and slavery

The rise of cotton as the number one crop of the nation had a tremendous impact on the institution of slavery and the lives of slaves in the American South. In 1790, there were fewer than 700,000 slaves in the United States. In 1830 there were more than 2 million slaves; less than 3,000 lived in the North. And in 1850, the U.S. census chief estimated that of the 2.5 million slaves producing staple crops, 1.8 million, or almost three-

**Women cotton workers in the South.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

fourths, were in cotton. About 350,000 slaves were in tobacco, 150,000 in sugar, 125,000 in rice, and 60,000 in hemp. In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, there were just under 4 million slaves in the United States. Seven out of eight slaves, or around 3.5 million, lived and worked on the farms and plantations of the South.

The emergence of cotton farming and its westward expansion affected slavery in two important ways. First, it immediately increased the number of African slaves imported into the South. With help from New England slave traders, in 1803 alone South Carolina and Georgia planters imported 20,000 African slaves to work their new cotton fields. Second, the demand for slaves to work the ever-growing number of cotton farms created a slave trade between the states and forced the migration of hundreds of thousands of slaves from the upper South states of Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas into the Deep South and west—into Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

## **The African slave trade**

The U.S. federal government's official abolition of the African slave trade in 1807 did little to stop the importation of African slaves, the growth of slavery, or its westward expansion in the cotton belt of the South. The main problem with the law was that it was poorly enforced, and consequently ignored by the people who profited most from the trade—the New England shipowners, the Middle Atlantic merchants, and the southern planters. The main effect of the prohibition, says one historian, was the creation by slave traders of the first underground railroad, a secret network for illegally transporting blacks—in this case, newly imported Africans—into slavery.

In spite of the 1807 law, the African slave trade persisted and, at times, flourished right up until the Civil War. There is evidence that in 1836 as many as 15,000 Africans were being shipped annually on American vessels from Africa through Havana, Cuba, to Texas. Bay Island, in the Gulf of Mexico, sometimes held as many as 16,000 newly arrived Africans

waiting to be taken to markets along the southern U.S. coast—to ports in Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.



## The domestic slave trade

What little, if any, decrease there was in the importation of slaves from Africa was made up for by the rise of the domestic—or interstate—slave trade. The large numbers of settlers who migrated west starting in the 1810s were desperate for laborers to clear the lands and cultivate cotton, and they were willing to pay good prices for slaves. With the plantation economy of the upper South in decline, the farmers of Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas found themselves

A slave coffle, or a group of people chained together, passes the United States capitol. Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

with a surplus of laborers and became the main suppliers of slaves to the cotton belt.

One of the reasons the upper South was able to continually supply slaves to the Deep South was that some slaveholders practiced the systematic breeding of slaves. Slave girls often became mothers at thirteen and fourteen years of age. Rewards, prizes, and even freedom were promised to slave women who bore the most children for their master. In 1832, an estimated 6,000 slaves per year were being exported from Virginia as a result of breeding. Maryland and Kentucky were also known as "slave-breeding" states.

### Fact Focus

- In 1840, three-fourths of the world's cotton was grown in the American South.
- In 1860, there were almost 4 million slaves in the U.S. South. Seven out of eight slaves lived and worked on farms and plantations.
- The official abolition of the African slave trade in the United States in 1807 did little to stop the importation of African slaves.
- Slave trade between states generated millions of dollars annually for the U.S. economy.
- Virginia, Maryland, and Kentucky were known as "slave-breeding" states.
- In 1860 one out of four southern families owned slaves. Of those who owned slaves, 88 percent owned fewer than twenty.
- In the Black Codes of the South, crimes such as running away or talking back to a white person were punishable by a whipping of 300 to 500 lashes.
- In the cities of the South, it was common for slaves to hire themselves out and pay their master a set fee or portion of their wages.
- Marriages between slaves were not legal.
- In the deep South, it was against the law to teach slaves how to read and write. Ninety percent of slaves were illiterate.
- By 1835, religious services for blacks, slave or free, had to be presided over by a white minister.
- Christmastime was a weeklong holiday for both plantation and city slaves.

The slave trade between the states generated millions of dollars annually for the U.S. economy. Some of the slave trade was handled by companies and their agents who specialized in the business. Slave traders constantly traveled the countryside in search of good deals on slaves. The traders then took the slaves into a nearby town or city where they were housed in the local slave pen. Slave pens were typically converted chicken coops, stables, or warehouses and served as secure holding areas for slaves awaiting public auction or private sale. Businesses that sold farm supplies and animals also advertised slaves. Slaves were also sold at auctions, at county fairs, and through newspaper advertisements.



Major slave-trading centers in the older states of the South included Baltimore, Washington, Richmond, Norfolk, and Charleston. Slaves were transported from as far north as Philadelphia and New York all the way to the cotton-belt cities of Montgomery, Memphis, and New Orleans. If it was spring or summer, slaves were chained together and marched over land to their destinations. In the fall and winter, slaves were loaded on ships for an ocean voyage to the Deep South and West.

## Ownership

In 1860 there were about 4 million slaves in the United States, 90 percent of them living in the rural South. In the same year there were about 1.5 million free families in the South (in a total white population of 8 million). One-fourth, or 385,000 free families, owned slaves. The average white southern farmer did not own slaves but worked his small farm with his

**A slave market takes its place among the shop fronts in Atlanta, Georgia, before the Civil War.**  
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

**Weighing in the cotton. On cotton plantations, whippings were the standard punishment for slaves who did not pick enough cotton to meet the quota for the day.** Archive Photos/Lass. Reproduced by permission.

family and maybe some hired help. Of those families who owned slaves, 88 percent owned twenty or fewer slaves. Owners of more than fifty slaves were in the minority, and only 3,000 families owned more than one hundred slaves. More than 200,000 owners, or just over half, held five or fewer slaves. Contrary to popular myth, the slave-owning South was not full of large plantations with pillared mansions run by aristocratic gentlemen with hundreds of slaves.

The number of large slaveholders was small, but their cotton production and public influence on life in the South were enormous. In 1860, the United States was producing more than 5 million bales of cotton annually. The four states that produced 70 percent of the cotton—Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Georgia—were also at the top of the list in the number of large slaveholders. And, compared with blacks in other parts of the South, blacks in these states did not live as long or have as many children.



## Field hands

The men, women, and children who slaved in the fields of the South were rated according to their ability to work. Children, who were often sent into the fields at age five or six to help their mothers, were rated as "quarter-hands." As they grew older and stronger, slaves were rated as half-hands, then three-quarter-hands, and finally full-hands. As slaves' productivity declined with age or poor health, their ratings went back down the scale.

At harvesttime, many of the plantations required their field hands to pick a minimum amount of cotton each day. Masters, depending on their level of greed or cruelty, demanded from 100 to 300 pounds of cotton per day from each slave (150 pounds was generally considered a good day's work). If the quota was not met, a slave could expect a whipping as punishment. If slaves picked more than their quotas, there was a good chance that their minimum daily loads would be increased for the next workday.

One former plantation slave, Solomon Northrup, wrote in his 1853 autobiography (see "Fruit of the vine," Chapter 9) about the constant sound of the whip at night during cottonpicking time (which lasted from late August through January): "It was rarely that a day passed by without one or more whippings. This occurred at the time the cotton was weighed. The delinquent, whose weight had fallen short, was taken out, stripped, made to lie upon the ground, face downwards, when he received a punishment proportioned to his offense. It is the literal, unvarnished truth, that the crack of the lash, and the shrieking of the slaves, can be heard from dark till bedtime, on Eppes' plantation, any day almost during the entire period of the cotton-picking season."



**A slave shows the scars left on his back from being whipped.** National Archives and Records Administration.



Clearing the fields, planting, weeding, hoeing, picking, ginning, and baling the cotton were all done by slaves. The pattern was the same whether the plantation grew cotton, tobacco, sugar, rice, or hemp. Slaves were forced to work very hard from daybreak to nightfall, from "can-see to can't-see," often working sixteen to eighteen hours a day. If work on the farm was slow because of the season, masters kept their field hands busy by hiring them out for a fee for short periods.

### **House slaves**

Trained slaves were also used for the many nonfarming jobs of the plantations. Both men and women worked as domestic servants, or slaves trained for household service. They held such jobs as cook, nursemaid, butler, seamstress, coachman, laundress, and waiter. Slaves were also carpenters, mechanics, brick makers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, weavers, stonemasons, architects, and engineers. House slaves had much more day-to-day contact with their masters, which could be good if their owners were kind and not so good if otherwise (see "Slaves of color," later in this chapter).

Masters apprenticed out some slaves to nonslaveholders at an early age so that they might learn a skill. Training for some slaves was provided by the skilled slaves on the plantation. Slaves who had skills were considered more valuable and, in general, enjoyed a higher status and better food, clothing, and housing than the plantation's field hands. On small farms, some slaves might work as field hands for half the day and domestics the other half. At harvesttime, on small farms and plantations alike, both house and field slaves worked together for very long hours to bring in the crops.



## Black Codes

As slavery took hold throughout the South in antebellum America, there emerged bodies of law that governed almost every aspect of slaves' lives, known as Black Codes. Each state had its own variations, but the general view was that slaves were nothing more than chattel (pronounced CHAT-el; property). As such, slaves had little standing in the eyes of the law except as property owned by their masters. A slave could not give testimony in court (except against other slaves or free blacks), be a party in any lawsuit, or have a jury trial. Slaves could not make contracts, own any property but a few personal items, make a will, or inherit anything.

**Wash day at  
the  
plantation.**

Archive  
Photos, Inc.  
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by



**In the antebellum years, slaves were restricted from meeting in groups without supervision of whites. Meetings were often held in secret, where the slaves could hear their own preachers, worship, sing, and talk freely.** Corbis-Bettmann. Reproduced by permission.

In some states, slaves were tried in regular courts for breaking the law. Other states had slave tribunals or trials by juries of slaveholders. Punishments were generally harsh and inflicted in public. Petty offenses were punished by "mild" whippings of twenty-five lashes. Crimes such as running away or talking back to a white person were punishable by 300 to 500 lashes. More serious crimes called for branding, imprisonment, or death. Arson, rape of a white woman, and conspiring to revolt were capital crimes.

As in colonial times (see Chapter 7), slaves were prohibited from a host of activities and behaviors. Slaves could not leave the plantation without permission, visit the homes of whites or free blacks, or have such people visit them. Slaves were not allowed to meet in groups unless a white person was present. Slaves could not hire themselves out for work or conduct themselves in any way as free people. In some communities,

slaves were not allowed to carry arms, gamble, smoke or swear in public, blow horns, beat drums, or make "joyful demonstrations."



**Book illustration of a slave hunt.**  
Archive Photos, Inc.  
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After the slave revolts led by Denmark Vesey (pronounced VEE-zee) in 1822 and Nat Turner in 1831 (see "Major uprisings," Chapter 10), the Black Codes became even more restrictive. In the 1830s, for example, Virginia banned nighttime religious meetings for slaves. Slaves could go to church only in the day, with their masters, to hear only white preachers. By 1835, the right for blacks, slave or free, to assemble in groups for any purposes without a white person

present was denied throughout the Deep South. Of course, blacks met anyway, in secret, at so-called "hush-harbor" meetings where they could hear their own preachers.

## **Frontier justice**

In the cotton-belt states of the South, where slaves often outnumbered their masters, plantation owners divided their counties into districts and paid local patrols to enforce the Black Codes. All white men were expected to serve in the patrols for periods of one to three months (failure to serve resulted in a fine). The patrols were mounted, armed, and equipped with dogs to track down missing or runaway slaves. Patrols punished offenders on the spot—usually by a whipping—and were empowered to search slave quarters for weapons or evidence of planned rebellion and to break up any gatherings of slaves.

Most of the time, however, what passed as law and justice for slaves was determined by the master of the plantation or, in his absence, his overseer. For a slave owner to subject one of his slaves to the public court system might mean the loss, through imprisonment or death, of his "property." Whenever possible, especially when dealing with daily discipline, plantation owners acted independently as judges, juries, and sometimes executioners.

The lash—or cowhide whip—was a brutal weapon in the skilled hands of a master, overseer, or driver (the person in charge of the slaves in the field, often a black). It was the same kind of whip that ranchers and farmers used to control bulls and horses. Slaves, both men and women, received whippings ranging from a few to 500 lashes on their bare backs while they were tied to a tree, bent over a barrel, or tied to stakes on the ground. Special paddles, with holes drilled through the heads to inflict the greatest pain, were sometimes used instead. Stocks (a wooden frame with holes for the hands and feet) were also a common form of punishment and a whipping site as well.



Slaves on large plantations were often subjected to supervision of overseers hired by the owner. Many overseers wielded the whip on a regular basis. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

In testimony before a congressional commission in 1863, Robert Smalls, an ex-slave from South Carolina, described some of the punishments he had witnessed in this passage from John Blassingame's *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies*:

I have had no trouble with my owner but I have seen a good deal in traveling around on the plantations. I have seen stocks in which the people are confined from twenty-four to forty-eight hours. In whipping, a man is triced up to a tree and gets a hundred lashes from a raw hide. Sometimes a man is taken to a blacksmith's shop, and an iron of sixty pounds weight is fastened to his feet, so that when it is taken off he cannot walk for days ... I have seen a man owned by John Verdier wearing an iron collar with two prongs sticking out at the sides like cow's horns ... I have heard of whipping a woman in the family way [pregnant] by making a hole in the ground for her stomach. My aunt was whipped so many a time until she has not the same skin she was born with.

There is no way to quantify the collective cruelty or kindness of southern slave owners. Historians point out that a great majority of planters owned twenty or fewer slaves and worked alongside them in the fields on their small farms. Under such

conditions, they argue, brutality was less likely. Still, hundreds of thousands of slaves lived on plantations that were too large for them to be under the direct supervision of their owners. Life on plantations with absentee owners was extremely harsh, as overseers were notorious for their abuse of power and their violence against slaves.

## **Bare necessities**

When it came to the necessities of life—food, clothing, housing, and health care—slaves were generally given the bare minimum. Some of the larger plantations had a central kitchen, but most did not, and slaves were responsible for making their own meals. The food was rationed to slaves on a daily or weekly basis. On average, adult slaves received about three pounds of meat (salt pork) and a peck (eight quarts) of cornmeal a week. Sometimes slaves also got rations of sweet potatoes, peas, rice, syrup, and fruit. If they had any time or energy left after their work duties, slaves could add to their diet by hunting, fishing, raising chickens, or growing their own small vegetable gardens.

Domestic servants not only had better food than field slaves (even if it was only their masters' leftovers), but they also had better clothes (even if they were mostly their masters' castoffs). Many of the women slaves made their own fabrics and clothing. The men wore cotton jeans and shirts of coarse cloth. Shoes were provided only for the winter months. The amount of food provided to slaves might affect their productivity, the slave owners reasoned, but they saw no connection between a slave's clothing and a possible rise in their personal profits.

Slaves were housed in small huts, or cabins. Most had no windows or floors and very little furniture. Slaves slept on boards, or blankets and quilts spread over beds of straw. A well-furnished cabin might have some cooking pots, a chest, a stool, and a bed. To let the smoke out from cooking, the cabins and huts had small holes in their roofs or crude chimneys, sometimes made of mud. To keep costs down, owners

crammed as many slaves as possible into each cabin. On one Mississippi plantation, 150 slaves lived in only twenty-four huts, each measuring fourteen by sixteen feet.

## City Slaves

In 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, there were about 4 million slaves in the United States. One out of eight slaves lived and worked in the towns and cities of the South. In general, they did the hardest and dirtiest work. Slaves built the streets, railroads, and bridges. They worked in the mines and quarries; they cut and milled the timber. Slaves worked on the riverboats and waterfronts and toiled in the shops and factories. They made turpentine, iron, cotton jeans, and tobacco products. With training from their masters or other slaves, many blacks found work as carpenters, masons, mechanics, shoemakers, painters, and cabinetmakers.

Life in the city provided more opportunities for slaves—especially slaves with marketable skills—to gain some small measures of freedom. On plantations, owners often hired out their slaves in return for a fee. In the city, the arrangement was taken a few steps further. It became common for slaves to hire themselves out and pay their master a set fee or a portion of their wages. This freed the master from having to provide food, clothing, health care, and even housing for his slave, as some owners allowed their hired-out slaves to live out as well. In turn, slaves gained more control over their own work and leisure time.

Many slaves in the city worked as domestic servants. Women, with help from their children, did most of the household chores. Their days began at 5:00 A.M. and lasted until late at night, with rarely a Sunday off. Men served as butlers, valets, coachmen, gardeners, and the like. Slave quarters were usually located behind the master's house. Typically, they were long, narrow two-story brick buildings, with small, windowless rooms. They were rundown, unfurnished, and terribly overcrowded. Compared with plantation slaves, however, city slaves in general had better housing, food, and clothing.

While the white patrols were the enforcers of the Black Codes in the rural South, in cities, the job belonged to the police force. The city of Charleston in the 1850s, for example, spent more money on their police force than on anything else in their budget; there were 281 police officers, 25 of them mounted. The city had a 10:00 P.M. curfew for blacks, and after that hour armed patrols of twenty to thirty police officers marched through the streets, looking for violators. A northern journalist who passed through the city in 1857 wrote that Charleston at night looked like a city at war.



**Several generations of a slave family outside a cabin on a plantation in South Carolina in 1862.** Photo by T. H. O'Sullivan. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



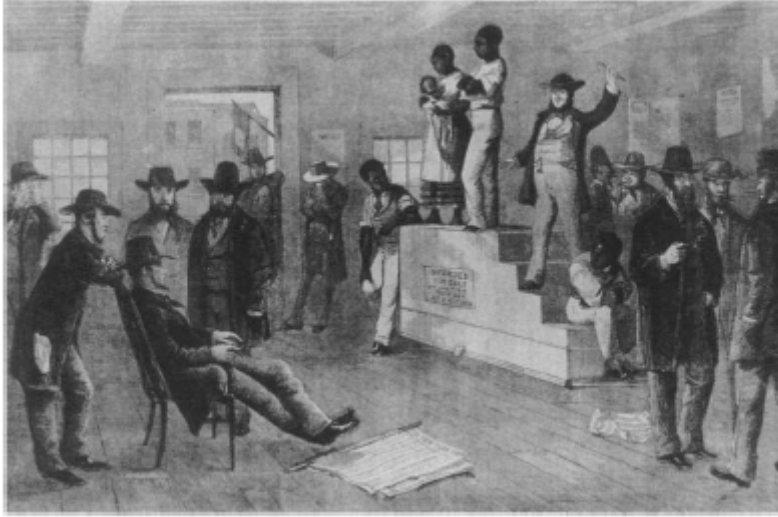
When slaves became ill, it was their masters' responsibility to provide medical treatment. If a slave was hired out at the time, then the temporary master was obligated to seek a doctor. Slaves who needed hospitalization were forced into segregated wards of the white hospitals or, if one existed, sent to the area's hospital for blacks. The quality of care that slaves received sometimes depended on how valuable they were to their masters. Many slaves distrusted the white man's medicine and preferred to treat their own illnesses with folk remedies, using the healing qualities of herbs and roots.



**Slave quarters on a South Carolina plantation, 1860.**  
Archive Photo, Inc.  
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## **Family life**

Given the conditions of slavery in the South, it is hard to imagine more difficult circumstances in which to raise a family. The very nature of slavery, which viewed enslaved blacks as property rather than human beings, denied to slaves the basic rights and freedoms necessary to form secure and stable families. Though many slaves were married, the Black Codes never recognized the legality of their marriages. When slaves were sold, families were often divided—husband from wife, parents from children—with little regard given to keeping a family together if higher profits were possible by selling them separately.



**A family on the block at a slave auction in Charleston, South Carolina, 1861.**  
Corbis-Bettmann.  
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The invention of the cotton gin had a profound effect on family life for slaves of the upper South. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of slaves were uprooted and forced to migrate to the new cotton fields of the Deep South and West (see "The domestic slave trade," earlier in this chapter). Many families were divided in the process. The breeding of slaves and the

selling of children eight to twelve years of age also tore apart many families. The practice also increased the number of runaway slaves, as husbands and wives sought to be reunited or parents fled from their masters in search of their children.

The master's absolute power made it nearly impossible for slaves to develop relationships and responsibilities considered typical of a healthy family structure at the time. A male slave had none of the traditional authority or prestige as breadwinner that was usually granted to a husband or father. The master was in charge of his labor and could exploit the slave's wife sexually or punish his children at will. A female slave, too, was denied her customary role as wife, mother, and homemaker. She had little choice, as she was forced to serve her master first. She also was worked too hard to have much time or energy left for her husband or children. Children, though obeying their parents, learned from an early age that their parents had very little ability to protect them from the master.

## Marriage

"Marriages" between slaves were often arranged by their masters (mostly for the purpose of breeding more slaves). As with many other aspects of their lives, slaves could either go

along with their masters' wishes or face severe punishments, including being sold away and forced to leave loved ones. For slaves who were able to choose their own spouses, marriage was sacred and obviously more stable in the long run, although no less likely to be broken up by sale than arranged marriages. Caroline Johnson Harrison, an ex-slave from Virginia, described her marriage experience on the plantation, which appears in John Blassingame's anthology *Slave Testimony*:

"Didn't have to ask Marsa or nothin'. Just go to Ant Sue an' tell her you want to get mated. She tell us to think 'bout it hard for two days, 'cause marryin' was sacred in the eyes of Jesus. After two days Mose an' I went back an' say we done thought 'bout it an' still want to get married. Then she called all the slaves after tasks to pray fo' the union that God was gonna make. Pray we stay together an' have lots of children an' none of 'em gets sold away from the parents. Then she lays a broomstick 'cross the sill of the house we gonna live in an' join our hands together. Fo' we step over it she ask us once mo' if we was sho' we wanted to get married. 'Course we say yes. Then she say, 'In the eyes of Jesus step into the holy land of matrimony.' When we step 'cross the broomstick, we was married."

Some married slaves were able to stay with their mates for life. Some slaves lived in the same place all their lives, raised families, and had grandchildren like most folks, despite the tremendous odds against them. As parents, slaves educated and protected their children the best they could. Mothers and fathers taught their daughters and sons what they knew about life and survival, such as how to hunt, fish, and trap food, or how to build canoes and make clothes.

## **Slaves of color**

Some historians point to the large number of mulattoes (muh-LAH-toes; people of mixed white and black ancestry), slave and free, as a sad testimony to the sexual abuse of black women slaves in antebellum America. In 1850 there were 246,000 mulatto slaves in a total slave population of 3.2

million. By 1860, the mulatto slave population had increased to 411,000 out of a total of 3.9 million slaves.

There is no way of telling how many children born to black slave women were the result of consensual relations or rape. There is, however, ample testimony from female slaves that their white masters forced sexual relations on them. A whipping or beating was often the punishment for slaves who resisted, and many slave women carried the scars of their defiance to the grave.

Mulattoes were considered blacks with light complexions. As such they were victimized by the same racial prejudices that held that all blacks, slave or free, were inferior to whites. Mulatto children born to slave mothers, however, were the offspring of white fathers and therefore more likely to receive somewhat better treatment than children born to black slave parents. Relations between white men and free black women, and the manumission of mulatto slaves by their white fathers, accounted for the 159,000 free mulattoes in the United States in 1850.

## **Organized religion**

Slave owners in the South tried to control every part of a slave's life, no matter how personal it was: where and how they worked and lived, who they married and had families with, how they were supposed to behave, and whether they were to be punished. If it was up to the slave owners, they would have controlled their slaves' spiritual lives as well—not that they didn't try.

After the abolitionists started their radical antislavery campaign in the 1830s, many states in the Deep South made it illegal for black preachers to hold services without at least one white person present. By 1835, religious services for blacks, slave or free, had to be presided over by a white minister. In urban areas, slaves were invited to attend the white churches, only to find themselves seated in the balconies or the back pews. On the plantations, owners brought in white preachers

for Sunday services, which they attended along with their families. In the name of providing slaves with moral and spiritual guidance, slaves were fed a steady diet of sermons on why they should always obey their masters, work their hardest, and never steal or destroy things.

Slaves in the cities and towns of the upper South, and those states that bordered on the North, were sometimes able to attend separate black churches. There they found a safe forum, free from their white masters, for their religious and political expressions. Blacks, slave or free, could worship and have their children attend Sunday Bible schools with their own community (see "Organized religion," Chapter 9).



**First African Baptist Church, founded in 1779, Savannah, Georgia.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

## A Letter from Emily

Although the law classified slaves as property rather than human beings, slaves lived, loved, married, raised children, worked, worshiped, socialized, and generally did their best to rise above their degraded positions in life. A letter in Blassingame's anthology from a North Carolina slave named Emily to her mother in 1836 illustrates the predicament and suffering of a woman separated from her family by forces beyond her control:

A cloud has settled upon me and produced a change in my prospect, too great for words to express. My husband is torn from me, and carried away by his master. Mr. Winslow, who married Miss Little, although he was offered \$800 for him that we might not be parted, he refused it. I went to see him—tried to prevail on him not to carry my husband away, but to suffer him to be bought for \$800, that we might not be separated. But mother—all my entreaties and tears did not soften his hard heart—they availed nothing with him. He said he would 'get his own price for him.' O! mother, what shall I do? The time is fast approaching when I shalt want my husband and mother, and both are gone!

## Sacred space

Slaves conducted their own religious services long before they were outlawed in the Deep South in the 1830s, and they continued to meet in secret long after they were forbidden to do so. Slaves may have sat patiently with their masters in Sunday services, nodding their heads and saying "Amen" for emphasis every now and then, but they were not blind to their masters' attempts to control them with the fear of God. Nancy Williams, an ex-slave from Virginia (whose words appear in Deborah Gray White's *Let My People Go*), wasn't fooled: "Dat ole white preachin' wasn't nothin'. Old white preachers use to talk with dey tongues widdout sayin' nothin'. But Jesus told us slaves to talk wid our hearts."

Slaves were able to create, through their own religious practices, songs, music, families, and folk beliefs, a sacred space that was untouchable by their white masters. Slaves seemed to be in control of at least one thing in their lives—their own souls. And for guidance, many slaves turned to the

Bible. They found comfort in the Old Testament stories of God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery, and the punishment of the Egyptians for their treatment of his chosen people. Slaves also found comfort in the story of Jesus, a "servant" who suffered from great persecution as well. For slaves, contrary to their masters' designs, the Bible confirmed what they felt in their hearts: the slaveholder, not the slave, was the sinner.

## Education

On the plantations of the Deep South, very few slaves received an education. It is estimated that 90 percent of slaves were illiterate (unable to read or write). Officially, no one was allowed to provide any organized instruction of any kind to blacks, slave or free. Occasionally people brave enough to break the law attempted to open schools for blacks, but they were always shut down. If slaves were caught with books or writing materials, they were whipped.

Some slaves, however, did learn to read and write, often with help from their owners. Frederick Douglass (1817-1895), writer and abolitionist, was the most famous example of a slave who learned to read and write from his owner's wife, the mistress of the house (see "Fruit of the vine," Chapter 9). Other slaves somehow managed to learn the basics, perhaps from the white children of the house or other slaves, and then secretly educate themselves.

In the cities and towns of the South, especially the upper South, slaves had a much better chance of learning to read and write, and maybe even receive some schooling. Slaves were constantly exposed to newspapers, books, and pamphlets. Some cities in the upper South even had schools for blacks (see "Education," Chapter 9). In 1847, one such school in Louisville, Kentucky, admitted slaves as students—with their master's permission, of course.



## Recreation

Only as very young children did slaves have much time they could truly call their own. In their earliest years slave children on plantations played with the white children. Once slave children reached the age where they could do minor tasks in the fields or around the house (around five or six years old) they were left with little time for playing. As slave children grew into teenagers and young adults, their playing time disappeared altogether, as did their social contact with white children.

Even if slaves found the time, there were very few recreational opportunities available on the plantation. Fishing and hunting were sometimes possible, but the need to bring home something to eat probably made it less relaxing. Some slaves were given permission to attend certain community events, such as fairs and races. Elections and militia gatherings were also occasions for relaxing the rules. Even if most slaves did not go to any of these events, there was often a festive spirit of singing, dancing, and socializing on the plantation on those special days.

The Christmas holiday meant a week off from work—except for cooking and washing duties—for both plantation and city slaves. It was a chance for slaves to visit with family and friends and to celebrate together with singing, dancing, socializing, and presents. Plantation slaves could also look forward to a slow period in the summer, between spring planting and fall harvesting, when their workloads were greatly reduced. Weddings, anniversaries, birthdays, and the like also provided occasions for gatherings and celebrations among slaves.

# Free Blacks in Antebellum America

## The conditions of freedom

The era between 1800 and the Civil War (1861-1865) is known as the antebellum period (pronounced an-teh-BELL-um), which means "before the war." Life for free black persons in this time period became increasingly harder as tensions mounted between the proslavery South and the antislavery North and the country moved slowly toward civil war. What few rights free blacks had in the colonial and revolutionary periods were for the most part gone by 1835. By the time of the Civil War, especially in the South, the conditions under which free blacks lived were very similar to the conditions of slavery that many thought they had escaped from or, in the case of freeborn blacks, hoped that they would never know.

Free blacks had little claim to the basic rights of citizenship enjoyed by whites. Free blacks were not permitted to move about freely or live where they chose, and they faced harsh penalties for violating those laws. Free blacks were sometimes

limited as to what occupations they could pursue. And free blacks found little justice in courts of law, unable even to testify if the case involved whites. Forbidden to vote in almost every state, free blacks had very little power or influence in the political arena as well.

For blacks, the conditions of freedom resembled the conditions of slavery because free or slave, North or South, blacks in antebellum America were treated in a prejudiced way by whites because of the color of their skin. The beliefs and laws that made slavery in America an institution based solely on race pervaded the entire society. Many whites believed that blacks were inferior in every way—physically, morally, spiritually, and intellectually. Deemed unfit for freedom and viewed with hostility and suspicion by whites, blacks trying to attain the same status and prosperity as whites had every possible obstacle placed in their path.

## **Where free blacks lived**

In 1790 there were 59,000 free blacks in the United States: 32,000 in the South and 27,000 in the North. The number of free blacks increased sharply in both the North and the South in the next two decades. From 1810 to 1860, however, that trend was reversed. Laws were passed that made it harder for owners to free their slaves, and the increased profitability of slaves in the cotton belt (see "Cotton and slavery," Chapter 8) also made freedom less likely, as slave owners desired to get the most work possible out of their "investments."

In 1830, there were 319,000 free blacks in the United States. About 16,000 lived as far west as Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois. By 1860, there were 488,000 free blacks: 224,000 in the South Atlantic states, 215,000 in the North, and 49,000 in the South Central states and the West. Not surprisingly, the fewest number of free blacks were found in the states that produced the most cotton and held the most slaves—Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Maryland had the most free blacks of any state (83,900), followed by Virginia

(58,000) and Pennsylvania (the state's entire black population of 56,000).

Free blacks tended to live in cities, where economic and social opportunities were greater for blacks, free and slave (see box titled "City Slaves," Chapter 8). In 1860 there were 25,600 free blacks in Baltimore, 22,000 in Philadelphia, 12,500 in New York, 10,600 in New Orleans, and 3,200 in Charleston. In the South, one out of three free blacks lived in towns or cities.

### Fact Focus

- In 1860, there were 488,000 free blacks in the nation. About half lived in the North and half in the South.
- If found guilty of certain crimes, free blacks were subject to public whippings and the possibility of enslavement, fates that no whites were forced to endure.
- In the North, only five states, four of them in New England, permitted free blacks to vote. Free blacks could not vote anywhere in the South.
- Every state had laws requiring free blacks to be employed. If found guilty of not working, or "loitering," free blacks could be sold into slavery.
- A very small number of free blacks were wealthy business owners and planters. Some even owned slaves.
- In 1794, Richard Allen founded the first independent church for blacks in America, the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (Bethel AME, for short).
- In the last decades before the Civil War, organized religion in the South became one of the strongest allies of the slaveholders.
- In the states of the Deep South, after 1830, it was against the law to educate blacks, free or slave.
- In 1860, there were 32,629 blacks in schools in the United States out of a total population of almost 500,000 free and 4 million enslaved blacks.
- Marriages between free blacks were legal. A free black wishing to marry a slave needed permission from the slave's master.

## Paths to freedom

There were a number of different ways for blacks to obtain their freedom, few of which were easy. One way was to be born free. In the slave period in America, the status of the mother—free or slave—determined the status of her children, even if the father was a free man. A small number of free blacks were the offspring of free black women. Some slaves acquired their freedom through manumission (a formal release from bondage) by their owners for having served them well. This was usually done in a master's will at the time of his or her death.

Slaves were sometimes able to buy their own freedom or the freedom of family members. The price depended on the circumstances, but it was usually set at what the slave would cost on the open market. It is not known how many slaves made enough money, through earning extra wages as hired-out laborers, to take advantage of this opportunity. In an 1863 interview with a congressional commission investigating slavery included in Blassingame's *Slave Testimony*, Mrs. L. Strawthor, an ex-slave from Kentucky, described how she and her family bought their freedom:

I reckon it is about fifteen or sixteen years since I bought myself. I paid \$800 for myself and two children. This house belongs to me, but the ground is leased. I pay \$51 a year for the ground. My house was burned about eight years ago and was not insured. I make my living at washing: I had a husband when I got my freedom. He bought me for \$300 ... and then we went to work and bought the children.

The most radical path to freedom for slaves was to run away from their owners. The chances of getting caught were high, and the penalties were harsh. One historian estimated that each year about 1,000 slaves chose this option. Many fugitive slaves fled to the cities of the South where they hoped to blend in with the crowd and pass as free blacks. Some made longer journeys and escaped to the free soil of the northern states, the western frontier, or Canada.

## Free but not equal

A free black person in antebellum America enjoyed few of the rights and privileges usually associated with freedom. Citizenship for whites at this time, it should be noted, was limited to white males. It meant the right to vote, to be elected, to serve on juries, to conduct one's business and move about freely, to be educated, and to serve in militias. If the freedom of free blacks were measured against these standards, their status appears to have been just slightly better than the enslaved black population.

For a short period of time, free black males could vote in Maryland, North Carolina, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Their state constitutions had been written during the country's revolutionary period and influenced by the ideals of the times—equality and liberty. By 1838 all of these states had taken away the voting rights of free blacks. In the North, only five states, four of them in New England, permitted free blacks to vote. Without widespread voting rights, free blacks' right to be elected was beyond consideration.

In courts of law, free blacks could not serve on juries. They were not even allowed to testify in court if the case involved whites. Yet the courts permitted slaves—who had no legal standing in courts otherwise—to testify against free blacks.



A newspaper depiction of a fugitive slave, 1837. Although the odds were stacked against them and the penalties were terrible, many attempted to escape from slavery; some succeeded.

The punishments for free blacks convicted of the same crimes as whites were always more severe. Free blacks were subject to public whippings and the possibility of enslavement, fates that no whites were forced to endure. Courts of law, especially the higher courts, did provide some degree of protection to free blacks. In one such case, the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled that a free black had the right to strike a white in self-defense.

## **Unfree to move**

Nowhere in the South could a free black move about without restrictions. In North Carolina, for example, free blacks could not legally travel farther than the next county from where they lived. Registration was required for free blacks in Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, and Mississippi. In Florida, Georgia, and a few other states, free blacks had to have a white guardian who would vouch for their good behavior. Throughout the South, free blacks were required to have passes; without the proper certificate or official identification, free blacks were assumed to be fugitive slaves. In Charleston, both freed blacks and slaves were required to wear identification badges that indicated their status.

Some states also limited the movement of free blacks coming into and leaving the state. Many states required freed slaves to leave the state once they had been manumitted. In Georgia, a free black who left the state for sixty days or more was not allowed to return. Georgia, as well as most of the southern and several of the northern states, also had laws prohibiting the migration of free blacks. Penalties for breaking these laws were severe, usually a stiff fine that was impossible to pay, which then resulted in the free black being sold into slavery.

Even in the nonslaveholding states of the North and West, states placed restrictions on free blacks' movements that were designed to discourage or prevent them from moving into the state. As in the South, free blacks were required to register their certificates of freedom with the county clerk. In some communities, they also had to pay a bond of \$500 or \$1,000 as

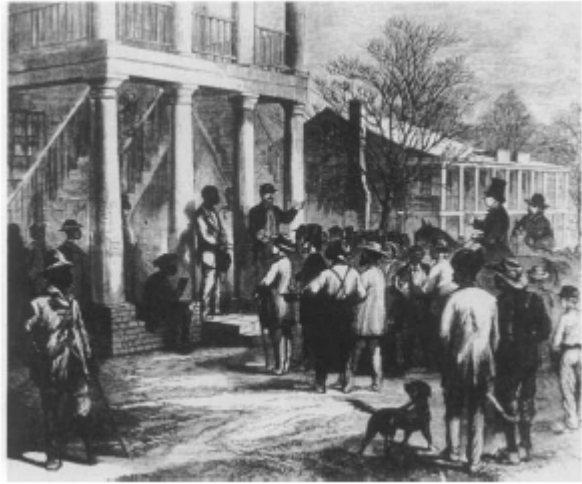
a guarantee that they would not disturb the peace or become wards of the state.

## Losing freedom

Free blacks were always in danger of losing their freedom. Freeborn blacks and ex-slaves were constantly challenged to prove that they were not slaves. For black people, having the proper official papers to prove their free status helped, but it did not guarantee that they would remain free. Such was the case of Solomon Northrup, whose story of being kidnaped by slave dealers was told in an 1863 *New York Times* article. Northrup, born a free black in the state of New York in 1803, was on business in

Washington City in 1841 when he fell ill in a hotel room. The article told the story of his kidnaping and enslavement:

While suffering with severe pains some persons came in, and, seeing the condition he was in, proposed to give him some medicine and did so. That is the last thing of which he had any recollection until he found himself chained to the floor of Williams' slave pen in this City, and handcuffed. In the course of a few hours, James H. Burch, a slave dealer, came in, and the colored man [Northrup] asked him to take the irons off of him, and wanted to know why they were put on. Burch told him it was none of his business. The colored man said he was free and told where he was born. Burch called in a man by the name of Ebenezer Rodbury, and the two stripped the man and laid him across a bench, Rodbury holding him down by the wrists. Burch whipped him with a paddle until he broke that, and then with a cat-o'-nine tails [a whip with nine knotted cords], giving him a hundred lashes, and he swore he would kill him if he ever stated to any one that he was a free man.



**A freedman being sold to pay a fine in Florida.** Engraving from a sketch by James E. Taylor. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



From that time forward the man says he did not communicate the fact from fear, either that he was a free man, or what his name was, until the last summer.

Solomon Northrup was sold to a plantation in Louisiana, where he spent nearly ten years as a slave—a field hand and carpenter. He regained his freedom, with much legal help from his friends in New York, when a court ruled that Northrup was a victim of an illegal kidnaping.

## **Work**

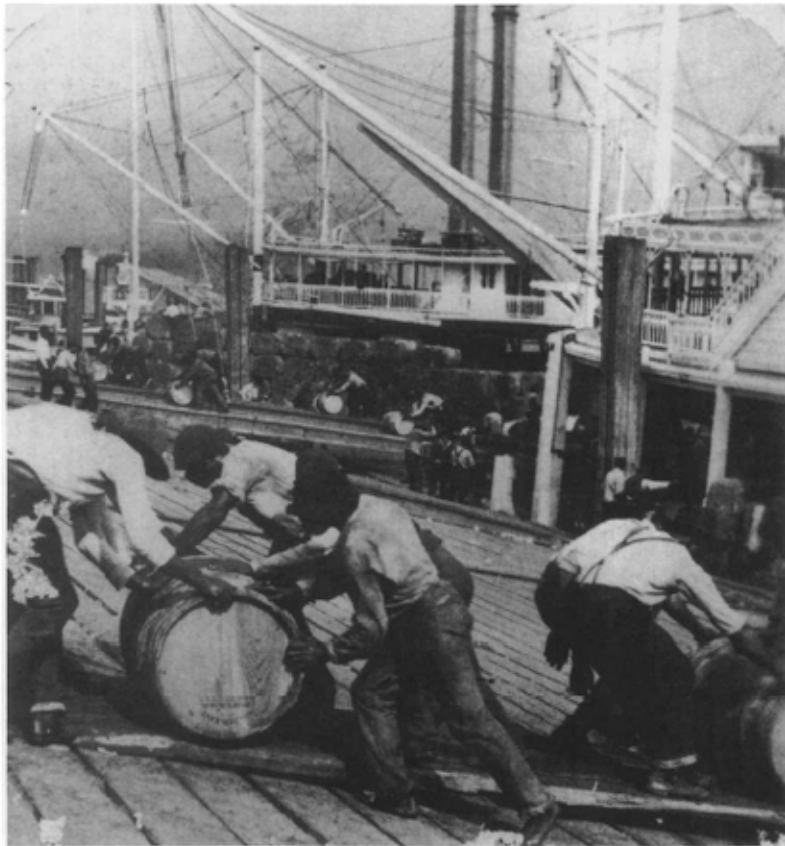
Every state had laws requiring free blacks to be employed. If found guilty of not working, or "loitering," free blacks could be sold into slavery for periods of time as the courts saw fit. If the guilty party had children, they were put into the custody of white persons, who usually put them to work. Many states had rules that restricted the ways that free blacks could make a living. Some states prohibited free blacks from buying or selling certain goods, such as corn, wheat, tobacco, and alcohol, without special licenses. In South Carolina, free blacks could not be clerks; in Georgia, they could not be typesetters.

Free blacks seeking work, especially ones with skills, often faced strong and organized opposition from whites. White artisans tried to get laws passed that prevented blacks from working in certain trades. Where that failed, white tradespeople used violence and bullying tactics to secure work and eliminate competition from free blacks. White workers everywhere, in the North, South, and West, refused to work next to blacks. This forced white employers to turn away qualified black workers or risk having their entire white workforce walk off the job.

Still, free blacks found employment in the towns and cities where many of the white workers had left for the western frontier. Free blacks worked in many different skilled trades and professions; some were carpenters, architects, druggists,

photographers, barbers, tailors, jewelers, furniture makers—even teachers and dentists.

Free blacks seeking employment who had no special skills, and that was most of them, had an even harder time finding work. Even those who made it to the North found that many of the unskilled jobs, such as ditchdigger, street cleaner, and porter, were taken by poor German and Irish immigrants. The vast majority of free blacks ended up working for substandard wages as agricultural workers and in the cities and towns as common laborers. Some unskilled free blacks found work in the lowest-paying jobs in urban-based industries of the South, such as tobacco factories, paper mills, and iron foundries.



**Levee roustabouts (laborers) on the Mississippi River in New Orleans unloading barrels from a ship.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

## **Property and prosperity**

Free blacks were allowed to own property in every state. In 1837, free blacks owned \$1.5 million worth of real estate in New York City and had more than \$600,000 deposited in savings accounts. In 1860, free blacks in Virginia owned more than 60,000 acres of farmland and city real estate valued at almost \$500,000. In New Orleans, free blacks owned more than \$15 million worth of property.

Some blacks were able to acquire their first home or piece of land with financial help from organizations such as the Society of Friends (Quakers), the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, or the North Carolina Manumission Society. Some blacks acquired property from their masters at the time of their manumission. Still others accumulated enough money through sheer hard work and thrifty lifestyles to buy a small piece of land or house.

Some free blacks became wealthy property owners and businesspeople. A fortunate few became successful hotel owners, grocers, sail makers, and even plantation owners. Some free blacks even owned slaves. Instances were known of free blacks in the Charleston area and around New Orleans who owned estates with as many ninety-one slaves. More often, if free blacks owned slaves, they did not own many of them and they usually had some personal connection to their "property." Husbands, wives, children, relatives, and friends sometimes purchased each other or were bought from white owners by wealthy free blacks.

It must be stressed that free blacks who acquired property or prosperity were not typical. Most free blacks barely scratched out a living, and what little property or housing they might possess most likely really belonged to the creditors and banks.



Members of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, one of the groups that helped freedmen and strove to abolish the institution of slavery. The renowned abolitionist and journalist William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879) is at the bottom right. National Portrait Gallery.

## Benevolent societies

Wherever possible, in both the North and the South, free blacks formed organizations, independent of churches and dedicated to the betterment of their people. They formed so-called benevolent societies (benevolent means "good") and fraternal organizations (fraternal means "brotherly"). These organizations were supported by dues from their members, who received such benefits as burial expenses, yearly incomes for widows and orphans of deceased members, and a form of unemployment insurance for disabled workers.

Benevolent societies provided many services for the black community, including schools for orphan children and help for the sick and disabled. Some societies were dedicated to gaining better wages and job security for black workers. Others were known more for their recreational activities and events that featured dancing, singing, and socializing. Baltimore's Society for Relief in Case of Seizure existed as a safeguard against free blacks being kidnaped into slavery.

By 1815 the Masons, a fraternal organization founded in Boston before the American Revolution, had four lodges

(branches) in Philadelphia. They pooled their resources and built the country's first black Masonic Hall. Only one benevolent society existed in Baltimore in 1821. By 1835 there were thirty-five such groups with names such as the Friendship Benevolent Society for Social Relief, the Star in the East Association, and the Daughters of Jerusalem. Another major black fraternal organization, called the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, was founded in 1843.

Black benevolent societies existed in the Deep South but were not welcomed by whites. Some communities even made it illegal to join one. Elsewhere in antebellum America, however, benevolent societies were very important social, cultural, and economic organizations for the free blacks who were members and for the black community at large.

## **Organized religion**

Religion, especially Christianity, had a special meaning for blacks in antebellum America. Freed blacks often saw their manumissions as religious experiences, a rebirth made possible by the same God who had delivered the Jews from slavery in the Bible's Old Testament.

Free blacks had more control over their religious practices than slaves. They could choose to attend services with the whites or to practice their faith at black churches. Blacks who worshiped with whites in the Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches were often segregated from the white congregations, forced to sit in balconies or in pews at the back of the church. They had very little say in how the churches were governed.



**A service at an African church in Cincinnati, Ohio.**  
Archive Photos, Inc.  
Reproduced by permission.

Most free blacks belonged to Baptist churches. As early as the 1770s, a few black Baptist churches were established in Georgia and Virginia. But it was in the major cities of the North and West—Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Cincinnati, Detroit, and Chicago—that the Baptist church flourished. Where separate black Baptist churches existed, they were usually associated with a white Baptist church in the same area. Consequently, black Baptists did not have the same kind of network for communicating and organizing that black Methodists had established through the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church (see below).

### **The AME Church**

A dispute over segregated church services led to the founding of the first independent church for blacks in America. In 1794, Richard Allen (1760-1831) founded the nation's first black Methodist church. Allen was born a slave but saved enough money to buy his own freedom from his



**Richard Allen (1760-1831), the first bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. AME was the first all-black religious denomination in the United States and is currently the largest African American Methodist denomination, with more than 2 million members.**  
Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

master in Delaware. In 1777, Allen moved to Philadelphia and became a preacher. When the officials of St. George Church, where he frequently preached, proposed separate seating for the large numbers of blacks who came to hear him, Allen left the church in protest. In 1787, Allen established the Free African Society, the first independent self-improvement organization for blacks in the nation. And in 1794, Allen and others founded the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (Bethel AME, for short).

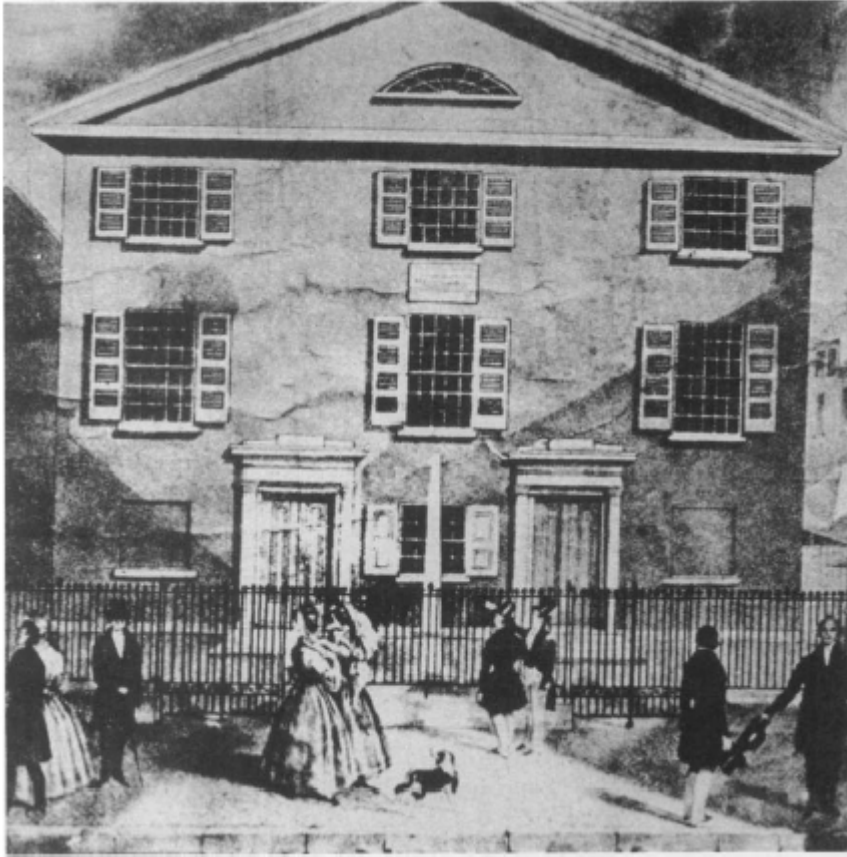
Bethel AME was the only black Methodist church in America until 1816. That year sixteen black Methodist congregations, from New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, came together for a convention at Allen's church in Philadelphia. Together they withdrew from the white-dominated mother church and formed the nation's first independent black church, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. In this meeting, Allen was ordained a church elder and the AME Church's first bishop.

### **Antislavery activism**

AME Church membership grew as independent black churches opened throughout the North. As free blacks moved into the West, they founded more AME churches. By 1830, the AME Church had members in Canada, Haiti, and West Africa. The various churches all maintained connections with one another, and as an internationally organized network, they became very important in the antislavery struggle that took shape in the early 1800s.

Bethel AME, the mother church in Philadelphia, was very committed to ending slavery. Many of the leaders of the abolition movement—Frederick Douglass, Lucretia Mott, and William Forten, to name a few—spoke from the church's

pulpit. The basement of the church housed runaway slaves and was a "station" in the Underground Railroad, a secret network that helped slaves escape to free soil (see box titled "The Underground Railroad," Chapter 10). Bethel AME also raised large amounts of money to feed, clothe, and educate the black community, especially slaves seeking freedom.



**Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, Philadelphia, the first all-black church in the United States.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.



### **Names of Freedom**

One of the first rights exercised by slaves who gained their freedom was to legally acquire a new name. As slaves, their masters had given them their names and often chose names that seemed to mock their slaves' degraded position in life—such as Caesar (a great Roman general) or Cato (a great Roman orator). Most masters recognized their slaves by their first name only, though many slaves took their master's surname (last name) as their own. When freed, many blacks saw advantages to being associated with their former white masters and kept their master's surname, but they often changed their first and second names.

Most free blacks chose English, not African, names. It was one way of trying to blend in and gain acceptance in the United States. Some blacks chose surnames based on the complexion of their skin, which explains why a great number of freed blacks had the last names Brown or Black. Other blacks chose names that reflected their occupations. A bricklayer might take Mason as a surname, gardeners perhaps chose Green, and blacksmiths and silversmiths found the name Smith appropriate. Some, inspired by their newly found liberty, chose surnames like Justice and Freeman. Others chose names from the Bible, such as Moses and Gabriel. A famous and highly skilled traveling preacher took the literal approach when she chose the name of Sojourner Truth (sojourner means "a temporary resident," or a traveler).



### **Proslavery activism**

Between 1800 and 1830, there were at least three serious incidents of organized rebellion among slaves in the South (see "Major uprisings," Chapter 10). Many whites suspected that the revolts had been planned at religious gatherings, where they feared slaves had been incited by abolitionist literature.

By 1835, most free blacks in the South had lost the right of free assembly. Any religious gathering of blacks, free or slave, had to be attended by a licensed white minister. Black ministers of the various denominations—Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian—were forced to leave their posts. Some ministers moved their congregations to the North.

In the last decades before the Civil War, the white-dominated churches of the South became the strongest allies of the slaveholders. Bishops and other high officials of the various churches were slaveholders themselves. One Episcopal bishop in Louisiana owned more than 400 slaves. In general, Presbyterians and Quakers did not own as many slaves as did the members of the Episcopal Church (in the Atlantic seaboard states) and the Baptist and Methodist Churches (in the cotton-belt states).

## **Education**

In the Deep South, it was against the law to educate blacks, free or slave. White southerners were afraid that blacks who could read might be exposed to abolitionist literature or other rebellious ideas. Any organized attempts to establish public schools for blacks were strongly opposed by whites and ultimately failed. The small number of blacks who learned basic literacy skills were taught privately; some even taught themselves.

In the upper South and the North, free blacks had a better chance of receiving an education. Many communities provided public education for blacks. Although there were exceptions—in Boston after 1855, for example—blacks had to attend separate schools from whites. Separate schools for blacks were established in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The existence of schools for blacks did not necessarily mean that they received a quality public education, as many states and localities never provided proper funding for their black school systems.

Public education opportunities for blacks in the West were very limited. Though free blacks were often forced to pay taxes to support public schools, they were not always allowed to send their children to those schools. In 1829, Ohio passed a law excluding blacks altogether from public schools. Twenty years later, Ohio permitted black schools but provided very little financial support for them. Most free blacks in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin had to wait until after the Civil War before they were educated in any great numbers at the public's expense.

### **Self-help**

In 1860, there were only 32,629 blacks in schools in the United States out of a total population of almost 500,000 free and 4 million enslaved blacks. In the absence of public education for blacks in antebellum America, black churches—at least where they were allowed to operate—filled the void as best they could. Many black churches ran Sunday Bible schools for children, and some churches offered regular classes during the weekdays for free or a small fee. By the 1850s, the AME Church was operating primary and secondary schools for blacks in many cities, including Philadelphia and Baltimore. Schools for blacks were established in other cities as well; some were made possible by large donations from individual wealthy free blacks, while others were funded by donations from black benevolent societies.

Black churches and benevolent societies also established institutions of higher learning for blacks. In 1856, the AME Church founded Wilberforce University in Ohio, and before the end of the century, the church set up four more colleges for blacks in Florida, South Carolina, Texas, and Georgia. Colleges for blacks established independently of black churches included the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia (1842) and Avery College (1849) in Allegheny City, Pennsylvania. Before the Civil War, some blacks were also attending predominantly white colleges such as Oberlin, Franklin, Rutland, and Harvard University.

## **Fruit of the vine**

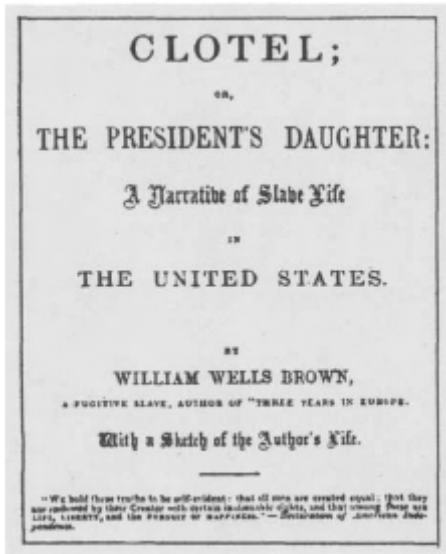
The efforts of the black churches, schools, benevolent societies, and fraternal organizations of antebellum America produced a new class of educated and socially active blacks. Some of the greatest black leaders—the preachers, teachers, orators, and organizers who were to become so important in the struggle for the abolition of slavery—emerged from these black institutions.

Black poets, novelists, essayists, playwrights, historians, and newspaper editors were finally able to deliver black perspectives to the white population in their own voices. Blackowned and operated newspapers sprang up: *Freedom's Journal* started in 1827, and Frederick Douglass began publishing *North Star* in 1847.

The largest group of black writers were freed slaves, manumitted or fugitives, who wrote about their experiences in the first-person "narrative" form. Many of these autobiographies were published from 1840 to 1860, sometimes with help from the abolitionists who used them in their arguments against slavery. Perhaps the most famous and influential of them all was published in 1845, simply titled *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Other narratives published before the Civil War were written by William Wells Brown (1842), Lunsford Lane (1842), Moses Grady (1844), Lewis Clarke (1846), Julius Melbourne (1847), Henry Bibb (1849), J. W. C. Pennington (1850), Solomon Northrup (1853), Austin Steward (1857), and J. W. Longuen (1859).

## **Family**

Family life for free blacks was much stabler than for enslaved blacks. Unlike slave marriages, unions between free blacks were legal and fairly secure, in that the married couple was not likely to be broken up by one of the partners being sold to another part of the country. Official marriages between free blacks, as between whites, required a marriage license and a formal civil or religious ceremony. If a free black wished to marry a slave, permission from the slave's owner was



The title page of William Wells Brown's novel *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (1853), the first published novel written by a black person in the United States.

necessary. These unions were more informal and usually took place without a license from the state. Relations and marriages between free blacks and whites or Indians were also informal. Mixed-race couples were not allowed to marry.

In every state, free blacks were required by law to work and to support their children in a very visible way. Officials of the state had the power to declare parents "unfit" and could force the children into legal apprenticeships. Thousands of free black families in both the North and the South were broken up this way, as children were taken away from their parents and forced to work for white tradespeople for periods up to twenty-eight years.

# The Abolition Movement

## Early abolitionists

The Quakers (the Society of Friends, a religious body founded in England in 1647), played an important role in the early antislavery movement in England and its American colonies. Some Quakers based their opposition to slavery on their religion. One of the central beliefs of the Quakers was in the complete equality of humankind. Some used the Bible as a source for their arguments against slavery. Individual Quakers spoke out against it as early as 1657, but their ideas did not carry much weight in the organization, as Quaker leaders in London, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island were deeply involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and owned slaves themselves.

In the United States, from the early 1700s, slavery became a controversial issue at most meetings of the Society. For example, in 1755, the Philadelphia yearly meeting ordered that members who traded in slaves should be officially admonished. In 1776, the Philadelphia meeting ruled that members would be dismissed from the Society if they did not

free their slaves and provide them with compensation. The Quakers' opposition to slavery was largely responsible for Pennsylvania declaring slavery illegal in 1780. (The Pennsylvania Colony, founded by William Penn, a British Quaker leader, had a large population of Quakers.)

Between 1780 and 1808, many state abolition and manumission (a formal release from bondage) societies were formed. Led by Quakers, evangelicals (Christian preachers of many denominations), and humanitarians, these early abolitionists aimed to end slavery gradually. They favored first ending the slave trade, then emancipating slaves over a period of time while providing compensation to the slaveholders. To that end, they petitioned and lobbied state legislatures from Massachusetts to Virginia. They secured legislation that prevented slavery in the Northwest Territory (1787), that shortened the apprenticeship periods for children of slaves in the North (see "Family," Chapter 9), and that prohibited U.S. participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade (1807).

## **Abolition in the North**

During the same time period (1780-1808), slavery became illegal in the North, either as the result of court rulings, as in Massachusetts in 1783, or as a result of acts passed by state legislatures, as in Connecticut and Rhode Island in 1784, New York in 1799, and New Jersey in 1804. It is hard to say how much credit for these changes belongs to the antislavery movement. Certainly the states in the North, where there were relatively few slaves, were more ready for change than the South.

The ideas of freedom and equality spawned by the American Revolution were still fresh in the North, and the influence of prominent whites who spoke out against slavery was also a significant factor in the postwar antislavery movement. No one as mighty as Thomas Jefferson or George Washington (who both owned slaves; see "Founding Fathers," Chapter 7) publicly spoke out against slavery, but some of society's leading white citizens took up the cause, such as Philadelphia's

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790; statesman, scientist, and philosopher) and Benjamin Rush (1745-1813; statesman, physician, and educator). Other leading whites who publicly opposed slavery included scholar Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803) of Rhode Island, clergyman Ezra Stiles (1727-1795) of Connecticut, clergyman and educator Jedidiah Morse (1761-1826) of Massachusetts, and author and dictionary creator Noah Webster (1758-1843) of Connecticut.

### Fact Focus

- The Society of Friends (Quakers) became a major force in the early antislavery movement in America and England.
- The African slave trade was illegal in England and the United States beginning in 1808.
- The American Colonization Society formed in 1816 and planned to ship blacks to a West African colony named Liberia, the "land of freedom."
- The Antislavery Society formed in England in 1823, and by 1826 it had seventy-one local chapters.
- During the 1830s, the British Royal Navy led patrols that captured an average of thirty slave ships off the African coasts each year, freeing 5,000 slaves.
- When the American Antislavery Society formed in 1833, only three blacks were among the sixty-two signers of the Society's Declaration of Sentiments.
- In the 200 years leading up to the Civil War, slaves engaged in about 250 serious revolts, conspiracies, and uprisings.
- In 1830, the first Free People of Color Congress met in Philadelphia and started what came to be known as the National Negro Convention Movement.
- In 1831, William Lloyd Garrison began publication of the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*.
- By 1840 there were more than 100 anti-slavery and abolition societies in the free states of the North, with at least 200,000 black and white members.
- From 1828 to 1845, the U.S. House of Representatives refused to even consider antislavery petitions from abolitionists.
- The autobiography of Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, became an international best-seller in 1845.
- In the fifty years before the Civil War, at least 3,200 "conductors" helped about 75,000 slaves escape to freedom on the Underground Railroad.





**William Wilberforce (1759-1833), British politician and fervent antislavery leader who spearheaded the movement that led to England's 1807 prohibition of the slave trade.** Corbis-Bettmann. Reproduced by permission.

## British abolitionists

The Society of Friends became a force in the antislavery movement in America and England. In 1761, the Quakers in England forbade their members to trade in slaves. The first abolitionist organization in England, The Meeting for Sufferers, was founded in London by Quakers in 1783. That same year they petitioned Parliament (England's legislative body) to make slave trading illegal. In 1787, the various British abolitionist organizations came together to form the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade. In early 1807, after great pressure from the abolitionists and repeated legislative attempts in the House of Commons (one of the two sections of Parliament) led by William Wilberforce

(1759-1833), Parliament outlawed the slave trade. The law took effect on January 1, 1808.

English Quakers and other abolitionists had an easier time than their American counterparts in their battle to end slavery. Slavery in England itself had been made illegal in 1772 in a historic decision by Lord Chief Justice Mansfield that freed some 15,000 slaves then living in the country. After the slave trade became illegal in 1808, the English abolitionists set their sights on ending slavery in all lands under British control. Wilberforce helped establish the Antislavery Society in 1823, and by 1826 it had seventy-one local chapters in England, with many Quakers as members and supporters. After years of intense political lobbying, on August 29, 1833, Parliament passed the Emancipation Act, freeing all slaves in the British Empire after a five-year period.

## Abolition on the Atlantic

Beginning in 1808, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was no longer legal for American citizens or British subjects. The United States banned the trade according to an agreement reached at the Constitutional Convention twenty years earlier (see "A country divided," Chapter 11). The Danish, in 1804, were the first Europeans to ban the slave trade, but it was the British who took the leading role against the African slave trade among slaveholding nations.

Unlike the Americans, who outlawed the trans-Atlantic slave trade but made few provisions for catching and punishing violators, the British passed laws that contained harsh penalties for violators and rewards for those who caught them. Any British ship used in slave trading was confiscated by the government, and the owners were fined £100 for each slave bought, sold, or transported. British soldiers and sailors were paid a bounty for each captured ship and each freed slave. In 1808, after the slave trade was outlawed, two British ships were immediately sent to patrol the Atlantic coast of West Africa with the sole mission of intercepting slave traders.

After the end of the Napoleonic Wars with France in 1815, the British could dispatch more ships from the Royal Navy to the West African coasts for antislavery patrols. In the meantime, other countries had passed laws against the African slave trade: the Dutch in 1814 and the French and Portuguese in 1815. By 1820, most countries (except the United States) had granted the British the rights to search and seize slave ships sailing under their nations' flags. For many years, until the British and United States began "joint cruising" in the 1840s, slave ships could evade British and French searches simply by flying the American flag and claiming to be an American vessel.



**British antislavery patrol vessel HMS *Daphne* captures a slave dhow (an Arab boat) off the coast of East Africa.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

A watercolor of the slave quarters of the Spanish ship *Albanoz*, painted by Lt. Francis Meinell of the British Royal Navy, whose ship captured the *Albanoz*. The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.



## The slave trade persists

In the 1830s, the United States and France stationed their own antislavery patrols off the West African coast. On the average, thirty slave ships were captured each year, and 5,000 slaves were freed and relocated to a colony in Sierra Leone, a small country on the West African coast. The number of freed slaves, however, was small when compared with the 80,000 to 90,000 slaves that were successfully transported to North and South America each year.

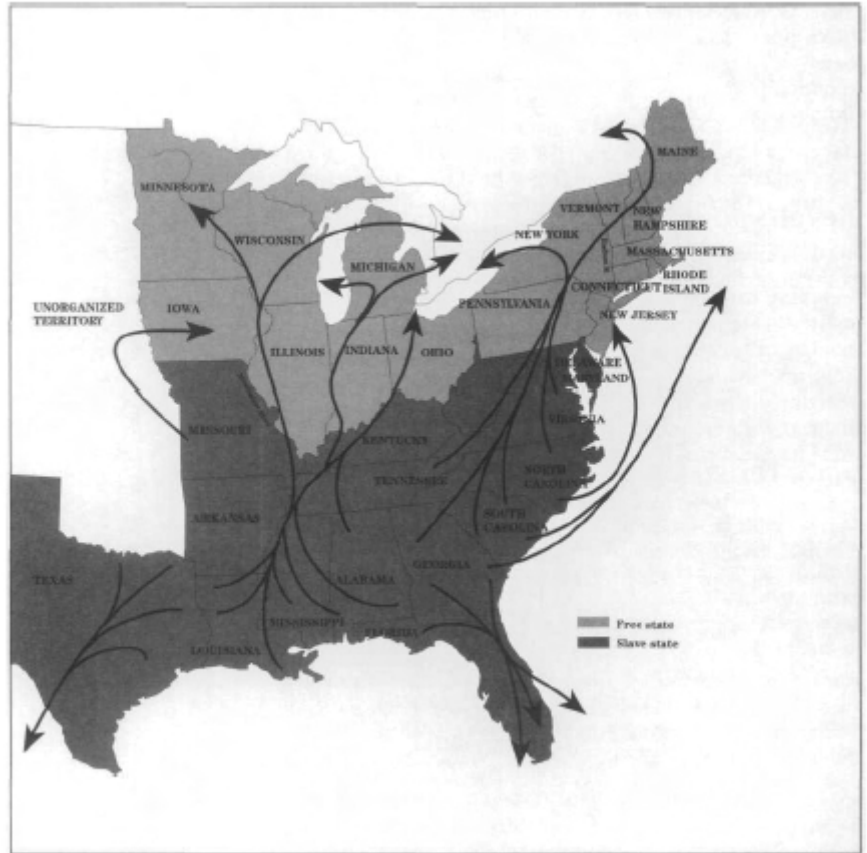
The United States protected slave ships by refusing to allow other countries to search American vessels, and many slave ships were still being outfitted (made ready to carry slaves) in U.S. ports. By the 1850s, two out of every three slave ships captured had been rigged by the Americans. And planters in the U.S. South kept the demand for African slaves high despite the ban (see "The African slave trade," Chapter 8). How many slaves were illegally brought into the United States after 1808 is impossible to know, but the effect of the Union's blockade of Southern ports in the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) provides a clue. From 1860 to 1865, the number of slaves transported to the Western Hemisphere dropped from about 25,000 a year to around 7,000 a year.

## **Slave resistance**

Slaves' resistance to slavery took on many forms, from passive to active, from individual to group, and from peaceful to violent. One passive strategy was for slaves to put on a show of obedience and meekness in front of their owners and overseers. Slaves sometimes faked being sick or wounded to avoid work. Behind their masters' backs, they worked as slowly as possible, or not at all—just enough to avoid the whip. In some cases, slaves cut off their own hands or toes or disabled themselves by other means as a way of taking revenge on their owners. Suicide was also common, and cases of infanticide (mothers killing their children) were not unheard of.

Slaves also directly resisted their owners in more violent ways. Slaves broke tools, destroyed crops, and worked farm animals to death. Slaves burned their masters' possessions with a vengeance. They torched crops, forests, barns, sheds, and homes. There were also many cases of slaves killing their masters or overseers—violently attacking them in the fields or silently poisoning them at mealtimes with arsenic or ground glass mixed in with gravy or other food.

Map showing some of the routes taken by slaves escaping on the Underground Railroad.



One of the most effective ways to deprive a slave owner of his "property's" benefits was for the slave to run away. Men, women, and children fled from their owners by the thousands, alone, in pairs, and in groups. Their chances of being caught were high, and the punishments were harsh. How many tried, and succeeded or failed, is not known, but the number of fugitive slaves must have been significant, judging by the large number of newspaper advertisements offering rewards for their capture and return.

Some slaves fled to the northern states or Canada with the help of the Underground Railroad (see box on page 185). Other fugitive slaves tried to blend in with the free black populations in southern cities. Still others chose to band together in small camps in the swamps, forests, and mountains of the South,

harassing the planters and stealing from them whenever possible.

## **Revolts and rebellions**

From all appearances, it seems that southern slave owners led a double life. In public, they argued that blacks were very happy to be slaves, living and working under their masters' kindhearted supervision. In private, however, slaveholders often feared for their lives, especially in the Deep South, where slaves outnumbered their masters by quite a margin. The passage of the Black Codes (see Chapter 8), with their incredibly harsh restrictions on blacks, slave and free, were the products of a ruling class that felt unsafe and insecure in their position of power.

Despite the harsh consequences, however, a number of slaves led uprisings against their masters. If one of the definitions of heroism is acting out of one's sense of Tightness without regard to the consequences, the thousands of slaves who revolted against slavery were surely heroes. They proved to their masters and their own people that blacks wanted freedom so badly that they would die fighting for it. If ending slavery was their goal, not one of the uprisings succeeded. Most rebel slaves ended up dead, not free. Their actions, however, forced the nation to confront the conditions of slavery that drove the slaves to organized rebellion and violence. Slave revolts, such as the one led by Nat Turner in 1831 (see below), also inspired the abolitionists to fight harder in their war to end slavery.

### **The record**

The very first slave revolt in what is now the United States actually occurred in 1526 in the first known settlement on mainland North America (see "Slaves come to North America," Chapter 7). Of the 600 people who arrived in what historians believe was South Carolina, 500 were Spanish colonists and 100 were African slaves. Illness claimed the lives of many Spaniards, including their leader. The slaves

revolted, and many fled to live with the local Indians. The remaining 150 settlers fled to Haiti, leaving the rebel slaves as the first permanent immigrants in America.

The first serious slave conspiracy in British North America occurred in Gloucester County, Virginia, in 1663. Very little is known about the event except that it involved slaves who planned to overthrow their masters and secure their freedom. The plot was betrayed by a white indentured servant, and the bloody heads of the unsuccessful rebels were displayed on local chimney tops.

One historian calculated that in the 200 years leading up to the Civil War, slaves engaged in about 250 serious revolts (conspiracies and uprisings). For a slave rebellion to be included in this count, it had to involve a minimum of ten slaves, and freedom had to be their goal. In the colonial period, slave uprisings occurred wherever there were slaves, from New York City to New Orleans. In antebellum (pronounced an-teh-BELL-um; meaning "before the war") America, slave revolts were confined to the slaveholding states of the South.

## **Major uprisings**

### **Jemmy (1739)**

One of the most significant early slave revolts occurred on September 9, 1739, at Stono, South Carolina (about twenty miles outside Charleston). Historians disagree on the name of the slave who led the uprising; some refer to him as Cato. The best information seems to point to a man named Jemmy as the man who led slaves in the killing of two warehouse guards and the seizure of weapons and ammunition. Jemmy, along with about 100 slaves who joined him on the way, began marching south to Spanish-held Florida, where they would be free.

Along the way they killed about twenty whites before the local militia formed a roadblock and fought the armed slaves in an intense battle. About fifty slaves were killed by the time the rebellion was over. Fourteen died in battle, and the rest of the captured slaves were either shot or hanged on the spot. Some of the heads of the defeated rebels were placed on milepost markers that lined the road back to Charleston. In response to the rebellion, South Carolina passed the Negro Act, making it illegal for blacks to assemble in groups, earn money, or learn to read. The Negro Act became the model for the Black Codes in the rest of the South.

### **The Underground Railroad**

The network of people, black and white, who guided runaway slaves to freedom and who sheltered them along the way came to be known as the Underground Railroad. The system began to take shape as early as the 1780s, when Quakers in a number of towns in Pennsylvania and New Jersey began assisting slaves in their escape. By 1819, towns in Ohio and North Carolina were acting as way stations and shelters for fugitive slaves. Long before the militant era of abolitionism began in 1831, the Underground Railroad was an established antislavery institution. Historians estimate that in the fifty years before the Civil War, at least 3,200 "conductors" helped about 75,000 slaves escape to freedom.

The term "Underground Railroad" was probably invented after 1831, about the time that steam railroads became popular. Some of the Underground Railroad's "lines" shared names with the nineteenth-century railroads that ran the same routes. In the early days, the "railroad" to freedom for fugitive slaves (mostly men) was a route traveled on foot, mostly at night, through swamps, up creek beds, across rivers, and over hills, using only the North Star as a guide.

As the traffic got heavier and more women and children slaves fled the South, escorts were provided and vehicles such as covered wagons and carriages were used to transport the human cargo from one "station" to the next. During the day, the fugitive slaves were hidden in barns and attics, where they would rest, eat, and prepare for the next leg of their journey.

The activities of the Underground Railroad were illegal, and people risked fines, jail, and sometimes death for participating. While the network's success depended on the coordination of hundreds of operators and conductors along the way, a few individuals stand out for their incredible accomplishments. Harriet Tubman, herself a runaway slave, made at least nineteen trips into the South and helped guide more than 300 slaves north to freedom. Levi Coffin, a Quaker and "president" of the Underground Railroad, helped more than 3,000 slaves escape. John Fairchild left his slaveholding family in Virginia and, posing as a slave trader and egg peddler, helped hundreds of slaves escape north from Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky.





**A slave in New York City being burned at the stake after being found guilty of insurrection, 1741.**  
Archive Photos, Inc.  
Reproduced by permission.

## **Gabriel Prosser (1800)**

The so-called Gabriel Conspiracy, which took place in Henrico County, Virginia, was the first large-scale uprising planned, and as such, it struck sheer terror into the hearts of white slaveholders across the nation. A slave named Gabriel Prosser believed that God had chosen him to deliver his people from slavery. He persuaded his wife, family, and friends to join him in the effort. They made crude weapons—swords, bayonets, clubs, and even bullets for the few guns they had—and recruited more slaves. In a matter of a few months, they were ready to march on the city of Richmond, hoping to ignite a widespread rebellion among all slaves. On the night of August 30, 1800, about 1,000 armed slaves, some on horseback, met six miles outside the city, ready to attack.

Meanwhile, Governor James Monroe (1758-1831; later the fifth president of the United States) had learned of the plot. He declared martial law and called into service more than 650 troops to defend the city. As fate would have it, the slaves were unable to march on Richmond on the appointed night: an incredibly heavy rainstorm washed out a bridge that the rebels needed to cross to get to the city. They were forced to scatter, and in the days following the aborted attack most of the rebels were hunted down and captured. At least thirty-five rebels, including Gabriel Prosser, were hanged.

## Denmark Vesey (1822)

The conspiracy led by Denmark Vesey (pronounced VEE-zee) in 1822 was one of the most significant and wide-reaching attempts to strike back at slavery. Vesey, who had purchased his freedom in 1800, made a respectable living as a hard-working carpenter. He was a literate man who hated slavery. In 1816, Vesey and other free blacks established a separate black Methodist church in Charleston, South Carolina. By 1820, the church had about 3,000 members, nearly one-third of the total membership of the country's African Methodist Episcopal Church (see "The AME Church," Chapter 9). The whites in Charleston shut down the African church in 1820, angering its members and inciting Vesey to action.

In December 1821, Vesey started to organize the area's slaves for an attack on Charleston. Vesey was the only non-slave involved in the plot. He was careful to select urban artisan slaves—mechanics, harness makers, blacksmiths, and carpenters—as leaders for the revolt. He appealed to his followers to recruit only slaves who could be trusted with the plans, but the secret was eventually leaked to the wrong person, who informed on the rebels to the authorities.

Vesey had set the date for the attack on Charleston for the second Sunday of July, 1822. When two of the leaders were arrested on May 30, Vesey moved the date ahead one month. Despite months of planning and the manufacture **and** stockpiling of bayonets and daggers, Vesey was unable to communicate the change of plans to the thousands of conspiring slaves, some of whom were eighty miles outside the city.

The planned attack, said by one of the witnesses to have involved as many as 9,000 slaves, never took place. In early June, authorities arrested 131 blacks in Charleston. Forty-nine rebels were condemned to die: twelve were eventually pardoned; thirty-seven were hanged, including Vesey. Four white men were fined and imprisoned for helping the blacks.

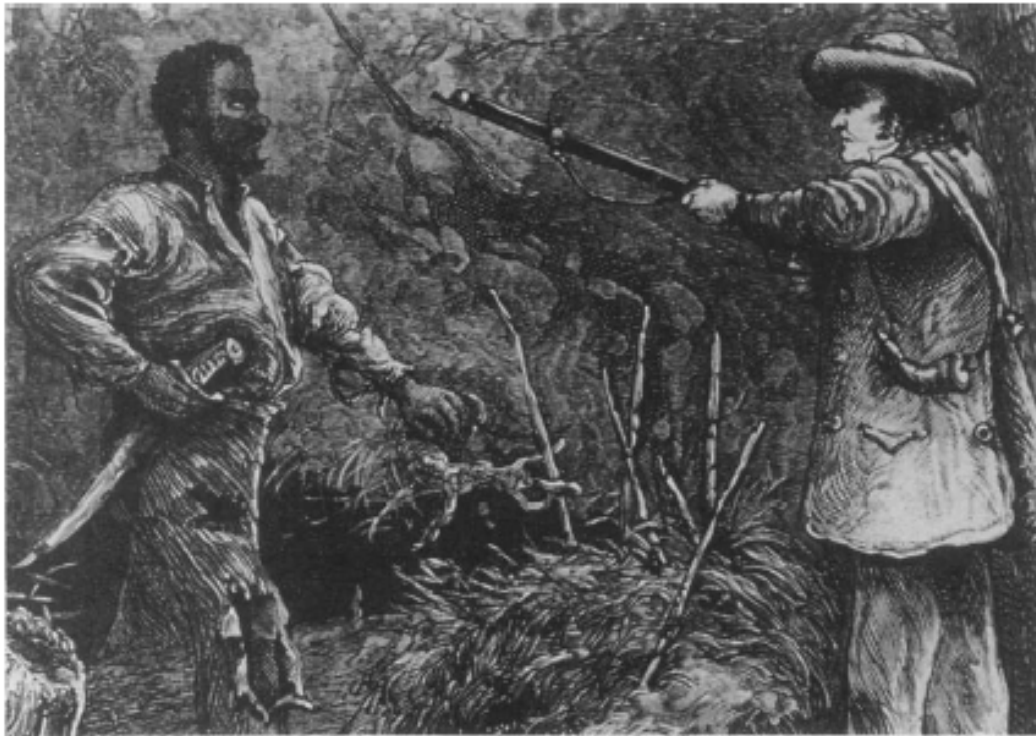
In response to the conspiracy, the whites of Charleston tore down the city's African church.

### **Nat Turner (1831)**

The uprising led by Nat Turner, known as the Southampton Insurrection ("insurrection" is another word for rebellion), was a slaveholder's worst nightmare. Turner was born a slave on October 2, 1800, and lived all his life in Southampton County, Virginia. Turner knew how to read and became very familiar with the stories in the Bible. He was also a preacher and sometimes conducted services of a Baptist nature.

After receiving what he considered a sign from God (a solar eclipse on February 12, 1831), Turner told four other slaves of his plans for a rebellion. They selected the Fourth of July as the date to strike. Turner was ill on that day, however, and the plot was postponed until another sign appeared, this time the "greenish blue color" of the Sun on August 13. On August 21, 1831, six rebels gathered at Turner's place and began their assault on the local white population.

Turner began the massacre by killing his master, Joseph Travis, and Travis's family. The rebels then took some arms and horses and began going from plantation to plantation killing whites. Within twenty-four hours, about seventy slaves had joined the revolt. By the morning of August 23, fifty-seven whites—men, women, and children—had been slaughtered. The rebels had covered about twenty miles and were marching toward the county seat, Jerusalem, where there was a warehouse of weapons. About three miles outside town, the slaves were drawn into battle with bands of armed white men and forced to scatter.



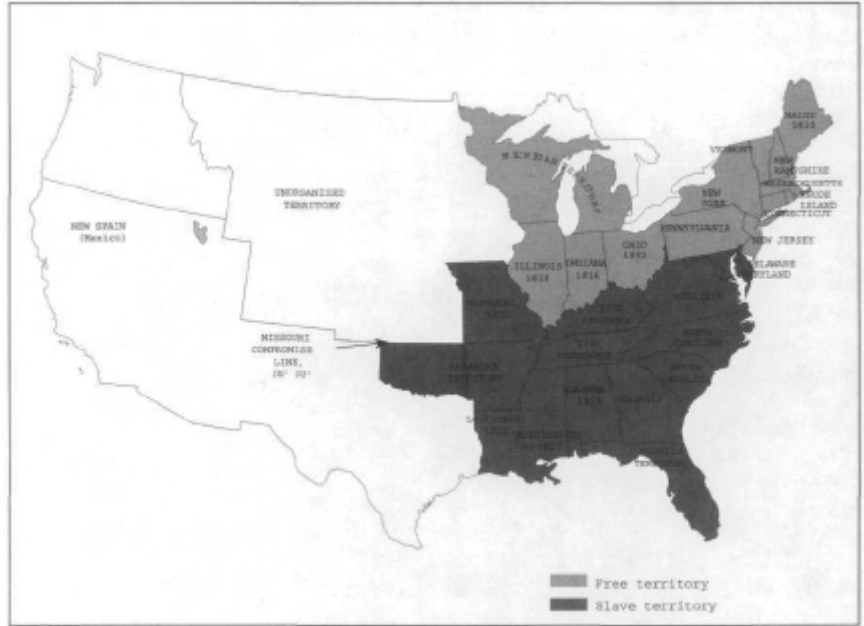
A massacre of blacks immediately followed. Hundreds of white soldiers and militiamen hunted down and executed anyone they thought was connected to the revolt. At least 200 blacks were killed without trials. Those captured alive, about sixteen slaves and three free blacks, were condemned to hang. Turner himself avoided capture until October 30. After a short trial, Turner was hanged on November 11, 1831. A wave of terror rolled over the entire slaveholding South. Thousands of blacks were killed as whites took their revenge on any slaves suspected of plotting to revolt.

The Southampton Insurrection, like the uprisings led by Jemmy, Prosser, and Vesey, was a local event, yet it affected the entire nation, especially the slaveholding South. For slaveholders, the rebellions and conspiracies were reasons to

**An engraving of the capture of Nat Turner. Turner remained hidden for two months after he incited an insurrection. During that time, troops killed an estimated 200 black people in Southampton County and beat his wife frequently, trying to learn Turner's whereabouts.**

Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

**Map of the United States in 1821, showing free territory and slave territory, and the Missouri Compromise line.**



fear their slaves all the more and to pass even more restrictive laws to control them. With each uprising or conspiracy, blacks in the South lost more of their rights. For the antislavery movement, the slave rebellions focused the attention of the nation on the brutality of the slave system. And, as examples of the price slaves were willing to pay for freedom, the slave revolts and conspiracies inspired and helped to unify the abolitionists.

## **The rise of militant abolitionists**

In 1821, Missouri became the twenty-fourth state in the Union. The question of Missouri's status as a slave or non-slave state sparked a national crisis. The U.S. Congress passed a series of measures in 1820 and 1821 known as the Missouri Compromise. Congress admitted Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state. It also prohibited slavery in all other territory north of Missouri's southern boundary (the 36th parallel). Missouri was also allowed to keep a law in its state constitution that forbade free blacks from settling there.

The expansion of slavery into the new state of Missouri was a defeat for the abolitionists. It became clear to many in the

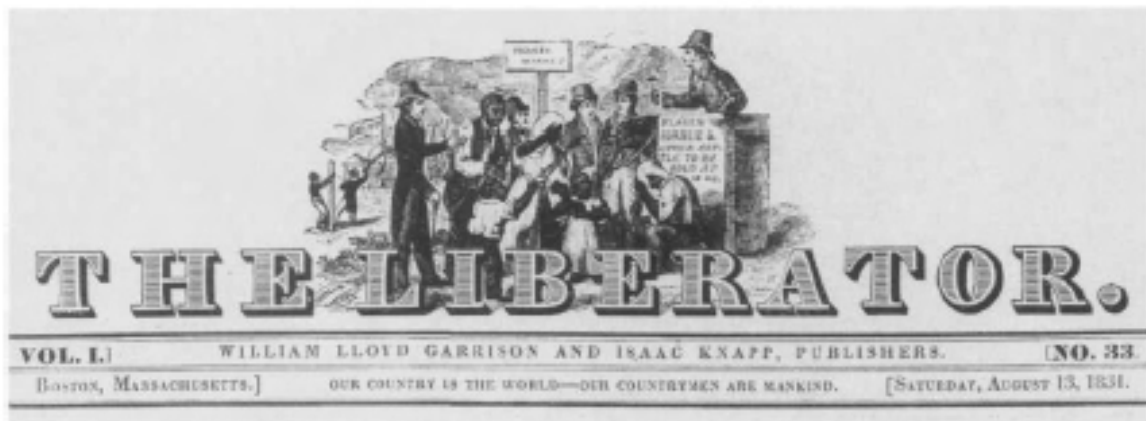
antislavery movement that their efforts to change things gradually and peacefully were not working. In the decade following the Missouri Compromise, abolitionists started calling for an immediate end to slavery, and in some cases, for violent methods to achieve that goal.

In 1829, David Walker (1785-1830) published *Walker's Appeal ...to the Colored Citizens of the World But in Particular and Very Expressly to Those of the United States of America*, which shocked the nation in its call for blacks to violently rise up and defeat the forces of slavery. Walker's message to blacks, in shortened form, was: "Kill or be killed." The writings of Walker, a free black from North Carolina who had moved to Boston, were widely distributed in the North and secretly smuggled into the South, where the pamphlet was banned and slaveholders put a price on Walker's head. Walker died under mysterious circumstances in 1830.

In January 1831, William Lloyd Garrison began publishing the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*. For Garrison and his followers, the immediate and unconditional end of slavery was the only solution to the problem. Many southerners blamed the abolitionists, and Garrison (whose newspaper reprinted *Walker's Appeal* in serial form) in particular, for the violent revolt led by Nat Turner (see above). True or not, Garrison and his followers openly praised the violence of the uprising.

## **The question of colonization**

Free blacks were at the forefront of the struggle from the beginning of the antislavery movement. One of their earliest successes was in opposing plans to deport blacks—those already free, and slaves manumitted for the purpose—to a colony in Africa set up with private donations and state and federal funds.



**The masthead of William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*.**

Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

A plan to deport blacks to Africa, first proposed by Thomas Jefferson in 1777, picked up many supporters in 1815 after a private citizen, at his own expense, carried thirty-eight blacks to Africa. The American Colonization Society (ACS) formed in 1816 and planned to ship blacks to some land near the British colony of Sierra Leone, a small country on the west coast of Africa. The land, purchased in 1822 by the society, was named Liberia, the "land of freedom."

At first, the society had the support of several white abolitionist leaders, including Garrison, Arthur Tappan, Gerrit Smith, and James Birney. By 1832, there were 302 local and state branches of the ACS. And more than a dozen state legislatures, including those of some slaveholding states, had endorsed the society's plans.

Colonization was never all that popular among blacks in the South, but it wasn't entirely opposed, either. For blacks in the North, opposition to the ACS's plans was near unanimous. In 1817, 3,000 free blacks gathered in Philadelphia, under the leadership of Richard Allen (see "The AME Church," Chapter 9), and denounced the plans as an "outrage, having no other object in view than the slaveholding interests of the country." In the next ten years, anticolonization meetings were held by free blacks in many cities across the North.

By 1830, the ACS had persuaded only 1,420 blacks to move to Liberia. By the time of the Civil War, only 15,000 blacks had migrated to Africa, about 12,000 of them due directly to the society's efforts. The idea of shipping blacks back to Africa never really took hold among blacks for many reasons, one of which was the strong and organized opposition to the plan by free blacks in the North. That opposition eventually led as well to white abolitionist leaders such as Garrison and Smith withdrawing their support from the ACS in 1831.



## Black power

On September 15, 1830, Richard Allen organized the first Free People of Color Congress in Philadelphia. At that gathering, black delegates from six states began what came to be known as the National Negro Convention Movement. Every year until the Civil War, blacks convened in different cities "to devise ways and means of bettering our condition." The conventions organized boycotts of slave-produced goods, developed strategies for ending segregated travel on public coaches and steamboats, and tried to improve educational opportunities for blacks. By the 1850s, the conventions openly called for violent rebellion by blacks, advising "all oppressed to adopt the motto 'Liberty or Death.'"

Blacks also organized their own antislavery societies. By 1830 there were at least fifty such groups in cities such as New Haven, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. In the North, black benevolent societies and fraternal organizations (see "Benevolent societies," Chapter 9), as well as black churches, were active in abolitionist causes (see "Antislavery activism," Chapter 9). Blacks gave their time, energy, and money to many of the local and regional antislavery societies and were especially active in organizing the American Antislavery

**"Am I Not a Man and a Brother." A medallion created and sold in the 1830s as a means to raise money for the American abolition movement.**

Photograph by Kari Shuda. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission



Society in 1833 and the activities of the Underground Railroad right up to the outbreak of the Civil War.

Blacks created their own newspapers as well, with most of them dedicated to the antislavery crusade. Samuel Cornish and John Russworm started the country's first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, in 1827. Other black newspapers published or edited by Cornish, most of them shortlived, included *Rights of All* (1829), the *Weekly Advocate* (1836), and the *Colored American*. Other black abolitionist newspapers included the *National Watchman*, the *Mirror of Liberty*, and the best-known of them all, the *North Star*, started in 1847 by Frederick Douglass.

## **The American Antislavery Society**

In 1833, William Lloyd Garrison helped establish the American Antislavery Society (AAS) and served as its president from 1843 to 1865. At first, the AAS was dedicated to ending slavery through peaceful means by focusing on its moral evils. The AAS published antislavery newspapers and pamphlets, and by 1836 it had seventy lecturers traveling the country and delivering the abolitionist message. Many members of the AAS also participated in the Underground Railroad.

Impatient with the moderate methods of the AAS, in 1839 Garrison and his followers seized control of the organization and turned it in a more radical direction. Opposition to Garrison by the AAS's first president, Arthur Tappan (1786-1865; prominent Massachusetts merchant), and others led to the formation of the American and Foreign Antislavery Society (AFAS). The AFAS continued to work with churches and believed that political action, not violence, was the best way to emancipation. In 1840, the members of AFAS became the core of the Liberty Party and nominated James Birney (1792-1857; publisher of the antislavery paper *Philanthropist*) as their candidate for president in 1840 and 1844. In 1844, Birney polled only 60,000 votes.

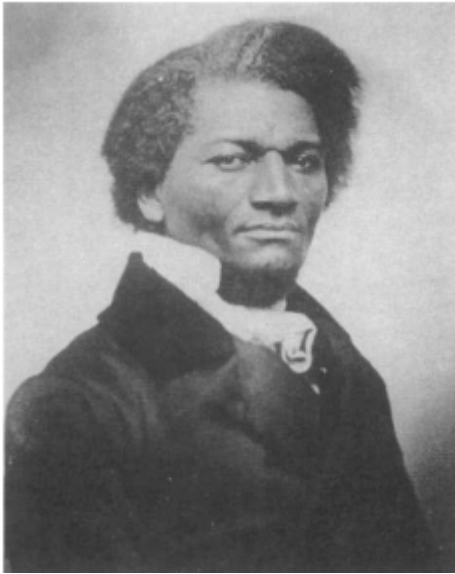


**Harriet Tubman (1820-1913), the heroine of the Underground Railroad, standing (far left) with six slaves she helped guide to freedom. Tubman, an escaped slave, brought more than 300 slaves to safety. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.**

By 1840 there were more than 100 antislavery societies in the free states of the North, with at least 200,000 black and white members. Abolitionists in general, however, and Garrison's brand of antislavery activism in particular, were not always well received by the public or the government. Lecturers often found it hard to rent halls, and their meetings were sometimes broken up by angry mobs. And from 1828 to 1845, the U.S. House of Representatives refused to even consider antislavery petitions from abolitionists.

## **Black abolitionists**

Many blacks served as agents and speakers for the various antislavery societies. Some were full-time employees of local or national chapters. Some of the more prominent agents, and the cause's more effective speakers, were Frederick Douglass, Theodore S. Wright, William Jones, Charles Lenox Remond, Sarah Parker Remond, Frances E. Harper, Henry Foster, Lunsford Lane, Henry Highland Garnet, and Isabella Baumfree, better known as Sojourner Truth (see box "Names of Freedom," Chapter 9).



**Frederick Douglass (c. 1817-1875), abolitionist, writer, newspaper editor, and reformer. His book *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) revealed his fugitive slave status.** AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission.

Blacks wrote as well as spoke against slavery. A number of black abolitionist agents were also authors of autobiographies known as "narratives." From 1840 to 1860, a number of ex-slaves published their stories of enslavement and escape (see "Fruits of the vine," Chapter 9). The autobiography of Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, became an international best-seller in 1845. Abolitionists found these eyewitness testimonies of the brutality of the slave system very helpful in persuading people to join their cause.

Since many of the black abolitionists were ex-slaves themselves, their views of slavery and how to end it often differed from their white counterparts. Frederick Douglass knew the pain of being both a slave and a free black in America. In the first issue of his newspaper, *North Star*, Douglass made clear the unity between free blacks and slaves. "We are one," he wrote. "What you suffer, we suffer; what you endure; we endure. We are indissolubly united, and must fall or flourish together."

## Common and uncommon goals

Alliances between black and white abolitionist leaders were sometimes strained. Many black leaders found it hard to trust white abolitionists such as Garrison and Birney, who had supported colonization up until 1831 (see "The question of colonization," earlier in this chapter). Further distrust was earned when the American Antislavery Society formed in 1833 and only three blacks were among the sixty-two signers of the society's Declaration of Sentiments.

Still, there was a great deal of cooperation between black and white abolitionists. White abolitionist leaders often attended, sometimes as featured speakers, the black conventions, churches, benevolent societies, and antislavery societies. Black abolitionist leaders also gave a great deal of time and energy to

many of the mostly white antislavery societies. Frederick Douglass, for example, served as president of the mostly white New England Antislavery Society in 1847.

While black and white persons were genuinely united in their opposition to slavery, many black abolitionists had a larger vision. Free blacks also wanted the rights and privileges that went along with freedom. Yes, slavery must end, they argued, but blacks realized there was another obstacle to overcome in racism, the force that kept even "free" blacks from ever becoming equal with whites.

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# Civil War, Emancipation, and Reconstruction

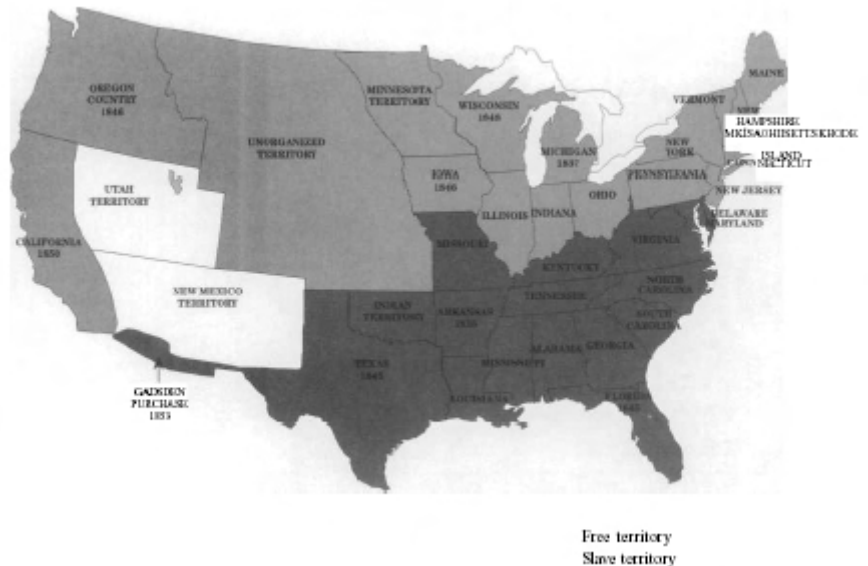
## A country divided

By the 1850s, the United States was unofficially divided into two opposing parts: the North and the South. The North's economy was more industrial, people lived mostly in cities, and there was no slave labor. The South depended on agriculture, people lived mostly in rural areas, and the economy was based on the labor of more than 3.5 million slaves. Though there were many other differences, the main problem for the two regions centered on slavery.

As the attack on slavery by the abolitionists of the North grew stronger (see Chapter 10), the South stiffened its defense of the institution. The South's most effective method of resistance was to threaten withdrawal from the Union. The tactic was first used by the slaveholding southern states at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. Most of the North had already abolished slavery, and some delegates were pushing for an official end to the African slave trade in the new nation (it had been outlawed briefly during the Revolutionary War). The South threatened to withhold its support from the

proposed federal government. A compromise was eventually reached, permitting the African slave trade to continue for another twenty years and obligating all states to return fugitive slaves to their owners.

A map of the United States showing free territory and slave territory after the Compromise of 1850, in which California was admitted as a free state, the District of Columbia prohibited the slave trade, and the status of the territories of Utah and New Mexico was left to be determined. The fugitive slave laws were also greatly strengthened to appease the South.



## The Compromise of 1850

When gold was discovered in California in 1848 and many people started migrating west, the nation was once again forced to decide whether slavery would be allowed in new territories and states. Southern pro-slavers argued that slavery should be permitted. Northern abolitionists insisted that slavery should not be expanded. A third group, led by northern Democrats, thought that the question should be put to a vote by the people living in the new territories.

## Fact Focus

- In **1852**, Uncle Tom's Cabin, a novel about the horrors of slavery, sold 300,000 copies and persuaded thousands to join the antislavery crusade.
- On February 4, 1861, delegates from the seven rebel states of the South met in Montgomery, Alabama, and formed the Confederate States of America.
- On April 6, 1862, a total of 80,000 Union and Confederate soldiers met on a battlefield in Tennessee. By nightfall on April 7, 23,741 soldiers lay dead.
- From 1862 to **1864**, **more than** 25 percent of slaves who sought refuge in Union camps died of starvation and disease.
- On January 1, 1863, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed 3 million slaves living in the Confederacy (about three-quarters of all slaves at that time).
- During the course of the war, more than 185,000 black men served in the Union army and 29,000 black men served in the Union navy.
- Immediately after the war, in 1865 and 1866, Black Codes that were very similar to the prewar laws that dealt with blacks were established as the law of the land in the South.
- The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, ratified between 1865 and 1870, abolished slavery and established citizenship and voting rights for blacks.
- In 1867 in the South, the wages paid to freedpeople (ex-slaves) were lower than those paid to hired slaves before the war.
- As early as 1866, groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camelia, and others used threats, force, bribery, arson, and even murder to keep blacks from voting in the South.
- By 1889, blacks had been elbowed out of their rights and were no longer a political force in the South.

After great debates, the U.S. Congress reached the Compromise of 1850. Among other things, Congress admitted California as a free state, left the status of territories to be decided later, outlawed the slave trade in the District of Columbia, and, most important, put real teeth into the fugitive slave laws of 1787 and 1793. The new law required federal marshals to arrest—on pain of a \$1,000 fine—any black person who was accused of being a runaway slave. No warrant was needed if the claimant swore ownership. The accused had no right to a jury trial or to give testimony in their own



defense. Anyone caught helping a fugitive slave was subject to six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

The Compromise passed in part because of more threats from the South. Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina were ready to pull out of the Union until they were promised that the fugitive slave act would be strictly enforced. The antislavery forces of the North were furious; they saw the Compromise of 1850 as a disaster. The fugitive slave laws directly threatened the freedom of approximately 50,000 runaway slaves in the North. Thousands of blacks immediately fled across the border to Canada. As slave catchers came north to find runaways, white and black abolitionists defended many fugitives from capture and even rescued a few already in the custody of federal marshals. Abolitionists also increased their efforts to help slaves escape by the Underground Railroad (see "The Underground Railroad" Chapter 10).

## **The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854**

If anyone wondered what was in store for a nation so divided by the issue of slavery, they had only to look to Kansas in 1854. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, introduced in the Senate by Stephen Douglass (1813-1861; a Democrat from Illinois), organized Kansas and Nebraska as territories and left the question of slavery to be decided by the settlers when they applied for statehood. The act, in effect, erased the thirty-four-year-old prohibition of slavery above the Mason-Dixon line as established in the Missouri Compromise (see "The rise of militant abolitionists" Chapter 10), and once again the abolitionists were fighting mad.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act also made Kansas, in particular, a bloody battleground for proslavery and antislavery forces, as each side tried to establish their dominance before the vote. Thousands of settlers, from New England to the Deep South, poured into Kansas, established free-state towns or slave-state towns, and for the next few years fought one another for control.

In the early 1850s, the two major political parties of the country, the Democrats and the Whigs, split into northern

and southern wings. In 1854, after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act (sponsored by the northern Democrats as a "compromise"), the northern Whigs united with antislavery Democrats and Free Soilers (an antislavery political party formed in 1848) and founded the Republican Party. The new party was firmly antislavery yet had a political program that was more broad-based than the failed Liberty Party of the abolitionists in the 1840s (see "The American Antislavery Society," Chapter 10). The southern Whigs joined the southern Democrats as a united party firmly on the proslavery side of the aisle. Emboldened by their political successes, the southerners began to press for the reopening of the African slave trade.



**Dred Scott and Harriet Scott, engraved portraits. Dred Scott's lawsuit brought the issue of slavery all the way to the Supreme Court.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

## **The Supreme setback**

The *Dred Scott v. Sandford* decision handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1857 was a huge victory for proslavery forces. Dred Scott was a slave who had filed suit in 1846, arguing that he and his wife should be free persons because they had lived with their owner for periods of time in territories where slavery was not allowed. At question was whether a slave was a citizen with the legal standing to sue in federal court, the status of slaves living on free soil, and

whether Congress had the power to outlaw slavery in the territories.

The majority of the Supreme Court ruled that blacks, free or slave, were not citizens of the United States and therefore Dred Scott and his wife had no legal standing in court and were to remain slaves. The court also ruled that slavery was a property right established by the U.S. Constitution and therefore owners still retained title to their slaves, even when visiting or living on free soil. Further, the court ruled that territories were common lands of the United States where the property rights of all citizens—including slaveholders—applied. The court, in effect, declared the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional and opened all territories to slavery.

## **The abolitionists respond**

The 1850s were a tough decade for the cause of abolition in the national political arena. Slaveholders won battle after battle in the U.S. Congress and the Supreme Court. Yet the abolitionists grew stronger and more determined as each year passed. Because of divisions within their ranks over what methods were best, abolitionists fought slavery with every weapon possible, from words to bullets.

In 1852, words were still the abolitionists' most powerful tool, and the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a novel about the horrors of slavery, persuaded thousands to join the antislavery crusade. The book, written by Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), sold 300,000 copies in its first year and was dramatized in theaters all over the North. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* proved to be the abolitionists' single greatest literary assault on the South, forcing slaveholders to defend the cruelty and suffering of slavery and turning the tide of public opinion in the North against slavery.

In the 1850s, abolitionists led by William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879; publisher of the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* and president of the American Antislavery Society)

began actively calling for "disunion"—for the North to break away from the South. Garrison argued that disunion was the best way to stop the spread of slavery in the territories and that it would end the North's obligation to return fugitive slaves. Other abolitionists, such as Frederick Douglass (1817-1895; ex-slave and publisher of the abolitionist newspaper the *North Star*), opposed disunion and called for direct political action and the use of armed force to overthrow slavery.

## The first shots

John Brown (1800-1859) was a white abolitionist who represented an even more radical viewpoint than Garrison or Douglass. Born in Connecticut in 1800, Brown was raised by parents who were very religious and very active in the antislavery movement. Brown made his mark in the movement in 1851 when he helped found the League of Gileadites, a small group of radical whites, free blacks, and runaway slaves committed to resisting the new fugitive slave laws (see "The Compromise of 1850," earlier in this chapter).

In response to the Kansas-Nebraska Act (see "The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854," earlier in this chapter), Brown and his sons moved to Kansas in 1855 to help establish the territory as free soil. Brown and his followers fought many armed and bloody battles in Kansas and Missouri for antislavery principles. For example, in May 1856, Brown and his group killed five southern settlers as revenge for the destruction of Lawrence, Kansas, a free-state town.

Brown's most famous act was his leadership in the October 16, 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Brown and his twenty-one followers hoped to capture the federal arsenal and arm

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN;

OR,

LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.



VOL. I.

ONE HUNDREDETH THOUSAND.

BOSTON:

JOHN P. JEWETT & COMPANY

CLEVELAND, OHIO:

JEWETT, PROCTOR & WORTHINGTON.

1852.

The title page of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), by Harriet Beecher Stowe. One of the most widely read books of the century, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* convinced many readers that slavery must end.

slaves for a massive uprising to end slavery. Brown's raiding party included two former slaves, three free blacks, and sixteen radical whites. After thirty-six hours and fifteen deaths, the well-planned but poorly executed revolt was crushed. Of Brown's group, ten were killed, five escaped, and the rest were hanged with their leader on December 2, 1859.

Brown's raid electrified the nation. Though black abolitionist leaders would not join Brown, and some, such as Frederick Douglass, actively tried to discourage him, no one questioned Brown's incredible commitment to the cause. To most abolitionists, Brown became a great martyr, an almost saintlike figure who gave his life in a holy crusade to end slavery. In the South, Brown was despised. His violent raid and plans for a large-scale revolt, and rumors of more to come, threatened the security of the South and inspired war preparations as far away as Georgia.

**John Brown, kissing a baby as he walks to the gallows to be hanged.**



## **The disunited states**

When the Republican Party candidate for president, Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), was elected on an antislavery platform in November 1860, many southern slaveholding states finally did what they had threatened for seventy years—they withdrew from the Union and formed their own government. On December 20, 1860, South Carolina became the first state to secede. By February 1, 1861, six more states had followed: Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas.

On February 4, 1861, delegates from the seven rebel states met in Montgomery, Alabama, and formed the Confederate States of America, or the Confederacy. The new nation's constitution outlawed the external slave trade but prohibited any laws that limited the rights of people to own slaves. On February 18, 1861, Jefferson Davis (1808-1889), a Mississippi plantation owner and former soldier, congressman, senator, and secretary of war, was inaugurated as president of the Confederacy.

When Lincoln was inaugurated in Washington, D.C., on March 4, 1861 as the sixteenth president of the United States, eight slave states still remained in the Union: Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, and the border states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. Lincoln was determined to keep what was left of the Union together, even if that meant offending the antislavery wing of the Republican Party.

## **The war begins**

The Civil War officially began on April 12, 1861, when President Davis ordered Confederate soldiers to open fire on Fort Sumter, a Union-held fort located in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Union forces surrendered after a thirty-one-hour battle. The defeat cost the Union four more slave states, as Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas joined the Confederacy. Delaware and northwestern Virginia (which became the state of West Virginia in 1863) declared for the Union. Union troops occupied Maryland before it could vote, and a small Union army secured Missouri.

Kentucky declared itself neutral (until the Confederates invaded in 1862; then it joined the Union).

War fever gripped both North and South, and thousands of men rushed to join the Union and Confederate armies. Many free blacks tried to enlist in the Union's army but were turned away. Some blacks volunteered to go into the South to organize slave revolts, but they were also turned down. The Union's refusal to enlist blacks was part of Lincoln's policy that billed the battle ahead as a fight to save the Union, not to end slavery. Enlisting blacks in the Union armies, Lincoln feared, would send the wrong message to the millions of Northern whites the Union would need to militarily defeat the Confederacy.

In the beginning of the war, Lincoln had every reason to expect the Union to prevail. The South had less than one-half the population of the North. Of the South's 9 million people, 4 million were slaves, leaving even less of the population available for military duty. The North was better equipped to wage war as well. It had twice as many rail lines to move troops and supplies on and five times as many factories to churn out arms, ammunition, and war-related materials. The Union also controlled the powerful U.S. Navy, which it used to effectively blockade the southern ports of the Confederacy throughout the war.

## **Ex-slave refugees**

As Union troops invaded the South in the spring of 1861, thousands of slaves left their plantations and headed for safety behind the lines of the advancing army. At first there was no clear-cut federal policy for how to treat slaves seeking refuge with the Union armies. Some commanders in the field acted on their own, emancipating slaves (a policy that Lincoln later reversed) and putting them to work (with pay) for the Union forces. Other commanders wanted to return the fugitives to their owners.



**Ex-slaves planting sweet potatoes on South Carolina plantation land during the Civil War, 1862.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.

The Confiscation Act passed by the U.S. Congress on August 6, 1861 settled the matter. The law stated that any property used in aiding or abetting insurrection against the United States could be captured and kept as a prize of war. When the "property" consisted of slaves, the law declared them to be forever free. The Confiscation Act resulted in thousands of slaves seeking refuge and freedom on the lands occupied and controlled by the Union armies.

The ex-slave refugees were free, but they did not receive the best treatment by their Northern hosts. Again, the lack of a well-formed federal policy left most of the decision making to the field commanders. In Tennessee, for example, ex-slaves were sent to work for whites who leased abandoned plantations from the Union. And in Louisiana, ex-slaves were hired out to loyal planters. The worst of it, however, was the suffering from starvation and diseases in the camps set up for the ex-slaves. Despite extensive relief efforts from private organizations in the North, from 1862 to 1864 more than 25 percent of the refugees in those camps died.



Some of the ex-slave refugee problems should have been solved in December 1862, when the head of the Union's Department of the South ordered that abandoned lands were to be used for the benefit of black refugees. Black families were to receive two acres for each working member and some farm tools. They were to plant corn and potatoes for themselves and cotton for the government. The actual amount of land available for such purposes, however, never met the demand. Instead the government sold off much of the abandoned lands to private buyers.

## **A turning point**

Neither side imagined that the war would last so long or be so costly in terms of human life—at least not until the battle of Shiloh. On April 6, 1862, a total of 80,000 Union and Confederate soldiers met on a battlefield in Tennessee. By nightfall on April 7, 23,741 soldiers lay dead. The Confederate army retreated after Union reinforcements arrived, and the Union declared a victory. The battle, like so many more that followed, resulted in an incredible number of casualties on both sides no matter which side won.

By the spring of 1862, the Union had gained the upper hand in the war. Their armies and navy were successfully protecting their capital city in the east (Washington), blockading ports on the southern coasts, and capturing important land and cities to the west, such as New Orleans in April 1862. If the Union could capture the Confederacy's capital city of Richmond, Virginia, located just 100 miles southwest of Washington, the war would have an early end.

Instead the momentum of the war suddenly switched to the South as the Confederate armies, under the command of General Robert E. Lee (1807-1870), defeated Union armies in a series of battles in the summer of 1862. The Union losses were very high, and Northerners were beginning to demand peace at any cost. The Confederacy was also very close to securing military intervention on their behalf from Europe,

having argued that the South had every right to leave the Union and that the North was the aggressor in the war.



**Abraham Lincoln (left, center) at the first reading of the Emancipation Proclamation.**  
Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

## **Toward freedom**

Faced with mounting losses on the battlefield and a lack of enthusiasm for the war from the public, Lincoln's policy toward emancipation (freedom from bondage) began to change in the summer of 1862. It was time, Lincoln decided, to rouse the North to a greater cause than just saving the Union. The war would be fought to end slavery, and blacks would be freed to help fight the war.

On June 19, the United States abolished slavery in the territories. On July 19, all slaves who made it into Union territory from "disloyal" masters (from Confederate states) were set free. Lincoln discussed issuing an emancipation proclamation with his cabinet as early as July 22, but he was advised to wait until the Union had a victory on the battlefield.

That victory came on September 17, 1862, at the battle at Antietam Creek, in Sharpsburg, Maryland. The one-day fight between the Union's 87,000 troops and the Confederacy's 41,000 troops was the Civil War's bloodiest day. The Union lost 12,000 men and the Confederacy nearly as many. The

Confederate army retreated the next day and the Union declared a "victory."

Five days after the battle, on September 22, 1862, Lincoln solved many of the Union's political problems by issuing a preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, which he hoped would take effect on January 1, 1863. At the same time, he began to allow the enlistment of blacks into the Union's armed forces. Lincoln's change of policy pleased the abolitionists, who had urged emancipation all along. And since the war's goal was no longer just to save the Union, but to crush slavery, the sympathy of the antislavery Europeans turned to the North.

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the final Emancipation Proclamation, setting free all slaves living in the Confederacy (roughly 3 million slaves; or about three-quarters of all slaves at that time). Almost 1 million blacks remained enslaved, most of them in the four border states loyal to the Union: Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri. And slaves were still not free in West Virginia, seven counties in eastern Virginia, and thirteen parishes in Louisiana, including the city of New Orleans.

## **Black sailors and soldiers**

On September 25, 1861, the secretary of the U.S. Navy authorized the enlistment of slaves into the Union navy. By the end of the war more than 29,000 black men had enrolled for duty. The first call to arms for blacks from the Union army came in May 1862. Enough blacks enlisted to establish the "First South Carolina Volunteer Regiment." The group, however, was disbanded and sent home before it saw any action. Lincoln allowed a limited number of blacks to enlist in the Union army in the fall of 1862. Regiments of black soldiers were organized in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Tennessee.



In the spring of 1863, after the Emancipation Proclamation, many blacks rushed to join the Union army. Frederick Douglass and other black leaders acted as recruiting agents. By the end of the war more than 185,000 blacks had served in the Union army. About 93,000 came from the rebel states, 40,000 from the border slave states, and about 52,000 from the free states.

Black Union soldiers were called "United States Colored Troops" and were organized into segregated regiments of light and heavy artillery, cavalry, infantry, and engineers. With few exceptions, they were led by white officers. In the beginning, black soldiers were paid less than white soldiers. According to the Enlistment Act of July 17, 1862, the monthly pay of a white soldier with the rank of private was \$16.50; blacks with the same rank received \$10. After many protests from the black soldiers and their commanding officers, beginning in 1864, the War Department paid blacks the same rate as whites.

**The 107th U.S. Colored Infantry poses for a Matthew Brady photograph.**  
Archive Photos, Inc.  
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**The camp cook of the Army of the Potomac during the Civil War.**  
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Blacks served the Union army in a variety of ways. Some blacks, such as Harriet Tubman (see "The Underground Railroad," Chapter 10), acted as spies. Some were organized into raiding parties. Many served as laborers for the Union cause, working on Union-controlled plantations and building fortifications for the army. One of the major complaints of black enlisted soldiers and their white officers was that they were used too much for manual labor and not enough for fighting. Finally, in

1864, the army limited the amount of "fatigue" duty assigned to black soldiers to the same as white soldiers.

According to one historian, black soldiers engaged in more than 250 battles with Confederate forces in the course of the war. More than 38,000 black soldiers died in the Civil War. The Confederacy held more than 3,000 black troops as prisoners in 1863, and in late 1864, more than 1,000 black prisoners of war worked on Confederate fortifications in Mobile, Alabama.

Black Union troops captured by the South before 1864 were not treated as prisoners of war. They were treated as fugitive slaves and returned to their states of origin. Throughout the war, Confederate troops were especially harsh on black Union soldiers, sometimes killing them in the field rather than taking them prisoner. Excessive manual labor, poor equipment, lousy medical care, the tendency to send blacks recklessly into battle, and the take-no-prisoners opposition from their enemies led to a 40 percent higher mortality rate for black soldiers than white soldiers.

## **Slaves in the Confederacy**

Life during wartime for black slaves in the Confederacy was a time of great change. Between 1861 and 1865, thousands of slaves walked off their plantations and sought refuge behind the lines of advancing Union armies. For those slaves who stayed in the South, some out of loyalty, many refused to work or to submit to punishment. Slaves often assisted Union troops by providing information, destroying their masters' properties, and sometimes physically harming or even killing their masters.

Faced with an extreme shortage of labor due to the enlistment of many of its working men, the Confederacy found new ways to use its slaves. Slaves were put to work on farms that grew food crops of corn and wheat (instead of cotton) for the war effort. Slaves went to work by the thousands in the South's iron foundries, iron mines, coal mines, and salt factories. In 1863, the Confederate government even tried to force slave owners to hire out their slaves to work in the war effort. Both the slaves and their owners resisted.

Slaves were forced to perform many dirty and dangerous tasks for the Confederate armies. They repaired rail lines and bridges destroyed by the Union army. They worked in factories making gunpowder and arms. Slaves acted as teamsters, hospital attendants, ambulance drivers, and manual laborers on many construction and fortification projects. Most of the cooks for the Confederate army were slaves. They received \$15 a month and clothing. If blacks ever served in battle as Confederate soldiers, it was at the end of the war, and their numbers were very small. Up until March 13, 1865, when President Davis put out a desperate call for troops of any color, the Confederacy refused to enlist black men in its armies.

**The surrender of  
Confederate general  
Robert E. Lee to  
Union general  
Ulysses S. Grant at  
Appomattox  
Courthouse,  
Virginia, on April 9,  
1865.** Archive  
Photos, Inc.  
Reproduced by  
permission.



## **The reunited states**

The Civil War ended on April 9, 1865, when the Confederate army, led by General Robert E. Lee, surrendered at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia. The casualties for both sides totaled 600,000, more than the number of combined casualties of all American wars since then. One of every four soldiers who served in the war died in battle or from disease. The South was in ruins. The Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, was just one of the many Southern cities destroyed by the Union army. The Union armies also laid to waste vast tracts of farmland as they advanced on, and occupied, much of the South.

Lincoln was elected to serve a second term as president in November 1864. He did not live long enough to serve out his term, however, nor did he have much time to appreciate the Union's victory and the total abolition of slavery. On April 14, 1865, five days after the South surrendered, John Wilkes Booth, a Southern sympathizer, shot Lincoln. The president died the next morning.



Before he died, however, Lincoln had set a tone of healing, not revenge, for the war-torn nation. The Southern states had not actually seceded, Lincoln argued, they had only rebelled, and they should be welcomed back into the Union. Lincoln lived also to see the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution—which abolished slavery in America—passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on January 31, 1865, and well on its way to ratification (official approval by popular vote) by the states.

The ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment on December 18, 1865, was a great victory for blacks in America. It freed 4 million slaves and ended nearly 250 years of slavery for an entire race of Americans. The Thirteenth Amendment would not have been possible without the Union's victory in the Civil War. And the Civil War would probably never have happened if the abolitionist movement had not pushed the country into conflict on the slavery issue with such force for so many years. The end of slavery was a great victory for the thousands of

**Former slaves greet black Union troops as the Civil War comes to a close.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.



free blacks and black slaves who, together with white abolitionists, fought the good fight on many fronts—social, political, economic, and military—for generations.

## **A step backward**

The end of slavery was the beginning of another battle for black Americans and their allies—to secure citizenship and equal rights for blacks. The North forced the South to accept that blacks could no longer be their slaves, but the South quickly proved that it was not willing to move an inch toward equal rights and citizenship for its black population. Taking advantage of lenient amnesty (official pardon) policies established by Lincoln and his successor, President Andrew Johnson (1808-1875), Southern whites reestablished control over their state legislatures.

In 1865 and 1866, Black Codes, which were very similar to the prewar laws that dealt with blacks, were established as the law of the land in the South (see Chapters 8 and 9). Blacks were forced to work or they were declared vagrants. If blacks quit their jobs, they could be arrested for breach of contract. Blacks could not testify in court except in cases involving blacks. Blacks could be fined for violating curfews; possessing firearms; missing work; or speaking, gesturing, or acting in an "insulting" manner. Blacks, of course, could not vote.

## **Political Reconstruction**

After almost two years of white home rule in the South, the Republican-controlled U.S. Congress intervened. First, on April 9, 1866, it passed a Civil Rights bill that repealed the Black Codes of the South. The bill granted citizenship to blacks, and equal rights with whites in every state and territory. Then in 1867, Congress passed a series of Reconstruction acts that drastically, but only temporarily, changed the political landscape of the South. The acts divided the former Confederacy into five military districts under the command of army generals. They stripped the right to vote from most whites who had supported the Confederate government. Elections were ordered for state constitutional

conventions, and black men were given the right to vote, in some states by military order.



A campaign to register voters in the South began in the summer of 1867. By November, more than 1.3 million citizens had registered, including 700,000 blacks. Black voters made up a majority in the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Blacks were elected to constitutional conventions in every southern state but held a majority only in South Carolina. The state constitutions drawn up in 1867 and 1868 abolished slavery and gave all male residents the right to vote. Throughout the Reconstruction period, blacks were also elected to state legislatures and, in much smaller numbers, to the U.S. House and Senate.

At the federal level, the Reconstruction-minded Congress sent two important amendments of the U.S. Constitution to the states for ratification. The Fourteenth Amendment, which granted citizenship to blacks, was made law on July 21, 1868. Ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment

**Freed slaves waiting for work opportunities.**

U.S. Signal Corps, National Archives and Records Administration.



**Black men voting  
in Washington,  
D.C., June 3, 1867.**  
Archive Photos, Inc.  
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permission.

**Government  
relief at the  
Freedman's  
Bureau.** Archive  
Photos, Inc.  
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permission.



became one of the requirements for states to be readmitted into the Union. In an attempt to secure the right to vote for black men, Congress also passed the Fifteenth Amendment, guaranteeing the protection of U.S. citizens against federal or state racial discrimination, which was ratified by the states on March 30, 1870.

## Relief and recovery

The Civil War and Reconstruction brought new freedoms to black Americans, but they also brought great suffering (see "Ex-slave refugees," earlier in this chapter). In March 1865, Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, or the Freedman's Bureau. Relief in the form of clothing, food, and schools for freedmen (exslaves, male and female) and refugees in the South had been provided by private associations and religious organizations based in the North since 1862. The Freedman's Bureau took the relief effort many steps further.

From 1865 to 1869, the bureau issued 21 million food rations; about 5 million rations went to whites, and the rest went to blacks. By 1867, forty-six bureau-run hospitals, staffed with surgeons, doctors, and nurses, had treated more than 450,000 cases of illness. The bureau also helped about 30,000 people resettle and distributed a small amount of abandoned lands to freedpeople.

The bureau's greatest achievement was the establishment of an extensive public school system in the South. Together with private agencies and religious organizations, the bureau set up and ran day schools, night schools, Sunday schools, industrial schools, and colleges. In 1869, there were 9,503 teachers in the bureau's schools, most of whom were from the North. In 1870, when the bureau ended its educational work, there were almost 247,333 students in 4,329 schools.

Black churches played an important role in providing spiritual and material relief (food, clothing, and schools) to blacks in postwar America. From around 1830 to the end of the Civil War, blacks were not free to worship as they wished in the South. With those restrictions gone, the number of independent black churches and their membership shot up dramatically. The oldest black church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, had 20,000 members in 1856; in 1876 it had more than 200,000 members. Black Baptist churches in

the South grew from a membership of 150,000 in 1850 to 500,000 in 1870.

## **Running in place**

The greatest failure of Reconstruction was its inability to improve the economic conditions of blacks in either the North or the South. Blacks who moved to the North in search of better living conditions were often disappointed. They were able to find work only because the operators of the iron and cotton mills and the railroad builders often employed blacks at low wages in order to undermine white labor unions. Generally, white labor unions did not allow black members in the postwar years. Black laborers were forced to work for lower wages and gained a reputation as strikebreakers (people hired to replace striking workers). In December 1869, blacks formed the National Negro Labor Union. Denied connections to the white labor movement until 1880, the union focused on improving conditions for black workers.

Immediately following the war in the South, many freedpeople returned to the farms of their ex-masters and resumed work under conditions not much better than before slavery was abolished. Blacks now worked under a contract system with their employers. Plantation wages ranged from \$9 to \$15 a month for men, and from \$5 to \$10 a month for women (plus food, shelter, and fuel). In 1867, the wages paid to freedpeople were lower than those paid to hired slaves before the war. Blacks who worked on a sharecropping system (a system in which one person farms land owned by another in exchange for a share of the crop) were no better off. Their expenses were sometimes higher than the value of their crops, and after paying the employer his share of the cotton and corn, many sharecroppers actually ended up in debt.



## Another civil war

The end of Reconstruction in the South was a gradual process. From 1870 to the end of the century, many of the political, social, and economic advances of blacks made in the postwar South were reversed. The growth of vigilante groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, the rise of the Democratic Party, and the eventual rewriting of state constitutions all contributed to the decline in the status of black Americans in the South. The campaign to overthrow Reconstruction began in 1866 with terrorism (attacks on unarmed civilians). Secret societies of white southerners formed and, through the use of threats and violence, waged a crusade to deny political equality to blacks. Groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camelia, the Pale Faces, and others used threats, force, bribery, arson, and murder to keep blacks from voting and to harass black and white Reconstruction officials and workers

After the war, with few work opportunities, many ex-slaves returned to the plantations to work for their former masters, at very low wages or on a sharecropper basis. Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by

from the North. Enemies of these white vigilante groups were whipped, maimed, hanged, or run out of town; their houses and barns were burned, and their crops destroyed. Congress put an official end to the Klan and other terrorist groups with a series of laws in 1870 and 1871, but their actions continued with greater secrecy than before.

This poster, created by Southern whites who opposed the Freedman's Bureau, demonstrates the kind of stereotyping and prejudice that faced black Americans after the Civil War. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



The rebirth of the Democrats as a political force in the South was in full swing by 1872, when, through a series of congressional amnesties, voting power was restored to all white southerners except a few ex-Confederate officials. Beginning in 1870 with the border states, the Democratic Party regained control of legislatures in one state after another in the South. By 1876, Democrats controlled every state in the South except South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana. The withdrawal of all federal troops from the South in 1877 marked the formal end of the Reconstruction period and left the Democrats and their vigilante allies firmly in control of the fate of millions of black Americans.

## **The rebirth of white supremacy**

The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution provided protections for black Americans based on their race and status as ex-slaves. The Democrats, once in power, spent the next twenty-five years or so finding ways to legally deny blacks the right to vote or to participate in politics. Violence, intimidation, and deception played important roles. Vigilante groups simply told blacks to stay out of town on election day or face the consequences. Polling places were set up far from black communities or moved to a place known only to Democrats and their friends. Voting districts were constantly redrawn to divide up the black vote. By 1889, one historian concluded, blacks were no longer a political force in the South.

As the century came to a close, almost every state in the South began rewriting and amending their Reconstruction-era constitutions to include voting restrictions aimed at blacks. By these measures, most blacks, as well as some whites, were kept from the voting booths because they didn't have enough money to pay a poll tax, or they could not read and write, or they did not own enough property. On the surface, the laws never mentioned race or color, but their intention was never in doubt. For example, in Louisiana in 1896, more than 130,000 blacks were registered to vote. Two years after the adoption of a new state constitution in 1898, there were 5,320 registered black voters. In Alabama, only 3,000 blacks out of 180,000 blacks of voting age were registered in 1900.

The social forces that shaped the South's treatment of blacks in the post-Reconstruction era led to the adoption of the "Jim Crow" laws that would last until the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Beginning in Tennessee in 1870, and followed rapidly by the rest of the South, laws were passed that separated blacks and whites on trains, in depots, and on wharves. By 1885, most of the South required separate schools for blacks and whites, and by 1900, blacks were barred from white hotels, barber shops, restaurants, and theaters.



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# Slavery in the Twentieth Century

## The end of Africa's western slave trade

Most of the slaves shipped to North and South America from 1518 to 1880 came from West Africa. In the nineteenth century, slaves were shipped to the Americas from East Africa as well. Beginning in the early part of the century, at least 25,000 slaves were being exported annually from the slave markets of Mozambique (pronounced moe-zam-BEEK) Island to Brazil. The Portuguese, Dutch, French, British, and Americans were all regular customers for slaves from Africa's east coast. Though the voyage around the southern tip of Africa to the Americas was much longer, slaves were cheaper than on Africa's west coast, and it was easier to evade the smaller British antislavery patrols (see "Abolition on the Atlantic," Chapter 10). It was not uncommon, however, for as many as one-half of the slaves to die on the voyage from East Africa to Cuba or Brazil.

By 1842, England, the United States, France, Denmark, Holland, and Spain had all passed laws against the trans-

Atlantic slave trade. The slave trade from Africa to the Americas was only *legally dead*, however, and African slaves continued to be shipped across the Atlantic for another thirty-eight years (see "The slave trade persists." Chapter 10).

The abolition of slavery in the United States in 1865 dramatically decreased the number of slaves brought to the Western Hemisphere and contributed greatly to the end of the trade. Slavery gradually came to an end in Latin America, though the last two countries to abolish slavery were also Latin America's greatest slaveholders—Brazil and Cuba. In 1871, Brazil passed a gradual emancipation law, and in 1880 Cuba did the same. Though there were still slaves in Cuba until 1886, and in Brazil until 1888, the shipping of Africans across the Atlantic ended in 1880.

## **Africa's eastern slave trade**

As the trade from West Africa to the Americas was winding down, slave traders turned their attention to East Africa and to the well-established slave markets of Arabia and the East. The Arab-dominated lands of northern Africa had been involved in the slave trade since 200 B.C.E., and by 900, there were many African slaves in Arab lands, as well as in India and China. For many years, slaves were just one of many exports from East Africa to these lands, including gold, iron, silver, mangroves (tropical trees), and coconut products.

In the 1800s, however, slaves became the chief export of East Africa, along with ivory. By 1840, Arab slave traders had moved deep into the forests of East Africa, as far south as Lake Victoria and the upper Congo, to capture and enslave Africans. Trading guns for slaves or taking them by force, the Arabs marched thousands of black Africans to the east coast for transport to the slave markets of Zanzibar, an island twenty-four miles off the coast of what is now Tanzania. At the time, Zanzibar was the capital of the Arab state of Oman and the main slave export market for the whole East African coast. Though Oman outlawed the export of slaves in 1845, at least two-thirds of the 20,000 to 40,000 slaves brought to

Zanzibar annually were shipped to Arabia (the Arabian Peninsula of southwest Asia), Iraq, Persia, and Turkey. The other one-third of the African slaves were put to work on the island's Arab-owned clove, cacao (beans used to make chocolate), and coconut palm plantations.

### Fact Focus

- Though there were still slaves in Cuba until 1886, and in Brazil until 1888, the shipping of Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas ended in 1880.
- As a result of mass enslavement by King Leopold of Belgium, between the late 1870s and 1919 the population of the Congo Basin in Africa was reduced from 20 million to 10 million.
- Under Joseph Stalin's rule (1927-1953), as many as 5 million to 8 million people were in "corrective labor camps" in the USSR at any one time.
- By late 1944, there were 7.5 million civilians and 2 million prisoners of war (captured soldiers) working as slaves in Nazi Germany.
- Modern forms of slavery include chattel slavery, serfdom, debt bondage, child labor, child prostitution, child pornography, the use of children in armed conflict, servile forms of marriage, forced labor, and the "white slave" traffic, or sexual slavery.
- In 1992, it was estimated that there were hundreds of thousands of political prisoners in China's vast network of labor reform camps.
- In 1996, there were between 10 million and 15 million bonded child workers in India. In Pakistan, there were at least 4 million bonded child workers.
- Human-rights groups estimated that in the 1990s, between 30,000 and 90,000 Sudanese were enslaved in an ongoing civil war in that African nation.
- In 1996, there were 26,047 reported cases of slavery in Brazil, mainly involving Indians who worked in charcoal production.
- In 1999, one human-rights group claimed that the African nation of Mauritania contained the world's largest concentration of chattel slaves—an estimated 390,000 people.
- According to Anti-Slavery International, there were more than 200 million slaves in the world in 1999.

The Egyptians were also heavily involved in trading black African slaves throughout the nineteenth century. The main source of slaves from 1821 to 1860 was the Upper Nile region, just south of Khartoum (pronounced car-TOOM), in the territory of Sudan (the region of North Africa from the Atlantic Ocean to the Upper Nile, south of the Sahara Desert).

As many as 50,000 African slaves a year were floated down the Nile to the slave markets of Egypt until British, French,

**An Arab slaver in Basra, a port in what is now Iraq, in the nineteenth century.** Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.



and German missionaries intervened. Driven off the Nile, the slave traders moved to the desert, where from 1860 to 1876, more than 400,000 black Africans were taken from the Sudan for sale as slaves in Egypt and Turkey.

## Europeans in Africa

As the twentieth century began, most of Africa was under direct European control. In 1884, at the Conference of Berlin, the countries of Germany, France, England, Portugal, and Belgium each staked out territories in Africa that they wished to occupy and control. The map of Africa changed almost overnight as the Europeans divided the lands of the vast continent among themselves. Germany lost most of her African possessions in World War I (1914-1918), but most of the European powers maintained control of their colonies until after World War II (1939-1945).

In 1885, King Leopold (1835-1909) of Belgium was granted by the Berlin Conference the right to rule over the Congo

Basin (now the Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire, and before that, the Belgian Congo), an area of central Africa seventy-five times the size of Belgium. King Leopold named his personal kingdom the Congo Free State and told the world he wanted to rescue the African people from Arab slave traders and bring them education and "civilization."

## Holocaust in Africa

The reality was that King Leopold replaced the Arab slave trade with a far more brutal system of slavery. Leopold's strategy was to plunder the area of its natural resources using the forced labor of the enslaved African population. Without ever setting foot in the Congo, Leopold directed Belgian troops to round up whole communities of Africans and put them to work harvesting ivory and wild rubber and building facilities needed for trade, such as railroads and ports. Leopold, and the private companies he worked with, imposed an almost-impossible-to-meet quota system on the natives and, when they failed to meet it, amputated the hands of the workers and kidnaped the women and children as punishment. As Leopold's private African kingdom eventually fell apart, his troops resorted to wholesale slaughter as punishment.

When the world finally learned the truth of Leopold's deadly system of slavery (see box titled "A Twentieth-century Abolitionist"), they forced the king to give up control of the Congo to the Belgian government in 1908. A Belgian government commission investigated Leopold's reign of terror and found that from the late 1870s to 1919 (the year of the



Two young boys in the Belgian Congo during King Leopold's reign there. Mola, seated, lost his hands to gangrene after being tied too tightly by soldiers. Soldiers cut off the right hand of Yoka, standing, in order to claim bounty for having killed him. Anti-Slavery

report), the population of the Congo Basin had been reduced from 20 million to 10 million, making it, as Adam Hochschild in *King Leopold's Ghost* called it, "a death toll of Holocaust proportions." Most of the people died from starvation and disease, a direct result of being driven from their homes and food sources. Other African natives died from the horrible conditions of their enslavement. Many of the dead had been murdered by Leopold's forces.

## **Forced labor in the USSR**

From 1927 to 1953, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was ruled by the dictator Joseph Stalin (1879-1953). During Stalin's rule, the government of the USSR enslaved millions of Soviet citizens in labor camps in Siberia, Central Asia, and above the Arctic Circle. In 1918, one year after the Russian Revolution and the overthrow of Russia's czarist system (a country ruled by a czar, or king), the Soviets wrote their Labor Code and in Article 1 declared that "all citizens be subject to compulsory labor."

The concept of forced labor and exile for criminal and political prisoners was not new to Russian society. In czarist Russia, as late as 1914, at least 30,000 convicts were assigned to hard labor in the mines and on construction projects. Russian czars did not hesitate to send personal and political enemies into forced labor or exile, and Russia's colonization of Siberia and the Far East were helped along by the thousands of Russians sent into exile as punishment by the czar. From 1904 to 1917, Stalin himself was exiled to Siberia by the czar for his political activity.

Russia's rulers in the Soviet era (1917-1991) took the concept of forced labor for convicts—especially political prisoners—agiant step beyond the old system. The Soviet system widened the definition of crimes punishable by forced labor or exile to include so-called "crimes against the state." At times, that might have meant no more than being *suspected* of disagreeing

with the government's tightly controlled social and economic policies. People were arrested, removed from their offices and jobs by the secret police, and sentenced without trials.

### **A Twentieth-century Abolitionist**

King Leopold's slaughter of the people of the Congo might have gone on even longer if not for the efforts of Edmund Dene Morel (1873-1924). Around 1897, Morel was an employee for a Liverpool-based shipping line in the port of Antwerp, Belgium. Morel noticed that ships from the Congo came in loaded with ivory and rubber but ships going back to the Congo were full of army officers, arms, and ammunition but no goods. The flow of goods to Belgium without an equal flow of goods in trade back to the Congo could only be explained one way, Morel figured: the rubber and ivory of the Congo were being obtained with slave labor.

Over the next few years, Morel spent his time as an investigator, journalist, public speaker, and government lobbyist in a crusade to end Leopold's rule in the Congo. Morel's efforts resulted in the founding in 1904 of the twentieth century's first human-rights movement, the Congo Reform Association. With thousands of members and branches in Europe and the United States, the association and its government supporters forced Leopold to surrender control of the Congo Free State to the government of Belgium in 1908.

## **Slavery Soviet-style**

Under Stalin's rule, as many as 5 million to 8 million people were in "corrective labor camps" in the USSR at any one time. Stalin used his huge prison workforce in a variety of ways to bolster the Soviet economy without having to pay for labor. Prisoners built and maintained roads and rail lines and constructed housing and hydroelectric plants (which harness running water to produce electricity). They labored in the coal, gold, chrome, and ore mines and in the oil fields. Prisoners also worked in agriculture, fishing, lumbering, and manufacturing. The prisoners were paid in food, not wages. Their living conditions were so poor that the death rate at many labor camps was 30 percent a year.





**Building the Turkmen-Siberian Railway in 1929. Sentenced by the Soviets to forced labor camps, Russian prisoners in Siberia labored in building railroads, plants, and housing, as well as in mining.** Photograph by M. Alpert. Corbis/Novosti. Reproduced by permission.

The use of prison labor does not always constitute a form of slavery. The conditions of Soviet-style forced labor, however, were nothing short of slavery. People were arrested without reasonable cause, shipped on trains like animals to faraway places, forced to do unbearable work, and frozen and starved to death. In 1956, three years after Stalin's death, Soviet leaders granted an amnesty to a large number of labor-camp prisoners, though many were forced to remain in exile in remote regions of the USSR. "Corrective labor" as a governmental policy designed to control political dissent continued under the new leadership, and it is reported (though figures are unavailable) that the practice is still alive after the formal breakup of the USSR in 1991.

## Slavery in Nazi Germany

Slavery as practiced by the Nazis (the National Socialist German Workers' Party) in Europe during World War II was one of the most brutal systems that the world has ever known. As the German armies conquered their European neighbors—Russians, Poles, Slavs, Italians, and others—they herded civilians and soldiers by the millions into boxcars and shipped them to Germany to work as slaves, where many of them died of overwork, starvation, and lack of shelter and clothing.

In 1939, the German leader, Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), drafted 7 million Germans for the war effort. Faced with a shortage of workers, the German strategy was to invade and conquer all non-German countries, plunder their resources, and enslave

their populations. At first, hundreds of thousands of Russians died in German hands of cold and starvation. By 1942, when the war had dragged on longer than Hitler expected, German policy changed. Greater care was taken to keep Russians, and other captives, alive so that they could work on Germany's farms and in its mines, factories, and households. By late 1944, there were 7.5 million civilians and 2 million prisoners of war (captured soldiers) working as slaves in Germany.

Most of the 3 million Russian civilians sent into slave labor were women. Some were forced to work as domestic servants in German households; others worked on farms and in factories. Beginning in June 1944, Germans rounded up Russian youths from the ages of ten to fourteen and shipped them to Germany to serve as apprentices to tradesmen. Throughout the war, millions of Slavic and Italian slaves worked on Germany's farms. They were housed like animals in barns and stables.

### **Extermination through work**

Most of Hitler's weapons—the tanks, guns, and ammunition—were made by slaves. Germany's chief weapons manufacturer, the Krupp firm, controlled factories, mines, and shipyards in twelve nations of German-occupied Europe. The Krupp works used male, female, and child slaves by the thousands. When Nazi Germany was defeated in 1945, Krupp had about 100,000 slaves in 100 different factories. Through the course of the war, Krupp used the inmates of 138 concentration camps (camps where the Nazis imprisoned and killed Jews and other prisoners) as well. Krupp set up a plant in the Auschwitz concentration camp, for example, where skilled Jewish inmates were forced to make weapons parts.

One of the main goals of Nazi Germany was to rid society of people it perceived as "undesirable." As noted by Milton Meltzer in *Slavery: A World History*, by 1942 Hitler developed a strategy to liquidate (kill) "Jews, foreign saboteurs, anti-Nazi Germans, gypsies, criminals, and antisocial elements" through a policy of "extermination through work." Hitler's agents

seized whole factories of workers, transporting the uncooperative in chains to various Krupp-owned factories. At first the minimum age for slave laborers was seventeen. By 1944, however, the Germans were forcing children as young as six years old to work in the factories.

## **Holocaust in Europe**

The foreigners (non-Germans) in the labor camps died in great numbers. Overwork, overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, poor-quality food, a lack of housing and clothes—all led to great suffering and death through diseases, starvation, and cold. Many prisoners worked and died in the same clothes they had on when they arrived. Some had no shoes even in the winter and had to use blankets as coats. The rate of tuberculosis (pronounced too-burr-cue-LOW-sis; a highly contagious and deadly disease) in the camps was four times the normal

rate. The horrors of Nazi Germany's slave-labor camps were surpassed only by the horrors of its concentration camps, where 6 million Jews were systematically murdered.

**Jewish women at the Plaszow concentration camp in Krakow, Poland, are forced to pull carts of quarried stone, 1944.**

Photograph by Raimund Tisch. USHMM Photo Archives.



Hitler's war machine was defeated in 1945. In 1948, at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals, Alfried Krupp, the head of the company, was sentenced to twelve years in prison and ordered to give up all his personal property and wealth for the crime of "exploitation of forced foreign labor." In 1951, the U.S. High Commissioner in West Germany pardoned Krupp and restored his fortune, estimated at \$500 million.

## "Comfort women" in World War II

One of the horrifying and sometimes unreported aspects of war is the abuse of women that occurs, with enemy soldiers raping, kidnaping, and otherwise preying upon civilian women in conquered territories. Before World War II, Japan occupied vast territories in Asia, including China, Korea, and the Philippines. According to a large group of survivors, women in some of these areas were kidnaped or forced to go to Japan's battlegrounds to serve as sex slaves for the Japanese soldiers. They were classified as military supplies when they were transported. On the battle fields they were known as "comfort women."



**A group of Filipino women who say the Japanese forced them to be "comfort women" in the 1930s and 1940s react with dismay when they hear that the Tokyo District Court has ruled against their claims for compensation and an apology, 1998.**  
Photograph by Bullit Marquez. AP/Wide World Photos.  
Reproduced by permission.

As many as 200,000 women from the ages of eleven to thirty-two were inducted into sexual slavery against their will by the Japanese. A majority of the women came from Korea. They were kept in small rooms, where they were forced to serve large numbers of soldiers daily. Shame and physical and emotional damage prevented many from going back to their homes when World War II was over. At the end of the twentieth century, women who had survived organized and presented a claim to the Japanese government, asking for compensation (money to repay them for their suffering) and an apology. The Japanese government rejected their claims.

## **The end of the twentieth century**

### **Modern forms of slavery**

Slavery as practiced in the second half of the twentieth century came to include a wide variety of humanrights violations. In 1956, the United Nations defined slavery as the condition of someone over whom any or all of the powers connected to the right of ownership are exercised. Over the years since then, the UN has dedicated itself to ending all forms of slavery, including chattel slavery, serfdom, debt bondage, child labor, child prostitution, child pornography, the use of children in armed conflict, servile forms of marriage, forced labor, and the "white slave" traffic, or sexual slavery.

Counting the number of slaves in the world at the end of the twentieth century was not easy. Estimates vary from source to source and according to what form of slavery was considered. According to Anti-Slavery International (ASI), a London-based organization founded in 1839, there were more than 200 million slaves in the world in 1999. Most of the slaves, according to ASI, lived in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1998 estimated the number of children exploited in labor markets around the world at between 200 million and 250 million, with nearly 95 percent living in developing (poor) countries. Child labor, the ILO contended, was widespread and growing in 1998.

A 1996 United Nations report noted that children were being sold for prostitution, pornography, and adoption at increasing rates worldwide. In Asia alone, more than 1 million children were exploited sexually and lived in conditions virtually identical to slavery. According to a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report, cited by the UN, up to 300,000 child prostitutes were walking the streets of the United States, many no older than eleven or twelve and some as young as nine.



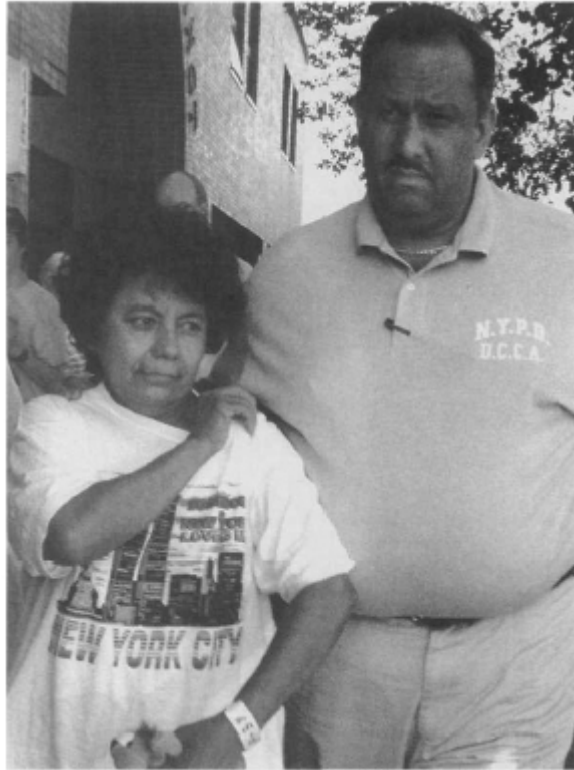
**Child labor abuse was common in the United States in the nineteenth century.** National Archives and Records Administration.

As the twentieth century came to a close, modern slavery, in some or all of its various forms, existed in dozens of countries around the world. The examples of slavery listed below represent only a handful of the places in the world where slavery continued through 1999. For more information on

slavery in the places listed below and the many other countries where slavery was practiced in the twentieth century, contact the organizations listed in the "Directory of Human Rights Groups" at the end of this chapter.

This woman (left) is one of dozens of deaf Mexicans who were rescued in 1997 after having been kept in slave-like conditions in New York City, forced to sell trinkets in the subway for the smugglers who had brought them into the country. Modern slavery often victimizes people who are vulnerable, such as immigrants, children, and in this case, people with disabilities.

Photograph by Cino Domenico. AP/Wide World Photos.



## Asia

### China

Many forms of slavery existed in China at the end of the twentieth century. Some were as ancient as the Han Dynasty of the third century B.C.E.; others were as new as the latest political leadership in the People's Republic of China. In China, as in the rest of Asia (including Japan), the selling of children into slavery has been a common practice for many centuries. The practice is known as *mui tsai*, a Chinese term

for child adoption. Traditionally, extreme poverty has forced parents to sell their children. Young girls, at the age of four or five, were sold into domestic slavery. Other children were forced to work in mines, small factories, and shops. Though slavery had been abolished in China in 1908, there were about 4 million children trapped in *mui tsai* in 1930.

The sale of children into slavery continued in China into the 1990s, along with another ancient Chinese form of slavery: the sale of girls and women into marriages and prostitution. From 1991 to 1996, according to official figures from the Chinese, police caught and prosecuted 143,000 slave dealers and rescued 88,000 women and children who had been sold into slavery, marriage, or prostitution. The real number of women and children was much higher, according to humanrights groups, which argued that the Chinese government downplayed the number of victims out of embarrassment.

The Communists outlawed wife selling after they took over China in 1949, but it and child slavery persisted fifty years later because the conditions that were responsible for these activities—extreme poverty and high unemployment—were still present. Also, the demand for abducted women has been high in China because of a severe shortage of females in a population that has traditionally favored male births. In 1998 there were 130 males for every 100 females in China. In terms of sheer economics, it was cheaper to buy a wife illegally (\$240 to \$480) than to pay a traditional bride's dowry (at least \$1,200).

**China's forced laborers** Like the Soviets, the Chinese used forced labor as a punishment and "corrective" for all kinds of crimes. In 1951, two years after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese leader Mao Zedong (1893-1976) began a policy of "reform through labor." As in the USSR, the Chinese government forced political opponents and dissidents into labor camps, where they worked on various state construction projects such as roads, railways, and water conservation.



A 1954 law identified persons who were targeted for arrest and detention at labor camps as "counter-revolutionary elements, feudal landlords, and bureaucrat-capitalists." By 1959, according to the International Labor Organization, the list had grown to include "vagrants, persons who refused to work, persons guilty of minor offenses, and those who, for various reasons, had no means of existence."

**Slave products for export** In 1992, it was estimated that there were hundreds of thousands of political prisoners in China's vast network of labor reform camps, some of which were nothing more than secured factories staffed with inmates. For years the official policy of China has been to use prison labor to produce cheap products for export, including clothes, shoes, bicycles, circuit boards, hand tools, steel pipe, leather, tea, wine, and many other products. Despite a 1930 law against importing prison-made goods, many of these products still made their way to U.S. store shelves. Germany and Japan also provided large markets for Chinese prison products.

In China most of the prisoners in the labor camps were treated no better than slaves. According to the humanrights group Asia Watch, prison workers labored long hours on dangerous jobs, received no pay, got little or no medical services, and lived on meager food rations that were withheld if production quotas were not met or as punishment for other infractions. Other punishments included beatings, torture, and solitary confinement. Political prisoners were treated especially poorly, reported Asia Watch, as most of them were forced to work in the confinement of their prison cells.

### **India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh**

In 1999, there were millions of people, mostly children, in slavery in India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Part of the labor system in these countries is known as bonded labor, which is a modern term for the age-old practice of debt slavery. The victims were mainly children between the ages of four and fourteen who were sold into bondage by their parents to pay debts or to provide income for their families.



A group of Thai girls, mostly about twelve years old, pose in 1980 after being rescued from slavery in a textile factory. They are a few of thousands of youngsters in Thailand sold by their parents every year at a market in Bangkok's railroad station. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission.

India passed laws against this form of child slavery in 1978 and again in 1986, yet the New York-based Human Rights Watch estimated that in 1996 there were between 10 million and 15 million bonded child workers in India. In Pakistan, the estimated number of bonded child workers varied depending on the source. In 1993, the Pakistan Human Rights Commission, a nongovernment organization, put their number at 20 million. A child labor survey conducted in 1996 by the Pakistani government, however, declared that there was a maximum of 4 million bonded child workers in the country.

**Carpet slaves** The children of South Asia were forced to work under slavelike conditions in a variety of industries. In India, Pakistan, and Nepal, which account for two-thirds of the world's trade in carpets, 70 percent of the carpet makers were under the age of fourteen in 1992. Children were forced to work at their looms for seventeen to eighteen hours a day, seven days a week. They lived and worked without proper light, ventilation, or sanitary facilities. Respiratory illnesses from wool dust were common, as were cases of anemia,

tuberculosis, skin diseases, cuts, spinal deformation, and blindness. Punishments for these "carpet slaves" included beatings, mutilations, and the withholding of food. For girls it was worse than for boys, as some were raped and sold into prostitution. In some regions of Pakistan, overwork and diseases killed up to 50 percent of the carpet slaves before they reached the age of twelve.

In addition to making carpets, children in these countries manufactured many other products for the world market, including the United States. In 1996, for example, Pakistan's top five exports to the United States included three products made mostly by bonded child workers—carpets, sporting goods, and surgical instruments. Soccer balls, clothing, and footwear were also products made by child labor in Pakistan that found their way to store shelves in the United States and around the world.

Bonded child laborers in India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh also worked in a variety of other jobs in the cities and the countryside. Some children worked as agricultural laborers—looking after livestock; digging canals; and cutting grass, wood, and hay. Children were also brick kiln workers, rag and paper pickers, and quarry miners. The bonded children of South Asia lived as orphans—without their most basic needs as children ever being met.

## **Africa**

### **Sudan**

From 1983 to 1998, an ongoing civil war in Sudan, Africa's largest country, resulted in the deaths of 1.5 million people, the displacement of another 4 million, and the enslavement of tens of thousands, mostly women and children. Except for a ten-year period (1972 to 1982), Arab Muslims in northern Sudan have been battling black Christians in the south since the country gained its independence from the joint rule of Egypt and Britain in 1956.



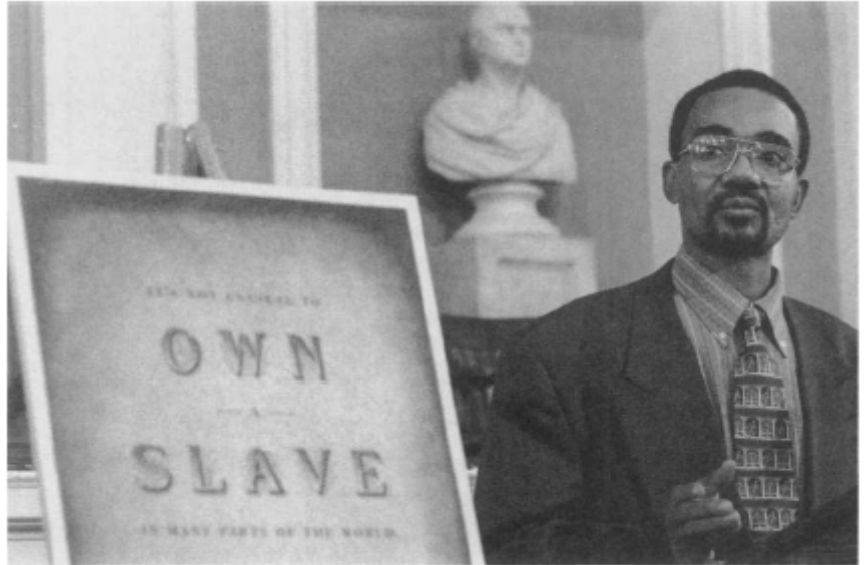
John Eibner of Christian Solidarity International pays an Arab trader the equivalent of \$13,200 in Sudanese money to buy 132 slaves and rescue them from slavery, 1997. Photograph by Jean-Marc Bouju. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission.

Beginning in 1989, the government of Sudan, from its capital city of Khartoum in the north, has pushed to impose the religion of Islam and the Arabic language on the entire country, including the south, where they faced armed opposition from the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Caught in the middle were the women and children of the million-member Dinka tribe, the largest ethnic group in southern Sudan and the main supporters of the SPLA.

The slave trade in Sudan was conducted mainly by the Popular Defense Force (PDF), a government-sponsored Arab militia. The PDF regularly raided civilian villages and cattle camps in the south and hauled away hundreds of black Africans at a time to be marched north and sold into slavery. Human-rights groups estimated that in the 1990s, 30,000 to 90,000 Sudanese were enslaved in such a manner. The captives were sold to wealthy Arabs in the north for as little as \$15. Young men were forced into the military or killed. Children were forced to work as domestic servants and agricultural laborers and women as servants and concubines (sex slaves).

**Moctar Teyeb, an escaped slave from Mauritania, addresses a news conference in Boston in 1999 as part of the American Anti-Slavery Group's awareness campaign to end modern-day slavery around the world.**

Photograph by Stephan Savoia. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission.



## **Mauritania**

In 1999, one human-rights group claimed that the African nation of Mauritania, a former French colony in the southwest Sahara Desert, contained the world's largest concentration of chattel slaves—an estimated 390,000 people. That number was much higher than other estimates of slavery in Mauritania in the 1990s. The U.S. State Department's human-rights report for 1994 documented 90,000 slaves, and in 1997, one expert on Mauritania estimated that there were about 100,000 slaves in the country.

It should be noted that in 1992, Mauritania had just over 2 million people, with blacks making up only 20 percent of the population, or about 400,000 people. Therefore, even the lower estimates of the number of black Mauritanian slaves would represent a significant part of the nation's minority population.

In 1996, human-rights activists told U.S. congressional subcommittees that Arab slave traders "capture [African] children and in some circumstances women to breed slaves." Slaves, according to David Hect in a 1997 *New Republic*

article, "may be exchanged for camels, trucks, or money." Slaves were also subject to beatings, mutilations, and torture, including the "camel treatment" the "insect treatment," and the "burningcoals treatment." Testimony from individuals to the committee was backed up by the human-rights group Africa Watch.

Mauritania obtained its full independence from France in 1960. The nation did not officially abolish slavery until 1980. Despite the ban on slavery, tens of thousands of blacks remained the property of their Arab masters through the 1990s. The slaves were subject entirely to their masters' will. They worked long hours without pay, had no access to education, and were not free to marry or associate freely with other blacks.

## **Latin America**

### **Brazil**

In the Amazon region of Brazil in the 1990s, many poor people were trapped in a system of forced labor and debt slavery. People came from all over Brazil to the Amazon forest looking for work and ended up as slaves, forced to labor in forest clearance, charcoal production, mining, and prostitution.

Workers were recruited with promises of decent wages and living conditions, but when they arrived at the mines and charcoal camps, they found inadequate shelter and lousy food. They also found themselves in debt. Not only did they owe money for their transport to the mining camps, charcoal farms, and construction projects, but also all of their food, work supplies, and medicine could only be bought from the "company store" at prices several times their market value. The result was that most workers ended up enslaved for life, never able to work off their debts.

The Pastoral Land Commission, a Catholic Church organization, reported 26,047 cases of slavery in Brazil in

1996, mainly involving Indians who worked in charcoal production. Whole families, including children as young as nine, gathered, stacked, and burned wood for twelve hours a day to meet production quotas. Charcoal workers and miners were kept under control by a variety of methods, according to the UN Commission on Human Rights, including "beatings, inhuman, cruel, and degrading treatment, and killings of workers trying to flee such conditions."

The practice of forced prostitution was closely linked to the isolated labor camps of the Amazon. Women were promised jobs in supply stores and restaurants but ended up being forced to work as prostitutes to pay off transportation and other debts. The women were often victims of beatings and imprisonment and were tortured or killed if they tried to escape.

## **Directory of Human Rights Groups**

Slavery existed in many countries around the world throughout the twentieth century with no end in sight for the twenty-first. To find out more information about worldwide slavery in the past and the present, contact one or more of the following human-rights organizations.

Amnesty International USA  
322 Eighth Avenue  
New York, NY 10001  
Phone: 212-807-8400  
Fax: 212-463-9193  
E-mail: [admin-us@aiusa.org](mailto:admin-us@aiusa.org)  
Web site: <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Anti-Slavery International  
The Stableyard  
Broomgrove Road  
London SW9 9TL, England  
E-mail: [antislavery@gn.apc.org](mailto:antislavery@gn.apc.org)  
Web site: <http://www.charitynet.org/~ASI>  
Founded: 1839

Christian Solidarity International  
c/o Rev. Hansjurg Stuckelberger  
Zelglistr. 64  
Postfach 70  
CH-8122 Binz, Switzerland  
Phone: 41-1-980-4700  
Fax: 41-1-980-4715  
Founded: 1977

International Labor Organization  
4, route des Morillons  
CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland  
E-mail: [webinfo@ilo.org](mailto:webinfo@ilo.org)  
Web site: <http://www.ilo.org>  
Founded: 1919

Human Rights Watch  
350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor  
New York, NY 10118-3299  
Phone: 212-290-4700  
Fax: 212-736-1300  
E-Mail: [hrwnyc@hrw.org](mailto:hrwnyc@hrw.org)  
Web site: <http://www.hrw.org/contact.html>  
Founded: 1985



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# Reader's Guide

Slavery is broadly described by the United Nations (UN) as the condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers connected to the right of ownership are exercised. We know that slavery has existed as an institution in human civilizations all over the world for thousands of years and that it continues to this day. But there is much we don't know. For the most part enslaved people throughout the world have lived and died without an opportunity to tell their own tales. Although slaves who found freedom were able to record their experiences, the records kept by slave holders are more often the only documentation left to us of many slaves' lives. How many millions of people in the world have lived their lives from birth to death in slavery and are now hidden from history is difficult to estimate and painful to imagine.

Through the records that do exist, though, it is possible to fill out our understanding of the people who lived in slavery, not only as victims of a terrible system, but in terms of their individuality, their ways of coping and surviving, their own stories, and their struggles to be free. The Slavery Throughout History Reference Library provides a unique forum for a student or general interest reader to approach this difficult subject. The *Almanac* presents the overall history of slavery throughout the Western world and beyond, with facts, figures, and plenty of contextual information

on the economics, politics, law, culture, religion, and social trends that developed around the institution. The *Biographies* volume presents slavery from the perspective of individual lives: the stories of people of diverse beliefs, personalities, and circumstances who were slaves themselves or who had a profound impact on the institution. Finally, the *Primary Sources* volume features the first-hand accounts of slaves, lawmakers, abolitionists, and slaveowners, offering the immediate voices of the times on the events, issues, and ideas that arose in the history of slavery.

## **Related reference sources:**

*Slavery Throughout History: Almanac* provides an overview of the institution of slavery from the time it developed among the earliest permanent settlers in Mesopotamia (perhaps as early as 3500 B.C.E.) to the present day. Civilizations covered in the volume include ancient Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome; western Europe and Africa in the Middle Ages; Latin America and the United States from colonial times through emancipation; and modern-day slavery worldwide.

Five of the twelve subject chapters in this volume are dedicated to slavery in the United States. Along with information about the commercial history of the vastly profitable slave trade, the draining of Africa, and the labor-intensive cotton industry, the reader will find stories of slave uprisings, black troops fighting in the American Revolution and the Civil War, the brutal punishments, the restrictive slave codes, the auction blocks, and the heroic abolitionist efforts. The final chapter presents examples of slavery still claiming millions of lives around the world at the end of the twentieth century.

One hundred fifteen black-and-white photographs, illustrations, and maps appear throughout the *Almanac*. A "Tact Focus" sidebar highlights key facts in each chapter. Other sidebars present information on a variety of interesting events, customs, and people. Cross references aid the reader in finding related material. *Slavery Throughout History: Almanac* begins with a Words to Know section defining key terms and a timeline of important events in the history of slavery. The volume concludes with a bibliography and a thorough subject index.

*Slavery Throughout History: Biography* presents biographies of thirty men and women who made an impact on the institution of slavery or were profoundly impacted by it. Featured are slaves and resistance fighters such as Moses, Spartacus, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, John Brown, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

*Slavery Throughout History: Primary Sources* features twenty full or excerpted documents pertaining to the institution of slavery, from the Code of Hammurabi to the American slave narratives to the United Nations 1956 declaration of intent to end slavery worldwide. Included are poems,

narratives, autobiographical essays, legal documents, speeches, newspaper articles, and other first-hand accounts of slavery. Ample introductory and sidebar information aid the reader in understanding the historical and biographical context of the primary source; black-and-white photographs and illustrations, glossaries, a timeline, a thorough subject index, and cross references provide easy and engaging access.

### **Special thanks**

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### **Comments and suggestions**

We welcome your comments about *Slavery Throughout History: Almanac* as well as your suggestions for other topics in history to be covered in this series. Please write: Editors, *Slavery Throughout History: Almanac*, U•X•L, 27500 Drake Rd., Farmington Hills, Michigan 48331-3535; call toll-free: 1-800-877-4253; fax to: 248-699-8055; or send e-mail via <http://www.galegroup.com>.



# Timeline of Events

- c. 3500 B.C.E.** Mesopotamians settle into permanent communities with successful agricultural techniques. Constantly at war with neighbors, the Mesopotamians begin to capture and enslave prisoners, forcing them into labor instead of killing them.
- 1780 B.C.E.** King Hammurabi becomes the sixth ruler of Babylon, a city in northern Mesopotamia. With Babylon as his capital, Hammurabi unites all of the competing kingdoms of Mesopotamia under one government. He establishes the Code of Hammurabi, a list of about 300 laws that regulate all aspects of Babylonian life, including slavery.
- 1570 B.C.E.** The Egyptians drive the ruling Hyksos from Egypt and enslave all foreigners who remain, including thousands of Hebrews, who are forced to work in the fields making bricks for the construction of new cities and temples.
- 597 B.C.E.** Nebuchadnezzar II captures the city of Jerusalem and sends most of the city's population, about 3,000 Hebrews, into slavery in Babylonia. The Hebrews, who are eventually freed in 539 B.C.E., call this period "The Great Captivity."

- 594 B.C.E.** Debt slavery for Greek citizens is outlawed in Athens, creating a demand for foreign slaves to do the work of the freed Greek debt slaves. At the same time, the introduction of coinage makes the slave trade easier, and slavery increases significantly.
- 431 B.C.E.** The city-state of Athens in Greece has so many slaves it becomes the world's first example of a slave society. Of the 155,000 residents of the city of Athens, 70,000 are slaves, 60,000 are citizens, and 25,000 are resident foreigners.
- 431-404 B.C.E.** The Peloponnesian War, a civil war between the Greek city-states Athens and Sparta, produces tens of thousands of slaves.
- 264-27 B.C.E.** Rome, during the second half of the Republic, fights many overseas wars that produce hundreds of thousands of slaves for central Italy. Giant agricultural estates develop—the world's first plantations—relying on slave labor.
- 73 B.C.E.** Roman gladiator/slave Spartacus leads a breakout of about seventy gladiators from their training school. The rebels build a vast army of runaway slaves and hold off the Roman army effectively for two years.
- 41-54 C.E.** The Roman Emperor Claudius makes it a crime to murder a slave or to turn a sick slave out to die. More laws follow that uphold the institution of slavery but take a more humane stand in the treatment of slaves.
- 476** The fall of the Roman Empire changes slavery in Europe dramatically. A new class of people develops, called serfs—peasants who are not allowed to leave the land where they work. If the land changes hands, the serfs stay, "bound" to the soil. Serfdom is hereditary: the children of serfs become serfs at birth. Beneath serfs on the social scale there is still a small population of slaves.
- 1000** As many as 80 percent of Europe's peasants are living on feudal estates. One-half of those peasants are free, able to live and work where they choose; the other half are serfs, legally bound to the land they work. The number of slaves is now very low, as descendants of slaves, through the years, have risen to the level of serfs.
- 1300** Europe emerges from the feudal era. The laws and customs of the villages are being replaced by the common law of entire kingdoms.
- 1441** Fourteen African slaves arrive in Lisbon, Portugal, beginning the network for shipping slaves from Africa to the New World. The Africans had been captured in a raid on one of the many voyages Portuguese explorers had made along Africa's Atlantic coast.
- 1455** The pope of the Catholic church approves slave raids and gives Portugal blanket permission to enslave all non-Christian people.
- 1481** The Portuguese establish a trading post at Elmina, Gold Coast.

- 1493** The pope grants Spain sole shipping rights to the New World, and throughout the 1500s, Spain dominates the Atlantic slave trade. Portugal continues the African part of the trade.
- 1494** Christopher Columbus sends 500 Indians to Spain as slaves.
- 1500** The Portuguese are taking 3,000 slaves a year from Africa's Atlantic coast.
- 1518** The first cargo of slaves from the Guinea coast of West Africa arrives in the West Indies.
- 1524** The Spanish bring slaves to Guatemala; by the end of the century they have shipped at least 60,000 Africans to Mexico.
- 1526** The first slave revolt in what is now the United States takes place in the first known settlement on mainland North America. Disease wipes out many of the 600 people—500 Spanish colonists and 100 African slaves—who arrive in modern-day South Carolina. The slaves revolt and flee to live with the local Indians. The surviving settlers flee to Haiti, leaving the rebel slaves as the first permanent immigrants in North America.
- 1538** The Portuguese bring slaves from the coasts of Africa to their colonies in Brazil.
- 1565** The Spanish settle Saint Augustine, Florida, the earliest example of an established colony using slaves on the North American mainland.
- 1574** The queen of England abolishes serfdom in her nation.
- 1600** About 367,000 African slaves have crossed the Atlantic to the Americas.
- 1619** Jamestown, Virginia, is the first English colony to receive Africans.
- 1630** The Republic of Palmares is established by runaway slaves in the heavy inland forests of northeastern Brazil. At its peak it has a population of 20,000. The Republic of Palmares is destroyed by the Portuguese in 1697—after surviving almost 70 years.
- 1638** A Salem ship named *Desire* unloads New England's first cargo of African slaves at Boston Harbor. A profitable New England slave trade has begun. Ships leave New England loaded with cargo to trade, sailing first to the West Indies, where they trade most of their cargo for rum. The "rum boats" then sail to Africa, where they trade the liquor for slaves. The ships then sail back to the West Indies, where they trade the freshly captured African slaves to the sugar islands for "seasoned" slaves and other products of the islands. These slaves are taken to New England slave ports, where they are sold in local markets, mainly to southern planters.
- 1641** Massachusetts is the first colony to officially recognize the institution of slavery.

- 1663** Planters are offered 20 acres for every African male slave and 10 acres for every African female slave they bring into the Carolinas.
- 1672** The Royal African Company is chartered by the British king and soon becomes the number-one slave trader in the world by securing, under an agreement with Spain, the exclusive rights to ship West African slaves to the Spanish colonies in the Americas. England becomes the dominant slave-trading force to the Americas.
- 1686** Carolina's colonial legislature begins creating laws that ensure the domination of black slaves by their white masters. In time, the slave code of the Carolinas becomes a model for the Black Codes that harshly regulate slaves throughout much of mainland North America.
- 1688** Pennsylvania's influential population of Quakers voice their religious opposition to slavery.
- 1739** A man named Jemmy leads a slave revolt in South Carolina, killing two warehouse guards and seizing weapons and ammunition. One hundred slaves join him as he marches south to Spanish-held Florida, where they hope to be free. Along the way they kill about 20 whites before entering into an intense battle with the local militia, in which about 50 slaves are killed.
- 1770** Runaway slave Crispus Attucks is the first man to die for the cause of the American Revolution in the Boston Massacre.
- 1775** As the American Revolution begins, the British governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, declares that all slaves who join the British side will be set free. After Dunmore's Proclamation, slaves run away by the tens of thousands. Hundreds of slaves join Dunmore, who forms all-black fighting units in what he calls his "Ethiopian Regiment."
- 1776** General George Washington, after learning that Lord Dunmore is enlisting blacks into the British troops, allows blacks to enter the war on the American side. Thousands of black soldiers fight against the British. Many states promise freedom after a set period to slaves who fight the war.
- 1780s** The Underground Railroad begins to take shape when Quakers in a number of towns in Pennsylvania and New Jersey assist slaves in their escape.
- 1787** At the Constitutional Convention, the new nation's founding fathers decide that the slave trade can continue for at least 20 more years, three-fifths of the slave population can be counted toward determining the number of each state's Congressional representatives, and all states are required to return fugitive slaves to their owners.
- 1787** Haiti, as the world's greatest producer of sugar and its by-products rum and molasses, brings in 40,000 slaves in this year alone to work on sugar plantations and in sugar mills. The island has more than 600

sugar plantations and more slaves in proportion to its size than any other place in the New World.

- 1787** Various British abolitionist organizations come together to form the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade.
- 1791** A rebellion in Haiti led by a slave named Toussaint L'Ouverture results in the abolition of slavery on the island in 1794 and ultimately to Haiti's independence from France in 1803.
- 1793** Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin. With just two people working it, Whitney's cotton gin cleans as much cotton as 100 workers could by hand, thus freeing up laborers for the cultivation of the crop. The rise of cotton as the number-one crop of the nation has a tremendous impact on the institution of slavery.
- 1793** The federal government passes the fugitive slave laws, which require that slaves who escape to a different state be returned to their owner by the authorities of the state to which they fled.
- 1794** Richard Allen founds the first independent church for blacks in America, the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.
- 1800** Gabriel Prosser prepares slaves for revolt in the city of Richmond, Virginia, hoping to ignite a widespread rebellion among all slaves. About 1,000 slaves arm themselves, ready to attack the city, but a severe storm stops them. Troops hunt them down, and at least 35 rebels, including Prosser, are hanged.
- 1807** The U.S. federal government officially abolishes the African slave trade. The law is poorly enforced and consequently ignored by the people who profit most from the trade—the New England shipowners, the Middle Atlantic merchants, and the southern planters.
- 1808** After great pressure from the abolitionists and repeated legislative attempts in the House of Commons led by William Wilberforce, the British Parliament outlaws the slave trade. Unlike the Americans, the British pass laws that contain harsh penalties for violators and rewards for those who catch them.
- 1815** The four Philadelphia branches of the Masons, a fraternal organization, pool their resources and build the country's first black Masonic Hall.
- 1816** Sixteen black Methodist congregations, from New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, come together for a convention at Richard Allen's Bethel AME church in Philadelphia—until then, the only black Methodist church in America. Together they withdraw from the white-dominated mother church and form the nation's first independent black church, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Allen is ordained a church elder and the AME Church's first bishop.

- 1816** The American Colonization Society (ACS) forms with a plan to ship blacks to land in Africa that will later be known as Liberia.
- 1819** Towns in Ohio and North Carolina join New Jersey and Pennsylvania in acting as way stations and shelters for fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad. Historians estimate that in the 50 years before the Civil War, at least 3,200 "conductors" help about 75,000 slaves escape to freedom.
- 1820-21** In a series of acts known as the Missouri Compromise, Congress admits Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state. It prohibits slavery in all other territory north of Missouri's southern boundary (the 36th parallel).
- 1822** Denmark Vesey, a freed slave and carpenter, prepares slaves around Charleston, South Carolina, for a major uprising after whites close down the African Methodist church he has helped establish. The planned attack, said by one of the witnesses to involve as many as 9,000 slaves, never takes place because information about it reaches the authorities and the leaders are hanged.
- 1827** Samuel Cornish and John Russworm start the country's first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*.
- 1829** David Walker, a free black in Boston, publishes *Walker's Appeal ...to the Colored Citizens of the World But in Particular and Very Expressly to Those of the United States of America*, which calls for blacks to violently rise up and defeat the forces of slavery.
- 1830** Richard Allen organizes the first Free People of Color Congress in Philadelphia. At that gathering, black delegates from six states begin what will come to be known as the National Negro Convention Movement. Every year until the Civil War, blacks convene in different cities "to devise ways and means of bettering our condition."
- 1831** William Lloyd Garrison begins publishing the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*.
- 1831** Nat Turner, a slave and preacher, leads a slave revolt in Southampton, Virginia. The rebels go from plantation to plantation killing whites. Within 24 hours, about 70 slaves have joined the revolt, and 57 whites—men, women, and children—are slaughtered. White troops force the group to scatter, and retaliation against all blacks in the area is severe.
- 1833** Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison helps establish the American Antislavery Society (AAS). Only 3 black people are among the 62 signers of the society's Declaration of Sentiments.
- 1835** The right for blacks, slave or free, to assemble in groups for any purposes without a white person present is denied throughout the Deep South.

- 1836** Sixty thousand slaves are brought to Cuba in this year alone, but not all of them will stay on the island to work the sugar plantations. Cuba has become the largest slave market in the New World, supplying African slaves to colonies far and wide.
- 1839** Anti-Slavery International (ASI), a London-based organization, is founded. It will continue to fight slavery into the twenty-first century.
- 1840** There are more than 100 antislavery societies in the free states of the North, with at least 200,000 black and white members. Abolitionists, however, are not well received in most places.
- 1845** The autobiography of Frederick Douglass, *Nanative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, becomes an international best-seller.
- 1847** Frederick Douglass begins publishing his abolitionist and reform-minded newspaper, the *North Star*.
- 1850** In the Compromise of 1850, Congress admits California as a free state, leaves the status of territories to be decided later, outlaws the slave trade in the District of Columbia, and puts real teeth into the fugitive slave laws of 1793.
- 1852** *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, an antislavery novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe, sells 300,000 copies in its first year and convinces many readers that slavery must end.
- 1853** William Wells Brown publishes his novel *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*, the first published novel written by a black person in the United States.
- 1854** The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 organizes Kansas and Nebraska as territories and leaves the question of slavery to be decided by the settlers when they apply for statehood. The act, in effect, erases the thirty-four-year-old prohibition of slavery above the Mason-Dixon line as established in the Missouri Compromise.
- 1854** After the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act (sponsored by the northern Democrats as a "compromise"), the northern Whigs unite with antislavery Democrats and Free Soilers (an antislavery political party formed in 1848) and found the antislavery Republican Party. The southern Whigs join the southern Democrats as a united party firmly on the proslavery side.
- 1857** Responding to Dred Scott's lawsuit, in which he contended that he and his wife should be free from slavery because they lived with their owner in territories where slavery was not allowed, the Supreme Court rules that blacks, free or slave, are not citizens of the United States; that slavery is a property right established by the U.S. Constitution and therefore owners still retain title to their slaves, even when visiting or living on free soil; that territories are common lands of the United States where the property rights of all citizens—

including slaveholders—apply. The court, in effect, declares the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional and opens all territories to slavery.

- 1859** John Brown, a white abolitionist, carries out a raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, hoping to capture the federal arsenal and arm slaves for a massive uprising to end slavery. The revolt is crushed, and Brown and his followers are hanged.
- 1860** There are about 4 million slaves in the United States at this time, 90 percent of them living in the rural South. The United States is producing more than 5 million bales of cotton annually. Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Georgia produce 70 percent of the cotton and are at the top of the list in the number of large slaveholders.
- 1860-61** When Republican Abraham Lincoln is elected president on an antislavery platform in November 1860, seven southern slaveholding states withdraw from the Union and form their own government. Those states—South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas—form the Confederate States of America.
- 1861** The Civil War officially begins on April 12, when Confederate soldiers open fire on Fort Sumter, a Union-held fort located in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Union forces surrender after a thirtyone-hour battle. The defeat costs the Union four more slave states, as Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas join the Confederacy.
- 1861** The Confiscation Act passed by the U.S. Congress states that any property used in aiding or abetting insurrection against the United States can be captured and kept as a prize of war. When the "property" consists of slaves, the law declares them to be forever free. Thousands of slaves seek refuge and freedom on the lands occupied and controlled by the Union armies.
- 1862** On June 19, the United States abolishes slavery in the territories. On July 19, an act proclaims that all slaves who make it into Union territory from Confederate states are to be set free. On September 22, President Abraham Lincoln issues a preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all slaves. At the same time, he allows the enlistment of blacks into the Union's armed forces. These acts mark a huge change of policy: the war's goal is no longer just to save the Union, but to crush slavery.
- 1863** President Abraham Lincoln issues the final Emancipation Proclamation, declaring approximately 4 million enslaved people in the United States free.



- 1865** The Civil War ends on April 9, when the Confederate army, led by General Robert E. Lee, surrenders at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia.
- 1865** By the end of the Civil War more than 185,000 blacks have served in the Union army. About 93,000 came from the rebel states, 40,000 from the border slave states, and about 52,000 from the free states. More than 38,000 black soldiers died in the war.
- 1865** The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which abolishes slavery in America, is ratified (officially approved by popular vote) by the states on December 18, 1865.
- 1865-66** Black Codes become the law of the land in the postwar South, gravely violating the rights of blacks.
- 1865** Congress establishes the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, or the Freedman's Bureau, to provide aid, such as food, education, medicine, and to help in resettling recently freed blacks in the South.
- 1866** The Republican-controlled U.S. Congress passes a Civil Rights bill that repeals the Black Codes of the South. The bill grants citizenship to blacks and equal rights with whites in every state and territory.
- 1867** The Reconstruction era begins when Congress passes a series of acts that divide the former Confederacy into five military districts under the command of army generals; strip the right to vote from most whites who had supported the Confederate government; order elections for state constitutional conventions; and give black men the right to vote, in some states by military order. Black voters soon make up a majority in the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Blacks are elected to state legislatures and, in much smaller numbers, to the U.S. House and Senate.
- 1868** The Fourteenth Amendment, which grants citizenship to blacks, is made law.
- 1870** The Fifteenth Amendment, guaranteeing the protection of U.S. citizens against federal or state racial discrimination, is ratified by the states.
- 1871** Brazil passes a gradual emancipation law.
- 1877** The withdrawal of all federal troops from the South in 1877 marks the end of the Reconstruction period; southern Democrats regain political dominance and restrict the rights of blacks.
- 1880** Cuba passes a gradual emancipation law, and the shipping of Africans across the Atlantic ends.

- 1885-1908** European powers grant King Leopold of Belgium the right to rule over the Congo Basin. He directs his troops in the Congo to round up whole communities of Africans. Millions of Congo people face inhuman conditions of hard labor—harvesting ivory and wild rubber and building facilities needed for trade—and atrocious brutality and violence at the hands of Leopold's forces. As Leopold's private African kingdom falls apart in the early twentieth century, his troops resort to wholesale slaughter of the Congo people as punishment.
- 1927-53** The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), ruled by the dictator Joseph Stalin, enslaves millions of Soviet citizens in labor camps in Siberia, Central Asia, and above the Arctic Circle.
- 1942-45** In Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler, millions of Jews are enslaved in concentration camps, where they are systematically murdered. At the same time, millions of foreigners are enslaved in labor camps.
- 1956** The United Nations (UN) defines slavery as the condition of someone over whom any or all of the powers connected to the right of ownership are exercised and dedicates itself to ending all forms of slavery, including chattel slavery, serfdom, debt bondage, child labor, child prostitution, child pornography, the use of children in armed conflict, servile forms of marriage, forced labor, and the "white slave" traffic, or sexual slavery.
- 1990s** In war-torn Sudan, human-rights groups estimate that in the 1990s, 30,000 to 90,000 Sudanese have been enslaved by a government-sponsored Arab militia. The militia regularly raids civilian villages and cattle camps in the south and hauls away hundreds of black Africans at a time to be marched north and sold into slavery.
- 1990s** Despite the ban on slavery in Mauritania, tens of thousands of blacks remain the property of their Arab masters.
- 1991-96** According to official figures from the Chinese, police in China catch and prosecute 143,000 slave dealers and rescue 88,000 women and children who had been sold into slavery, marriage, or prostitution. Human-rights groups claim the real number of enslaved women and children was much higher.
- 1992** It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of political prisoners are forced to work in slave-like conditions in China's vast network of labor reform camps, some of which are nothing more than secured factories staffed with inmates. For years the official policy of China has been to use prison labor to produce cheap products for export.
- 1993** The Pakistan Human Rights Commission estimates the number of bonded child workers in Pakistan is 20 million. (A child labor survey conducted in 1996 by the Pakistani government, however, declares that there are a maximum of 4 million bonded child workers in the

country.)

- 1996** The United Nations reports that children are being sold for prostitution, pornography, and adoption at increasing rates worldwide. In Asia alone, more than 1 million children are exploited sexually and live in conditions virtually identical to slavery.
- 1996** New York-based Human Rights Watch estimates that there are between 10 million and 15 million bonded child workers in India.
- 1996** The Pastoral Land Commission, a Catholic Church organization, reports 26,047 cases of slavery in Brazil, mainly involving Indians who work in charcoal production.
- 1998** The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates the number of children exploited in labor markets around the world is between 200 million and 250 million, with nearly 95 percent living in poor countries.
- 1999** Anti-Slavery International (ASI) estimates that there are more than 200 million slaves in the world. Most of the slaves, according to ASI, live in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

# Words to know

## A

**Abbot:**

The head or ruler of a monastery for men.

**Abolition:**

The act of getting rid of slavery. An abolitionist is someone who fights against the institution of slavery.

**Agricultural slaves:**

People owned as property by owners of farms and forced to labor in the fields.

**Amnesty:**

An official act of pardon for a large group of people.

**Antebellum:**

Before the war; particularly before the Civil War (1861-65).

**Apprentice:**

Someone who learns an art or trade by serving for a set period of time under someone who is skilled at the trade.

**Auction:**

A sale of property in which the buyers bid on the price, and the property goes to the highest bidder.

## B

**Baptism:**

A Christian ceremony marking an individual's acceptance into the Christian community.

**Benevolent societies:**

Organizations formed to promote the welfare of certain groups of people determined by the society's members. In antebellum America, benevolent societies were very important social, cultural, and economic organizations for free blacks.

**Black codes:**

Bodies of law that emerged in the states of the U.S. South that restrictively governed almost every aspect of slaves' lives.

**Black Death:**

A deadly contagious disease often called "the plague" that started around 1350 and killed about one-third of Europe's population and even more in Asia.

**Bondage:**

The state of being bound by law in servitude to a controlling person or entity.

**Branding:**

Marking something, or someone, usually by burning them with a hot iron with a particular mark that shows ownership.

## C

**Cacao:**

Seeds used to make chocolate and cocoa.

**Chain gangs:**

Groups of workers chained together at the ankles while performing forced hard labor.

**Chattel slavery:**

A permanent form of slavery in which the slave holder "owns" a human being—the slave—in the same way that property (chattel) is owned: permanently and without restrictions. Historically, chattel slaves had no legal rights and were considered property that their owners had the right to possess, enjoy, and dispose of in whatever way they saw fit. Slaves could be bought, sold, given away, inherited, or hired out to others. Slave masters had the right, by law and custom, to punish and, in some times and places, to kill their slaves for disobedience. Slaves were forced to work where and when their masters determined. They could not own property or freely marry whom they chose, and their children were born as slaves.

**City-state:**

An independent political unit consisting of a city and its surrounding lands.

**Coffle:**

A group of people chained together.

**Colonialism:**

Control by one nation or state over a dependent territory and its people and resources.

**Colony:**

A territory in which settlers from another country come to live while maintaining their ties to their home country, often setting up a government that may rule over the original inhabitants of the territory as well as the settlers.

**Commerce:**

The making and selling of goods for local and foreign markets.

**Commodity:**

Something that is to be bought and sold for a profit.

**Compromise:**

To arrive at a settlement or agreement on something by virtue of both parties giving up some part of their demands.

**Compromise of 1850:**

A decision by the U.S. Congress to admit California as a free state and that left the status of territories to be determined when they applied for statehood. It also outlawed the slave trade in the District of Columbia and strengthened the fugitive slave laws.

**Confederate States of America:**

Often called the Confederacy, the government established in 1861 when seven states of the South—South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, and Texas—seceded from the Union.

**Concentration camps:**

Prison camps where inmates are detained, often, historically, under severe conditions and for political or ethnic reasons.

**Concubine:**

A sex slave.

**Conspiracy:**

The act of two or more parties secretly joining together to plan an illegal action.

**Cotton gin:**

A machine invented by Eli Whitney in 1793 that separated cotton fibers from the seed. With just two people working it, Whitney's cotton gin cleaned as much cotton as 100 workers could by hand, thus freeing up laborers for the cultivation of the crop.

**Crucifixion:**

Being nailed or bound to a cross until death; any horrible and painful punishment.

**Crusades:**

A series of military expeditions from the eleventh century to the thirteenth century launched by the Christian powers to conquer the Holy Land from the Muslims.

**Curfew:**

A rule or regulation that forbids certain people from being out in public after a certain time of day.

## D

**Dark Ages:**

A period of the Middle Ages in western Europe from 500 to 750 when there was no central government, lords ruled over small territories, and education and the arts were minimal. The term is also used to mean the entire span of the Middle Ages (500-1500).

**Debt slavery:**

A form of forced servitude usually taking place when a person has borrowed money against a pledge, or a promise, of work. If the loan goes unpaid, the borrower or members of his family are enslaved for a period of time to the lender to clear the debt.

**Democracy:**

Government ruled by the people or their representatives.

**Democratic party:**

A party founded by Thomas Jefferson in the early days of the United States favoring personal liberty and the limitation of the federal government. In 1854 the political party names changed to reflect the proslavery forces of the South versus the antislavery forces of the North. The Democrats were the proslavery forces of the South; the Republicans were the antislavery party of the North.

**Domestic slaves:**

Slaves who worked in the homes of the slaveowners, usually cooking, cleaning, serving, or performing child care.

## E

**Emancipate:**

To free from bondage.

**Emancipation Proclamation:**

The 1863 order by President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War that freed all slaves in the rebel states that had seceded and were battling against the Union.

**Empire:**

A large political unit that usually has several territories, nations, or peoples under one governing authority.

**Essenes:**

A Jewish brotherhood in ancient Palestine that was opposed to violence, war, and slavery.

**Exodus:**

Departure.

**Exploitation:**

An unfair or improper use of another person for one's own advantage.

## F

**Feudalism:**

The system of political organization in the Middle Ages in Europe based on the relationship of lord and vassal. The king or ruler basically owned all the land in his realm, but he could not govern it all. Thus he partitioned it out to nobles for a pledge of loyalty and military service. The nobles then divided their lands among lords for their pledge of service. Peasants, serfs, and slaves lived and worked on the lords' estates.

**Forced migration:**

The movement of a large group of people by force.

**Free state:**

A state in which slavery is not permitted.

**Freedman's Bureau:**

Also called the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, an organization formed in 1865 by Congress to provide food, land, clothing, medicine, and education to the newly freed peoples of the South.

**Freedpeople:**

Former slaves.

**Fugitive:**

Someone who is running away or escaping from something.

**Fugitive slave laws:**

Federal acts of 1793 and 1850 that required the return of escaped slaves between states. Thus, a citizen of a free state was required to return an escaped slave to his or her owner in a slave state.

## G

**Gladiator:**

Trained fighters in ancient Rome who fought each other—and sometimes wild beasts—to the death in huge arenas in front of crowds of spectators.

## H

**Heathen:**

A disrespectful word for non-Christian people.

**Holocaust:**

Mass slaughter.



**Human rights:**

Rights that belong to every person by virtue of their being a human being; the idea that everyone should be provided with the civil, political, economic, cultural, and social opportunity for personal human dignity.

**Husbandry:**

The taming and raising of domestic animals as a branch of farming.

**I****Imperial slaves:**

Slaves owned by the emperor.

**Indentured servants:**

Servants who work under a contract, bound to their masters for terms usually between two and fourteen years. In American history the terms of service were generally part of the deal that paid for an indentured servant's passage from England to the New World. Upon completion of their contract, indentured servants were promised their freedom and perhaps some food, clothing, tools, or land.

**Indigo:**

A plant used for making dyes.

**Industrial Revolution:**

A period of great economic changes in Europe due to new technology, starting in England in the mid-1700s.

**Industrial slaves:**

Slaves who labored in factories, mines, quarries, and other fields of production.

**Infidel:**

A disrespectful word for a non-Christians.

**Insurrection:**

Rebellion.

**Irrigation farming:**

An agricultural system using ditches and canals built to bring water to dry fields from a river or lake in order to grow crops.

**J****Jim Crow laws:**

Laws passed in the South after the Reconstruction period (1865-77) that separated black people from white people in many public places.

**K**

**Kansas-Nebraska Act:**

An 1854 act that organized Kansas and Nebraska as territories and left the question of slavery to be determined by the settlers when they applied for statehood. This act, in effect, erased the prohibition of slavery north of the Mason-Dixon line as established in the Missouri Compromise.

**Kidnaping:**

The holding of captured people for ransom (money or goods paid for the return of the captured person).

**Knight:**

A trained soldier who fought on horseback in the service of a lord or superior, especially in the Middle Ages.

## L

**Labor camp:**

A prison camp in which forced labor is performed.

**Latin America:**

A vast region comprised of the countries of South and Middle America where Romance languages (languages derived from Latin) are spoken. Geographically, it includes almost all of the Americas south of the United States: Mexico, Central America, South America, and many of the islands of the West Indies.

## M

**Magna Carta:**

A British document created in 1215 by King John guaranteeing certain rights, but perhaps mainly guaranteeing feudal relations.

**Manor:**

In Medieval England, the castle and surrounding land belonging to a lord, who ruled locally.

**Manumission:**

Formal release from bondage.

**Mason-Dixon line:**

The boundary between the states of Pennsylvania and Maryland. Before the Civil War the Mason-Dixon line became the boundary between the free states of the North and the slave states of the South.

**Massacre:**

The act of killing a group of people who are not prepared to adequately defend themselves; the word connotes a cruel or atrocious act.

**Medieval:**

Relating to the Middle Ages (500-1500), particularly in Europe.

**Mestizos:**

People of mixed Indian and European ancestry.

**Middle Ages:**

A period of European history that dates from about 500 to 1500, beginning after the fall of the Roman empire in 476 and characterized by a unified Christian culture, economy, politics, and military and a feudal hierarchy of power.

**Middle Passage:**

The voyage from Africa to the Americas; the middle stretch of the slave-trading triangle that connected Europe to Africa, Africa to the Americas, and the Americas back to Europe.

**Militant:**

Ready to fight, or aggressively active.

**Militia:**

A unit of armed forces that is trained and ready to do battle or patrol in an emergency.

**Missionary:**

A person with a religious mission, usually a minister of the Christian church who tries to convert non-Christians to the faith.

**Missouri Compromise:**

A series of measures passed in 1820 and 1821 admitting to the Union Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state and prohibiting slavery in all other territory north of Missouri's southern boundary.

**Monasteries:**

Churches and residences for monks and nuns.

**Monk:**

A man who belongs to a religious order and lives in a monastery, where he serves the church and devotes himself to his religion.

**Mulatto:**

A word—used mainly in past times—meaning a person of mixed white and black ancestry.

**Muslims:**

Members of the Islam religion.

**Mutilation:**

The act of cutting something or someone in a way that is permanently disfiguring or removes an essential part of the body.

## N

**Narratives:**

Something that is told like a story. Slave narratives in the years before the Civil War were written personal stories about what life was like as a slave. They were either written by former slaves or told out loud by them and then written down by someone else. Either way, they were presented in the manner of a spoken story.

**Near East:**

A region of southwest Asia that includes the Arab nations.

**Nobles:**

Wealthy families of landholders in Europe, usually holding the titles

of dukes, counts, and lords.

## P

**Passive resistance:**

Not cooperating with authority by purposefully not doing what is expected of one, but without using violent or aggressive means.

**Patriarch:**

A tribal chief, or a man who is the father and founder of a people.

**Peasants:**

A class of people throughout the history of Europe and elsewhere who were poor and lived by farming the land, either as small landowners or laborers.

**Peculium:**

Money, such as wages, tips, or gifts, that slaves in ancient Rome earned by doing extra jobs; they were allowed to keep it after giving their master part of the income.

**Piracy:**

The seizure by force of people and property on land or water.

**Pharaoh:**

The supreme ruler, as a king, of ancient Egypt.

**Pillory:**

A wooden frame in which there were holes to lock up the head and hands used to punish and humiliate people.

**Plantation:**

A vast farming estate that is worked by a large staff living on the premises.

**Plebs:**

Short for plebeians; Rome's majority middle class.

**Pope:**

The bishop of Rome and head of the Roman Catholic church.

**Prostitution:**

The practice of engaging in sexual activities for payment.

**Public slaves:**

Slaves owned by cities or towns who did administrative, construction, public-safety, or maintenance work or worked in temples.

## Q

**Quakers:**

A religious body formally known as the Religious Society of Friends that originated in seventeenth-century England. Its founders believed that people could find the spiritual truth that was provided by the Holy Spirit within themselves, having no need of church services or its hierarchy. The Quakers believed in the equality of all human beings and were staunch abolitionists in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

**Quarry:**

A dug out pit from which stone, slate, or limestone is taken.

## R

**Ratification:**

The formal approval or confirmation of a document or act, such as an amendment to the Constitution.

**Reconstruction acts:**

Acts passed in 1867 by Congress that divided the former Confederacy into five military districts under the command of army generals. They stripped the right to vote from whites who had supported the Confederate government. Elections were ordered for state constitutional conventions, and black men were given the right to vote. Withdrawal of the federal forces in 1877 marked the end of the Reconstruction period.

**Reenslavement:**

Being forced back into slavery once one has achieved freedom from bondage.

**Republic:**

A form of government run by elected representatives and based on a constitution.

**Republican party:**

A party formed in 1854 by the antislavery forces of the North. The first Republican president was Abraham Lincoln, elected in 1860.

**Rural:**

Relating to the country, country people, and agriculture; the opposite of urban or city life.

## S

**Secede:**

To withdraw

**Segregation:**

The separation of people along racial lines. For example, in many churches before and after the Civil War, black people were forced to sit in separate sections than white people; in public transportation in some places there were separate sections for blacks and whites; in education; there were sometimes separate schools.

**Serfdom:**

From the Latin word for "servant," a form of servitude that differed from chattel slavery in that the enslaved were not considered "movable" property. Serfs were bound to the land they lived on, generation after generation, serving the owners of the land, known as lords. If the lord left the land, the serf served its next owner.

**Servile:**

Submissive, or slavelike; being always at the bidding of a controlling person.

**Sexual slavery:**

The control and ownership of one human being by another for the purpose of engaging in sexual activities with that person, often forcibly, or selling the person's sexual services to others.

**Sharecropping:**

A system of farming in which one person farms land owned by another in exchange for a share of the crop.

**Slave codes:**

The body of laws held by the states governing the slaves themselves and the ownership of them. Many slave code laws severely restricted slaves because of the slaveowner's strong fear of slave uprisings.

**Slave raids:**

Military expeditions for the purpose of capturing slaves.

**Slave trading forts:**

Sometimes called "slave factories," trading posts operated by Europeans mainly on the west coast of Africa with dungeons capable of holding thousands of captured Africans until they could be placed on the next ship to the Americas.

**Slaver:**

A person who is involved in the slave trade for profit.

**Supreme Court:**

The highest court of the United States, and the highest authority on all cases that arise under the Constitution, laws, and treaties of the federal government.

## T

**Territory:**

An area, or a vast stretch of land in eighteenth and nineteenth century America that had settlers and local communities but had not yet organized as a state of the Union.

**Terrorism:**

Attacks on unarmed civilians.

**Textile:**

Cloth, usually a woven or knit fabric.

**Therapeutae:**

A Jewish community in ancient Alexandria, Egypt, that opposed war and slavery.

**Tribute:**

A payment made by one group or state to another, either in acknowledgment of having been conquered or for protection.

## U

### **Underground Railroad:**

A secret network of people, black and white, who guided runaway slaves to freedom and sheltered them along their way in the eighteenth and nineteenth century United States.

### **United Nations (UN):**

An international organization established after World War II (1939-45) that includes most of the world's countries. The UN's mission is to maintain world peace and security, to achieve cooperation among countries in solving problems, and to promote international humanitarianism.

## V

### **Vassals:**

Lower nobles in medieval Europe who pledged loyalty and services to the local ruler, the lord.

### **Vigilante group:**

A group that organizes independently of official authority, setting its task to suppress or punish other people, for real or perceived offenses, without going through the due processes of law.

# I Afonso

Born 1461  
Kongo (now Democratic Republic of the  
Congo)  
Died c. 1550  
Kongo

Ruler of Kongo Kingdom

**A**fonso I (pronounced ah-FAHN-so) was a Christian king of Kongo (now Democratic Republic of the Congo) who attempted to found the first Europeanized kingdom in Africa. During his reign (1506 to 1543) he established a partnership with the kings of Portugal, who had been sending explorers and traders to Kongo since the 1480s and 1490s. In 1518 Afonso's son, Henrique, became a bishop in the Roman Catholic church, further strengthening ties between Kongo and Portugal. Yet cultural and religious concerns were soon overshadowed by the slave trade, as Portuguese and Africans alike scrambled to make huge profits on the growing demand for slaves. Although Afonso took a stand against this alarming development, his kingdom was eventually destroyed and his experiment ended in tragedy.

## Family converts to Christianity

In the thirteenth century, about 150 years before the Portuguese arrived in Africa, Kongo-speaking invaders from north of the Congo River conquered weaker groups and united them into the Kongo Kingdom. (Kongo spanned from the Congo River in the

".. . we need from your Kingdoms no more than some priests and a few people to teach in schools, and no other goods except wine and flour for the holy sacrament.... It is our will that in these Kingdoms there should not be any trade of slaves or outlet for them."

*Afonso I, from letter to King John III of Portugal*



## The Myth of Prester John

The myth of an African Christian king named Prester John stimulated Portuguese exploration of Africa. Christian rulers in Europe believed the fabulously wealthy kingdom of Prester John could be found in Ethiopia, so they sent explorers along the Atlantic coast of Africa to find a river route across the continent to his kingdom. Portuguese prince Henrique de Aviz (Henry the Navigator; 1394-1460) set up a school of navigation in 1420 and financed the early expeditions himself. At the time of Prince Henry's death in 1460, Portuguese explorers had reached the western coastal region of Sierra Leone. The hunt for the imaginary king continued, contributing to the discovery of the Americas, the exploration of the Congo River, and the establishment of a sea route around southern Africa to India.

north to the Kango River in the east and from the Dande River in the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the west). With its capital in Mbanza, the kingdom consisted of six divisions that were headed by leaders appointed by the *manikongo* (king of the Kongo people).

Afonso was the son of manikongo Nzinga a Nkuwu, who made the first contact with the Portuguese in 1482 when explorer Diogo Cao discovered the place where the Congo River empties into the Atlantic Ocean. After a second visit in 1485 Diogo Cao left behind four Catholic missionaries and took four young Kongo noblemen back to Portugal with him. The Portuguese king, John II (reigned 1477-95), received the Kongolese warmly and assumed responsibility for their education. Likewise, the manikongo welcomed the Portuguese and treated them as royal visitors. When the Portuguese returned home, the two kings agreed to a policy of peace and friendship between Kongo and Portugal.

In 1490 King John established diplomatic relations with Nzinga a Nkuwu, sending three ships, Catholic priests, soldiers, and craftsmen. The priests quickly succeeded in converting Nzinga a Nkuwu and his family to Catholicism. According to some reports, 100,000 people were baptized (initiated into the faith through anointment with water) the following year. Nzinga a Nkuwu took the name of his benefactor, King John, and his wife became Eleanor, after the queen of Portugal. Afonso was named for King John's son.

This swift embrace of a foreign religion was not accepted by all the nobles in the Kongo court. Some refused to be baptized. Among them was Mpanzu a Nzinga, chief of the Mpemba and the king's son by another wife. In time, the Kongo Christians also resisted the teachings of the church, refusing to give up some of

their traditional practices. The priests therefore resorted to violence, destroying Kongo ritual centers and whipping people. As a result, many converts turned away from the church. Eventually, Afonso's father himself abandoned Christianity.

Afonso, however, continued to practice Catholicism. As punishment the king banished him and all remaining Portuguese to Afonso's inherited district of Nsundi in 1495. Afonso lived in exile (forced absence from one's homeland) for about eleven years, during which time he held fast to his Christian beliefs. He also expelled from Nsundi anyone who practiced traditional Kongo rituals.

## **Afonso takes the throne**

The manikongo died in 1505 and Afonso took the throne after winning a battle against Mpanzu a Nzinga, who wanted to be king himself. During the eleven years he spent in exile, he had studied with European priests and absorbed European customs. Afonso had also learned something about court politics. One of his first acts as king was to rid the court of his non-Christian enemies, ordering many to be hanged or sent into exile.

Afonso also took steps to heal the split in the court and agreed to respect certain traditional rituals. He then asked the new Portuguese king, Manuel I (reigned 1495-1521), to send more skilled Europeans to the kingdom. As a gesture of goodwill, Afonso shipped to Portugal some of Kongo's most valued riches: ivory, copper, parrots—and slaves. He also sent his own son, Henrique, and other sons of court nobles to be educated in Lisbon, the capital of Portugal. In return, Manuel dispatched fifteen priests, along with various craftsmen, soldiers, and teachers, to Kongo.

## **Modernizes Kongo kingdom**

Afonso then embarked on his dream of creating a modern, Europeanized Kongo by building several schools in Mbanza. In 1509 four hundred students were enrolled, and within seven years the number had reached nearly a thousand. Afonso also put the

craftsmen to work redesigning the capital city, which was renamed Sao Salvador and had a population of 100,000.

Using the knowledge he had gained from his exposure to Europeans, Afonso helped advance the living conditions in his kingdom. He imported fruit-bearing trees such as guava, lemon, and orange to improve the diet of the people. He also brought in maize (corn), manioc (a tropical plant), and sugar cane for planting from Brazil and Asia. In addition, Afonso taught his people how to use contemporary weapons such as mortars, muskets, swords, and sabers.

Afonso and the Kongo noblemen adopted the dress and manners of the Portuguese. Duarte Lopes, Portuguese representative to the court, reported that they were garbed in "cloaks, capes, scarlet tabards, and silk robes. . . . They also wear hoods and capes, velvet and leather slippers, [with] rapiers [swords] at their sides. . . . The women have adopted the Portuguese fashions, wearing veils over their heads, and above them black velvet caps, ornamented with jewels, and chains of gold around their neck." Members of the court took the titles of Portuguese nobles: princes, dukes, marquises, counts, and barons. Afonso ordered the design of a royal coat of arms (official insignia). Soon, however, the most advanced kingdom in Africa was torn apart by bitter conflict.

## **Slavery brings ruin**

After reaching the African coast in the late 1480s, the Portuguese established sugar plantations on an uninhabited island they called São Tomé. (The island is situated on the equator, about two hundred miles west of Gabon.) Because sugar growing and processing require extensive labor, the Portuguese brought slaves with them from West Africa to do the work. São Tomé quickly became the leading slave trade depot for the Lower Guinea coast (a region in Africa) and the Kongo territory.

A company licensed by the Portuguese king ran the island, but the head of the company did not want the king to interfere in his business. By 1512 São Tomé completely controlled the trade between Kongo and Europe. Rather than deal with African

middlemen on the coast, the São Tomé traders went inland to buy their own slaves. They encouraged various African groups to make war on one another and then to take captives to sell as slaves.

Afonso wrote a letter to Manuel describing the horrible conditions in Kongo and requesting that the king send a representative with the power to stop the whites. Manuel responded with assistance, but for his own purposes—he realized that the slave trade was highly profitable and he wanted to keep the São Tomé company out of it. Consequently, he brought the Kongo under government rule, appointing an official representative to protect Portuguese interests.

Manuel also sent five ships loaded with missionaries, teachers, books, tools, and furniture. Most important, he prepared an official document, a *regimento*, which specified Portuguese responsibilities to Kongo and, in turn, Kongo's obligations to Portugal. In exchange for teachers, missionaries, and soldiers, each year Kongo had to fill Portuguese ships with ivory, copper, and slaves. The agents at São Tomé, however, learned of the Portuguese move to cut them out of the trade and went into the Kongo before the *regimento* took effect. They ravaged the countryside for slaves, bribing and threatening local chiefs.

Meanwhile, in Mbanza, two factions had developed—those who favored the alliance with the Portuguese and those who saw an opportunity to make a fortune by siding with the São Tomé agents. Stone masons, carpenters, teachers—even some of the priests—joined in the trade. So many slaves were supplied to São Tomé agents that a corral had to be built to hold them until they could be taken to the coast. Ironically, the corral was located next to the church.

## **Afonso opposes slave trade**

Between 1505 and 1575, nearly 345,000 slaves were exported from Kongo. In 1515 a Portuguese trader described the situation at Mbanza:

Of all those who go there, few fail to sicken and of those who sicken few fail to die, and those who survive are obliged to withstand the intense heat of the torrid zone, suffering hunger, thirst, and many other miseries, for which there is no relief save patience. [Patience] is needed . . . not only to tolerate the discomforts of such a wretched place but.. . to fight the barbarity ignorance; idolatry and vices which seem scarcely human but rather those of irrational animals.

Afonso wrote several more letters to the king, requesting ships so that Kongo might bypass São Tomé and deal directly with Portugal. His appeals went unanswered. Portugal chose not to honor its agreement with Afonso because its interests lay in the slave trade, not in a modern Christian nation in Africa. In 1522 Portugal managed to take control of São Tomé, and a new king, John III (reigned 1521-27), declared it a colony of the crown.

Alarmed at the ruination of his kingdom, in 1526 Afonso wrote to John III. When he received no reply, he banned the slave trade. So great was the resistance, however, that he was forced to cancel the ban and trading continued. By the 1530s traders were shipping at least five thousand slaves a year out of Kongo.

## **Afonso's nightmare**

By this time only four missionaries remained in the entire kingdom. Afonso's son, Henrique, who had been ordained as the first African bishop in the Roman Catholic church, received poor treatment at the hands of the Portuguese. After thirteen years of religious study in Portugal, he returned to the Kongo to take his position. The white clergy treated him so badly that he became seriously ill. Nevertheless, Afonso did not lose faith in Portugal, and he entrusted twenty young noblemen to the care of the Portuguese for their education. His trust was cruelly betrayed, however, for on the way to Lisbon half of the men were taken captive and enslaved on São Tomé. From there they were sent to Brazil as slaves on plantations.

As Kongo deteriorated into lawlessness, a Catholic priest named Friar Alvaro ordered eight Portuguese traders to kill Afonso as he

attended church on Easter Sunday of 1539. They fired a cannonball into the church but it missed him, wounding other worshipers instead. After that event, Afonso became more remote and withdrawn. He is believed to have died around 1550.

Wars over his succession further tore the kingdom apart. With the support of the Portuguese powers in São Tomé, manikongo Pedro I rose to power, but the Kongo people rebelled after several years. They then installed Afonso's Lisbon-educated grandson, Diogo I (reigned 1545-61), as king. Yet Diogo faced the same issues his grandfather had confronted. During his reign the southern kingdom of Ndongo declared independence from Kongo and began dealing directly with the traders on São Tomé. The Portuguese eventually gained total dominance by invading Ndongo and taking the port of Luanda (in present-day Angola). Thus Afonso's remarkable experiment came to a tragic end.

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# Richard Allen

**Born February 14, 1760**  
**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**  
**Died March 16, 1831**  
**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

**Freedperson, preacher,**  
**community leader**

The founder of the nation's first independent black church. A self-educated leader of national importance who worked for the social, economic, and educational advancement of black people.

**R**ichard Allen was born a slave. At the age of seventeen, Allen became deeply involved in the Methodist religion, a form of Christianity. After gaining his freedom at the age of twenty, he began traveling and preaching to blacks and whites alike. When he was twenty-seven, Allen emerged as a leader in Philadelphia's black community, co-founding the Free African Society as a first step toward establishing the country's first African church in 1794. Allen founded mutual aid societies, helped create numerous schools for black youths, and organized and presided over many conferences and conventions. Allen proved to a doubting society by example that blacks were more than capable of independently creating their own social and economic opportunities.

## Born without a last name

Richard—he had not yet acquired the surname Allen—was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at a time when slavery was still legal in the North. Slaves were seldom given more than a first name, and if given a surname, it often was the same as their master's.

Richard's parents were slaves and, like his three brothers and sisters, he was born into slavery by law. Richard and his family were owned by Benjamin Chew, a Philadelphia lawyer and officeholder. In 1768, when Richard was just eight years old, Chew sold the whole family to Stokely Sturgis, a small farmer in Kent County, Delaware, near Dover.

It was probably debt and hard times that forced Sturgis, in 1776, to sell some of his slaves for cash. Unfortunately for Richard, who was only sixteen at the time, his mother and several of his siblings were sold away from the farm. The breakup of families through the sale of some of its members was a common practice during the American slaveholding period. In this case, the sorrow and heartbreak it caused may have led to the religious conversion of Richard and his brother to Methodism, a form of Christianity.

## **Religion and freedom**

In 1777, as Allen recalled in his autobiography, he and his brother (with permission from Sturgis) joined the Methodist Society and attended religious classes that were held in the forest at a nearby farm. A short time later, Sturgis, moved by the religious beliefs and commitments of his young slaves, converted to Methodism himself and invited traveling Methodist ministers to preach at his farm. In the fall of 1779, after hearing one such preacher tell the small farm congregation that slaveholders were acting against God's will, Sturgis offered freedom to Richard and his brother.

Sturgis allowed the brothers to buy their freedom for \$2,000 each. The two young men jumped at the chance of gaining their liberty and signed a contract with Sturgis that allowed them to make payments in yearly installments beginning in February 1781. In 1780 at twenty years of age, "Richard Negro" as he was called in his manumission (official release) papers, became Richard the freedperson. He chose Allen as his surname, which was the name of an associate of his original master, Benjamin Chew.

Even though the contract allowed him five years, Allen wanted to pay his purchase price quickly, for if Sturgis, who was in his sixties, died before the terms of the contract were complete, Allen



## Building Character

Richard Allen faced many challenges growing up black in a white-controlled world. Perhaps the single greatest test of Allen's character as a young man came in 1783, when he was just twenty-three. Allen tells the story in his autobiography, *The Life Experience and Cospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen*:

*Embarking on a trip to New York from Wilmington, Allen happened upon a heavy trunk "he thought might contain Cash to some Considerable amount." Allen left the trunk with a friend and when he returned to Delaware, they opened it together. Just as he had suspected, it contained a small fortune in French silver and gold. After placing an advertisement in the newspaper, the trunk's owner was found and the contents returned in their entirety. Allen refused the large reward offered to him, and instead accepted a modest new suit of coarse cloth. This episode established Allen as a man of integrity and great character, and the story followed him wherever he went.*

could be sold to the highest bidder. Allen spent the next few years working and preaching at various places on the road. At first Allen chopped wood and labored in a brickyard. He also made shoes, and for a while, hauled salt for the Revolutionary army. Hard work combined with a talent for business paid off when, on August 27, 1783, a year and a half ahead of schedule, Allen paid off Sturgis in full. Allen also gave a gift to the struggling Sturgis of eighteen bushels of salt (equal to about half a year's wages for a common laborer).

## A traveling preacher

In 1783, with the Revolutionary War (1775-83) over, the twenty-three-year-old Allen began to work full time as a traveling Methodist preacher. For the next three years Allen traveled by foot over thousands of miles, preaching to black and white audiences in villages,

crossroads, and forest clearings. Allen's journeys, sponsored by the Methodist Society, took him into various parts of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina.

It was during this period of time that Allen, with no formal education, gained skills such as reading and writing. Through extensive traveling and preaching, Allen also developed his speaking and leadership skills, and learned how to survive and flourish in a world dominated by white people. Allen became a trusted man in the community. Stories about his honesty and integrity were well known among the public and laid a foundation for his life's work as a minister.

## **Founds African Church**

In 1786 Allen returned to Philadelphia, his city of birth, and began his twenty-year battle to establish a black church independent of white authorities. Invited to preach to the small black congregation at the mostly white Saint George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Allen soon found himself at odds with the church's segregated seating, a policy that forced blacks to sit in the back of the church or in the balcony. On a November Sunday in 1787, Allen and Absalom Jones (1746-1818; the first black ordained as a priest in the Episcopal church) led a small group of blacks to seats in the white section of the church. When the usher tried to remove them, they walked out of the church.

The group then started the process of setting up their own church. Earlier in the year, on April 12, 1787, Allen and Jones had already taken the first steps when they founded the Free African Society, an organization that was dedicated to ending slavery and racial hatred. They bought an abandoned blacksmith shop (for \$35) and moved it with a team of six horses to a plot of newly purchased land. Allen led Sunday services at the society until the blacksmith shop was fixed up and dedicated in July 1794, as Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, or Bethel A.M.E.. By 1800 Bethel A.M.E. was Philadelphia's largest black church, with more than five hundred members.

The white Methodist authorities opposed Allen's efforts to become independent every step of the way, even contesting the ownership of the church building itself. Finally, on January 1, 1816, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that Bethel was a legally independent church. A few months later, in April, black ministers from New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania gathered at Allen's Bethel A.M.E. Church for a convention. Together they formed the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. Allen, at fifty-six years of age, was ordained a church elder and the A.M.E. Church's first bishop.

**Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia.** (*Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.*)



## **Empowerment through the church**

In the early nineteenth century, the A.M.E. Church was one of the most important institutions for black people—free and enslaved—because it demonstrated that blacks could organize themselves without charity or interference from the white people who were in power. Just as important, the A.M.E. Church played a crucial role in the everyday lives of blacks by providing a place where they were safe and welcome in a very hostile world. The A.M.E. Church helped many slaves make the transition from bondage in the South to daily life as freedpersons in the North.

The A.M.E. Church was very active in the antislavery movement. The voices of abolitionist leaders, such as Frederick Douglass

(1817-95), were heard from the church's pulpits on a regular basis. The Bethel A.M.E. Church played host to runaway slaves, housing them in its basement as part of the Underground Railroad (a secret network that helped slaves escape to the North). The church's congregation also collected money to secretly feed, clothe, and educate fugitive slaves as they made their way to freedom.

## **Leads by example**

Richard Allen dedicated his life to the advancement of social, economic, and educational opportunities for his people. In addition to founding the A.M.E. Church, Allen helped to create many schools for black youths and mutual aid societies that helped blacks escape from being dependent on whites for their own improvement. Allen organized many conferences and conventions, always with the goal of improving the social, political, and economic status of blacks. Allen was also the author of an autobiography, a hymnal, and many antislavery and antiracism sermons and pamphlets.

Allen's reputation as a national figure in the black community was well established by 1830 when he was given the honor of presiding over the first Free People of Color Congress in Philadelphia. At that gathering, black delegates from six states formed what came to be known as the National Negro Convention Movement. Yearly conventions were held in different cities until the Civil War (1861-65). The conventions organized boycotts of slave-produced goods, developed strategies for ending segregated travel on public coaches and steamboats, and worked to improve educational opportunities for blacks.

Richard Allen's death in 1831 was marked by a funeral that was well attended by many black and white admirers. By then, Allen's A.M.E. Church had grown into an international organization with members in Canada, West Africa, and Haiti. The A.M.E. Church continued to be a very important black institution throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, playing an especially significant role in establishing black schools and colleges. In 1997, membership in the A.M.E. Church, founded by Richard

Allen in 1794, was estimated at 2.5 million people, attending some eight thousand churches in twenty-nine countries.

Late in life, Richard Allen related pieces of his life story to his son, John Allen, who wrote them down and collected them. A year after Richard Allen's death in 1831, his autobiography was published in Philadelphia entitled, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen*.

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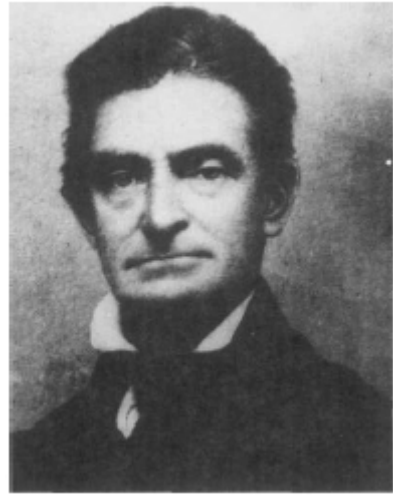
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# John Brown Biography

Born May 9, 1800  
Torrington, Connecticut  
Died December 2, 1859  
Charlestown, Virginia

Abolitionist, Underground  
Railroad conductor,  
revolutionary



In October 1859, John Brown, a white abolitionist (someone who fights against the institution of slavery), led a raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in what many historians refer to as the "first shots" of the American Civil War (1861-65). To most abolitionists, Brown became a great martyr, an almost saint-like figure who gave his life in a holy crusade to end slavery. In the South, Brown was despised. His violent raids and plans of a large-scale revolt—and rumors of more trouble to come—threatened the security of the South and inspired war preparations as far away as Georgia.

## Born into the cause

John Brown's parents, Owen and Ruth Brown, opposed slavery. They were hardworking, sober, religious people who were happy when their home state of Connecticut abolished slavery by law in 1784. In Connecticut, Owen Brown was known as an outspoken opponent of slavery, and when he moved his family to Ohio in 1805, he put his views into practice. After the family became settled, the Browns used their home to illegally shelter runaway

The most radical of abolitionists, Brown believed that slavery in the United States amounted to one part of society—the slaveholders—waging war on another part of society—the slaves. In that context, Brown advocated the use of violence in obtaining or defending the freedom of slaves, ex slaves, and free blacks.

slaves as they made their way further north or into Canada using a secret network of safe houses known as the Underground Railroad.

John Brown was just five when his family made the long trip west, taking with them their furniture and equipment on wagons drawn by teams of oxen, as well as their livestock, horses, and cows. The Brown family settled in Hudson, Ohio, a small village carved out of the wilderness about twenty-five miles south of Cleveland. The Browns suffered through a hard winter in a drafty log cabin only to have their spring plantings ravaged by wild animals and a late frost. They lived on wild game and borrowed food from their neighbors.

Owen Brown eventually earned some money at tanning leather and making shoes and harnesses. John learned how to make shoes, hunt, trap, and cure the skins of rabbits, squirrels, and deer, and the hides of cattle and sheep. Owen Brown was also a farmer and John helped on the farm as well. By the age of ten, John was tall and thin but could carry the workload of a grown man.

## **Frontier life**

John Brown's mother died when he was eight years old, the first of many losses he would endure throughout his lifetime. Brown had learned how to read from his mother, and at the age of ten had access to a neighbor's library. Brown had very little formal schooling but he read a great deal and preferred to work on the farm with his father. At the age of twelve, Brown often was responsible for driving a herd of cattle over one hundred miles to the quartermaster depot by himself. His interactions with the federal army led him to a great dislike for military affairs. When he came of age for military duty, Brown paid fines rather than train or drill for service.

When Brown was sixteen, he tried to enter the ministry. He traveled to Massachusetts to secure the necessary education but an eye inflammation forced him to return to Hudson and work in his father's tanning business. He soon became the foreman of the shop and in his spare time taught himself arithmetic and land surveying.

At age twenty, Brown set up his own tannery and began to deal in sheep and cattle as well. He also married Dianthe Lusk and began a family.

## **The Brown family struggles**

In 1826 Brown moved his wife and three children to northwest Pennsylvania. He built a large house and a barn with a secret room to hide fugitive slaves, as his father had done. Brown became a leader in the small community of Randolph. He helped start both a school and a post office, where he was the postmaster from 1828 to 1835.

In 1831, however, troubles for the Brown family began. One of his sons died and Brown was sick with fever and unable to work. In 1832, Brown's wife died after giving birth to their seventh child, who also died a few hours later. A year later Brown married seventeen-year-old Mary Ann Day, and in the years to follow they added seven sons and six daughters to their family (only six would live to adulthood).

In 1835, John Brown, ill and without money, moved his family back to Ohio, to Franklin Mills, a village near Hudson. With borrowed funds, he organized a cattle company and began to speculate in land. Unfortunately, the country's economy was suffering and in 1842, Brown was forced to file bankruptcy. The family moved from one home to another as Brown took different jobs to keep them financially afloat. In Hudson, Brown tried breeding racehorses. In Richfield, Ohio, he bred cattle and sheep. He twice drove herds of cattle to be sold in the East. To make matters worse, in the middle of the family's worst financial hardships, in 1843, three of the Brown children died in an epidemic of dysentery (an infection of the lower intestine). And in the same year, another Brown child died from scalding in a kitchen accident.



## **A turning point**

In 1844 John Brown started his last major business venture as a partner in the wool business. He moved his family to Springfield, Massachusetts, where they worked at the company's warehouse. Throughout Brown's travels, and especially during his stay in the New England area, he constantly sought the company of other abolitionists, especially the black leaders of the movement. In 1847, Brown met Frederick Douglass (1817-95; publisher of the abolitionist newspaper, the *North Star*) and invited him for a meal at his house. Brown had read Douglass's newspaper and trusted him enough to reveal for the first time to anyone his plan to attack Harpers Ferry and incite a general slave rebellion.

John Brown could also count among his friends two black women who were very influential in the abolition of slavery: Harriet Tubman (c. 1820-1913), an ex-slave and Underground Railroad conductor; and Sojourner Truth (c. 1797-1883), speaker and organizer for the abolition movement, also an ex-slave. Tubman declared her support for Brown's plans but was too sick at the time to directly participate.

In 1848 Brown bought 244 acres of land at North Elba, New York, from Gerrit Smith (1797-1874), a wealthy white abolitionist landowner. Smith had set aside 120,000 acres of land in northeastern New York as a colony for exslaves and free blacks to live and farm. Brown—farmer, stockman, surveyor—offered to help Smith in his project in exchange for a good price on the land.

## **Call to action**

In 1850 Congress enacted regulations that further strengthened the Fugitive Slave Laws of 1787 and 1793. The new law required federal marshals to arrest—or face a \$1,000 fine—any black person who was accused of being a runaway slave. If individuals were accused, they were given no right to a jury trial and they could not give testimony in their own defense. Anyone caught helping a fugitive slave was subject to six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

The abolitionists were furious. The fugitive slave laws directly threatened the freedom of approximately fifty thousand runaway slaves in the North. Thousands of blacks immediately fled across the border to Canada. As slave catchers came North to find runaways, white and black abolitionists defended many fugitives from capture and even rescued a few already in the custody of federal marshals.

Brown urged his black friends in both North Elba and Springfield to resist the new law with violence if necessary. In Springfield, Brown organized the League of Gileadites, a small group of radical whites, free blacks, and runaway slaves who pledged to fight to defend themselves and other blacks.

## **Bloody Kansas**

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 organized Kansas and Nebraska as territories and left the question of slavery to be decided by the settlers when they applied for statehood. The act, in effect, erased the thirty-four-year-old prohibition of slavery above the Mason-Dixon line as established in the Missouri Compromise of 1820. Once again the abolitionists were fighting mad.

In 1855 Brown quit his partnership in the wool business to devote his time and energy to fighting slavery. In June he moved his family for the last time, to the land at North Elba, where he had been living and working off and on since 1849. In the fall of 1855, at the age of fifty-five, Brown moved to Kansas in order to help establish the territory as free soil.

He joined five of his sons who had settled there in the spring. Brown and his followers fought many armed and bloody battles in Kansas and Missouri for antislavery principles. For example, in May of 1856, Brown and his group killed five proslavery settlers in revenge for the destruction of Lawrence, Kansas, a free-state town. The massacre proved to be a turning point in the struggle for Kansas

Brown left Kansas shortly after proslavery forces were defeated in elections in August 1858. Kansas was now a free state but Brown

had paid a heavy personal price. One of his sons was killed and two had been captured by the enemy. Brown's heart was heavy but he became even more determined to wage his personal war against slavery, believing that he was wielding the "sword of the spirit."

## **Showdown at Harpers Ferry**

Before leaving Kansas for good, Brown made one more daring raid. In December 1858, Brown and ten recruits ventured into Missouri and by force of arms liberated eleven slaves. A slaveholder was shot and killed in the process. Brown then personally led the slaves on an 82-day, 1,100-mile journey to Canada and freedom.

Brown's most famous act was his leadership in the October 16, 1859, raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Brown had planned the raid for years, collecting funds from supporters, recruiting and training fighters, and stockpiling arms and ammunition. The plan was put into action in April 1859. Members of Brown's raiding party secured a farmhouse about six miles from Harpers Ferry, where they secretly shipped firearms and ammunition. Brown arrived in July, and his son Oliver and his wife Mary soon joined the group to give the farm a peaceful look.

With all his men in place, including three of his sons, Brown ordered the strike to begin on Sunday, October 16. They marched to the armory under cover of night, cut the telegraph wires, captured the Potomac bridge, took about fifty hostages, and then holed up in the armory. By evening of the next day, about four hundred Virginia militiamen had engaged the rebels in battle and forced Brown and his men to retreat into the engine house. Of the original twentyone, only four men remained unwounded. Two of his sons were killed in battle.

## **Final days**

The next morning a company of U.S. Marines, commanded by General Robert E. Lee (1807-70), surrounded the engine house. Brown refused to surrender. The Marines stormed the building and in three minutes the battle was over. During the scuffle, one Marine struck Brown in the face with a saber and another ran a

bayonet through his body. One of Brown's men was shot and two Marines were wounded.

According to an account in Eve Marie Iger's *John Brown: His Soul Goes Marching On*, as Brown lay wounded in jail awaiting his trial on charges of treason and murder, he was interviewed by two congressmen and a senator. "Why did you do it?" they asked. "To free the slaves," Brown answered. The governor of Virginia also visited Brown and had this to say about him: "They are mistaken who take [John Brown] to be a madman. He is a bundle of the best nerves I ever saw, cut & thrust & bleeding, and in bonds."

Brown was carried to his trial on a stretcher, but managed to stand and tell the court, "Gentlemen, it is no use whatever to hold the mockery of a trial over me. Take me out and hang me at once!" On November 2 the jury found Brown guilty as charged and set his hanging date for one

### Tributes to John Brown

John Brown's personal sacrifices and his display of character and dignity as he faced death led some of his countrymen to publicly declare their admiration. The following are taken from Lorenz Graham's *John Brown: A Cry for Freedom*:

- "His zeal in the cause of my race was far greater than mine," commented Frederick Douglass. "I could live for the slave but he could die for him."
- Essayist and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82) said that John Brown's execution "made the gallows glorious like the cross."
- According to Unitarian minister and orator Reverend Theodore Parker (1810-60), for Brown "The road to heaven is as short from the gallows as from a throne."
- In the words of writer Henry David Thoreau (1817-62), "John Brown was such a man as it takes ages to make, and ages to understand."



**A wounded John Brown awaits trial on charges of treason and murder.**

month later.

On the morning he was to be hung, Brown wrote a message to his countrymen and passed it on to a guard at the jail: "I, John Brown am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with Blood." Seventeen months later the Civil War began, resulting in great bloodshed and the loss of 600,000 American lives—all over the question of slavery.

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# Joseph Cinque

Born c. 1810  
Present-day Sierra Leone  
Died c. 1880  
Sierra Leone

Slave, revolt leader



**C**inque, sometimes referred to as Joseph Cinque (pronounced sink-AY), led a slave revolt in 1838 aboard the ship *Amistad*, which was carrying captured Africans. Tried for his part in the mutiny, Cinque was defended by former U.S. president John Quincy Adams (1767-1848). Adams won the case before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1841, and Cinque and the other mutineers were freed and returned to Africa.

The details of Cinque's early life in Africa are uncertain, and the facts of his death are likewise clouded in mystery. But in the years between his capture and his return to Africa in 1842, Cinque became a celebrated figure among both African American slaves and abolitionists (people who wanted slavery to be abolished). Since then, Cinque has remained a powerful symbol of the eternal desire for freedom. In 1997 the movie *Amistad* told the story of the revolt and the subsequent trial.

## Sold into slavery

Leader of the first and only successful mutiny in the history of the American slave trade.

Historians know little about Cinque's early life. He was born in the 1810s in what is now the African country of Sierra Leone. His name, in the Mende language of his tribe, was actually Sengbe Pieh (pronounced sing-BAY pea-AH). At the time of his capture by slave traders, he was in his twenties and had a wife and three children.

Unfortunately, Cinque lived in a part of Africa with an active slave trade. He was captured by members of an enemy tribe and sold to Spanish slave traders who owned a so-called "slave-factory" (a holding facility for captives awaiting shipment to the New World) on the island of Lomboko. They in turn sold him to a Portuguese slaver on his way to Cuba.

## Human cargo

The voyage from Africa to the Americas was called the Middle Passage because it was the middle stretch of the slave trading triangle that connected Europe to Africa, Africa to the Americas, and the Americas back to Europe. In pursuit of higher profits, slave traders overloaded their ships with slaves, packing in as many Africans as possible for the two-month voyage.

Thrown in with the human cargo aboard the Portuguese slave ship *Técora*, Cinque was subjected to extraordinarily cruel treatment. The slaves were crowded into the cargo hold and chained to one another and to the sides of the ship. Spoiled food, stagnant water, diseases such as smallpox and dysentery, and dark, damp, and dirty quarters typically killed up to twenty-five percent of the slaves on the Middle Passage voyage. The fact that Cinque survived is a tribute to his strength, both physically and mentally.

In the Spanish colony of Cuba, the importation of slaves was illegal, but slavery itself was not. Therefore the slavers gave their captives Spanish names to make it look as though they had been born in Cuba. Sengbe became José, or Joseph, Cinque. Cinque and forty-eight other adult males were sold to a Cuban planter named Ruiz. Sailing from the Cuban capital of Havana, Ruiz and his partner, Pedro Montes, planned to take the adults, along with three little girls and a boy, to a plantation a short distance away. The

name of their ship was *Amistad*, which means "friendship" in Spanish.

## Mutiny

Conditions on board the *Amistad* were no better physically than on the *Técora*, and psychologically they were even worse. A cook used sign language to tell the slaves that when they got to their destination, the Spaniards would slaughter them and eat them. The Africans, who had no way of knowing otherwise, believed him, and the cook's cruel joke ultimately triggered the famous *Amistad* mutiny.

Cinque seems to have quickly emerged as the leader of the slaves. He reportedly told the others, "We might as well die in trying to be free as be killed and eaten." Cinque somehow managed to break free of his chains and then freed other slaves from their chains. Their captors had foolishly stored a large number of knives for harvesting sugar cane. These knives now became weapons in the mutineers' hands.

The first person the slaves killed was the cook, who Cinque himself handled with a single blow. They also killed the captain and all but two members of the crew, who managed to escape in a lifeboat. The only ones left were Ruiz and Montes, who themselves became captives when the mutineers placed them in chains.

## Tricked and captured

Although Cinque and his fellow mutineers controlled the *Amistad*, no one but the two Spaniards knew how to sail the ship. If they wanted to get back to Africa, Cinque and the others would have to keep their former captors alive. Knowing that they had sailed west to the New World, which meant sailing away from the rising sun, Cinque ordered Montes to sail toward the sun. But Montes managed to trick the Africans. He sailed east by day but northwest at night. Montes hoped to steer the ship to the southern United States, where slavery was legal, but when the ship finally pulled into a harbor six weeks later, it was on Long Island, New York, where slavery was against the law.



The U.S. Coast Guard captured the *Amistad*. At first Cinque tried to escape by jumping overboard, but he finally allowed himself to be captured. By that point, there were only



Slave revolt leader Cinque (played by Djimon Hounsou, center) is portrayed in the 1997 Steven Spielberg movie *Amistad*. (The Kobal Collection. Reproduced by permission.)

forty-three African men alive on the ship, along with the four children. They were placed in jail.

## Humans or property?

The slaves might have been returned to Cuba had it not been for a group of abolitionists. Among the abolitionists who supported the cause of the *Amistad* prisoners were lawyer Joshua Leavitt and Lewis Tappan, a New York businessman. Like many abolitionists, they were Christians, opposed to slavery on moral grounds.

U.S. president Martin Van Buren (1782-1862), however, was no abolitionist. Ruiz and Montes initiated a court case to secure the return of the slaves to them. They argued that the Africans were their property, and that by revolting, Cinque and the others had in effect "stolen" themselves from their rightful owners. Van Buren was inclined to agree, especially because he wanted to maintain good relations with the Spanish authorities. To fight for Cinque and the others, the abolitionists hired attorney Roger S. Baldwin

(1793-1863), who set out to prove in court that the slaves were not "property" at all, but kidnapped human beings, and therefore Montes and Ruiz were the true criminals.

## **Lower court victory**

The trial began in Hartford, Connecticut, on September 19, 1839. When Cinque testified in court, aided by a Mende language interpreter, he gave a stirring account of his capture and treatment. In a powerful display, he graphically illustrated the way he and the other slaves had been crammed into the ship's hold by sitting on the floor with his hands and feet pulled tightly together.

In a move that surprised the White House, Judge Andrew T. Judson (1784-1853) of the Connecticut district court ruled on January 13, 1840, that the slaves had indeed been kidnapped, and should be returned to their homes in Africa. President Van Buren filed an appeal, which meant that the case would go before the highest court in the land, the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C.

## **Supreme Court decision**

Prospects did not look good for the Africans. A majority of the Supreme Court, five of its nine justices—including Chief Justice Roger Taney (1777-1864)—were slaveholders from the South. By now the Africans' supporters had formed the Amistad Committee, which consisted of both whites and free blacks. The committee hired former U.S. representative and president John Quincy Adams to argue the case on behalf of the Africans.

Although in his seventies and almost deaf, Adams was still a powerful orator (speaker), and the case of the Africans had moved him deeply. Adams argued before the Supreme Court for eight hours over the space of two days. On March 9, 1841, the Supreme Court ruled that the Africans had been kidnapped, and that their mutiny had been an act of self-defense.

### **Amistad Brought to the Big Screen**

In 1978, almost exactly a century after Cinque's death, actress Debbie Allen (1950- ) became inspired by the *Amistad* story. Then a student at Howard University in Washington, D.C., Allen would later receive acclaim as a dancer and the star of the hit TV series *Fame*. In 1984 she purchased the film rights to a 1953 book about Cinque called *Black Mutiny*, but it would be many years before she would achieve her dream of bringing the story to film.

In 1994 Allen "found [her] John Quincy Adams in Steven Spielberg." Allen and Spielberg (1947- ), one of the most successful directors of all time, teamed up to make the movie *Amistad*. The film starred Djimon Hounsou (1964- ), an actor from the West African country of Benin, as Cinque; Academy Award winner Anthony Hopkins (1937- ) as Adams; and many others, including Morgan Freeman (1937- ). A descendant of Cinque in Sierra Leone, Samuel H. Pieh, served as a consultant in the making of the movie.

## **Return to Africa**

By this time Van Buren was no longer president. His stand on the *Amistad* issue, which infuriated northern members of his party, the Democrats, helped lead to his defeat to William Henry Harrison (1773-1841) in the 1840 election. Even with Van Buren out of office, the Amistad Committee had to raise money for the former captives' return trip to Africa. U.S. president John Tyler (1790-1862) refused to fund the voyage. (Tyler became president when Harrison died after only one month in office.)

On November 25, 1841, Cinque and the other former captives set sail for Africa aboard a British vessel, the *Gentleman*. They were now traveling as free human beings, not slaves. When they arrived in Sierra Leone nearly two months later, a British government official welcomed them.

Little is known about Cinque's later years. He returned to his home, but found that many of his family members had been killed in tribal fighting. In subsequent years, African American missionaries set up a mission in Sierra Leone. One day in 1879, an old man who said he was Cinque arrived at the missionary's compound. He said he was dying and asked to be buried on the grounds of the mission. He died soon afterward, and was buried at the American Missionary Association compound.

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# Levi Coffin

**Born October 28, 1798**  
**New Garden, North Carolina**  
**Died September 16, 1877**  
**Cincinnati, Ohio**

**Teacher, merchant, abolitionist,  
reformer,  
relief worker, author**

**Abolitionist who personally assisted thousands of runaway slaves on their flight to freedom.**

**L**evi Coffin was born and raised in the southern United States at a time when slavery was legal and widespread. However, the Coffin family had been practicing Quakers (religious body formally known as the Religious Society of Friends) for generations, and long opposed to slavery. Like many other people who wanted to see slavery abolished, the Coffins moved north in the 1820s, at first to Indiana and then to Ohio—where slavery was illegal. Levi Coffin quickly established profitable businesses, which allowed him to engage, at his own expense, in many antislavery activities. This included turning his home into a "station" for fugitive slaves fleeing north on the Underground Railroad. Over the years Coffin assisted an estimated three thousand fugitive slaves.

Much of what historians know about Levi Coffin and his work comes from Coffin's 1876 autobiography, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin*. The book immediately became popular and today remains one of the most reliable sources for information about the

Underground Railroad and its role in the abolition of slavery in the United States.

## **Young abolitionist**

Levi Coffin was born the sixth of seven children, and the only son of Levi Coffin, a schoolteacher and farmer, and Prudence (Williams) Coffin. As the only male child on a farm, Coffin had little time for formal schooling while growing up. His father tutored him and his sisters when there wasn't outdoor work to be done. He sometimes attended classes at a school where his father taught during the winter months. Levi Coffin was raised a farmer until he was twenty-one. He then enrolled in school to obtain a formal education.

Coffin's parents, and his grandparents, were members of the Society of Friends (Quakers). They were farmers but did not own slaves because they were morally opposed to slavery. In his autobiography, Coffin claims he was converted to abolitionism (the movement to end slavery) at the age of seven. One day, while chopping wood by the roadside with his father, a gang of slaves passed by, handcuffed and chained together, driven by a man on horseback with a long whip. Coffin's curiosity and sympathy were deeply aroused. When Coffin was fifteen he had his first chance to act on those feelings and took it. He helped free a black man who had been kidnapped into slavery. Coffin then made it his business to aid fugitive slaves who used to conceal themselves in the woods and thickets around his home of New Garden, North Carolina.

## **Teacher and merchant**

In the summer of 1821 Coffin and his cousin, Vestal Coffin, obtained permission from some of the area's slaveholders to open a Sunday school, where slaves would be taught how to read the Bible. Other slaveholders in the area became upset. It was against the law in the South to teach slaves how to read. They threatened to enforce the law against the Coffins and those who allowed their slaves to attend the school. The school was closed down after only a couple of months.

In 1822 Coffin and his young Quaker friends started another school (not for slaves). Coffin taught there for three years. During that time Coffin helped to organize a manumission society (an organization dedicated to gaining freedom for slaves). In 1824, on his twenty-sixth birthday, Coffin married fellow Quaker



**A group of escaped slaves at a stop along the Underground Railroad in Virginia.** (*Library of Congress*)

and antislavery worker Catherine White. They had at least four children, although the exact number is unclear.

Slave laws in the South became more harsh every year and many southern Quaker families decided to move to the North rather than live where slavery was tolerated. In 1825 Coffin's parents and siblings moved to Indiana. One year later, Coffin, his wife, and their one-year-old son, Elias, joined them. The Coffin family settled in the small village of Newport, in Wayne County. There Coffin opened a small store, which soon grew into a large retail business offering a wide assortment of goods. Coffin also became director of a bank, and in 1836 built a mill to manufacture linseed oil.

# Underground Railroad conductor

In the winter of 1826-27, the Coffins' Newport house became an active "station" on the Underground Railroad, which was a network of abolitionists who helped fugitive slaves escape to freedom in Canada. It was against the law to aid runaway slaves but Coffin never hid the fact that fugitives were welcome at his house.

Coffin was a prosperous merchant who chose to use the profits from his ever-growing retail business to provide fugitives with food, clothing, and temporary housing. For the Coffins—who aided an average of 100 fugitive slaves a year for over twenty years while in Indiana—that was no small expense. Among abolitionists in the region, Coffin's leadership and long-time service earned him the informal title of "President of the Underground Railroad."

Coffin was also active on other antislavery fronts. In 1838 he helped to found the Indiana State Anti-Slavery Society. In 1842 differences over antislavery strategies led to a split among the Quakers. Not all Quakers approved of helping runaway slaves so Coffin and others left the Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends to found their own Yearly Meeting of Anti-Slavery Friends.

## The Underground Railroad

The network of people, black and white, who guided runaway slaves to freedom and who sheltered them along the way came to be known as the Underground Railroad. The system began to take shape as early as the 1780s when Quakers in a number of towns in Pennsylvania and New Jersey began assisting slaves in their escape to freedom. By 1819 towns in Ohio and North Carolina were acting as way-stations and shelters for fugitive slaves. Long before the militant era of abolitionism began in 1831, the Underground Railroad was an established antislavery institution. Historians estimate that in the fifty years before the Civil War (1861-65), at least 3,200 "conductors" helped about 75,000 slaves escape to freedom.

The term "Underground Railroad" was probably invented after 1831, about the time that steam railroads became popular. Some of the Underground Railroad's "lines" shared names with the nineteenth-century railroads that ran the same routes. In the early days, the railroad to freedom for fugitive slaves (mostly men) was a route traveled on foot, mostly at night, through swamps, up creek beds, across rivers, and over hills, using only the North Star as a guide.

As the traffic got heavier and more women and children slaves fled the South, escorts were provided and vehicles such as covered wagons and carriages were used to transport the human cargo from one station to the next. During the day, the fugitive slaves were hidden in barns and attics, where they would rest, eat, and prepare for the next stretch of their journey. The activities of the Underground Railroad were illegal and people risked fines, jail, and sometimes death for participating.



## **Reformer**

By the mid-1840s Coffin had become a leader in the movement to boycott products made from slave labor and to support free labor in the South. With help from the Philadelphia Free Labor Association, Coffin sold free-labor goods, such as cotton, grown without slave labor by independent southern farmers and processed by a Quaker family in Mississippi. The demand for such goods was so high that Coffin was unable to supply all of his customers. In 1847, with encouragement from a Quaker organization, Coffin moved his family to Cincinnati, Ohio, to open a business center that sold only goods made without the use of slave labor. Coffin sold the store after a decade.

The Coffins continued their work with the Underground Railroad in Cincinnati. Coffin established a network similar to the one he had organized in Newport and his house quickly became a temporary refuge for fugitive slaves on their way further north. The Coffin home also became the meeting place for the Anti-Slavery Sewing Society, which provided essential clothing for the runaway slaves coming through the city.

## **Relief worker**

In addition to his antislavery work, Coffin was active in the temperance movement (the crusade to abolish the use of alcoholic beverages) and in efforts to improve the conditions of free blacks and former slaves. In 1844 Coffin made the first of several trips to Canadian settlements of former slaves. He found their living conditions better than had been reported but determined that there was still a great need for clothing and other essential items for new arrivals. After returning home Coffin raised money and collected clothing for the refugees.

The 1850s brought an increase in Coffin's Underground Railroad work. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 made it easier for slave catchers to pursue and apprehend runaways in the North, causing thousands of fugitives to flee northern cities like Cincinnati and head even further north into Canada, where slavery was illegal. Coffin was so well known for his fugitive slave relief work that he was said to have inspired the character of Simon

Halliday in Harriet Beecher Stowe's popular 1852 antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

## **The Civil War years and beyond**

During the Civil War (1861-65), which he viewed as divine punishment for slavery, Coffin gave no direct aid to the North's (the Union) military effort. Instead he provided supplies only to those forces prepared to defend Cincinnati from attack by Confederate forces. Coffin's war efforts were entirely nonviolent. He cared for the wounded and visited former slaves behind Union lines, making trips home to collect money for warm clothing and bedding for the refugees.

In 1863 Coffin organized the Western Freedman's Aid Commission to assist the thousands of former slaves who were now on their own due to their liberation by Union armies. Coffin toured northern cities to raise money and then made many trips down the Mississippi to distribute supplies and money to the freedpeople. In 1864 Coffin traveled to England to raise money for the freedpeople. There he helped organize the London Freedman's Aid Society, an organization that raised over \$100,000 within a single year. In 1867 Coffin attended the International Anti-Slavery Conference in Paris, France, as a delegate from the Western Freedman's Aid Commission.

Coffin unofficially began his retirement in 1867, but waited until the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, which gave black males the right to vote, to officially close down his Underground Railroad activities. During his retirement, Coffin wrote his autobiography, which was published in Cincinnati in 1876, a year before his death.

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# Ellen Craft

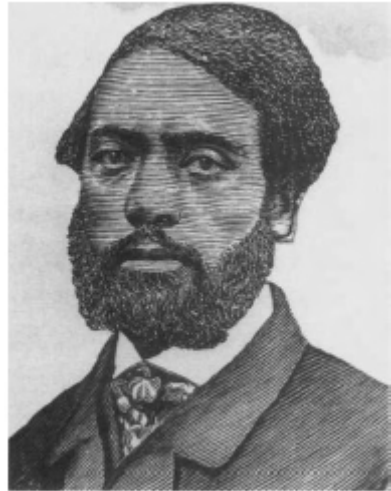
Ellen Craft

Born c. 1826  
Clinton, Georgia  
Died 1897  
Charleston, South Carolina

William Craft

Born 1824  
Macon, Georgia  
Died January 28, 1900  
Charleston, South Carolina

Slaves, freedpeople, abolitionists,  
teachers



The story of the Crafts' 1848 escape from slavery illustrates the great lengths slaves were willing to go in order to be free. Escaping slavery was never easy, but the odds against the Crafts were especially steep because they lived in the state of Georgia—a thousand miles away from the nearest free soil. Their journey to freedom did not end, however, until they were many thousands of miles away, in England, where slavery was illegal. After the Civil War (1861-65), their homesickness for the land where they grew up led them back to Georgia and farming.

## Ellen's childhood

Ellen Craft was born in 1826 on a cotton plantation in Clinton, Georgia. Ellen's mother was a house slave of African descent named Maria. Her father was Major James Smith, the white owner of the plantation. Ellen resembled her father more, and to all

Through their daring escape from slavery in the Deep South, followed by their activities in England, and again in the South, the Crafts greatly contributed to the abolition of slavery in the United States and the elevation of freedpeople in society.

appearances was white. Black or white, being born to a slave mother made Ellen a slave according to the law.

Growing up, Ellen felt like she could do nothing right in the eyes of her mistress, the wife of Major Smith. She tried to be helpful with the household work—dusting, polishing, sewing, and setting the table—but her mistress was always scolding her, often slapping or hitting her. What Ellen didn't realize was that her mistress saw her as a constant reminder that her husband had fathered a child with a slave woman. Ellen complained to her mother how unhappy she was but Maria could do nothing more than remind her child that at least she was not a field slave and that the two of them were together.

In 1837, when Ellen was eleven years old, she was given as a wedding present to her half-sister Eliza when Eliza married Dr. Robert Collins, of Macon, Georgia. Although Ellen was very sad to leave her mother, and angry that she could be given away as a present, she was glad to leave the abuse of her jealous mistress. Ellen's new masters were very kind to her. They were also very wealthy and Ellen grew up in a beautiful mansion as her mistress's personal maid and seamstress.

## **William's childhood**

William Craft was born in 1824 on a cotton plantation in Macon, Georgia. Both of his parents were slaves as were his two brothers and two sisters. William had to endure a number of painful separations from his family as he was growing up. When his master, Mr. Craft, decided that William's parents were too old to be of any use to him he sold them at different times to different owners. When Mr. Craft found himself in need of money he sold one of William's brothers and one of his sisters, again to different owners.

Another way for a slave owner to make income from their slaves besides selling them was to have them trained in a trade and then to collect their wages. William was apprenticed to a cabinetmaker and his brother to a blacksmith. When Mr. Craft needed money to start growing cotton, however, he sold William's brother even

though his apprenticeship was not over. And when Mr. Craft couldn't repay a loan, William and his sister became the property of the bank, which sold them separately on the auction block. William watched the last member of his family taken away in a wagon, helpless to do anything about it.

## **Husband and wife**

William was bought by Mr. Ira Taylor, an employee of Ellen's master, Dr. Collins. Taylor allowed William to return to his work as a cabinetmaker. Some years later, William and Ellen met and fell in love. Both hesitated to get married as they feared it would then be more painful if they were ever separated by sale. But in 1846 they asked for, and received, permission from their masters to live together as husband and wife (slaves were not allowed by law to have a religious or civil wedding ceremony).

Ellen and William Craft's lives as slaves were not as bad as most of the three million slaves in the southern United States at the time, yet they dreamed of being free—of having no master to claim their time or wages. They knew from their earliest experiences that the practices of slavery could be very cruel. Masters were free to do virtually anything they wanted with their slaves: work them in the fields or house, starve them, punish them, have them sold—even kill them. Although neither Ellen nor William was ever a field slave or severely punished by their masters, they experienced other horrible realities of slavery, the kind that do not necessarily leave physical scars but that can be as painful and long-lasting as any beating.

## **The plan for escape**

William and Ellen had heard many stories about slaves who tried to escape to the North. Chased by bloodhounds and men on horseback, many runaways were caught and returned to their owners, who punished them severely as examples to others. Finally, in December 1848 William came up with an idea: the two would travel north together on public transportation—Ellen disguised as "Mr. Johnson," a white Southern gentleman accompanied by William, "his" slave.

For four days William and Ellen prepared for their journey. William secretly bought Ellen a shirt, a coat, and a hat. Ellen sewed her own trousers. When it was time to go, William cut Ellen's hair. In addition to wearing men's clothes, Ellen added props to make it look as if she were ill. She put her arm in a sling so that she would not be forced to write or sign anything (neither of them could read or write). To cover her whiskerless face Ellen also tied a bandage about her head, pretending to have a bad toothache. And for a final touch, Ellen wore green-tinted eyeglasses to hide her eyes.

Over the years William had been able to sometimes earn extra money that he did not have to pay his master. This money now came in handy as the couple would need it to buy tickets for their train and boat rides north, and food and lodging along the way. The first test of Ellen's disguise was at the train station in Macon where she stepped up to the window just as the train was about to leave and bought two tickets, one for herself ("Mr. Johnson") and one for Mr. Johnson's "slave" William.

## The journey

Ellen and William traveled by train to Savannah, Georgia, where they boarded a steamer to Charleston, South Carolina. After an overnight stay in the city they were taken by boat to Wilmington, North Carolina; then by train to Richmond, Virginia; then by another steamer to Baltimore, Maryland; and finally by a train to the free soil of



Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**Ellen Craft disguised as a man; a trick that helped her and husband William escape to the North.**  
*(The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.)*

Ellen's disguise was tested again and again by ticket-sellers, hotel clerks, customs officials, and by her daily interactions with other travelers. As the train was leaving the station from Macon, Ellen noticed a man frantically running alongside the train, peering into the windows. The man was William's master, who had become suspicious and was looking for his slave. He did not find him: William was already in the windowless baggage car with the other slaves, and Ellen sat in disguise in the carriage for whites. But who should sit next to Ellen but Mr. Cray, a man who was a friend of her master's and who had known her for years. Ellen was so afraid that if she spoke her voice would give her away, so when Mr. Cray greeted her she pretended not to hear him. Mr. Cray soon assumed that "Mr. Johnson" was deaf and gave up trying to hold a conversation.

The greatest crisis of their trip occurred in Baltimore, their last stop in the slaveholding South. A Maryland customs officer demanded that "Mr. Johnson" produce papers proving that he owned William, otherwise they would be detained and questioned further. To the Crafts' surprise, a young military officer who befriended "Mr. Johnson" on the trip stepped forward and vouched for the couple, claiming he had known "Mr. Johnson" all of his life!

## Almost free

On Christmas Day 1848, only eight days after William first devised their plan, the Crafts arrived in Philadelphia. The couple immediately went to a boarding house run by an abolitionist (a person who wanted to end slavery), an address William was given by a free black person on the trip. After a few weeks the Crafts

### Henry "Box" Brown

Henry Brown, like William and Ellen Craft, gained fame through an extraordinary escape to freedom. In 1848, when Brown was thirty-two years old, his master sold his wife and three children away from him so he decided to make a daring and dangerous escape to the North. He had a carpenter make a wooden box, two feet by two-and-a-half feet by three feet. With the help of a white friend, a shoemaker, the crate was marked "right side up with care," labeled with an address in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and shipped on March 29, 1849—with Henry Brown inside.

Brown took a container of water with him and had three small holes for air. He thought he would die at one point when the crate was loaded wrong and he had to travel upside down. The trip ended twenty-seven hours later when the box was retrieved and opened by four abolitionists (someone who fights against the institution of slavery) in Philadelphia.

Henry Brown moved to Boston where he joined the abolition movement and became known as Henry "Box" Brown for his escape.



went on to Boston, where with the help of prominent abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79) and the Rev. Theodore Parker (1810-60), William found work as a cabinetmaker and Ellen as a seamstress.

During their two-year stay in Boston, the Crafts spoke frequently at antislavery meetings about their years in slavery and their escape. When an article about one of their Boston appearances ran in a Macon, Georgia, newspaper, Dr. Collins and Mr. Taylor learned of the whereabouts of their missing slaves. In September 1850, after Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act making it easier for fugitive slaves to be captured in the North, a slave catcher was sent to Boston armed with arrest warrants for William and Ellen.

## **Exile in England**

Reverend Parker and other abolitionists provided protection for the Crafts and thwarted the attempts by the slave catchers to seize the two. The Crafts no longer felt safe in Boston, however, and left for Maine, then went on to Nova Scotia, Canada, where they boarded a steamer to Liverpool, England. Before they left for England, William and Ellen had Reverend Parker marry them.

The Crafts remained in exile in England for nineteen years, returning to the United States only after the Civil War (1861-65) and the abolition of slavery. During that time the Crafts made friends with many leaders of the English abolition movement. Although slavery was made illegal in the British Empire in 1833, abolitionists continued to fight against slavery elsewhere in the world, including the United States. In England the Crafts studied writing, grammar, and scriptures at a trade school where they eventually became teachers. Ellen taught needleworking and William taught cabinetmaking.

The Crafts went on a speaking tour of England sponsored by abolitionists. They told of the cruelties of slavery in the United States and how they managed to escape but were still hunted down in the North. In 1860 the Crafts published *Running a Thousand Miles to Freedom*, an account of their dramatic escape to freedom.

## Home again

Ellen and William Craft had five children while they were in England. When the couple decided to move back to the United States in 1869 two of their children stayed behind to finish their education. After a brief visit to Boston the family moved south to "Hickory Hill," a plantation in South Carolina near the Georgia border. There they opened an industrial school for blacks. Ellen taught day classes and her daughter taught at night. After the school was burned down in 1870 by the Ku Klux Klan (a society formed in the South after the Civil War by white individuals who used terrorist tactics to guarantee white supremacy), the couple established the Woodville Cooperative Farm School in a nearby county. William was often away raising funds for the project while Ellen taught classes and managed the seventy-acre plantation of rice, cotton, and peas.

Mounting debts and angry white neighbors forced the school to close in the 1880s. The Crafts then moved to be with their daughter in Charleston, South Carolina, where Ellen died in 1897 and William three years later.

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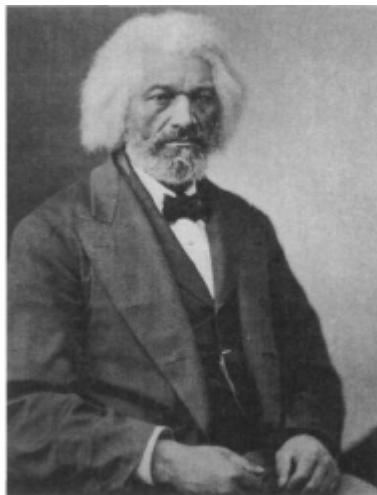
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# Frederick Douglass

Born 1817  
Tuckahoe, Maryland  
Died 1895  
Washington, D.C.

**Chattel slave, fugitive slave,  
freedman, abolitionist,  
orator, Journalist,  
reformer, public servant**



**F**rederick Douglass was born a slave but rose to great heights by the end of his life. After gaining his freedom Douglass devoted his life to abolishing slavery and fighting for equal rights for African Americans as well as women. He was one of the finest writers and speakers of his time and greatly influenced the development of American democracy. Douglass published three book-length autobiographies as well as a weekly newspaper, the *North Star*. His printing office in Rochester, New York, also served as a way station in the Underground Railroad, a secret network that helped runaway slaves escape to freedom in Canada.

## Humble beginnings

Frederick Douglass never knew who his father was, and barely remembered his mother. He did not even know his own birthdate. Soon after Douglass was born in 1817, his mother, a slave named Harriet Bailey, was sent by her master to work on a farm some distance from her child. At the time, it was common for slaveholders to part children from their mothers at a very early age—usually within the first twelve months. The only thing

**The most prominent black American of his day due to his tireless devotion and effective leadership in the causes of abolition of slavery and civil rights for black Americans and women.**

Frederick knew for sure about his father was that he was white. If the rumors that he heard while growing up were true, his father was most likely the same man who owned his mother and who now owned him—Captain Aaron Anthony.

Harriet Bailey named her child Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey. Frederick Bailey later changed his name to Frederick Douglass when he gained his freedom. Douglass lived with his grandparents, Betsey and Isaac Bailey, for his first seven years in a two-story windowless cabin with a clay floor in the little town of Tuckahoe, Maryland. The Baileys were responsible for raising the children of the plantation slaves so that their parents could work in the fields. Douglass only saw his mother a few times because she lived so far away and risked being whipped if she was not back to her plantation on time for work in the morning.

## **Plantation life**

As was customary for slave children, when Douglass reached the age of seven, he was forced to move from his grandparents' house to the plantation, known as the Big House Farm. Too young to labor in the fields, Douglass was kept busy tending the cows and chickens, keeping the barnyard clean, and running errands. The care of his loving grandmother was replaced by the watchful eyes of a household slave named Aunt Katy, whose job was to supervise the slave children.

Aunt Katy and Douglass did not get along well at all. She had a quick temper and often hit Douglass with a stick or kicked him when she was angry. She also used starvation as a punishment, forcing Douglass sometimes to go a whole day without any food. Even when he was fed it was just corn mush (boiled cornmeal) in a large wooden tray set on the ground for the children to fight over like pigs at the trough. Douglass suffered much more from the cold than hunger, he wrote later, as he had no shoes, socks, pants, or jacket—only a coarse cloth shirt that hung to his knees. On the coldest nights he slept, headfirst, in a burlap corn storage bag on a dirt floor.

## City life

When Douglass was seven years old his mother died. A year later, in 1825, Douglass was sent away from Aunt Katy and the Big House Farm to the city of Baltimore, Maryland. His master's relatives, Hugh Auld and his wife Sophia, needed a servant to help look after Tommy, their little son. Douglass was given food, clothing, and a warm bed to sleep in. Miss Sophia, as she was called, treated him with kindness. She read to Tommy and Frederick, taught them the alphabet and how to count to ten. After about two years Mr. Auld found out about the lessons. He told Miss Sophia that it was against the law to educate a slave and he told Frederick that he was forbidden to read. Douglass did just the opposite. He read everything he could get his hands on including newspapers from trash cans—all in secret, of course.

## The last straw

Douglass lived with the Aulds in Baltimore until 1833 when he was ordered back to the plantation by a new master. He was sad to leave the Aulds and his friends—black and white—in the bustling port city. The farm was now owned by Thomas Auld who was both greedy and cruel, working his slaves to near exhaustion and starvation. When the other slaves found out that Douglass knew how to read they begged him to start a Sunday school for black children. One Sunday morning, the lessons were broken up by an angry mob of local white men, including his master, Thomas Auld. A week later, Douglass was sent to the farm of Edward Covey, who was considered the best slave breaker (one who "tamed" slaves into submission by breaking their spirit) in the state.

After six months of abuse, which included being worked seven days a week, starved, and beaten, Douglass ran away briefly from Covey's farm. He knew he would be whipped, perhaps beaten to death, when he returned. The day after Douglass came back Covey attacked him in the barn, only this time Douglass did not turn the other cheek. He fought back, and after two hours Covey gave up. Douglass did not get whipped again in his remaining six months at Covey's farm. It was Covey, not Douglass, who had been broken.

## **Freedom bound**

On January 1, 1834, Douglass was sent by his master, Thomas Auld, to work at the farm of William Freeland. There he was given enough to eat and wear. As he got stronger, Douglass began making plans to escape. His plan included five other slaves but somehow the plan was discovered and they were all arrested and thrown in jail.

Thomas Auld, fed up with his rebellious slave, sent Douglass to Baltimore, back to Hugh and Sophia Auld. Mr. Auld found Douglass a job in the shipyards where he learned to be a skilled caulker (applying waterproof material to the seams of ships). On Saturdays Douglass would hand over his week's wages to Mr. Auld, sometimes as much as six dollars. Mr. Auld sometimes gave Douglass a portion of his wages back as an allowance—usually about six cents.

Douglass was very unhappy that he had to work all week and then turn over his wages to his master. He was also unhappy that he was not free to live with the woman he loved and wanted to marry, a free black woman named Anna Murray. On September 3, 1838, instead of going to work, Douglass went to the house of a friend, a free black sailor who agreed to help him escape. With his friend's papers that said he was a free man, and his friend's clothes that made him look like a sailor on shore leave, Douglass boarded a train heading north. When the train reached New York City, Douglass got off and for the first time set foot on free ground.

## **A new life**

The first thing Douglass did as a free man was to write to Anna Murray and ask her to join him. Douglass then wandered the streets of New York City for three days and nights, penniless, hungry, and tired. On the fourth day, he was taken in by Mr. Ruggles, an abolitionist and conductor on the Underground Railroad. Douglass stayed in New York just long enough for Anna to arrive. Mr. Ruggles arranged for a minister to marry them and then sent the two on their way to New Bedford, Massachusetts, where Douglass would be safer from the slave catchers who were sure to be sent looking for him.

In New Bedford, the slave born Frederick Bailey became the fugitive slave named Frederick Douglass. He began a family and in two years' time had a daughter (Rosetta, b. 1839) and a son (Lewis Henry, b. 1840). Douglass worked hard to support his family doing odd jobs for low wages but he took pleasure and pride in keeping what he earned.

## Abolitionist and orator

During their first year in New Bedford the Douglass family joined the Methodist church, where they met other free blacks and Frederick learned more about the antislavery movement. Douglass began to subscribe to *The Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper published and edited by William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79) since 1831. Douglass greatly admired Garrison, a white man who publicly declared that all slaves should be freed immediately and given full rights as U.S. citizens.

On August 11, 1841, Douglass unofficially began a new career as a traveling speaker for the abolitionist cause. Douglass was urged to take the speaker's platform at a Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society convention in Nantucket that night by a man who had heard him speak about slavery in New Bedford's Methodist Church. Douglass was nervous but when he was done the audience of five hundred people stood and cheered. Douglass was hired by the society to travel throughout the northern states and make speeches against slavery. Douglass faced great odds on the



**Frederick Douglass, center, on a "Heroes of Black History" lithograph. (Corbis-Bettmann. Reproduced by permission.)**



lecture circuit. As a black man in the "free" North he had to travel and lodge in segregated quarters from his white companions. He was sometimes mobbed and beaten by anti-abolitionists. Douglass was even accused of being too smart and well-spoken to have ever been a slave.

## **Author and journalist**

In May 1845, Douglass published his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, a small book that told his life story through 1841. The book was a success, so much so that Douglass feared for his safety now that his whereabouts were known to his former master. With his new book in hand, in August 1845, Douglass left for a speaking tour of England, Ireland, and Scotland. He returned to the United States in the spring of 1847 with enough money to buy his freedom and start a newspaper.

In November 1847, Douglass moved his family to Rochester, New York, and on December 3 the first issue of the *North Star* was printed. The articles in the newspaper were mostly about slavery and many of them were written by black writers. There were also articles about other groups of people who needed help such as poor people who were hungry and homeless, children who were forced to work in factories, and women who were fighting for the right to vote. Douglass published the *North Star* until the start of the Civil War (1861-65), and during that time over four hundred runaway slaves found refuge at his printing shop on their way to freedom in Canada.

## **Reformer and public servant**

Douglass was very active in the turbulent 1850s, the decade leading up to the Civil War. He published the *North Star* and reported on the important issues of the day. The Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 were among the issues he spoke about from black America's perspective. He lectured, supported women's suffrage (the right to vote), participated in politics, tried to start an industrial school for black youth, and counseled with other abolitionists, such as the revolutionary John Brown (1800-1859). In fact, in October 1859 when John Brown's

rebellion at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, failed, Douglass left the country for Canada for fear of being accused as an accomplice.

Douglass was back in the United States when the Civil War began. He welcomed it and once the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect on January 1, 1863, and blacks were allowed to enlist in the Union army, Douglass vigorously recruited soldiers for the all-black regiments of Massachusetts. Two of his own sons were the first to enlist. Douglass provided counsel to U.S. president Abraham Lincoln (1809-65) during the war, and during Reconstruction (1865-77) fought for suffrage and civil rights for freed blacks.

The last years of Douglass's life were spent in comfort and honor. He enjoyed three successive government appointments, the last being the U.S. minister to Haiti. In 1884 Douglass married for a second time (his first wife, Anna, died in 1882). When criticized for marrying Helen Pitts because she was white, Douglass replied that his first wife "was the color of my mother, and the second, the color of my father."

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### In His Own Words

The following excerpt is from Frederick Douglass's first book, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845):

*I am filled with unutterable loathing when I contemplate the religious pomp and show, together with the horrible inconsistencies, which everywhere surround me. We have men-stealers for ministers, women-whippers for missionaries, and cradle-plunderers for church members. The man who wields the blood-clotted cowskin during the week fills the pulpit on Sunday, and claims to be a minister of the meek and lowly Jesus. The man who robs me of my earnings at the end of each week meets me as a class leader on Sunday morning, to show me the way of life, and the path of salvation.*

Other books by Douglass include: *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881).

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# Olaudah Equiano

Born c. 1750  
Nigeria, Africa  
Died 1797  
England



African slave, writer,  
abolitionist

Olaudah Equiano (pronounced ek-wee-AHN-o; also called Gustavus Vassa) led a remarkable life. When he was a child living in Nigeria, he was captured by African slave traders. After being sent first to the West Indies and then to a plantation in Virginia, Equiano was bought by British Naval officer Michael Henry Pascal. While serving Pascal, he received many advantages, including an education. He also became a skillful sailor during the Seven Years War (1756-63; a worldwide conflict fought in Europe, North America, and India). After the war, Equiano was traded to Robert King, who was a Quaker (member of the Society of Friends, a Christian group). King provided Equiano with the experience to begin his own trading business, which enabled him to save enough money to buy his freedom. After writing *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789), Equiano became a prominent abolitionist (a person who opposes slavery).

"The closeness of the place and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us."

from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*

## **Kidnapped by slave traders**

Olaudah Equiano was born in Africa around 1750. He was the son of an Ibo chief (the Ibos were an East-Nigerian tribe of Africans). As a child, Equiano experienced the security of a close community. This security was shattered when, at age eleven, he was captured along with his sister by African tribesmen who participated in the slave trade. (Africa had a long history of slavery before European slave traders reached the continent in the fifteenth century.) In his narrative Equiano described this frightening event:

One day, when all our people were gone out to their works as usual, and only I and my dear sister were left to mind the house, two men and a woman got over our walls, and in a moment seized us both; and, without giving us time to cry out, or to make resistance, they stopped our mouths, tied our hands, and ran off with us into the nearest wood, and continued to carry us as far as they could, till night came on, when we reached a small house, where the robbers halted for refreshment, and spent the night.

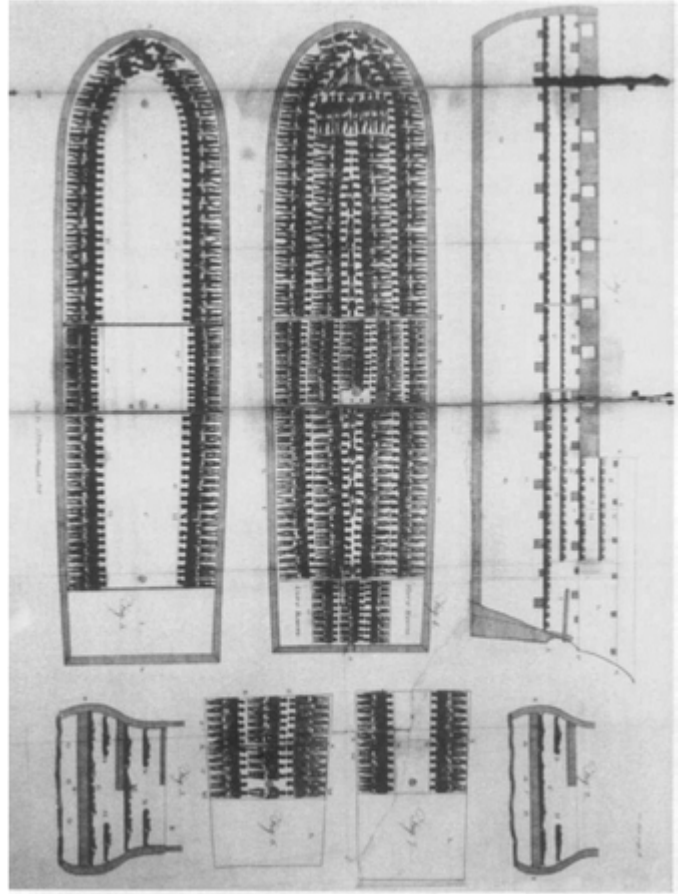
We were then unbound, but were unable to take any food; and, being quite overpowered by fatigue and grief, our only relief was some sleep, which allayed [reduced] our misfortune for a short time. The next morning we left the house, and continued traveling all the day. For a long time we had kept to the woods, but at last we came into a road which I believed I knew. I now had some hopes of being delivered, for we had advanced but a little way before I discovered some people at a distance, on which I began to cry out for their assistance; but my cries had no other effect than to make them tie me faster, and stop my mouth, and then they put me into a large sack. They also stopped my sister's mouth, and tied her hands. And in this manner we proceeded till we were out of the sight of these people....

## Slavery firsthand

Equiano was soon separated from his sister, whom he never saw again. He was traded from village to village, where he worked for a variety of African masters. When he was taken to the coast of West Africa he was purchased by a European trader. He was then chained together with many other captives in the cramped hold of a slave ship. There Equiano witnessed firsthand the brutal treatment of slaves by the white traders:

The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome that it was dangerous to remain there for any time. . . . The closeness of the place and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died. . . .

Equiano was then transported thousands of miles to the Caribbean island of Barbados, where sugar plantations made it the richest British colony of the eighteenth century. When none of the planters in Barbados purchased Equiano, he was taken to the American colony of Virginia and there worked briefly on a tobacco plantation. His job was to pull weeds and collect stones.



**Diagram illustrating the layout of a British slave ship.** (*Library of Congress*)

## The Middle Passage

Sailors referred to the shipboard experience of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean as "the middle passage." During the voyage men were usually chained, while women and children were allowed some freedom of movement on the ship deck. Captains chose one of two methods for transporting slaves: tight packing or loose packing. Tight packing squeezed in as many slaves as possible. Male slaves lay in spaces six feet long, sixteen inches wide, and two and one-half feet high. Female slaves lay in spaces five feet long, fourteen inches wide, and two and one-half feet high. This method prevented the slaves from moving about or even sitting up. Captains who chose this style of storage did not want to waste space. They believed their net receipts were higher from the larger cargo even if many slaves died. Part of the profit derived from less food and a smaller crew.

Other captains chose loose packing. They believed that more room, better food, and a degree of freedom reduced the death rate of slaves. Healthy slaves increased the profit. Some captains insured their stock of slaves against drowning. Because insurance did not cover the loss of slaves who died aboard a ship, some captains dumped dying slaves overboard and claimed they drowned in order to collect insurance benefits.

## Cheated out of his freedom

Only a few weeks after being purchased in Virginia, Equiano was sold again, this time to Michael Henry Pascal, a lieutenant in the British Royal Navy. Pascal renamed Equiano after the sixteenth-century Swedish king Gustavus Vasa (Equiano spelled his own name "Vassa"). During the voyage to England in 1757, Equiano met a thirteen-year-old Virginian named Richard Baker, who taught him to read and write. Equiano subsequently took every opportunity to improve his reading and writing skills and to add to his knowledge. In 1759, while living with some friends of Pascal in London, England, Equiano was baptized (admitted to the Christian faith through anointment with water) at St. Margaret's Church.

During the Seven Years War, Pascal encouraged Equiano to become a skillful sailor. He served on several naval vessels in the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. For instance, he was a steward (one who assists passengers) on board the *Aetna* in 1761. Toward the end of the year he returned to England. Although Equiano said he had no specific promise from the captain

that he would be given his freedom when they landed, he certainly expected it. Instead, the captain forced Equiano onto a barge and later onto a ship sailing for the West Indies.

## Buys his freedom and seeks adventure

Under instruction from Pascal, the captain sold Equiano when the ship reached the island of Montserrat in 1763. His new master was a Quaker merchant, Robert King, who had a reputation as a kind

and charitable man. Equiano was valuable to King because of his skills as a sailor and his ability to read, write, and do arithmetic. Equiano assisted King in shipping sugar and other agricultural goods between the Caribbean, Georgia, and South Carolina. Once he was even forced to transport slaves.

Equiano also did a little trading of his own: he would buy an item in the Indies and resell it for a small profit in North America. Likewise he would make yet another profit by purchasing something in North America and then selling it in the Indies. In this way he eventually earned enough money to buy his freedom. Despite the fact that the Quakers had renounced slavery as part of their religion in 1761, King still required Equiano to pay forty pounds sterling (British silver coins). Equiano became a free man in 1766.

Equiano went to London, where he worked for a short time as a hair dresser, a skill he had learned aboard ship. Unable to make ends meet in London, in 1768 he signed up again as a sailor on a ship going to Turkey. He spent several more years sailing in the Mediterranean and making trips to the West Indies. Equiano soon found, however, that the life of a freed man in the islands could be dangerous. Black people had no protection under the law and might easily be kidnapped and taken away on a ship as a slave.

In the early 1770s he returned to England and worked for a Dr. Irving, whose business was purifying salt water into drinkable water. Equiano acted as Irving's assistant, purifying between twenty-six and forty gallons a day. When a Captain Phipps invited Equiano to accompany him on an expedition to the Arctic (the icy region around the North Pole), Irving asked to join Equiano on the trip. Equiano wrote that in their four-month voyage they explored farther north than any previous navigation team

Upon returning to London, Irving bought a 150-ton sloop (sailing boat) that he planned to sail to Jamaica to establish a plantation there. In 1775 Equiano accompanied him on this venture. After spending several months with the doctor along the coast of Nicaragua and Honduras, Equiano left and returned to Jamaica. He planned to go back to England, but in several instances of bad



judgment, he put his trust in people who duped and cheated him. Finally, in 1777, he settled in England and began working on his autobiography.

## **Becomes prominent abolitionist**

During the previous decade Equiano's life had taken another important turn. While visiting Savannah, Georgia, he had attended a religious service led by the famous English preacher George Whitfield. The clergyman's powerful sermon greatly influenced Equiano, who continued to think about the sermon's message of heaven, hell, and salvation for several years. In 1774 he experienced a religious conversion in Cadiz, Spain, and began to attend worship services and to read the Bible. Through his religious activities he came into contact with Quakers, Anglicans, and Methodists who were involved in the abolitionist movement. Soon Equiano became committed to ending the slave trade.

Equiano was a valuable contact person for the early abolitionists as he carried news of the horrors of slavery between England and America. In 1785 during a journey to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he was pleased to observe that the Quakers had emancipated (freed) their slaves and founded a free school in the city. Because of his involvement in the antislavery movement, naval authorities in England appointed him Commissary for Provisions and Stores for the Black Poor, a position in which he supervised supplies sent to Africans in Sierra Leone.

In 1787 British abolitionists, humanitarians, and church groups established the Sierra Leone Company, a community for freed slaves in Sierra Leone, a small British colony on the west coast of Africa. It started as an experimental colony with 411 freed slaves from Britain. Their goals were to "introduce civilisation among the natives and to cultivate the soil by means of free labour. "

Equiano never made the trip back to Africa. He quarreled constantly with the company agent and wrote a public letter to the newspaper accusing the promoters of the expedition of corruption and deception. In response the agent accused him of disobedience to authority and disrespectful behavior toward his superiors. The

navy dismissed Equiano from his post and the expedition went ahead without him.

## Gains international fame

In 1789 Equiano published *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, which increased his status as an abolitionist spokesman. Nine editions of the autobiography were printed during his lifetime, and the book quickly brought him to international fame. In his narrative Equiano compared the experiences of African slaves with the stories of Hebrew slaves in the Bible (see Moses entry). He also expressed his own antislavery views. The book is now ranked with such great slave narratives as the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and others that were written around the time of the American Civil War (1861-65).

In 1792 Equiano married Susan Cullen, an English-woman with whom he had two daughters, Anna Maria and Johanna. Susan Cullen Vassa died only months after Johanna's birth, and Equiano died in 1797. Johanna died two months after her father, but Anna Maria survived him into adulthood.

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# William Lloyd Garrison

**Born December 10, 1805**  
**Newburyport, Massachusetts**  
**Died May 24, 1879**  
**New York , New York**

**Journalist, abolitionist leader,  
social reformer**

**Publisher of an antislavery newspaper, *The Liberator*, and leader of a group of abolitionists. A tireless advocate and activist for racial equality integration, women's rights, temperance, and other social causes.**

**W**illiam Lloyd Garrison was born into a very poor family in New England but was determined from a very early age to make something out of his life. He got his lucky break at the age of twelve when he became an apprentice with the owner and editor of the local newspaper. At twenty years old he started his own newspaper and although it didn't last long he knew he had found his calling. After a series of jobs as editor of different publications he also knew that he had found his cause: ending slavery in the United States. In 1831 Garrison created *The Liberator*, a weekly newspaper devoted to abolishing slavery, which he edited for thirty-four years.

Garrison's role in the abolition of slavery in the United States was especially important in the 1830s and 1840s when people in the North were still, as a group, undecided on the question of slavery. Garrison's greatest accomplishment in these decades—as a journalist and lecturer for the abolition movement—was that he

forced people to think about slavery. To his credit, by the 1850s, a decade before the Civil War (1861-65), the topic of slavery was on everyone's mind—and virtually everyone's tongue—as well.

## **Hard times**

William Lloyd Garrison was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, the third child of Abijah and Fanny Garrison. Lloyd, as his mother called him, lived with his siblings—four-year-old James and two-year-old Caroline—and his parents in a rented room in the poorer section of the small port town. Abijah Garrison was a sailor and often left Fanny to care for the family while he was at sea.

When Garrison was just an infant the Garrison family suffered two serious misfortunes. The local shipping economy came to a standstill and Abijah could not find work. Then in the summer of 1808, five-year-old Caroline died after eating poisonous flowers. Abijah took to drinking heavily and after a heated quarrel with Fanny, who was a Baptist and firmly against the use of alcohol, he deserted his family never to be heard from again.

With the birth of Maria Elizabeth in July 1808, Fanny had three children under the age of seven to support. She found work nursing sick people, leaving her children with a neighbor while she made her rounds. When Fanny had a hard time finding steady work she sent Garrison to the public square to sell molasses candies that she had made. Other times, she sent him with a small pail to the back doors of the town's mansions to beg for scraps of food. When he had the time Garrison attended the nearby primary school where he learned—after many blows on his knuckles—to write using his right hand despite being left-handed.

## **Failed apprentice**

In 1812 Fanny moved to Lynn, Massachusetts, hoping to find more regular work. She took eleven-year-old James with her so that he could learn the shoemaking trade. Maria Elizabeth was left with a neighbor and Garrison, now seven, was sent to live with Deacon Ezekial Bartlett and his family, members of the same Baptist church as the Garrison family. Life with the Bartletts was better. Garrison had to do chores around the house and odd jobs

but in exchange he was fed and clothed and even had a little more time for school. On Sundays he sang in the Baptist church choir.

When Garrison was nine he joined his mother in Lynn where she apprenticed him to a shoemaker. The work was too much for Garrison and after a few months and an illness he was happy to be sent back to the Bartletts. After several failed attempts by Fanny to place her son as an apprentice (someone who studies under a skilled tradesperson) to a shoemaker and a cabinetmaker, Garrison was allowed to return to the Bartletts in Newburyport where he found the time to finish his formal grammar school education.

## **Beginnings of a newspaperman**

On October 18, 1818, just weeks before his thirteenth birthday, William Lloyd Garrison had the good fortune to be apprenticed to Ephraim Allen, the editor and owner of the Newburyport *Herald*. As an apprentice Garrison moved into the Allen home where he had access to a well-stocked library. By the time he was fifteen Garrison was the best typesetter (the job of arranging pieces of lead type on a page) and was made the foreman of the print shop. Garrison was also doing editorial work at fifteen, clipping articles of interest from other newspapers for publication in the *Herald*.

At nineteen, Garrison tried his hand at writing. To his surprise his anonymously written articles to the *Herald* were published. And when he revealed his secret to Mr. Allen, Garrison was rewarded with a month's vacation!

## **Freelance editor**

When Garrison turned twenty his apprenticeship ended. He turned down a job offer from Mr. Allen in order to start his own newspaper. He called it the *Free Press*. After just six months the paper had to close. Garrison was out of money and had managed to alienate his subscribers and supporters—even Mr. Allen who had been so kind to him—by his strongly worded articles on the issues of the day, including slavery.

Garrison then moved to Boston and worked a few years on and off as a printer's helper. On July 4, 1828, Garrison became the editor of the *National Philanthropist*, a publication devoted to temperance (abstinence from alcohol). He was fired six months later because he refused to limit his writings to the subject of the evils of alcohol. He also wrote about religion, conditions among the poor, and slavery.

At the end of 1828, Garrison was invited to Baltimore by antislavery activist and newspaper publisher Benjamin Lundy (1789-1839), to co-edit *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*. In the first issue of the new *Genius* (September 2, 1829), Garrison demanded the immediate and unconditional end to slavery, a position that was considered very bold and radical at the time. While Garrison's views raised some eyebrows in the emerging abolitionist movement, the general public in New England appeared indifferent.

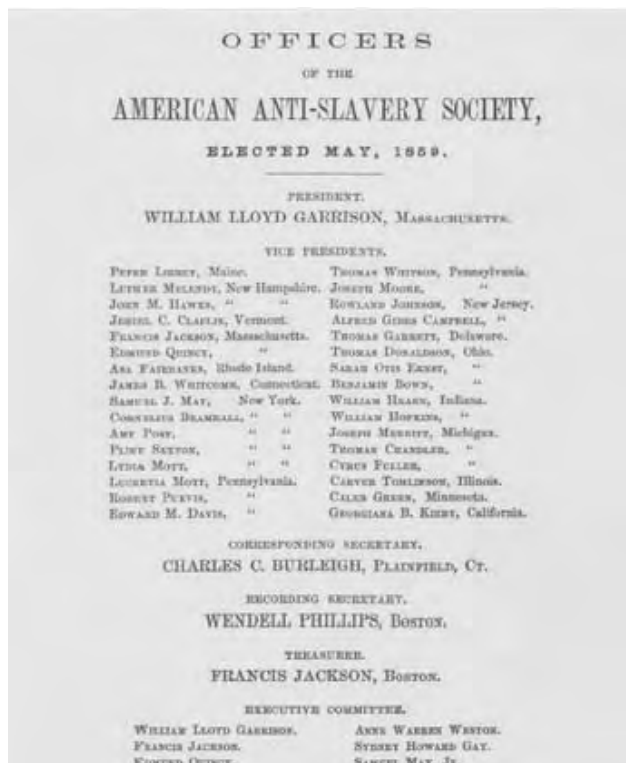
## **Jail, journalism, and fame**

In 1830 Garrison finally got the public to pay attention to him and to his message. Garrison was sued for libel (a printed statement that unjustly damages a person's reputation) for one of his editorials. When he refused to pay a fine he spent forty-nine days in jail. During his incarceration Garrison sent out letters to newspaper editors explaining that his only crime was in speaking the truth when he called a local slave trader a "murderer" in *The Genius*. As a result, more than one hundred newspapers wrote about Garrison and the issue of slavery. In a matter of a few weeks, William Lloyd Garrison was a well-known name in New England.

After returning to Boston in 1830 Garrison began his next publishing project—his own newspaper, in which the doctrine of immediate emancipation would be the central theme. The first issue of *The Liberator* came out on January 1, 1831. Relying on seed money mainly from the free black community, *The Liberator* slowly grew in the number of subscribers and the area of its distribution, North and South.

Officers as listed in the 1859 American Anti-Slavery Society's annual report.

Garrison soon became one of the most hated men in the country. The South blamed unrest among their slaves on the availability of abolitionist newspapers like *The Liberator*. An incident that caused particular concern was the violent rebellion led by slave leader Nat Turner (1800-31) in August 1831, in which almost sixty whites were killed. Garrison published many articles praising Turner as a hero. Several states in the South passed laws making it a crime to possess a copy of *The Liberator* and Garrison received a great deal of hate mail and a number of threats on his life.



## Abolitionist and activist

Early in 1831, Garrison helped found the Boston-based New England Anti-Slavery Society, an organization dedicated to fighting for complete social equality for all persons regardless of race. In December 1833, Garrison also helped found the American Anti-Slavery Society. Its main purpose was to promote the formation of abolitionist societies throughout the North with the goal of convincing the public that slavery was morally wrong. Garrison was a leader in the abolition movement for thirty years but his ideas were not always popular among its members. For example, Garrison's idea that slaves should not only be freed but granted equal rights with whites was considered extreme by the mainstream abolitionist movement. In 1840 Garrison's insistence that female

abolitionists be allowed to participate fully in antislavery activities led some members to quit the American Anti-Slavery Society and form their own male-dominated organization.

Garrison further alienated some people in the 1840s when he called for the North to secede (formally withdraw) from the Union, adopting the new motto "No Union with Slaveholders!" In 1854 he even went so far as to burn a copy of the U.S.

Constitution at a public Fourth of July celebration. But in the explosive decade of the 1850s, Garrison's protests drew little attention. Articles about slavery were now in every newspaper, not just the abolitionist publications. People argued about it on street corners, in churches, and in the halls of Congress. People were even fighting and dying over the issue of slavery in the western territories.

## **Garrison's rewards**

For thirty years or so Garrison divided his time between publishing *The Liberator*, organizing and leading abolitionist and women's rights activities, and traveling around the northern states making speeches against slavery. Somewhere along the way he also found time to be a husband and a father. Garrison married Helen Benson in September 1834, and together they raised five sons and one daughter in their Boston home. The Garrison family never had much money but their house had many guests—people who needed a meal or a place to sleep.

Garrison always said that if he had wanted to be rich he would have chosen a different line of work. Instead of wealth, Garrison was rewarded in other ways. Although he was against the use of violence he welcomed the Civil War as a means to end slavery. Although against participating directly in electoral politics, Garrison supported U.S. president Abraham Lincoln (1809-65) after he issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, freeing about three-fourths of all slaves. Garrison was even Lincoln's guest at the White House following the convention that nominated him for a second term as president.



## "I will be heard!"

William Lloyd Garrison chose to use words, not violence, to try to change what he saw as an unjust world. The major weapon in his fight to end slavery in the United States was his weekly newspaper, *The Liberator*. For thirty-four years Garrison kept the promises he made on the subject of slavery in the very first issue of *The Liberator*, on January, 1, 1831:

*I will be as harsh as truth, as uncompromising as justice. On this subject I do not wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation. No! No! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen—but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate — will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—and I will be heard.*

Garrison had the distinction of going from one of America's most hated men in 1835 to one of the country's most honored men in 1865. With the end of the Civil War and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment by Congress abolishing slavery, Garrison was invited to many celebrations in honor of his lifelong work. He was the guest of honor in his hometown of Newburyport—where fifty years before he had begged for food scraps—and in his adopted city of Boston. On April 14, 1865, Garrison traveled to Charleston, South Carolina, for a banquet in his honor and a parade the following day. Thousands of liberated slaves lined the route and offered presents to Garrison as he passed by, an experience that Garrison later described as the proudest moment in his life.

## The right to rest

When Garrison published the last issue of *The Liberator* on December 29, 1865, he was as penniless as when he began his project thirty-four years earlier. Garrison lived out the rest of his life in relative comfort, however, thanks to the generosity of his supporters who raised thirty thousand dollars to support him in retirement. Garrison continued to lecture occasionally and write essays for the *New York Independent* newspaper on various social reforms until his death in 1879.

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# Sarah Grimké

**Sarah Grimké**

**Born November 26, 1792**  
**Charleston, South Carolina**  
**Died December 23, 1873**  
**Hyde Park, Massachusetts**

**Angelina Grimké**

**Born February 20, 1805**  
**Charleston, South Carolina**  
**Died October 26, 1879**  
**Hyde Park, Massachusetts**

**Abolitionists, women's rights activists**

As speakers and writers, the Grimké sisters were pioneers and leaders in the abolition and women's rights movements. Not only should slavery be abolished, they argued, but women should be given the same legal and social rights as men.

Sarah and Angelina Grimké were among the very first women to publicly speak out against slavery in the United States. They may also have been the first Americans to argue in print for women to receive the same legal and social rights as men. The Grimké sisters crusaded for the emancipation of slaves and women during a time in America when women could not vote, run for office, or go to college. No organized religion except the Quakers allowed women to speak out or participate in church affairs. It was a time when women were expected to have their names in the newspapers only three times in their lives: when they were born, married, and died.

## Aristocratic roots

Sarah and Angelina Grimké were born into a wealthy slaveholding family in Charleston, South Carolina. Angelina was the fourteenth

and last child of John Faucheraud Grimké and Mary Smith, and twelve years younger than Sarah. John Grimké was the chief judge of the South Carolina Supreme Court. Mary Smith came from one of the wealthiest families in the state and her family tree included two colonial governors.

The Grimké family lived in a large house in the city of Charleston. Judge Grimké owned other properties including a plantation in Beaufort on the Carolina coast. He also owned hundreds of slaves—some as servants for his city residence but most of them as field workers for his farm. Judge Grimké was a member of the Episcopal church and every Sunday the family attended services and the children went to Sabbath school. A formal education, including the study of law, Greek, Latin, and philosophy was readily available for the sons of the Grimké family but not the daughters, who were only expected to prepare themselves for marriage.

## **Sarah's childhood**

While the education of Sarah's brothers was designed to prepare them for professional lives as lawyers and doctors, Sarah's instructions focused on making her a better homemaker and a "lady." Reading, writing, a little arithmetic, and French were the basics; drawing, piano, and voice lessons rounded out the curriculum. But Sarah wanted to learn more and she spent much of her time until she was twelve studying the lessons of her older brother Thomas: mathematics, geography, history, Greek, natural science, and botany.

Sarah was exposed to some of the practices of slavery at an early age. She was just four years old when she accidentally witnessed the whipping of a slave woman at the Grimké plantation. It affected her so much that she ran away from the house and had to be searched for by her nurse. Whenever Sarah heard that a slave was to be punished she shut herself up in her room and prayed for the whipping not to happen. As was the custom of the time in the South, Sarah was given a slave girl by her father to be her servant and companion. Sarah became very fond of Kitty and treated her

as an equal. When the little girl died after just a few years Sarah refused to have another slave replace her.

## **Sarah's rebellion**

Sarah was just twelve when she committed her first act of rebellion against the slave system that surrounded her. Like the other Grimké girls Sarah had taught Bible classes for black children, slave and free, every Sunday afternoon since she was eight. Sarah asked for permission to teach her students how to *read* the Bible and was told by her father that it was against the law to do so. Teaching slaves how to read, he told her, might make them restless and rebellious. Sarah later recalled her response to the situation in an 1827 diary entry:

My great desire in this matter would not be totally suppressed, and I took an almost malicious satisfaction in teaching my little waiting-maid at night, when she was supposed to be occupied in combing and brushing my long locks. The light was put out, the keyhole screened, and flat on our stomachs, before the fire, with the spelling book under our eyes, we defied the laws of South Carolina.

## **A turning point**

Sarah was almost thirteen when it was time to baptize her new sister, Angelina. Although it was an unusual request for a girl of her age, her parents consented to Sarah being Angelina's godmother. Sarah pledged to cherish, protect, and train her sister, a promise that she spent her life fulfilling. Sarah spent her teenage years doting on her younger sister and yearning to be allowed to go off to law school like her older brother Thomas. She also led the leisurely life of a young and wealthy southern belle. Her days were made up of long meals, walks in the garden, shopping, visiting friends, writing letters, horseback riding, and strolling in town in the evening. Meanwhile, Angelina benefitted from a better formal education than Sarah had as she attended a seminary school for daughters of Charleston's upper class.

In 1819, at age twenty-six, Sarah accompanied her ill father on a trip north to seek medical treatment. Her father died on the trip

and when Sarah was traveling back home she met a Quaker family who gave her a copy of the writings of a Quaker abolitionist. Despite her life of privilege in Charleston, Sarah was not happy with many aspects of her life—especially the contradictions she saw between the preachings of the Episcopal church and the practices of its slaveholding members. In 1821 Sarah left her family and moved north to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where she worked and studied with Quakers.

## Angelina's choices

Angelina had the same problems with her family's choice of religion as Sarah, and at the age of thirteen refused confirmation in the Episcopal church. At twenty, Angelina converted to the Presbyterian church. She taught Bible classes, organized prayer meetings, and urged every church member to speak out against slavery. Like her sister, Angelina was unhappy with Christianity as practiced in the South, especially the mistreatment of slaves by



her own family, mostly by her brothers. In 1829 Angelina moved to Philadelphia to join Sarah who had become a member of the Society of Friends (the Quakers).

By 1831 Angelina had also become a member of the Society of Friends. The Grimké sisters were drawn to the Friends' movement because of its history in the antislavery struggle. American Quakers had opposed

### Life in the South

One of the reasons Sarah Grimké left her life of privilege in the South to become an abolitionist in the North was her frustration with the practices of slavery, especially the law that prevented her from legally teaching slaves to read and write (from the Statute Book of South Carolina):

*AN ACT FOR THE BETTER ORDERING AND GOVERNING OF NEGROES AND SLAVES . . . 1740. SECT. 45. And whereas, having slaves taught to write, or suffering them to be employed in writing, may be attended with great inconveniences . . . that any person who shall teach a slave to write or to employ any slave as a scribe in writing, shall forfeit 100 pounds [monetary currency].*

**Angelina Grimké.**  
(The Granger  
Collection, New York.  
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permission.)

slavery since 1688. They helped establish many of the earliest organizations designed to abolish slavery and aid free blacks. But the Grimké sisters ultimately found the Quakers to be too moderate in their practices when it came to race relations. They noted that there were a fair number of blacks who had converted to Quakerism but relatively few who were full-fledged members. And, blacks who attended the same Quaker meetings as Sarah and Angelina were seated in the "Negro benches" in the back of the room.

About this time Angelina began reading abolitionist literature, including *The Liberator*, a Boston-based weekly newspaper established by editor and abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79). She was very attracted to Garrison's call for the immediate emancipation of all slaves. She attended her first antislavery lecture in February 1835, and a few months later joined the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society.

## **Recruited to the cause**

Angelina first came to the attention of the organized abolition movement in the summer of 1835 when she wrote a letter to Garrison praising his work and condemning slavery. On September 19 Angelina's letter appeared in *The Liberator* without her permission. It caused outrage among the Quaker elders and an uproar in her home state of South Carolina. The newspaper was burned when it arrived at post offices in South Carolina and a warrant was issued for Angelina's arrest. Instead of remaining silent, Angelina responded in 1836 by writing a 36-page antislavery pamphlet, *Appeal to the Christian Women of the South*.

In 1836 Angelina was asked to become a speaker for the American Anti-Slavery Society. The society planned to send speakers all over the North to drum up support for the cause of abolition. They invited seventy recruits to New York City for training. Angelina Grimké was the only woman in the group. Sarah soon joined Angelina in New York and the two were trained in November as speakers by abolitionist Theodore Weld (1803-95). In December Sarah wrote her own antislavery pamphlet, *Epistle to the Clergy of the Southern States*, which was published

by the American Anti-Slavery Society. In it she attacked the many biblical arguments used by the southern clergy in their Sunday sermons in support of slavery.

## **In the public eye**

In early 1837 Sarah and Angelina began their speaking tour of the state of New York, telling people about their experiences with slavery in the South and why the practice should be abolished everywhere. Their positions on slavery enraged the South but the North was offended almost as much by the fact that women were speaking in public to "mixed audiences" of women *and* men. They were criticized in the press and by the clergy, even denied permission to give their talks in churches throughout the North.

In May 1837 the Grimké sisters went on a speaking tour of New England. Women and men flocked to hear them speak. In five months Sarah and Angelina separately visited sixty-seven towns and addressed more than forty thousand people in eighty-eight meetings. In February 1838 Angelina became the first woman to ever speak before the state legislature in Massachusetts, a talk that lasted for three sessions over three days before a packed house each time. At the same time she presented a petition to the government calling for an end to slavery—signed by twenty thousand Massachusetts women.

## **Slavery and women's rights**

The Grimké sisters were powerful messengers in the antislavery cause. Their southern roots and firsthand experiences made their stories of the brutal treatment of slaves more believable. The fact that they were women added to their draw, as very few people could say they ever heard a woman speak in public on any subject. The sisters took full advantage of this fact and used their lectures to advocate for the equality of women as well as blacks. According to the Grimkés, women should not only be able to be doctors, lawyers, and ministers but they should be able to vote and make laws as well.

In 1838 Sarah wrote what amounted to the first statement in the United States of a woman's rights to equality. Her *Letters on the*



*Equality of the Sexes* was published in the newspaper, the *Spectator*, and in pamphlet form. In it she argued that nonmales and non-whites held very similar positions in U.S. society. For example, the law upheld the right of a man to beat his wife or his slave. A husband, or master, also owned all the personal property of his wife or slave, and if wages were earned by either they also belonged to him. Education, Sarah pointed out, was also very limited or nonexistent for both women and slaves.

In their speeches the Grimkés also used the realities of slavery to discredit some of the myths that were common about women in the times. If women were too weak to work as equals with men why was it that black women were able to work side by side with black men in the fields? If women who had sexual relations outside of marriage either committed suicide or went mad why were black women able to become pregnant—often by white men—work, give birth, and return to work?

## **Marriage and retirement**

In May 1838 Angelina married Theodore Weld, the man who had trained her as a speaker in New York. The Society of Friends expelled Angelina for marrying a Presbyterian and Sarah for attending their wedding. Two days after her wedding Angelina and a number of other women gave speeches to the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery convention. An angry mob threw stones through the windows and later burned the building to the ground.

Angelina, Theodore Weld, and Sarah withdrew from the lecture circuit and moved to Fort Lee, New Jersey. There the sisters compiled articles on slavery clipped from southern newspapers for a book they published in 1839, *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*. The book was an important source for author Harriet Beecher Stowe's explosive antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).

Angelina Grimké and her husband Theodore Weld had three children, whom Sarah helped raise because of her sister's poor health. For a while the Grimké sisters and Weld ran a successful boarding school in New Jersey before relocating to Hyde Park,

Massachusetts, near Boston. Although they remained in the background of the abolition and suffrage (women's right to vote) movements the sisters never lost interest in their causes. In 1868 the Grimké sisters and Weld served as officers of the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association. Two years later the sisters led a group of Hyde Park women in an attempt to illegally cast ballots in a local election.

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# Hammurabi

**Birthdate unknown**

**Babylon**

**Died 1750 B.C.E.**

**Babylon**

"... then Anu and Bel called by name me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, who feared God, to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers; so that the strong shall not harm the weak. . . ."

*"Prologue,"* Code of Hammurabi

**H**ammurabi was the king of Babylonia, an empire in ancient Mesopotamia. (Mesopotamia was a region located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in southwest Asia; in the Greek language, Mesopotamia means "between the rivers.") He developed a set of 282 laws called the Code of Hammurabi, which controlled nearly every aspect of Babylonian society. Several of the laws related to the ownership of slaves, who were considered the property of their masters. Nevertheless the code gave certain rights to the children of male slaves who married free-born women. Although Hammurabi was a humane and just ruler, his laws involved strict punishments of offenders in all levels of society. He is best known today for the concept of "an eye for an eye," which means the punishment should be equal to the crime.

## **Builds a great kingdom**

Hammurabi (pronounced ham-uh-ROB-ee) was born in Babylon, a city-state that was located about fifty miles south of present-day Baghdad, Iraq, on the Euphrates River. He was the son of Sin-

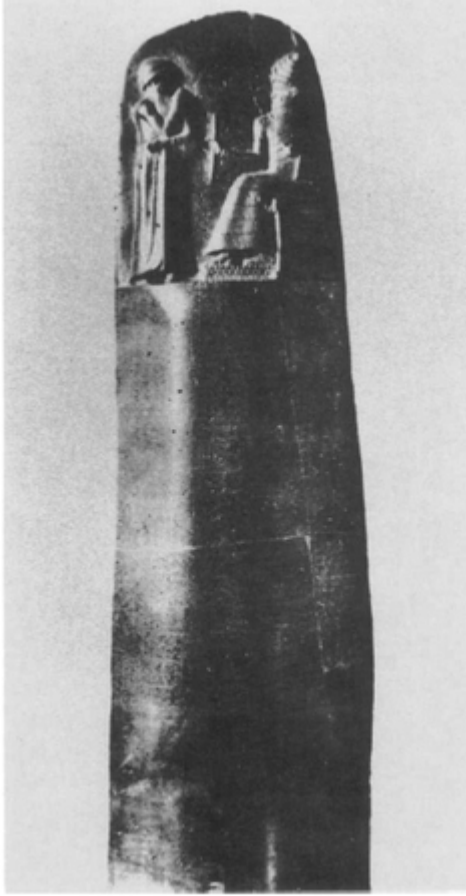
muballit, the ruler of Babylon. Around 1792 B.C.E., Hammurabi succeeded his father to the throne. At that time larger city-states with more powerful kings surrounded Babylon. Seven years into his rule, Hammurabi started to expand his empire, which he called Babylonia (also known as the Old Babylonian Kingdom). He conquered the neighboring cities of Uruk and Isin, and then, two years later, the small country of Emutbal.

During an eighteen-year period Hammurabi ruled in relative peace. In 1764 B.C.E., however, a number of neighboring cities in the northeast formed an alliance and launched attacks on Hammurabi's kingdom. His forces easily defeated the invaders and strengthened his empire. Hammurabi then moved against an old enemy to the south, the powerful Rim-Sin of Larsa. Hammurabi emerged triumphant, and by 1762 B.C.E. the empire of Babylonia, with Babylon as its capital, included all of southern and central Mesopotamia.

Hammurabi was more than a conquering military ruler. He personally supervised the expansion and improvement of Babylonia, digging canals, building and restoring temples, and revising the calendar. Archaeologists (scientists who study the remains of ancient cultures) have discovered that the streets of Babylon were laid out in a grid pattern (straight lines that intersect at right angles), a sign that Hammurabi had planned the design of the city. They also believe that the king began building the tower of Babel, which is now identified with Etemenanki, a temple-tower in Babylon. (The famous story of the tower of Babel, a symbol of the confusion caused by people speaking many different languages, appears in the book of Genesis in the Old Testament of the Bible.)

## **Creates famous Code**

Hammurabi's greatest achievement was forming a strong central government that established law and order in Babylonia. Greatly concerned with helping the poor and oppressed, he issued many laws and regulations that protected them. Near the end of his reign he had these laws—the Code of Hammurabi—carved into an eight-foot-tall black diorite (a type of rock somewhat like coal)



column called a stele. He then ordered the column to be erected in Babylon so that all his subjects could read the laws.

In the twelfth century B.C.E. the Elamites (inhabitants of Elam in present-day western Iran)—Hammurabi's enemies in the northeast—conquered Babylon and took the stele to Susa (an ancient city in southwestern Iran). Discovered by French archaeologists in Iran in 1902, the column is now exhibited in the Louvre Museum in Paris, France.

At the top of the well-preserved stele is a finely sculptured scene that shows Hammurabi praying before Shamash, the Babylonian god of law and of justice. Appearing below this scene is the prologue (introductory statement), in which Hammurabi stated that he developed the code "to cause justice to prevail in the land." The laws are carved in cuneiform (pronounced KYOO-nee-uh-form; wedge-shaped characters used to represent words

The eight-foot-tall Code of Hammurabi column. The figure of Hammurabi is carved into the top of the stone; the laws are carved along the front and back of the column.

or ideas) under the prologue, both on the front and back of the column. (The text of laws sixty-six through ninety-nine is missing.) The code deals with a wide range of social matters: marriage, divorce, private property, wages, trade, theft, assault, slavery, and many others. Although Hammurabi's Code was not the first set of laws established in the ancient world, his emphasis on justice was an advance over previous legal systems.

## "An eye for an eye"

The Code of Hammurabi had two important features. The first was the *lex talionis*, or the practice of giving a punishment equal to the crime committed. For example, law 196 states that "If a man has put out the eye of another man, they shall put out his eye." The second characteristic was the extreme harshness of the penalties,

which included drowning, burning, and mutilation (cutting off of body parts).

The code reflected three basic social classes in Babylonia: *awilum* were free men (the highest class); *mushkenum* were citizens responsible to the government; and *wardum* were slaves. Punishments were given out according to one's social rank. If an *awilum* lost an eye, then the aggressor also lost an eye. If the injured party was a *mushkenum*, however, the aggressor simply had to pay the victim a fee. The aggressor paid even less if the victim was a *wardum*. Justice was the main concern of the code. The first law states that "If a man accuses another man of murder and it proves to be false, the accuser shall be put to death." According to the last law, "If a slave say to his master: 'You are not my master,' if they convict him his master shall cut off his ear."

## **Slaves are valuable property**

At least twenty-two of Hammurabi's laws had to do with slaves, defining them as property and protecting the rights of their owners. In fact, slaves were so valuable that stealing a slave or harboring a runaway was punishable by death. For instance, law fifteen states that "If any one take a male or female slave of the court, or a male or female slave of a freed man, outside the city gates, he shall be put to death." The next law was equally harsh: "If any one receive into his house a runaway male or female slave of the court, or of a freedman, and does not bring it out at the public proclamation of the major domus, the master of the house shall be put to death." Law seventeen granted a good citizen a reward of two shekels (coins) of silver for returning a slave to his or her master.

Owners were compensated if a slave was injured or died. Law 199 states that "If [a person] put out the eye of a man's slave, or break the bone of a man's slave, he shall pay one-half of its value." Even doctors were responsible for the injury or death of a slave. According to law 219, "If a physician make a large incision in the slave of a freed man, and kill him, he shall replace the slave with another slave."

Barbers could also suffer stiff penalties. Before a slave was sold, a barber would carve a mark on the slave's body indicating that he or she was for sale. Law 226 stated that "If a barber, without the knowledge of his master, cut the sign of a slave on a slave not to be sold, the hands of this barber shall be cut off." The next law went on to specify, however, that "If any one deceive a barber, and have him mark a slave not for sale with the sign of a slave, he shall be put to death, and buried in his house. The barber shall swear: 'I did not mark him wittingly [knowingly],' and shall be guiltless."

## **Exceptions for some children**

Although the Code of Hammurabi did not give slaves any rights, exceptions were made for the children of a male slave who married a free-born woman. According to law 175, "If a State slave [one owned by the government] or the slave of a freed man marry the daughter of a free man, and children are born, the master of the slave shall have no right to enslave the children of the free." In other words, a child could not be held in slavery if his or her mother was not a slave. The next law, which is more complex, made it possible for the children of a free-born woman and a slave to inherit property.

Hammurabi died around 1750 B.C.E. Shortly thereafter the Elamites attacked and defeated his son, Samsuiluna. The Babylonian Empire fell, and the capital city of Babylon was eventually burned to the ground. Hammurabi had instructed future kings to rely on his great code, but there is no historical evidence that it was ever used after his death.

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# Sally Hemings

**Born 1773**

**Bermuda Hundred, Virginia**

**Died 1835**

**Charlottesville, Virginia**

The relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings has caused controversy and debated descendants—as well as historians and scholars—for almost two hundred years.

The general story of the life of Sally Hemings—a mulatto (a person of mixed black and white ancestry) slave who served her master as a domestic servant and possibly his concubine (mistress)—was not all that unusual in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century United States. What makes Sally Hemings's tale especially interesting is that her white master, and some argue, the likely father of her seven children, was Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), the third president of the United States (1801-1809). Hemings's relationship with Jefferson probably began sometime in 1788, when the two of them were in Paris, France, and lasted until his death in 1826.

## Hemings's early years

Although she was three-fourths white, Sally Hemings was born a slave. In colonial America, the status of the mother—free or slave—determined the status of the child. Sally Hemings's father, John Wayles, was white but her mother, Elizabeth Hemings, was a mulatto slave, the child of a white father (Captain Hemings) and a

full-blooded African mother (a slave owned by John Wayles). Elizabeth Hemings was John Wayles's slave from birth, and after the death of Wayles's wife, she became his concubine. Together they had six children: Robert, James, Peter, Critty, Sally, and Thena.

John Wayles died in 1773, the same year that his illegitimate (out of wedlock) daughter Sally was born. Sally Hemings, her mother, and her five siblings (along with about 125 other slaves and 11,000 acres of land), were inherited at that time by John Wayles's legitimate daughter, Martha. At the time, Martha Wayles was the wife of Thomas Jefferson (a wealthy Virginia planter and statesman). Sally Hemings was Martha Wayles Jefferson's half-sister, both having been fathered by the same man.

The Hemings were brought to Monticello (pronounced mon-teh-CHELL-oh), Thomas Jefferson's Virginia farming estate, and given the privileged position of house slaves. James Hemings, Sally's older brother, became Thomas Jefferson's personal servant.

## **Jefferson and Hemings in Paris**

In September of 1782, Martha Jefferson died, leaving Thomas Jefferson a widower at the age of thirty-nine, and the father of two girls, Martha (about to turn ten years old) and Maria (four years old). In 1784 Thomas Jefferson was sent as a diplomat to France by the American colonial government. James Hemings went with him. Jefferson's eldest daughter Martha joined him in Paris a short time later, and was enrolled in a convent school for a formal education. In 1787 Jefferson sent for his other daughter, Maria, who made the voyage from Virginia escorted by Sally Hemings, who was either fourteen or fifteen at the time.

It is impossible for historians to say with any certainty exactly what happened in Paris between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings. Legally, Sally Hemings was a free person in Paris, and so was her brother James, as slavery had been abolished in France. While in France, Jefferson paid Sally and James a monthly salary for their services. James Hemings, with Jefferson's support, apprenticed under French cooks and became a skilled chef.

**Thomas Jefferson**  
**holding the Declaration**  
**of Independence.**  
(Library of Congress)



## One historical witness

In the fall of 1789, Jefferson and his two daughters, as well as Sally and James Hemings, returned to America. By all accounts, Sally Hemings was visibly pregnant at the time of their homecoming to Monticello. Many years later, in 1873, Madison Hemings (1805-77), the sixth child of Sally Hemings, described the circumstances of his mother's return from Paris. His account was published in the *Pike County Republican*, a newspaper in Ohio.

Madison Hemings grew up at Monticello and after Jefferson's death in 1826, he and his younger brother, Eston, rented a house in a nearby county where they lived with their mother, Sally, until her death in 1835. Madison is considered the most important historical witness in this story by some, but others point to minor errors and inconsistencies in his rendering of the facts. The following excerpt from Madison's published story sheds light on his mother's trip to France and its result:

Their stay (my mother's and Maria's) was just about eighteen months [it was really twenty-six months]. But during that time my mother became Mr. Jefferson's concubine, and when he was called

back home she was *enciente* [pregnant] by him. He desired to bring my mother back to Virginia with him but she demurred. She was just beginning to understand the French language well, and in France she was free, while if she returned to Virginia she would be re-enslaved. So she refused to return with him. To induce her to do so, he promised her extraordinary privileges, and made a solemn pledge that her children should be freed at the age of twenty-one years. In consequence of his promises, on which she implicitly relied, she returned with him to Virginia. Soon after their arrival, she gave birth to a child, of whom Thomas Jefferson was the father.

## Promises kept

Between 1790 and 1808, Sally Hemings gave birth to seven children, all the time while residing at Monticello: Thomas, Harriet, Edy, Beverly, Harriet, Madison, and Eston. Hemings's first-born took the name Thomas Woodson and is conspicuously absent from Jefferson's personal records. He was born in 1790, shortly after Hemings and Jefferson returned from France. Thomas Woodson was probably gone from Monticello by the time Madison was born in 1805, although the age of his departure is unknown. Hemings's second child, Harriet, was born in 1795 but only lived two years. Edy was born in 1796 and died in her infancy. Hemings's second son, Beverly, was born in 1798, followed by Harriet in 1801, Madison in 1805, and Eston in 1808.

Harriet and Beverly were listed as "runaways" in Thomas Jefferson's personal records from 1822. The reality was that they were allowed to walk away and, because of their light-colored skin, blend into the free white world of Washington, D.C. Madison and Eston were freed in Jefferson's will at his death in 1826. Sally Hemings was not mentioned in Jefferson's will, and a year later was listed on the official slave inventory as worth \$50. Jefferson's daughter, Martha, freed Sally Hemings, who spent her remaining years living in a rented house with her sons Madison and Eston.

## A 200-year debate

The public first learned of Sally Hemings in 1802, during the second year of Jefferson's first term as president, when the *Richmond Recorder* published an article that contained the following: "It is well known that the man, whom it delighteth the people to honor, keeps and for many years has kept, as his concubine, one of his slaves. Her name is Sally. The name of her eldest son is Tom. His features are said to bear a striking though sable resemblance to those of the president himself. . . . By this wench Sally, our president has had several children."

The possibility that one of America's founding fathers had a long-term sexual relationship with one of his slaves that resulted in the births of several children caused great controversy in 1802. At the time, the charge against Jefferson was neither proven true nor false. Jefferson himself never denied or confirmed the relationship. The result was that the question has been debated by historians and scholars ever since.

Until recently many historians argued, supported by the claims of some of Jefferson's white descendants, that Thomas Jefferson could not have fathered Hemings's children because he wasn't around when conception must have taken place. On the other side, descendants of Sally Hemings have claimed from the very beginning that Thomas Jefferson was the father of all of her children. They based their arguments on a well-kept oral family history, and an 1873 memoir written by one of Hemings's seven children, Madison Hemings.

Historians have more recently acknowledged that Jefferson, who traveled widely and often, was present at his Virginia plantation home, Monticello, eight or nine months before the birth of all but one of Hemings's children. That child, Thomas Woodson, was conceived when Jefferson was minister to France and Sally Hemings was living with him in Paris.

## Science muddies the waters

For some, the results of a 1998 DNA test on known descendants of both Jefferson and Hemings adds great weight to the historical evidence for a Jefferson-Hemings connection. The purpose of the study was to compare Jefferson's Y chromosome—a genetic marker passed from father to son—with those of Hemings's family to see if there was a match. Since Jefferson had no adult sons, the blood from a descendant of one of his male cousins, who would have had the same Y chromosome as their mutual grandfather, was used for the study. From the Hemings side, blood samples were tested from the descendants of two of Hemings's children, Thomas Woodson, the first born, and Eston Hemings, the last born.

The results showed a definite Jefferson-Hemings genetic link, only instead of providing a clear answer to the question, the scientific evidence further complicated the debate. First, the DNA tests found a genetic match between Jefferson and Eston Hemings, but not between Jefferson and Thomas Woodson. This finding has disappointed the descendants of Thomas Woodson, who have a very detailed oral family history that claims otherwise. Second, the test only confirms that *a Jefferson*, not necessarily *Thomas Jefferson*, fathered a child with Sally Hemings (other possible Jefferson candidates include his brother, Randolph, and his two sons, who both spent some time at Monticello).

Obviously, more tests are going to be needed before any definitive scientific findings can prove Jefferson's paternity one way or another. Historians and scholars, and descendants of both Jefferson and Hemings, will continue to debate the issue for years

### The Privileged Slaves of Monticello

Life at Monticello (Jefferson's plantation) for the Hemings family is best described by Madison Hemings (Sally Hemings's sixth child) in his 1873 memoir:

*My brothers, sister Harriet and myself were used alike. They were put to some mechanical trade at age fourteen. Till then we were permitted to stay about the 'great house,' and only required to do such light work as going on errands. Harriet learned to spin and weave in a little factory on the home plantation. We were free from the dread of having to be slaves all our lives long, and were measurably happy. We were always permitted to be with our mother, who was well used. It was her duty, all her life which I can remember, up to the time of our father's death, to take care of his [Jefferson's] chamber and wardrobe, look after us children and do such light work as sewing, &c. Provision was made in the will of our father that we should be free when we arrived at the age of 21 years.*

to come. Meanwhile, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, which runs tours of Jefferson's Monticello plantation, have adjusted their version of what their guides tell visitors about the Jefferson-Hemings controversy. Within twenty-four hours of the release of the study results, according to the foundation's director, "guides were telling visitors that new DNA evidence indicated a sexual relationship between Sally Hemings and Jefferson."

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# Harriet Ann Jacobs

Born autumn 1813  
Edenton, North Carolina  
Died March 7, 1897  
Washington, D.C.

Slave, fugitive in the South and North,  
freed slave,  
writer, antislavery activist,  
reformer



The story of Harriet Jacobs's life as a slave in the nineteenth-century United States, from her birth in 1813 to her freedom in 1852, was published in 1861 as *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*. Although the Civil War (1861-65) was about to begin and many slave narratives had already been published, *Incidents* was the first full-length autobiography published by an African American woman in the United States. It was also the only slave narrative that took as its subject the sexual exploitation of female slaves; and the only slave narrative that identified its targeted audience as female.

## Making the private public

Writing about her own private sexual history was not easy for Jacobs. She felt, however, that by telling her story in the public arena, the issue of sexual abuse of female slaves would become part of the country's political debate about slavery. Jacobs also felt that even though society's notions of acceptable sexual behavior

Jacobs's first-person slave narrative strengthened the antislavery cause with its comprehensive depiction of a slave woman's desperate struggle for freedom, her battles against sexual oppression, and her fight to protect her children and maintain her role as mother of a family.

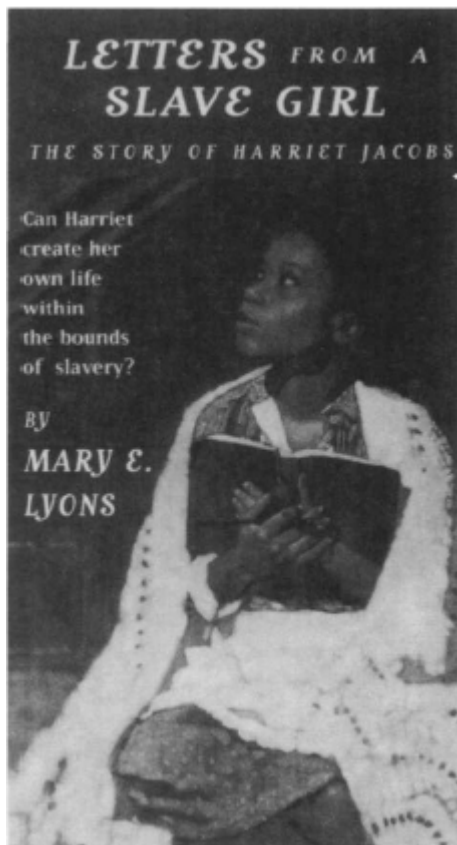


for single women did not apply to slave women (Jacobs herself had two children out of wedlock with a white man), they were still entitled to sympathy for the unwanted sexual advances from their white masters.

"Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women," Jacobs writes in *Incidents*. "I have not written my experiences in order to attract attention to myself.... Neither do I care to excite sympathy for my own sufferings. But I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse.

In *Incidents*, Jacobs writes her story in the first-person narrative style but she changes the names of her characters, including herself, whom she refers to as Linda Brent. Although the names of characters and places have been changed to spare innocent people possible embarrassment, Jacobs tells readers in the preface to her book: "Reader, be assured this narrative is no fiction."

This 1992 work, based on a true story, describes Harriet Jacobs's ordeals as she attempts to win her freedom.)



## Fond memories

As her story is told in *Incidents*, Jacobs was born a slave in Edenton, a small town in North Carolina. Both of her parents were mulattoes (people of mixed black and white ancestry). Her father, Daniel Jacobs, was a carpenter and the slave of Dr. Andrew Knox. Daniel Jacobs had a fairly rare arrangement with his master. As long as he paid a yearly fee to Dr. Knox he was allowed to work at his trade and manage his own affairs. Harriet Jacobs's mother, Delilah Horniblower, was owned by Margaret Horniblower and worked as her household servant.

Jacobs lived with both her parents (they were unmarried, as it was against the law for slaves to

marry) in a comfortable home for the first six years of her life. Jacobs's maternal grandmother, Molly Horniblower, lived nearby. "Though we were all slaves," Jacobs writes, "I was so fondly shielded that I never dreamed that I was a piece of merchandise, trusted to them for safe keeping, and liable to be demanded of them at any moment," When her mother died in 1819, Jacobs was taken to live with her mother's mistress, Margaret Horniblower, who taught her how to read, spell, and sew.

## The real world

When Margaret Horniblower died in July 1825, she willed Jacobs and her ten-year-old brother, John S. Jacobs, to her niece, Mary Matilda Norcom. Since Mary Matilda was only three years old, Jacobs and her brother came under the control of their mistress's father, Dr. James Norcom. After just a few weeks with her new masters, Jacobs heard the cries of one of Dr. Norcom's slaves—who was brought to town from the doctor's rural plantation—as he was beaten by his master. "Never before, in my life, had I heard hundreds of blows fall, in succession, on a human being," she writes in *Incidents*. "His piteous groans, and his 'O, pray don't, massa,' rang in my ear for months afterwards."

When Jacobs was fifteen, Dr. Norcom began to sexually harass her, constantly pressuring her to have sexual relations with him. "My master began to whisper foul words in my ear," she writes in *Incidents*. "Young as I was, I could not remain ignorant of their import . . . I turned from him with disgust and hatred. But he was my master . . . He told me I was his property; and that I must subject to his will in all things."

## War of wills

Dr. Norcom was set on having his way with Jacobs, and she, in turn was set on refusing his advances. When Dr. Norcom learned that Jacobs was in love with—and wanted to marry—a free-born black man whom she had met at her grandmother's house, he struck her and threatened to have her thrown in jail. (Slaves could not legally marry but a free-born black could marry a slave with a master's permission.) Fearing for her lover's safety due to threats

from her master, Jacobs encouraged him to move north where she hoped to join him later.

To get back at Dr. Norcom for making her life so miserable, Jacobs engaged in a sexual relationship with Norcom's white neighbor, Samuel Sawyer, a lawyer. Jacobs gave birth to two children by Sawyer, Joseph in 1829 and Louisa Matilda in 1833. "I knew nothing would enrage Dr. Flint [Dr. Norcom] so much as to know that I favored another," she writes in *Incidents*, "and it was something to triumph over my tyrant even in that small way."

Enraged, but still persistent, in 1835 Dr. Norcom threatened to send Jacobs to work as a field slave on his plantation if she did not become his concubine (mistress). She refused to give in and was sent to Auburn (the name of his plantation), a few miles outside of town. When Jacobs learned that Dr. Norcom planned to move her children from her grandmother's house, where they had been living, to Auburn to be "broken in," she set in motion a series of events that would eventually lead to her escape to the North and freedom for her children.

## **Saving her children**

Believing that she could save her children from plantation slavery, in June 1835 Jacobs ran away from Auburn and was temporarily sheltered by black and white friends. In August, after hiding in a swamp for several days, Jacobs secretly moved into a tiny crawlspace above a storeroom in her grandmother's house where she hid for nearly seven years.

Jacobs's trick was successful. Dr. Norcom looked everywhere for her. He even posted a \$100 reward for her capture. Jacobs chose the cramped quarters of her grandmother's storeroom attic over her master's bed, and as a result, Dr. Norcom lost interest in her children and sold them to their father, Samuel Sawyer. Sawyer allowed the children to continue to live with their grandmother. While in hiding, Jacobs sewed, practiced writing, and read—mostly the Bible.

## Fugitive in the North

In 1842, with the aid of family and friends, Jacobs escaped to the North. She first went to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, then New York City, where she found work as a nursemaid with the Willis family. In New York, Jacobs met up with her daughter, Louisa Matilda, who had earlier been brought north by Sawyer. With slave catchers (people who were paid to capture fugitive slaves) hired by Dr. Norcom on her trail, in 1843 Jacobs fled briefly to Boston, Massachusetts, where she arranged for her son, Joseph, to be sent from her grandmother's Edenton home.

Jacobs returned to New York, and after another close call with slave catchers, in October 1844 fled with her daughter and settled in Boston, where she worked as a seamstress. In the spring of 1845 Mrs. Willis died, and Jacobs traveled to England with Mr. Willis as a nurse for their child, Imogen. Back in New York in 1846, Jacobs learned that her son had fled his job as a printer's apprentice and had shipped out to sea.

After enrolling her daughter in a boarding school in Clinton, New York, in 1849 Jacobs moved to Rochester, New York, to join her brother, John Jacobs, a fugitive slave now lecturing for the abolitionist movement. Harriet Jacobs lived for a while with Quaker reformers, Isaac and Amy Post. Amy Post was a participant in the first Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls in 1848, and an abolitionist. Jacobs worked in the Anti-Slavery Office and

### Reward: \$100

When Harriet Jacobs was twentyone years old she disappeared from the plantation of her owner, Dr. James Norcom. For seven years Jacobs hid in her grandmother's attic to escape her cruel master. Dr. Norcom, thinking she had fled to the North, placed an advertisement in the newspaper offering a reward for the return of his missing slave, which read as follows:

*\$100 REWARD ... Will be given for the apprehension and delivery of my Servant Girl HARRIET... She is a light mulatto, 21 years of age, about 5 feet 4 inches high, of a thick and corpulent habit, having on her head a thick covering of black hair that curls naturally, but which can be combed straight. She speaks easily and fluidly and has an agreeable carriage and address. Being a good seamstress, she has been accustomed to dress well, has a variety of very fine clothes, made in the prevailing fashion, and will probably appear, if abroad, tricked out in gay and fashionable finery. As this girl absconded from the plantation of my son without any known cause or provocation, it is probable she designs to transport herself to the North.*

*The above reward, with all reasonable charges, will be given for apprehending her, or securing her in any prison or jail within the U. States.*

*All persons are hereby forewarned against harboring or entertaining her, or being in any way instrumental in her escape, under the most rigorous penalties of the law.*

Reading Room, located above the offices of Frederick Douglass's (1817-95) abolitionist newspaper, the *North Star*.

## **Free to write**

In 1850 Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Law, making all citizens subject to fines or punishment for harboring fugitive slaves—even in states where slavery had been abolished. Under the provisions of the new law, Mary Matilda Norcom (now an adult) and her husband, Daniel Messmore, traveled to New York repeatedly to seize Jacobs and her children. Jacobs, who had returned to New York City to take a job with Mr. Willis and his new wife, Cornelia Willis, again went into hiding in Massachusetts. With help from the American Colonization Society, in 1852 Cornelia Willis arranged to buy Jacobs from the Messmores for \$300, and at the same time gained assurances for Jacobs of the safety of her children (who had been legally sold to Sawyer).

Freed at last, in 1853 Jacobs moved with the Willis family to Idlewild (an eighteen-room estate) in Cornwall, New York, where she worked during the day and wrote at night. Jacobs, who had maintained her connections to the organized antislavery movement, was encouraged to write her life story by one of her abolitionist friends. Jacobs sought help for the task from writer and abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-96) who, in 1852, had authored the best-selling antislavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Stowe refused, so Jacobs decided to write her own story.

## **Author, activist, and reformer**

Jacobs finished the manuscript for *Incidents* in 1858. She tried unsuccessfully for several years to get the book into print. Finally, in early 1861, after a Boston book publisher went bankrupt on the eve of publishing her book, Jacobs somehow obtained the funds to have her book printed. The book (which received good reviews), and Jacobs, became well known among abolitionists. A year later, the British edition of Jacobs's book was published in London under the title *The Deeper Wrong; Or, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Historians have traced Jacobs's life after the publication of *Incidents*. In 1863, during the Civil War (1861-65), Jacobs's work was sponsored by the Philadelphia and New York Quakers in Alexandria, Virginia, where she distributed clothing, taught classes, and provided health care to war refugees. After the war, Jacobs and her daughter moved to Savannah, Georgia, to do relief work. Jacobs abandoned her plans to build an orphanage in Savannah, and in 1870 moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she ran a boarding house. In 1885 Jacobs and her daughter moved to Washington, D.C., where she lived until March 7, 1897.

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# Haksun Kim Biography

**Born 1924**  
**Manchuria, China**

**Comfort woman (prostitute)**  
**for the Japanese military**

One of the first Korean comfort women to publicly tell her story of being forced to serve as a prostitute for the Japanese military in Asia during World War II.

**H**aksun Kim was one of an estimated 200,000 women who were forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during its Fifteen Year War on eastern Asia (1930-45). The story of Kim's tragic life as a Korean "comfort woman" was originally published in Korea in a 1993 book, *The Korean Comfort Women Who Were Coercively Dragged Away for the Military*. It is one of nineteen life stories that were collected and published by the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan. Kim relates her abduction and enslavement by the Japanese military in a chapter of the English version of the book (*True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*), "Bitter Memories I Am Loath To Recall."

## Early years in Korea

Haksun Kim was born in 1924 to Korean parents living in China (who were there to escape the Japanese occupation of their country). When Kim was three months old her father died. Two years later Kim returned with her mother to Pyongyang, a village

in present-day North Korea. Kim's newly widowed mother was at first forced to beg from her brothers and sisters in order to survive. Eventually she found work as a domestic servant, a farmhand, a washerwoman, and a sockmaker.

Kim and her mother were very poor but Kim remembers her early years as happy ones. She regularly attended church with her mother, and from age seven to eleven attended a missionary school run by the church. There she recalls enjoying her lessons, sports, and playing with friends. After school Kim often went home and helped her mother knit woolen socks on a rented knitting machine.

Kim's mother remarried in 1938 when Kim was fourteen. Kim did not get along very well with her stepfather. When she was fifteen she was sent as a foster child to a family that trained *kisaeng* (girls who entertain men by singing and dancing). Kim sang for an audition; then her mother received money from the foster father and made a contract that Kim would stay with the foster family for a number of years.

## **Abducted by the military**

For two years Kim attended classes with three hundred other pupils, including another girl who lived with her foster family. They learned how to dance, to sing, and to tell epic stories through song. Kim was seventeen when she graduated but could not obtain a license as a *kisaeng* until she was nineteen. Unable to make money from his foster children in Korea, Kim's foster father decided to take his two foster children north to China to find work.

The year was 1941, however, and a dangerous time to be Korean and traveling in East Asia. The Japanese Imperial Army, seeking to establish an empire for the island of Japan on mainland Asia, occupied Korea and much of eastern China. The travelers were detained for hours at the Korean border for questioning by the Japanese military police. Finally, they were allowed to board a train to Beijing, China.



When they reached the city they went to a restaurant for lunch. There they were confronted by a Japanese military officer who accused them of being spies because they were Korean. The officer led Kim's foster father away and other soldiers forced Kim and her foster sister into a truck loaded with about fifty soldiers. Terrified and in shock, the two girls crouched in the corner of the truck and wept as they were driven for hours to an abandoned house. There Kim and her foster sister were each raped by a Japanese officer, one of whom was the man who had abducted the two from Beijing.

## **Comfort women**

Thus Kim began her life as a comfort woman—one of an estimated 200,000 women who were forced to sexually serve the Japanese military from 1930 to 1945. Like Kim, as many as eighty percent of the comfort women were Korean; their ages ranged from eleven to thirty-two. And like Kim, most came from very poor families. Kim found herself a prisoner in what was known as a comfort station. She was given a bed and some food, and forced to service as many as eight Japanese soldiers in a day. She also had to clean, cook, and wash clothes.

Kim had been abducted into slavery directly by the Japanese military. Many other comfort women were tricked into service by false promises of employment in Japan. Sometimes civilians were involved but it was mostly soldiers and the military police that recruited comfort women, with the military controlling the operation and providing the trucks or boats for transport of the women captives to comfort stations.

## **Sexual slavery**

Haksun Kim spent four months as a sex slave for the Japanese military before she managed to escape. For the first three months she lived at a Chinese village called Tiebizhen; she spent another month at a remote countryside location. In the first comfort station, Kim, at seventeen, was the youngest of five women. All were Koreans who were given Japanese names. Kim was renamed Aiko; her foster sister, Emiko. Because of her age Kim was given more washing and cooking to do than the others, and because they

were new, the other women sent the roughest and most violent soldiers to Kim and Emiko.

Kim had to be available for the soldiers at whatever hours—and in whatever condition—they were given permission to show up. Usually soldiers would visit in the afternoon but sometimes they would arrive early in the morning after returning from a nighttime expedition, or in the evening, drunk and rowdy. Although violence against the women was officially forbidden, Kim and other surviving comfort women reported that they were frequently treated roughly and threatened with beatings if they refused a soldier's sexual demands.

In spite of strict controls, sexually-transmitted diseases were common. When a woman was found to be infected she received an injection and did not serve soldiers for a few days. Medical records of comfort women show that many had to be hospitalized for more serious infections. Women suffered other ailments as well, such as malaria, jaundice, mental disorders, and vaginal swelling; many suffered with lifelong health problems as a consequence.

## **A miraculous escape**

After three months at the Tiebizhen comfort station, the soldiers moved to a new location deep in the countryside, taking Kim and the other comfort women with them. Kim's life continued

### **How a Comfort Station Operated**

The Japanese military began setting up comfort stations for their soldiers as their armies advanced on the Asian mainland in the early 1930s. They saw them as necessary for the morale of their soldiers and as a way to control the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases by forbidding their soldiers access to civilian brothels (houses of prostitution). The Japanese also saw them as a way of limiting the violence and rapes randomly committed by their occupying forces against the civilian (non-military) population. To that end, the Japanese military imported Korean women as sex slaves throughout the areas of Japanese military campaigns, from Siberia to the South Pacific.

Comfort stations were strictly for the use of soldiers, although they were sometimes run by civilians, who then paid a fee to the military authorities. The hours for visitation and fees paid by the soldiers were fixed by army regulations and posted at each comfort station. Officers were charged more than the rank and file soldier, and in some comfort stations, they were serviced exclusively by Japanese comfort women. Sometimes the fees were set according to the nationality of the women: a Japanese woman would receive 2 yen, a Korean 1.5 yen, and a Chinese 1 yen. (Yen is the basic currency of Japan.) The soldiers paid in cash or in tickets, which the women had to turn over to the managers of the stations. More often than not the fees were paid directly to the managers and the women never saw any money at all.

In an attempt to curb the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases, the military authorities ordered soldiers to use condoms that were supplied to them by the army (in some cases comfort women were also given a supply of condoms). Surviving comfort women reported that some soldiers refused to use protection. Regular medical checkups of the women for sexually-transmitted diseases were also part of official regulations dictated by the military.

as before except there were fewer soldiers and fewer disease examinations by the military doctor. Kim had thought about escape from the first day of her captivity but the Tiebizhen comfort station was next to the army base and so well guarded that it was impossible for her to attempt it.

After a month in the new house, a Korean man visited Kim in her room. With the soldiers away on an expedition, the man somehow sneaked past the guard as no one but Japanese soldiers were allowed inside the comfort station. Kim threatened to scream if the man did not take her when he left, and at about two o'clock in the morning the two managed to miraculously escape the grounds undetected. The couple traveled all over China posing as husband and wife. According to Kim, the man knew the country's every nook and cranny and was most likely a dealer of opium (an addictive drug derived from a variety of poppy) for the Chinese.

Kim became pregnant in the winter of 1942 and the couple settled in the French judicial district in Shanghai. On September 20, 1943, Kim gave birth to a girl and in 1945, at age 21, she gave birth to a boy. The couple ran a pawn shop, and with help from a Chinese investor, acted as moneylenders.

## **Return to Korea**

In 1945, at the end of World War II (1939-45), Kim returned to a liberated Korea with her "husband" and children on board a ship loaded with fellow refugees and Liberation Army soldiers. An outbreak of cholera forced the boat's passengers into a refugee camp where Kim's daughter died of the disease. The family eventually settled near Seoul, the capital of South Korea, where Kim sold vegetables and her husband worked in construction, and then as a deliveryman for the military. After the end of the Korean War (1950-53) in 1953, Kim's husband was killed in an accident. Tragedy continued to haunt Kim when she took her son, a fourth-grade student, to the sea for a summer vacation. He suffered a heart attack and died while swimming.



In 1994, former South Korean comfort women, including Haksun Kim (left), staged a 33-hour hunger strike demanding compensation from the Japanese government for their suffering during World War II. (AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission.)

In 1961 Kim moved away from Seoul to the Cholla province where she says for twenty years she performed odd jobs and drank and smoked away her earnings. Kim tried to commit suicide a number of times before finally returning to Seoul. With the help of a friend she found steady work until 1987, when she retired with the money she had saved over the years.

## Breaking the silence

For years Kim, as well as the thousands of other surviving comfort women in Korea, lived in silence and shame. Despite the widespread knowledge in Korea after World War II about comfort women, little was done to seek prosecution of the perpetrators or reparations (compensation) for the victims. Part of the problem was that comfort women were afraid to go public with their stories due to the shame that they and their families would endure in a society that so highly values female purity.

It wasn't until August 1991 that Kim became one of the first of many surviving comfort women to report her story to the public through the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military

Sexual Slavery by Japan. In December 1991, Kim was one of three South Korean comfort women to file a lawsuit—on behalf of all comfort women—in Tokyo District Court against the Japanese government. The lawsuit demanded twenty million yen in damages.

After many years of silence, the Japanese government finally admitted in 1993 that the Imperial army was involved in setting up and running wartime brothels, and forcibly kidnapping women into sexual slavery. Japan, however, has refused to pay any direct compensation to the victimized women, arguing that postwar treaties settled all wartime claims. Instead it has set up a private fund to compensate former Korean comfort women. From 1996 to 1998, the Asia Peace National Fund for Women distributed around \$72,000 to qualified recipients.

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# Abraham Lincoln

Born February 12, 1809  
Hardin County, Kentucky (near  
Hodgeville,  
Kentucky)  
Died April 15, 1865  
Washington, D.C.



U.S. President

In 1863, during the height of the American Civil War (1861-65), sixteenth president of the United States Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, a presidential order that granted freedom to slaves held in Confederate (southern) states. Hailed as the "Great Emancipator," Lincoln set in motion the turning point that ultimately ended the bloodiest conflict in American history. He did not live, however, to see the reconciliation of a divided nation. In 1865, five days after the Confederate surrender, Lincoln became the first U.S. president to be assassinated. He has since become a legendary figure not only in the United States but throughout the world. His story—the rise from humble frontiersman to one of the greatest presidents in U.S. history—is now regarded as a symbol of democracy.

"... I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and hence forward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons."

## Rises from humble origins

Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin in the backwoods of Hardin County, Kentucky, on February 12, 1809. His parents, Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks Lincoln, were poor, illiterate farmers. He had a sister, Sarah; his brother Thomas died in infancy. In 1816 the family moved to south-western Indiana.

Abraham was especially close to his mother, and he was grief-stricken when she died in 1818. About a year later his father married Sarah Bush Johnston, a widow with three children, whom Abraham called his "angel mother." Since Thomas thought his son would become a farmer, Abraham received less than a year of formal schooling. His stepmother encouraged him to educate himself, however, so he read and reread a few books, such as a biography of George Washington, *Pilgrim's Progress* by English writer John Bunyan (1628-88), and *Fables* by the ancient Greek poet Aesop.

After his sister's death in 1828, Lincoln joined a flat-boat expedition down the Mississippi River. In 1831, after his family had resettled in Illinois, he volunteered in the state militia (citizen army) to fight Native Americans in a conflict known as the Black Hawk War. Although Lincoln never participated in battle, he was elected captain by his company. He left the militia in 1832, moved to New Salem, Illinois, and worked at a variety of jobs, including general store owner, town postmaster, and surveyor (one who measures the geographic features of land).

In 1834, as a member of the Whig Party (a political group that supported the power of Congress over the president), Lincoln was elected four times to the Illinois state legislature, serving until 1841. During his first term he taught himself law and earned his license to practice as an attorney in 1836. The following year he relocated to Springfield, the capital of Illinois, and traveled throughout the state trying court cases. Lincoln proved to be a successful lawyer, eventually earning \$1,200 to \$1,500 a year (a sizable sum in those days). On November 4, 1842, he married Mary Todd, and over the next eleven years they had four sons:

Robert, Edward, William, and Thomas, who was nicknamed Tad (only Robert survived into adulthood).

## **Forms views on slavery**

Lincoln began forming his views on slavery after an event that occurred during his second term in the legislature. In 1837 Elijah Lovejoy, an abolitionist newspaperman in Alton, Illinois, was hanged by a mob. Several legislators then introduced resolutions that condemned abolitionist groups (groups that opposed slavery) and upheld the right of southern states to practice slavery. Refusing to support these resolutions, Lincoln and one of his colleagues issued a protest in which they stated that slavery was based on "injustice and bad policy."

Lincoln was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives (one of two branches of Congress, the legislative body of the U.S. government) in 1847, but he accomplished very little and served only a single term. A disappointed Lincoln returned to Springfield, vowing to stay out of politics. The growing issue of slavery in America, however, soon pulled him back.

In 1820 Congress had passed the Missouri Compromise, which permitted Missouri to be admitted as a slave state while banning slavery in the remaining northern portions of the Louisiana Purchase (territory west of the Mississippi River acquired from France by the United States in 1803). The compromise was overturned when Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. Sponsored by Illinois senator Stephen A. Douglas (1813-61), the act allowed settlers in the new territories of Kansas and Nebraska to reject or allow slavery. Angered over the possible spread of slavery, Lincoln ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate (the second, and highest, legislative branch of the U.S. government) in 1851.

## **"A house divided against itself"**

A group of people who opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act formed the Republican Party in 1854. Identifying with the Republican position, Lincoln joined the party in 1856 and quickly became a leader. When Douglas, a member of the Democratic Party, ran for



re-election as U.S. senator from Illinois in 1858, the Republicans nominated Lincoln to run against him. The two men then engaged in a series of seven debates at various locations throughout the state. Their fiery discussions drew large crowds and national press coverage. Neither Lincoln nor Douglas was an abolitionist, but both opposed slavery. They differed, however, on the question of whether slavery should be permitted in the new territories.

Douglas did not believe there was a need for special legislation to prevent the expansion of slavery in the West. His reason was that the land in the West was poor and would not support crops, such as cotton, that traditionally supported a slave economy. Lincoln disagreed, making the famous speech in which he warned that the United States was in danger of splitting in two over the issue of slavery. "A house divided against itself cannot stand," he declared. "I believe the government cannot endure permanently half slave or half free." Nevertheless, Lincoln did not advocate totally abolishing slavery; instead he felt that it should not be expanded beyond the existing southern states. The election of 1859 was close, but Douglas kept his senate seat.

## **Confronts crisis as new president**

Lincoln's performance in the debates, however, earned him the Republican nomination for U.S. president in May 1860. After he was elected, panic immediately swept through the South. Many, believing Lincoln would do away with slavery after he took office, urged the southern states to secede (break away) from the Union. South Carolina became the first state to do so, on December 20. Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas soon followed.

On February 4, 1861, these states formed the Confederate States of America, drew up a new constitution, and elected Jefferson Davis as president. (Arkansas, North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee later joined the Confederacy.) Lincoln had not yet set foot in the White House, the official home of the president in Washington, D.C., the nation's capital.

## **Tries to hold nation together**

After his inauguration in March 1861, Lincoln tried to hold on to all U.S. government property in Confederate territory. In retaliation, the Confederates attacked Fort Sumter on April 12, giving Lincoln no choice but to declare war. The Union (northern) army, unprepared for war, performed badly, and the president was frustrated because he could not find a general competent enough to lead successful battles.

At the same time members of Lincoln's cabinet (his top officials) were not working with him, and instead were attempting to make their own policy decisions. Lincoln was also being harshly criticized from all sides. Many people thought he acted like a dictator when he limited the freedom of the press (newspapers) and allowed the army to arrest suspected traitors without proof of their guilt. Lincoln believed these actions were necessary to achieve his main goal—keeping the United States together.

The second goal, the abolitionist campaign to outlaw slavery, was not shared by most northerners. Lincoln therefore did not push any antislavery measures while the Confederacy was gaining an advantage in the war. However, historians report that he remained personally troubled by slavery. In 1855, for instance, he had written a letter to his friend Joshua Speed, recalling a steamboat trip they had taken together on the Ohio River in the 1840s. Lincoln wrote: "From Louisville to the mouth of the Ohio there were, on board, ten or a dozen slaves, shackled together with irons. That sight was a continual torment to me; and I see something like it every time I touch the Ohio, or any slave-border."  
"

## **Issues Emancipation Proclamation**

On August 22, 1862, journalist Horace Greeley (1811-72) wrote an editorial in the *New York Tribune*, calling upon Lincoln to use his powers immediately. Lincoln gave this reply: "My paramount object is to save the Union, and it is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would



Lithograph of the Emancipation Proclamation.

decisive step. Using his presidential war powers, he issued a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22 and freed all slaves held in Confederate states. The decree did not apply to slave states that had remained loyal to the Union or to areas of the Confederacy that were occupied by Union troops. On January 1, 1863, Lincoln signed the final Proclamation. By the end of the Civil War around 3 million slaves had been freed.

## Delivers famous address

Lincoln believed his most notable act as president was the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Yet he is remembered today

do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that."

Lincoln then offered a plan: slaves would be gradually freed by individual state legislatures and slave owners would be repaid, with some funds being provided by the federal government. The freed slaves would be sent abroad to live in specially created colonies. Lincoln's idea was not supported by the border states, however, and African American leaders did not want freed slaves to leave the country.

In September 1862, Union forces stopped the Confederates from moving north at the battle of Antietam in Maryland. Since the war had now turned in the Union's favor, Lincoln took a

for the Gettysburg Address, a speech he delivered at the dedication of a national military cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on November 19, 1863. He was not the main speaker, and many in the audience felt his brief speech—just 272 words—was dull and made no real contribution to the occasion. People later realized that, through his clear and vivid language, Lincoln honored not only the men who had died in battle but also expressed the ideals set forth in the U.S. Constitution.

Lincoln finally found a capable general in Ulysses S. Grant (1822-85), whom he gave command of the Union forces in March 1864. At this time, however, Lincoln was still battling his critics. While some northerners accused him of putting too much emphasis on the issue of slavery, others thought he had not gone far enough. Many people simply wanted an end to the war. Lincoln's re-election was therefore not guaranteed at the end of 1864. Even Lincoln, himself, placed little hope of being re-elected. However, the fall of Atlanta, Georgia, to Union general William Tecumseh Sherman (1820-91) on September 2 helped boost northern hopes that the war would soon be over. Lincoln won the November election.

## Assassinated after Confederates surrender

As Lincoln prepared to serve his second term, he lobbied Congress to adopt the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which would permanently ban slavery throughout the United States. Passed by Congress on January 31, 1865, the amendment

### Excerpt from The Emancipation Proclamation

*And I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.*

*And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.*

*And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.*

*And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God. . . .*

Source: *The Emancipation Proclamation: January 7, 1863*. Washington D.C.: National Archives Records Administration.

states: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction,"

For the next two months Lincoln worked tirelessly on a peace plan. Even though southern leaders refused his initial offers, he remained hopeful. Finally, Confederate general Robert E. Lee (1807-70) surrendered his troops to General Grant at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865. The Civil War was over. Lincoln had been sworn in as president only a month earlier, but historians can only speculate about how he would have handled the rebuilding of the divided nation.

On April 14, while watching a play at Ford's Theater in Washington, Abraham Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth (1838-65), an actor who sided with the South. Lincoln died early the next morning, becoming the first U.S. president to be assassinated. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, who had been standing by Lincoln's bedside, reportedly said to others gathered in the room, "Now he belongs to the ages."

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# Toussaint L'Ouverture

**Born May 20, 1743**  
**Cap Francais, Saint**  
**Domingue**  
**Died April 7, 1803**  
**Fort de Joux, France**

**Former slave, Haitian**  
**general, revolutionary**

**Former West Indian**  
**slave of African**  
**descent who became**  
**the most important**  
**black leader in the**  
**Americas.**

**A**s leader of Saint Domingue's slave revolution, Toussaint L'Ouverture oversaw the expulsion of the French from their New World colony and the establishment of Haiti as the Western Hemisphere's second independent republic in 1804 (the first was the United States).

## **Royal beginnings**

François-Dominique Toussaint (pronounced too-SAHN) was born a slave in 1743 on a sugarcane plantation two miles outside of Cap Francais, a city in Saint Domingue (a French colony occupying the western third of the Caribbean island, Hispaniola; the eastern two-thirds was a Spanish colony known as Santo Domingo). Toussaint was the grandson of a West African king whose son—Gaou-Guinou—had been captured in a war in Africa and sold to Count de Breda, a French colonist who grew sugarcane on the island and manufactured it into sugar for export to Europe.

Toussaint's father was given special privileges on the Breda estate due to his family's former high status in Africa. This was very unusual for the times as plantation slaves in the West Indies were treated very harshly. Typically, they were forced to work in the fields very long hours in the tropical heat, fed minimum rations of food, and beaten for the most minor offenses. Of the twenty thousand slaves who arrived on the island yearly in the mid-eighteenth century, one out of nine died before the end of their first year. Toussaint's father, however, enjoyed full liberty on the Breda estate and was given five slaves to cultivate a plot of land. He became a member of the Catholic church, married, and had five children (Toussaint was the youngest of four sons).

## **Childhood**

Toussaint's home was larger than most slave cabins, but it was still made of mud and branches with a thatched palm roof. Toussaint's mother grew flowers and herbs and his father taught him about their healing powers, a skill he learned in his homeland. Toussaint helped his mother feed the chickens, sweep the yard, and haul water from a stream for the family's prized possession, a pig. At home the family spoke their native African language, and Toussaint listened to stories of his ancestors and their strategies and prowess (skills) in fighting and war.

As a young slave, Toussaint was given the work of a shepherd. Tending to the flocks and herds, Toussaint had a job that gave him the opportunity to locate and study the many medicinal herbs and flowers that grew in the wild. A shepherd's life also allowed Toussaint the time and opportunity to think and dream. Toussaint dreamed of being a warrior like his father and of being wise and respected like his grandfather, the king. Despite being small for his age, at twelve years old Toussaint became known as a fearless swimmer, and for his daring and skilled horsemanship.

## **Education**

During his formative years Toussaint was greatly influenced by Pierre Baptiste, an old and respected slave who lived on the Breda estate. Baptiste became Toussaint's godfather, a very important position in the culture of the West Indies (a group of islands in the



Caribbean, of which Hispaniola was one). Baptiste passed on to Toussaint the religious instructions and teachings he had learned from Catholic missionaries and laid the foundations of Toussaint's lifelong religious faith.

Baptiste also taught the young Toussaint the French language, Latin, and the basics of geometry (which Baptiste had learned from a Catholic priest, despite unwritten laws that forbade educating slaves). After reading every book—mostly religious in nature—that Baptiste could supply him with from the priest's library, Toussaint turned to the collection of the Breda estate. The plantation's manager, impressed by Toussaint's intelligence, loaned many history and philosophy books to his young slave.

## **Plantation life**

Toussaint's self-education and interest in animals earned him a promotion by age eighteen to husbandman (manager) of all the animals of the estate. He was especially protective of animals and was known to exhibit rage and anger at anyone who mistreated them, including his white overseer, whom he struck in a dispute over a horse. Despite the Black Codes, laws that made it a crime punishable by death for a black to hit a white, Toussaint's value as a skilled slave saved him from punishment. Toussaint, in fact, was never beaten or treated poorly on the Breda estate. But he was never far away from the suffering and cries of less fortunate slaves, always well aware of their mistreatment by their white masters.

When Toussaint was in his late twenties, a new owner took over the estate. Toussaint became a favorite of his new master's family and was made their personal coachman. Toussaint would drive his master and family in a horse-drawn carriage to balls and assemblies, on social visits to neighboring plantations, and into the city to the clubs and shops.

After years of resisting pressure to marry a slave of his master's choice, Toussaint, at forty years old, chose Suzanne Baptiste, the daughter of his godfather. Suzanne was pregnant at the time of their marriage from a previous relationship with a mulatto (a person of mixed black and white ancestry). She eventually gave birth to a boy named Placide, whom Toussaint adopted and treated as well as his own children—Isaac, who was born a year later, and Jean-Paul, who was born ten years later.

## Toussaint joins the rebels

There is no evidence that Toussaint participated in the planning or initial stages of Saint Domingue's slave revolt of 1791. The Breda plantation owners, at first protected by Toussaint, in a matter of weeks fled for their lives. Toussaint sent his wife and children to safety in Spanish-ruled Santo Domingo (the eastern part of the island). Two months after the beginning of the revolt, Toussaint rode off to join the rebels, taking horses and the most reliable slaves of Breda with him.

When Toussaint reached the rebel camp he found great disorder and suffering. The slave army was nothing more than an unsheltered, weary mob, with many dying from festering wounds and tropical fevers. Toussaint's first reaction was to use his knowledge of herbs and medicines to treat the sick and the wounded. His healing skills earned him the title of chief physician to the army, and his fighting skills led to his promotion to commander of a section of the army. Toussaint instilled strict discipline among his troops, making it a crime punishable by death to rape a woman. He also put an end to the abuse of prisoners in rebel hands. He trained his troops to fight

### Saint Domingue's Slave Revolution

In 1789 there were nearly 500,000 slaves in Saint Domingue, 30,000 colonists, and 30,000 free blacks and mulattos. There had been slave uprisings in Saint Domingue before, four in the 1500s and two in the 1600s, but nothing like what happened on August 22, 1791. The rebellion had been brewing for some time. In September 1789 the National Assembly of France granted independence to the whites of Saint Domingue, giving them control of their own government and taxes. In 1791, the rights granted to the whites were also given to Saint Domingue's mulattos and free blacks, but not to the slaves.

Hundreds of years of pent-up hatred for their colonial masters exploded among the field slaves near the city of Le Cap on that hot August night in 1791. Rebellious slaves torched everything: the cane fields, the sugar mills, and the properties and homes of the planters. Armed with machetes and knives, they killed white men, women, and children by the hundreds. The next day the rebels attacked the city, and after suffering heavy losses, were forced to retreat and set up camp on an abandoned plantation. The number of rebel slaves grew from 1,500 to 40,000 within a month.

the French using guerrilla warfare tactics—a hit-and-run strategy that resulted in great military successes for the rebel army.

## **Shifting alliances**

In September 1792 the French sent six thousand troops to Saint Domingue to try to restore order. Toussaint responded by making an alliance with the Spanish in Santo Domingo, believing that the Spanish were truly interested in the emancipation (freedom) of the island's slaves. Toussaint was made a colonel and his army, freshly supplied by their new allies, captured much of Saint Domingue's northern province. In a matter of months, Toussaint's army grew from six hundred to almost five thousand.

On August 29, 1793, the French commissioner of Saint Domingue declared the emancipation of the colony's slaves. Four days earlier, Toussaint had sent out a written appeal to his people to join him in his fight for "Liberty and Equality." He signed the statement Toussaint L'Ouverture (pronounced LOO-ver-chur; an opening), explaining later that he thought "it was a good name for bravery."

On September 20, 1793, British troops landed on the southern tip of the island and in a short time captured the capital of the southern province, Port au Prince, and major ports and towns in the west. Within a year, thanks to Toussaint, two-thirds of the French colony was occupied by either the British or the Spanish. On February 4, 1794, the French National Convention in Paris confirmed the emancipation of all slaves in Saint Domingue. No longer trusting the Spanish to do the same, Toussaint in May 1794 sent his family out of Spanish Santo Domingo and declared his loyalty to France.

## **Taking control**

In a matter of months, Toussaint's army regained control of northern Saint Domingue from the Spanish. After successfully battling the British in a two-year campaign (1795-96), Toussaint was made a brigadier general, then commander in chief of the armed forces by the colony's head commissioner. Toussaint was treated as a god—their liberator from the degradation of slavery—

by the people of Saint Domingue, ninety percent of whom were ex-slaves. The French authorities treated Toussaint as a potential threat to their rule. He controlled two-thirds of their colony—the north and west provinces. The south province was in the hands of the army led by Toussaint's rival, a mulatto general named André Rigaud (1761-1811). After Toussaint drove the British off the island in 1798, he engaged and defeated Rigaud in a civil war in 1799.

As a general and unelected leader of the colony, Toussaint still needed to accomplish two more goals: expel the French and liberate the slaves still held in Spanish-controlled Santo Domingo. In 1801 when the French commissioner of the colony refused Toussaint's request to invade Santo Domingo, Toussaint put him and his family on a ship back to France. He easily defeated the Spanish forces, freed the slaves, and installed his brother Paul as governor of the new province. The entire island of Hispaniola was now under Toussaint's control.

## **King of Saint Domingue**

Toussaint declared his main goal to be "freedom for all—be they black, white, or red." Throughout his career as a military leader Toussaint enforced strict discipline among his troops: no looting, burning, or raping was allowed; prisoners of war and civilians, including whites and mulattos, were treated with respect. In 1801 and 1802, as a leader in peace, Toussaint tried to instill that same sense of responsibility among Saint Domingue's civilians.

After many years of war, the country was in ruins. The once-profitable sugar industry was at a standstill. Toussaint's generals took over sections of the island and forced the people back to work (for wages). Blacks, whites, and mulattos were all to be treated without prejudice. Estates were still managed by whites but they were run on a cooperative basis.

Toussaint reorganized the courts of law and made justice more accessible to everyone. Severe laws were imposed against such crimes as corruption and smuggling. With help from the Roman Catholic Church, Toussaint opened high schools throughout the

country. Toussaint personally oversaw the rebuilding of many of the war-damaged towns, including his favorite, Le Cap. He also built for himself a palace—complete with marble floors, French furniture, a painted ceiling, and garden.

## **Birth of a nation**

During Toussaint's short rule he rebuilt the island's roads, ports, the export trade, education, the arts, and justice system. With stability came economic growth and the attention of France's new ruler, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821). When Toussaint wrote a new constitution for the island, with himself as governor for life, Catholicism as the state religion, and slavery abolished forever, Napoleon decided to invade Saint Domingue and restore French rule. In early 1802 Napoleon sent his brother-in-law, Captain General LeClerc, and twenty thousand veteran troops to take over the island and restore white rule and slavery.

The French began their assault on February 2, 1802. Superior weaponry and numbers forced Toussaint's army to retreat from the coastal towns to the interior, burning everything as they fled to the hills. In the next few months both sides suffered heavy losses in battles and skirmishes. The French also lost fourteen thousand troops to yellow fever, leaving LeClerc with only five thousand soldiers. In May 1802, in a move to prolong the conflict into the rainy season (the end of April) when many more French troops would die of the fever, Toussaint offered peace.

## **Arrest and exile**

Still fearing his power to rouse the people against the French, LeClerc, on orders from Napoleon, arrested Toussaint in early June and put him, his wife, and family on a ship to France. On August 25, 1802, Toussaint arrived at his prison, Fort de Joux, near the Swiss border. It did not take long for the cold and damp of the mountain fortress, with its twelve-foot-thick stone walls and eight months of snow-cover, to take its toll on a sixty-year-old man who had lived his whole life in a tropical climate. In less than eight months, on April 7, 1803, Toussaint died of pneumonia.

Inspired by his death, Toussaint's generals in Saint Domingue waged a fierce war against the French. The French, having lost almost forty-five thousand troops to disease alone, decided to surrender the island. On November 19, 1803, Saint Domingue's top three generals proclaimed Hispaniola's independence from France, effective January 1, 1804. The island's first ruler promptly changed the name from Saint Domingue to Haiti (meaning mountainous country).

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# Edmund Dene Morel

**Born c. 1873**

**Paris, France**

**Died November 12, 1924**

**Devonshire, England**

**Journalist, author, public speaker,  
government lobbyist, anti-war activist**

**Founder of the Congo Reform Association, the first international human rights organization created in the twentieth century, and leader of a movement to end slave labor in the Congo region of Africa.**

**E**dmond Dene Morel was a twenty-eight-year-old, French-born shipping clerk and freelance writer working in Liverpool, England, when he discovered evidence of horrendous crimes being committed against the people of Africa by the king of Belgium, Leopold II (1865-1909). Instead of looking the other way, as he was encouraged to do by his employers, Morel spent the next ten years exposing the crimes of King Leopold. In pursuit of his goal, Morel founded and ran a weekly newspaper and an international human rights organization. His efforts stand as a great example of what a single person can do—even against the greatest of odds—to fight injustice in the world.

## Early life of a writer

Edmund Morel was born in a suburb of Paris. Morel's father was French and his mother was English. Morel's father, a civil servant, died when Edmund was four years old, leaving the family without a pension. Morel's mother went to work as a music teacher in Paris. Morel was sent to England to attend Bedford Modern, a public school with a good reputation and modest fees. When he

was fifteen Morel was forced to return to Paris to work and support his ailing mother.

In 1890, when Morel was seventeen, he landed a job in England, as a clerk at Elder Dempster, a shipping company based in Liverpool. Morel found it hard to support himself and his mother on his meager wages so in his spare time he gave French lessons. He also began to write freelance articles on African trade issues for publications such as the *Shipping Telegraph* and the *Liverpool Journal of Commerce*. Morel wrote his articles from a businessman's point of view, praising the great boom in trade that was apparently taking place between the Europeans and the Africans.

## **Morel dismisses reports of abuse**

For ten years Morel worked in the day as a shipping clerk and at night as a freelance writer. By 1899 he was considered the leading British authority on West Africa. Morel, like most of the rest of the world, believed that the European colonization of Africa that was taking place at the time was good for both Europeans and Africans. In his articles Morel consistently dismissed reports of atrocities (extreme cruelty) being done to African natives by Europeans as false, and if true, a small price to pay for the "civilizing" influences of the West on that "dark" continent.

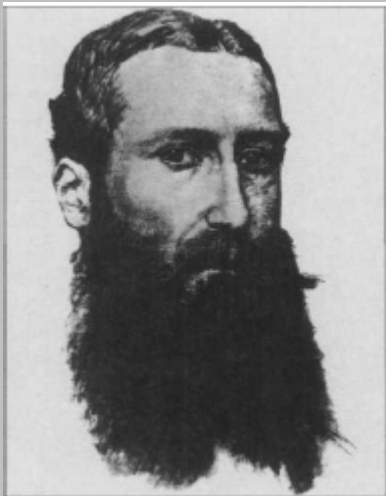
In the late 1890s, part of Morel's job was to travel across the English Channel to Antwerp, Belgium, to supervise the arrival and departure of Elder Dempster ships on what was called the Congo run. The steamers of Elder Dempster had for years worked the west coast of Africa, hauling goods from Europe to Africa and back. At the time of Morel's employment, Elder Dempster had an exclusive contract for carrying all cargo to and from the Congo Free State (now the Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire, and before that, the Belgian Congo). The Congo Free State was created in 1885 by King Leopold of Belgium.



## The Scramble for Africa

At the end of the nineteenth century, most of Africa was under direct European control. In 1884, at the Conference of Berlin, the countries of Germany, France, England, Portugal, and Belgium each staked out territories in Africa that they wished to occupy and colonize. The map of Africa changed almost overnight as the Europeans divided the lands of the vast continent among themselves.

The Berlin Conference, with pressure from the United States, granted King Leopold of Belgium the right to rule over the Congo Basin, an area of central Africa seventy-five times the size of Belgium. King Leopold named his personal kingdom the Congo Free State, and told the world he wanted to rescue the African people from Arab slave traders, and bring them education and "civilization."



## Leopold's reality

King Leopold told the world that he wanted to save the people of the Congo from enslavement by Arabs. The reality was that King Leopold replaced the Arab slave trade with an even more brutal system of slavery. Leopold's strategy was to plunder (drain) the area of its natural resources using the forced labor of the native African population. Without ever setting foot in the Congo, Leopold directed Belgian troops to round up whole communities of Africans and put them to work harvesting ivory and wild rubber.

The native Congolese were also forced to build the facilities needed for trade such as railroads and ports. Leopold, and the private companies he worked with, imposed a quota (a set amount of work to be completed each day) system on the natives, and when they failed to meet it, amputated the hands of the workers. Sometimes they kidnapped the women and children of a village and held them as hostages until the quota was met.

A Belgian government commission investigated Leopold's reign of terror and found that from the late 1870s to 1919 (the year of the report), the

population of the Congo Basin had been reduced from twenty million to ten million, making it, as one historian later called it, "a death toll of Holocaust proportions." Most of the people died from starvation and disease, a direct result of being driven from their homes and food sources. Other African natives died from the horrible conditions of their enslavement. Many of the dead had been murdered by Leopold's forces.

## **Morel's discovery**

Public reports of atrocities in the Congo were made by individuals in the 1890s but for one reason or another they were not given widespread credibility in Europe or abroad. Even Morel, an "expert" on West Africa, was inclined to believe that King Leopold's intentions in the Congo were good and that reports of Africans being mistreated were exaggerated. By 1900, however, Morel came to believe otherwise.

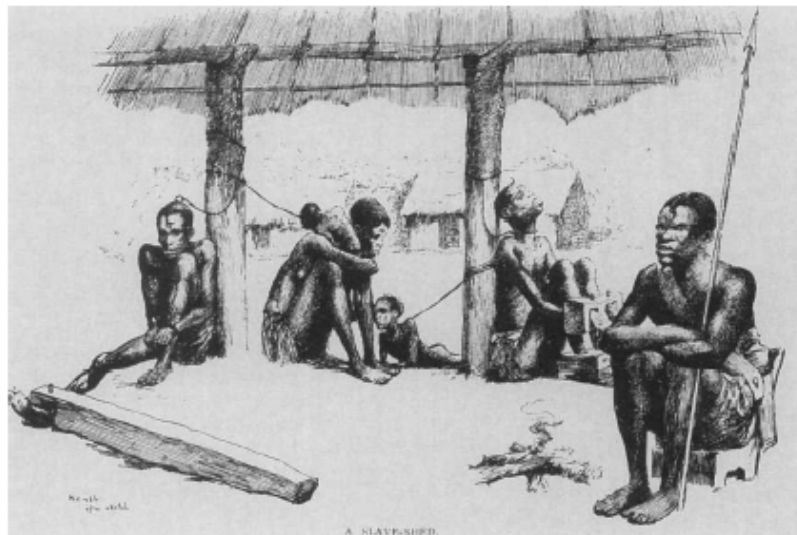
At dockside in Antwerp, Morel noticed that Elder Dempster ships from the Congo came in loaded with ivory and rubber, but ships going back to the Congo were full of army officers, arms, and ammunition. Morel also discovered that the records he compiled for his employer did not match the records released to the public by the Congo Free State. Leopold's books showed a balanced and fair trade taking place. The reality was that thousands of tons of rubber and other tropical products were reaching Belgium without an equal flow of goods in trade back to the Congo. The imbalance could only be explained one way, Morel figured: The rubber and ivory of the Congo were being obtained with slave labor. And, if that were so, then the reports of brutalities inflicted on the Congolese by Leopold's forces were also probably true.

## **Morel exposes the "Congo scandal"**

In the summer of 1900 Morel went to his supervisor at Elder Dempster and informed him of his discovery. Morel was advised to overlook the whole affair as the king of Belgium was one of the company's best customers. Morel instead anonymously wrote a series of expert articles in *The Speaker* on the "Congo scandal." Elder Dempster attempted to silence Morel by offering him a raise and a transfer to another country. Morel refused and in 1901, at twenty-eight years of age, quit his job to work full-time to expose the truth about King Leopold's Congo.

Morel was filled with moral outrage over Leopold's blatant disregard for human life in the pursuit of personal profits. But unlike the people who had tried to expose Leopold before him by appealing to the public on solely humanitarian grounds, Morel's

Drawing of Congolese slaves being held in a "slave shed." (The Granger Collection, New York. Reproduced by permission.)



strategy was to show how Leopold's monopoly on trade in the Congo was bad business for England. Morel argued that Leopold had abolished the rights of free trade in the Congo that were guaranteed to the international community by the Berlin Act of 1885. In other words, the Congo Free State was not only robbing African peasants but British merchants as well. Morel had hoped to arouse Britain's business community to act in its own self-interest and break up Leopold's grip on the Congo in the name of free trade.

## Morel the crusader

Morel was determined to find out everything possible about the workings of Leopold's Congo empire and reveal it to the world. Before he was through Morel produced a huge body of work on the subject: three full books and portions of two others; hundreds of articles and letters to the editor for British, French, and Belgian newspapers; and several dozen pamphlets. He did all this while writing for—and editing—his own newspaper, the *West African Mail*, a weekly publication he started in 1903 to expose injustice in the Congo. Somewhere along the way, although the record isn't clear on this, Morel married Mary Richardson Morel, who raised their five children and supported her husband in his cause.

Initially, Morel's campaign for reform attracted support in England from some members of Parliament as well as humanitarian groups such as the Anti-Slavery Society and the Aborigines Protection Society. Through his newspaper, books, speeches, articles, and pamphlets, Morel became well known as the most outspoken critic of the Congo state. As such many people came to him with eyewitness accounts or smuggled insider documents.

Missionaries provided some of the most gruesome accounts of human rights violations, including descriptions of Belgian soldiers cutting off hands of natives, and Africans being tied naked to a stake for days without food or water for stealing rubber. Missionaries also provided what turned out to be one of the most powerful public relations tools for Morel's campaign—photographs of severed hands and heads, children without hands or feet, and destroyed villages. Morel published it all in the *West African Mail*.

## **Birth of Congo Reform Association**

In May 1903, Morel and his allies forced a major debate on the Congo question in the British House of Commons, where a resolution was unanimously passed urging that Congo "natives should be governed with humanity." Further, the Foreign Office was instructed to investigate conditions in the Congo and to report back to Parliament. The job fell to Roger Casement, Britain's roving consul (government representative) in Africa. After several months in the Congo Free State, Casement returned to Europe in late 1903 to prepare his report.

Casement, who had visited the Congo before the rubber terror days of Leopold, was very upset by what he witnessed during his investigation. His report confirmed that a slave labor system was in place in the Congo and that Leopold's forces systematically abused the native Africans with torture, forced amputations, hostage-taking, and murder. The report was published in early 1904 and gave a great boost to the credibility of Morel's writings and opinions on the subject.

Casement had read Morel's writings while in the Congo and sought him out when he returned to England. After several meetings between the two men, Casement persuaded Morel to found the Congo Reform Association (C.R.A.), an organization devoted solely to campaigning for justice in the Congo. The C.R.A. attracted more than one thousand people to its first meeting in Liverpool on March 24, 1904.

## **Leopold's downfall**

Morel and his allies in the Congo Reform Association spent the next few years trying to convince the world that King Leopold's reign of terror in the Congo should come to an end. Morel traveled to the United States and personally lobbied President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) at the White House. The C.R.A. opened a branch in the United States and more than two hundred mass meetings to protest slave labor in the Congo were held.

At the peak of the crusade in England, more than three hundred mass meetings were held in a year, some drawing as many as five thousand people at a time. With thousands of members, and branches in Europe and the United States, the C.R.A. and its government supporters in 1908 forced Leopold to surrender personal control of the Congo Free State to the government of Belgium.

Morel and his followers in the C.R.A. were pleased that control of the Congo was transferred to the hands of the Belgian government. Leopold died in 1909, and Belgium's new king, Albert I (1875-1934), was publicly opposed to forced labor and promised reforms. In 1913 the Congo Free State officially became the Belgian Congo. On June 6, 1913, the C.R.A. held its last meeting in London.

## **Morel's passion continues**

For years Morel was well known and well respected in England for his Congo reform campaign. World War I (1914-18) would change all that. Morel was one of a tiny minority of people in Europe who opposed the war from the very beginning. In 1914 Morel formed the Union of Democratic Control, which quickly

became the main anti-war organization in the country. Morel, targeted by pro-war opponents in the government, was arrested in 1917 and sentenced to six months hard labor for the crime of sending anti-war literature to a neutral country.

Morel was released from prison in early 1918. His hair had turned completely white while incarcerated. Once a burly man (his nickname was "Bulldog"), Morel was now very thin. Yet Morel resumed his speaking and writing, and in a matter of a few years, was again accepted and respected by the public. With hindsight, the public came around to Morel's negative viewpoint of World War I, which resulted in 8.5 million casualties (deaths) and 21 million wounded. In 1922 Morel was elected to the House of Commons on the Labor Party ticket from his home district in Dundee, Scotland. He was reelected in 1923 and 1924, but did not live to serve his last term in full; Morel died on November 12, 1924.

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# Moses

**Born c. fourteenth century B.C.**

**Egypt**

**Died c. thirteenth century B.C.**

**Egypt**

**Hebrew leader, prophet**

"And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." *Deuteronomy 34:10*

**M**oses was the great Hebrew leader who delivered the Hebrew people (also called the Israelites) out of slavery from Egypt during the thirteenth century B.C. According to the Bible, Moses gave the Hebrews the laws (Torah) that formed the basis of Judaism, the Jewish religion. He is also considered a prophet (one whose words are inspired by God) by Christians and Muslims. Christians are followers of the religion founded by Jesus of Nazareth (also called Jesus Christ; c. 6 B.C.-C. A.D. 30). Muslims are followers of Islam, the religion founded by the Prophet Muhammad (c. 570-632). Scholars are uncertain about the dates of Moses' birth and death because the Bible gives conflicting accounts of his achievements. Many of the events in the story of Moses, however, are based on facts that have been verified by other historical accounts.

## **Adopted by Egyptian royalty**

According to the Bible, Moses ("Moshe" in the Hebrew language) was born in Egypt to Amram and Jochebed, a slave couple in the Hebrew tribe of Levi. They also had another son, Aaron, and a

daughter, Miriam. Although the Hebrews had been in Egypt for hundreds of years, they were ultimately enslaved by the Egyptians. In particular, the Egyptians needed many slaves to work the extremely rich land along the Nile River (the longest river in the world, beginning in Africa and emptying into the Mediterranean Sea). Stretching from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, this region was called the Fertile Crescent because it enabled ancient peoples to create advanced civilizations.

At the time of Moses' birth, the pharaoh (Egyptian king) was trying to restrict the Hebrew population, so he ordered that all newborn Hebrew males be drowned in the Nile. Determined to save Moses, Jochebed kept him hidden until he was three months old. Then she put him in a basket and set it in the river at a spot where she knew the pharaoh's daughter came to bathe every day. Upon finding the baby, the princess adopted him, but she told Jochebed to nurse (breast feed) him until he was old enough to be brought up in the Egyptian court. And so Moses became the foster son of the pharaoh.

## **Forced to flee**

Nothing is known about Moses' life as a child and young adult, but scholars speculate that he received an education in religion, law, and military arts. He probably learned about the culture of the ancient Near East because Egypt controlled Canaan (present-day Palestine) and part of Syria, and the Egyptians had contacts with other nations along the Fertile Crescent.

At some point Moses learned he was a Hebrew. He may have been around twenty-five years old when he made his first visit among his people, witnessing firsthand their terrible living conditions. One day he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave to death, so he stepped in and killed the Egyptian. When the pharaoh found out, he tried to have his foster son executed. Moses then fled to Midian, an ancient region south of the present-day country of Jordan.



## **Speaks directly to God**

Upon reaching Midian, Moses stopped to rest at a well. While he was there the seven daughters of Jethro, the priest of the Midianites, brought their father's sheep to drink from the well. Soon they were chased away by other shepherds who wanted the water for their own sheep. Witnessing this incident, Moses stepped in and drove the shepherds off. He then went to live with Jethro's family, eventually marrying Zipporah, one of the priest's daughters.

Now in charge of his father-in-law's flocks, Moses wandered the wilderness in search of pasture land. According to the Bible, one day he came upon a bush that was burning but was not being consumed. Drawing closer, he heard a voice speaking to him from the flames. The voice told Moses to take off his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. Moses obeyed, realizing he was in the presence of a divine being (deity or god). Much to his surprise, the voice told him to return to Egypt and lead the Hebrews out of slavery. Moses protested that he could not take on this responsibility because he was unworthy. Another reason why he may not have wanted to return to Egypt was because he had committed a murder and he feared Ramses II (fourteenth-thirteenth century the current pharaoh).

Next Moses asked the name of this deity. The voice from the bush responded that he was Yahweh (the great "I Am"), the God of the Hebrews, who ruled over nature and all the nations of the world. Moses continued to resist delivering the Hebrews from slavery, claiming that he could not speak well and was therefore not a good choice as a prophet. Yahweh was becoming angry, yet he would not give in to Moses' excuses. Finally they agreed that Moses would be Yahweh's representative and Moses' brother Aaron, who was a persuasive public speaker, would be the spokesman. Moses went to Jethro and received permission to return to Egypt, but he did not reveal that he was being sent by Yahweh.

## "Let my people go."

Upon reaching Egypt Moses and Aaron told Ramses II to release the Hebrews, announcing: "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go.' " Ramses refused. The pharaoh was considered to be a god in human form, so he did not take orders from any other gods, including this unknown Yahweh. "Who is the Lord, that I should heed his voice and let Israel go?" Ramses demanded. "I do not know the Lord, and moreover I will not let Israel go."

Instead of freeing the Hebrews, Ramses made their lives even more difficult. For instance, he gave them the added task of carrying straw for making bricks on top of the work they were already required to do each day. Many Hebrews blamed Moses for their increased hardship. In despair Moses turned to Yahweh, pleading "Why didst thou ever send me?" But Yahweh promised revenge against Ramses in the form of ten plagues.

Throughout the summer and the following spring Egypt was devastated by the plagues. First the Nile turned to "blood" in a tremendous flood. (Modern scientists have concluded that this flood was caused by extremely heavy rains that washed red clay from nearby hills into the river.) Then the kingdom was attacked by hordes of frogs, gnats (tiny flying insects), and mosquitos. The Egyptian people were afflicted with boils (body sores), their cattle became sick,

## Ramses II

Ramses was the name shared by several kings, or pharaohs, of Egypt during the nineteenth and twentieth dynasties. Ramses II ruled Egypt for sixty-seven years (c. 1304-1237 B.C.), expanding the empire into southern Syria and around the Nile River. In the early years of his reign he achieved fame as the victor in a battle with the Hittites, a people who also occupied parts of Syria. After a nearly twenty-year-long conflict with the Hittites, Ramses negotiated a treaty of friendship in 1283. He then married a Hittite princess.

During Ramses's reign Egypt attained great wealth and political power. He increased the use of slaves, including the Hebrews, and built up a large army. Ramses built many monuments to himself throughout Egypt, including the temple at Karnak, Ramses's tomb at Thebes, the temple of Luxor, and the rock temple at Abu Simbel. Ramses's appetite for luxury and the accumulation of slaves led to the downfall of Egypt. Other kings were unable to maintain the level of wealth and power, and the Egyptian social system ultimately collapsed when the twentieth dynasty ended in 1090 B.C. Historians are fairly certain that Ramses II was the pharaoh mentioned in the Bible, who was forced by Moses to free the Hebrews from slavery.



and the land was overwhelmed by hail (icy rain), locusts (large insects that eat vegetation), and darkness. (Scientists confirm that all of these events occurred and were caused by unusual weather patterns.) The tenth plague resulted in the death of the firstborn sons of the Egyptians. Finally, Ramses agreed to Moses' demands.

## **Hebrews flee Egypt**

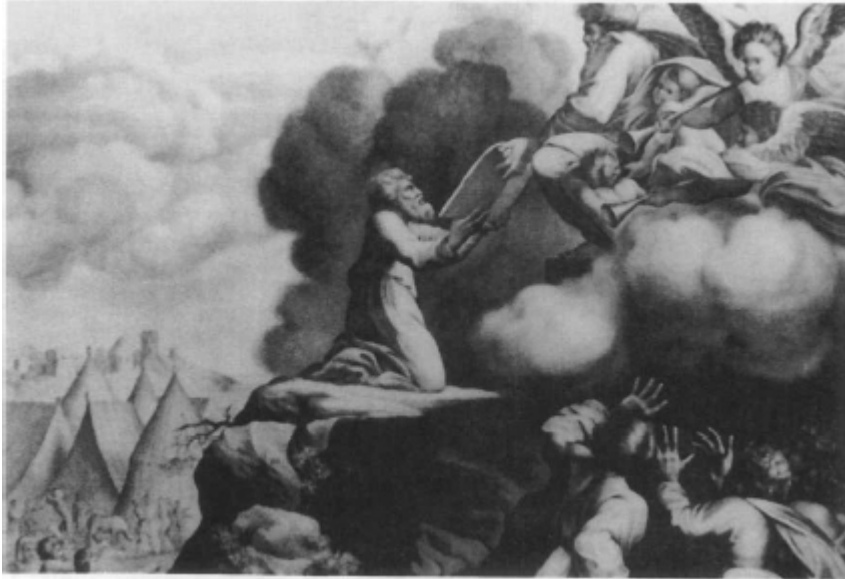
The biblical story of the Hebrews' flight from Egypt is complicated and sometimes conflicting. For instance, one version claims that 600,000 people fled from Egypt, while another says 2,000,000. Historians have determined that the number was probably around 15,000. Yet it is known that Ramses changed his mind and sent his troops to recapture the Hebrews.

Moses and his people—including his own family—had reached the Red Sea when the Egyptian army began to surround them. According to the Bible, at that moment Moses raised his staff (a long stick used by shepherds to herd sheep) and parted the waters, thus letting the Hebrews cross safely. The Egyptians surged forward, but just as they entered the river the waters engulfed them and they drowned. Moses' sister Miriam then led the Hebrews in a song of victory.

In an attempt to explain this dramatic event, scholars have concluded that the Red Sea was actually the Sea of Reeds, a shallow lake where papyrus (tall, woody plants) grew. The "parting" of the waters probably was the result of a high wind that created a dry corridor through the papyrus and permitted the Hebrews to get to the other side. The Egyptians were drowned when the wind died down and the waters returned.

## **Receives the Ten Commandments**

Although they were now freed from the Egyptians, the Hebrews faced many difficulties as they roamed through the deserted lands of the present-day Sinai Peninsula (in northeastern Egypt). Food and water were always in short supply, and the Hebrews were in constant danger of being attacked by other tribes.



**Moses, on Mt. Sinai, receives the Ten Commandments.** (Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.)

After three months of wandering, the Hebrews came upon Mount Sinai (also called Horeb) in the southern part of the peninsula. While the people waited below, Moses climbed the mountain. According to the Bible, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, a moral code the Hebrews were to live by. Among the acts forbidden by the Commandments were murder, adultery (having sexual relations outside marriage), and stealing.

Most laws at that time had been established to keep order in society, but they were written by rulers who themselves did not have to live by the laws. (One of the earliest systems of laws was created by the Babylonian ruler Hammurabi, who died in 1750 B.C.) The Ten Commandments were different because they affected everyone equally and they applied to all aspects of social and religious life. The religious laws of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are based on the principles of the Commandants.

## **Dies on Mount Pisgah**

Led by Moses, the Hebrews wandered for forty years in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. Their destination was Canaan, a land that had been promised to them by Yahweh. During this time Moses served as leader, priest, and prophet, compiling the written

record of the Hebrew laws. He had to face many more battles with tribes whose lands the Hebrews crossed, however, and he had to calm rebellions among his own people.

Finally, the Hebrews reached the Jordan River, which separated them from Canaan. Climbing to the top of Mount Pisgah (also called Nebo; in present-day northeast Jordan), Moses saw the "promised land." He never achieved his goal of leading the Hebrews into Canaan because he died on the mountain. According to some accounts, Moses was buried at Moab (in present-day southwest Jordan), but other versions of the story state that the Hebrews did not see him again.

Moses was succeeded by the prophet Joshua, who had proven himself in battle in the wilderness, and later by the priest Eleazar, the son of Aaron. Yet no one ascended to the greatness of Moses, who is still revered as one of the most outstanding figures in human history.

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# Solomon Northrup

Born July 1808  
Essex County, New York  
Died 1863  
Warren County, New York

Freeborn black, slave, slave narrative author

The story of Solomon Northrup's life as a free black man in the North who was abducted into slavery in the Deep South gained widespread notoriety in the early 1850s. This was due in part to the vast popularity of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in which the horrors of slavery in the American South were vividly portrayed. Solomon Northrup, with the help of an editor, told of his incredible misfortune in a book called *Twelve Years a Slave*, which was published in 1853. Northrup's autobiography of life as a plantation slave, an account that was hailed as entirely believable even by slavery's allies in the South, added credibility to Stowe's fictionalized depiction of the same subject.

Historians today view Northrup's book with great interest. It is the only slave narrative written from the point of view of a black person who was free for many years and then subjected to the cruelties of slavery. Northrup's story sheds light on many aspects of the institution of slavery including the intrastate slave trade,

**Kidnapped from the North into slavery for twelve years in the Deep South, Northrup regained his freedom and wrote one of the most widely read slave narratives of his time.**

slave auctions, the separation of slave families through sale, the role of slave drivers, and the extent of slave resistance. *Twelve Years* is considered one of the most valuable descriptions of the life of a slave on a southern plantation in the mid-1840s and early 1850s.

## **Born free**

Solomon Northrup was born to free black parents in the northern state of New York. Northrup's father, Mintus, had grown up a slave in Rhode Island, owned by a family named Northrup. Mintus moved to New York with his owner at the beginning of the nineteenth century. A few years before Northrup's birth, Mintus's owner died and in his will directed that his slave be set free.

Mintus Northrup became a landowning farmer who was able to meet the \$250 property qualification required of black voters in the state of New York. Northrup was born the second of two sons to Mintus and his wife, and grew up working with his family on their farm. He learned to read and write and in his leisure time read books or played his violin.

Mintus Northrup died on November 22, 1829. On Christmas day of that same year, Solomon Northrup married Anne Hampton, a woman of mixed ancestry—African, Native American, and European. Northrup and Anne had three children: Elizabeth, Margaret, and Alonzo. From the time of his father's death until he was abducted in 1841, Northrup lived an uneventful life, farming and working at various semiskilled jobs in and around the small towns of upstate New York. In the winter season Northrup often made money playing the fiddle at dances.

## **Tricked**

In 1834 the Northrup family moved to Saratoga Springs, New York, where Northrup continued to work at odd jobs and earn money from his violin playing. In March 1841 Northrup was in the village of Saratoga Springs looking for work when he met two strangers who claimed to be looking for musicians to join their traveling circus. They offered Northrup immediate wages and future long-term employment. Northrup accepted and

accompanied the men to New York City, and then to Washington, D.C., where they planned to meet up with the circus company.

At no time was Northrup suspicious of the two men. They did little things to earn his trust such as giving him cash up front, and helping him obtain his freedom papers from the New York authorities before he left the state and entered the South, where slavery was still legal. Once in Washington the three of them went sightseeing and in the course of the day stopped at taverns for food and drink. The two men made a habit of pouring Northrup's drinks for him. Although he did not consume much alcohol, that night at his hotel room Northrup became very ill and lost consciousness.

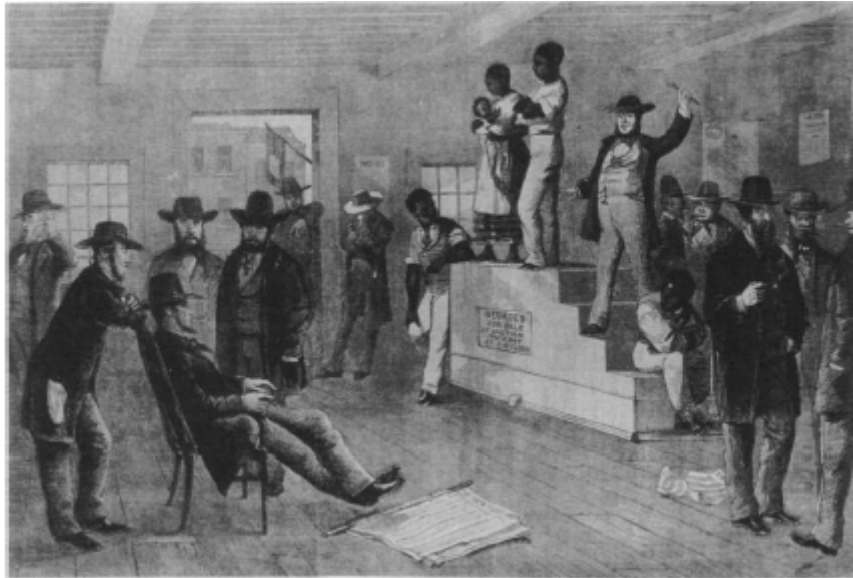
## Captured

When Northrup woke up he found himself in total darkness, in chains, and robbed of his money and his free papers. What he didn't know at the time was that he had been drugged and was now a prisoner of Price, Burch, and Company—one of Washington's major slave traders. What happened next is best described in an 1853 *New York Times* article based on an interview with Northrup shortly after he had gained his freedom:

In the course of a few hours, James H. Burch, a slave dealer, came in, and the colored man [Northrup] asked him to take the irons off of him, and wanted to know why they were put on. Burch told him it was none of his business. The colored man said he was free and told where he was born. Burch called in a man by the name of Ebenezer Rodbury, and the two stripped the man and laid him across a bench, Rodbury holding him down by the wrists. Burch whipped him with a paddle until he broke that, and then with a cat-o'-nine tails, giving him a hundred lashes, and he swore he would kill him if he ever stated to any one that he was a free man. From that time forward the man says he did not communicate the fact from fear, either that he was a free man, or what his name was, until the last summer.



Depiction of slaves being sold on an auction block. Solomon Northrup was illegally kidnapped and sold by auction in 1841. (Archive Photos, Inc. Reproduced by permission.)



## Sold into slavery

Northrup remained in the slave pen for about two weeks before being put on a ship to New Orleans. There he was purchased off the auction block by a planter in the Red River region of Louisiana, where for the next twelve years he would serve several masters as a slave. Even though Northrup had been illegally kidnapped, the sale of slaves between states was entirely legal; importing slaves from Africa was made illegal in 1808 although the trade continued until the outbreak of the Civil War (1861-65).

Northrup worked as a carpenter for his first master and was owned for a short period by another master before being sold in 1843 to Edwin Epps, the owner of a cotton plantation in Bayou Beauf, Louisiana. Epps was a mean master; when he drank too much he took delight in forcing his slaves to dance to the crack of his whip just to hear them scream and shriek. When sober, Northrup recalls in *Twelve Years*, Epps had very good aim with his whip and applied it frequently to slaves that he thought were not working hard enough or who had somehow disobeyed him.

## **Worked like a dog**

Northrup spent ten years as a field slave on the Epps plantation. During that time he worked at many different jobs, described in great detail in *Twelve Years*. Northrup and the other field slaves worked six days a week from dawn to dusk throughout the year. They planted corn in February and cotton in March and April; hoed and weeded the crops as they grew in May, June and July; and at the end of August they started the harvest season. Northrup describes a typical work day during cotton-picking time, which on some plantations lasted through January:

The hands are required in the cotton field as soon as it is light in the morning, and with the exception of ten or fifteen minutes, which is given them at noon to swallow their allowance of cold bacon, they are not permitted to be a moment idle until it is too dark to see and when the moon is full they often times labor till the middle of the night. They do not dare to stop even at dinner time, nor return to their quarters, however late it be, until the order to halt is given by the driver.

## **Plantation punishment**

Northrup witnessed the brutal punishments handed out to slaves who did not meet their daily work requirements or who misbehaved. Slaves who were expected to pick two hundred pounds of cotton, for example, were punished for weighing in with less at the end of the day. Northrup describes in *Twelve Years* the process that occurred at the time the cotton was weighed:

The delinquent, whose weight had fallen short, was taken out, stripped, made to lie upon the ground, face downwards, when he received a punishment proportioned to his offense. It is the literal, unvarnished truth, that the crack of the lash, and the shrieking of the slaves, can be heard from dark till bedtime, on Epps' plantation, any day almost during the entire period of the cotton-picking season.

### Law of the Lash

The Black Codes of the South, laws made to govern the behavior and punishment of slaves, were extremely harsh. Slaves, according to the law, were property, not people, and therefore had no human rights. Slave owners, such as the one who owned Solomon Northrup, were entitled to punish their slaves as they saw fit. The law, in effect, gave Master Epps the power to act independently as judge, jury, and executioner. In *Twelve Years a Slave*, Northrup describes the laws on the Epps plantation and consequences for breaking them:

*The number of lashes is graduated according to the nature of the case. Twenty-five are deemed a mere brush, inflicted, for instance, when a dry leaf or piece of boll is found in the cotton, or when a branch is broken in the field; fifty is the ordinary penalty following all delinquencies of the next higher grade; one hundred is called severe: it is inflicted for the most serious offense of standing idle in the field; from one hundred and fifty to two hundred is bestowed upon him who quarrels with his cabin-mates, and five hundred, well laid on, besides the mangling of the dogs, perhaps, is certain to consign the poor, unpitied runaway to weeks of pain and agony.*

## Rescued

Solomon Northrup, from the very beginning of his enslavement, sought a way to escape or to communicate his predicament by letter to his family and friends in New York. He managed to post a letter from New Orleans in June 1841, to Henry P. Northrup (a member of the family that used to own his father), asking for help regarding his kidnapping. At the time that he wrote the letter to Henry P. Northrup, however, Northrup was unable to state his final destination, thus leaving no way of finding him.

All the time Northrup was living on the Epps plantation he was under orders from his master to not be caught with a book, or pen and ink, or he would receive one hundred lashes. At one point, Northrup made his own ink and managed to write a letter. However, he could find no one he could trust enough to post it. If not for the chance meeting by Northrup with Samuel Bass, a traveling carpenter from Canada, Northrup might have died a slave in Louisiana.

In 1852 Bass was employed by Epps to build a house, and since Northrup had carpentry experience, he was assigned to work with him. The two became friends and conspired

to arrange Northrup's escape. Bass posted letters on Northrup's behalf, which brought Henry P. Northrup to the rescue as an official agent of the governor of the state of New York.

## Returned from exile

After much legal wrangling, and over the strong objections of Master Epps, Solomon Northrup was freed from bondage and returned to his family in Glenn Falls, New York, in January 1853.

He immediately began writing the narrative of his enslavement. Within months a manuscript was ready for publication and by July 1853, copies of *Twelve Years a Slave* were in the hands of reviewers.

The book was immediately successful; the first printing of 8,000 copies sold out in one month. In the course of Northrup's lifetime the book sold over 30,000 copies. Northrup received \$3,000 for the copyright of his narrative, money he used to buy a house, where he lived with his wife and the family of his oldest daughter until he died in 1863.

The publication of Northrup's autobiography led to the identification and arrest of his kidnapers in 1854. One of the book's readers remembered a chance encounter with the kidnapers and Northrup in Washington in 1841. Charges were pressed by New York authorities against the two men, and although their guilt was never in doubt, they were eventually set free after several complicated trials and appeals based on legal technicalities.

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# Mary Prince

**Born c1788**

**Brackish Pond, Bermuda  
(British Colony)**

**Death date unknown**

"This is slavery," Mary Prince declared at the end of *History*. "I tell it to let English people know the truth; and I hope they will never leave off to pray God, and call loud to the great King of England, till all the poor blacks be given free, and slavery done up for evermore."

The publication in England in 1831 of *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* caused quite a stir. The story of Mary Prince's life as a slave in the West Indian colony of Bermuda was widely read by the general public and lawmakers alike at a time when the country was fiercely debating the abolition of slavery in the British colonies. Mary Prince's *History* was especially shocking as it was the first time that a British female slave's life story was published, complete with tales of murder, torture, sexual abuse, and general mistreatment of slaves.

## Oh happy days?

Mary Prince was born a slave on a small farm in Brackish Pond, Devonshire Parish, Bermuda. Unlike many of Europe's New World island colonies at the time, the major industries of Bermuda were shipbuilding and salting, not plantation farming. In 1788 the population of Bermuda, a collection of seven major islands and over a hundred smaller ones, was around eleven thousand people.

Almost half of the people were slaves of African descent, some of whose ancestors had arrived in Bermuda as early as 1616.

Mary Prince's mother was a house slave and her father was a sawyer (a person who saws wood for a living). Her father was owned by Mr. Trimmingham, a shipbuilder, and Mary and her mother were owned by Mr. Myners. When Mary Prince was just an infant, Mr. Myners died, and she was sold along with her mother to Captain Darrel. The captain bought Mary Prince as a present for his grandchild, Miss Betsey Williams. Mary Prince's mother became the house slave for Mrs. Williams—Betsey's mother, and the wife of the captain's son.

In *History*, Mary Prince called her childhood "the happiest period of my life." Looking back on those first years with the wisdom of a forty-year-old woman telling her life story, she added, "for I was too young to understand rightly my condition as a slave." For her first twelve years, Mary Prince and her brothers and sisters were raised by her mother. Given only light tasks to do, Mary Prince and her siblings played with Miss Betsey like a sister. Mrs. Williams, who ran the house in her husband's absence (which was most of the time), was a kind mistress to her slaves. "I was truly attached to her," Mary Prince recalled in *History*, "and, next to my own mother, loved her better than any creature in the world."

## Early education

Mary Prince had just turned twelve years old when she was forced to confront the cold realities of her enslavement. Two years after the sudden death of Mrs. Williams in 1798, Mary Prince and her sisters, Hannah and Dinah, were sold in the local slave market to raise money for Mr. Williams's upcoming wedding. Mary was sold first. "I then saw my sisters led forth," she wrote in *History*, "and sold to different owners; so that we had not the sad satisfaction of being partners in bondage. ... It was a sad parting; one went one way, one another, and our poor mammy went home with nothing."

Mary Prince's new masters were Captain John Ingham and his wife, who lived at Spanish Point, about five miles from the

Williams estate. Under the Inghams, Mary Prince learned how to milk cows, herd sheep and cattle, rub down horses, feed animals, take care of children, cook for a family, and do all the household chores. In *History* Mary Prince describes other things she learned, such as "the exact difference between the smart [pain] of the rope, the cart-whip, and the cow-skin."

## First rage

Slaves under the Inghams were punished for the most minor mistakes or disobedience. And none was worked harder, or beaten more, than the Inghams' household slave, Hetty. Hetty, who was pregnant at the time, was flogged so hard after letting a cow escape that she and her unborn baby died from the injuries. Hetty's work—and her beatings—then fell on Mary Prince.

After being beaten nearly to death herself for breaking a jar, and another time for letting a cow escape, Mary Prince ran away to where her mother lived. She was soon returned to the Ingham household by her father, who pleaded with her master to treat her better. With her father at her side, Mary Prince verbally took a stand against her master, as she recalls in *History*: "I then took courage and said that I could stand the floggings no longer; that I was weary of my life, and therefore I had run away to my mother; but mothers could only weep and mourn over their children, they could not save them from their cruel masters." Mary Prince won a small victory: she was not flogged by her master that day.

## Salt slave on Turk's Island

Mary Prince endured five more years of daily abuse from the Inghams before being sold in 1805 to her new master, identified only as "Mr. D—" in her story. At first Mary Prince was glad to make the 750-mile sea voyage to Turk's Island, if only to get away from her cruel masters. She soon learned, however, that her new master was no better. Mr. D—was a cold-blooded taskmaster whose business was extracting salt from sea water with the use of slave labor.

The work on Turk's Island was very hard and involved hours of standing knee-deep in saltwater, which caused the skin on Mary

Prince's legs to break out in great boils that never had a chance to heal properly. Except for short meal breaks, Mary Prince and her fellow slaves stood in saltwater from four in the morning until dark. They were given daily rations of boiled corn in the morning, corn soup for lunch, and raw corn at quitting time, which they pounded into mortar and boiled in water for supper. "We slept in a long shed, divided into narrow slips, like the stalls for cattle," Mary Prince wrote in *History*. "Boards fixed upon stakes driven into the ground, without mat or covering, were our only beds."

Mary Prince and her fellow slaves sometimes worked around the clock—if salt had to be prepared for a waiting ship, for example. Being tired or sick made no difference to Mr. D—. Mary Prince developed boils on her feet that kept her from working as fast as the others, and like other slaves who could not keep up, she was beaten mercilessly by her master. Mary also witnessed the torture of an ill slave named Daniel, the beating and stabbing of another slave, Ben, and the brutal murder of an old and sick slave named Sarah.

## **A turning point**

Around 1810, after five years in the salt ponds at Turk's Island, Mary Prince was forced to return to Bermuda with her master. She was assigned to work in the house as a servant to Mr. D—'s daughters and in the fields raising such crops as sweet potatoes, Indian corn, bananas, cabbages, pumpkins, and onions. She did all the household work and attended the cow and horse as well. The work was better than on Turk's Island but the cruelty of Mr. D— was still a force that Mary Prince had to reckon with.

"He [Mr. D—] had an ugly fashion of stripping himself quite naked and ordering me to wash him in a hot tub of water," Mary Prince wrote in *History*. "This was worse to me than all the licks [hits from beatings]." After some time, Mary Prince refused her master's advances and demanded to be sold.

## **Freedom's first steps**

Mary Prince's wish was soon met, when around 1816 she was bought for \$300 by Mr. John Wood, a Bermudian merchant who



was in the process of moving his family to the island of Antigua (pronounced ann-TEE-gwa). Most slaves had one or two owners in their lifetimes. Mary Prince had five. The Woods turned out to be her last as Mary Prince, slowly, over a period of more than ten years, gained her freedom from them, one small step at a time.

Mary Prince and Mrs. Woods did not get along well from the very beginning. Suffering from rheumatism (pronounced ROO-meh-tiz-em; swelling and pain in muscles and joints) and St. Anthony's Fire (a disease of the skin), Mary Prince was seldom able to keep up with the loads of washing that were heaped upon her by her mistress. Mrs. Woods did not hesitate to use the whip on Mary Prince either, which strengthened her resolve to seek freedom, however she could attain it.

One way Mary Prince was able to assert herself was by earning and saving money she hoped would purchase her freedom. When the Woods vacationed in the country, Mary Prince stayed at home and took in washing; sold yams, coffee, and other supplies to the captains of ships; and bought and sold livestock in the local market. Mary Prince, independent of her masters' knowledge or permission, also converted to the Methodist religion and learned how to read and write. Her greatest act of rebellion was her marriage in 1826 to James Daniels, a free black widower who worked as a carpenter, like her father. For this act, Mary Prince was flogged by Mr. Woods. Mary Prince begged the Woods to sell her or allow her to buy her own freedom. They refused time after time.

## **Fed up**

The last phase of Mary Prince's life as a slave began in 1828, when she accompanied the Woods on a trip to London, England, to pick up their daughters from school. Leaving her husband behind in Antigua, Mary Prince hoped the change of climate would improve her health. She also believed that the Woods would grant her manumission (a formal release from bondage) in England, where slavery had been abolished since 1772, and allow her to return to her husband in Antigua a free woman.

The Woods, it turned out, had no intention of ever selling Mary Prince or setting her free. They knew Mary Prince would be legally free once on English soil but they thought that she would be unable to leave them due to her poor health and the fact that she was a stranger in a strange land. Indeed, Mary Prince's rheumatism worsened in England, swelling her body and crippling her limbs. Fed up with increased work loads in the face of her illness, Mary Prince, in November 1828, left the Woods and sought help from the Moravian (Methodist) Missionaries and the Anti-Slavery Society.

## Bittersweet freedom

The Anti-Slavery Society went to great lengths to help Mary Prince establish herself as a free person in London. They helped her find work, and made repeated, but unsuccessful, attempts to purchase her unconditional freedom from the Woods, who returned to Antigua without Mary Prince sometime in 1829.

Did Mary Prince ever return to her husband in Antigua or her family in Bermuda, a free woman, to live her life out in peace and liberty? There is no evidence to suggest that her life ended so happily. On the contrary, the last information that is known about Mary Prince's condition is from a note in the second edition of *History*, which suggests a bleak future: "Mary Prince has been afflicted with a disease of the eyes, which, it is feared, may terminate in total blindness." Mary Prince's life story, a tale as bleak as it is full of strength and hope, opened the eyes of the British to the horrors of slavery in their colonies in a way that had never been done before.

### **History makes History**

It was Mary Prince's association with the Anti-Slavery Society of England that led to the publication of her life story, *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*, in pamphlet form in 1831. In 1829 Mary Prince was hired as a house servant by Thomas Pringle, the secretary of the society and editor and publisher of her narrative. Sometime during 1829 or 1830, Mary Prince told her story to a house guest of the Pringles, Susanna Strickland, who wrote it down for word. There is no way of telling how much of Mary Prince's story was edited before publication to fit the needs of the Anti-Slavery Society and their abolition campaign. What is known is that what was printed and distributed, in three editions in 1831, caused a great uproar in England as the country was debating the emancipation of all slaves in the British colonies.

Mary Prince's autobiography, the first ever published of an African British female slave, was called a fraud by proslavery advocates. Antislavery readers, on the other hand, had little trouble believing the horrors of colonial slavery. The debate over the book's authenticity ended on July 31, 1833, when Parliament (governing body of the United Kingdom) passed a bill that abolished slavery throughout the British colonies.

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# Sacagawea

Born c. 784  
near present-day Lemhi, Idaho  
Died 1812  
South Dakota (not determined)

Interpreter, guide



**S**acagawea (pronounced sak-uh-juh-WEE-uh) was a Shoshone (pronounced sho-SHO-nee) interpreter and guide for the Corps of Discovery, one of the most famous expeditions in American history. She was also the only woman member of the party. Most of the information about her life comes from the journals of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, leaders of the exploring party. Her skills as an interpreter and as contact between the Shoshone and the explorers, her knowledge of the plants and wildlife along the route, and her common sense and good humor contributed to the journey's success. Nevertheless, there is much controversy surrounding the story of Sacagawea's life.

## Captured by Hidatsa war party

Sacagawea was born into the Native American tribe known as the Shoshone. Her name at birth was Boinaiv, which means "Grass Maiden." She was born sometime between 1784 and 1788 into the Lemhi band of the Shoshone, who lived in the eastern part of the Salmon River area of present-day central Idaho. Her father was

**"[She] reconciles all the Indians as to our friendly intentions—a woman with a party of men is a token of peace."**

*William Clark*

chief of the village. In 1800, when Boinaiv was about twelve years old, her band was camped at the Three Forks of the Missouri River in Montana. There they were attacked by Hidatsa warriors. Several girls and boys, including Boinaiv, were captured and taken back to the Hidatsa village.

Boinaiv was given the name *Sacagawea*, which means "Bird Woman," by her captors. Historians disagree about the origin and spelling of her name. It is often written as *Sacajawea*, a name meaning "Boat Launcher" in Shoshone. Sometime between 1800 and 1804, Sacagawea and another girl were sold to (or won in a gambling match by) a French-Canadian trader, Toussaint Charbonneau, who lived among the Hidatsa. He eventually married both women.

## **Joins Corps of Discovery**

In 1803 U.S. president Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) and the U.S. Congress authorized a Corps of Discovery for the purpose of exploring the territory between the Mississippi and Columbia Rivers and attempting to find a water route to the Pacific Ocean. Meriwether Lewis (1774-1809), who was Jefferson's secretary, and his friend William Clark (1770-1838) were assigned to lead the expedition. The party of about forty-five men left St. Louis, Missouri, on May 14, 1804. They arrived at the Mandan and Hidatsa villages near the mouth of the Knife River in North Dakota on October 26, 1804. There, they built cabins in a clearing below the villages and settled in for the winter.

Lewis and Clark realized that they would need someone to help communicate with the Shoshone in order to obtain supplies. In November they met Charbonneau and hired both him and his wife, Sacagawea, as interpreters. The process turned out to be quite complicated, however. Sacagawea talked with her husband in the language of the Gros Ventre people. Charbonneau then passed on Sacagawea's words in French to a member of the party who spoke French and English; that person then relayed the information to Lewis and Clark in English. Sacagawea also used sign language, which many in the party could understand.

## River named for Sacagawea

By the time the party had arrived in the Mandan villages, Sacagawea was pregnant. In February 1805 she gave birth to a boy named Jean Baptiste Charbonneau. On April 7, 1805, Sacagawea—carrying her infant in a cradle-board on her back—accompanied the expedition out of the Mandan villages for the trek west. Sacagawea showed Lewis and Clark important passageways through the wilderness. She also quickly demonstrated her knowledge of edible plants along the trail. Lewis wrote on April 9 that when the expedition stopped for dinner Sacagawea "busied herself in search for the wild artichokes. . . . This operation she performed by penetrating the earth with a sharp stick about some collection of driftwood. Her labors soon proved successful and she procured a good quantity of these roots."

On May 14 the party encountered heavy winds near the Yellowstone River. Charbonneau was at the helm of the *pirogue* (canoe), which held supplies and valuables gathered during the expedition. Lewis and Clark were onshore at the time. Knowing Charbonneau was not comfortable in the water, they could only watch in horror as the boat overturned. Sacagawea, however, quickly handled the situation. Lewis wrote, "The Indian woman, to whom I ascribe equal fortitude and resolution with any person on board at the time of the accident, caught and preserved most of the light articles which were washed overboard." The articles included the records of the trip. About a week later, Lewis recorded that he and Clark had named a recently discovered river in Sacagawea's honor.

### Native American Women Guides

Sacagawea was part of a long tradition of Native American women who guided Europeans through the frontier wilderness. After arriving in North America in the early 1500s, white fur traders discovered that native women were excellent interpreters and diplomatic agents. The women carried messages to tribal leaders, familiarized Europeans with native customs, resolved differences and misunderstandings, and taught native languages to the white men. They also provided services such as carrying supplies, mending tents, cooking meals, and making clothing. Since there were few white women on the frontier, native women—like Sacagawea—frequently married European explorers and traders. Too often, however, Native American women were forced into these roles. Like Sacagawea, many were captured by enemy warriors and thrust into the white world.

## Reunited with Shoshone

On June 10 Sacagawea became ill. Lewis and Clark were concerned for her welfare, and they took turns tending to her for several days. Her condition worsened until Charbonneau convinced her to take medicine. The explorers noted privately that if she died, it would be his fault. Lewis wrote that Sacagawea's illness "gave me some concern as well for the poor object herself, then with a young child in her arms, as from the consideration of her being our only dependence for a friendly negotiation with the Snake [Shoshone] Indians on whom we depend for horses to assist us in our portage from the Missouri to the Columbia River."

On July 30, 1805, the party passed the spot on the Three Forks of the Missouri where Sacagawea had been taken from the Shoshones five years earlier. A little over a week later, at Beaverhead Rock, Sacagawea recognized her homeland. On August 13 Lewis took an advance party to find the Shoshone while Clark remained behind with Sacagawea and the rest of the group. The next day Clark saw Charbonneau hit his wife and spoke angrily to him about his behavior. On August 17 Clark, and the others found Lewis, who had met the Lehmi-Shoshone chief Cameahwait. They sent Sacagawea to interpret between Lewis and Clark and Cameahwait:

She came into the tent, sat down, and was beginning to interpret, when in the person of Cameahwait she recognized her brother; she instantly jumped up and ran and embraced him, throwing over him her blanket and weeping profusely .. . after some conversation between them she resumed her seat, and attempted to interpret for us, but her new situation seemed to overpower her, and she was frequently interrupted by tears.

Sacagawea learned that her only surviving family were two brothers and a son of her eldest sister, whom she immediately adopted. She also met the Shoshone man to whom she had been promised in marriage when she was a child. He was no longer interested in marrying her, however, because she had borne a child with another man.



## "A token of peace"

Leaving her adopted son in the care of Cameahwait, Sacagawea continued on the journey. Eventually the party followed the Snake River to its junction with the Columbia, then headed toward the Pacific Ocean. On October 13, 1805, Clark again commented on Sacagawea's value to the expedition, saying she "reconciles all the Indians as to our friendly intentions—a woman with a party of men is a token of peace." In November, a lead party reached the ocean. Upon hearing the men had discovered a beached whale, Sacagawea insisted that Lewis and Clark take her to see it.

When the party separated on the return trip in order to explore various routes, Sacagawea joined Clark, directing him through

**Map showing the routes taken by Lewis, Clark, and Sacagawea during their exploration of the American West.**  
*(Reproduced by permission of the Caie Group)*



One of several  
memorials  
erected to honor  
Sacagawea.  
(Library of  
Congress)



Shoshone territory. She also suggested that he take the Bozeman Pass—a mountain pathway that runs between what are now the states of Colorado and Montana—to rejoin the other members at the junction of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers.

On August 14, 1806, the expedition arrived back at the Mandan villages. Charbonneau and Sacagawea decided to stay there. Clark arranged to adopt their infant son, whom he had affectionately nicknamed "Pomp." On the return trip to St. Louis, Clark wrote a letter to Charbonneau, inviting him to work in St. Louis and telling him that Sacagawea deserved a "great reward" for her help on the journey. Yet only Charbonneau was paid for his services.

## Controversy over Sacagawea's later years

There is reason to believe that Sacagawea lived only a few years after leaving the expedition. Charbonneau possibly accepted Clark's invitation to go to Missouri. On April 2, 1811, a lawyer and traveler named Henry Brackenridge was on a boat going from St. Louis to Native American villages in North and South Dakota. In his journal he mentioned meeting the Frenchman and his Snake Indian wife. Brackenridge admired Sacagawea's gentle personality and added that she tried to imitate European styles of clothing and manners. He also expressed regret that she looked ill and that she wanted to visit her people again but her husband wanted to live in a city.

Many historians believe that Charbonneau and Sacagawea left their son, eventually called Jean Baptiste, with Clark in St. Louis. The boy grew up to become a respected interpreter and mountain man. Then they took their infant daughter, Lizette, and traveled to the Missouri Fur Company of Manuel Lisa in South Dakota. An employee of the fur company, John C. Luttig,

recorded in his journal on December 20, 1812: "This Evening the Wife of Charbonneau, a Snake Squaw died of a putrid fever she was a good and the best Woman in the fort aged abt 25 years she left a fine infant girl." Sacagawea was buried on the grounds of the fort. William Clark later published an account book for the period 1825 to 1828, in which he listed the members of the expedition and whether they were then either living or dead. He noted that Sacagawea was deceased.

According to another theory, Sacagawea left her husband, took Jean Baptiste and her adopted son, Bazil, and went to live with a tribe of plains Indians known as the Comanche (kuh-MAN-chee). There she married a man named Jerk Meat and bore five more children. She later returned to live with the Shoshone at the Wind River Reservation in Fort Washakie, Wyoming. She was called *porivo* (chief) and became an active tribal leader. Some Shoshones, Indian agents, and missionaries reported that she died at the age of about 100 in 1884 and was buried at Fort Washakie. Critics argue that this "Sacagawea" was actually a different Shoshone woman.

## **Honored with numerous memorials**

The Shoshones of Fort Washakie started a project to document the descendants of Sacagawea. Many among them believe that she indeed lived a long and full life. Sacagawea has become one of the most memorialized women in U.S. history. A bronze statue of her was exhibited during the centennial (hundred-year) observance of the Lewis and Clark expedition in St. Louis in 1904. Another statue was commissioned by a women's suffrage group in Oregon, with the unveiling set to coincide with the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in Portland, Oregon, in 1905. Statues were also erected in Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Virginia. In addition to the river in Montana named for Sacagawea, other memorials include three mountains, two lakes, and numerous markers, paintings, musical compositions, schools, and a museum.

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# Patrick Saint

Born c. 385  
Britain  
Died c. 461  
Ireland

Christian missionary, patron saint of  
Ireland



Throughout the world Catholics and non-Catholics alike celebrate March 17 as St. Patrick's Day with parades, festivals, and other special events. The patron saint (holy protector) of Ireland, Patrick has become a legendary figure, yet the real-life Patrick had little in common with the mythical St. Patrick. Born in the late fourth century, he was actually a simple man who was sold into slavery as a teenager. He then served as a Catholic missionary in Ireland during the fifth century, spreading Christianity outside the Roman Empire (the Romans did not occupy Ireland). Nevertheless, he did perform the near-superhuman feat of converting virtually the entire Irish population. The most reliable source of information about Patrick is his *Confession*, which he wrote in Latin when he was an old man. He composed this work to justify his career to church leaders who criticized his lack of education and questioned his commitment to Christianity.

"A young man, almost a beardless boy, I was taken captive before I knew what I should desire and what I should shun."

*St. Patrick, Confession*

## **Sold into slavery by pirates**

According to his *Confession*, Patrick was born to Calpurnius, a deacon (a church official), whose own father, Potitus, was a priest. The family lived in a small country estate near the settlement of Bannavem Taburniae. The exact location of Bannavem Taburniae is not known, but it was part of the Roman Empire in Britain, possibly near the Severn River in present-day Pembroke, Wales. Patrick's family were Roman citizens and Calpurnius was a nobleman.

The date of Patrick's birth is uncertain, although it was probably sometime during the last years of Roman domination (the empire began to decline in Britain in A.D. 409). Historians believe that Patrick may have been born around A.D. 385, or even as late as 415. His original name was Maewyn Succat (he became known as Patrick or Patricius when he entered the Christian priesthood). Despite coming from a noble family, Patrick received hardly any formal education. In fact, in the *Confession* he repeatedly apologizes for his poor command of Latin (the official language of the Catholic church) and his inferior writing skills. Most significantly, he showed little interest in Christianity while he was growing up.

When he was sixteen years old, Patrick was captured by pirates and carried across the Irish Sea (the body of water between Britain and Ireland) to be sold as a slave in Ireland (known as Scottus by the Romans). Patrick wrote in the *Confession* that he felt he had been taken captive because he had not been faithful to God.

## **Enters priesthood in France**

Patrick was bought by Milchu, a chieftain-king. He worked as a shepherd on Slemish Mountain, and possibly on another mountain (now called Croaghpatrick in his honor), near present-day Ballymena in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. While tending his sheep he began to feel "the love of God," and experienced a spiritual conversion. Sorry for his earlier failure to obey God, he began to pray both day and night. He recalled that he "used to stay out in the forests and on the mountain" and would "wake up before daylight to pray in the snow, in icy coldness, in rain. . . ."

After six years, Patrick had a dream urging him to escape from Milchu and return home. He later wrote in the *Confession* that he traveled two hundred miles to reach the coast of Ireland. He then had to convince a group of sailors to take him on board their ship. After a three-day voyage they reached France, where Patrick roamed for several years.

Patrick possibly visited the Monastery of St. Martin at Marmoutier before entering the monastery (a place for a community of men who have taken religious vows) at Lérin, where he was admitted to the Catholic priesthood. Around 413 he returned to Britain and lived with his family for several years. Although they begged him to stay home, his dreams once again forced him to act.

This time Patrick had a vision in which he was "visited by a man named Victoricus," who told him to return to Ireland and convert the people to Christianity. Around 419 he left his homeland to prepare himself as a missionary (a person who tries to convert others to different religious beliefs) with the famous bishop Germanus (later St. Germanus) at Auxerre, France. Patrick remained at Auxerre for the next twelve years before heading to Ireland.

## **Sent as missionary to Ireland**

Patrick was not the first Christian to preach in Ireland. The missionary bishop Palladius (later St. Palladius) went there in 431, but he failed to gain any converts. After a year Palladius left the country and died on the way home. In 432 Germanus sent Patrick to take Palladius's place as bishop (the official representative of the pope, the head of the Catholic church). At that time the Irish believed in their own gods and were highly suspicious of Christianity. They had a tradition of myths and legends, dating to prehistoric times, that had been passed down through the generations by poets and druids (priests or teachers).

Because the Irish worshiped several gods, they were considered to be pagans (derogatory word for non-Christians) by the Christians, who believed in the "one true God" revealed by Jesus of Nazareth (founder of Christianity, known as the Christ). Since Palladius had

## The Legends of St. Patrick

Over the centuries storytellers have exaggerated the facts of St. Patrick's life with miraculous tales. According to one legend, Patrick used the three-leaf clover (called the shamrock) to explain the Holy Trinity (the Christian concept of God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit) to an Irish king. Thus the shamrock has become the symbol for St. Patrick—and for Ireland. Another legend credits Patrick with driving all the snakes out of Ireland. He also supposedly brought on earthquakes, sudden darkness, and general confusion in places where people refused to convert to Christianity. And in one wild tale, a wizard mocked both God and Patrick, so Patrick had the wizard lifted high into the air and then dropped to the ground, where he was smashed into pieces.

been unable to spread his message, Patrick knew he had to take another approach. In the Roman Empire, Christianity was practiced mainly in the cities, but the Irish were nomads (people who do not settle in one place) and lived in tribal villages. So Patrick would have to travel throughout the countryside, going from tribe to tribe.

## Wins pagans to Christianity

Patrick had reached Ireland in the winter and started his first church at Saul (present-day Strangford Lough on the east coast of Northern Ireland) in 432. His first major attempt at conversion took place the following spring near the Hill of Tara (in County Meath, northwest of present-day Dublin), the seat of the high kings of Ireland (chiefs of all the tribes).

It was a dramatic confrontation. Patrick had deliberately chosen to preach at Beltaine (the feast of the sun god Bel, the giver of life), a Celtic ritual held on May 1 to celebrate the beginning of summer. (The Celts were peoples who lived in the British Isles, Spain, and Asia Minor.) It was the custom to light bonfires in honor of Bel throughout Ireland, but only after the high kings and druids lit the first fires at Tara. That year Beltaine coincided with the Christian Easter (a holiday commemorating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ). As the kings and druids gathered at Tara on May Eve (the night of April 30), Patrick camped on Slane, a nearby hill. Before the Beltaine celebrants had a chance to light their bonfires, Patrick started the first fire—in celebration of Easter.

Patrick's act initially caused extreme outrage, but gradually he gained the respect of the kings. Finally he even set up his headquarters at Tara. With a band of followers he began converting and baptizing hundreds of people in northern and

western Ireland. His mission, though, was not without danger. Many non-Christians, especially kings and other tribal leaders, were hostile to Patrick's teachings. His life was frequently threatened, and once he was jailed for two weeks.

Many senior church officials also despised him because of his lack of education. In 444 or 445, with the permission of Pope St. Leo I, Patrick founded a cathedral (main church) at Armagh (now a city in the southern part of Northern Ireland), which continues to be a religious center in Ireland.

## **Demands return of slaves**

Patrick devoted his career to saving pagans. Yet on at least one occasion, several years before he wrote the *Confession*, he turned his attention to the atrocities (extreme cruelty) of slavery. A British-Roman prince named Coroticus, who was supposedly a Christian, headed a kingdom in southwest Scotland and northwest England, not far from Patrick's boyhood home. Coroticus staged a raid on Ireland and captured newly converted Christians. Several captives were killed and the survivors were sold into slavery in Scotland and Ireland.

Appalled by this event, Patrick sent a letter to Coroticus, requesting the return of the slaves. He was ignored. He wrote a second appeal, the *Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus*, which was addressed to Coroticus's men and was intended to be read aloud in public. This remarkable document, which still exists, vividly conveys Patrick's anger and

### **St. Patrick's Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus**

The following excerpt appears in Seamus Deane's *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (pp. 70-71):

*With my own hand I have written and composed these words, to be given, delivered, and sent to the soldiers of Coroticus....*

*. . . I do not know what to lament more: those who have been slain, or those whom they have taken captive, or those whom the devil has mightily ensnared. Together with him they will be slaves in Hell in an eternal punishment; for those who committeth sin is a slave and will be called a son of the devil. . . .*

*. . . Hence the Church mourns and laments her sons and daughters whom the sword has not yet slain, but who are removed and carried off to faraway lands, where sin abounds openly, grossly, impudently. There people who are freeborn have been sold, Christians made slaves, and that, too, in the service of the abominable, wicked, and apostate Picts [inhabitants of Scotland]!...*

*I ask earnestly that whoever is a willing servant of God be a carrier of this letter, so that on no account it be suppressed or hidden by anyone, but rather be read before all people, and in the presence of Coroticus himself May God inspire them sometime to recover their senses for God, repenting, however late, their heinous deeds . . . and set free the baptised women whom they took captive, in order that they may deserve to live to God, and be made whole, here and in eternity!*



feelings of betrayal at the violence committed against Christians by other Christians.

## Makes lasting contributions

Little is known about Patrick's work beyond the facts provided in the *Confession*, but he made lasting contributions that are still in evidence today. Historians note that he was successful in his mission because he understood the Irish people. As bishop of Ireland he initiated a system of church organization, with bishops overseeing monasteries headed by abbots, that was based on the tribal units he found when he arrived in the country. He also helped change and soften Irish laws, especially those pertaining to slaves and taxation of the poor, and he introduced the Roman alphabet to Ireland. Patrick retired in 457 and went to live at Saul. When he died four years later, Ireland was almost entirely Christian. This achievement transformed a barely educated former slave into one of the most successful missionaries in history.

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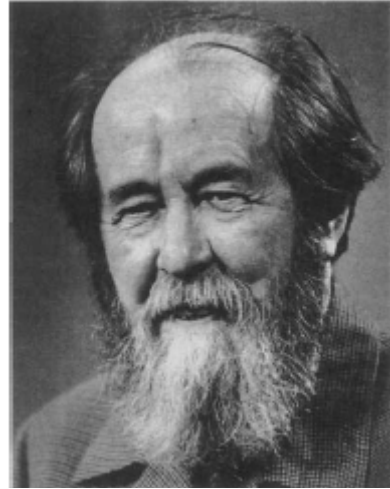
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# Aleksandr Isayevich Solzhenitsyn

Born December 11, 1918  
Kislovodsk, Soviet Union

**Slave in Soviet labor camps,  
world-renowned author**



**F**rom 1927 to 1953, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was ruled by the dictator Joseph Stalin (1879-1953). During Stalin's rule, the government of the USSR enslaved millions of Soviet citizens in labor camps in central Russia, Siberia, central Asia, and above the Arctic Circle. Russian-born novelist, dramatist, and poet Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was one of those victims, accused of political crimes and forced as punishment into the Soviet corrective labor camp system known as the gulag (pronounced GOO-lahg) from 1945 to 1953.

First as a critic of Stalin's government, and then as a critic of the Soviet system in general for its abuse of human rights and its censorship of writers, for over thirty years Solzhenitsyn waged a one-man war against the powerful communist government of the USSR. Although very few of Solzhenitsyn's extensive writings have ever been published in the former Soviet Union, his novels, short stories, and plays about his experiences in Stalin's slave labor camps have been widely read throughout the world. Solzhenitsyn won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1970.

**A survivor of an eight-year sentence in the Soviet Union's corrective labor camps, Solzhenitsyn emerged to become one of the great literary figures of the twentieth century.**

## The young writer

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (pronounced sohl-zuh-NEET-sin) was born in Kislovodsk (pronounced KEES-luh-votsk), a health resort in the northern Caucasus (KAH-kuh-suhs) between the Black and Caspian seas. His father, Isaaki, survived four years on the German front as a Russian artillery officer in World War I (1914-18) only to die in a hunting accident six months before his son's birth. When Solzhenitsyn was six years old he and his mother, Taisiya, moved to the city of Rostov-on-Don, in the northern Caucasus, where she worked as a typist when she was not ill.

Despite their impoverished conditions, Solzhenitsyn was able to indulge in his love of reading, and according to his own account, by the age of ten had read most of the Russian literary classics including Leo Tolstoy's (1828-1910) *War and Peace* in its entirety. Solzhenitsyn admits that he wanted to be a writer from the time he was nine years old and when he was growing up he longed to go to Moscow to pursue literary studies. He excelled as a student and graduated in 1936 from the best high school in the city. During that time Solzhenitsyn was an active member of Komsomol, the Communist youth organization.

## Soviet citizen

Not wanting to move away from his ailing mother, Solzhenitsyn enrolled at the University of Rostov in 1938. Although his passion was for literature, Solzhenitsyn was not impressed with the university's literary studies faculty and enrolled instead in the mathematics department. In 1940 Solzhenitsyn married Natalya Reshetovskaya, a fellow Rostov University student who later became a professor and research chemist. In 1941 Solzhenitsyn graduated with honors, with the help of a Stalin scholarship along the way. In the same year Solzhenitsyn began his formal literary studies through correspondence courses with the Moscow Institute of History, Philosophy, and Literature.

Solzhenitsyn briefly taught mathematics at a Rostov secondary school before being drafted into the Red Army after Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Solzhenitsyn served as a driver of an army wagon train, with the rank of private until

November 1942, when he completed training as an artillery officer. Solzhenitsyn was sent to the front as a commander of an artillery battery. There he served with distinction, earning two wartime decorations for bravery and attaining the rank of captain by 1945.

## Imprisoned

In February 1945 Solzhenitsyn was called into the headquarters of his commanding officer where he was put under arrest by the Soviet secret police. He was immediately transported to Lubyanka Prison in Moscow. The charge: criticizing Russian leader, Joseph Stalin, in letters to a school friend between 1944 and 1945. Stripped of his captain's rank, Solzhenitsyn was sentenced in the summer of 1945 by a three-man court, without a hearing, to eight years in a labor camp.

Solzhenitsyn was transferred to another prison in Moscow for about a year. There he worked as a laborer on a building project. Due to his skills in mathematics Solzhenitsyn was sent to Marfino, a specialized prison on the outskirts of Moscow that forced mathematicians and scientists to do research for the state. In 1950 Solzhenitsyn was sent to a hard labor camp at Ekibastuz, Kazakhstan (pronounced eh-kee-BOS-tus, kuh-zok-STON), in central Asia, perhaps because of his refusal to cooperate fully in research projects for the government.

Conditions at Ekibastuz, a special camp created for political prisoners only, were much harsher. It was bitter cold without warm clothing and proper shelter, the discipline was strict, and hunger was a fact of life. The work was hard. In his three years at the camp Solzhenitsyn provided slave labor as a bricklayer, a

### Stalin's Slaves

Under Joseph Stalin's rule (1927-53), as many as five to eight million people were in "corrective labor camps" in the USSR at any one time. Stalin used his huge prison work force in a variety of ways to bolster the Soviet economy without having to pay for labor. Prisoners built and maintained roads, canals, and rail lines, and constructed housing and hydroelectric plants. They labored in the coal, gold, chrome, and ore mines, and in the oil fields. Prisoners also worked in agriculture, fishing, lumbering, and manufacturing. The prisoners were paid in food, not wages. Their clothing and shelter were minimal. Living conditions were so poor that the death rate for inmates at many labor camps was thirty percent a year.

The use of prison labor does not always constitute a form of slavery. The conditions of Soviet-style forced labor, however, were nothing short of slavery. People were arrested without reasonable causes, shipped on trains like animals to faraway places, forced to do unbearable work without compensation, and frozen and starved to death.

foundry worker, and a general laborer. While in Ekibastuz, Solzhenitsyn developed a cancerous growth in his stomach that was operated on in a prison hospital. He was not expected to live.

## **Exiled**

Having served his full term in prison, Solzhenitsyn was released on March 5, 1953, the same day that Stalin's death was announced. Solzhenitsyn walked out of the labor camp without guards for the first time in eight years but he was not free. Soviet authorities instead sent him into permanent exile (forced removal from one's native country) in Kokterek, in southern Kazakhstan. At the end of 1953, on the verge of death, Solzhenitsyn was allowed to go to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, for treatment in a cancer clinic. There he underwent successful radiation therapy and then returned to Kazakhstan where he taught mathematics and physics in a rural school, always under surveillance by the Soviet secret police.

In the hard labor camp, Solzhenitsyn was able to write only bits of poetry on scraps of paper, which he destroyed once he committed them to memory. In exile, even though he was constantly monitored, Solzhenitsyn spent great amounts of time secretly writing prose despite being convinced that Soviet authorities would never allow its publication.

With the death of Stalin the political atmosphere of the Soviet Union changed and the country began to move away from some of its harsher institutions and policies. In June 1956 Solzhenitsyn was released from forced exile, and in 1957, Solzhenitsyn's 1945 conviction was officially recognized as invalid, which allowed him to return to central Russia. He settled in the city of Ryazan (pronounced ri-ZON), southeast of Moscow, where he found work as a secondary school teacher. His wife, who had remarried while he was in the labor camp, divorced her second husband to remarry Solzhenitsyn.

## **Begins to publish**

The rise to power of Nikita S. Krushchev (1894-1971; pronounced kroosh-CHAWF) in the mid-1950s, and his policy of de-

Stalinization of the USSR, led Solzhenitsyn in 1961 to believe that it was finally safe for him to try to publish some of his writings. His first attempt was successful. In 1962 the Soviet Union's leading literary journal, *Novy Mir* (New World), published Solzhenitsyn's novel, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. The story describes a single day in the life of Ivan Denisovich Shukhov, a labor camp inmate sentenced to ten years corrective labor because he had been taken prisoner by the Germans during the war. Publication of the short novel was approved by Krushchev himself as part of an official anti-Stalin campaign.

The reaction to *Ivan Denisovich* was instant worldwide acclaim for Solzhenitsyn as an important Russian author. In the USSR, he was admitted to the Union of Soviet Writers and the book received high praise from critics in the official newspapers, *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. In 1963 Solzhenitsyn published three more short stories in *Novy Mir* and was nominated for, but did not win, a Lenin Prize for literature in 1964. Solzhenitsyn, however, had accumulated enough royalties (money from sales of his book) at this point to quit his teaching job to devote all of his time to writing.

## Final showdown

After Krushchev was removed from power in December 1964, Solzhenitsyn found it increasingly difficult to get his work published in the Soviet Union. The USSR's new leadership viewed Krushchev's policies—and Solzhenitsyn's writings—as having gone too far in their criticism of established Soviet policies. In 1965 Soviet authorities confiscated Solzhenitsyn's manuscript of *The First Circle*, a novel about his forced labor at the Marfino penal research facility, as well as other manuscripts that Solzhenitsyn considered as unfinished works in progress. Manuscripts of *The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward* found their way to the West, however, where they were published in 1968.

In May 1967 Solzhenitsyn wrote a famous letter to the Fourth National Congress of Soviet writers, criticizing the Soviet system of censorship of its writers. Eighty-two writers petitioned the Communist Party's Central Committee on Solzhenitsyn's behalf but in November 1969 he was expelled from the Writer's Union.

When he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1970 Solzhenitsyn did not travel to Stockholm, Sweden, to receive the award for fear that he would not be permitted to return home by Soviet authorities.

Solzhenitsyn's next major novel, *August 1914* (the first in The Red Wheel series of books on World War I and the Russian Revolution), was rejected by seven Soviet publishers before Solzhenitsyn allowed it to be published abroad in 1971. In 1973 when Soviet authorities seized the manuscript of Solzhenitsyn's major work about the Soviet penal system, *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn immediately authorized its publication in Paris, France, where a copy had earlier been smuggled. Parts one and two of the seven-part work appeared in print in December 1973.

## Later years

On February 12, 1974, Solzhenitsyn was arrested and charged with treason (betrayal of one's country). He was stripped of his citizenship and deported (banished) to West Germany. Solzhenitsyn's second wife, Natalya Svetlova (they were married in 1973 after Solzhenitsyn divorced his first wife), and her three sons were permitted to join him. The Solzhenitsyn family lived for two years in Zurich, Switzerland, before moving to the United States where they settled in rural Vermont.

Solzhenitsyn continued to write novels in exile and had books published in 1984 and 1986. In 1989 *Novy Mir* published the first officially sanctioned excerpts from *The Gulag Archipelago*, and in 1990, Solzhenitsyn's Soviet citizenship was officially restored. Solzhenitsyn returned to Russia in 1994, three years after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In May 1997 Solzhenitsyn was hospitalized for a heart ailment. In 1999, Solzhenitsyn's latest installment in The Red Wheel series, *November 1916*, was released in English translation (the Russian-language edition was issued in 1993).

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# Spartacus

**Birth date unknown**  
**Thrace (a region in**  
**southeast Europe near Italy)**  
**Died 71 B.C.E.**

**Roman slave and gladiator,**  
**rebellion leader**

Taken from his native Thrace and sold into slavery in Rome, Spartacus led the greatest slave rebellion in ancient history.

**T**he slave war started by Spartacus in 73 B.C.E. was the largest slave outbreak in Roman history. In the two years of armed revolt tens of thousands of slaves ran away from their owners to join the original rebels. Not long before the Spartacan war, the Romans had already brutally crushed two previous slave wars in Sicily (a large island off the southern tip of Italy), the First Servile War (135-133 B.C.E.), and the Second Servile War (104-100 B.C.E.). Spartacus and his followers for two years battled one of the world's greatest armies and in the process occupied and controlled at one time or another large parts of central and southern Italy. Spartacus and his followers were eventually defeated but it took a military force as great as Caesar would later require to conquer all of Gaul (France) to do it.

## Unknown origins

What little information there is about the personal life of Spartacus (pronounced SPART-uh-kuhs) comes to us from accounts of the "War of the Gladiators" by ancient writers such as Plutarch (c. 46-119; Greek biographer), Sallust (c.86-35 B.C.E.; Roman

historian), and Appian (second century A.D.; Greek historian). Spartacus was a man from Thrace, a region of southeast Europe composed of northeast Greece, south Bulgaria, and European Turkey. Some ancients claimed he was of noble birth; others that he was born to a slave mother. Spartacus served for a while in the Roman army, but deserted and turned brigand (outlaw; bandit). The Romans recaptured him and took Spartacus and his wife to Rome where they were sold into slavery to the highest bidder.

The legend of Spartacus that developed after his death includes the following story about his character, as told by Plutarch: "The story goes that when he was first brought to Rome to be sold, a snake appeared and wound itself round his face as he was asleep, and his wife, who came from the same tribe as Spartacus and was a prophetess . . . stated that it signified that a great and fearful power would accompany him to a lucky conclusion." The story may be untrue but it does show that Spartacus was regarded as an almost supernatural being.

## **Life as a gladiator**

Spartacus and his wife were bought in Rome by Lentulus Batiatus, a slave trader who ran a training school for gladiators (men trained for fighting) in the city of Capua. Gladiators in ancient Rome, as early as 400 B.C.E., fought each other—and sometimes wild beasts—to the death in public arenas as a form of mass entertainment. One of the larger arenas, the Colosseum in Rome, could hold fifty thousand spectators. Gladiators were chosen among slaves, war captives, and criminals for their fighting potential. Death in the arena was the sentence for crimes such as murder, treason, and robbery.

## Slaves in Roman Society

Slaves under the Roman Republic (509-27 B.C.E.) had no legal rights. They were not allowed to own property or marry without their owner's permission. A slave owner could whip, beat, maim, torture, and even kill a slave without being prosecuted. If a slave, however, killed his or her master, all the slaves of the household were, by law, condemned to death. If caught, runaway slaves faced crucifixion (being nailed or bound to a cross until death). If not killed, runaway slaves were branded or made to wear a slave collar with their master's name inscribed on it. Roman law did not protect slaves, male or female, from sexual assault by their masters. Slaves could also be left to starve or sent to die in the arena fighting gladiators if they disobeyed their masters.

Slaves under the Roman Empire (27 B.C.E.-A.D. 180) slowly acquired some legal rights. The first emperor, Augustus (27 B.C.E.-A.D.14), restricted the practice of taking legal testimony from slaves under torture (a common practice in ancient times). The emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54) made it a crime to murder a slave or to turn a sick slave out to die. Other emperors continued the trend: the selling of female slaves into prostitution was banned (c. A.D. 75); mutilation of slaves was prohibited (c. A.D. 88); and killing of slaves except by judicial authority (with the court's permission) was outlawed (c. A.D. 127).

It should be noted that the more humane laws of the empire did not necessarily mean that slaves were treated well. The most important factor in that regard was still the character of the slave owner, for a master still had tremendous power in the day-to-day life of a slave.

While it is impossible for historians to know exactly what life was like for Spartacus and the other gladiators in the training school or in first-century B.C.E. Capua, some generalizations can be made. Most of the gladiators at Batiatus's training school were probably first-generation slaves, having been captured in war or obtained through the slave trade. Like slaves used for agriculture or industry, gladiators were acquired from all over the Roman empire—from Gaul (France), Germany, Thrace, Greece, Egypt, and Arabia.

Gladiators were chosen from the general population of slaves because of their size and strength. Men from Gaul, Germany, and Thrace were considered the best suited for the fighting profession and it was these three groups that made up most of the trainees at Batiatus's school. That Spartacus had a wife with him when sold into slavery was not unusual. Gladiators, like other categories of slaves, were sometimes allowed to marry and have families. However, their family lives were controlled by their owners and could be broken up at any time through the sale of one or more family members to different owners.

## Revolt

Slaves in Rome could obtain their freedom in a limited number of ways. If they were very fortunate their owner might grant them manumission (formal release from bondage) in their will. Some slaves were able to earn wages and save enough money to eventually buy their freedom. Most slaves, however,

were left with the harsher options of running away, killing their master or themselves, or revolting.

While Spartacus and his fellow gladiators may have lived long enough to have been manumitted as a reward for their prowess (skills) in the fighting arena, they apparently chose not to wait for that opportunity. In the spring of 73 B.C.E., Spartacus led a breakout of about seventy gladiators from their training school. The rebels set up a base camp near Mount Vesuvius (pronounced veh-SOO-vee-us), and attacked nearby towns, freeing slaves, and killing slave owners, sometimes forcing them to fight each other to the death. As word spread, the gladiator-led revolt attracted thousands of runaway slaves to the rebel camp. By the time Rome sent a small military force to Vesuvius to end the rebellion, they faced thousands of liberated and runaway slaves. The Romans were soundly defeated.

## **War and defeat**

For two years the rebels led by Spartacus roamed Italy, first to the Alps, a mountain range in the north, and then to the very southern tip of the country. They fought and defeated the Romans in battle after battle, gaining wealth from looting cities and country estates along the way. In 72 disagreements among the rebel leadership (Spartacus was only one of three leaders) led to a split of rebel forces, and the defeat of one faction of twenty thousand slaves by the Romans.

In the winter of 72-71 B.C.E., Spartacus and his followers found themselves trapped on the southern Italian peninsula by the Roman army. Having been betrayed by pirates who were supposed to supply a fleet of ships for their escape off the mainland, the rebels were forced into a decisive battle with the Romans. By the spring of 71 B.C.E., Spartacus and most of his seventy thousand followers were killed by a massive Roman force—ten legions under the command of Marcus Crassus (115?-53 B.C.E.), and the armies of Pompey (106-48 B.C.) and Lucullus (c. 117-58? B.C.E.; recalled from foreign wars to fight Spartacus). The six thousand surviving rebel slaves were crucified alongside the road that led from Capua (where the revolt began) to Rome.

## **Spartacus: The Movie**

**In 1960, the story of Spartacus came to the big screen. Compare how the movie version lives up to the facts.**

- Spartacus is originally from Thrace. Roman slaves came from all over the empire. Make a list of the places that slaves came from in the movie.
- Slaves in the Roman Empire had many different jobs and skills. Make a list of the jobs and skills that slaves had in the movie.
- The story of Spartacus in the movie is different from the actual history. Make a list of how the movie is true to—or different from—the historical facts.



**Spartacus as portrayed by Kirk Douglas in the 1960 film.** (*The Kobal Collection. Reproduced by permission.*)

## **Spartacus's legacy**

Since Spartacus left no writings, nor did any of the participants of the revolt, historians are left with many unanswered questions as to the motivations of the rebels. Did Spartacus ever intend to mount a widespread slave insurrection that would challenge the authority of Rome and possibly lead to the freedom of all slaves in the empire? If so, why didn't Spartacus attack Rome itself when his army was at full strength and he had the strategic advantage? If Spartacus and his fellow gladiators were only looking to obtain their personal freedom why didn't they escape to their native countries of Gaul, Germany, and Thrace when the Spartacan army reached the Alps and their passage was clear?

While the historical record may never provide adequate answers to these questions, Spartacus remains a powerful and influential figure, a bold leader who paid with his life for the cause of freedom. In the modern era Spartacus has been idolized by revolutionaries such as the German socialists, who from 1916 to 1919 called themselves "Spartacists" when they tried to lead a worker-based revolution after World War I (1914-18). Spartacus made his entry into Western popular culture in 1960 when American

filmmaker Stanley Kubrick (1928-99) directed what was at the time the most expensive movie ever made. *Spartacus*, the movie, is a fact-based dramatization of the cruelty and violence of Rome's slave-based society.

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# Harriet Beecher Stowe

**Born June 14, 1811**  
**Litchfield, Connecticut**  
**Died July 1, 1896**  
**Hartford, Connecticut**

**Author, abolitionist, teacher**

**Writer of one of the most important books in U.S. history, *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life Among the Lowly.***

**D**uring the course of her long literary career, Harriet Beecher Stowe published sixteen books, hundreds of short stories, and countless articles, children's tales, and religious poems, but nothing ever equaled the success of her 1852 novel, known by its shortened name, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Almost overnight, the book ended her family's financial problems and made her an international celebrity. More important, historians give the popularity of Stowe's book credit for unifying public opinion in the North against slavery, a sentiment that ultimately led to the Civil War (1861-65) and the end of slavery in the United States.

## **The preacher family**

Harriet Beecher was born the sixth child of Roxana and Lyman Beecher in Litchfield, a little town in western Connecticut. Her mother died when she was just four years old and her father remarried a year later to Harriet Porter. Harriet Beecher was born into a large family; Lyman fathered seven children with his first wife and four with his second wife. If Harriet had been born a boy

she most likely would have ended up a preacher, like her seven brothers and her father.

Lyman Beecher was one of the most popular and prominent ministers of his time. He was a leader in the community as well as a strong influence on his children. Reverend Beecher was a Calvinist who practiced and preached a strict brand of Christianity. He was known for his fiery sermons in which he told his congregation of an angry God waiting to punish people for their sins if they did not repent and ask for forgiveness.

## **Stowe's education**

Stowe was a very intelligent child. By the time she was four she had learned dozens of hymns and whole chapters of the Bible by heart. By the time she was six she was reading books from her father's library—mostly religious sermons and tracts—but she occasionally found a novel that took her to faraway places in her imagination. When Stowe was eight she was enrolled in Miss Sally Pierce's Litchfield Female Academy, an unusual school for girls in that it taught science, languages, and the classics (classic works of literature) in addition to needlework, drawing, and music.

In 1824 thirteen-year-old Stowe left her family and friends in Litchfield to attend the Hartford Female Academy, a school founded by her sister Catharine a year earlier. Stowe was shy and had few friends in Hartford so she spent much of her time studying grammar, French, Italian, and Latin, as well as painting and drawing. At sixteen she became a part-time teacher at her sister's school, a position that turned into a full-time job when she was eighteen.

## **Transitions**

In 1826 Reverend Beecher found a new job at a bigger church with more pay. He moved his family to Boston, Massachusetts, to become the minister of the Hanover Street Church. Stowe spent her summer vacations in Boston and from 1827 to 1830 her favorite brother, Edward, was a minister at the city's Park Street Church.



In 1829 Stowe was in her brother's church to hear a speech marking the Fourth of July holiday. The speaker was newspaper editor and abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79), a member of Lyman Beecher's congregation who was about to leave Boston and become the editor of an antislavery newspaper in Baltimore. The Fourth of July could not be properly celebrated as a day of freedom and independence, Garrison told his audience, as long as there were two million slaves in bondage in the South. The slaves must be set free immediately, he said, and he challenged his audience, as Christians, to work for the abolition of slavery.

## **On the border**

In the fall of 1832 most of the Beecher family, including Harriet and Catharine, moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where Reverend Beecher became the president of Lane Seminary and the pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church. In the spring of 1833 Catharine opened the Western Female Institute in downtown Cincinnati with herself and Harriet as the school's associate principals. The sisters moved into the city to be near their school.

Stowe spent the next seventeen years in Cincinnati, a city in the free state of Ohio, just across the Ohio River from the slaveholding state of Kentucky. Cincinnati in 1833 had about twenty-five thousand residents and was one of the larger cities in the United States. One in ten residents was black. When Ohio became a state in 1803 a law was passed forbidding black people to enter the state. The law was ignored and many blacks migrated into the state from the South; most were ex-slaves. Cincinnati's location made it a magnet for runaway slaves, and the city's newspapers were full of advertisements offering rewards for missing slaves.

## **Cincinnati life**

Stowe spent most of her time teaching at the institute, writing articles for local magazines and newspapers, and working on a book, *A New Geography for Children*, which was published in May 1833. In the summer, Stowe and a friend visited a plantation in the Kentucky countryside. They stayed in a large, elegant house and could see the slaves laboring in the fields of corn, hemp, and

tobacco. After dinner they sat in the parlor where the slaves were forced to sing and dance for their masters' entertainment. Although she did not write about it upon her return, much of what she saw on that trip would be used almost twenty years later as material for her famous novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

On January 6, 1836, Harriet married Calvin Stowe and became Harriet Beecher Stowe. Calvin was a professor at Lane Seminary, a preacher like her father and brothers, and one of the country's leading biblical scholars. On September 29, 1836, Stowe gave birth to twins, Eliza and Harriet. The Stowe family moved into their own house in Walnut Hills, near Lane Seminary, and hired a black woman as a housekeeper. It turned out that the woman was a runaway slave whose owner was looking for her. Calvin Stowe and Harriet's brother, Henry Ward, smuggled the fugitive slave out of the city at night to a farm that served as a stop on the Underground Railroad, a secret network of people who helped slaves find their way to freedom in the North.

## Hard times

Stowe had no doubts that slavery was wrong and that it was her Christian duty to try to abolish it, but her mounting duties as a mother, housekeeper, and wife left her little time for political concerns. While living in Cincinnati she gave birth to Henry in 1838, Frederick in 1840, Georgiana in 1843, and Samuel in 1848. Calvin's salary at the college was never enough to support the ever-growing family and Stowe began churning out more articles and stories for magazines and newspapers to earn income for her family.

As it turned out the time Stowe spent in Cincinnati provided her with many stories and ideas that she would use later in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In 1842, for example, the Stowes, along with some students from Lane, helped shelter nine runaway slaves from Kentucky until they were picked up by an antislavery worker. Stowe also learned how slavery operated and the kind of impact it had on the lives of ordinary people by listening to the stories of the many black women who worked in the Stowe household over

the years, helping with the cooking, cleaning, and washing. Most of them were from the South and many of them were ex-slaves.

Stowe's years in Cincinnati were spent in virtual poverty and ended in tragedy. In the summer of 1849 a cholera (severe diarrheal disease) epidemic swept Cincinnati, and claimed the life of Stowe's eighteen-month-old baby, Charles. Stowe was deeply affected by the death. Because of her religious upbringing she saw it as punishment from God for not acting more forcefully against slavery—something she knew was wrong but neglected to do anything about. Stowe was happy when she learned that Calvin had been offered a job at a college in Brunswick, Maine, and she could return to her native New England.

## **With pen in hand**

After Congress passed a new Fugitive Slave law in 1850, making it easier for slave owners to pursue and apprehend their runaway slaves in the North, Stowe decided that she must take up her pen and write about slavery. Then one Sunday in February 1851 Stowe was with her children in church, daydreaming, when she envisioned a scene of a black man being brutally beaten and dying because he would not deny the existence of his true master, Jesus Christ. Stowe wrote down what she had seen as soon as she returned home, and with that first step, she began what turned out to be *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life Among the Lowly*, a full-length novel about slavery in the United States.

Stowe never actually intended to write a whole novel. She started publishing her story in weekly installments in June 1851, in *The National Era*, a Washington, D.C.-based antislavery newspaper. She expected it to run for maybe five or six weeks but her series was so popular that it continued until March 1852, when it was published in book form. The first printing of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was only 5,000 copies but it sold out in two days. In its first year, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sold 300,000 copies. By the time of the Civil War (1861-65) millions of copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had been sold in the United States and Britain. The book was also translated into over forty different languages and read by people all over the world.

## A simple but powerful message

The impact of the book on the country was nothing short of explosive. Never before had anyone touched the hearts and minds of the American public with such effect. The reason for her success, especially on the controversial subject of slavery, is that she did not lecture or condemn. Instead, Stowe painted with words a series of pictures of the operation of slavery that was so vivid and compelling that people finally understood just how cruel and unjust slavery really was in the United States.

The people of the South, however, responded to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by attacking Stowe in the press and from the pulpit. They realized that her book was an assault on their way of life and many of the myths they used to perpetuate the system of slavery. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the first American novel that was peopled by black heroes of dignity, strength, intelligence, and religious conviction. Anyone who read the book knew that slaves were not happy to be slaves even under the best of conditions. The message of the book was simple: the problem was not with the *abuses* of slavery but with slavery *itself*.

## Life after *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Stowe's success as the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* made her one of the world's most admired women and finally ended the Stowe family's financial troubles, enabling them to live for the rest of their lives in relative comfort. Stowe traveled to Europe twice and was hailed as a great author by everyone from the person on the street to the Queen of England.



Poster advertising Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

## The Stereotyping of "Uncle Tom"

Unfortunately for Harriet Beecher Stowe and the true character of her 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the term "Uncle Tom" has over the years become a name that black people are called when they are viewed as being too eager to please white people. The characterization of Uncle Tom as cowardly and stupid came from the racist minstrel shows (musical skits and plays) that were based on Stowe's novel, not the novel itself. The book's Uncle Tom was powerful and intelligent, a strong healthy man in the prime of his life, but on stage he was portrayed as just the opposite.

The productions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that played in cities across the United States from the Civil War (1861-65) to the outbreak of World War I in 1914 regularly featured white actors with darkened faces playing the black characters in the story. They sang songs such as "Happy Are We, Darkies So Gay," and "Uncle Breve Tells About The Good Times He Had On The Plantation." In addition to the plays, there were toys, games, and figurines based on the book, none of which Stowe had any control over or made any money from.

At home, Stowe was invited to the White House by President Abraham Lincoln (1809-65) in November 1862, in the middle of the Civil War, just a few months before the Emancipation Proclamation freed most of the slaves. He greeted her with, "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war!" Lincoln was only half jesting as most historians agree that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was extremely influential in waking up the North to the realities of slavery and in doing so convinced the public that the practice must end, even if the cost was war and bloodshed.

Stowe continued to write books, children's stories, religious poetry, and countless articles until her death of natural causes at eighty-five years old. She outlived her husband Calvin by ten years but the two were able to spend many of their later years happily together, living in Florida in the winter and New England in the summer, looked after by their unmarried twin daughters, Eliza and Harriet.

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# Tippu Tib

**Born c.  
1837  
Zanzibar  
Died 1905  
Zanzibar**

**Slave trader**

One of the last great slavers of the nineteenth century, Tippu Tib's name was known and feared in most of East and Central Africa.

**T**ippu Tib (pronounced TEE-poo tib) was a brave and daring adventurer, a good administrator, and a great leader of men. Much of his financial success, however, came at the expense of other human beings. His exploits can hardly be called heroic by today's standards, yet Tippu Tib played an important role in the history of East and Central Africa in the late nineteenth century. The opening of Africa's interior to European explorers and missionaries with help from Tippu Tib led to great changes in that part of the continent. European exploration led to European colonization and the end of Arab domination of the African interior. For Tippu Tib, it led to his own destruction in the very countries that he conquered and held for almost thirty years.

## Heritage

Tippu Tib was born Muhammed bin Hamid on the island of Zanzibar off the east coast of Africa in the 1830s. He later acquired the nickname Tippu Tib, meaning "the one who blinks," because of a tick or nervous twitch in one eye. Tippu Tib was of mixed racial heritage. His mother, Bint Habib bin Bushir, was an

Arab woman whose family came from Muscat; his father and grandfather were Swahili (members of the Bantu-speaking people of Zanzibar and its adjacent coast) traders from the African coast, and his father's great-grandmother was the daughter of an African chief of the Nyamwezi. Tippu Tib claimed that he was a full-blooded Arab, but he was born with his great-great-grandmother's African features including an undeniably dark complexion.

Tippu Tib was born into the upper class of Zanzibar. His family could afford plantations, town houses, and a great number of slaves. Tippu Tib's father, Muhammed bin Juma, was an established and wealthy trader of slaves and ivory. He made his fortunes by traveling to the interior of East and Central Africa and trading goods for ivory and slaves, which he then brought back to sell in Zanzibar, the most important slave market in the Indian Ocean. Slaves were bought for the local plantations but most slaves were sold for export to the markets of Arabia, Muscat, Persia, Turkey, or Egypt.

## Early years

Tippu Tib was one of many children fathered by Muhammed bin Juma. Tippu Tib's mother was just one of Muhammed's many wives. However, Tippu Tib was his father's first son by an Arab wife and thus heir to his father's business and fortunes. When he was six years old Tippu Tib was sent to a teacher of the Koran (the sacred text of Islam) to learn to read and write. In his early years he also spent time helping his mother with her garden, but more than anything he longed to join one of his father's trading caravans.

When Tippu Tib was twelve he was allowed to join his uncle's trading expedition to the mainland. Tippu Tib sailed in a small *dhow* (boat) back and forth from the island, hauling gum-copal (a byproduct of tropical trees), and an occasional slave or two.

When he was fifteen, Tippu Tib was finally allowed to join his father in the slave and ivory trade. His first trip was to Tabora, his father's base of operations on mainland Africa, a 500-mile, three-month journey. From there he joined his father in a trade caravan



to Ugangi, northeast of Lake Nyasa, a 300-mile, two-month trip south into eastern Africa. Tippu Tib and his father traded such items as colored beads, coils of copper and wire, bales of cotton, cowry shells, and various types of cloth for ivory and slaves.

Not only was the trip peaceful but it was also very profitable. On their return they found the demand for slaves in Zanzibar's markets higher than ever as were the prices they got for their human cargo. One visitor to the area estimated that about forty thousand slaves were bought and sold in Zanzibar in 1859 alone.

## **Amasses a fortune**

As a young man Tippu Tib represented his father's interest in the interior of the continent. He traveled with Nyamwezi trading caravans around the southern end of Lake Tanganyika, south to Katanga in what is today called the Democratic Republic of the Congo (known as Zaire from 1971 to 1997). Nyamwezi were African traders who lived between Lake Tanganyika and the coast. They were known as exceptionally good porters or bearers, and by the early 1800s they had developed a trading network across the region. The Nyamwezi traders dealt in ivory, slaves, and copper well before Arab traders ventured into Africa's interior.

Tippu Tib stayed in Katanga for about two years. Around 1869 Tippu Tib went northwest looking for ivory. In a daring raid against Nsama, a chief reputed to have killed Arabs, Tippu Tib captured his capital and took his ivory. Tippu Tib's victory over this much-feared chief gained him the reputation of a powerful and dangerous man. Other chiefs paid him tribute in elephant tusks. So great was his store of ivory that he had special storage places built to house it.

## **"Big Man of Nyangwe"**

About the time Tippu Tib was establishing himself in trade independent of his father's business, several Arab merchants from Zanzibar reached the Lualaba River and founded a settlement called Nyangwe. There they established a major market center. In 1874 the Arabs recognized Tippu Tib as the overlord of the area. His personal empire was huge: it stretched from Lake Tanganyika

as far as the Lomami River and north to the Congo forest. Although Tippu Tib held this territory in the name of the sultan (ruler of a Muslim state) of Zanzibar, he actually served as an independent ruler. Tippu Tib became known as the "Big Man of Nyangwe" and made his capital, Kasonga, into a showpiece on the Lualaba River.

Although not officially a sultan, Tippu Tib ruled like one. With his monopoly on the sale of ivory, he controlled the political structure of his kingdom. He selected local leaders as chiefs and appointed his own officials to supervise the chiefs, to collect tribute, to enforce the laws, and to recruit soldiers. From his base west of Lake Tanganyika, Tippu Tib maintained good relations with the Nyamwezi to the east of the lake. These relations were important because the Nyamwezi lay between Tippu Tib and his outlet to the markets of Zanzibar.

## **The slave trade**

Tippu Tib kept a steady flow of ivory and slaves from his empire to the markets on the Indian Ocean coast. In usual practice, Tippu Tib's men would pay a casual visit to a village to see if the chief had hidden away any ivory. If so, they would return later with sufficient men and firepower to take the ivory from the chief. Or when they raided the villages, they would take captives, usually women and children, and then ransom them to the village chief for his ivory. If the village did not have sufficient ivory, they would take the remaining captives along with them as they traveled, then trade them in another place.

Sometimes Tippu Tib's men would form an alliance with a local chief, and together they would raid a neighboring village. The raiders would set fire to the huts, wait for villagers to run out, and then capture the women and children. Later they would take them to market and either trade them locally for food and supplies or take them to the east coast for sale at the slave market in Zanzibar.

## Slaves and Ivory

African slaves were important to the Muslim nations because, according to Muhammad the Prophet (the father of Islam; c. 570-632), Muslims could not be enslaved. Slave trade along Africa's Indian Ocean coast also grew in response to restrictions placed on slave trade along the Atlantic coast, including the presence of British and American naval patrols stationed there to prevent slave export to the West.

While slaves from Zanzibar's markets were exported mostly to the Arab world and the east, most of the ivory ended up in the Western world, especially in the United States. By the late 1890s the U.S. was importing eighty percent of the ivory exported from Zanzibar. It was used for such house-hold items as knife handles, snuff boxes, and ladies' fans. Religious statues and crucifixes were often made of ivory as well.

The slave and ivory trade in East Africa seemed to go hand in hand through much of the nineteenth century. In the beginning ivory was the prized commodity. Acquiring slaves, by comparison, was not as profitable and considered a sideline. As the slaughter of elephants moved further and further into the interior of Africa, however, caravans had to travel more miles inland from the coast to obtain ivory. And that meant there was a greater need to take captives and enslave them as porters or sell them to offset the greater costs.

## Into the heart of Africa

Over the years, Tippu Tib welcomed European explorers to his capital and provided aid and protection for their expeditions into the deepest parts of the African interior. In 1867, while working for his father, he guided the caravan of Scottish missionary and explorer Dr. David Livingstone (1813-73) south toward Lake Merwu. From 1872 to 1874 he escorted British explorer Verney Lovett Cameron (1844-94) part of the way on his trek to the Atlantic coast from Lualaba. And in 1876 Tippu Tib assisted the British explorer and journalist Sir Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904) in his search for the upper reaches of the Congo River, known as the Lualaba River.

Stanley is said to have given \$5,000 to Tippu Tib for his guidance to Nyangwe. Tippu Tib also supplied 140 men with guns, another 140 men with spears and traditional weapons, and about 20 women from his harem (group of women living with one man). Later, for another \$2,600, Tippu Tib agreed to accompany Stanley for sixty days beyond Nyangwe and then return. Eventually Tippu Tib did turn back but Stanley continued to travel along the Lualaba River.

Two months after Tippu Tib left him, Stanley came out of the dense rain forest onto a lake 15 miles across surrounded by white cliffs. He named the lake Stanley Pool after himself. (It is now known as Malebo Pool.) From there, Stanley and his men followed the raging river 220 miles to Matadi, where the river became navigable again, and went the final 100 miles to the river's mouth. In all it had taken Stanley 999 days to cross the African continent from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean.

## Explorers and slavers

The explorers and slave traders needed each other: European explorers needed the help of men like Tippu Tib because of their intimate knowledge of the African terrain. The slavers and ivory hunters benefitted from the explorers because they helped open new paths to Africa's interior. Stanley's successful trip down the Lualaba encouraged travel by the once-skeptical Arab traders. In fact, Tippu Tib was one of the first traders to follow. The traders created chaos along the river. They burned and looted entire villages and took people captive.

According to Peter Forbath in *The River Congo*, Stanley was shocked at what he saw six years later when he revisited the area. As they traveled down the river, Stanley described a village where the slave traders held their captives: "There rows and rows of dark nakedness, relieved here and there by the white dresses of their captors. . . . observe that mostly all are fettered [chained]; youth with iron rings around their necks, through which a chain . . . is drove [driven], securing the captives by the twenties. The children over ten are secured by three copper rings. . . . The mothers are secured by shorter chains ..." Later Stanley learned that this camp held 2,300 captives taken in raids on 118 villages. The slavers had killed at least another 4,000 Africans.

## Later years

In 1885 Stanley returned to the Congo to head a relief expedition. He went to Zanzibar in 1887 to ask Tippu Tib to help him. In exchange, Stanley appointed Tippu Tib the Belgian governor of Stanley Falls (Kisangani), an area he already controlled. One condition of the arrangement was that Tippu Tib had to agree to try and stop the slave trading. Although he could not succeed in doing this, he was able to stop the Arabs from coming into contact with the Europeans.

Tippu Tib left the interior in 1890 and retired to Zanzibar. He died there in 1905. His son, Sef, represented his interests at Stanley Pool. When the Belgians settled in the area and tried to restrict the Arabs by force from trading slaves, the Arabs rose against them.

Sef was killed in 1892, and within eighteen months the Belgians had completely crushed the Arabs.

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# Sojourner Truth

Born c. 1797  
Ulster County, New York  
Died 1883  
Battle Creek, Michigan

Abolitionist, women's rights advocate,  
preacher



**S**ojourner Truth was born a slave. After gaining her freedom, she began a quest to end slavery and to assist former slaves. Truth was an early civil rights advocate—she fought the segregation policy of Washington, D.C., streetcars shortly after the end of the Civil War (1861-65). She was also a noted speaker who lectured frequently on the ills of racism and sexism, and the injustice of denying women the right to vote. A deeply religious woman, Truth rose to prominence at a time when African Americans and women were expected to live in the shadows of society.

## Childhood as a slave

Sojourner Truth was born Isabella Baumfree in Ulster County, New York, sometime in 1797 (the exact birth and death dates of slaves were not typically recorded). Her father's name was James Baumfree, after his original Dutch owner, and her mother's name was Elizabeth, although she was better known as Mau Mau Bett.

One of the most persuasive speakers in the antislavery, African American rights, and women's rights movements.

Like both her parents, Truth was a slave of wealthy landowner Charles Hardenbergh. Prior to Truth's birth, her mother had given birth to eleven other children—all but one had been sold away from the plantation. The name "Isabella" had been selected by Master Hardenbergh; Truth's parents called her "Belle."

In 1806 Truth's family was shattered when Truth and her brother were taken away and sold at an auction. Truth was purchased, along with a flock of sheep, for one hundred dollars. Her new masters were an English immigrant couple named the Neelys. Both Mr. and Mrs. Neely beat Truth mercilessly. One day Truth's father, who was old and crippled but had been freed, came to see her. When he saw her back, bloodied and scarred from beatings, he sought to help her.

Baumfree convinced a tavern owner named Martin Schryver to purchase his daughter. During her three years with Schryver, Truth was not mistreated and had adequate food, clothing, and shelter. Truth was unaware, however, of the terrible conditions in which her parents were living. She later learned that they had run out of food and firewood, and died.

## **The escape to freedom**

In 1810 Truth was again sold, this time to a wealthy landowner in New Paltz, New York, named John Dumont. Dumont arranged for Truth to be married to an older slave named Thomas, so that the couple would bear children (children born to slaves became the master's property). Over a period of ten years, Truth gave birth to five children.

In 1817 Truth was heartened by a new law that required all slaves in New York to be freed on July 4, 1827, (slaves over forty years old were freed immediately). In 1825 Dumont told Truth that if she worked exceptionally hard for the next year, he would grant her and her husband their freedom one year early. He would also give them a log cabin that they could call home. Truth held up her end of the bargain, but on the agreed-upon date Dumont went back on his word. Truth had her mind so set on freedom that she could not continue to live as a slave.

Three months later—only nine months before the law would set her free—Truth took her infant daughter, Sophia, and escaped in the early morning hours. She went down the road to a farmhouse, where she had heard Quaker abolitionists lived. (An abolitionist is someone who actively opposes slavery.) The Quaker couple, named the Van Wageners, took her in. When Dumont came to the house looking for Truth, the Van Wageners purchased Truth and her daughter. The Van Wageners then granted the mother and daughter their freedom, and allowed them to stay on in their house.

Truth soon learned that her son, Peter, had been sold to a wealthy farmer in Alabama. Determined to get her son back, Truth enlisted the help of the Van Wageners and their Quaker-abolitionist friends. They informed Truth that Peter's sale had been illegal—that New York law prohibited the sale of slaves out of state. With the aid of a lawyer, whom the Quakers hired and paid, Truth filed suit and won back her son. Truth's victory in the courts was exceptionally unusual—in the 1820s the legal system rarely worked in favor of former slaves or women.

## **Truth lets religion be her guide**

In 1829 Truth moved to New York City with Peter, leaving Sophia with her older daughters. Truth hoped to find a job that would pay enough for her to start a home and provide for all her children (her husband had died a year earlier). In the city, Truth found housing in a growing community of free blacks. She was hired to work as a servant and enrolled Peter in a navigational school.

Truth, who had been deeply religious her whole life, began attending services at the Mother Zion African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. In church Truth met two of her siblings who had been sold to different masters before she was born. Truth then learned that another woman with whom she had been friendly in church, and who had recently died, was also her sister.

Before long, Truth became acquainted with a religious and charitable couple, the Piersons, who operated a shelter for homeless women. She went to work for them part-time. In 1832 a



### What's In a Name?

One of the first rights exercised by slaves who gained their freedom was to legally acquire a new name. As slaves, their names had been given to them by their masters, who often chose names that seemed to mock their slaves' degraded position in life—such as Caesar (a great Roman general), or Cato (a great Roman orator). Most masters recognized their slaves by their first name only, although many slaves took their master's surname (last name) as their own. When freed, many blacks saw advantages to being associated with their former white masters and kept their master's surname but changed their first and second names.

When finally given a choice, most free blacks chose English, not African, names. It was one way of trying to blend in and gain acceptance into their new homeland of America. Some blacks chose surnames based on the complexion of their skin, which explains why a great number of freed blacks had the last names of Brown and Black. Other blacks chose names that reflected their occupations. A bricklayer might take Mason as a surname; gardeners perhaps chose Green; and blacksmiths and silversmiths found the name Smith appropriate. Some blacks, inspired by their newly found liberty, chose surnames like Justice and Freeman. Other blacks chose names from the Bible, such as Moses and Gabriel. Sojourner Truth took the literal approach when she chose her name (sojourner means "a temporary resident," or a "traveler").

man named Robert Matthews, who called himself Matthias and claimed he was God, arrived at the shelter. Matthews was really a con artist, but Truth believed his story. Matthews enlisted Elijah Pierson in a scheme and the two men established a commune called "The Kingdom." The commune drew many believers, among them Truth, who had to donate all their worldly possessions to the organization. Truth went to work at the commune as an unpaid cook and maid. Eventually, Truth caught on to the deceit of the two men and left.

Truth's experience with the con artists, however, did not dampen her religious convictions. She resumed her membership in the Zion A.M.E. Church. In June 1843, Truth had a dream in which God told her, "Go East." Truth packed her bags the next morning and headed east into farm country. Along the way, she decided to change her name from Isabella Baumfree to Sojourner Truth. She took this new name because she believed it was God's will that she "walk in truth."

That day in June 1843 was the beginning of Truth's life as a traveling preacher. She gave sermons and sang in churches, on street corners, at religious revivals, and in homes. She found food and shelter wherever she could. Sometimes Truth spoke about her life as a slave. Truth rapidly gained a reputation as a provocative and inspirational speaker. She was often met with large crowds waiting to hear her speak.

## **Introduction to abolitionism and women's rights**

In late 1843 Truth arrived at a cooperative farm called the Northampton Association of Education and Industry. There she met several noted abolitionists, among them William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79) and Frederick Douglass (1817-95). The cooperative's residents also taught Truth about the antislavery movement and the budding women's rights movement.

Olive Gilbert, a feminist and member of the Northampton cooperative, convinced Truth of the need to record her life story. Since Truth was illiterate, she dictated her memoirs to Gilbert. The year 1850 saw the publication of *Narrative of Sojourner Truth: A Northern Slave*.

## **Blossoms as an antislavery lecturer**

Truth made her first major appearance on the antislavery lecture circuit in late 1850. Her friend Garrison, who spotted Truth while he was speaking at the podium, invited her to speak. Although Truth had not prepared a speech, she headed to the front of the room.

Standing nearly six feet tall, Truth had a commanding presence. She started her address by singing a hymn of her own composition. It began: "I am pleading for my people, A poor downtrodden race, Who dwell in freedom's boasted land, With no abiding place." She then told the story of her life as a slave, the separation of her family, and the selling of her son Peter, and how she got Peter back. The audience was moved to tears and many people bought copies of Truth's book.

Truth then embarked on a national speaking tour. She addressed women's rights conventions and antislavery groups, and often traveled with Garrison and other noted abolitionists. In 1854 Truth gave one of her most famous and often-quoted speeches at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. After listening to clergymen claim that women were inferior to men and had no

God-given rights, Truth launched into her well-known "Ain't I a Woman?" speech:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place, and ain't I a woman?.. I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me—and ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man (when I could get it), and bear the lash as well—and ain't I a woman? I have borne five children and seen most all sold off into slavery and when I cried out with a mother's grief, none but Jesus heard—and ain't I a woman?

Audiences were not always sympathetic to her message. In some places, her opponents burned a figure that looked like her in front of the hall where she was to speak; in other places, they disrupted meetings. Truth was clubbed by a crowd in Kansas and was at the center of mob violence in Missouri. Truth refused to let such people stand in her way.

## **Retirement and return to action**

In 1857, Truth, then sixty years old, decided it was time to retire. She moved to a spiritual community in Harmonía, Michigan, just outside of the city of Battle Creek. Within three years, two of her daughters and their families joined Truth in Harmonía. Truth made her home in a converted barn and one of her grandchildren, Sammy, moved in with her. For a time, Truth was content sitting on her porch and telling stories to her grandchildren. That time did not last long

The Dred Scott decision of 1857 made Truth come out of retirement. Dred Scott (1795?-1858) was a slave from Missouri who had traveled with his owner into Illinois, where slavery had been outlawed. On his return to Missouri, Scott sued for his freedom. *Dred Scott v. Sanford* ended up before the Supreme Court, where Scott's claim was rejected. The court wrote that slaves were not citizens of the United States and had no right to file lawsuits. Chief Justice Roger B. Taney (1777-1864) added

insult to injury by claiming that blacks "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect." Truth decided that retirement could wait. In 1859, accompanied by Sammy, she returned to the antislavery lecture circuit.

## **Aids black soldiers and freed slaves during Civil War**

When the Civil War began in 1861, many blacks enthusiastically supported the Union (Northern) cause. When the Union army began accepting black soldiers in 1862, nearly 180,000 blacks signed up (including Truth's grandson, James Caldwell). Truth supported black soldiers by collecting food and clothing for them and by caring for the wounded. She also advocated that black soldiers receive pay equal to white soldiers.

Truth was named "counsellor to freed people" by the National Freedmen's Relief Association in 1864, and began a two-year stay in Washington, D.C. Truth's job was to assist newly freed slaves who had poured into Washington, D.C, many of whom were living in squalid refugee camps and slums.

On October 29, 1864, Truth was granted her wish to meet President Abraham Lincoln (1809-65). At the White House, Lincoln told Truth he had known of her for many years before he thought about running for president. Lincoln signed Truth's scrapbook, which she called her "Book of Life."

During her tenure in Washington, Truth challenged the city's segregation (separation of people along racial lines) policy on streetcars. In 1867 Truth was ordered by a driver to sit in the rear of the car. Truth refused; the driver slammed her against the door and dislocated her shoulder. Truth sued the driver for assault and battery and won. Thereafter, until the passage of Jim Crow laws, blacks received courteous treatment on Washington streetcars. (The Jim Crow system, which began in 1887 and lasted until the 1960s, dictated the segregation of the races at every level of society.)



Memorial for Sojourner Truth.

In the late 1860s Truth resumed speaking and selling copies of her book. In her lectures she combined aspects of Christian religion, mysticism, women's rights, and African American rights.

## Final years in Harmonía, Michigan

Truth returned to Harmonía in 1875 to take care of Sammy, who had fallen ill. Later that year Sammy died, just shy of his twenty-fifth birthday. Sammy's death sent Truth into a long period of grief and mourning. Truth believed she would follow Sammy in death; however, she survived another nine years.

In 1878 Truth set off on a speaking tour of thirty-six cities in Michigan and served as a delegate to a women's rights convention. In early 1883 Truth returned to Battle Creek in poor health. She died on November 26, 1883, at the age of eighty-six. Just before her death, Truth told her family and friends, "I'm going

home like a shooting star."

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# Harriet Tubman

**Born c. 1820**  
**Dorchester County, Maryland**  
**Died March 10, 1913**  
**Auburn, New York**

**Fugitive slave, abolitionist,  
Underground Railroad  
conductor, Union Army scout,  
spy, nurse, cook, social  
reformer**

One of the most famous conductors on the Underground Railroad, Tubman made at least nineteen trips from the North into the South within a ten-year period, and led over three hundred slaves into freedom.

**M**ore than probably any single individual of her times, Harriet Tubman successfully rebelled against the slave system of the United States, devoting enormous amounts of time and energy for most of her life to fight for liberty and equality for her fellow African Americans.

## Araminta, the young slave

Harriet Tubman was born a slave, one of eleven children of plantation slaves Benjamin Ross and Harriet Green. From the day she was born, according to the laws of the times, Harriet was the "property" of Edward Brodas, who also owned her parents and siblings. Brodas originally named the newborn child Araminta Ross; her mother called her Minty. As an infant, Araminta was fortunate to be able to live with her mother Rit, as she was called, in a slave cabin on the Brodas plantation. Often, slave owners separated a slave mother from her child, selling or hiring out the mother to live and work on another farm soon after the child's birth.

Araminta stayed with her mother at night. In the day, while her mother was working in the field, Araminta and the other slave children were watched over by one of the grandmothers—women who were too old to work in the fields any longer. When Araminta was six years old she was sent off the plantation to work for Mr. and Mrs. Cook. Mrs. Cook tried to teach Araminta how to weave. When Araminta showed little interest, Mr. Cook put her to work checking his muskrat traps in the river. Araminta returned to the Brodas plantation a year later, sick from the measles and her constant exposure to the cold water of the river.

After Rit nursed the seven-year-old Araminta back to health, she was again hired out, this time to Miss Susan. Araminta's job was to clean Miss Susan's house and take care of her baby—holding the child during the day and rocking its cradle at night if the child cried. If the child's crying woke up Miss Susan in the night, or if Araminta somehow failed in her daytime duties, Miss Susan lashed her with a cowhide whip. One day, caught in the act of stealing from the sugar bowl, Araminta ran away from Miss Susan's to escape a whipping. She hid for several days in a pigsty before returning. Shortly after the incident, Miss Susan returned Araminta—worn down from lack of food and sleep, and scarred from the whippings—to the Brodas plantation.

## **Harriet, the field slave**

As soon as Rit nursed her back to health, Araminta was hired out again by her master. This time it was to do odd jobs in the field, as she was deemed untrainable as a house slave. Araminta was still very small but she was expected to chop wood and haul heavy loads like an adult. And when she failed in her tasks, she was whipped like an adult. When Araminta was eleven years old, she started wearing a bright colored bandanna wrapped around her head, a custom among slaves that meant she was no longer a child. From that time on, Araminta would be known as Harriet, the name of her mother. Years of hard work in the fields made Harriet, in spite of her small size, as strong as any man. She could work long hours and lift heavy loads.



As a young teenager, Harriet was again hired out by her master to a neighbor at harvest time. One evening, as the slaves were working in the fields, Harriet noticed a slave sneaking away, followed by the plantation's overseer (the boss of the slaves in the field). In the course of trying to catch the runaway, Harriet was hit in the head with a two-pound iron weight. The wound scarred Harriet's forehead and caused her to have seizures for the rest of her life. Brodas tried to sell Harriet while she was still sick, but no one wanted her, even at the lowest price possible.

## **Tickets to freedom**

In 1836 Harriet went back to work in the fields of the Brodas plantation. She soon gained permission from her master to hire her time out. Under this arrangement Harriet was free to work for other people for whatever wages they would pay; she was also required to pay Brodas \$75 per year. In 1844 Harriet married John Tubman, one of sixty-two thousand free blacks in the state of Maryland (there were ninety-two thousand slaves in the state at the time). John had his own cabin, but due to competition from hired-out slaves, he earned meager wages for his work. Harriet lived with John in his cabin but was not happy. She longed for freedom and dreamed of escaping to the North.

Harriet Tubman's master died in 1849. Fearing that she would be sold to the Deep South to pick cotton, Tubman and two of her brothers decided to escape to the North. Shortly after they set out, her two brothers tried to convince Tubman to return. Two days later Tubman, without her brothers, sought help from a local Quaker woman who was known for aiding fugitive slaves. The woman gave Tubman two slips of paper, each containing the name of a family that lived on the road north. These people, she explained, would feed and shelter her, and then tell her how to get to the next house. Tubman had heard talk of an "underground railroad" that slaves could take to freedom in the North. She was now a passenger.

Tubman traveled by night, using the North Star as her guide, and hid during the day. After traveling through ninety miles of swamp and woodland she finally reached the Mason-Dixon line, the

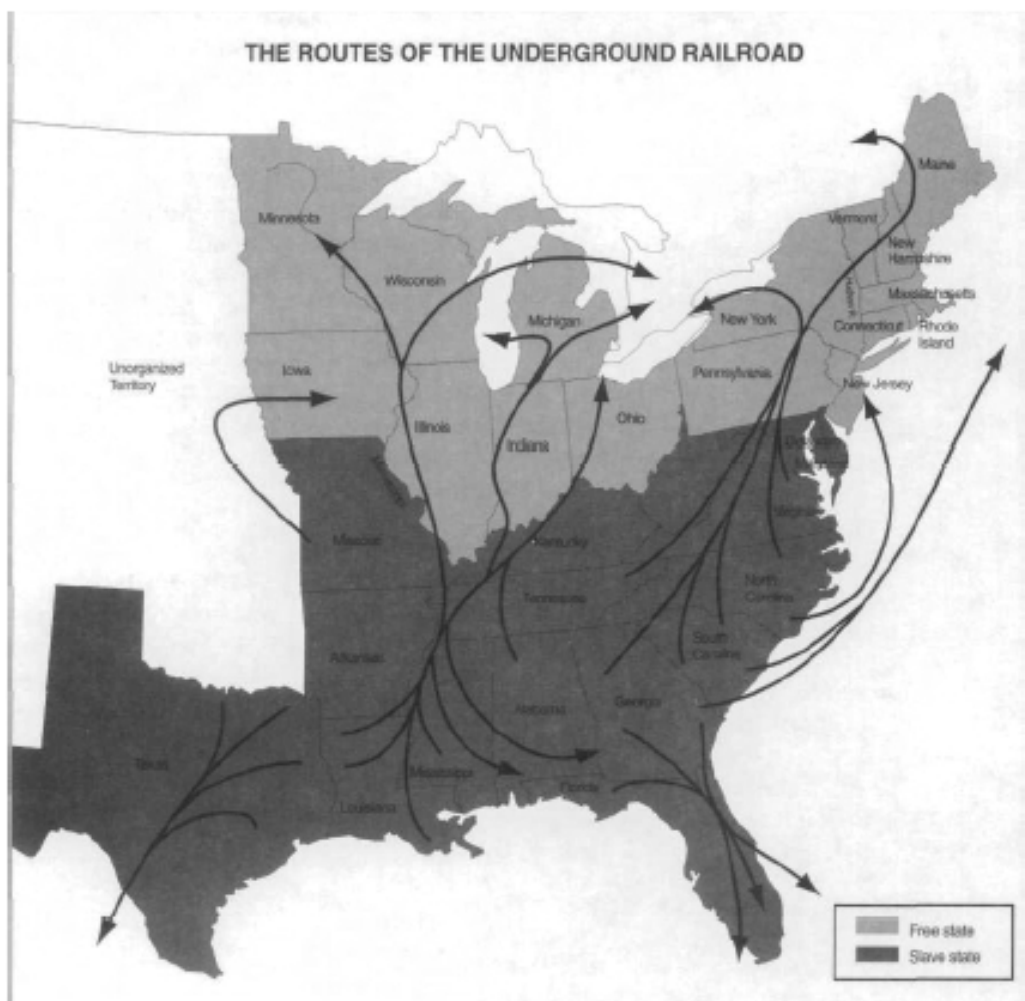
boundary between Maryland and Pennsylvania—between the slave South and the free North. Tubman headed to Philadelphia, home to a large population of free blacks. She found work there washing dishes in a hotel kitchen.



**Harriet Tubman (left) with a group of slaves she helped escape via the Underground Railroad.**  
*(Library of Congress)*

## **Underground Railroad conductor**

In 1850, Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act. Under this federal law, any black person could be accused of being a runaway slave and brought before a federal judge. Accused runaways were denied a jury trial and could not testify on their own behalf. The law also made it a federal crime to aid or harbor a fugitive slave, with strict penalties for helping a slave escape. The law gave a boost to the professional slave catchers, who for a fee captured runaway slaves and returned them to their owners. Always a grave threat to blacks—free or slave—in the South, they now operated boldly in the North, in states where slavery had been abolished for some time.



Harriet Tubman and other fugitive slaves and free blacks were no longer very safe in the free North. At that time, many chose to head even further north, into Canada, where slavery had been abolished since 1833. From 1852 through 1857, Tubman lived in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, a small town with a population of six thousand people, seven hundred of whom were African Americans. Tubman, however, chose to head south, back over the Mason-Dixon line, intent on helping other slaves escape to freedom. During that time she made eleven trips into Maryland.

From 1850 to 1860, Tubman made at least nineteen trips into the South and escorted over three hundred slaves on their northern journey to freedom in Canada, including her brother and her parents (her husband did not want to leave the South). Tubman resettled her parents in Auburn, New York, in a house that her

**Map of the eastern United States showing the routes of the Underground Railroad.**  
 (Reproduced by permission of the Gale Group)

friend, U.S. Senator and former New York governor William Seward (1801-72), helped her buy.

## Civil War spy and scout

When war between the Confederacy (the South) and the Union (the North) broke out in April 1861, Tubman went back into action. With a letter in hand from the governor of Massachusetts, she reported to the Union Army camp in Beaufort, South Carolina. There she went to work in a field hospital for war refugees, caring for injured and wounded contraband, which is a word meaning "property of war." In this case, the contraband were slaves who had fled their plantations for refuge behind Union lines and soldiers.

On January 1, 1863, U.S. president Abraham Lincoln (1809-65) issued the Emancipation Proclamation that freed all slaves in the Confederacy, urging them to join the Union Army. That summer Tubman worked in the Charleston, South Carolina, area as a scout and a spy for an all-black Union regiment led by Colonel James Montgomery. Their mission was to carry out raids on the rebels—releasing slaves and terrorizing the enemy. As a spy, Tubman was known for her cleverness and courage in gathering information from behind enemy lines, skills that she had sharpened for years as a conductor on the Underground Railroad.

## Life after the war

In 1864 Tubman returned to her home and parents in Auburn, New York, without money and exhausted from the war. Despite serving the Union Army in many useful capacities, Tubman was never paid for her services as were other scouts, spies, and cooks (Civil War nurses were unorganized, unpaid volunteers). After the war ended on April 9, 1865, Tubman traveled to Washington,

### Harriet Tubman, "General Moses"

Although they were not legally allowed to learn to read or write, many slaves were familiar with the stories of the Bible. In particular, they were well acquainted with the story of how Moses led the enslaved Hebrews out of captivity in Egypt to the promised land of Israel and freedom. Among both black and white abolitionists, Harriet Tubman's daring rescues as an Underground Railroad conductor earned her the name of "Moses." The slave owners of the South, on the other hand, detested Tubman and offered a \$40,000 reward for her, dead or alive.

Abolitionist John Brown (1800-1859), who led a raid on a federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in October 1859—in what many historians refer to as the "first shots" of the Civil War (1861-65)—called her "General Tubman." Brown knew of Tubman's courageous accomplishments and sought her help for the raid. Tubman encouraged Brown but illness prevented her from directly participating in the revolt.

D.C., to try to secure a position as a paid nurse at a freedman's hospital in Virginia, and to see if she could collect her back pay from the army. She again went home empty-handed.

Fortunately for Tubman, her friends came to her aid. Abolitionist friends placed ads seeking donations of money and clothing for Tubman, who supported her parents and fed and sheltered many poor ex-slaves who showed up at her front door. In 1869 Tubman's friend Sarah Bradford wrote a short biography of her life, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*. Sales of the book raised enough money for Tubman to pay off the mortgage on her Auburn home.

In 1869 Tubman married Nelson Davis, a black Civil War veteran. Davis was younger than Tubman but suffered from tuberculosis. Their marriage lasted nineteen years, until 1888 when Nelson died from his disease. Tubman never got her back pay (she calculated that the army owed her around \$1,800) but she did finally collect a pension of \$8 a month for her late husband's service. Ten years later, an Act of Congress increased Tubman's widow's pension to \$20—still the government refused to officially reward Tubman for her own services.

## **Fighting to the end**

In 1896, at seventy-five years old, Tubman began yet another project to improve the quality of life for the poor and aged. With help from a bank, and royalties from a second edition of Bradford's book, she purchased twenty-five acres of land that were located next to her property and started a cooperative farm. Tubman wanted to create a place where able-bodied people could work together to help support those who were too old or ill to work. Using her nursing and cooking skills, Tubman managed the farm until 1903.

Now in her eighties, Tubman could no longer run the place by herself so she donated the land to her church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (she also attended the white Central Church in Auburn every Sunday morning). The A.M.E. church formally opened the Harriet Tubman Home for Aged and

Indigent Negroes in 1908. Tubman wanted it to be called the John Brown Home. The church had only people of color on its board of directors. Tubman wanted both black and white board members. The church charged \$100 a year to live there. Tubman wanted it to be free. Tubman lost these last battles but spent her remaining years peacefully at the home she had founded. When she died in 1913 at age ninety-two, Tubman was given a full military service for her funeral.

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# Nat Turner

**Born October 2, 1800**

**Southampton County, Virginia**

**Died November 11, 1831**

**Southampton County, Virginia**

**Slave, slave preacher, revolt leader**

**Organizer and leader of the most violent—and successful—slave revolt in U.S. history.**

**T**he South was never the same after Nat Turner's revolt of 1831. Turner and approximately seventy slaves killed about sixty white men, women, and children in Southampton County, Virginia—some even as they slept. The myth of the happy slave was forcefully exploded and slaveholders throughout the South no longer slept peacefully. Every little sound in the night reminded them of Nat Turner's reign of terror and the possibility that their slaves might do the same.

## Marked at birth

On October 2, 1800, Nat Turner was born into slavery on a plantation in Southampton County, Virginia, about seventy miles southeast of Richmond. The plantation's owner, Benjamin Turner, had bought Turner's mother a year earlier from the slave market in Norfolk, a port on Virginia's Atlantic coast. She had been taken a few years earlier from her African homeland, the ancient land of the Upper Nile (in Sudan), and brought to the Americas by slave

traders. Benjamin Turner gave his newly acquired human property the Christian name of "Nancy."

Very little is known about Turner's father, not even his name. When Turner was just a child his father fled from the plantation to escape to freedom in the North. No one is sure if he ever made it as he was never heard from again. Turner's grandmother (his father's mother), "Old Bridget," along with Nancy, raised Turner and had a very strong influence on his early and formative years.

When Nat Turner was born, he had strange bumps and marks on his skin. In the part of Africa where his mother was from, these marks meant that he would grow up to be a great prophet (a religious leader with special, almost magical powers). In his published *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1831), Turner describes his earliest memory of being considered special: "Being at play with other children, when three or four years old, I was telling them something, which my mother overhearing, said it had happened before I was born. . . . I surely would be a prophet, as the Lord had shewn me things that had happened before my birth. And my father and mother strengthened me in this my first impression, saying in my presence, I was intended for some great purpose."

## Early childhood

The Turner plantation was a large farm, spread over several hundred acres. The labor of more than thirty slaves produced yearly crops of tobacco, corn, apples, and cotton. As a child, Turner probably spent his years playing games, fishing, swimming, and trapping with the other children—black and white—of the plantation, watched over by slave women who were too old to work in the fields. Turner, like the other black children, grew up listening to his grandmother's folktales—the stories, myths, and legends of her African homeland. Turner's grandmother, Bridget, was also a Christian, and taught him about Christianity as well.

Somehow, Turner learned to read at a very early age. Some historians think that his grandmother may have taught him; others



think that he learned from a member of Benjamin Turner's family (although it was against the law to teach a slave how to read or write). In *Confessions*, Turner recalls: "The manner in which I learned to read and write, not only had great influence on my own mind, as I acquired it with the most perfect ease, so much so, that I have no recollection whatever of learning the alphabet—but to the astonishment of the family, one day, when a book was shewn to me to keep me from crying, I began spelling the names of different objects—this was a source of wonder to all in the neighborhood."

Turner's intelligence and abilities did not go unnoticed by his master, Benjamin Turner. He took Turner with him to Bible meetings and even gave him his own Bible to read. Although he was forbidden by his master to read anything but the Bible, in *Confessions* Turner tells how he secretly read the books of the plantation's white schoolchildren at every opportunity. Nat Turner *was* special and he knew it. He truly felt that someday he would be a leader of his people and even as a child planned for it to happen. "Having soon discovered to be great," he says in *Confessions*, "I must appear so, and therefore studiously avoided mixing in society, and wrapped myself in mystery, devoting myself to fasting and prayer."

## **Field slave**

When Benjamin Turner died in 1810, his land and slaves were divided among his three surviving children. Nat Turner, his mother, and his grandmother became the legal property of Samuel Turner. When Turner reached the age of twelve he was forced to work in the fields with the other slaves on Samuel Turner's small farm. Although he was considered special by both blacks and whites, he could not escape the reality of being a slave.

For six days a week Turner and his fellow slaves worked from dawn to dusk plowing, planting, hoeing, weeding, building and mending fences, feeding animals, and harvesting crops. On Sunday Master Turner allowed his slaves to attend a prayer meeting led by a white preacher. Afterwards, the slaves were

allowed to hold their own, separate prayer groups, dances, and picnics.

At one Sunday prayer meeting, Turner recalls in *Confessions*, he was struck by a passage from the Bible: "Seek ye the kingdom of Heaven and all things shall be added unto you." He prayed daily for God to help him understand the meaning of this directive. "As I was praying one day at my plough," he recalls in *Confessions*, "the spirit spoke to me, saying 'Seek ye the kingdom of Heaven and all things shall be added unto you.'" Two years later, he again heard a voice repeating those same words. The experience, Turner explains in *Confessions*, "fully confirmed me in the impression that I was ordained for some great purpose in the hands of the Almighty."

## **Plantation life**

Despite his obvious intelligence, and possible better use to his master as a house slave, Nat Turner labored in the fields of Samuel Turner for the better part of ten years. During that time, Turner tried to lead a life that he thought would please God and prepare him for the role of leader of his people: he didn't drink, gamble, smoke, or steal. He married another slave on the Turner plantation, Cherry, and together they had three children.

When an economic depression hit Virginia in 1820, the price of cotton dropped dramatically and Samuel Turner hired an overseer to manage his farm and get more work from his slaves. In 1821, perhaps because he was beaten or overworked, Turner ran away. He hid in the nearby woods and swamps and somehow escaped detection from the patrols and their hunting dogs. Everyone thought that he had run off for good like his father had done years earlier, and the search was called off after two weeks.

Surprising both his master and his fellow slaves, Turner returned to the Turner farm exactly thirty days after he had escaped. Samuel Turner was so pleased that he did not even have Turner punished. The slaves, on the other hand, were astonished that anyone who had escaped to freedom would voluntarily return to slavery. In his mysterious way, as Turner relates in *Confessions*,

he told them: "the reason of my return was, that the Spirit appeared to me and said I had my wishes directed to things in this world, and not to the kingdom of Heaven, and that I should return to the service of my earthly master."

## **Waiting for a sign**

When Samuel Turner died in 1822, his widow put the farm's slaves on the auction block to be sold to the highest bidders. The Turner widow kept his mother but Turner was sold to Thomas Moore, and Cherry and their children were sold to Giles Reese, whose place was not far from the Moore farm. Turner was only one of three slaves on Moore's seven hundred-acre farm and he was forced to work harder than ever.

During his time as a slave for Moore, Turner gained a reputation among the local whites for being a trusted servant. Among the local blacks, Turner was seen as a powerful slave preacher who talked about divine visions and voices, and the coming of what he called "the Great Day of Judgment." On Sundays, when he was not visiting Cherry and his children at the Reese farm, Turner traveled from farm to farm preaching to mostly black audiences. As a result Turner came to know almost every slave, back-road, woods, swamp, and town in the county.

The years passed as Turner waited for a sign from God that would provide for him some direction. Finally on May 12, 1828, as he relates in *Confessions*: "I heard a loud noise in the heavens, and the Spirit instantly appeared to me and said the Serpent was loosened, and Christ laid down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and that I should take it on and fight against the Serpent, for the time was fast approaching when the first should be last and the last should be first." The spirit, Turner says, instructed him to wait for another sign before he began the battle to free his people.

When Thomas Moore died at the end of 1828, his widow remarried a man named Joseph Travis, a local wheelwright (maker and repairer of wheeled vehicles) who assumed control of the farm and slaves. In *Confessions*, Turner recalls that Travis was "a kind

master, and placed the greatest confidence in me; in fact I had no cause to complain of his treatment to me."

## The Great Day of Judgment

On February 12, 1831, when the sky went totally black as a result of a solar eclipse, Turner was sure it was the sign the spirit had promised him. He began to make plans for a revolt of slaves in the area. They would rise up and kill their white masters who had held them in bondage for so long. Age or sex would not matter; no one was to be spared. As the slaves did what Turner called in *Confessions* their "work of death," they would gather arms and supporters, march on the nearby town of Jerusalem, Virginia, and seize more arms and ammunition. Turner hoped that his revolt in Southampton County would spark slave rebellions throughout the South and that slavery would end as a result.

Turner told his plan to his most trusted friends. They selected the Fourth of July as the date to strike. Turner was ill on that day, however, and the plot was postponed until another sign appeared, this time, the "greenish blue color" of the sun on August 13. Six slaves, led by Turner, began the rebellion at two o'clock in the morning on Monday, August 22. Turner and the rebels began the massacre by killing Turner's master, Joseph Travis, and his family. The rebels then took some arms and horses, and began going from farm to farm killing whites.

Within twenty-four hours about seventy slaves had joined the revolt. By the morning of August 23, fifty-seven whites—men, women, and children—had been slaughtered. The rebels had

### Violence, Repression, and Freedom

Nat Turner's revolt, like earlier uprisings led by Jemmy (1739), Gabriel Prosser (1800), and Denmark Vesey (1822), was a local event, yet it affected the entire nation, especially the slaveholding South. For slave owners, the revolts were reasons to fear their slaves all the more, and to pass even more restrictive laws to control them. With each uprising, blacks in the South, free and slave, lost more of their rights. Shortly after the Turner revolt Virginia, for example, banned night-time religious meetings for slaves. Slaves could go to church only in the day, with their masters, to hear only white preachers. By 1835 the right for blacks, free or slave, to assemble in groups for any purpose without a white person present was denied throughout the states of the Deep South.

For the antislavery movement, the slave rebellions focused the attention of the nation on the brutality of the slave system. And, as examples of the price slaves were willing to pay in pursuit of freedom, the slave revolts and conspiracies inspired, and helped to unify, the abolitionists and eventually brought an end to slavery in the United States.

covered about twenty miles and were slowly making their way, worn from their task, toward Jerusalem, where there was a warehouse of weapons. About three miles outside the town, the slaves were drawn into battle with bands of armed white men and forced to scatter.

## Hung in Jerusalem

Word of the bloody revolt spread quickly, and a massacre of blacks by whites immediately followed. Hundreds of soldiers and militiamen (an army made up of citizens) hunted down and executed anyone they thought was connected to the uprising. At least two hundred blacks were killed in the field, without trials. Those captured alive, about sixteen slaves and three free blacks, were condemned to hang. Turner, who hid in a cave he made

**The building where Nat Turner was held during his trial and until his execution.**



under a pile of logs, avoided capture until October 30. After a short trial in the town of Jerusalem, on November 11, 1831, Turner was hanged.

The trial of Nat Turner wasn't really necessary, as he never denied his guilt. In fact, Turner gave a full confession to Thomas R. Gray, a white attorney who had defended several of the other rebels. Over a period of days, while chained in his jail cell, Turner

dictated his story to Gray. Shortly after his trial and hanging, Gray published Turner's story as *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. In the aftermath, a wave of terror rolled over the entire slaveholding South. Thousands of blacks were killed as whites took their revenge on any slaves suspected of ever being involved in plotting to revolt.

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# Denmark Vesey

**Born c. 1767**

**Africa or St. Thomas, Danish  
West Indies**

**Died July 2, 1822**

**Charleston, South Carolina**

**Chattel slave, freedman,  
rebellion leader**

**The leader of the most wide-reaching plan to strike back at the slave system in the United States.**

**A** literate and worldly man, Denmark Vesey spent his life resisting the degrading forces of slavery and racism. He ultimately became the first slave revolt leader of note when in 1822 he organized thousands of slaves in Charleston, South Carolina, in a carefully planned uprising. Vesey's aim was to change the system by force, no matter what the cost.

## Return to sender

Very little is known about Denmark Vesey's childhood years. Some historians claim he was born in the Danish colony of St. Thomas, an island in the Caribbean; others say he was born in Africa. The historical record begins in 1781, when Joseph Vesey, a sea captain and slave trader based in Bermuda, delivered 390 slaves from St. Thomas to St. Domingue (a French colony occupying the western third of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola). On the voyage, Captain Vesey and his officers took special notice of a fourteen-year-old male from the Danish slave market. They made a pet of him, gave him special clothes to wear,

and, since he was acquired from a Danish colony, named him Denmark.

Denmark and the rest of Captain Vesey's human cargo were sold in the slave market of Cap Francais, St. Domingue, to various planters for work on their sugarcane plantations. Three months later, when Captain Vesey was delivering another shipload of slaves to Cap Francais, Denmark's owner met him at the dock to return the slave and demand his money back. Denmark was examined by a physician and found "unsound and subject to epileptic fits," and according to slave-trading custom, Captain Vesey was forced to refund the buyer's money.

## **Witness to horror**

Denmark, deemed "unsellable," became Captain Vesey's personal servant and assumed his master's surname, Vesey. From 1781 to 1783 Denmark sailed the seas on Vesey's vessel and witnessed all the horrors of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It was a time when European colonists, especially in the West Indies, just couldn't seem to get enough African slaves for their sugarcane plantations. The French colonists of St. Domingue, for example, were importing slaves at the rate of twenty thousand per year.

Like most slave traders of the day, Captain Vesey traded for slaves with coastal West Africans, offering in return items from the colonies such as rum, gin, molasses, pistols, gunpowder, knives, tobacco, glass beads, salt, kettles, fishhooks, and needles. Typically, as many slaves as possible were crammed into a ship for the two-month journey to the West Indies known as the Middle Passage. Conditions on the slave ships were so bad that one-quarter to one-third of the slaves died before ever reaching the other side of the Atlantic. Spoiled food, stagnant water, diseases, and dark, damp, and dirty living conditions all took their toll.

## **Slave in the city**

In 1783 Captain Vesey gave up slave trading on the high seas and settled in Charleston, South Carolina, one of many ports along America's coast where he had plied his trade. Denmark Vesey was now sixteen and had seen more of the world than most people. He



picked up many languages along the way—English, French, Danish, and Spanish. And he knew firsthand of the brutal treatment of Africans and how they were whipped, branded, and tortured when they tried to resist or rebel.

Vesey quickly adapted to life in America's fourth largest city at the time. Life in an urban area provided more opportunities and freedoms for slaves, especially if they had marketable skills. While Captain Vesey retained a number of his slaves as household servants, there was little need on a daily basis for Vesey's services as a skilled carpenter. Vesey, like other slaves in the city, hired out his services and paid his master his weekly earnings. Captain Vesey then gave back to Vesey a portion of those wages as an allowance—an amount that was barely enough for food and clothing.

In the South, one out of eight slaves lived in urban areas. Vesey's arrangement with his master was fairly common for slaves in cities and towns. As a result, urban slaves had access to a whole different world than slaves isolated on plantations in rural areas. Vesey could move about freely in comparison and interact with a greater variety of people—whites, free blacks, and other slaves. He had access to newspapers and books, and was exposed to a broader range of ideas and news from near and far.

## **Free but not equal**

In December 1799, Denmark Vesey won \$1,500 in the East Bay Street lottery. Vesey bought his freedom from Captain Vesey in January for \$600 and opened a carpentry shop. Vesey would no longer have to hand over his wages every week to his master. He was now one of about 1,000 free blacks in the city. Vesey had to carry his manumission (formal release from bondage) papers with him at all times to prove his free status. He also had to register with the state and pay taxes or risk re-enslavement.

Although Vesey was free, made a respectable living as a carpenter, and paid his taxes, he was still not entitled to the rights and privileges of white people. Free blacks could not vote, serve on a jury, or testify in court except in cases involving other blacks.

If accused of a crime, free blacks were treated the same as slaves: they had no right to legal representation or a jury trial. In Charleston, both freed blacks and slaves were required to wear identification badges that indicated their status.

## **Spurred to revolution**

Denmark Vesey was not a man who was easily intimidated by the rules of white society. He was known for arguing with whites about racial issues in public, sometimes just to show other blacks that it could be done. Vesey was literate and intelligent, aware of events in other parts of the world, especially the slave revolution that took place in the French colony of St. Domingue. Fed up with hundreds of years of abuse at the hands of their white masters, the colony's black slaves violently revolted in 1791. Through years of fighting and heavy losses, St. Domingue's slaves gained their emancipation in 1794, and in 1804 established Haiti—the first independent nation in the Western Hemisphere to be governed by blacks.

Through the years, Vesey came to believe that he had won the lottery and had been freed from slavery in order to help save his people from slavery and racism. He was a very religious man who was able to passionately quote scripture. He was especially familiar with the Old Testament stories of Moses leading the Israelites out of slavery in ancient Egypt. Vesey dreamed of becoming the Moses of his people.

## **Power through the church**

Like many other blacks, Vesey found comfort and community in the black church. He also found an outlet for his radical view of the world, a view that held that slavery was against God's will and must be opposed by whatever means were necessary. In 1817 Vesey became an active and vocal member of Charleston's only independent black church, the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. The church was located in the suburb of Hampstead. It had been formed after three-quarters of the city's six thousand black Methodists withdrew their membership from the white-controlled churches in a dispute over the custody of a burial ground for blacks.

White church officials quickly responded to the rebellion by having 469 black worshippers arrested one Sunday while at their Hampstead church. They were charged with disorderly conduct. The group was released after the arrests but the action served notice of more harassment to come. City officials again moved against the Hampstead A.M.E. Church on a Sunday in June 1818. They arrested 140 free blacks and slaves who belonged to the church and put them in jail. The church's bishop and four ministers were given a choice: leave the state or spend a month in jail. Eight other ministers were sentenced to ten lashes or a \$10 fine. Still, the Hampstead A.M.E. Church continued to function through 1822.

For years Vesey had engaged many people, black and white, in conversations about slavery. His activities with the A.M.E. Church, which included giving sermons and leading some religious classes, enabled Vesey to preach his message to a much wider audience. Contrary to the opinion of white southern slaveholders, he argued with passion that God does *not* approve of slavery. Religious meetings offered Vesey the perfect opportunity to test his ideas on other blacks and to assess which people were sympathetic and might be trusted with his secret plan to free the slaves.

## **Betrayal and disaster**

In December 1821 Vesey started to organize the area's slaves for an attack on Charleston. It would take place in the summer when many of the white residents would be away from the city on vacation. A slave army led by Vesey would kill as many whites as possible while seizing control of Charleston. His hope, based on what he knew of Haiti's slave revolution, was to spark a widespread rebellion among the slaves that would lead to the downfall of slavery in the United States.

Vesey was careful to select urban artisan slaves—mechanics, harness-makers, blacksmiths, and carpenters—as leaders for the revolt. He also chose as one of his lieutenants a man named Gullah Jack, a conjurer who some believed had magical powers. Vesey appealed to his followers to selectively recruit only slaves who could be trusted with the plans, but the secret was eventually leaked to the wrong person, who informed on the rebels to the authorities.

Vesey had set the date for the attack on Charleston for the second Sunday of July 1822. When two of the leaders were arrested on May 30, Vesey moved the date ahead one month. Despite months of planning and the manufacture and stockpiling of bayonets and daggers, Vesey was unable to communicate the change of plans to the thousands of conspiring slaves, some of whom lived as far away as eighty miles from the city.

The battle never happened. Instead the rebels were betrayed and arrested. Gullah Jack managed to avoid capture by the authorities until July 5, 1822, three days after Vesey had already been hanged. Gullah Jack was condemned to death for his part in the conspiracy and hanged on July 12, 1822.

## Aftermath

The planned attack, said by one witness to have involved as many as nine thousand slaves, never took place. In early June, authorities arrested 131 blacks in Charleston. Forty-nine rebels were condemned to die; twelve were eventually pardoned; and thirty-seven were hanged, including Vesey. Four white men were fined and imprisoned for helping the rebels.

### Gullah Jack

Denmark Vesey recruited Gullah Jack to be one of his top lieutenants in the plot to violently seize the city of Charleston and incite a nationwide slave rebellion. Gullah Jack was also known as Cooter Jack, or Jack Pritchard. He was the slave of Paul Pritchard, a shipbuilder in Charleston. He joined Vesey's conspiracy sometime after Christmas of 1821. Vesey chose Gullah Jack because of his connections to the slaves of South Carolina's coastal islands known as the Gullah, or Kongo people of Angolan descent.

Gullah Jack was a member of Vesey's church and a well-respected man in the black community. He was known by his people to be a "conjurer," a person believed to have special, almost magical powers to manipulate the world. With Gullah Jack as a leader, many of the slave conspirators felt more confident of their success—some even believed that Gullah Jack himself was bulletproof. Gullah Jack provided charms to some of the rebels before the planned attack, saying they would prevent injury in battle.

In response to the conspiracy, the whites of Charleston tore down the Hampstead A.M.E. Church. The state of South Carolina reacted by passing even more restrictive laws in an effort to prevent future slave revolts. For example, slaves could no longer meet in a group for any purpose unless a white person was present; slaves were not allowed to hire out their time; and free blacks over fifteen years of age had to have a white guardian.

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# Slavery Throughout History

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# Reader's Guide

Slavery is broadly described by the United Nations (UN) as the condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers connected to the right of ownership are exercised. We know that slavery has existed as an institution in human civilizations all over the world for thousands of years and that it continues to this day. But there is much we don't know. For the most part enslaved people throughout the world have lived and died without an opportunity to tell their own tales. Although slaves who found freedom were able to record their experiences, the records kept by slave holders are more often the only documentation left to us of many slaves' lives. How many millions of people in the world have lived their lives from birth to death in slavery and are now hidden from history is difficult to estimate and painful to imagine.

Through the records that do exist, though, it is possible to fill out our understanding of the people who lived in slavery, not only as victims of a terrible system, but in terms of their individuality, their ways of coping and surviving, their own stories, and their struggles to be free. The Slavery Throughout History Reference Library provides a unique forum for a student or general interest reader to approach this difficult subject. The *Almanac* presents the overall history of slavery throughout the Western world and beyond, with facts, figures, and plenty of contextual information

on the economics, politics, law, culture, religion, and social trends that developed around the institution. The *Biographies* volume presents slavery from the perspective of individual lives: the stories of people of diverse beliefs, personalities, and circumstances who were slaves themselves or who had a profound impact on the institution. Finally, the *Primary Sources* volume features the first-hand accounts of slaves, lawmakers, abolitionists, and slaveowners, offering the immediate voices of the times on the events, issues, and ideas that arose in the history of slavery.

## **Related reference sources:**

*Slavery Throughout History: Almanac* provides an overview of the institution of slavery from the time it developed among the earliest permanent settlers in Mesopotamia (perhaps as early as 3500 B.C.E.) to the present day. Civilizations covered in the volume include ancient Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome; western Europe and Africa in the Middle Ages; Latin America and the United States from colonial times through emancipation; and modern-day slavery worldwide.

Five of the twelve subject chapters in this volume are dedicated to slavery in the United States. Along with information about the commercial history of the vastly profitable slave trade, the draining of Africa, and the labor-intensive cotton industry, the reader will find stories of slave uprisings, black troops fighting in the American Revolution and the Civil War, the brutal punishments, the restrictive slave codes, the auction blocks, and the heroic abolitionist efforts. The final chapter presents examples of slavery still claiming millions of lives around the world at the end of the twentieth century.

One hundred fifteen black-and-white photographs, illustrations, and maps appear throughout the *Almanac*. A "Tact Focus" sidebar highlights key facts in each chapter. Other sidebars present information on a variety of interesting events, customs, and people. Cross references aid the reader in finding related material. *Slavery Throughout History: Almanac* begins with a Words to Know section defining key terms and a timeline of important events in the history of slavery. The volume concludes with a bibliography and a thorough subject index.

*Slavery Throughout History: Biography* presents biographies of thirty men and women who made an impact on the institution of slavery or were profoundly impacted by it. Featured are slaves and resistance fighters such as Moses, Spartacus, Toussaint L'Ouverture, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, John Brown, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

*Slavery Throughout History: Primary Sources* features twenty full or excerpted documents pertaining to the institution of slavery, from the Code of Hammurabi to the American slave narratives to the United Nations 1956 declaration of intent to end slavery worldwide. Included are poems,

narratives, autobiographical essays, legal documents, speeches, newspaper articles, and other first-hand accounts of slavery. Ample introductory and sidebar information aid the reader in understanding the historical and biographical context of the primary source; black-and-white photographs and illustrations, glossaries, a timeline, a thorough subject index, and cross references provide easy and engaging access.

### **Special thanks**

Grateful acknowledgment is extended to Laurie J. Wechter and Maxine A. Biber for their editorial assistance with this book. Special thanks also to Sonia Benson, a perceptive, patient editor.

### **Comments and suggestions**

We welcome your comments about *Slavery Throughout History: Almanac* as well as your suggestions for other topics in history to be covered in this series. Please write: Editors, *Slavery Throughout History: Almanac*, U•X•L, 27500 Drake Rd., Farmington Hills, Michigan 48331-3535; call toll-free: 1-800-877-4253; fax to: 248-699-8055; or send e-mail via <http://www.galegroup.com>.

# Timeline of Events

- c. 3500 B.C.E.** Mesopotamians settle into permanent communities with successful agricultural techniques. Constantly at war with neighbors, the Mesopotamians begin to capture and enslave prisoners, forcing them into labor instead of killing them.
- 1780 B.C.E.** King Hammurabi becomes the sixth ruler of Babylon, a city in northern Mesopotamia. With Babylon as his capital, Hammurabi unites all of the competing kingdoms of Mesopotamia under one government. He establishes the Code of Hammurabi, a list of about 300 laws that regulate all aspects of Babylonian life, including slavery.
- 1570 B.C.E.** The Egyptians drive the ruling Hyksos from Egypt and enslave all foreigners who remain, including thousands of Hebrews, who are forced to work in the fields making bricks for the construction of new cities and temples.
- 597 B.C.E.** Nebuchadnezzar II captures the city of Jerusalem and sends most of the city's population, about 3,000 Hebrews, into slavery in Babylonia. The Hebrews, who are eventually freed in 539 B.C.E., call this period "The Great Captivity."



- 594 B.C.E.** Debt slavery for Greek citizens is outlawed in Athens, creating a demand for foreign slaves to do the work of the freed Greek debt slaves. At the same time, the introduction of coinage makes the slave trade easier, and slavery increases significantly.
- 431 B.C.E.** The city-state of Athens in Greece has so many slaves it becomes the world's first example of a slave society. Of the 155,000 residents of the city of Athens, 70,000 are slaves, 60,000 are citizens, and 25,000 are resident foreigners.
- 431-404 B.C.E.** The Peloponnesian War, a civil war between the Greek city-states Athens and Sparta, produces tens of thousands of slaves.
- 264-27 B.C.E.** Rome, during the second half of the Republic, fights many overseas wars that produce hundreds of thousands of slaves for central Italy. Giant agricultural estates develop—the world's first plantations—relying on slave labor.
- 73 B.C.E.** Roman gladiator/slave Spartacus leads a breakout of about seventy gladiators from their training school. The rebels build a vast army of runaway slaves and hold off the Roman army effectively for two years.
- 41-54 C.E.** The Roman Emperor Claudius makes it a crime to murder a slave or to turn a sick slave out to die. More laws follow that uphold the institution of slavery but take a more humane stand in the treatment of slaves.
- 476** The fall of the Roman Empire changes slavery in Europe dramatically. A new class of people develops, called serfs—peasants who are not allowed to leave the land where they work. If the land changes hands, the serfs stay, "bound" to the soil. Serfdom is hereditary: the children of serfs become serfs at birth. Beneath serfs on the social scale there is still a small population of slaves.
- 1000** As many as 80 percent of Europe's peasants are living on feudal estates. One-half of those peasants are free, able to live and work where they choose; the other half are serfs, legally bound to the land they work. The number of slaves is now very low, as descendants of slaves, through the years, have risen to the level of serfs.
- 1300** Europe emerges from the feudal era. The laws and customs of the villages are being replaced by the common law of entire kingdoms.
- 1441** Fourteen African slaves arrive in Lisbon, Portugal, beginning the network for shipping slaves from Africa to the New World. The Africans had been captured in a raid on one of the many voyages Portuguese explorers had made along Africa's Atlantic coast.
- 1455** The pope of the Catholic church approves slave raids and gives Portugal blanket permission to enslave all non-Christian people.
- 1481** The Portuguese establish a trading post at Elmina, Gold Coast.

- 1493** The pope grants Spain sole shipping rights to the New World, and throughout the 1500s, Spain dominates the Atlantic slave trade. Portugal continues the African part of the trade.
- 1494** Christopher Columbus sends 500 Indians to Spain as slaves.
- 1500** The Portuguese are taking 3,000 slaves a year from Africa's Atlantic coast.
- 1518** The first cargo of slaves from the Guinea coast of West Africa arrives in the West Indies.
- 1524** The Spanish bring slaves to Guatemala; by the end of the century they have shipped at least 60,000 Africans to Mexico.
- 1526** The first slave revolt in what is now the United States takes place in the first known settlement on mainland North America. Disease wipes out many of the 600 people—500 Spanish colonists and 100 African slaves—who arrive in modern-day South Carolina. The slaves revolt and flee to live with the local Indians. The surviving settlers flee to Haiti, leaving the rebel slaves as the first permanent immigrants in North America.
- 1538** The Portuguese bring slaves from the coasts of Africa to their colonies in Brazil.
- 1565** The Spanish settle Saint Augustine, Florida, the earliest example of an established colony using slaves on the North American mainland.
- 1574** The queen of England abolishes serfdom in her nation.
- 1600** About 367,000 African slaves have crossed the Atlantic to the Americas.
- 1619** Jamestown, Virginia, is the first English colony to receive Africans.
- 1630** The Republic of Palmares is established by runaway slaves in the heavy inland forests of northeastern Brazil. At its peak it has a population of 20,000. The Republic of Palmares is destroyed by the Portuguese in 1697—after surviving almost 70 years.
- 1638** A Salem ship named *Desire* unloads New England's first cargo of African slaves at Boston Harbor. A profitable New England slave trade has begun. Ships leave New England loaded with cargo to trade, sailing first to the West Indies, where they trade most of their cargo for rum. The "rum boats" then sail to Africa, where they trade the liquor for slaves. The ships then sail back to the West Indies, where they trade the freshly captured African slaves to the sugar islands for "seasoned" slaves and other products of the islands. These slaves are taken to New England slave ports, where they are sold in local markets, mainly to southern planters.
- 1641** Massachusetts is the first colony to officially recognize the institution of slavery.

- 1663** Planters are offered 20 acres for every African male slave and 10 acres for every African female slave they bring into the Carolinas.
- 1672** The Royal African Company is chartered by the British king and soon becomes the number-one slave trader in the world by securing, under an agreement with Spain, the exclusive rights to ship West African slaves to the Spanish colonies in the Americas. England becomes the dominant slave-trading force to the Americas.
- 1686** Carolina's colonial legislature begins creating laws that ensure the domination of black slaves by their white masters. In time, the slave code of the Carolinas becomes a model for the Black Codes that harshly regulate slaves throughout much of mainland North America.
- 1688** Pennsylvania's influential population of Quakers voice their religious opposition to slavery.
- 1739** A man named Jemmy leads a slave revolt in South Carolina, killing two warehouse guards and seizing weapons and ammunition. One hundred slaves join him as he marches south to Spanish-held Florida, where they hope to be free. Along the way they kill about 20 whites before entering into an intense battle with the local militia, in which about 50 slaves are killed.
- 1770** Runaway slave Crispus Attucks is the first man to die for the cause of the American Revolution in the Boston Massacre.
- 1775** As the American Revolution begins, the British governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, declares that all slaves who join the British side will be set free. After Dunmore's Proclamation, slaves run away by the tens of thousands. Hundreds of slaves join Dunmore, who forms all-black fighting units in what he calls his "Ethiopian Regiment."
- 1776** General George Washington, after learning that Lord Dunmore is enlisting blacks into the British troops, allows blacks to enter the war on the American side. Thousands of black soldiers fight against the British. Many states promise freedom after a set period to slaves who fight the war.
- 1780s** The Underground Railroad begins to take shape when Quakers in a number of towns in Pennsylvania and New Jersey assist slaves in their escape.
- 1787** At the Constitutional Convention, the new nation's founding fathers decide that the slave trade can continue for at least 20 more years, three-fifths of the slave population can be counted toward determining the number of each state's Congressional representatives, and all states are required to return fugitive slaves to their owners.
- 1787** Haiti, as the world's greatest producer of sugar and its by-products rum and molasses, brings in 40,000 slaves in this year alone to work on sugar plantations and in sugar mills. The island has more than 600

sugar plantations and more slaves in proportion to its size than any other place in the New World.

- 1787** Various British abolitionist organizations come together to form the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade.
- 1791** A rebellion in Haiti led by a slave named Toussaint L'Ouverture results in the abolition of slavery on the island in 1794 and ultimately to Haiti's independence from France in 1803.
- 1793** Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin. With just two people working it, Whitney's cotton gin cleans as much cotton as 100 workers could by hand, thus freeing up laborers for the cultivation of the crop. The rise of cotton as the number-one crop of the nation has a tremendous impact on the institution of slavery.
- 1793** The federal government passes the fugitive slave laws, which require that slaves who escape to a different state be returned to their owner by the authorities of the state to which they fled.
- 1794** Richard Allen founds the first independent church for blacks in America, the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church.
- 1800** Gabriel Prosser prepares slaves for revolt in the city of Richmond, Virginia, hoping to ignite a widespread rebellion among all slaves. About 1,000 slaves arm themselves, ready to attack the city, but a severe storm stops them. Troops hunt them down, and at least 35 rebels, including Prosser, are hanged.
- 1807** The U.S. federal government officially abolishes the African slave trade. The law is poorly enforced and consequently ignored by the people who profit most from the trade—the New England shipowners, the Middle Atlantic merchants, and the southern planters.
- 1808** After great pressure from the abolitionists and repeated legislative attempts in the House of Commons led by William Wilberforce, the British Parliament outlaws the slave trade. Unlike the Americans, the British pass laws that contain harsh penalties for violators and rewards for those who catch them.
- 1815** The four Philadelphia branches of the Masons, a fraternal organization, pool their resources and build the country's first black Masonic Hall.
- 1816** Sixteen black Methodist congregations, from New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, come together for a convention at Richard Allen's Bethel AME church in Philadelphia—until then, the only black Methodist church in America. Together they withdraw from the white-dominated mother church and form the nation's first independent black church, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. Allen is ordained a church elder and the AME Church's first bishop.

- 1816** The American Colonization Society (ACS) forms with a plan to ship blacks to land in Africa that will later be known as Liberia.
- 1819** Towns in Ohio and North Carolina join New Jersey and Pennsylvania in acting as way stations and shelters for fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad. Historians estimate that in the 50 years before the Civil War, at least 3,200 "conductors" help about 75,000 slaves escape to freedom.
- 1820-21** In a series of acts known as the Missouri Compromise, Congress admits Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state. It prohibits slavery in all other territory north of Missouri's southern boundary (the 36th parallel).
- 1822** Denmark Vesey, a freed slave and carpenter, prepares slaves around Charleston, South Carolina, for a major uprising after whites close down the African Methodist church he has helped establish. The planned attack, said by one of the witnesses to involve as many as 9,000 slaves, never takes place because information about it reaches the authorities and the leaders are hanged.
- 1827** Samuel Cornish and John Russworm start the country's first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*.
- 1829** David Walker, a free black in Boston, publishes *Walker's Appeal ...to the Colored Citizens of the World But in Particular and Very Expressly to Those of the United States of America*, which calls for blacks to violently rise up and defeat the forces of slavery.
- 1830** Richard Allen organizes the first Free People of Color Congress in Philadelphia. At that gathering, black delegates from six states begin what will come to be known as the National Negro Convention Movement. Every year until the Civil War, blacks convene in different cities "to devise ways and means of bettering our condition."
- 1831** William Lloyd Garrison begins publishing the abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*.
- 1831** Nat Turner, a slave and preacher, leads a slave revolt in Southampton, Virginia. The rebels go from plantation to plantation killing whites. Within 24 hours, about 70 slaves have joined the revolt, and 57 whites—men, women, and children—are slaughtered. White troops force the group to scatter, and retaliation against all blacks in the area is severe.
- 1833** Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison helps establish the American Antislavery Society (AAS). Only 3 black people are among the 62 signers of the society's Declaration of Sentiments.
- 1835** The right for blacks, slave or free, to assemble in groups for any purposes without a white person present is denied throughout the Deep South.

- 1836** Sixty thousand slaves are brought to Cuba in this year alone, but not all of them will stay on the island to work the sugar plantations. Cuba has become the largest slave market in the New World, supplying African slaves to colonies far and wide.
- 1839** Anti-Slavery International (ASI), a London-based organization, is founded. It will continue to fight slavery into the twenty-first century.
- 1840** There are more than 100 antislavery societies in the free states of the North, with at least 200,000 black and white members. Abolitionists, however, are not well received in most places.
- 1845** The autobiography of Frederick Douglass, *Nanative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, becomes an international best-seller.
- 1847** Frederick Douglass begins publishing his abolitionist and reform-minded newspaper, the *North Star*.
- 1850** In the Compromise of 1850, Congress admits California as a free state, leaves the status of territories to be decided later, outlaws the slave trade in the District of Columbia, and puts real teeth into the fugitive slave laws of 1793.
- 1852** *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, an antislavery novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe, sells 300,000 copies in its first year and convinces many readers that slavery must end.
- 1853** William Wells Brown publishes his novel *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*, the first published novel written by a black person in the United States.
- 1854** The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 organizes Kansas and Nebraska as territories and leaves the question of slavery to be decided by the settlers when they apply for statehood. The act, in effect, erases the thirty-four-year-old prohibition of slavery above the Mason-Dixon line as established in the Missouri Compromise.
- 1854** After the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act (sponsored by the northern Democrats as a "compromise"), the northern Whigs unite with antislavery Democrats and Free Soilers (an antislavery political party formed in 1848) and found the antislavery Republican Party. The southern Whigs join the southern Democrats as a united party firmly on the proslavery side.
- 1857** Responding to Dred Scott's lawsuit, in which he contended that he and his wife should be free from slavery because they lived with their owner in territories where slavery was not allowed, the Supreme Court rules that blacks, free or slave, are not citizens of the United States; that slavery is a property right established by the U.S. Constitution and therefore owners still retain title to their slaves, even when visiting or living on free soil; that territories are common lands of the United States where the property rights of all citizens—

including slaveholders—apply. The court, in effect, declares the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional and opens all territories to slavery.

- 1859** John Brown, a white abolitionist, carries out a raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, hoping to capture the federal arsenal and arm slaves for a massive uprising to end slavery. The revolt is crushed, and Brown and his followers are hanged.
- 1860** There are about 4 million slaves in the United States at this time, 90 percent of them living in the rural South. The United States is producing more than 5 million bales of cotton annually. Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Georgia produce 70 percent of the cotton and are at the top of the list in the number of large slaveholders.
- 1860-61** When Republican Abraham Lincoln is elected president on an antislavery platform in November 1860, seven southern slaveholding states withdraw from the Union and form their own government. Those states—South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas—form the Confederate States of America.
- 1861** The Civil War officially begins on April 12, when Confederate soldiers open fire on Fort Sumter, a Union-held fort located in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Union forces surrender after a thirtyone-hour battle. The defeat costs the Union four more slave states, as Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas join the Confederacy.
- 1861** The Confiscation Act passed by the U.S. Congress states that any property used in aiding or abetting insurrection against the United States can be captured and kept as a prize of war. When the "property" consists of slaves, the law declares them to be forever free. Thousands of slaves seek refuge and freedom on the lands occupied and controlled by the Union armies.
- 1862** On June 19, the United States abolishes slavery in the territories. On July 19, an act proclaims that all slaves who make it into Union territory from Confederate states are to be set free. On September 22, President Abraham Lincoln issues a preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all slaves. At the same time, he allows the enlistment of blacks into the Union's armed forces. These acts mark a huge change of policy: the war's goal is no longer just to save the Union, but to crush slavery.
- 1863** President Abraham Lincoln issues the final Emancipation Proclamation, declaring approximately 4 million enslaved people in the United States free.

- 1865** The Civil War ends on April 9, when the Confederate army, led by General Robert E. Lee, surrenders at Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia.
- 1865** By the end of the Civil War more than 185,000 blacks have served in the Union army. About 93,000 came from the rebel states, 40,000 from the border slave states, and about 52,000 from the free states. More than 38,000 black soldiers died in the war.
- 1865** The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which abolishes slavery in America, is ratified (officially approved by popular vote) by the states on December 18, 1865.
- 1865-66** Black Codes become the law of the land in the postwar South, gravely violating the rights of blacks.
- 1865** Congress establishes the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, or the Freedman's Bureau, to provide aid, such as food, education, medicine, and to help in resettling recently freed blacks in the South.
- 1866** The Republican-controlled U.S. Congress passes a Civil Rights bill that repeals the Black Codes of the South. The bill grants citizenship to blacks and equal rights with whites in every state and territory.
- 1867** The Reconstruction era begins when Congress passes a series of acts that divide the former Confederacy into five military districts under the command of army generals; strip the right to vote from most whites who had supported the Confederate government; order elections for state constitutional conventions; and give black men the right to vote, in some states by military order. Black voters soon make up a majority in the states of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Blacks are elected to state legislatures and, in much smaller numbers, to the U.S. House and Senate.
- 1868** The Fourteenth Amendment, which grants citizenship to blacks, is made law.
- 1870** The Fifteenth Amendment, guaranteeing the protection of U.S. citizens against federal or state racial discrimination, is ratified by the states.
- 1871** Brazil passes a gradual emancipation law.
- 1877** The withdrawal of all federal troops from the South in 1877 marks the end of the Reconstruction period; southern Democrats regain political dominance and restrict the rights of blacks.
- 1880** Cuba passes a gradual emancipation law, and the shipping of Africans across the Atlantic ends.



- 1885-1908** European powers grant King Leopold of Belgium the right to rule over the Congo Basin. He directs his troops in the Congo to round up whole communities of Africans. Millions of Congo people face inhuman conditions of hard labor—harvesting ivory and wild rubber and building facilities needed for trade—and atrocious brutality and violence at the hands of Leopold's forces. As Leopold's private African kingdom falls apart in the early twentieth century, his troops resort to wholesale slaughter of the Congo people as punishment.
- 1927-53** The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), ruled by the dictator Joseph Stalin, enslaves millions of Soviet citizens in labor camps in Siberia, Central Asia, and above the Arctic Circle.
- 1942-45** In Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler, millions of Jews are enslaved in concentration camps, where they are systematically murdered. At the same time, millions of foreigners are enslaved in labor camps.
- 1956** The United Nations (UN) defines slavery as the condition of someone over whom any or all of the powers connected to the right of ownership are exercised and dedicates itself to ending all forms of slavery, including chattel slavery, serfdom, debt bondage, child labor, child prostitution, child pornography, the use of children in armed conflict, servile forms of marriage, forced labor, and the "white slave" traffic, or sexual slavery.
- 1990s** In war-torn Sudan, human-rights groups estimate that in the 1990s, 30,000 to 90,000 Sudanese have been enslaved by a government-sponsored Arab militia. The militia regularly raids civilian villages and cattle camps in the south and hauls away hundreds of black Africans at a time to be marched north and sold into slavery.
- 1990s** Despite the ban on slavery in Mauritania, tens of thousands of blacks remain the property of their Arab masters.
- 1991-96** According to official figures from the Chinese, police in China catch and prosecute 143,000 slave dealers and rescue 88,000 women and children who had been sold into slavery, marriage, or prostitution. Human-rights groups claim the real number of enslaved women and children was much higher.
- 1992** It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of political prisoners are forced to work in slave-like conditions in China's vast network of labor reform camps, some of which are nothing more than secured factories staffed with inmates. For years the official policy of China has been to use prison labor to produce cheap products for export.
- 1993** The Pakistan Human Rights Commission estimates the number of bonded child workers in Pakistan is 20 million. (A child labor survey conducted in 1996 by the Pakistani government, however, declares that there are a maximum of 4 million bonded child workers in the

country.)

- 1996** The United Nations reports that children are being sold for prostitution, pornography, and adoption at increasing rates worldwide. In Asia alone, more than 1 million children are exploited sexually and live in conditions virtually identical to slavery.
- 1996** New York-based Human Rights Watch estimates that there are between 10 million and 15 million bonded child workers in India.
- 1996** The Pastoral Land Commission, a Catholic Church organization, reports 26,047 cases of slavery in Brazil, mainly involving Indians who work in charcoal production.
- 1998** The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates the number of children exploited in labor markets around the world is between 200 million and 250 million, with nearly 95 percent living in poor countries.
- 1999** Anti-Slavery International (ASI) estimates that there are more than 200 million slaves in the world. Most of the slaves, according to ASI, live in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

# Words to know

## A

**Abbot:**

The head or ruler of a monastery for men.

**Abolition:**

The act of getting rid of slavery. An abolitionist is someone who fights against the institution of slavery.

**Agricultural slaves:**

People owned as property by owners of farms and forced to labor in the fields.

**Amnesty:**

An official act of pardon for a large group of people.

**Antebellum:**

Before the war; particularly before the Civil War (1861-65).

**Apprentice:**

Someone who learns an art or trade by serving for a set period of time under someone who is skilled at the trade.

**Auction:**

A sale of property in which the buyers bid on the price, and the property goes to the highest bidder.

## B

**Baptism:**

A Christian ceremony marking an individual's acceptance into the Christian community.

**Benevolent societies:**

Organizations formed to promote the welfare of certain groups of people determined by the society's members. In antebellum America, benevolent societies were very important social, cultural, and economic organizations for free blacks.

**Black codes:**

Bodies of law that emerged in the states of the U.S. South that restrictively governed almost every aspect of slaves' lives.

**Black Death:**

A deadly contagious disease often called "the plague" that started around 1350 and killed about one-third of Europe's population and even more in Asia.

**Bondage:**

The state of being bound by law in servitude to a controlling person or entity.

**Branding:**

Marking something, or someone, usually by burning them with a hot iron with a particular mark that shows ownership.

## C

**Cacao:**

Seeds used to make chocolate and cocoa.

**Chain gangs:**

Groups of workers chained together at the ankles while performing forced hard labor.

**Chattel slavery:**

A permanent form of slavery in which the slave holder "owns" a human being—the slave—in the same way that property (chattel) is owned: permanently and without restrictions. Historically, chattel slaves had no legal rights and were considered property that their owners had the right to possess, enjoy, and dispose of in whatever way they saw fit. Slaves could be bought, sold, given away, inherited, or hired out to others. Slave masters had the right, by law and custom, to punish and, in some times and places, to kill their slaves for disobedience. Slaves were forced to work where and when their masters determined. They could not own property or freely marry whom they chose, and their children were born as slaves.

**City-state:**

An independent political unit consisting of a city and its surrounding lands.

**Coffle:**

A group of people chained together.

**Colonialism:**

Control by one nation or state over a dependent territory and its people and resources.

**Colony:**

A territory in which settlers from another country come to live while maintaining their ties to their home country, often setting up a government that may rule over the original inhabitants of the territory as well as the settlers.

**Commerce:**

The making and selling of goods for local and foreign markets.

**Commodity:**

Something that is to be bought and sold for a profit.

**Compromise:**

To arrive at a settlement or agreement on something by virtue of both parties giving up some part of their demands.

**Compromise of 1850:**

A decision by the U.S. Congress to admit California as a free state and that left the status of territories to be determined when they applied for statehood. It also outlawed the slave trade in the District of Columbia and strengthened the fugitive slave laws.

**Confederate States of America:**

Often called the Confederacy, the government established in 1861 when seven states of the South—South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, and Texas—seceded from the Union.

**Concentration camps:**

Prison camps where inmates are detained, often, historically, under severe conditions and for political or ethnic reasons.

**Concubine:**

A sex slave.

**Conspiracy:**

The act of two or more parties secretly joining together to plan an illegal action.

**Cotton gin:**

A machine invented by Eli Whitney in 1793 that separated cotton fibers from the seed. With just two people working it, Whitney's cotton gin cleaned as much cotton as 100 workers could by hand, thus freeing up laborers for the cultivation of the crop.

**Crucifixion:**

Being nailed or bound to a cross until death; any horrible and painful punishment.

**Crusades:**

A series of military expeditions from the eleventh century to the thirteenth century launched by the Christian powers to conquer the Holy Land from the Muslims.

**Curfew:**

A rule or regulation that forbids certain people from being out in public after a certain time of day.

## D

**Dark Ages:**

A period of the Middle Ages in western Europe from 500 to 750 when there was no central government, lords ruled over small territories, and education and the arts were minimal. The term is also used to mean the entire span of the Middle Ages (500-1500).

**Debt slavery:**

A form of forced servitude usually taking place when a person has borrowed money against a pledge, or a promise, of work. If the loan goes unpaid, the borrower or members of his family are enslaved for a period of time to the lender to clear the debt.

**Democracy:**

Government ruled by the people or their representatives.

**Democratic party:**

A party founded by Thomas Jefferson in the early days of the United States favoring personal liberty and the limitation of the federal government. In 1854 the political party names changed to reflect the proslavery forces of the South versus the antislavery forces of the North. The Democrats were the proslavery forces of the South; the Republicans were the antislavery party of the North.

**Domestic slaves:**

Slaves who worked in the homes of the slaveowners, usually cooking, cleaning, serving, or performing child care.

## E

**Emancipate:**

To free from bondage.

**Emancipation Proclamation:**

The 1863 order by President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War that freed all slaves in the rebel states that had seceded and were battling against the Union.

**Empire:**

A large political unit that usually has several territories, nations, or peoples under one governing authority.

**Essenes:**

A Jewish brotherhood in ancient Palestine that was opposed to violence, war, and slavery.

**Exodus:**

Departure.

**Exploitation:**

An unfair or improper use of another person for one's own advantage.

## F

**Feudalism:**

The system of political organization in the Middle Ages in Europe based on the relationship of lord and vassal. The king or ruler basically owned all the land in his realm, but he could not govern it all. Thus he partitioned it out to nobles for a pledge of loyalty and military service. The nobles then divided their lands among lords for their pledge of service. Peasants, serfs, and slaves lived and worked on the lords' estates.

**Forced migration:**

The movement of a large group of people by force.

**Free state:**

A state in which slavery is not permitted.

**Freedman's Bureau:**

Also called the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, an organization formed in 1865 by Congress to provide food, land, clothing, medicine, and education to the newly freed peoples of the South.

**Freedpeople:**

Former slaves.

**Fugitive:**

Someone who is running away or escaping from something.

**Fugitive slave laws:**

Federal acts of 1793 and 1850 that required the return of escaped slaves between states. Thus, a citizen of a free state was required to return an escaped slave to his or her owner in a slave state.

## G

**Gladiator:**

Trained fighters in ancient Rome who fought each other—and sometimes wild beasts—to the death in huge arenas in front of crowds of spectators.

## H

**Heathen:**

A disrespectful word for non-Christian people.

**Holocaust:**

Mass slaughter.

**Human rights:**

Rights that belong to every person by virtue of their being a human being; the idea that everyone should be provided with the civil, political, economic, cultural, and social opportunity for personal human dignity.

**Husbandry:**

The taming and raising of domestic animals as a branch of farming.

**I****Imperial slaves:**

Slaves owned by the emperor.

**Indentured servants:**

Servants who work under a contract, bound to their masters for terms usually between two and fourteen years. In American history the terms of service were generally part of the deal that paid for an indentured servant's passage from England to the New World. Upon completion of their contract, indentured servants were promised their freedom and perhaps some food, clothing, tools, or land.

**Indigo:**

A plant used for making dyes.

**Industrial Revolution:**

A period of great economic changes in Europe due to new technology, starting in England in the mid-1700s.

**Industrial slaves:**

Slaves who labored in factories, mines, quarries, and other fields of production.

**Infidel:**

A disrespectful word for a non-Christians.

**Insurrection:**

Rebellion.

**Irrigation farming:**

An agricultural system using ditches and canals built to bring water to dry fields from a river or lake in order to grow crops.

**J****Jim Crow laws:**

Laws passed in the South after the Reconstruction period (1865-77) that separated black people from white people in many public places.

**K**



**Kansas-Nebraska Act:**

An 1854 act that organized Kansas and Nebraska as territories and left the question of slavery to be determined by the settlers when they applied for statehood. This act, in effect, erased the prohibition of slavery north of the Mason-Dixon line as established in the Missouri Compromise.

**Kidnaping:**

The holding of captured people for ransom (money or goods paid for the return of the captured person).

**Knight:**

A trained soldier who fought on horseback in the service of a lord or superior, especially in the Middle Ages.

## L

**Labor camp:**

A prison camp in which forced labor is performed.

**Latin America:**

A vast region comprised of the countries of South and Middle America where Romance languages (languages derived from Latin) are spoken. Geographically, it includes almost all of the Americas south of the United States: Mexico, Central America, South America, and many of the islands of the West Indies.

## M

**Magna Carta:**

A British document created in 1215 by King John guaranteeing certain rights, but perhaps mainly guaranteeing feudal relations.

**Manor:**

In Medieval England, the castle and surrounding land belonging to a lord, who ruled locally.

**Manumission:**

Formal release from bondage.

**Mason-Dixon line:**

The boundary between the states of Pennsylvania and Maryland. Before the Civil War the Mason-Dixon line became the boundary between the free states of the North and the slave states of the South.

**Massacre:**

The act of killing a group of people who are not prepared to adequately defend themselves; the word connotes a cruel or atrocious act.

**Medieval:**

Relating to the Middle Ages (500-1500), particularly in Europe.

**Mestizos:**

People of mixed Indian and European ancestry.

**Middle Ages:**

A period of European history that dates from about 500 to 1500, beginning after the fall of the Roman empire in 476 and characterized by a unified Christian culture, economy, politics, and military and a feudal hierarchy of power.

**Middle Passage:**

The voyage from Africa to the Americas; the middle stretch of the slave-trading triangle that connected Europe to Africa, Africa to the Americas, and the Americas back to Europe.

**Militant:**

Ready to fight, or aggressively active.

**Militia:**

A unit of armed forces that is trained and ready to do battle or patrol in an emergency.

**Missionary:**

A person with a religious mission, usually a minister of the Christian church who tries to convert non-Christians to the faith.

**Missouri Compromise:**

A series of measures passed in 1820 and 1821 admitting to the Union Missouri as a slave state and Maine as a free state and prohibiting slavery in all other territory north of Missouri's southern boundary.

**Monasteries:**

Churches and residences for monks and nuns.

**Monk:**

A man who belongs to a religious order and lives in a monastery, where he serves the church and devotes himself to his religion.

**Mulatto:**

A word—used mainly in past times—meaning a person of mixed white and black ancestry.

**Muslims:**

Members of the Islam religion.

**Mutilation:**

The act of cutting something or someone in a way that is permanently disfiguring or removes an essential part of the body.

## N

**Narratives:**

Something that is told like a story. Slave narratives in the years before the Civil War were written personal stories about what life was like as a slave. They were either written by former slaves or told out loud by them and then written down by someone else. Either way, they were presented in the manner of a spoken story.

**Near East:**

A region of southwest Asia that includes the Arab nations.

**Nobles:**

Wealthy families of landholders in Europe, usually holding the titles

of dukes, counts, and lords.

## P

**Passive resistance:**

Not cooperating with authority by purposefully not doing what is expected of one, but without using violent or aggressive means.

**Patriarch:**

A tribal chief, or a man who is the father and founder of a people.

**Peasants:**

A class of people throughout the history of Europe and elsewhere who were poor and lived by farming the land, either as small landowners or laborers.

**Peculium:**

Money, such as wages, tips, or gifts, that slaves in ancient Rome earned by doing extra jobs; they were allowed to keep it after giving their master part of the income.

**Piracy:**

The seizure by force of people and property on land or water.

**Pharaoh:**

The supreme ruler, as a king, of ancient Egypt.

**Pillory:**

A wooden frame in which there were holes to lock up the head and hands used to punish and humiliate people.

**Plantation:**

A vast farming estate that is worked by a large staff living on the premises.

**Plebs:**

Short for plebeians; Rome's majority middle class.

**Pope:**

The bishop of Rome and head of the Roman Catholic church.

**Prostitution:**

The practice of engaging in sexual activities for payment.

**Public slaves:**

Slaves owned by cities or towns who did administrative, construction, public-safety, or maintenance work or worked in temples.

## Q

**Quakers:**

A religious body formally known as the Religious Society of Friends that originated in seventeenth-century England. Its founders believed that people could find the spiritual truth that was provided by the Holy Spirit within themselves, having no need of church services or its hierarchy. The Quakers believed in the equality of all human beings and were staunch abolitionists in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

**Quarry:**

A dug out pit from which stone, slate, or limestone is taken.

## R

**Ratification:**

The formal approval or confirmation of a document or act, such as an amendment to the Constitution.

**Reconstruction acts:**

Acts passed in 1867 by Congress that divided the former Confederacy into five military districts under the command of army generals. They stripped the right to vote from whites who had supported the Confederate government. Elections were ordered for state constitutional conventions, and black men were given the right to vote. Withdrawal of the federal forces in 1877 marked the end of the Reconstruction period.

**Reenslavement:**

Being forced back into slavery once one has achieved freedom from bondage.

**Republic:**

A form of government run by elected representatives and based on a constitution.

**Republican party:**

A party formed in 1854 by the antislavery forces of the North. The first Republican president was Abraham Lincoln, elected in 1860.

**Rural:**

Relating to the country, country people, and agriculture; the opposite of urban or city life.

## S

**Secede:**

To withdraw

**Segregation:**

The separation of people along racial lines. For example, in many churches before and after the Civil War, black people were forced to sit in separate sections than white people; in public transportation in some places there were separate sections for blacks and whites; in education; there were sometimes separate schools.

**Serfdom:**

From the Latin word for "servant," a form of servitude that differed from chattel slavery in that the enslaved were not considered "movable" property. Serfs were bound to the land they lived on, generation after generation, serving the owners of the land, known as lords. If the lord left the land, the serf served its next owner.

**Servile:**

Submissive, or slavelike; being always at the bidding of a controlling person.

**Sexual slavery:**

The control and ownership of one human being by another for the purpose of engaging in sexual activities with that person, often forcibly, or selling the person's sexual services to others.

**Sharecropping:**

A system of farming in which one person farms land owned by another in exchange for a share of the crop.

**Slave codes:**

The body of laws held by the states governing the slaves themselves and the ownership of them. Many slave code laws severely restricted slaves because of the slaveowner's strong fear of slave uprisings.

**Slave raids:**

Military expeditions for the purpose of capturing slaves.

**Slave trading forts:**

Sometimes called "slave factories," trading posts operated by Europeans mainly on the west coast of Africa with dungeons capable of holding thousands of captured Africans until they could be placed on the next ship to the Americas.

**Slaver:**

A person who is involved in the slave trade for profit.

**Supreme Court:**

The highest court of the United States, and the highest authority on all cases that arise under the Constitution, laws, and treaties of the federal government.

## T

**Territory:**

An area, or a vast stretch of land in eighteenth and nineteenth century America that had settlers and local communities but had not yet organized as a state of the Union.

**Terrorism:**

Attacks on unarmed civilians.

**Textile:**

Cloth, usually a woven or knit fabric.

**Therapeutae:**

A Jewish community in ancient Alexandria, Egypt, that opposed war and slavery.

**Tribute:**

A payment made by one group or state to another, either in acknowledgment of having been conquered or for protection.

## U

### **Underground Railroad:**

A secret network of people, black and white, who guided runaway slaves to freedom and sheltered them along their way in the eighteenth and nineteenth century United States.

### **United Nations (UN):**

An international organization established after World War II (1939-45) that includes most of the world's countries. The UN's mission is to maintain world peace and security, to achieve cooperation among countries in solving problems, and to promote international humanitarianism.

## V

### **Vassals:**

Lower nobles in medieval Europe who pledged loyalty and services to the local ruler, the lord.

### **Vigilante group:**

A group that organizes independently of official authority, setting its task to suppress or punish other people, for real or perceived offenses, without going through the due processes of law.

# Premodern Slavery (Ancient Times-A.D. 1500)

The term "premodern" encompasses both ancient times and the Middle Ages, also known as the medieval period, which lasted from about A.D. 500 to 1500. Although there were many changes during the premodern period, the way people lived then was so different from the way people live now it is useful to group these periods together.

In particular, the nature of slavery changed little in this period. During the modern era, slavery had racist overtones: white slaveholders claimed that they were racially superior to black Africans. However, in premodern times, slavery generally lacked this racial aspect. Certainly people, for the most part, considered slaves as inferior human beings; but this viewpoint was also influenced by ideas about nationality, social class, and even religion—not race.

Social class played a strong role in Babylonia, a highly developed ancient civilization in what is now Iraq. The greatest of Babylonia's early kings was **Hammurabi** (reigned 1792-c. 1750 B.C.), who created one of the world's first legal codes, or system of laws. The Code of Hammurabi provided

important protections for weaker members of society, including widows and orphans, and even (to some extent) slaves.

According to the code, for instance, the child of a male slave and a free woman was free, and a slave could pass on money to his children after his death. Yet the code also revealed the extent to which social class determined the worth of a human being. If a rich man caused harm to a rich man, the punishment was serious, but not nearly as serious as the penalty if a slave harmed a rich man. By contrast, if a rich man harmed a slave, he only had to pay a fine to the slave's owner.

This seems unfair to modern observers, but not to ancient people, not even to an intelligent man such as the Greek philosopher **Aristotle** (384-322 B.C.) In Aristotle's view, which he explained in his *Politics*, it was clear that some people were born to be slaves, and others to be masters. This idea was related to the way the Greek people viewed the rest of the world: to them, the Greeks were the only civilized people, and all others were "barbarians." Hence it was fitting, in their minds, that the "barbarians" should serve the Greeks.

One such "barbarian" was the slave Spartacus, who was born in what is now Bulgaria. Spartacus lived almost three hundred years after Aristotle, and by that time Rome had taken Greece's place as the dominant power in Europe. To an even greater extent than the Greeks, Romans depended on slavery to sustain their civilization.

Like the Greeks, the Romans based their system of slavery on a belief that they had a right to enslave those people who were not Roman. Slavery was not based on race, since Rome's armies fought in all parts of the known world and slaves came from a variety of regions and racial backgrounds. What the enslaved people had in common was not skin color, but the fact that they came from countries less powerful than Rome.



In light of Greek and Roman attitudes toward slaves, it is interesting to read the sympathetic views of the Greekborn Roman historian **Plutarch** (A.D. c. 46-c. 119) regarding Spartacus. Plutarch described him as brave, honorable, and wise—certainly not traits most Greeks or Romans typically attributed to their slaves.



The ruins of the Roman coliseum where the Romans watched enslaved men like Spartacus fight each other or lions. Many of the great architectural structures of the Greek and Roman empires were built by slaves.

*Reproduced by permission of AP/Wide World Photos, Inc.*

The Roman Empire in Western Europe would last until A.D. 476, but centuries of decline preceded its final collapse. In those centuries, slavery gradually gave way to a new system, which came to be known as serfdom. Serfs enjoyed slightly more freedom than slaves did, but there were far more of them. The growing institution of serfdom slowed Western Europe's development during the Middle Ages.

The Roman Catholic Church attempted to protect slaves and serfs from cruel masters by giving orders such as those handed down by the **Fifth Council of Orleans** in 549. However, as **Gregory of Tours** (538-594) later reported, the Church could not always keep the most wicked masters under control.

Although serfdom largely replaced the practice of slavery in Europe, traditional forms of slavery persisted in the Middle East and Africa. In addition, the Turks, who became the dominant force in the Middle East from about 1000 onward, introduced a new concept: the slave-soldier. These were boys trained from youth for lives of hardship and service; yet unlike most other slaves, they could sometimes assume positions of great power. Particularly interesting were the Janissaries, described by **James M. Ludlow**, whose members were taken from the ranks of Christian men captured by the Muslim Turks.

# Hammurabi

*Excerpt from the Code of Hammurabi*

**Published in *Hammurabi, King of Babylonia: The Letters and Inscriptions of Hammurabi, King of Babylon*, 1976**

**Translated by L. W. King**

**H**ammurabi (1792 B.C.-?) established one of the world's first legal systems. As ruler of Babylonia (in what is now Iraq) during the 1700s B.C., Hammurabi conquered a large empire. To rule such a large and diverse area, he created a system of laws. Among the most notable features of this system are the protections it offered to the weak and vulnerable members of society, such as widows and orphans. On the other hand, it also established harsh punishments, and was the source of the idea "an eye for an eye," the belief that the punishment should be every bit as harsh as the crime itself.

The Code of Hammurabi consisted of 282 laws; thirty directly relate to the practice of slavery. These addressed various aspects of slavery, but there was one constant: the punishment depended on the status of the person harmed. In ancient Babylonia, there were three classes, or social groups: free men, who were the wealthiest and most powerful class; citizens or common men; and slaves. The greater the power of the person who committed a crime—and the lower the status of the victim—the smaller the penalty. The reverse was also true.

**If a slave say to his master: 'You are not my master,' if they convict him his master shall cut off his ear.**

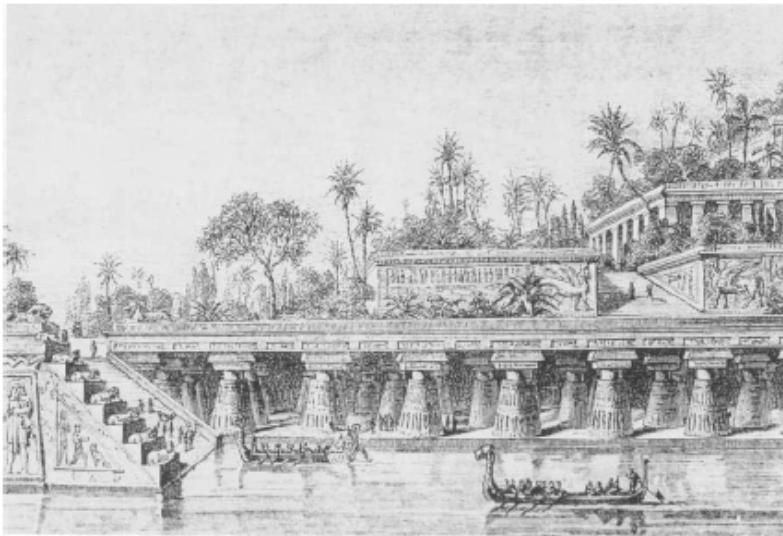
According to Laws 196 through 199, for instance, a free man who put out the eye of another free man would have his own eye removed. By contrast, if a free man did the same to a common man, he would merely have to pay a fee in silver; and if he poked out a slave's eye or killed the slave, he would have to pay half the slave's value, to the slave's owner and not to the slave.

Such aspects of Hammurabi's code may seem unfair to a modern person, but at the time it was an extremely generous set of laws. For instance, it established a number of provisions to protect women in situations such as divorce, which was highly unusual at a time when women had few rights. With regard to slaves, it at least provided a system of laws, which was much preferable to a system in which masters simply decided right and wrong on the spur of the moment.

### **Things to remember while reading**

- The Code of Hammurabi begins with a short prologue, or introduction, and ends with an epilogue, or conclusion, that offers blessings for those who obey, and curses for those who do not. In between are 282 laws, of which approximately thirty (including the last one) involve slavery.
- Of the laws discussed, numbers 15 through 20 deal with runaway slaves; 117 through 119 with slaves sold to settle debts; 175 and 176 with children of a male slave and a free woman; and 217 through 224 with the punishments and rewards for a physician who harms or helps various societal groups, including slaves. Moreover, laws 226 and 227 relate to barbers, whose job it was to mark a slave prior to sale, and laws 280 and 281 address slaves stolen and sold in another country. The last of Hammurabi's laws dictates a severe punishment for a slave who verbally defies his master.
- Despite the many harsh laws regarding slaves, a number of provisions in Hammurabi's code are quite generous—particularly by the standards of the day. For

example, law 119 addresses situations in which an owner is unable to pay off his debts and sells a female slave with whom he has fathered children. Recognizing the difficulty this would pose for the slave, and the significance of the bond created by children, the code provides that the owner must later purchase the slave's freedom. Also notable are the provisions in numbers 175 and 176, whereby the children of a slave and a free woman are free, and the master of a deceased slave with children has a right to no more than half of the slave's property.



**An illustration of ancient Babylonia where Hammurabi dispensed his code.**

*Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.*

As was typical of ancient documents, these laws primarily address males—whether free man, common man, or slave. Hammurabi's code was unusual in referring to women at all; more often, ancient laws simply ignored them.

### ***The Code of Hammurabi***

*... 15. If any one take a male or female slave of the court, or a male or female slave of a freed man, outside the city gates, he shall be put to death.*

16. *If any one receive into his house a runaway male or female slave of the court, or of a freedman, and does not bring it out at the public proclamation of the major domus, the master of the house shall be put to death.*

17. *If any one find runaway male or female slaves in the open country and bring them to their masters, the master of the slaves shall pay him two shekels of silver.*

18. *If the slave will not give the name of the master, the finder shall bring him to the palace; a further investigation must follow, and the slave shall be returned to his master.*

19. *If he [the person who found the runaway slave or slaves] hold the slaves in his house, and they are caught there, he shall be put to death.*

20. *If the slave that he caught run away from him, then shall he swear to the owners of the slave [that he did not assist the slave's escape], and he is free of all blame.*

...117. *If any one fail to meet a claim for debt , and sell himself, his wife, his son, and daughter for money or give them away to forced labor: they shall work for three years in the house of the man who bought them, or the proprietor , and in the fourth year they shall be set free.*

118. *If he [slaveholder] give a male or female slave away for forced labor, and the merchant sublease them, or sell them for money, no objection can be raised [by the man who originally owned the slaves].*

119. *If any one fail to meet a claim for debt, and he sell the maid servant who has borne him children, for money, the money which the merchant [i.e. the buyer] has paid shall [later] be repaid to him by the owner of the slave and she shall be freed.*

... 175. *If a State slave or the slave of a freed man marry the daughter of a free man, and children are born, the master of the slave shall have no right to enslave the children of the free.*

176. *If, however, a State slave or the slave of a freed man marry a [free] man's daughter, and after he marries her she bring a dowry from a father's house, if then they both enjoy it and found a household, and accumulate means, if then the slave die, then she who was free born may take her dowry, and all that her husband and she had earned; she shall divide them into two parts, one-half the master for the slave shall take, and the other half shall the free-born woman take for her children. If the free-born woman had no gift [i.e. dowry] she shall take all that her husband and she had earned and divide it into two parts; and the master of the slave shall take one-half and she shall take the other for her children.*

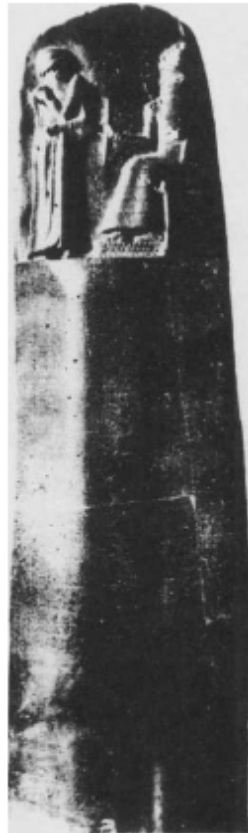
...215. *If a physician ... open a tumor [over the eye] with an operating knife, and saves the eye, he shall receive ten shekels in money.*

216. *If the patient be a freed man, he receives five shekels.*

217. *If he be the slave of some one, his owner shall give the physician two shekels.*

218. *If a physician make a large incision with the operating knife, and kill him [freed man], or open a tumor with the operating knife, and cut out the eye, his hands shall be cut off.*

219. *If a physician make a large incision in the slave of a freed man, and kill him, he shall replace the slave with another slave.*



Engraved into this stone stele is Hammurabi's code, as well as an image of Hammurabi giving his subjects this code. Reproduced by permission of Corbis-Bettmann.

*...221. If a physician heal the broken bone or diseased t of a man, the patient shall pay the physician five shekels in money.*

*222. If he were a freed man he shall pay three shekels.*

*223. If he were a slave his owner shall pay the physician two shekels.*

*224. If a veterinary surgeon perform a serious operation on an ass or an ox, and cure it, the owner shall pay the surgeon one-sixth of a shekel as a fee.*

*...226. If a barber, without the knowledge of his master, cut the sign of a slave on a slave not to be sold, the hands of this barber shall be cut off.*

*227. If any one deceive a barber, and have him mark a slave not for sale with the sign of a slave, he shall be put to death, and buried in his house. The barber shall swear: "I did not mark him wittingly, " and shall be guiltless.*

*...280. If while in a foreign country a man buy a male or female slave belonging to another of his own country; if when he return home the owner of the male or female slave recognize it: if the male or female slave be a native of the country, he shall give them back without any money.*

*281. If they are from another country, the buyer shall declare the amount of money paid therefor to the merchant, and keep the male or female slave.*

*282. If a slave say to his master: "You are not my master, " if they convict him his master shall cut off his ear....*

### **What happened next...**

Hammurabi died in approximately 1750 B.C., and with him died the power and glory of his reign. It would be many centuries before another powerful king emerged in Babylonia; indeed, the country entered a period of decline soon after his



death, and the next thousand years would be characterized by a series of invasions from all sides.

Hammurabi's son fought off a number of attacks from invading peoples, among them the Hittites from Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). In 1600 B.C. the Hittites destroyed

### **Hammurabi**

Babylonia was an ancient kingdom in Mesopotamia, in present-day Iraq. It is remembered for its splendid capital city, Babylon, and for its many achievements in areas ranging from astronomy (the study of the stars) to architecture to law. Its two most famous rulers were Nebuchadnezzar II (reigned c. 630-562 B.C.), and—more than a thousand years before him—Hammurabi.

The period from 3000 to 1792 B.C. is referred to by historians as "Old Babylonia," an era that preceded the greatest achievements of Babylonian civilization. The beginning of Hammurabi's forty-two-year reign in 1792 marked the opening chapter of a new and glorious (though brief) phase in Babylonia's history.

Hammurabi quickly distinguished himself as a leader by defeating a neighboring king who tried to take over Isin, an important city in the region. During the decades that followed, Hammurabi defeated all of the kings in all of the surrounding areas. Eventually his empire stretched from the southern part of modern-day Iraq to the Mediterranean Sea far in the west.

During his long reign, Hammurabi built many ziggurats, or temple towers. Historians believe that the Tower of Babel, described in the Old Testament of the Bible, may have been constructed under his leadership. He supervised numerous other building projects, including the construction of fortifications, or defensive walls, around the city of Babylon.

However, Hammurabi's greatest achievement was his legal system. Though many of those laws may seem unfair to a modern person, at the time they represented a great step for justice. In particular, the Code of Hammurabi provided protections for people who usually had none, including widows, orphans, and slaves.

Babylonia. Five years later, a group called the Kassites seized control of the region and held it for three centuries.

In the turmoil that followed Hammurabi's death, it is not surprising that his laws held little influence. In fact there is no evidence that his legal code was ever enforced in the years that followed his reign. Ultimately, however, the Code of Hammurabi would be highly influential: though it was not the

first legal code in history, it is the first known code. As such, it provides much insight into how legal systems work and develop.

### **Did you know...**

- Strictly speaking, the Code of Hammurabi is not a true code of law because it only added to already existing laws. Nonetheless, it is the oldest statement of laws known in the world and formed the basis for later legal systems.
- Among the issues dealt with in the Code of Hammurabi are personal property, real estate, business, trade, agriculture, marriage, inheritances, adoption, contracts, and leases.
- The code was carved into a large stele, or stone pillar, with an illustration of Hammurabi receiving the laws from Babylonia's gods.
- More than ten percent of Hammurabi's code, specifically, the laws between number 65 and number 100, is missing.

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# Aristotle

*Excerpt from The Politics of Aristotle*  
Published in *The Politics of Aristotle*, 1900

For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient....

Although ancient Greece introduced the concept of democracy (a government ruled by its citizens), Greek society was also highly dependent on slave labor. In fact, only a small group of people in ancient Greece—the citizens—actually enjoyed the benefits of democracy, such as the opportunity to vote. The citizens were made up of free Greek males. Women were forbidden to vote, as were foreigners. So, too, was the largest group in Greek society: slaves.

Ancient Greece was never a single nation, but a collection of several hundred self-governing city-states. These tiny districts functioned as separate countries, but tended to follow the lead of the most important city-states, particularly Athens and Sparta. Sparta was a military dictatorship, an extremely harsh, organized system ruled by a small group. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of its people were slaves. Yet even Athens, the birthplace of democracy and indeed of Western civilization, was hugely dependent on slave labor.

Even a highly intelligent, educated Athenian citizen could support the cause of freedom for some people and accept the concept of slavery. Such was the case with Aristotle



The ruins of the Parthenon in Athens, Greece. The Parthenon was a temple built by slaves to the goddess Athena. Photograph by Susan D. Rock. Reproduced by permission.

(384-322 B.C.), who is considered one of the greatest Greek philosophers. (Philosophers are concerned with the essential nature of reality, and in the course of their study they examine different aspects of life.) Aristotle's interests were extremely wide-ranging, and he wrote hundreds of books on subjects exploring such topics as science, music, and politics.

Many aspects of Aristotle's thinking had a liberating effect: his writings helped scientists, for instance, reach a better understanding of how they knew what they knew. Yet in his discussion of slavery from the *Politics*, Aristotle revealed himself as a man tied to his time and place. He lived in a world built by slavery, and he was not inclined to question it.

### **Things to remember while reading**

- Although many of the ideas expressed by Aristotle in this passage are offensive to a modern reader, it is important to remember the time and place in which he was writing. The Greeks looked down on other societies and considered their own, which had been

built on the backs of slaves, superior to all others. Aristotle was among the wisest men who ever lived, and did much to advance the cause of human freedom; yet when it came to the subject of slavery he was (like most people) unable to challenge the beliefs of his time.

- A number of the ideas expressed in this passage reflects Aristotle's Greek heritage. The ancient Greeks tended to regard anyone who was not Greek as a barbarian, or uncivilized person; and they viewed women as vastly inferior to men. They also placed little value on mercy or compassion.
- Like his teacher Plato, Aristotle regarded the ability to think as the most important qualification for a person. He also believed that people's destinies were already determined for them. He wrote that free people were superior to slaves, using as justification the fact that free people work with their minds and slaves with their bodies. Yet one might object that free people think, and slaves labor, because in either case, that is their job. To this Aristotle would say that some people are born to be slaves and others to be free.

### ***The Politics of Aristotle***

*Let us first speak of master and slave, looking to the needs of practical life and also seeking to attain some better theory of their relation than exists at present.... Property is a part of the household, and the art of acquiring property is a part of the art of managing the household; for no man can live well, or indeed live at all, unless he be provided with necessaries And so, in the arrangement of the family, a slave is a living possession, and property a number of such instruments; and the slave is himself an instrument which takes precedence of all other instruments.... The master is only the master of the slave; he does not belong to him, whereas the slave is not only the slave of his master, but wholly belongs to him. Hence we see what is the nature and of a slave; he who is by nature not his own but another's man, is by nature a slave; and he may be said to be another's man who, being a human being, is also a*

*possession. And a possession may be defined as an instrument of action, separable from the possessor.*

*But is there any one thus intended by nature to be a slave, and for whom such a condition is expedient and right, or rather is not all slavery a violation of nature? There is no difficulty in answering this question, on grounds both of reason and of fact. For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule.... Again, the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind.*

*Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals (as in the case of those whose business is to use their body, and who can do nothing better), the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master. For he who can be, and therefore is, another's [property] and he who participates in rational principle enough to apprehend, but not to have, such a principle, is a slave by nature. Whereas the lower animals cannot even apprehend a principle; they obey their instincts. And indeed the use made of slaves and of tame animals is not very different; for both with their bodies minister to the needs of life. Nature would like to distinguish between the bodies of freemen and slaves, making the one strong for servile labor, the other upright, and although useless for such services, useful for political life in the arts both of war and peace. But the opposite often happens—that some have the souls and others have the bodies of free men. And doubtless if men differed from one another in the mere forms of their bodies as much as the statues of the gods do from men, all would acknowledge that the inferior class should be slaves of the superior. It is clear, then, that some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right*

*There is a slave or slavery by law as well as by nature. The law of which I speak is a sort of convention—the law by which whatever is taken in war is supposed to belong to the victors. But this right many jurists impeach, as they would an who brought forward an they detest the notion that, because one man has the power of doing violence and is superior in brute strength, another shall be his slave and subject. Even among philosophers there is a difference of opinion. The origin of the dispute, and what makes the views invade each other's territory, is as follows: in some sense , when furnished with , has actually the greatest power of exercising force; and as superior power is only found where there is superior excellence of some kind, power seems to imply virtue, and the dispute to be simply one about justice (for it is due to one party identifying justice with goodwill while the other identifies it with the mere rule of the stronger). If these views are thus set out separately, the other views have no force or against the view that the superior in virtue ought to rule, or be master. Others, clinging, as they think, simply to a principle of justice (for law and custom are a sort of justice), assume that slavery in accordance with the custom of war is justified by law, but at the same moment they deny this. For what if the cause of the war be unjust? And again, no one would ever say he is a slave who is unworthy to be a slave. Were this the case, men of the highest rank would be slaves and the children of slaves if they or their parents chance to have been taken captive and sold. Wherefore Hellenes do not like to call Hellenes slaves, but confine the term to barbarians. Yet, in using this language, they really mean the natural slave of whom we spoke at first; for it must be admitted that some are slaves everywhere, others nowhere. The same principle applies to nobility. Hellenes regard themselves as noble everywhere, and not only in their own country, but they deem the barbarians noble only when at home, thereby implying that there are two sorts of nobility and freedom, the one absolute, the other relative.*



## Aristotle

Along with his teacher Plato and Plato's teacher Socrates, Aristotle was one of the three most influential philosophers of ancient Greece. Aristotle's interests were extremely broad. He wrote about subjects as diverse as biology, drama, and politics.

Born in the town of Stagira, Aristotle came from the region of Macedonia to the north of Greece, where his father served as court physician to the Macedonian king. At age seventeen, Aristotle went to Athens, cultural center of Greece, to study under the renowned philosopher Plato. For twenty years, he remained at Plato's school—known as the Academy—during which time he proved to be the great philosopher's most outstanding pupil. Later, however, he would reject most of Plato's ideas and develop an entirely independent system of thought.

Aristotle married at age forty; soon afterward, his father-in-law was killed. Later, his wife Pythias died during childbirth. It was after these traumatic events that Aristotle received an intriguing offer from King Philip of Macedonia, who asked him to come to the Macedonian court to tutor his teenage son Alexander—who was destined to become known as Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.).

Aristotle tutored Alexander for four years, then served King Philip in a number of other ways. In 334 B.C., as Alexander began to win a series of wars that would make him the greatest conqueror in history, Aristotle opened a school of his own in Athens, the Lyceum. During the years that followed, the Lyceum would welcome a wide variety of students (in contrast to Plato's upper-class Academy). Aristotle would put his pupils to work assisting him in a wide array of research projects.

Also in 334 B.C., Aristotle began writing down his ideas. In the next twelve years, he produced some four hundred books, of which only forty survive. In 323 B.C., he received word that Alexander had died, and fearing an anti-Macedonian reaction in Athens, he left the city. A year later he died in the city of Chalcis on a nearby island.



## **What happened next...**

Ancient Greece flourished in spite of its slave system; indeed, one might say it flourished in part *because* of slavery, which allowed free men the time and leisure to undertake some of the most brilliant writing and thinking in human history. Yet by Aristotle's time, the sun was setting on Greece's glory.

In the mid-330s B.C., Greece was under the control of Alexander the Great, Aristotle's old pupil. Although Alexander considered himself Greek, he was really a Macedonian, and the Greeks viewed him as an outsider. Thus the fact that he was able to bring all of Greece under his control signaled the weakening of Athens and the other city-states. As it turned out, Alexander's campaign of conquest, which resulted in an empire that stretched from Italy to India, was Greece's last hurrah.

During the two centuries that followed, Greek civilization, including its ideas about slavery, spread throughout the Mediterranean region. By then Rome was becoming an empire, however, and in 146 B.C. it added Greece to its territories. Romans had long admired and imitated Greek civilization, and as a result, Rome was destined to become a society dependent on the institution of slavery, just like Greece.

## **Did you know...**

- A wealthy household in ancient Greece typically owned between ten and twenty slaves.
- The going rate for a healthy slave in ancient Greece was ten *minae*, or about \$180.00. Old or otherwise undesirable slaves, including ones who refused to work, could sell for as little as 0.5 minae, or \$9.00.
- Surprisingly, Athens's police force was made up primarily of slaves. It is hard to imagine how the Athenians could have prevented a slave revolt if firearms had existed in ancient times.

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# Plutarch

*Excerpt from Lives of the Noble Romans*  
Published in *Lives of the Noble Romans*, 1959

"Spartacus was chief, a Thracian of one of the nomad tribes, and a man not only of high spirit and valiant, but in understanding, also, and in gentleness superior to his condition...."

Few societies in history have been as dependent on slavery as ancient Rome. In fact, Romans lived in terror of a slave uprising; in 73 B.C., their worst fears were realized when a slave named Spartacus led a slave revolt. Over the course of two years, approximately 120,000 slaves fought the Roman forces throughout Italy before finally being defeated in 71 B.C.

This conflict is known as the Gladiatorial War, because Spartacus and the others who began it were gladiators, or warriors who fought to their deaths in a ring while cheering spectators watched. Slaves like Spartacus were trained to be gladiators at a center run by Lentulus Batiates, in the southern Italian city of Capua.

Spartacus came from Thrace, which was located in the area that is present-day Bulgaria. Many of the other slaves at the school were either Thracians or Gauls. Gaul was the Roman

term for the Celts, a tribal group that lived in areas to the north of Italy.

The gladiators of Capua may have started the revolt, but soon slaves from all over Italy joined the uprising. The senate, Rome's governing body, first appointed Clodius to lead the army against the slaves. Clodius was a praetor, an official whose powers were similar to that of a judge. (In Rome, every governmental figure also doubled as a military commander.) However, as reported by the Greek historian Plutarch (A.D. c. 46-119), in his *Lives of the Noble Romans*, Clodius was unable to defeat the rebels.



Italy is a peninsula (a body of land surrounded on three sides by water), and over the course of the war, the rebels moved up and down the country. At one point they reached the Alps, the high mountains that form Italy's northern border. From there, Spartacus hoped that they would all return to their homeland. His army overruled him and continued fighting. Rome dispatched two consuls, the top officials in the Roman government, against the rebel, but still the slaves kept fighting. It was then that Crassus (c. 115-53 B.C.) appeared on the scene.

Rumored to be the wealthiest man in Rome at the time, Crassus hoped that by defeating the slaves, he also could become the most powerful man as well. Soon, however, the slaves won a victory over his lieutenant Mummius at Picenum in eastern Italy. The rebels moved on to Lucania in the south, and from there, Spartacus hoped they could escape to Sicily, a large island off the southwestern tip of Italy. To that end, he paid a group of pirates from Cilicia in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) for the use of their ships. The pirates, however, simply took the slaves' money and left them stranded.

**The gladiator Spartacus led one of the most famous slave revolts of the Roman Empire.**

Sculpture by Vinnie Ream Hoxie. Courtesy of The Library of Congress.

The fighting continued. Crassus resolved to end the revolt when he learned that Pompey (106-48 B.C.), one of Rome's most distinguished generals, was on his way. He knew that Pompey might very well defeat the slaves and gain all the glory for himself; thus Plutarch noted that Crassus was "eager to fight a decisive [conclusive] battle."

### **Things to remember while reading**

- The following excerpt is condensed from the chapter on Crassus in *Lives of the Noble Romans*, which was written by Plutarch. Among the parts omitted are accounts of the slaves' battles with several generals after the defeat of Clodius and before the appointment of Crassus. Also omitted are further details of the rebel army's battles with Crassus after their betrayal by the Cilician pirates and before the final showdown in Lucania.
- Because he was Greek, some of Plutarch's comments reflect his Greek viewpoint. The Greeks considered the Thracians—and indeed anyone who was not Greek—to be barbarians, or uncivilized people; therefore, by noting that Spartacus was "more of a Grecian than the people of his country usually are," Plutarch was paying him high praise.
- As with Rome, the economy of Greece was dependent on slavery, yet Plutarch showed a degree of sympathy with the slaves when he wrote that they were put in the position of becoming gladiators "not for any fault by them committed," i.e., through no fault of their own. He also suggested that the fact that Spartacus was a slave did not make him less of a human being; hence his comment that the rebel leader was "in gentleness [honorable nature] superior to his condition."
- The translator of the text, English poet John Dryden (1631-1700), used British spellings such as "honour." The word "waggon" is a British variation on "wagon."

## Plutarch

Although his writing has provided historians with valuable information concerning the ancient world, Plutarch was not, strictly speaking, a historian. Rather, he was a biographer of notable figures in Greece and Rome. He published these short biographies in several collections, such as *Lives of the Noble Romans* and *Parallel Lives*. The latter collection presented paired biographies of Greek and Roman figures, establishing links between men separated by time and geography. Plutarch's work is highly readable, and offers insights on a number of key figures from ancient times.



Long before Plutarch's time, Greece had fallen under the control of the Roman Empire. Nonetheless, the Greeks, not to mention the Romans themselves, looked to Athens for cultural leadership. Therefore as a young man, Plutarch left his home in Chaeronea, in central Greece, to study in Athens under a teacher named Ammonius. He later traveled throughout the known world, performing research for his writings. He spent his final years in Chaeronea.

Although his Greek beliefs suggested that Plutarch should not have sympathy for slaves, his account of Spartacus's revolt shows some empathy for slaves. Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.

## **Lives of the Noble Romans**

*The insurrection of the gladiators and the devastation of Italy, commonly called the war of Spartacus, began upon this occasion. One Lentulus Batiates trained up a great many gladiators in Capua, most of them Gauls and Thracians, who, not for any fault by them committed, but simply through the cruelty of their master, were kept in confinement for this object of fighting one with another. Two hundred of these formed a plan to escape, but being discovered, those of them who became aware of it in time to anticipate their master, being seventy-eight, got out of a cook's shop chopping-knives and spits, and made their way through the city, and lighting by the way on several waggons that were carrying gladiators' arms to another city, they seized upon them and armed themselves. And seizing upon a defensible place, they chose three captains, of whom Spartacus was chief, a Thracian of one of the nomad tribes, and a man not only of high spirit and valiant, but in*

*understanding, also, and in gentleness superior to his condition, and more of a Grecian than the people of his country usually are. When he first came to be sold at Rome, they say a snake coiled itself upon his face as he lay asleep, and his wife... a kind of prophetess ... declared that it was a sign portending great and power to him with no happy event.*

*First, then, those that came out of Capua against them, and thus procuring a quantity of proper soldiers' arms, they gladly threw away their own as barbarous and dishonourable. Afterwards Clodius, the praetor, took the command against them with a body of three thousand men from Rome, and them within a mountain, accessible only by one narrow and difficult passage, which Clodius kept guarded, encompassed on all] other sides with steep and slippery precipices. Upon the top, however, grew a great many wild vines, and cutting down as many of their boughs as they had need of, they [the slaves] twisted them into strong ladders long enough to reach from thence to the bottom, by which, without any danger, they got down all but one, who stayed there to throw them down their arms, and after this succeeded in saving himself.... Several also, of the shepherds and herdsmen that were there, stout and nimble fellows, revolted over to them [the slaves' side], to some of whom they gave complete arms, and made use of others as scouts and light-armed soldiers....[Spartacus] began to be but wisely considering that he was not to expect to match the force of the empire, he marched his army towards the Alps, intending, when he had passed them, that every man should go to his own home, some to Thrace, some to Gaul. But they, grown confident in their numbers, and puffed up with their success, would give no obedience to him, but went about and ravaged Italy; so that now the senate was not only moved at the indignity and baseness, both of the enemy and of the insurrection, but, looking upon it as a matter of alarm and of dangerous consequence sent out both the consuls to it, as to a great and difficult enterprise....*

*...[Later,] they appointed Crassus general of the war, and a great many of the nobility went volunteers with him, partly out of friendship, and partly to get honour. He stayed himself on*



*the borders of Picenum, expecting Spartacus would come that way, and sent his lieutenant, Mummius, with two legions, to wheel about and observe the enemy's motions, but upon no account to . But he [Mummius], upon the first opportunity, joined battle, and was routed, having a great many of his men slain, and a great many only saving their lives with the loss of their arms. Crassus rebuked Mummius severely, and arming the soldiers again...he led them against the enemy; but Spartacus retreated through Lucania toward the sea, and in the straits meeting with some Cilician pirate ships, he had thoughts of attempting Sicily, where, by landing two thousand men, he hoped to rekindle the war of the slaves, which was but lately extinguished, and seemed to need but little fuel to set it burning again. But after the pirates had struck a bargain with him, and received his earnest, they deceived him and sailed away...*

*...[N]ews was already brought that Pompey was and people began to talk openly that the honour of this war was reserved to him, who would come and at once oblige the enemy to fight and put an end to the war. Crassus, therefore, eager to fight a decisive battle, encamped very near the enemy, and began to make but the slaves made a and attacked the . As fresh supplies came in on either side, Spartacus, seeing there was no avoiding it, set all his army in array and when his horse was brought him, he drew out his sword and killed him, saying, if he he should have a great many better horses of the enemies', and if he lost it he should have no need of this. And so making directly towards Crassus himself, through the midst of arms and wounds, he missed him, but slew two centurions that fell upon him together. At last being deserted by those that were about him, he himself stood his ground, and, surrounded by the enemy, bravely defending himself, was cut in pieces....*

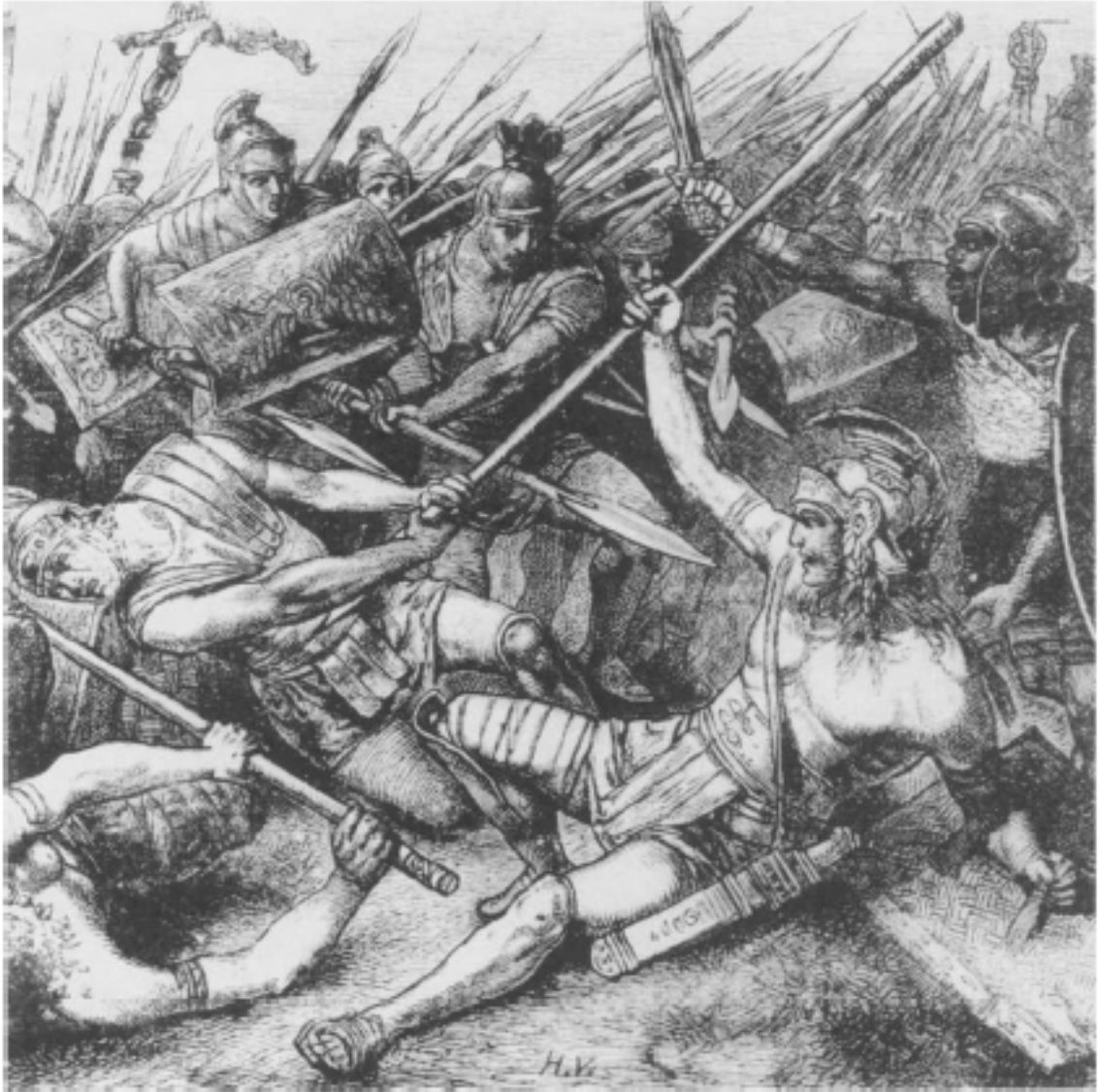
### **What happened next...**

Spartacus's death in battle was not only a heroic act, but in light of what happened to the slaves after their defeat by Crassus's army, it was probably also a wise choice. The soldiers took some six thousand rebel slaves prisoner and

subjected them to a form of punishment common in Rome at that time: crucifixion. They hung their bodies at intervals of one hundred paces along the Appian Way between Capua to Rome, a distance of some ninety miles. To the remaining slaves in Rome, the message was clear: any further revolt would be met with the harshest punishment possible.

The Gladiatorial War set in motion a chain of events that made it one of the most significant, if not well-known, conflicts in history. Having established himself as one of the most powerful men in Rome, Crassus, along with Pompey and Julius Caesar (100-44 B.C.), formed a triumvirate, or government of three. Though Rome still called itself a republic—meaning that it was governed by elected officials—in fact all power rested in the hands of the three men that formed the triumvirate.

Slavery in Rome did not so much end as it faded away. Once Rome quit making overseas conquests in the A.D. 100s, it no longer had a source for slaves. In addition, as the Roman economy declined, few people could afford to keep slaves. The feudal system, under which powerful landowners virtually owned poor farmers (called serfs), took the place of slavery during the Middle Ages (c. 500-1500).



### Did you know...

- The Romans called their slaves "speaking tools," indicating that they considered them less than human.
- In the 1960 film *Spartacus*, Kirk Douglas played the title role, with Laurence Olivier as Crassus and Peter Ustinov as Lentulus Batiates. The director was Stanley Kubrick, acclaimed for a number of later films such as

A drawing showing the death of **Spartacus**. Drawing by H. Vogel. Reproduced by permission of Corbis-Bettmann.

*2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). The screenwriters took some liberties with history, adding a love affair between Spartacus (who in their version was unmarried) and a slave girl named Virgilia, played by Jean Simmons.

- The name of Spartacus has remained a powerful symbol for armies of poor and oppressed people intent on overthrowing the existing political system. In 1919 a group of rebels called the Spartacus League led an unsuccessful uprising in Germany.

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*Spartacus* (motion picture). Universal Studios Home Video, 1960.

# The Fifth Council of Orleans and Gregory of Tours

## The Fifth Council of Orleans

*Excerpt from Laws Concerning Slaves and Freedmen*  
**Published in *A Sourcebook for Medieval Economic History*, 1936**

**Edited by Roy C. Cave and Herbert H. Coulson**

## Gregory of Tours

*Excerpt from History of the Franks*  
**Published in *A Sourcebook for Medieval Economic History*, 1936**

**Edited by Roy C. Cave and Herbert H. Coulson**

In the Middle Ages, the period between about A.D. 500 and 1500, the issue of slavery in Europe became more confusing. During this period, only about ten percent of the people in Europe were slaves—but another forty percent were serfs, poor farmers who enjoyed just a bit more freedom than actual slaves.

The dominant political force in Europe during the Middle Ages was the Roman Catholic Church, whose leadership passed laws that applied to the population as a whole, just like the laws of a government. Much of this activity took place at church councils, or conferences. It was at these events that bishops (high-ranking priests with authority over the believers in a given region) considered a number of matters. One such council was held in the French city of Orleans in 549.

But concerning slaves, who flee for refuge to the church on account of any offense, we decree that it should be observed that they be sent away certain of forgiveness, just as is acknowledged to have been written in ancient laws....

*From the Laws Concerning Slaves and Freedmen*

The Fifth Council of Orleans, as it was called, addressed a number of issues, including the treatment of runaway slaves and serfs. The council urged masters to be merciful to runaway slaves, but as Catholic bishop and historian Gregory of Tours (538-594) reported a quarter-century later, many masters simply ignored the recommendations of the Church.

### **Things to remember while reading**

- The Fifth Council of Orleans was a group of bishops, or church leaders, making policy for the Church—and because of the great power of the Roman Catholic Church, all of Europe.
- As the members of the Council of Orleans noted, the Church offered a safe haven, and in some cases freedom, to slaves. A runaway slave could be certain that the Church would forgive him or her for running away; the Church also encouraged slaveholders to be forgiving as well. On the other hand, Church leaders did not want to make the Church seem "as if it had appeared desirous of retaining the [runaway] slave," nor did they want to defy existing laws. Hence they made an exception "for those faults for which the laws ordered revocation of the liberties conferred on slaves": thus if a slave had committed a serious crime in the course of running away, there was nothing the Church could do to protect him or her.
- In general, however, the Church was interested in limiting slavery. To this end, the council members encouraged free men who sold themselves into bondage to buy themselves out of slavery as soon as possible: "if they can find the price, as much as was given for them, when the price is given, they shall be restored to their former status without delay." Like Hammurabi (see entry), the council decreed, or ruled, that the children of a slave and a free person were free. In dealing with non-Christian slaveholders, the council suggested that a Christian should guarantee the

protection of the slave, because a Christian would be kept in line by his fear of the Church's authority.

- Gregory indicated that the cruel slaveholder Rauching punished a slave who, "as was customary ... held a burning candle before him at dinner." Presumably the slave was only providing the master with light, and perhaps he or she accidentally burned him. As for Rauching's treatment of a runaway slave couple, it appears that he ordered a coffin made for them and then forced them to get into it and buried them alive.



**German serfs working in the field for the lord of the manor.**

Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.

### **Laws Concerning Slaves and Freedmen**

*7. And because on the suggestion of many we have found for a certainty that those, who were freed from slavery in the churches according to the custom of the country, have been recalled to slavery again on the whim of all kinds of people, we have deemed it impious that those who have been freed from the yoke of servitude in the Church out of consideration for God should be disregarded. Therefore, because of its piety, it is pleasing to the common council that it be observed, that, whatever slaves be released from servitude by free masters, shall remain in that freedom which they then received from their lords. Also liberty of this kind, if it be questioned by any one shall be defended with justice by the churches, except for*

*those faults for which the laws ordered revocation of the liberties conferred on slaves.*

*...14. Concerning freemen who sell themselves for money or other things, or who have pledged themselves, it is our pleasure that if they can find the price, as much as was given for them, when the price is given, they shall be restored to their former status without delay, nor shall more be required than was given for them. And meanwhile, if one of them shall have married a free wife, or if one of them, being a woman, shall have taken a freeman as husband, the children who are born of them shall remain free.*

*...22. But concerning slaves, who flee for to the church on account of any offense, we decree that it should be observed that they be sent away certain of forgiveness, just as is acknowledged to have been written in ancient laws, after the lord, whoever he may be, has taken the oath to pardon the offense. For, if the lord, his oath, shall be proved to have broken his promise, and the slave who accepted forgiveness shall be proved to have been punished in some way for that fault, the faithless lord shall be excommunicated. Again if the lord has taken the oath and the slave, though safe when pardoned, is unwilling to go and so seeks sanctuary because he might perish at the hands of his lord, then his master may seize the unwilling slave so that the Church might suffer no calumny nor molestation in any way whatsoever as if it had appeared desirous of retaining the slave; nevertheless the lord should by no means break his oath of forgiveness. But if he should be a gentile lord or one of another sect and be proved to be outside the pale of the Church and should seek the return of his slave, he shall have Christians as pledges of good faith who shall take the oaths to the slave on behalf of the lord; because they who fear l discipline for their are able to keep what is sacred.*



## History of the Franks

*[The widow of Godwin] married Rauching, a man of great vanity, swollen with pride, shameless in his arrogance, who acted towards those subject to him as though he were without any spark of human kindness, raging against them beyond the bounds of malice and stupidity and doing unspeakable injuries to them. For if, as was customary, a slave held a burning candle before him at dinner, he caused his shins to be bared, and placed the candle between them until the*

*flame died; and he caused the same thing to be done with a second candle until the shins of the torchbearer were burned. But if the slave tried to cry out, or to move from one place to another, a naked sword threatened him; and he found great enjoyment in the man's tears. They say that at that time two of his slaves, a man and a girl, fell in love—a thing which often happens—and that when their affection for each other had lasted for a period of two years, they fled together to a church. When Rauching found this out he went to the priest of that place and asked him to return the two slaves immediately, saying that he had forgiven them. Then the priest said to him, "You know what veneration is due to the churches of Cod. You cannot take them unless you take an oath to allow them to remain together permanently, and you must also promise that they will be free from corporal punishment. "*



**Servant girls bathing their master during the Middle Ages in Europe.**  
Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.

## **Christianity and Slavery**

The Bible contains ninety references to slaves and slavery, more than half of them in the Old Testament, which is the sacred scripture of the Jewish faith. For example, the Book of Genesis tells the story of how Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers; later, he became one of the most powerful men in the country. In the Book of Genesis, the Egyptian enslavement of the Israelites is described. The latter part of Exodus and several later books contain the records of early Jewish law, including a number of provisions concerning the treatment of slaves.

The birth of Jesus Christ (believed by some to be the savior of the Jews) and the spreading of his teachings, as described in the New Testament, was the beginning of the Christian faith. With his message of God's love for all people, no matter their place in society, Christ might have been expected to condemn slavery; however, his mission was to change people's hearts, not to change laws.

The Apostle Paul, an important figure in the development of Christianity, took Christ's lead. According to Paul's teachings, true slavery was a condition of the spirit rather than the body, since all people are slaves to sin. As for the actual institution of slavery, Paul urged Christian slaves to submit to their masters, not because slavery was morally right, but because as Christians they should provide others with an example of peacefulness and gentleness.

These principles are clearly spelled out in the New Testament book of Philemon, actually a letter from Paul to a Christian by that name. Philemon's slave Onesimus had run away, which under the laws of the time was punishable by death; but in the course of his wanderings, Onesimus had met Paul and had converted to Christianity. Paul told Onesimus to return to Philemon, and urged the latter to forgive his slave. Paul offered to pay Philemon for any damage caused by Onesimus.

In the centuries that followed the writing of the New Testament, Christians were divided over the subject of slavery. Those sympathetic to the practice cited the advice of Christ and Paul that slaves should submit to their masters. On the other hand, Christian opponents of slavery noted that both Christ and Paul had taught that all humans are the same in the eyes of God. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in fact, some of the most outspoken opponents of slavery were Christian leaders such as the preacher John Wesley (1703-1791), whose "Thoughts Upon Slavery" (1774) contained a powerful antislavery message.

*But he [Rauching], being in doubt and remaining silent for some time at length turned to the priest and put his hands upon the altar, saying, "They will never be separated by me, but rather I shall cause them to remain in wedlock for though I was annoyed that they did such things without my advice, I am perfectly happy to observe that the man did not take the maid of another in wedlock, nor did she take the slave of another. " The simple priest believed him and returned the two slaves who had been ostensibly pardoned. He [Rauching] took them, gave thanks, and returned to his house, and straightaway ordered a tree to be cut down. Then he ordered the trunk to be opened with wedges and hollowed out, and a hole to be made in the ground to the depth of three or four feet, and the trunk to be placed therein. Then placing the girl as if she were dead, he ordered the slave to be thrown on top of her. And when the cover had been placed upon the trunk he filled the grave and buried them both alive, saying, "I have not broken my oath and I have not separated them. "*

### **What happened next...**

The sixth century in Western Europe was the beginning of a period sometimes described as "the Dark Ages," an era that lasted until about A.D. 1000. For much of this era, Western Europe was in a state of confusion and progress almost came to a standstill. But in the eleventh century, a number of factors propelled Europe out of the Dark Ages.

#### **Gregory of Tours**

Gregory of Tours was among the most important historians of the early medieval period in Western Europe. Born Georgius Florentius, he lived most of his life in what is now France, which at that time was ruled by the tribe known as the Franks.

Gregory became the bishop, or the leading Church official, for the city of Tours in 573. For many years, he was involved in a dispute with Chilperic (539-584), a harsh king whose reign was characterized by war, high taxes, and conflict with the clergy, or priests. In addition to *History of the Franks*, Gregory wrote a book on the lives of the saints and one on famous miracles. After his death, he was canonized, or made a saint.

In 1095, European armies launched a series of wars known as the Crusades, or "wars for the cross," in which they attempted to gain control of the Holy Land (i.e., the Middle East) for the

Roman Catholic Church. Although the Crusades ultimately proved to be a failure, they gave Europeans exposure to different parts of the world and hastened the pace of progress in Europe. As a result, Europe's economy grew and people gained more rights, which helped bring about an end of slavery.

Between 1347 and 1351, a widespread disease called the Black Death wiped out nearly a third of Europe's population. As a result, peasants (poor farmers and laborers) were in great demand. Suddenly there were alternatives to serfdom, and many talented peasants made their way to the cities, where they got jobs in skilled professions. Serfdom gradually faded away, and England became the first European country to outlaw it in 1574. The movement to abolish serfdom gradually spread eastward, until it reached Russia in 1861.

### **Did you know...**

- Peasants, or poor farmers, made up about eighty percent of Europe's population during the Middle Ages.
- The term "serf" comes from the Latin word *servus*, meaning "slave."
- The Franks gave their name to the country of France.

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# Ludlow, James M

*"The Tribute of Children"*

Published in *The World's Story:  
A History of the World in Story, Song, and Art, 1914-  
18*

Edited by Eva March Tappan

They are kept up by continual additions from the sultan's share of the captives, and by recruits, raised every five years, from the children of the Christian subjects.

While serfdom (an institution in Europe during the Middle Ages bounding people as servants to lords) became prominent in Europe, traditional slavery remained a significant force in the Middle East. Because of its position between Europe, Africa, and Asia, the region was an important trading center. Local Arab merchants maintained a thriving business in captured Africans and other slaves.

Arab or Middle Eastern slave traders were not concerned with the same issues that eventually brought an end to slavery in America. Whereas many Americans recognized that the practice of slavery was opposed to the principles of freedom and equality spelled out in the U.S. Constitution, slavery did not necessarily go against the principles of the Muslim or Islamic faith, which dominated the Middle East. Like Christianity, Islam made little effort to directly oppose slavery, and many believers in the Islamic faith considered slavery to

be justified—particularly if the slaves were members of another religion.

The Turks, a non-Arab people who migrated from Central Asia to modern-day Turkey in the 900s, had a long tradition of slavery; yet unlike Europeans, they did not look down on or think of slaves as inferiors. As a matter of fact, slaves were able to rise to positions of importance in the Turkish government. In the 900s, when Arabs still dominated the Middle East, a number of Turks served in the government as slave-soldiers.

Soon the Turks built a thriving empire that overshadowed the Arab empire. Usually their slave-soldiers came from Muslim families, but in 1388 the Ottoman sultan, or king, Murad created an elite group of slave-soldiers called the Janissaries (JAN-uh-sair-eez), comprised of male children captured from Christian nations.

### **Things to remember while reading**

- The name *Janissaries* (or Janizaries as it is used in Ludlow's document) comes from the Turkish *yingi-cheri*, meaning "new soldiers." The following passage makes use of numerous other terms from the Turkish language, some of which are untranslatable.
- By his name, it can be assumed that James M. Ludlow came from an English-speaking country, which in turn means that his upbringing was probably influenced by European and Christian ideas. He maintained the European custom of mistakenly referring to members of the Muslim religion as "Mohammedans." This was a reference to the prophet Muhammad (c. 570-632), founder of the Islamic faith and its holy book the Koran; however, most Muslims considered the term "Mohammedan" offensive, because they worshiped Allah or God and not Muhammad.
- During the era of the Janissaries, Turkey was controlled by the Ottoman Empire, which at different times included a wide array of nations in the Middle

A copper engraving of Janissaries, which was an elite group of slave-soldiers made up of male children captured by the Turks from Christian nations. Reproduced by permission of Corbis-Bettmann.

East, North Africa, and southeastern Europe. Its base was in presentday Turkey, and a large portion of that region in premodern times was known as Anatolia.

- Among the Ottoman Empire's cities was Adrianopolis, which Ludlow referred to as Adrianople, in northwestern Turkey. Constantinople was an ancient city, formerly the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, which is often referred to as the Byzantine Empire. After the Turks defeated the Byzantines in 1453, Constantinople became the Turkish capital, and remained so until the early twentieth century. Today it is known as Istanbul, and Galata is its chief business district. Finally, Saloniki—better known as Salonika—is a city in Greece.



### "The Tribute of Children"

*...[M]any thousands of the European captives were educated in the Mohammedan religion and arms, and the new militia was consecrated and named by a celebrated dervish. Standing in the front of their ranks, he stretched the sleeve of his gown over the head of the foremost soldier, and his blessing was delivered in the following words "Let them be called **Janizaries**; may their be ever bright; their hand victorious; their swords keen; may their spear always hang over the heads of their enemies; and, wheresoever they go, may they return with a white face. " White and black face are common and proverbial expressions of praise and reproach in the Turkish language. Such was the origin of these troops, the terror of the nations.*

*They are kept up by continual additions from the sultan's share of the captives, and by recruits, raised every five years, from*



*the children of the Christian subjects. Small parties of soldiers, each under a leader, and each provided with a particular firman , go from place to place. Wherever they come, the protogeros assembled the inhabitants with their sons. The leader of the soldiers have the right to take away all the youth who are distinguished by beauty or strength, activity or talent, above the age of seven. He carries them to the court of the grand seignior, a tithe, as it is, of the subjects. The captives taken in war by the pashas and presented by them to the sultan, include Poles, Bohemians, Russians, Italians, and Germans.*

*These recruits are divided into two classes. Those who compose the one, are sent to Anatolia, where they are trained to agricultural labor, and instructed in the Mussulman faith; or they are retained about the seraglio, where they carry wood and water, and are employed in the gardens, in the boats, or upon the public buildings, always under the direction of an overseer, who with a stick compels them to work. The others, in whom traces of a higher character are discernible, are placed in one of the four seraglios of Adrianople or Galata, or the old or new one at Constantinople. Here they are lightly clad in linen or in cloth of Saloniki, with caps of Prusa cloth. Teachers come every morning, who remain with them until evening, and teach them to read and write. Those who have performed hard labor are made janizaries. Those who are educated in the seraglios become spahis or higher officers of state.*

*Both classes are kept under a strict discipline. The former [those training to be Janizaries] especially are accustomed to privation of food, drink, and comfortable clothing and to hard labor. They are exercised in shooting with the bow and arquebuse by day, and spend the night in a long, lighted hall, with an overseer, who walks up and down, and permits no one to stir. When they are received into the corps of the Janizaries, they are placed in cloister-like barracks.... Here not only the younger continue to obey the elders in silence and submission, but all are governed with such strictness that no one is*

A slave market in Constantinople, the capital city of the Ottoman Empire. Local Arab slave traders maintained a thriving business in captured Africans and other slaves. Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.



*permitted to spend the night abroad, and whoever is punished is compelled to kiss the hand of him who inflicts the punishment.*

*The younger portion, in the seraglios, are kept not less strictly, every ten being committed to the care of an inexorable attendant. They are employed in similar exercises, but likewise in study. The grand seignior permitted them to leave the seraglio every three years. Those who choose to remain, ascend, according to their age in the immediate service of their master, from chamber to chamber, and to constantly greater pay, till they attain, perhaps, to one of the four great posts of the innermost chamber, from which the way to the dignity of a beglerbeg, or a capitan deiri (that is, an admiral), or even of a vizier, is open. Those, on the contrary, who take advantage of this permission, enters, each one according to his previous rank, into the four first corps of the paid spahis, who are in the immediate service of the sultan, and in whom he confides more than in his other bodyguards.*

## What happened next...

As Ludlow noted, the Janissaries enjoyed enormous power, and eventually their influence became so great that they had the ability to make or break sultans and other leaders of the Ottoman Empire. The Janissaries continued to exist for more than four hundred years, until 1826 when Sultan Mahmud II (1785-1839) ordered their execution.

By that time, the Ottoman Empire had long since ceased to be a great power. Influence had shifted to European countries, which in the meantime had spawned new forms of slavery by controlling Africans and other peoples. Whereas the institution of the Janissaries had been surrounded with great respect and power, the Europeans, or rather their descendants in other parts of the world, barely regarded their slaves as human beings. Slavery had entered a new, and even more painful, phase.

### The Black Legend

As the Ottoman Empire reached the height of its power, a new phase in the history of slavery was beginning: the European enslavement of Africans and Native Americans in the New World. The first European slavers were the Spanish and Portuguese, who also led Europe in the exploration of Africa and the New World. Almost from the beginning of this practice, however, there were people in these countries that questioned the treatment of non-European peoples. Thus was born the "Black Legend."

This term refers to a type of literature attacking the Spanish system in the Americas. The father of the Black Legend was Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474-1566). Las Casas first came to the New World in 1502 as the owner of a plantation. Ten years after his arrival, he became a priest and began to preach against slavery. He devoted his life to an unsuccessful campaign for the abolition of slavery.

In 1552 Las Casas published the *The Very Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (i.e. the lands inhabited by Indians, or Native Americans). This work helped to spread the "Black Legend" of Spanish cruelty in the New World. Las Casas's writing was heavy-handed; he portrayed all Native Americans as good, and all Spaniards as evil, but no one could doubt his sincerity.

Thanks to the relatively recent invention of printing, his book reached a wide audience. By 1575 it had been translated into French, Dutch, and English. At home in Spain, his writing caused many to question the institution and practice of slavery.

### Did you know...

- The Ottoman Empire, established in approximately 1300, was not formally dissolved until 1922. It existed longer than almost any single political system in history.
- One group of Turkish slave-soldiers, called Mamluks, controlled the government of Egypt for about 250 years.
- The idea of slave-soldiers spread as far east as the Indian subcontinent, parts of which were conquered by Turks. As a matter of fact, a number of former slaves actually became kings in that region.

### Slavery in the Middle East and Africa

Though slavery is most often identified with the descendants of Europeans in the New World (a European term for North and South America), in fact slavery existed in the Middle East from ancient times until recent centuries. Likewise Africans practiced slavery centuries ago, and in the twenty-first century, Africa was one of the few places where traditional slavery (as opposed to newer forms such as child labor) still existed.

People in early Africa did not tend to regard slaves as inferiors, and it was quite likely that a person who was enslaved might later be free, or that a free person might become a slave if he fell into the hands of an enemy tribe. If there was any kind of deep-seated hatred or emotion associated with slavery, it was not racial but tribal; indeed, Africans would later assist European slave traders by selling members of neighboring tribes into slavery.

However, some racial hatred did exist between Arab or Persian (Iranian) slavers and African slaves, whom they referred to as *Zanj*. Middle Eastern writings on the Zanj, which date back to A.D. 680, typically referred to them as a lazy and dishonest people whose dark skin—in the view of the authors—made them inferior to the Arabs and Persians. The writers also believed that the Zanj possessed magical powers.

Yet people in East Africa greatly admired the Arabs, and this made the Africans easy targets for capture. Many of the Zanj became slaves in the Middle East, and in 868 there was a widespread slave revolt. For nearly fifteen years, the rebels controlled much of southern Iraq, but by 883 the Muslim government had suppressed the revolt.

People in the Middle East did not only enslave sub-Saharan or "black" Africans. In fact, people captured in battle—Europeans, East Africans, and many others—often wound up as slaves of Arabs, Persians, or Turks. The Janissaries of the Ottoman Turks, for instance, came from Europe. This was one of the few instances when Europeans or their descendants were the slaves and not the slaveholders.

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# Early Modern Slavery (1500-1900)

**A**s the Renaissance (a period of renewed interest in learning) began to sweep Western Europe around 1450, the practice of slavery began to change. A pivotal event was the arrival of fourteen African slaves in Portugal in 1441. The slaves had been captured in the interior by other Africans, who then sold them to a Portuguese mariner on the coast of Africa. The mariner in turn brought them back to Europe, where he presented the slaves to Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460).

Although he never really traveled, Prince Henry was the guiding force in an age of Portuguese exploration. Under his direction, Portuguese sailors charted the coast of Africa and sea routes to India. Portuguese economic interest in Africa was motivated primarily by goods such as gold and ivory; slaves were, at least at first, an afterthought. After all, slavery was not practiced in Europe, since there was no shortage of cheap labor.

However, the discovery of the New World (a European term for North and South America) by Christopher Columbus in 1492 left the Spanish with vast new territories with a seemingly limitless need for labor. At first the Spanish conquerors attempted to enslave the peoples they called "Indians," the native inhabitants of the New World. This proved futile for a number of reasons, one being the fact that the Native Americans, lacking previous exposure to European diseases such as smallpox, died by the thousands.

Therefore, European interest turned to the African slave trade. In 1518, the first slaves from West Africa arrived in the New World, where they worked on plantations in the West Indies. In 1619, the first African slaves arrived at the English colony in Jamestown, Virginia. In the years that followed, three areas of the New World became centers of large slave populations: Cuba and the West Indies (that is, the islands of the Caribbean); Brazil; and the southern United States.

Partly as a result of their British cultural heritage, with its relatively high respect for human rights, Americans placed a great value on freedom; this made the existence of slavery in the United States all the more ironic. The writing of **Alexander Falconbridge**, a British doctor who served aboard a slave ship, amply illustrates his country's humanitarian tradition. However, the recollections of **James Barbot**, also an Englishman, but a slave trader confident that there was nothing morally wrong with slavery, make it clear that this humanitarian tradition had its limits.

Underlying Barbot's account was a belief that Africans were less than human, which made it possible for Europeans to engage in the slave trade without suffering a crisis of conscience. Perhaps it was true that humans had certain rights that could not be taken from them, as the U.S. Declaration of Independence stated in 1776; but if a person was not really a complete human being, then those rights could be disregarded. This was the essence of racism, one of the factors that set early modern slavery apart from the slavery in earlier eras. In order for slavery to exist along the values of freedom and justice



adopted not only by the British but also increasingly by other Europeans, it was necessary to treat certain races as inferior to others.

By the early 1800s, Britain had outlawed the slave trade, and most European countries were on their way to enacting provisions that would make slavery illegal. The United States had passed feeble laws against slave trading, but these were not well enforced, and they only increased the demand



**The arrival of the first African slaves at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619.** Courtesy of The Library of Congress.

in some quarters that slavery be abolished entirely. This was the position of the American Antislavery Society (AAS), a leading organization in the abolitionist movement. Its 1833 "Declaration of Sentiments" made it clear that the abolitionists viewed persons of African descent as the equals of all other Americans—and that therefore slavery should be abolished as an offense to human dignity.

Such statements were powerful weapons against slavery. Another effective tool was the publication of slave narratives, which were autobiographical books or articles by people raised under slavery. They offered compelling evidence of the human suffering inflicted by the practice of slavery. An example was the article by a slave whose name appears to have been Ralph,

but who was listed simply as "**Anonymous**" when his autobiography appeared in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* in 1857.

By that point, America was well on its way to the Civil War (1861-65), a conflict that would decide the slavery issue once and for all. The war claimed about 500,000 lives—compared to approximately 650,000 combined deaths in all other U.S. wars from 1775 to 1991. On several occasions during the Civil War, more Americans died in a single *day* than were killed in the entire Vietnam War from 1964 to 1973.

In this most significant of American wars, one of the most important acts was the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation by **Abraham Lincoln** in 1862. The proclamation, which freed all slaves in the Confederate states (the eleven Southern states that seceded from the United States in 1860 and 1861), energized the Union (the states loyal to the United States during the American Civil War) war effort by identifying it with the cause of freedom. It also encouraged thousands of African American men to flee slavery and join the Union army.

Ironically, because the Emancipation Proclamation only freed slaves that were held in states "rebellious against the United States," slavery was still legal in several Union states during the war. It was not until the Thirteenth Amendment to the **United States Constitution** was passed that slavery was outlawed, and full civil rights were not extended to freed slaves until the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments became part of the Constitution. Though it would be many years before African Americans began to experience anything approaching equality with whites, the institution of slavery was finished in the New World. Within two decades of its abolition in the United States, it also was outlawed in Cuba and Brazil.

# Falconbridge, Alexander

*Excerpt from An Account of the Slave Trade  
on the Coast of Africa*

*Published in An Account of the Slave Trade  
on the Coast of Africa, 1788*

**M**any scholars date the true beginnings of the Renaissance, a period of renewed interest in learning that heralded the beginnings of the modern age in Europe, from about 1450. Around that time, a number of important changes occurred, among them the launching of numerous voyages of discovery by Portuguese and Spanish ships.

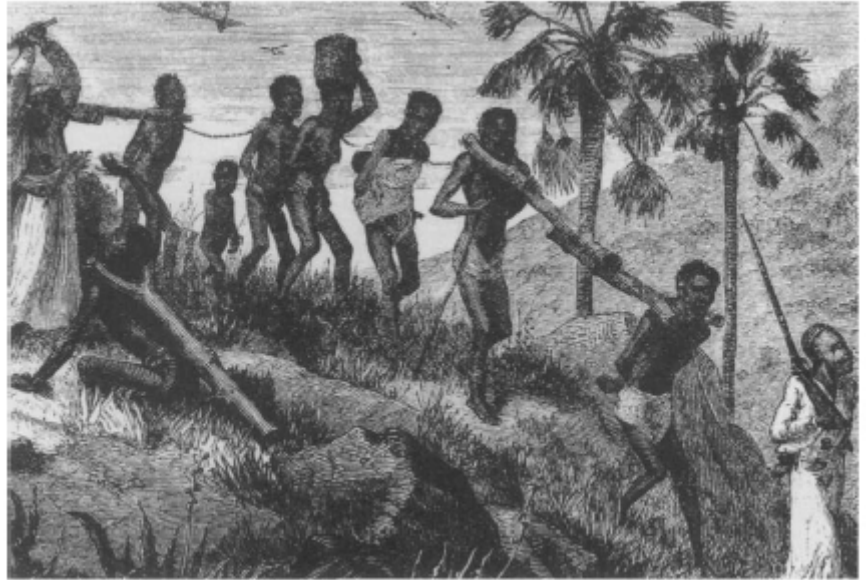
After Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) accidentally discovered the Americas, or the New World, in 1492, Spaniards began colonizing parts of it—that is, they made certain regions into Spanish territories. Among these regions were the islands of the Caribbean, which came to be known as the West Indies because Columbus mistakenly believed he had reached India. The Portuguese, however, had started their explorations a half-century earlier, and their voyages took them to the Atlantic coast of Africa. It was there that European trade in African slaves began during the mid 1400s.

Slavery had long existed in Africa. For instance, although the family of Olaudah Equiano (see box, "Slave Narratives") was

**The hardships and inconveniences suffered by the Negroes during the passage are scarcely to be enumerated or conceived.... It is not in the power of the human imagination to picture a situation more dreadful or disgusting.**

African, they owned quite a few slaves. Yet Africans' enslavement of other Africans was not nearly as

**African slave traders leading a group of captured Africans to the coast to be sold as slaves. Without the help of African slave traders, Europeans could have never penetrated the interior of the African continent and kidnaped slaves.**  
Reproduced by permission of The Granger Collection.



harsh as the treatment of African slaves by Europeans. It is also important to note that the Europeans could never have penetrated the interior of the African continent and kidnaped slaves on their own: they needed the help of African slave traders who lived on the Atlantic coast and were willing to sell out members of other tribes.

The Portuguese were slave traders, and both Spaniards and Portuguese in the New World—where Portugal's colony of Brazil became a vast slave empire—used slave labor. By the 1700s, however, both Spain and Portugal were eclipsed by new powers: Britain and France. In some ways, the two new powers resembled the old ones. For example, Spain, like France, was not actively involved in the actual slave trade, but it certainly made use of slaves in its New World colonies. Like Portugal before it, Britain took an active role both in the slave trade and in the slave system as it existed in the New World.

To a much greater extent than Spain, Portugal, or even France, Britain had a strong and growing tradition of respect for individual freedom and human dignity. Given such views it was difficult to justify the buying and selling of human beings. Many concerned people became abolitionists, or opponents of slavery, and one of their leading figures was Alexander Falconbridge, a surgeon who had worked aboard slave ships during the mid 1700s.

### **Alexander Falconbridge**

Alexander Falconbridge was a British surgeon who worked aboard slave ships during the mid to late 1700s. Disgusted by the treatment of captured Africans, Falconbridge resolved to expose the slave traders' inhumane behavior. The result was *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (1788).

Falconbridge's book began with the words, "The following sheets [pages] are intended to lay before the public the present state of a branch of the British commerce [economy], which, ever since its existence, has been held in detestation [hatred] by all good men, but at this time more particularly engages the attention of the nation, and is become the object of general reprobation [disapproval]." The book described almost the entire process of slave trading: the purchase of slaves from slavers (who, like the slaves, were Africans) along the African coast; the harsh treatment of the captives on the voyage to the Americas; and finally, the sale of slaves in the islands of the West Indies.

Falconbridge was popular with English abolitionists. He became governor of Sierra Leone, a newly created colony for freed slaves, but he was later removed from office. He died in 1792.

### **Things to remember while reading**

- The following passage, condensed from Falconbridge's *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (1788), describes aspects of slavery, beginning with the point at which slaves were sold by slavers at markets in West Africa. At these markets, the sellers were Africans, and the buyers Europeans. The slaves were forced onto prison-like ships, where they sailed to the New World amid horrible conditions.
- With his unique perspective, Falconbridge paid special attention to the health hazards posed to the slaves by the close, confined quarters in which they were kept.

At one point when he was tending to patients in the slave hold, he noted, it became so unbearably hot that he could only stay down there for a few minutes at a time. As a free man, Falconbridge had the option of going above decks; the captives did not.

- Falconbridge may have been unaware of the deeper meaning of his words when, in several places, he noted that circumstances aboard the ship often caused the slaves to quarrel with one another. No doubt the slave traders *wanted* the slaves to fight amongst themselves, so that they would not join forces against their common enemy. Also, his description of how the slaves were forced to sing and dance is intriguing. Even in modern times, African Americans are sometimes stereotyped, or lumped together in a misleading and racist way, as accomplished singers and dancers; the passage from Falconbridge shows how many slaves developed these abilities as a survival technique.
- From what Falconbridge wrote in the third paragraph from the last, it appears that though the sailors were raping the African women, they had managed to convince themselves that the women engaged in sex willingly. Thus if a woman was raped by one man and then another, it seemed that she was being "unfaithful" to the first man. Even Falconbridge seems to have been misled to an extent, because he referred to the sailors "procuring the consent" of African women. It is hard to imagine a situation in which any of the latter would willingly have engaged in relationships with their captors.

### ***An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa***

*From forty to two hundred Negroes are generally purchased at a time by the black traders, according to the opulence of the buyer, and consist of all ages, from a month to sixty years and upwards. Scarcely any age or situation is deemed an exception, the price being proportionable . Women sometimes*

*form a part of them, who happen to be so far advanced in their pregnancy as to be delivered during their journey from the [slave trading] fairs to the coast; and I have frequently seen instances of deliveries on board ship....*

*[T]he European purchasers ... first examine them [the slaves] relative to their age. They then minutely inspect their persons and inquire into the state of their health; if they are inflicted with any disease or are deformed or have bad eyes or teeth; if they are lame or weak in the joints or distorted in the back or of a slender make or narrow in the chest; in short, if they have been ill or are afflicted in any manner so as to render them incapable of much labor....*

*The men Negroes, on being brought aboard the ship, are immediately fastened together, two and two, by handcuffs on their wrists and by irons riveted on their legs....*

*[T]hey are frequently stowed so close, as to admit of no other position than lying on their sides. Nor will the height between decks, unless directly under the grating, permit the indulgence of an erect posture; especially where there are platforms, which is generally the case....*

*In each of the apartments are placed three or four large buckets, of a conical form, nearly two feet in diameter at the bottom and only one foot at the top and in depth of about twenty-eight inches, to which, when necessary, the Negroes have recourse. It often happens that those who are placed at a distance from the buckets, in endeavoring to get to them, tumble over their companions, in consequence of their being shackled. These accidents, although unavoidable, are productive of continual quarrels in which some of them are always bruised. In this distressed situation, unable to proceed and prevented from getting to the tubs, they desist from the attempt; and as the necessities of nature are not to be resisted, ease themselves as they lie. This becomes a fresh source of boils and disturbances and tends to render the condition of the poor captive wretches still more uncomfortable....*

*Their food is served up to them in tubs about the size of a small water bucket. They are placed round these tubs, in companies of ten to each tub, out of which they feed themselves with wooden spoons. These they soon lose and when they are not allowed others they feed themselves with their hands....*

*Upon the Negroes refusing to take sustenance , I have seen coals of fire, glowing hot, put on a shovel and placed so near their lips as to scorch and burn them. And this has been accompanied with threats of forcing them to swallow the coals if they any longer persisted in refusing to eat These means have generally had the desired effect. I have also been credibly informed that a certain captain in the slave-trade, poured melted lead on such of his Negroes as obstinately refused their food.*

*Exercise being deemed necessary for the preservation of their health they are sometimes obliged to dance when the weather will permit their coming on deck. If they go about it reluctantly or do not move with agility , they are flogged*

*.... The poor wretches are frequently compelled to sing also; but when they do so, their songs are generally, as may naturally be expected, melancholy lamentations of their exile from their native country.*

*The women are furnished with beads for the purpose of affording them some diversion . But this end is generally defeated by the squabbles which are occasioned in consequence of their stealing from each other.*

*On board some ships the common sailors are allowed to have intercourse with such of the black women whose consent they can procure . And some of them have been known to take the inconstancy of their paramours so much to heart as to leap overboard and drown themselves. The officers are permitted to indulge their passions among them at pleasure and sometimes are guilty of such excesses as disgrace human nature....*

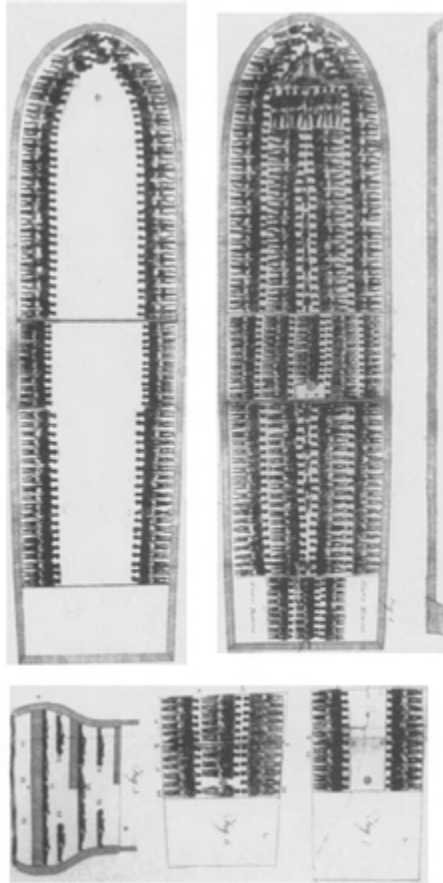


*The hardships and inconveniences suffered by the Negroes during the passage are scarcely to be enumerated or conceived... .*

*During the voyages I made, I was frequently witness to the fatal effects of this exclusion of fresh air [from the cargo hold]. I will give one instance, as it serves to convey some idea, though a very faint one, of their terrible sufferings.... Some wet and blowing weather having occasioned the port-holes to be shut and the grating to be covered, fluxes and fevers among the Negroes ensued . While they were in this situation, I frequently went down among them till at length their room became so extremely hot as to be only bearable for a very short time. But the excessive heat was not the only thing that rendered their situation intolerable. The deck, that is the floor of their rooms, was so covered with the blood and mucus which had proceeded from them in consequence of the flux, that it resembled a slaughter-house. It is not in the power of the human imagination to picture a situation more dreadful or disgusting. Numbers of the slaves having fainted, they were carried upon deck where several of them died and the rest with great difficulty were restored....*

### **What happened next...**

Falconbridge's account was actually written a few years after James Barbot (see entry) described a shipboard revolt, but such revolts became more common. Certainly it is easy to understand how and why slaves would want to rise up against



**A diagram of a British slave ship showing the layout for stowing 292 slaves. In order to put more slaves on a ship, many slaves were forced to lay in extremely cramped quarters for the entire trip. Courtesy of The Library of Congress.**

their oppressors, given the dreadful conditions to which they were subjected.

By the time of Falconbridge, slavery in the New World was in full swing. Two countries took the lead in the slave trade: Britain, with its slave trading ships and colonies; and the brand-new American republic, with its southern regions heavily dependent on agricultural slave labor. Yet these were also the lands that claimed to value liberty and individual rights the most.

### **Early Slave Narratives**

One type of valuable firsthand source about African slavery comes from writers such as Alexander Falconbridge—that is, those rare Europeans who were concerned with the cruelty and injustice of the slave trade. An even more direct account of the slave trade, however, comes from those who experienced it from the worst possible perspective: as slaves.

Among such people was the author of *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, Written by Himself* (1774). Gronniosaw had begun his life as a member of a powerful African family; later, he had been captured and sold into slavery, but had eventually been able to obtain his freedom. Except for the part about having been a prince, Gronniosaw's story was much the same as that of other former slaves who wrote their life stories in the eighteenth century.

Perhaps the most famous of the slave narrative authors was Olaudah Equiano (c. 1750-1797), also known as Gustavus Vassa. A member of the Ibo people in what is now Nigeria, Equiano was kidnaped at age eleven and sold into slavery. He was sent first to Barbados, one of the main slaveholding islands of the West Indies, but eventually wound up in Virginia. There he served a British naval officer, who then sold him to a Quaker merchant from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Quakers, a religious group, had strong antislavery sentiments, and in 1766 the merchant allowed Equiano to purchase his freedom.

Equiano spent the remainder of his life as an active participant in the abolitionist, or antislavery, movement. In 1789, he published *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African*. The book included a description of his capture. One day while his parents were out tending their crops, Equiano wrote, two men and a woman—apparently Africans—kidnaped him and his sister: "without giving us time to cry out, or make resistance, they stopped our mouths, and ran off with us into the nearest wood."

## Did you know...

- Slaves did not come from all over Africa; rather, they were taken almost entirely from the western part of the continent—the enormous "hump" of Africa that extends into the Atlantic Ocean.
- Ironically, West Africa had been the site of numerous great and wealthy civilizations, such as Ghana, Mali, and the Songhai Empire, just a few centuries before the slave ships arrived.
- One British philosopher whose ideas inspired the antislavery movement was John Locke (1632-1704). Locke wrote that all human beings deserved certain natural rights, which he identified as "life, liberty, and the pursuit of property." This inspired the reference to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" in the U.S. Declaration of Independence.

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# Barbot, James

*Excerpt from "A Supplement to the Description of  
the Coasts of North and South Guinea"*

Published in *A Collection of Voyages and Travels...*,  
1732

Compiled by Awnsham Churchill

One of the most frequently used terms in the vocabulary of slavery is "Middle Passage." This is a reference to the triangular route employed by most slave ships, the middle part of which was the voyage from Africa to the New World. Ships would sail from Europe to West Africa, where they would pick up slaves; then from Africa to the Americas, where they would sell the slaves for goods such as corn and tobacco; and then from the New World back to Europe, where they sold the products.

If one forgets for a moment that slavers were trafficking in human lives, and instead views this arrangement in pure business terms, it makes sense: rather than send empty ships on a transatlantic voyage, European merchants were able to make money on both the journey out and the journey back. The fact is that although slavery was an extraordinarily cruel business, it was a business nonetheless, and the people who engaged in it considered it as just another way to make a

...if all those who carry slaves duly observ'd them, we should not hear of so many revolts as have happen'd. Where I was concern'd, we always kept our slaves in such order, that we did not perceive the least inclination in any of them to revolt, or mutiny, and lost very few of our number in the voyage.

living. This was the perspective of James Barbot, a crew member aboard the English slave ship *Don Carlos*.

In the following passage, Barbot describes the same situations observed by Alexander Falconbridge (see entry), but with a very different attitude. Barbot's description begins with an account of a slave revolt, which the slavers brutally suppressed.

Sadly, Barbot was probably correct when he indicated that he and his shipmates treated slaves better than most other crews. Some slavers, as Barbot noted, took out their anger and frustration on the defenseless slaves. In Barbot's mind, however, this was unwise since hurting slaves was not good business.

### **Slave Rebellions**

In 1838 the only successful slave ship rebellion in United States history occurred aboard the *Amistad*, a Spanish ship from Cuba. Soon after the slaves revolted, they chose as their leader Joseph Cinque (c. 1810-c. 1880). Their ship wound up in the United States, where the slaves went on trial, and eventually the case went before the U.S. Supreme Court. Defended by former U.S. President John Quincy Adams (1767-1848; President 1825-1829), the slaves won the case in 1841, and Cinque and the other mutineers were freed.

On at least one occasion, slaves in the New World established their own governments. This happened in northeastern Brazil, where the Republic of Palmares—founded and governed by escaped slaves—existed between 1630 and 1697. Palmares, destroyed by the Portuguese in 1697, represented by far the longest running slave revolt in the New World.

More tragic was the rebellion led by Toussaint L'Ouverture (1743-1803) in Haiti, which was a French colony with a huge slave population. The revolt began in 1791, and led to the abolition of slavery in all French colonies three years later. Yet after Napoleon (1769-1821) became dictator of France in 1799, he was determined to win new territories and gain back ones that had been lost, including Haiti. His troops captured Toussaint, who died in a French prison in 1803. The war in Haiti had exhausted the French, however, and they granted the country its independence early in 1805.

In the United States, there were approximately two hundred slave revolts, most notable being the ones led by Denmark Vesey (1767-1822) in 1822 and Nat Turner (1800-1831) in 1831. Both men were executed for their part in the uprisings. The last major slave related revolt in the United States was an 1859 attack on an ammunition storehouse at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Leading the raid was John Brown (1800-1859), a white man who hoped to incite a widespread slave revolt. Instead he was captured and executed, and the incident helped bring about the Civil War (1861-65), which resulted in the end of slavery.

### **Things to remember while reading**

- As a crew member and not an officer, Barbot was not a particularly well-educated man, and in places his writing is awkward and labored. His unusual spellings, however, are more a product of his era than of his

education. At that time, it was common, for instance, to write *crouds* instead of *crowds*. Another regular practice was the use of apostrophes: *arm'd* instead of *armed*, for example.

- Barbot clearly looked down on the Africans as "savage people" who, like children, would behave themselves if treated properly. At one point, he referred to them as smelling poorly, but it does not seem to have occurred to him that anyone would smell bad if forced to travel under such harsh conditions.
- Throughout his recollections, Barbot congratulated his shipmates for their kind treatment of the slaves. In a section removed from the following passage, he noted that they tried to allow the slaves as much headroom as possible in the cargo hold: "the greater height it has, the more airy and convenient it is for a considerable number of human creatures; and consequently far the more healthy for them, and fitter to look after them."
- On the other hand, Barbot seemed entirely ignorant regarding the cruelty of slavery. Particularly disturbing is his reference to the "abundance of recreation" he and other slavers had with female slaves. The implication here is that they raped the more attractive girls.

### **"A Supplement to the Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea"**

*About one in the afternoon, after dinner, we, according to custom caused them [the slaves], one by one, to go down between decks, to have each his pint of water; most of them were yet above deck, many of them provided with knives, which we had \_ given them two or three days before, as [we were] not suspecting the least attempt of this nature from them; others had pieces of iron they had torn off our \_ door.... Thus arm'd, they \_ in crouds and \_ on our men ... and stabb'd one of the \_ of us all, who receiv'd fourteen or fifteen wounds of their knives, and so \_ . Next they assaulted our \_ , and cut one of his legs so round the bone, that he could not move, the nerves being cut through; others cut our cook's throat to the \_ , and others wounded three of the sailors, and threw one of*

them overboard in that condition, from the fore-castle into the sea.... [W]e stood in arms, firing on the revolted slaves, of whom we kill'd some, and wounded many: which so \_ the rest, that they gave way, \_ themselves .... and many of the most \_ leapt over board, and drown'd themselves in the ocean with much \_ \_ no manner of concern for life. Thus we lost twenty seven or twenty eight slaves, either kill'd by us, or drown'd; and having master'd them, caused all to go \_ decks, giving them \_ . The next day we had them all again upon deck, where they unanimously declar'd, the Menbombe slaves had been the \_ of the \_ , and for an example we caused about thirty of the ringleaders to be very severely whipt by all our men that were capable of doing that \_ .

I have observ'd, that the great \_ , which so often happens in slave ships, proceeds as well from taking in too many, as from of knowing how to manage them aboard....

It is true, we allow'd them much more liberty, and \_ them with more tenderness than most other Europeans would think \_ to do; [such] as, to have them all upon deck every day in good weather; to take their meals twice a-day, at fix'd hours, that is, at ten in the morning, and at five at night; which being ended, we made the men go down again between the decks; for the women were almost entirely at their own discretion , to be upon deck as long as they pleas 'd, nay even many of the males had the same liberty by turns, successively; few or none being fetter'd or kept in shackles, and that only on account of some disturbances, or injuries, offer'd to their fellow captives, as will unavoidably happen among a numerous croud of such savage people. Besides, we allow'd each of them ... now and then short pipes and tobacco to smoak upon deck by turns, and some coconuts; and to the women a piece of coarse cloth to cover them, and the same to many of the men, which we took care they did wash from time to time, to prevent vermin ,





A group of male slaves clubbing a white sailor during a slave revolt like the one described by James Barbot. Etching from Harper's Weekly. Courtesy of The Library of Congress.

*which they are very subject to; and because it look'd sweeter and more agreeable. Toward the evening they diverted themselves on the deck, as they thought fit, some conversing together, others dancing, singing, and sporting after their manner, which pleased them highly, and often made us pastime; especially the female sex, who being apart from the males, on the quarterdeck, and many of them young sprightly maidens, full of jollity and good-humour, afforded us abundance of recreation; as did several little fine boys, which we mostly kept to attend on us about the ship....*

*Much more might be said relating to the preservation and maintenance of slaves in such voyages, which I leave to the prudence of the officers that govern aboard... and shall only add these few particulars, that tho' we ought to be circumspect in watching the slaves narrowly, to prevent or disappoint their ill designs for our own conservation, yet must we not be too severe and haughty with them, but on the contrary, caress and humor them in every reasonable thing. Some commanders ... are perpetually beating and curbing them, even without the least offence, and will not suffer any upon deck ... under pretence it hinders the work of the ship*

*and sailors and that they are troublesome by their nasty nauseous stench, or their noise; which makes those poor wretches desperate, and besides their falling into distempers thro' melancholy, often is the occasion of their destroying themselves.*

*Such officers should consider, those unfortunate creatures are men as well as themselves, tho' of a different colour, and pagans; and that they ought to do to others as they would be done by in like circumstances....*

### **What happened next...**

It is hard to know what to think of Barbot's final paragraph, with its reference to Christianity's Golden Rule. ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.") Perhaps this is evidence that Barbot felt a degree of compassion for the slaves. Or perhaps he was merely being a hypocrite—someone who pretends they are doing the right thing when they know they are not.

On the other hand, Barbot may have believed in the popular justification of slavery on religious grounds. Some religions taught that by enslaving Africans (who were considered heathens), Europeans and their descendants in the Americas were providing them with an opportunity to save themselves from hell by becoming Christians. In this way, many slave traders and owners justified their participation in the practice of slavery.

Certainly supporters of slavery could find passages in the Bible to justify the institution, but many other Christians maintained that slavery went against Christian principles. Together with non-Christians who likewise opposed slavery on moral grounds (i.e., as an offense to the basic dignity of humankind) they began putting pressure on the American and British governments to end the slave trade.



An engraving showing the hold of the slave ship *Gloria*. During their trip to the New World slaves were often forced to remain in cramped quarters with little food or water. Reproduced by permission of The Granger Collection.

### Did you know...

- The European trade in African slaves began in 1441, when fourteen slaves were brought to Lisbon, Portugal, as a "gift" to Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460).
- The first slaves to cross the Atlantic Ocean on European ships were not Africans bound for the New World, but Native Americans taken *from* the New World to Europe. In 1495, Christopher Columbus returned to Spain with several hundred Indian slaves. Most of these men and women died soon after their arrival in Spain.
- Between 1451 and 1870, some eleven million African slaves were brought to the Americas.

### Indentured Servants

Many people came to the New World in a situation only slightly better than slavery: indentured servitude. In return for passage to the New World, and for room and board while there (as well as, in some cases, clothing or even land), indentured servants agreed to work for a set period of time. Unlike slaves, who were African, indentured servants included not only Africans, but also poor whites from Europe, and Indians from India.

Also unlike slaves, indentured servants had a contract, or a legal document, which outlined the terms of their service—including its duration, which was typically between two and fourteen years. Obviously, the fact that they knew when their service would end made indentured servitude preferable to slavery; however, the conditions of travel to the New World were not much better for indentured servants than for slaves. In addition, indentured servants were often treated like slaves, with long hours, substandard living conditions, and beatings.

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# American Antislavery Society

*Excerpt from "Declaration of Sentiments"*  
Published in *The Abolitionists: A Collection of Their Writing*, 1963

Edited by Louis Ruchames

**W**ith the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the adoption of the U.S. Constitution in 1787, a new government based on what Americans believed were the natural rights of human beings was created. Those rights had a number of dimensions, but they all reduced to a single idea: freedom. And yet when Americans looked around them, they saw that many people were not free.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the United States became increasingly divided over the question of slavery. To wealthy Southern plantation owners, slavery was believed to be necessary for their economic survival. The invention of the cotton gin, a machine for separating cotton fibers from seeds, had made cotton highly profitable. Along with tobacco, rice, and other crops grown by slaves, it became a mainstay of the economy of the American South.

**But those, for whose emancipation we are striving—constituting at the present time at least one-sixth part of our countrymen—are recognized by law, and treated by their fellow beings, as brute beasts.**

In the North, however, it was too cold to build an economic system based on agriculture; this turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The North focused on manufacturing goods, such as turning Southern cotton into clothing. These factories competed with those in England, which then led the industrialized world. As a result, the material wealth of the North grew much faster than that of the South.

Because the North did not rely on slaves for its economic growth, it was there that the first voices of opposition to slavery made themselves known. In fact, most Northern states had outlawed slavery by the early part of the nineteenth century, and in 1807 the United States prohibited the importation of slaves from overseas. Britain did the same thing a year later, but whereas the British laws proved effective, the American ones did not: too many people, including ship owners from the North, profited from the slave trade.

One possible solution to the slavery problem was the creation of a country in Africa to which freed slaves could return. Thus in 1816 the American Colonization Society formed with a plan to ship former slaves to the nation that would later become Liberia. A few years later, the Missouri Compromise (1820-21) offered another, highly complicated, solution. It admitted two new states to the Union: Missouri, in which slavery was legal, and Maine, in which it was not; and it outlawed slavery in all other states north of Missouri's southern boundary.

Even with these compromises, the debate over slavery continued to escalate, and there was a rising tide of sentiment among many whites in the North (along with a few freed slaves) for the complete abolition, or outlawing, of slavery throughout the United States. Thus was born the abolitionist movement, which consisted of a number of organizations. Most prominent among these was the American Antislavery Society (AAS), formed in 1833 under the leadership of William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879) and others.

## Things to remember while reading

- Abolitionists saw themselves both as Christians and as Americans. Slavery, as they made clear in the Declaration of Sentiments of the American Antislavery Society (AAS), went against both the principles of Christianity and those of the American political system. For instance, the Declaration of Sentiments mentions "Ex. xxi, 16"—that is, the sixteenth verse of the twenty-first chapter of the Old Testament Book of Exodus. According to this passage, found in the King James version of the Bible, "... he that stealeth [i.e., kidnaps] a man, and selleth him ... he shall surely be put to death." Thus throughout the Declaration of Sentiments, the abolitionists referred to slavery as a sin. They also note that America's Founding Fathers had demanded freedom, and that without an end to slavery, America's quest for freedom would be incomplete.



**Slaves picking cotton on a Southern plantation. Since crops such as cotton became the mainstay of the Southern economy during the mid-1800s, Southern plantation owners believed that slavery was necessary for their economic survival. Courtesy of The Library of Congress.**

In line with their beliefs as Christians and Americans, abolitionists regarded it as a self-evident fact—something as obvious as the heat of the Sun or the blue color of the sky, for instance—that slavery was evil. In their view, any laws that legalized slavery were illegal because they went against natural law. The idea that human beings had natural rights had inspired the

American Revolution (1775-83), as well as the French Revolution of 1789. Tied in with this concept was that of a social contract, or "social compact" as abolitionists called it. The social contract refers to the mutual obligations that hold a society together. According to the social contract, people protect their own rights by protecting those of their neighbors.



There are many references to law throughout the Declaration of Sentiments—for instance, the laws in most Southern states which made it a crime to teach a slave how to read and write, thus keeping them in "heathenish darkness." The abolitionists also note—without naming—the 1807 law outlawing the slave trade. Thus, they reasoned that the institution of American slavery must surely be as serious as the African slave trade.

- This view of slaves as Americans was a progressive one at that time. Tied in with this was the abolitionists' belief that a black person ought to enjoy the same rights as a white person—again, a highly unusual sentiment for any white American in 1833.



- The abolitionists opposed the move to resettle freed blacks in Africa because they believed it was not comparable to allowing the slaves the rights and freedom they deserved as Americans. The abolitionists demanded the immediate freeing of slaves, and did not believe that Southern slave owners should be paid for giving up property that did not belong to them in the first place. However, abolitionists made it clear that they respected the rights of each state to make its own decision regarding slavery, and rejected any attempt by the federal government to settle the question by force. What was needed, the abolitionists held, was a strong nonviolent movement by people of conscience to change the laws of the states and the nation.

### **"Declaration of Sentiments"**

*We have met together for the achievement of an enterprise, without which that of our \_ is incomplete; and which, for its \_ , and probable results upon the destiny of the world, as far \_ theirs as moral truth does physical force....*

*Their \_ , great as they were, were \_ in comparison with the wrongs and sufferings of those for whom we plead. Our fathers were never slaves—never bought and sold like cattle—never shut out from the light of knowledge and religion—never subjected to the lash of brutal taskmasters.*

*But those, for whose \_ we are striving—constituting at the present time at least one-sixth part of our countrymen — are recognized by law, and treated by their fellow-beings, as brute beasts; are \_ daily of the fruits of their toil without \_ really enjoy no \_ nor legal protection from \_ and murderous outrages upon their persons; and are ruthlessly torn \_ the tender babe from the arms of its frantic mother — heartbroken wife from her weeping husband — at the \_ or pleasure of irresponsible tyrants. For the crime of having a dark complexion, they suffer the pangs of hunger, the infliction of \_ , the \_ of brutal servitude. The condition of being a servant or slave.*

*They are kept in \_ by laws expressly enacted to make their instruction a criminal offence.*

*These are the \_ circumstances in the condition of more than two million people, the proof of which may be found in thousands of \_ facts, and in the laws of the slaveholding States.*

*Hence we maintain—that, in view of the \_ and religious privileges of this nation, the guilt of its oppression is unequalled by any other on the face of the earth; and, therefore, that it is bound to repent instantly, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free....*

*It is \_ to buy or steal a native African, and subject him to servitude. Surely, the sin is as great to enslave an American as an African.*

*Therefore we believe and affirm—that there is no difference, \_ between the African slave trade and American slavery:*

*That every American citizen, who detains a human being in involuntary bondage as his property, is, according to Scripture, (Ex. xxi, 16,) a \_*

*That the slaves ought instantly to be set free, and brought under the protection of law: That if they had lived from the time of \_ down to the present period, and had been \_ through successive generations, their right to be free could never have been \_ but their claims would have constantly \_*

*That all those laws which are now in force, admitting the right of slavery, are therefore, before Cod, utterly null and void; being \_ a daring \_ on the law of nature, a \_ overthrow of the very foundations of the \_, a complete extinction of all the relations, \_ and obligations of mankind, and a \_ of all the holy commandments; and that therefore they ought instantly to be \_*

*We further believe and affirm—that all persons of color, who possess the qualifications which are demanded of others,*

ought to be admitted forthwith to the enjoyment of the same privileges, and the exercise of the same prerogatives, as others; and that the paths of \_ of wealth and of intelligence, should be opened as widely to them as to persons of a white complexion.

We maintain that no \_ should be given to the planters emancipating their slaves:

Because it would be a surrender of the great fundamental principle, that man cannot hold property in man:

Because slavery is a crime, and therefore is not an article to be sold:

Because the holders of slaves are not the \_ of what they claim; freeing the slave is not depriving them of property, but restoring it to its rightful owner; it is not wronging the master, but righting the slave—restoring him to himself:

Because immediate and general emancipation would only destroy \_, not real property; it would not amputate a limb or break a bone of the slaves, but \_, would make them doubly valuable to the masters as free laborers; and

Because, if compensation is to be given at all, it should be given to the outraged and guiltless slaves, and not to those who have plundered and abused them.

We regard as \_, cruel and dangerous, any scheme of \_ which pretends to aid, either directly or indirectly, in the emancipation of the slaves, or to be a substitute for the immediate and total abolition of slavery.

We fully and unanimously recognize the \_ of each State, to legislate exclusively on the subject of the slavery which is tolerated within its limits; we concede that Congress, under \_, has no right to interfere with any of the slave States, in relation to this \_ subject:

*But we maintain that Congress has a right, and is solemnly bound, to suppress the domestic slave trade between the several States, and to abolish slavery in those portions of our territory which the Constitution has placed under its exclusive*

*We also maintain that there are, at the present time, the highest obligations resting upon the people of the free States to remove slavery by moral and political action, as prescribed in the Constitution of the United States....*

*These are our views and principles — these our designs and measures. With entire confidence in the overruling justice of Cod, we plant ourselves upon the Declaration of our Independence and the truths of , as upon .*

### **What happened next...**

By 1840, there were more than one hundred antislavery societies in the northern United States; mean-while, proslavery sentiment in the South became more intense. The federal government again proposed a solution, called the Compromise of 1850. This was a complicated deal for both sides: for instance, it admitted California to the Union as a free state, but it made fugitive, or runaway, slave laws much harsher.

The slavery issue reached a boiling point during the 1850s, with the publication of the highly influential novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe and the adoption of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. This legislation left open the question of slavery in those two states; this led to the formation of the

**William Lloyd Garrison** cofounder of the **American Antislavery Society (AAS)** and a leading figure in the abolitionist movement played a pivotal role in drafting the **AAS Declaration of Sentiments**. Courtesy of The Library of Congress.



Republican Party as a powerful force for the antislavery movement.

Disputes over slavery in Kansas and Nebraska led to widespread violence, and this violence would escalate during the decade leading up to the Civil War. In 1859, John Brown (1800-1859) led a daring raid on a federal arms depot in Harper's Ferry, Virginia, hoping to arm slaves for an uprising. He and his followers were hanged. A year later, Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), running on a clearly antislavery platform or plan of action, became the first Republican President of the United States. Seven slave states withdrew from the Union in protest.

### **Did you know...**

#### **William Lloyd Garrison**

Cofounder of the American Antislavery Society (AAS) and one of the leading figures in the abolitionist movement, William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879) played a pivotal role in drafting the AAS Declaration of Sentiments. Garrison came from a poor family in Massachusetts, and at age twelve went to work for a local newspaper. By the time he was twenty, he had started his own paper and later went on to become editor of several other publications. It also was during his twenties, that he became involved in the abolitionist movement.

From 1831 to 1865, Garrison edited the *Liberator*. This newspaper was so strong in its antislavery sentiments that after the 1831 slave rebellion led by Nat Turner (1800-1831 ) was suppressed, many Southern states made it a crime to possess a copy of the paper. In 1833, Garrison helped found the AAS, and served as its president from 1843 to 1865. Garrison's ideas were too extreme for many abolitionists, however: among other things, he called for full equality between blacks and whites, a notion which even the most forward-thinking people of his time considered unsettling.

Following the Civil War (1861-65), which ended slavery, Garrison was an honored man, celebrated among freed slaves and sympathetic whites as a great warrior for freedom. He devoted his latter years to issues such as temperance, or the outlawing of alcohol consumption, and women's rights.

- Sixty-two people signed the American Antislavery Society's Declaration of Sentiments, among them three freed black slaves.
- Despite the fact that the Declaration of Sentiments opposed the idea of creating a homeland in Africa for freed slaves, that was exactly what happened with the

establishment of Liberia as a nation in 1847. Liberia's flag resembles that of the United States, and many of its leaders have had American-sounding names such as Doe and Tolbert.

- In his latter years, AAS cofounder William Lloyd Garrison was penniless; however, he managed to live in relative comfort thanks to the generosity of his many supporters.

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# Anonymous

*Excerpt from "A Slave's Story"*

Published in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, June 1857

I was made, by my parents, the carrier of everything not beyond my strength. I have heard of Indians called Flatheads, because of the shape given to their skulls by pressure. But, if pressure *can* flatten the human head, my race should all be thus deformed; for, in childhood, our heads are the universal vehicles of transportation....

By 1857, America was on the brink of civil war. The most significant reason for the conflict was the issue of states' rights—that is, the question of how much power the federal government had over the states. Slavery was related to this issue, as many states wanted to determine for themselves whether they would allow slavery in their state.

Whereas questions regarding federal and state power were largely abstract, or removed from everyday reality, slavery was a highly personal issue. Opponents of slavery sought to make it still more personal through the use of the written word. For example, the 1852 novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe strongly influenced public sentiment against slavery both in the northern United States and in England, whose dependence on cotton from the slaveholding states could otherwise have made it an ally of the South.

But *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was fiction. Much more compelling were the great number of autobiographical slave narratives



published in the years leading up to the Civil War (1861-65). The excerpt that follows comes from a long article in the June 1857 issue of *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*. Its authorship is credited to an anonymous slave, though at places in the narrative, he referred to himself as Ralph. Though Ralph freely acknowledged that his experience is far better than that of most slaves, it is still a tale filled with the painful experiences that characterized the practice of slavery: families separated, children forced to labor, and beatings administered to grown men.

### **Things to remember while reading**

- It should be kept in mind that Ralph's experience was, as he himself wrote, "perhaps, the most pleasant that slavery can exhibit..." Rather than work in the fields, he spent most of his life as a personal attendant to his master or in similar roles. Even a relatively privileged slave such as Ralph, however, had to work in the fields at some point in his life; and Ralph knew enough about the overseer (the white manager of the slaves working in the fields) to avoid him.
- Ralph's narrative may be typical of a slave's attitude toward poor whites. Despite the fact that all whites were technically their social superiors, as Ralph made clear, most slaves looked down on white sharecroppers and others whose station, or position, was hardly better than that of slaves. Indeed, many of the worst conflicts facing freed slaves after the Civil War came not from former plantation owners, but from poor whites jealous of what little the freed slaves possessed.
- A particularly significant theme in Ralph's narrative is the effect of slavery on morality. In a world where parents' children could be taken away, and husbands and wives separated, it was not surprising that Ralph and his first wife Sally treated marriage vows as something of little meaning—or that Ralph considered theft an appropriate means for supporting his family.
- Ralph freely pointed out the extent to which he and those around him had become afflicted with the

lowered standards that slavery forced on them, but he was perhaps less aware of the ways he had adopted white peoples' views of slaves. In reference to Sally's willingness to cheat on her first husband with him, he wrote that "she was not superior to her race or her condition"—meaning that he thought a black slave was capable of no better. He also suggested that what he viewed as Sally's laziness was not merely an outgrowth of slavery, but a condition typical of Africans.

House slaves serving a Southern family dinner. House slaves were considered more privileged than field slaves because housework was not as strenuous as working in the fields. Reproduced by permission of Corbis Corporation (Bellevue).



### **"A Slave's Story"**

*I was born about the year 1794, on a large plantation, thirty odd miles above Richmond, Virginia, and was descended, in the third generation, from imported Africans, and, probably, from some of the darkest of the native race; for my parents as well as myself were pretty black.... As in most other cases, the overseer managed*

*very well for himself, but not so well for his employer; and, at the death of my parents' master, his debts ... encumbered his estate so much, that his only son ... whom I designate as my master, found himself compelled to sell immediately a portion of the slaves. My parents and their five children—including myself, then an infant were amongst those sold. But their kind*

### **Lunsford Lane**

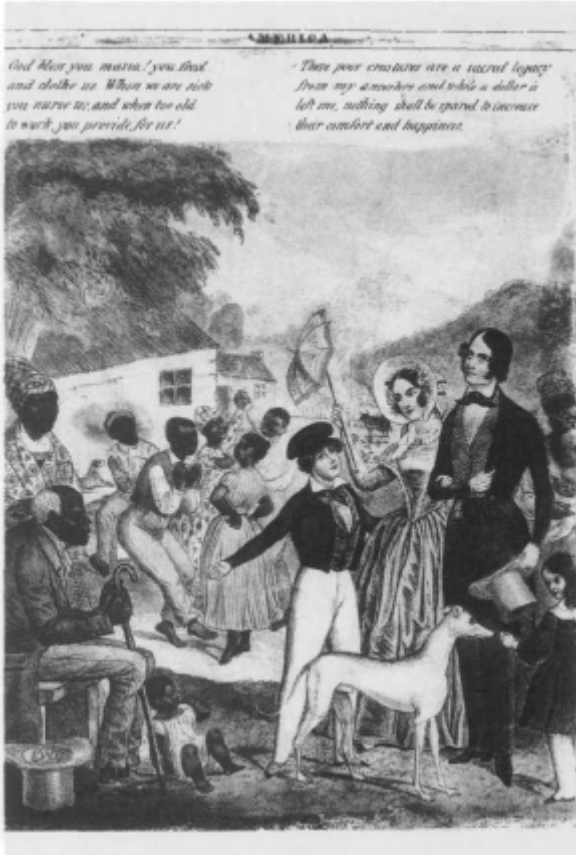
Born in 1803, Lunsford Lane grew up as a slave on a plantation outside of Raleigh, North Carolina. He manufactured pipes, sold tobacco, and raised enough money so that when he was in his thirties, he purchased not only his own freedom, but also that of his wife and seven children.

In 1842, Lane published *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane*, an autobiographical work. In it, he described his first awareness of what it meant to be a slave: "My early boyhood [was spent] in playing with the other boys and girls, colored and white, in the yard, and occasionally doing such little matters of labor as one of so young years could. I knew no difference between myself and the white children; nor did they seem to know any in turn. Sometimes my master would come out and give a biscuit to me, and another to one of his own white boys; but I did not perceive the difference between us...."

"When I began to work, I discovered the difference between myself and my master's white children. They began to order me about, and were told to do so by my master and mistress. I found, too, that they had learned to read, while I was not permitted to have a book in my hand. To be in possession of anything written or printed, was regarded as an offence. And then there was the fear that I might be sold away from those who were dear to me, and conveyed to the far South...."

*master did the best he could for them, and sold the whole family, privately, to some man very near or beyond the mountains. The contrast between their new situation and the mild government of their young master, soon rendered my parents greatly dissatisfied; and, after a few months, they both absconded from the purchaser, leaving their four elder children, whom they never saw again, and taking me with them. They found their way back to their former neighborhood, and, for a summer and part of autumn, were concealed in a large body of woods on their former master's premises. Of course, all the neighboring slaves soon knew their lurking place, and supplied them with food, and often with shelter. At length the young master was informed, in some way, of the circumstance; and, with that kindness which*

*distinguished him through life, he repurchased my parents and myself, at considerable loss and inconvenience....*



An engraving showing an idealized Southern belief that plantation owners were willing to provide comfort and happiness to slaves, while slaves were grateful for the care their masters provided for them. Courtesy of The Library of Congress.

*My earliest recollection of myself is, as a little, black, dirty, uncombed, and unwashed animal, scantily covered with odds and ends of cotton or woolen garments in cool weather, and in the warm season neither having nor desiring any other covering than my own dark skin. And this was universal amongst children, whether male or female, until nine or ten years old. The truth is, the whites in that locality were in a remote situation, at a distance from the frequented roads, and far behind most parts of the state in intelligence and improvement. Raising tobacco was the one sole object in life.... A crop, occupying so much time, and requiring so much attention, compelled both whites and blacks to neglect everything else; and, generally, the former were ignorant and exacting, the latter debased and barbarous, with scarcely a want fully satisfied, and with little more*

*intelligence than the beasts that perish....*

*I sat in the ashes, or made dirt-pies in the sand, or hunted for berries or birds' nests, until old enough to carry a pail of water on my head; and then I was made, by my parents, the carrier of everything not beyond my strength. I have heard of Indians called Flatheads, because of the shape given to their skulls by pressure. But, if pressure can flatten the human head, my race should all be thus deformed; for, in childhood, our heads are the universal vehicles of transportation.... A year or two later, I became the carrier of water and food to the hands in the fields; and then was advanced to the post of cow-driver*

*and attendant on the dairy-maid. Now I began to be noticed by my master, and came gradually to be considered in his employment, and began to plow and attend to horses.*

*My young master, being a bachelor, was much from home; and as soon as I could manage a horse pretty well, I became his attendant—his body-servant, as such were called on his journeys; he on one horse and I on another, with his portmanteau, as large as myself, strapped behind my saddle. I was now in that privileged station, from which I looked down with contempt, not only on most of my own race, but on all poor white folks, as we called all who had not a fair share of property or intelligence. My position as attendant on a gentleman-bachelor of large property, who traveled a good deal, and was at all times kind to his dependents, was, perhaps, the most pleasant that slavery can exhibit... When at home, I now became the waiter in the house, and a kind of doer of all work about the premises, and, consequently, avoided altogether subjection to the overseer....*

*... My master's father had emancipated an elderly negro, named Joe, before such acts were prohibited, and had conveyed to him about sixty acres of land, part of my present master's estate. This old man and his wife now brought from Williamsburg a young female relation named Sally, with her husband and one or two children, who were all free. Sally was one of the most beautiful of women. I have never seen one of her color I thought comparable to her. I soon became madly in love. I knew that what is called the marriage tie is usually of little obligation amongst slaves; and that free negroes, being no better taught, if as well, were probably not more virtuous. And how can the slave be expected to observe the marriage vows? In most cases they make none ... [but] have a sort of understanding that their agreement shall continue until one or both choose to form some other tie. And even if wishing to continue faithful unto death, they know their master deems their vows null and void, if he choose to separate them; and he often does thus without scruple, by selling one or both.... I determined, if possible, to get Sally from her husband, and*

*make her my wife; and, after much delay, and more that cannot be told, I found she was not*

**A photo of a typical slave family found on a Southern plantation. This is probably similar to the one that the slave Ralph and his wife Sally raised. Photograph by T. H. O'Sullivan. Courtesy of The Library of Congress.**



*superior to her race or her condition. For a good while, she might be said to have two husbands; but finally her first husband went back, with his own children, to Williamsburg, in company with old Joe, who had sold his land, and Sally became my acknowledged wife. My master strongly disapproved my conduct; but, always kind to the unthankful and the evil, he permitted me, as he did his other men, to build*

*a cabin on the margin of the forest, and thither I carried Sally...*

*Sally bore me several children, and in a few years I had a large family to maintain. My wife and children were free, and my master, after giving them a house and patch of ground, fuel, and a supply of meal weekly, and having more than*

### **Later Slave Narratives**

The years leading up to and following the Civil War (1861-1865) saw an increase in the publication of slave narratives. Unlike earlier autobiographical works concerning the capture and enslavement of Africans, these were written by men and women who had grown up as slaves. In rare cases such as that of Ralph in "A Slave's Story," the authors were still enslaved at the time of their writing.

One intriguing postwar slave narrative was "My Escape from Slavery," which appeared in the November 1881 issue of *The Century Illustrated Magazine*. By then, numerous slave narratives had been published. What made this one remarkable was its author: Frederick Douglass (1817-1895), the most distinguished African American leader of the abolitionist movement.

"In the first narrative of my experience in slavery," Douglass began his account, "and in various writings since, I have given the public what I considered very good reasons for withholding the manner of my escape. In substance these reasons were, first, that such publication at any time during the existence of slavery might be used by the master against the slave, and prevent the future escape of any who might adopt the same means that I did. The second reason was, if possible, still more binding to silence: the publication of details would certainly have put in peril the persons and property of those who assisted [my escape]."

In addition to the autobiographical article, Douglass published several book-length autobiographies. Another well-known late slave narrative was *Up From Slavery* (1901) by Booker T. Washington (1856-1915). Slavery ended when Washington was nine years of age, yet as his autobiography makes clear, emancipation did not end the hardships faced by slaves. They merely exchanged one set of problems for another. Thus he and his brother and stepfather went to work in the furnaces of a salt mine in West Virginia, a very difficult existence.

Describing the conditions his family faced, Washington wrote, "Our new house was no better than the one we had left on the old plantation in Virginia. In fact, in one respect it was worse. Notwithstanding the poor condition of our plantation cabin, we were at all times sure of pure air. Our new home was in the midst of a cluster of cabins crowded closely together, and as there were no sanitary regulations, the filth about the cabins was often intolerable. Some of our neighbours were coloured people, and some were the poorest and most ignorant and degraded white people. It was a motley mixture. Drinking, gambling, quarrels, fights, and shockingly immoral practices were frequent."

*enough of his own slaves to provide for, could not be expected to give them more. Sally, I regret to say, was too much given to sloth and improvidence —those plague-spots inherited from our ancestors, and fostered by our condition here. Most of my time, during the day, being given to my master's interests, necessity compelled me to resort to expedients, to which my own depraved nature and the example of other slaves already tempted me....*

### **What happened next...**

Ralph's narrative continued at some length, describing the ways he supplemented his income through theft and the punishments he suffered. He regarded Sally's death, which came suddenly and prematurely, as another form of punishment against him—this one from God—for taking her from her husband. He sent his children away to be raised by others, and after some time, he married again. His happiness was cut short when his master sold him to a new owner. He escaped and returned to the home of his old master (actually, the master's son, now head of the household), who welcomed him back.

It was this man who sent Ralph's lengthy autobiography to *Putnam's* not long after the slave died at age sixty-three. Along with it, the white man included the following note: "The slave question is becoming more and more prominent, and I have thought it well to give a simple, faithful narrative of a slave's experience and views. The sketch has not been gotten up for effect, but has been written as an authentic illustration of the results, moral and physical, of the [slave] system. Though the owner of slaves, I have always advocated some plan of gradual emancipation *by our own state*, and, therefore, have no motive for concealing anything in relation to the effects of slavery. I have given, exactly, Ralph's narrative—many facts I could myself establish, and verify others by unquestionable evidence."

The family that "owned" Ralph at the beginning and end of his life was highly unusual among Southern slaveholders.



Presumably it was under the guidance of this family that Ralph learned how to read and write, though Ralph never mentions the fact, no doubt because it was illegal to teach reading and writing to a slave. Despite the misfortunes he encountered with this family, and the fact that he and others were bought and sold several times, life could have been much, much worse, and indeed it was for most slaves.

### **Did you know...**

- *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* was owned by G. P. Putnam, who founded the publishing company G. P. Putnam & Son in 1866. Nearly 140 years later, as a vast conglomerate called the Berkley Putnam Group, it remains one of America's leading publishers.
- One of the most famous short stories by Herman Melville (1819-1891), best-known for his masterpiece *Moby Dick* (1851), was "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street." The story was first published, anonymously, in the November and December 1853 issues of *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*.

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# Lincoln, Abraham and United States Constitution

Abraham Lincoln

*Emancipation Proclamation*

Reprinted in *The American Revolution—an .HTML project, 1997*

United States Constitution

*Amendments 13 to 15*

Reprinted in *Discovering World History, 2000*

**B**y the 1860 presidential elections, tensions in America had reached a boiling point. The Democratic Party had divided into proslavery and antislavery factions while the Republican Party, united in its opposition to slavery, nominated Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) for president. Lincoln, who opposed both the spread of slavery and efforts by government to forcibly end it, won the November presidential elections.

Lincoln's victory sparked enormous hostility in the South, where slaveholders feared that the federal government would take their "property"; therefore, a group of Southern leaders met to form a breakaway government, the Confederate States of America. South Carolina was the first state to secede, or separate itself, from the United States, and ten others followed: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. The Confederacy also claimed two other states, Missouri and Kentucky, for a total of thirteen, a number intended to reflect that of America's thirteen original colonies. However,

... nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law....

*From the United States Constitution, Amendment 14, Section 1*

Missouri and Kentucky never actually seceded, and though both allowed slavery, they were actually part of the Union.

Armed hostilities began on April 12, 1861, when Confederate forces opened fire on the federal installation at Fort Sumter, which was located in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. Initially the war seemed to favor the Confederacy, which had superior generals, and the South gained a number of victories in the first year of the war.

Lincoln had long insisted that the purpose of the war was to preserve the Union, but pressure from a number of sides, most notably from abolitionist leaders, forced him to place a greater emphasis on freeing the slaves. In July 1862 he drafted a preliminary version of the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed all slaves in the Confederate states as of January 1, 1863. His cabinet, or the presidential advisors, suggested that he not make the proclamation public until the Union had secured a major victory in battle; otherwise, it might appear like a desperate ploy to gain support from antislavery elements.

This major victory came in September, at the Battle of Antietam in Maryland. Soon afterward, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. This document only freed the slaves in the Confederate states, however, and it became increasingly clear that after a Union victory, *all* the slaves in the United States would have to be freed. To do so, and to ensure that slavery would never again be legal in the United States, required a constitutional amendment. Congress passed three significant amendments after the war: the Thirteenth, which ended slavery; the Fourteenth, which granted slaves citizenship; and the Fifteenth, which made them eligible to vote.

### **Things to remember while reading**

- The Emancipation Proclamation was an order from the executive branch of the United States government and, therefore, did not need the approval of Congress. By contrast, a constitutional amendment, that is, a change

to the Constitution, the central document guiding the government, requires a vote of Congress, or the legislative branch. The judicial branch of the government would be the testing ground for the amendments as participants in lawsuits brought legal challenges (particularly ones concerning the Fourteenth Amendment) before the Supreme Court.



It should be stressed that the Emancipation Proclamation only freed slaves in the South. Thus, for the remainder of the war, slavery continued in Kentucky, Missouri, and other non-Confederate states where slavery was still legal. The document's greatest significance was that it legally freed Southern slaves to leave their masters and enlist in the Union army.

**Abraham Lincoln  
(third from the left)  
at the first reading  
of the  
Emancipation  
Proclamation.**

Courtesy of The  
Library of Congress.

- The Civil War Amendments, as the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments are called, strongly reflect the time in which they were written. Today people refer to "the United States" as a single entity, but this was not customary until after the Civil War. Thus, the Thirteenth Amendment, drafted just

after the war, still uses *their* rather than *its* as a possessive pronoun referring to the United States.

- By the time of the Emancipation Proclamation, the Confederacy as a whole remained defiant. Five years later, when the Fourteenth Amendment was adopted, quite a different situation prevailed: the war was over, the Confederacy destroyed, and former opponents of the United States wanted to return to the rights they had previously enjoyed under the federal government. The Union did not make this easy, however. States had to apply for read-mission to the Union; and many individuals never regained the rights they had enjoyed before the war. In fact, much of the Fourteenth Amendment concerns persons who had served the Confederacy: as punishment for their part in the rebellion, most of these individuals would not enjoy full civil rights under the restored Union.

### ***The Emancipation Proclamation***

*By the President of the United States of America:*

#### **A PROCLAMATION**

*Whereas on the 22nd day of September, A.D. 1862, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:*

*"That on the 1st day of January, A.D. 1863, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.*

*"That the executive will on the 1st day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if*

*any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State or the people thereof shall on that day be in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such States shall have participated shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State and the people thereof are not then in rebellion against the United States.*

*"Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this 1st day of January, A.D. 1863, and in accordance with my purpose so to do, publicly proclaim for the full period of one hundred days from the first day above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof, respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States the following, to wit:*

*Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana (except the of St. Bernard, Palquemes, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terrebone, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the city of New Orleans), Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northhampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Anne, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth), and which excepted parts are for the present left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.*

*And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States and parts of States are, and henceforward shall be, free; and that the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities*

*thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.*

*And I hereby enjoin upon the so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all case when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.*

*And I further declare and make known that such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States to forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.*

*And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.*

## **United States Constitution**

*Amendment XIII  
December 18, 1865  
Section 1*

*Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.*

### **Section 2**

*Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.*

*Amendment XIV  
July 28, 1868  
Section 1*



## **Abraham Lincoln**

Born in a log cabin in Hardin County, Kentucky, on February 12, 1809, Abraham Lincoln was close to his mother as a child. After her death, he was raised by his sister Sarah. Lincoln did not enjoy a close relationship with his father, who did little to foster the young man's education. Nevertheless, Lincoln set out to educate himself, walking long miles to a library where he could borrow books and reading them by candlelight.

When Lincoln was nineteen, Sarah died. Soon afterward, he took the first of two significant trips down the Mississippi River, working on a "flatboat" carrying cargo. In 1831, he made his second flat-boat journey, and the exposure to new places greatly broadened his mind. After his second trip, he settled in Illinois and volunteered in the Black Hawk War, a conflict with local Native Americans.

In 1832 the twenty-three-year-old Lincoln ran unsuccessfully for the Illinois state legislature. This was followed by a short and disastrous career in business, after which Lincoln worked briefly as a postmaster and deputy surveyor. It was not a promising beginning for a man who would one day become one of his nation's greatest leaders. Yet he won election to the state legislature in 1834, and by teaching himself law was able to earn a license to practice it in 1836. He moved to Springfield, the state capital in 1837, and gained prominence in a number of federal court cases around the area.

In his early thirties, Lincoln fell in love with Mary Todd, a spirited and popular young woman whose manner contrasted sharply with Lincoln's shy, sometimes awkward ways. The two were married on November 4, 1842, and had four sons, only one of whom would live past his teen years. Lincoln went on to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives for one term (1847-49), and ran unsuccessfully for the Senate in 1855. By 1856, Lincoln had switched his allegiance from the disintegrating Whig Party to the new Republican Party, which was strongly antislavery.

Lincoln's fame grew when he ran against Democrat Stephen Douglas for Douglas's Senate seat in 1858. He did not win, but a series of Lincoln-Douglas debates gained national attention because of the candidates' fiery discussions on the issues of slavery expansion in the United States. Then in May 1860, Lincoln unexpectedly won the Republican nomination as their presidential candidate. Due to nationwide disagreement over slavery, the presidential race was split between four candidates. This helped Lincoln to a surprise win in the November elections.

In April 1861, a month after Lincoln was sworn in as president, the Civil War began. It would occupy virtually all of his attention for the remainder of his administration. After initial Confederate victories, the tide of the war began to turn in 1862; Union victories at Vicksburg, Mississippi and Gettysburg, Virginia in 1863 helped seal the fate of the Confederacy. Yet the war dragged on through 1864, which saw the destruction of Atlanta—a decisive blow to the Confederacy—and Lincoln's reelection. Finally, on April 9, 1865, Confederate forces surrendered. Lincoln, often criticized as much by his own side as by the Confederacy, was now widely praised. Unfortunately, he did not have long to enjoy his success: five days after the surrender, on April 14, 1865, Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth while viewing a performance at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C.

*All persons born or \_ in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.*

## **Section 2**

*Representatives shall be among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.*

## **Section 3**

*No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.*

## **Section 4**

*The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned. But neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.*

## **Section 5**

*The Congress shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.*

*Amendment XV  
March 30, 1870  
Section 7*

*The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.*

## **Section 2**

*The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.*

## **What happened next...**

Along with the victory at Antietam, and those at Vicksburg and Gettysburg that followed, the Emancipation Proclamation marked a turning point in the Civil War. No longer was the war simply about the preservation of the Union; with the document, it became a fight for freedom. Awareness of this moral purpose gave renewed energy to the Union's military effort, and the proclamation opened the floodgates for

enlistment by former slaves. By war's end, some 180,000 African American men had served in the Union forces.

The Civil War Amendments officially ended slavery and, in theory, secured the civil rights of African Americans. The Fifth Amendment, adopted long before, had guaranteed citizens' right to "due process of law"—for example, a fair trial—but the Fourteenth Amendment took the crucial step of applying this federal provision to the states. In future years, many segments of society would invoke the Fourteenth

### **Emancipation of the Serfs**

By the mid-1800s, the system of serfdom had long since died out in Western Europe, but not in Russia. In fact, progress seemed to move from the West to the East, with Britain becoming the first major nation to abolish all forms of slavery, serfdom, and indentured servitude. Mean-while, far to the east, Russia held on to their old traditions regarding serfdom.

The vast majority of Russian people were either serfs or poor peasants. What distinguished serfs from ordinary peasants was not necessarily the quality of life—peasants hardly had an easy existence—but the fact that a serf was tied to the estate where he or she lived, and to the master who "owned" him or her. At the opposite end of Russian society was a wealthy and well-educated elite who enjoyed a privileged existence.

As in America and Brazil, where plantation owners "needed" slaves to work large tracts of land, the sheer size of Russia had virtually forced serfdom into being. What sustained serfdom, however, was the power of the czars, Russia's iron-fisted emperors. By the 1800s, however, an educated segment of the upper class had begun to question not only the absolute power of the czars, but also the virtual enslavement of the population under serfdom.

Among this educated group was Prince Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921), a member of a radical political faction who later wrote about his father's treatment of his serfs. Displeased with one of his servants, Kropotkin's father ordered that the servant receive "A hundred lashes with the birch rod" at the local police station. Yet as Kropotkin went on to note, "father was not among the worst of the landowners. On the contrary, the servants and the peasants considered him one of the best. What we saw in our house was going on everywhere, often in much more cruel forms. The flogging of the serfs was a regular part of the duties of the police and the fire brigade."

The coronation of Czar Alexander II (1818-1881) in 1855 signaled the beginnings of change. Alexander, probably the most liberal czar Russia ever had, wanted to reform the system. Two years before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Alexander emancipated the serfs. The Russian serf population was actually much larger than the slave population in the United States. However, unlike the Americans, the Russians did not have to fight a war to free them.

Unfortunately, the pace of reform under Alexander was not fast enough for some political groups, and one of these groups assassinated the czar in 1881. The situation of the serfs, as it turned out, was similar to that of the slaves in the United States: emancipation did little to change their actual situation. Problems in Russia continued to fester, and in 1917 they would erupt leading to the Russian Revolution.

Amendment to guarantee their constitutional rights.

Unfortunately, laws could only do so much to change conditions. In many cases, African Americans found that they were only slightly better off after slavery than they had been under it. Much of this was due to the inept manner in which the federal government handled the difficult period after the war known as Reconstruction (1865-77), its effort to enforce rapid change in the South. By eliminating the civil rights of Southerners and virtually guaranteeing the election of black legislators, the government embittered the white power structure of the South. With the removal of federal troops in 1877, Southerners were free to treat the black people in their states as they pleased, and this led to an erosion of the rights established in the Civil War Amendments. Only with the gains made by the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s would blacks begin to enjoy the full rights of U.S. citizenship.

### **Did you know...**

- The stars on the Confederate battle flag, or "stars and bars," stood for the thirteen states of the Confederacy. Nearly a century later, during the civil rights struggles of the 1950s, the flag gained new meaning as white opponents of racial integration adopted it as a symbol. By the 1990s, numerous civil rights groups opposed display of the flag, which they equated with slavery and white supremacy.
- If the Constitution had a list of "greatest hits," the Fourteenth Amendment would be on it. The U.S. Supreme Court has reviewed few cases concerning the Third Amendment, for instance, which protects citizens from being forced to provide lodging for troops in peacetime. By contrast, the Fourteenth Amendment's provision concerning "due process of law" is one of the most invoked phrases in constitutional law.
- One of American history's great ironies concerns Confederate General Robert E. Lee and Union General Ulysses S. Grant, respectively the commanders of the Confederate and Union forces in the Civil War. A

Virginian loyal to his state, Lee sided with the Confederacy, yet freed his slaves as soon as the war began, to show that he was not fighting for personal gain. By contrast, Grant (who later served two terms as U.S. president) owned four slaves.

## **For more information**

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# Late Modern Slavery (1900-Present)

Slavery in the twentieth century would take on a variety of new forms, and would in many instances prove more gruesome than anything that preceded it. As cruel as slavery had been in the American South during the nineteenth century, for instance, few slaveholders had tried to work their slaves to death, if for no other reason that they considered them valuable "property." In the twentieth century, however, slave-labor camps in Germany, the Soviet Union (a former country of eastern Europe and northern Asia that united Russia and various other soviet republics), China, and other nations became death camps.

Slavery in modern times, particularly slavery that was politically motivated, truly took shape in the latter part of World War I (1914-18). By that time, Germany was having difficulty maintaining its war effort against Britain, France, Russia, and their allies, and needed to produce more weapons and ammunition. To that end the German military began using



**Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin built his regime on slave labor, repression, death.** Reproduced by permission of UPI/Corbis-Bettmann.

large brigades of captured civilians for labor in munitions factories. Although using prisoners as a work force does not necessarily constitute slavery, the conditions imposed

by the Germans, combined with the fact that those imprisoned were typically neither criminals nor combatants, makes this the first notable use of slave labor in the twentieth century.

German methods deeply impressed a young Russian Marxist (see sidebar, "Marxism and Slavery") named V. I. Lenin (1870-1924).

At one time Russia had a large numbers of serfs (peasants who work the land for a lord), but the Russian government had abolished serfdom in 1861. Yet in 1917, Lenin and his political party, the Bolsheviks, seized control. Lenin employed these slave-labor methods employed by the Germans, and also those once used in Russia by the old imperial government. Slave labor in the Soviet Union would further expand under Lenin's successor, Joseph Stalin (1879-1953), who ruled for a quarter-century beginning in the late 1920s.

Soviet Communism (a system of government in which the state plans and controls the economy and a single, often authoritarian state) was one type of totalitarianism. Another was Nazism, which took hold in Germany in 1933 under the control of Adolf Hitler (1889-1945). Totalitarian systems demand that people submit completely to the state, or the government. These governments maintain their power through secret police, prisons, and concentration camps, which are huge facilities for political or war prisoners. Another common feature of totalitarian states is the implementation of enormous projects: road building, dam construction, and other large construction projects.



Given all these conditions, the use of slave labor was almost inevitable, not only in Soviet Russia but also in Nazi Germany. With the advent of World War II (1939-45), the Nazis forced captured combatants and civilians in enemy countries to act as slave labor. Among these was **Aimé Bonifas**, a future pastor who took part in antigovernment activities in German-occupied France in 1940.

During World War II, the Nazis were allied with the Japanese, whose government was highly militarized and had a low regard for human life. Just how low that regard was is illustrated by the story of the "comfort woman" **Yun Turi**. "Comfort women" were non-Japanese women (primarily Koreans) forced into prostitution as a means of satisfying the needs of Japanese soldiers, in other words, they were sex slaves, a type of slave that had hardly existed prior to the twentieth century.

By mid-century, it was clear that slavery had returned with a vengeance, in forms and on a scale hardly imagined by previous generations. Though Germany and Japan were defeated in World War II, and as a result were forced to adopt new forms of government, there was one country that found a way to maintain its slave-labor system: the Soviet Union. Once allies with the United States and Britain during World War II, the Soviet Union became a formidable enemy of the both countries during a period known as the Cold War (a period beginning after World War II in which conditions of hostility and military build-up short of actual armed conflict lasting until 1989).

As the **American Federation of Labor** noted in a 1947 statement, the Soviet system was the greatest threat to freedom in the world. Soon after that statement, communism took hold in China under Mao Zedong (1893-1976), who ruled that country for more than thirty years and imprisoned, enslaved, and murdered millions of his countrymen.

An admirer of Stalin, Mao adopted an extreme version of Marxism (the political and economic ideas of Karl Marx and

Friedrich Engels on which Soviet Communism was based) while the Soviet system became less brutal in the years following Stalin's death. Among Mao's admirers was a group called the Khmer Rouge, or "Red Cambodians." From 1975 to 1979 the Khmer Rouge forced millions of Cambodians into a brutal form of slave labor. During this time, the outside world was largely ignorant of the crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge. Later, however, the full story was revealed, partly through the efforts of individuals such as **François Ponchaud**, a French priest who reported information he had learned from Cambodian survivors.

By the end of the twentieth century, the horrors of totalitarianism in Cambodia and most other countries were a thing of the past, thanks in large part to the downfall of Soviet Communism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. But slavery continued to exist in a variety of forms, as articles by **Huw Watkin**, **Vijay Prashad**, and the **All Africa News Agency**, all published in the last few months of 1999, all illustrate.

Not only was there still political slavery in some countries, there was sex slavery, as reported by Watkin; in addition, child labor still flourished in some parts of the world, which was the subject of Prashad's article. To top it off, old-fashioned chattel slavery, in particular, the traffic in human beings captured from Africa, still existed, as the All Africa News Agency and others made clear.

Some sources estimated that at the end of the twentieth century, more people were enslaved than ever before. For instance, it was estimated that 25,000,000 children were enslaved and forced into child labor. It is clear that the world still had a long, long way to go to rid itself from slavery.

# Bonitas, Aimé

***Excerpt from Prisoner 20-801:  
A French National in the Nazi Labor Camps***

***Published in Prisoner 20-801:  
A French National in the Nazi Labor Camps, 1987***

**B**y the time Aimé Bonifas was imprisoned by the Germans, slavery had long since been revived in its twentieth-century forms. This had been aided by the spread of totalitarian systems, (totalitarian systems demand that people submit completely to the state, or the government) most notably Marxism (the political and economic ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels on which Soviet Communism was based) and Nazism (the ideology and practice of the Nazis, especially the policy of racist nationalism, national expansion, and state control of the economy) in Germany.

Led by Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), the Nazis had taken over the German government in 1933. Once in power, they dealt harshly with enemies both real (i.e. communists and members of other political parties) and those they imagined to be their enemies. In fact, their most brutal treatment was toward groups such as Gypsies, homosexuals, and Jews, who could

**I had observed that some prisoners—poor intimidated fellows, robots of the System—killed themselves with work when they could have limited their output. We marked them well, for by increasing production norms, they involuntarily became our enemies.**

not possibly have posed a serious threat to the Nazi government.

In twelve years, the Nazis imprisoned and murdered millions of Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses and other innocent people. In some cases the Nazis simply killed their victims in gas chambers (sealed rooms filled with poisonous gas); but more often these prisoners were used for slave labor before being killed. Much of this took place during World War II, when the Nazis took advantage of the confusion brought on by the war. It was at this time that they developed what they named "the Final Solution" to the Jewish problem, the complete extermination of the Jews, now known as the Holocaust.

### **Marxism and Slavery**

Communism, the system of government that prevailed in the Soviet Union and other countries during much of the twentieth century, is more accurately known as Marxism, or better yet, Marxism Leninism. In theory, it is a system in which the people jointly own all property; but in practice, Marxist-Leninist governments control not only all property, but virtually all other aspects of life. During the twentieth century, millions and millions of people worked and died in slave-labor camps operated by Marxist-Leninist regimes in Eastern Europe, East Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

It is ironic that Marxism, the creation of German philosophers Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), would become the justification for the enslavement of millions. Marx and Engels predicted that nineteenth-century wage-slavery, a situation in which factory owners profited from the labor of workers, would come to an end. The workers would seize control of the factories and share in the wealth of their production, justice and equality would reign supreme, according to Marx and Engels.

Historians have often disputed the degree to which Marx and Engels were responsible for the horrors of Soviet Communism. Yet their writings did little to explain *how* the workers would seize control. In their view, this would simply happen, and it would take place in the most economically advanced countries, such as Britain, first.

The Russian Marxist V. I. Lenin (1870-1924), however, knew exactly how to take power: by force. With help from the Germans, who rightly believed that Lenin would topple the Russian government and withdraw his country's troops from World War I, Lenin and his tiny political power seized control in November 1917. Russia was far from an economically advanced country, but Lenin maintained that by employing ruthless means, his government could achieve the goals outlined by Marx and Engels. This ultimately became a justification for slave labor. Not only was it justifiable to arrest, imprison, and enslave people who had benefited from the pre-Marxist system, but Lenin considered such measures appropriate for anyone who dared criticize his party's leadership.

Lenin's successor, Joseph Stalin (1879-1953), greatly expanded the Marxist system developed by Lenin, using huge slave-labor brigades to build railroads and dams and to mine resources ranging from salt to gold. Millions died in Stalin's slave-labor camps. The Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-) and others exposed the brutality of the Stalinist system, yet Stalin's and Lenin's interpretation of Marxism spread to other countries.

Hitler's Nazism attracted far more attention because of its racist character, but in fact Marxism killed far more people. (As a matter of fact, Hitler and other Nazis were influenced by Marxist ideas, which they simply reinterpreted in racial terms.)

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Soviet Union and a number of other countries rejected Marxist Leninism, but it would take many years to overcome the effects of totalitarianism. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, only a handful of countries, primarily China, Cuba, and North Korea, maintained Marxist systems. All are noted for their use of slave labor.

The Holocaust is a subject unto itself, and due to the sheer enormity of that crime, German use of non-Jewish slave labor has received less attention. On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union (a former country of eastern Europe and northern Asia that united Russia and various other soviet republics), breaking a two-year alliance between the two nations. In the months and years that followed, the Nazis enslaved huge numbers of Russians and other Soviet citizens many of which were Jewish. According to the Nazis' beliefs, Jews were less than human and the people of Eastern Europe were only slightly better. This was the justification for their brutal treatment of people in that region.

By contrast, the Nazis were far less cruel to the citizens of nations they conquered to the north and west of Germany, including France, which they subdued in June 1940. Aimé Bonifas, a French citizen born in 1920, might never have been interned in a Nazi concentration camp; however, he took part in anti-Nazi activities, aided the French Resistance, and tried to escape from Nazi-controlled France. Following his capture, he was interned in a number of camps, including the forced-labor camp at Mackenrode, where events in the following passage took place.

## **Things to remember while reading**

- Bonifas's experience was not as horrible as that of the approximate six million Jews murdered in Nazi death camps, nor of the millions other people also murdered by the Nazis. Thus his account illustrates the brutality with which the Nazis treated even people who were not part of targeted group such as Jews, Gypsies, or homosexuals.
- The "Laura" referred to by Bonifas was not a woman, but a camp where he and others had been confined. Like the more well-known Auschwitz, Laura was an extermination camp. Hence his comment that "To remain at Laura had promised nothing."
- As Bonifas made clear, in a situation of forced labor it was best to work just enough to keep from being harmed. Those prisoners who showed too much enthusiasm and worked harder than was necessary simply increased the expectations on the whole group, which explains his comment about prisoners who worked too hard: "We marked them well, for by increasing production norms, they involuntarily became our enemies."
- Bonifas provides an inside view of the black market, or illegal trade in goods. Because they were always underfed and overworked, the prisoners were eager to buy or trade illegally for food and other "luxuries."

### **Prisoner 20-801**

*Under a hail of punches and kicks, we learned the technology by which ancient slaves constructed grandiose works. We slid studs under the trunk, and two of us on each side of the trunk grasped each stud. We placed the studs as closely as our ranks would permit. Fifty or sixty men could hoist the tree and carry it to the designated location. What an effort! This task demanded tremendous muscular exertion. The tall inmates, of whom I was one, were at a disadvantage. They bore the brunt of the burden for the short inmates and for those who only pretended to exert themselves. No sooner had we put down the first trunk than we had to hoist the second. There was no time*

*to catch our breath or to talk about a better procedure. Indeed, the kapo found that there were too many of us for a single trunk and that the work did not progress quickly enough; therefore, he divided us into two teams. At first, we had carried the trees that were at hand or that were the smallest. Thus, at last, when we were drained of our strength, the heaviest trunks were still to be moved. In the afternoon, we were ordered to lift trunks that had fallen on marshy ground. Slipping and panting all the while, we risked dropping the trunk and breaking the legs of all the men on one side of it. The superhuman task was all the more difficult to perform because we were weakened by months of malnutrition . Our foreman was an irresponsible gypsy type, an impostor who seemed to find a sadistic pleasure in making us suffer.*

*Once again we had to ascend as the grimmest days overshadowed us. Surely, such duress would not last forever, but, in the meantime, we had to survive. My back ached, my arm and leg muscles knotted, and I was dizzy. My comrades were also spent. And always, Los, los, schneller , " with no letup! Indeed, we exercised our will until our will was broken. But every day had an evening. At the close of the workday, each of us lugged back to the camp a chunk for the kitchen fire. We literally dragged ourselves to the compound.*

*This routine was followed every day. Some Frenchmen who had been in this commando for a month were completely exhausted. The rest of us, like them, would not be able to endure. Many regretted ever having left Laura. For me, it seemed that there was nothing to regret. To remain at Laura had promised nothing. Now, without looking back, we should courageously accept our fate.*

*We were laying the roadbed for a new railway. We were urged on because the approaching winter freezes might hamper or interrupt our work. It seemed that this railroad was of some military significance....*

Jewish women pulling hopper cars of quarried stone in the Plaszow Concentration Camp in Poland. During World War II, the Nazis forced millions of people into concentration camps and used the captives as slaves.

*One way or the other, the work proceeded. A new commando, number 16, was formed, and I was assigned to it. Each morning we*



*had to walk to our job, and, of course, each evening, back to the camp. Our worn-out shoes alone would have made this march painful, but our exhaustion made it torturous. The roadbed for this section of the future railroad ran across open fields. Each one of us was assigned a definite work quota. Each day, working as a team of two, we were required to load a certain number of tip trucks with twenty-five to thirty cubic meters of earth. This demand was unreasonable, for the ground was so hard and stony that first we had to break it with a pick. We were digging our own graves in the German earth! I could still swing my pick fairly well, but many of my friends were noticeably weakening. What would happen to them if we should be forced to spend another winter here? We were so famished that once again our hunger became an obsession. It was absolutely essential to relax our pace, but we were watched too closely. Strange as it may seem, some worked rapidly just to make trouble for others. At Laura, as well as here, I had observed that some prisoners—poor intimidated fellows, robots of the System—killed themselves with work when they could have limited their output. We marked them well, for by increasing production norms, they involuntarily*



*became our enemies. They worked to their own detriment , and most of them did not last long.*

### **Slavery in the Belgian Congo**

In the 1880s, it seemed that slavery was finished. In 1886, the institution came to an end in Cuba, and Brazil followed suit two years later. Yet that same decade saw the rebirth of slavery in the Congo, a huge region in southern central Africa formed by the basin of the Congo River. Promising to protect the people of the Congo from Arab slavers, King Leopold of Belgium in 1885 assumed control over the vast country, which he proceeded to turn into his personal colony.

Over the next twenty-three years, Leopold ruled the absurdly named "Congo Free State" with almost unimaginable cruelty. The Belgian Congo, an area seventy-five times as large as Belgium itself, was rich in natural resources and treasures, which Leopold exploited by using slave laborers. His overseers set impossibly high quotas for workers, and when the latter failed to meet them, would cut off their hands.

The Belgians also kidnaped women and children, and in the latter days of Leopold's rule, resorted to wholesale slaughter of populations who failed to produce. In the end, they killed about half the Congo's population of 20,000,000 before Leopold was forced to turn over control of the colony to the Belgian government in 1908. Leopold himself never set foot in the Congo.

The Belgian Congo was the last clear-cut example of white Europeans enslaving black Africans, as in the early modern era. In its almost limitless brutality, however, the Congo experience compared to the crimes of the twentieth century. Thus in a sense it might be considered a bridge between one era of slavery and another.

*Since we were fortunate enough to work under a reasonable foreman, I did not try to transfer to another commando. Admittedly, in spite of ourselves, our team worked decidedly harder than the others, but thereby we gained some small advantages. The 55 supervisor distributed tobacco to us as often as an unprecedented three times a week. I did not smoke, but tobacco was a valuable currency; with two or three*

*cigarettes, I could buy a liter of soup. Perhaps it is surprising that soup was for sale in the camp. However, there was nothing we could do about the black market; we were governed by the law of our environment. The German prisoners, who distributed the soup, set aside several containers for a company of profiteers, the Slavic dishwashers, who ate what they wanted and black-marketed the rest.*

Allied soldiers crawling past log fortifications on the beach of Normandy during D-Day on June 6, 1944. DDay was a turning point in World War II and led to the liberation of countless prisoners from Nazi concentration camps.

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### **What happened next...**

In all, Bonifas was confined at five camps, as signified by chapter titles in *Prisoner 20-801*: "Compi gne, Detention Camp"; "Buchenwald, the Gates of Hell"; "Laura, Extermination Camp"; "Mackenrode, Forced Labor Camp"; "Osterhagen, Disciplinary Camp."

The war raged on, with Germany losing more and more territory. The Nazis had done little to win the sympathy of conquered peoples, who aided the Allies (United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union) in driving the Germans back. One reason for Hitler's eventual defeat was his obsession with killing Jews. At a time when his troops desperately needed

shipments of munitions and other goods, he ordered the deployment of railroads to transport Jewish prisoners to extermination camps instead of transporting supplies to the troops.

Once American, British, and other Allied troops invaded Europe in June 1944, the Nazi cause was finished. With the Allies descending on his capital at Berlin, Hitler committed suicide on April 30, 1945, and Germany surrendered a week later. Allied troops liberated countless prisoners in extermination and death camps; unfortunately, prisoners in Eastern Europe, where the Soviets assumed control, were simply moved from a Nazi slave-labor camp to a Soviet one.

Fortunately for Bonifas, he was in the western part of Europe, dominated by the British, Americans, and other democratic nations. After the war, he studied for the ministry and became a pastor. He published *Prisoner 20-801* in French in 1946, and a Spanish edition followed in 1949. Not one but four German editions followed and the book was translated into English in 1983. During the 1980s and 1990s, Bonifas wrote and published several books attacking Holocaust denial, which is the effort by Nazi sympathizers to "prove" that the Holocaust never happened.

### **Did you know...**

- Ironically, the Nazis won power not by overthrowing the government, as was typical of most totalitarian regimes, but by winning an election.
- The term "concentration camp" refers to the fact that a large population is concentrated within the camp.
- The first concentration camps were used not by the Nazis or Soviets, but by the British, who interned captured South African soldiers in such camps during the Boer War (1899-1902).

SS: Abbreviation of *Schutzstaffel*, or "protective unit" in German. The SS were elite troops who did much of the Nazis' killing.

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# Turi, Yun

**Excerpt from True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women**

**Published In *True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women*, 1995**

**Edited by Keith Howard**

**G**ermany and Japan fought on the same side during World War II (1939-45), an alliance known as the Axis nations. They did little to coordinate their efforts, but their leaders shared a desire to rule the world and a brutal disregard of human rights. Japan, a nation lacking in natural resources, wanted to conquer eastern Asia and the Pacific islands, and it very nearly succeeded in doing so.

In 1931, ten years before Japanese planes launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, which brought the United States into World War II against Japan and Germany, Japan annexed Manchuria in northern China. During the 1930s, the Japanese tightened their grip on China, and by 1941, they were prepared to extend their rule over much of the region. On December 7, the same day as the Pearl Harbor attack, Japan launched attacks in several other areas, including the Philippines. Japan did not attack Korea, however, simply because it had already controlled that country since 1910.

**There was no single happy moment during my life as a comfort woman.**

Conquered nations unwillingly supplied Japan with both natural resources and human resources, including both regular slave labor and a type of sex slave known in Japan as "comfort women." This term is a euphemism, or an attempt to soften the meaning of something by giving it a nice-sounding name. No mere words, however, can soften the reality of forced prostitution (the practice of engaging in sex acts for hire), a hideous form of slavery and personal violation that these women had to endure.

From the early 1930s to the end of World War II in 1945, as many as 200,000 women between the ages of eleven and thirty-two were forced to attend to the sexual desires of Japanese servicemen, often several dozen men a day. The majority of "comfort women," like Yun Turi in the passage below, came from Korea; but plenty more of these women were from the Philippines, China, and other nations. They contracted sexually transmitted diseases, underwent unwanted pregnancies and dangerous abortions, and suffered enormous shame.

### **The Bridge on the River Kwai**

In addition to "comfort women," Japan adopted more well-known forms of slavery during World War II, including the use of prisoners of war (POWs) to build bridges and other large public projects. This experience is brilliantly portrayed in the film *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), a fictional account of British soldiers forced by the Japanese to build a rail bridge through a jungle in Burma. The film won numerous Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director (David Lean), and Best Actor (Alec Guinness). The storyline of *The Bridge on the River Kwai* illustrates the means by which slaves and prisoners often came to identify with their captors.

### **Things to remember while reading**

- Yun Turi served in a "comfort house" in Pusan, a large city on the Sea of Japan in southeastern Korea. The coast of Japan was only about two hundred miles away, making Pusan a convenient location for Japanese servicemen.

- In using the expression "venereal disease," Yun Turi harkened back to another era. Prior to the appearance of AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) in the early 1980s, venereal diseases such as syphilis and gonorrhea were the most feared variety of sexually transmitted disease.
- From Yun Turi's reference to "that fateful day," it is easy enough to guess that she was kidnaped and forced to serve as a prostitute. As for her weeping when she heard that her mother was selling herbs, this was because she realized how vulnerable her mother and younger siblings were without her. Their father was dead, and Yun Turi had been the principal breadwinner for the family; now her mother was reduced to selling herbs, a grave dishonor in Yun Turi's mind.

### ***True Stories of the Korean Comfort Women***

*I served, on average, 30 to 40 men daily. They were mostly sailors and soldiers posted to Pusan. When a ship came into harbor, many sailors visited us. At weekends, many more would come than on weekdays. When I had to serve many men, I would go out of my mind. The men would enter my room one after another, and it was impossible to count them. After I had served a soldier, I went downstairs to wash myself with water mixed with creosol. Then I returned to serve the next man. To lessen the number I served even by one, I insisted on washing each time and tried to prolong the time I took cleaning up after each. The soldiers were supposed to use condoms, but many tried to avoid them. Many of them were nasty...*

*Some soldiers were kind. Yosimura came to see me often, and he took pity on my plight and did not try to sleep with me. He was a soldier. He took my photograph and said he wanted to marry me once the war ended. He said that he would take me to Japan after his country won the war. I tearfully pleaded with him to help me leave the place, but he replied that he lacked any real power. He couldn't do anything because I was there on the orders of his superiors. He sometimes gave me sweets or money. After Japan lost the war, he went back to*

*Japan alone. There was another man who often visited me. He said he had Korean parents, but that he had been born in Japan and was now a sailor in the Imperial Forces. His ship came to Pusan once a month, and he visited me each time. Once I went to the harbor with him to see his ship. He, together with several other officers, got permission to take us out and bring us back. That was the only time I left the station. Others went out occasionally with soldiers for short liaisons but, in principle, we were not allowed out.*

*I never got pregnant at the station, but two others did. One died while having an abortion. The other grew quite large with the baby, and tried to commit suicide by hanging herself from a banister. But she was discovered by a soldier and taken away. I don't know where she ended up. Nobody had any children at the station. When we had our monthly periods we were given gauze **in lieu of** sanitary towels, which we used whenever we weren't serving the soldiers. But we were made to serve soldiers even while menstruating, so we had no time to keep the towels in place. I can't describe how dirty and miserable the whole thing was. When we had to continue having sex while menstruating, we rolled the gauze up and inserted it deep into our wombs. Once I couldn't get it out again, and became very worried. In the end I had to go to hospital to have it removed.*

*The hospital was right next to the comfort station. It had a male doctor and a nurse who gave us check-ups for venereal disease once a month. The doctor looked into our insides, inserting his fingers. Anyone infected with gonorrhoea was given the "No. 606" injection. This hurt your arm so much that you felt it would drop off your body. I was infected once. I went to the hospital for injections and took a lot of medicine. Even after I left the station, the infection would flare up whenever I became weak.*



## WPA Slave Narratives

During the 1930s, slavery was taking different forms such as the Japanese "comfort women" system and the labor camps of Soviet Russia. At the same time, victims of earlier forms of slavery, such as the kind practiced in the American South in the nineteenth century, were dying off—not from the effects of slave labor, but from old age.

Between 1936 to 1938, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a unit of the federal government under the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, interviewed more than 2,300 former slaves in the American South. By then, more than seventy years had passed since the end of slavery in the United States, and the people interviewed by the WPA had experienced slavery only as small children. WPA researchers knew that if they wanted to get the stories of these former slaves down on paper, they had to act quickly.

For more about the WPA slave narratives, visit a Web site created by the University of Virginia: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/wpa/wphahome.html> (accessed on May 12, 2000).

*Many officers stayed the night. When they stayed over, in what was euphemistically described as "sleeping the long night," I would leave the bedroom and stand out in the hall even in the cold winter to reduce the hours I had to spend with them a little. Once a week, when there were no officers staying overnight, I was able to sleep comfortably. Those who stayed left at five the next morning. Then we could sleep better, but we had to be up at 7.30 a.m. We had to gather in the yard, sing the Japanese anthem, and recite the Oath of Imperial Subjects. Only then did we get breakfast between 8.00 and 9.00 o'clock. We had a break for an hour and then the soldiers began to arrive. The largest number would arrive at between 3.00 and 4.00 p.m. We were allowed 30 minutes for meals, during which time we weren't forced to serve soldiers. Of the women in the station, I still remember Yun Yongja, who had the Japanese name Yamamoto Eiko, Umeko and Sunja.*

*after my arrival, I tried to escape. Sunja said she knew the area around Yongdo, so we tried to run away together. I was the one who suggested it. To get past the two guards, we pretended to be nice to them and offered them cigarettes. We asked if we could go out for some fresh air, but they wouldn't allow it, so we offered them drinks, after which they sat down in the hall and began to doze. We sneaked out, pretending we*

were off to the toilet, and then ran. But the road outside the station was longer than we had thought, and we were caught before we had got more than a few steps. After that I was hit hard three times on my hip with a gun, and I fell on my belly with blood pouring from my mouth. The wound on my hip left a big bruise and became infected, giving me an accompanying high fever. I was unable to lie on my back, but even in that state I had to keep on serving soldiers. The wound festered and became rotten. Only then did the soldiers take me to the hospital to have the rotten part cut out. I was allowed to take a break for three days. Then, even though it was still impossible for me to lie on my back, the soldiers started to visit me again. This was the hardest time of my confinement. It was too painful to serve soldiers when I couldn't even lie on my back. All the women harbored thoughts of running away, but after they saw me beaten and suffering, they gave up. Nobody attempted to flee anymore.

There was no single happy moment during my life as a comfort woman. When the soldiers didn't visit us and we were left on our own, we talked of our homes and wept. When the Japanese soldiers did visit, they often lined us up and took photographs. I would sing my two favorite songs, **Arirang** and *To My Mother*. When I missed my mother, I sang the latter song and cried. We had to sing anything in Korean in secret, since if we were caught we would be severely reprimanded. I never wrote to my family nor received a letter from them. No correspondence and no visits were allowed. But I once heard news. I was looking out of the window when I saw a peddler from my neighborhood. I asked him about my mother, and he told me she was selling herbs. I wept a lot when I heard this.

I now know that, when I didn't return home that fateful day, my mother and sister had gone round trying to find me. My sister even came to the comfort station in case I had been taken there. Since the building had once been a guest-house it was on the street and we could see passers-by from the windows. They came by again on a day when no soldiers were visiting, and I saw them while I was looking out of the window. I rushed down to greet them. My mother saw me and tried to

*take me back, but the soldiers pushed them both away, and we were parted without being able to say a single word to each other. After that my mother was so upset she became ill. There was a signboard and guards, so they must have realized I had become a comfort woman. There was also a second comfort station in Pusan, in Taesin ward. I hear that there were about 40 to 50 women in that place.*

### **What happened next...**

Japan surrendered to the Allies (the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union) on September 2, 1945. Korea and other countries were liberated, and the "comfort women" were freed to return to their homes. Determined to provide for her family and embarrassed that she had no money, Yun Turi got a job as a waitress at a restaurant near the "comfort station." She worked for a year and saved her money before going home to her mother, her younger sister, and brothers.

Yun Turi recalled her return: "My mother was out selling vegetables at a market, and my younger sister greeted me with tears in her eyes. At 6.00 in the evening my mother, haggard and with a faded dark complexion, came home. To see her like that broke my heart. She wept. I wept. She wept, saying that she had thought she would never see me again. The following morning, she was ready to go out to sell her vegetables, but I stopped her. With the money I had, we first bought rice. Later, I worked and earned sufficient money to bring up my brothers and sister."

Many of the comfort women believed they were somehow responsible for what had happened to them. In their shame, these women feared, in some cases correctly, that their families would not take them back, or would view them as collaborators with the Japanese. Not every homecoming was as positive as Yun Turi's.

**Former Korean comfort women sitting outside the gate of parliament in Tokyo protesting for an apology for the injustices they faced at the hands of the Japanese government during World War II.** Reproduced by permission of AP/Wide World Photos, Inc.



Shame also kept the former "comfort women" silent for nearly fifty years. Yet in the 1990s, they began to speak out. Groups of former victims petitioned the Japanese government for financial compensation and apologies. Though they received an apology from Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi in October 1998, it was small compensation for the horrors they had suffered. However, the story was not over: as people in the United States and other Western countries became more aware that the "comfort women" had existed, their cause began to gain more support.

### **Did you know...**

- A geisha is a Japanese woman trained to provide entertainment to men. Unlike comfort women geishas are not prostitutes, but are highly sophisticated women admired for their ability to offer stimulating conversation.
- After World War II, Korea was divided into two nations: North Korea, with a communist government supported by the Soviet Union and later China, and South Korea, whose government the United States supported. Under the leadership of dictator Kim Il-Sung (1912-1994) and his son and successor, Kim Jong-Il, North Korea became one of the most brutally

repressive countries on Earth, one that made extensive use of slave labor.

- Until the early twentieth century, some upper-class Chinese women were subjected to a custom called foot-binding. Because Chinese men considered tiny feet on a woman attractive, the tiny feet of the little girls would be bound tightly starting in infancy, thus stunting their growth. As a result, women whose feet had been bound were hardly able to walk.

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# American Federation of Labor

*"Free Labor vs. Slave Labor: Irrepressible Conflict"*  
**Published in** *Slave Labor in Russia: The Case*  
*Presented by the*  
*American Federation of Labor to the United Nations,*  
**1949**

**A**t the beginning of World War II (1939-45), the Soviet Union (a former country of eastern Europe and northern Asia that united Russia and various other soviet republics) under Joseph Stalin (1879-1953) had been allied with Nazi Germany; however, the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 had ended this alliance. As a result, the Soviet Union joined forces with Great Britain and the United States against Nazi Germany. Even before the war ended in 1945, this alliance was falling apart, largely because of different ways they treated human life: America and Britain were, for all their faults, countries with a high value for freedom and human life, whereas Stalin's regime was built on slave labor, repression, and death.

By 1947, when the American Federation of Labor (AFL) published a statement in its *International Free Trade Union News* denouncing Soviet slave-labor practices, the wartime alliance was in shreds. The United States and Soviet Union

**To those who excuse the Soviet methods on the ground that such practices serve the aims of socialism, the reply can only be that the founders of the socialist doctrine proclaimed it as a path for workers' liberation, and not their enslavement.**

had entered into an undeclared conflict, known as the Cold War, which would continue until the fall of Soviet Communism (a system of government in which the state plans and controls the economy and a single, often authoritarian state) in the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this time, American opinion about the Soviet system was divided, with many Americans professing admiration for the Soviets' stated aims of social and economic equality, even if they did not admire their methods.

This division was particularly strong within the U.S. labor movement. Labor unions are organizations of workers that use their large numbers and political power to obtain higher wages, shorter hours, and other concessions. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the unions were often on the same side as communist and socialist groups in their opposition to factory owners and management. (Socialism is a social system in which the means of producing and distributing goods are owned collectively and political power is exercised by the whole community.) However, as the industrial systems of the Western world modified and adapted to the labor unions, unionists and political radicals went their separate ways.

Nonetheless, the admiration of many in the labor movement for the stated aims of communism blinded many to the crimes committed by Stalin and others. Hence the AFL's statement: "To those who excuse the Soviet methods on the ground that such practices serve the aims of socialism, the reply can only be that the founders of the socialist doctrine proclaimed it as a path for workers' liberation, and not their enslavement. In discussing the totalitarian system of slavery now represented by the Soviet Union, the problem of socialism as such, does not enter."

Much of the Soviet system's appeal to workers and others in the West was its use of powerful words, which contrasted sharply with reality. The AFL addressed this issue by stating, "In spite of the high-sounding declarations of the Soviet Constitution, the Russian political police still retains the



power, conferred upon it by a decree of 1934, to send anyone to a concentration camp without a trial."

### **The Nightmare of Stalinism**

Virtually every American knows about their nation's history of slavery, or about the Nazi's extermination of the Jews during the Holocaust. Yet perhaps only one in ten has heard about the horrors associated with the rule of Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union, despite the fact that Stalin's crimes impacted more people than both American slavery and the Holocaust. From the time he took power in the late 1920s until his death in 1953, Stalin either directly or indirectly caused the deaths of tens of millions of people.

Though the purges referred to by the AFL were devastating, they were mainly directed at political opponents or enemies of the state, and thus involved a relatively small number of people. Much worse was the death toll associated with Stalin's Five-Year plans and the collectivization of agriculture. Both of these massive Soviet efforts were implemented in the late 1920s; both were attempts to push the Soviet economy forward rapidly. Each also used huge slave-labor brigades made up of ordinary citizens.

Under collectivization, millions of peasants were forcibly removed from their homes and herded onto giant agricultural facilities called collective farms. Many died in transport, or were killed, and many more died because they refused to work. In some cases, peasants burned their crops rather than turn them over to Stalin; this resulted in man-made famines. The peasants who did go to work on the collective farms became virtual slaves, yet their situation was preferable to that of the prisoners forced to work in mines or on giant construction projects.

Eventually Stalin established a network of slave-labor camps, called the *gulag*. Later, the Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-), a former slave laborer in the camps, gave this network a memorable name when he exposed the camp system in *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973). An archipelago is a group of islands, and indeed the prisons were like a series of islands dotting the frozen northern section of Russia. By the time Solzhenitsyn published his book, Stalin was long dead, and many of the labor camps had been closed. However, the Soviet Union continued to make use of "corrective labor," though on a smaller scale.

The first Five-Year Plan was another example of the difference between image and reality in Stalin's regime. Instituted in 1928 by Stalin's regime, the plan was an effort to jump-start Soviet agriculture and industry by setting goals and then pushing to achieve them. In fact, as the AFL noted, the plan involved huge amounts of slave labor; although Stalin announced in 1933 that the goals had all been exceeded—and in less time than anticipated—this is highly unlikely. In any case, the cost in human lives was so high that no government

with a respect for human rights would pursue such a plan even if it *did* work.

The AFL aimed to show by its statement that, although Nazism (the ideology and practice of the Nazis, especially the policy of racist nationalism, national expansion, and state control of the economy) had recently been destroyed, another form of totalitarianism, one on which Hitler had modeled aspects of his Nazi state, continued to flourish in the Soviet Union. As a leading representative of free labor, the AFL declared its strong opposition to Soviet use of slave labor, noting that the use of slave labor anywhere was an offense to free labor everywhere.

### **Things to remember while reading**

- The statement by the AFL refers extensively to the history and politics of the mid-twentieth century, for instance, the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939. This was an agreement between Germany and the Soviet Union that neither would attack the other, and it made possible Hitler's invasion of Poland, the event that initiated World War II on September 1, 1939. Stalin took advantage of the pact to acquire parts of Poland, as well as Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. On June 22, 1941, Hitler broke the pact by invading the Soviet Union.
- In addition, the AFL statement refers to a new series of purges in the Soviet Union. During the purges of the 1930s, Stalin had arranged for the arrest and execution of many thousands of people, almost always on false charges, or no charges at all. During the war with Nazi Germany, however, he needed the Soviet people's help, and therefore discontinued the purges and other attacks on the population. As soon as the war ended, though, Stalin launched a new series of purges, particularly against people he accused of helping the Nazis.
- Established in 1922, the Soviet Union included both "republics," the largest of which was Russia, and tiny "autonomous" (independent) republics. In fact there

was nothing autonomous about these, as the AFL's statement—"several autonomous republics were abolished and their entire populations deported"—makes clear.

- The AFL referred to Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Poland as "satellite states of the Soviet Union." In fact Yugoslavia later broke away from Soviet influence and charted a separate course for itself, as did Albania and Romania, two other communist nations in Eastern Europe. However, the Soviet Union retained a high degree of control over Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria. The Sudeten districts of Czechoslovakia comprised an area with a heavy German population. In 1938 Hitler had used the concentration of Germans there as an excuse to take over the region.



**Russian slave laborers building the "Stalin Canal" under Joseph Stalin's Five-Year Plan.**  
Reproduced by permission of Archive Photos, Inc.

## **"Free Labor vs. Slave Labor: Irrepressible Conflict"**

*About a quarter of a century ago it seemed as if the complete extinction of the last remnants of slavery throughout the world might not be far off. Slavery had been outlawed by international conventions and its abolition in those backward countries where it still existed was, apparently, only a question of time.*

*However, the rise of brought about a complete reversal of this historical trend. During the last 20 years the world has witnessed the reintroduction of slavery on a gigantic scale. The widespread use of forced labor by the modern dictatorships and those under their influence is, indeed, nothing but a reappearance of slavery under a different name. This reversion to servitude—and that is what it is, in the literal sense of the word—is one of the principal characteristics of modern totalitarianism and totalitarian tendencies.*

*The process of creating huge forced labor armies began in Russia under the first Five-Year Plan. Since that time, slave labor has become a regular and integral factor of the Russian economy as it has developed under subsequent Five-Year Plans. A net of so-called corrective labor camps has been gradually extended all over the Soviet Union. Various estimates of the number of the inmates of these camps have been made, but the figure of 10,000,000—not including prisoners of war and other deported non-Soviet citizens—seems to be not exaggerated.*

*When Hitler seized power in Germany, he immediately followed the Soviet example by creating concentration camps for political opponents and any other persons whom the Nazi regime considered harmful; and when the Nazis overran Europe they created an immense reservoir of forced labor by deporting millions of workers to Germany.*

*But the defeat and destruction of the Nazi dictatorship has failed to ring the knell for the system of modern slavery which had been introduced by totalitarianism. The situation in Russia remains unchanged. In spite of the high-sounding declarations of the Soviet Constitution, the Russian political police still retains the power, conferred upon it by a decree of 1934, to send anyone to a concentration camp without a trial. The provision of this decree that the political police may not impose terms in concentration camps for longer than five years is virtually meaningless, since the practice is to impose additional terms after the expiration of the first. There is no indication that the Soviet government has thought of rewarding the sufferings and sacrifices of the peoples of the Soviet Union during the war by abolishing or reducing the number of concentration camps, or by liberating any appreciable portion of their gigantic forced labor army. On the contrary, we have been informed that as a collective punishment for the collaborationism of some, several autonomous republics were abolished and their entire populations deported.*

*The new sweeping all sections of Soviet public and economic life indicate that the activities of the Soviet political police, aimed at assuring a constant supply of forced labor, are as ruthless as ever.*

*Not only has the forced labor situation failed to improve inside the borders of the Soviet Union, but the Soviet government has extended its methods far beyond its own frontiers. Reports from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Poland prove that the Russian system of concentration camps and forced labor has been fully adopted by the satellite states of the Soviet Union. In addition, the Soviet government has continued the practice which it inaugurated in 1939 and 1940 when, during its pact with Hitler, it occupied the Eastern provinces of Poland and the Baltic states and deported over 1,000,000 Poles and a considerable number of Lithuanians, Letts and Estonians to remote parts of the Soviet Union. Recently, the deportation of German workers from the Soviet zone of occupation was resumed on a large scale. The mass expulsions of the German*

*population from their homes in the Sudeten districts of Czechoslovakia and in the Eastern provinces of Germany are intimately connected with the system of totalitarian slavery.*

*Such treatment of millions of people, driven from their homes after being stripped of all their possessions, is conceivable only in a political and moral climate saturated and infected by the totalitarian practice of slave-raiding—a practice in which, unfortunately, other powers have so far diplomatically acquiesced .*

*The question of German war prisoners must also be considered from this point of view. Eighteen months have passed since the cessation of hostilities in Europe, but there are still more than 3,000,000 German war prisoners in Russia (to say nothing of the still uncounted number of Japanese), about 600,000 in France and 360,000 in England. These are being used for forced labor. In this particular instance, it is done under the guise of collecting . However, servitude is prejudicial to free labor and to human liberty in general, regardless of the pretext under which it is practiced. It is particularly deplorable that democratic nations should make use of the forced labor of war prisoners, and thereby help to fortify the totalitarian system of outright slavery as it exists in the Soviet Union.*

*Free labor has always opposed slave labor in any form or under any pretext. Slave labor anywhere in the world adversely affects the standards of free labor everywhere. Moreover, each highly centralized political system based on slavery engenders aggressive policies, since it tends to enslave new populations in order to satisfy its need for an additional supply of forced labor. Furthermore, such a system tends to resort to conquest as a means of acquiring sources of wealth which it cannot create fast enough because of the notoriously low productivity of slave labor.*

*There is really an "irrepressible conflict" between free labor and every system of forced labor. To those who excuse the Soviet methods on the ground that such practices serve the*

*aims of socialism , the reply can only be that the founders of the socialist doctrine proclaimed it as a path for workers' liberation, and not their enslavement. In discussing the totalitarian system of slavery now represented by the Soviet Union, the problem of socialism as such, does not enter . In this case the question is simply one of free labor versus slave labor.*

*The A. F. of L. has condemned all forms of forced labor and servitude. The A. F. of L, through its Bill of Rights, appeals to all forces of free labor throughout the world to support it in this crucial struggle.*

### **What happened next...**

The AFL's statement against Soviet slave labor appeared in the January 1947 issue of *International Free Trade Union News*, a publication of the Free Trade Union of the American Federation of Labor. Two years later, the AFL included the editorial in documents it presented to the United

Nations (UN) as part of an effort to urge UN condemnation of Soviet slave-labor practices.

The UN had been founded at the end of World War II with the aim of providing an international organization to ensure peace and justice around the world. However, the Cold War prevented it from becoming a workable body, because the Soviet Union's influence in the UN gave it full power to cancel out any initiatives by the United States or other democratic nations. For that reason, the AFL's message had little direct impact in the short run.

**A political cartoon illustrating how the Russian economy was built on slave labor.**  
Courtesy of The Library of Congress.



In the years that followed, the Cold War escalated while Stalin's death brought to light some (but not nearly all) of his crimes. Meanwhile the AFL merged with the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) in 1955 to form the AFLCIO. This new organization increasingly concentrated on matters of more direct concern to U.S. workers than the slave-labor practices of the Soviet Union.

### **The American Federation of Labor**

A union is an organization of workers that uses its large numbers and political power to obtain concessions from management, such as higher wages and shorter hours. Groups of unions, representing specific trades such as transportation workers or bricklayers, often come together in even larger groups called union federations. The American Federation of Labor or AFL, sometimes referred to as the A. F. of L, was the largest and most enduring union federation in American history.

Founded in 1886, the AFL became a powerful force under the leadership of Samuel Gompers (1850-1924), who served as its president for thirty-seven years. It had 1,000,000 members in 1902, a number that doubled by World War I (1914-18), and doubled again to 4,000,000 by 1920. However, under the leadership of William Green, who served from 1924 to 1952, the AFL encountered a number of new challenges brought on in part by the economic hardships associated with the Great Depression (1929-41).

Many groups within the federation were critical of the manner in which the AFL responded to these challenges, and in 1938 several unions broke away to form the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Seventeen years later, the two organizations merged to form the AFL-CIO. At the end of the twentieth century, the AFL-CIO represented about 14,000,000 of the estimated 20,000,000 U.S. union members.

The end of Soviet Communism in 1991 led to the full disclosure of crimes by Stalin and other Soviet leaders. Without Soviet influence opposing it at every turn, the UN became a more effective organization. In the 1990s, it took more active efforts in opposition to slavery worldwide.

### **Did you know...**

- In *Modern Times* (1983), author Paul Johnson reported that in the confusion created by Stalin's massive arrests and deportations, one Soviet citizen was arrested, sentenced to die, pardoned, then sent to a labor camp, only to be released and awarded a medal—all within



eighteen months. He never knew what crime he supposedly had committed in the first place.

- The Soviet Union, also called the U.S.S.R. or Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, comprised fifteen "republics." In terms of both geography and population, Russia was much larger than the other fourteen combined. After the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, these republics became independent countries.
- During the Great Depression of the 1930s, some Americans defected to the Soviet Union, that is, they gave up their U.S. citizenship, planning never to return. Many of these people ended up in prison camps, and some later managed to escape and return to America.

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# Ponchaud, François

*Excerpt from Cambodia: Year Zero*  
Published in *Cambodia: Year Zero, 1978*

**The human organism was used to the extreme limit of its physical endurance; no effort was made to spare it and it was never given a day of rest.**

**F**rom the mid-1960s to 1973, the United States and its allies in South Vietnam fought a long war against Soviet-supported Communist forces concentrated in North Vietnam. (Communism is a system of government in which the state plans and controls the economy and a single, often authoritarian state.) This war eventually expanded throughout much of Southeast Asia, involving the neighboring nations of Laos and Cambodia. The opposition of American citizens to the war forced the government to withdraw its troops, and in January 1973 the United States signed a peace treaty with North Vietnam.

Meanwhile, Soviet and Chinese support for North Vietnam continued, and in April 1975, North Vietnam conquered South Vietnam. At the same time, Communist forces in Laos and Cambodia were also victorious. Vietnamese and Laotian Communists (who were heavily dependent on Vietnamese support) herded thousands of people into "re-education camps," which were in fact slave-labor camps. However, the

Soviet model was positively humane compared to the system imposed in Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge, or "Red Cambodians."

The Khmer Rouge were battle-hardened guerrilla warriors who had long fought government forces in the jungles of Cambodia. Many were illiterate, and quite a few were young. It might be said that they were teenagers with guns. Their guidance came from an elite group of Cambodian scholars who had studied in Paris. These scholars, sometimes referred to as *Angka Loeu*, admired the radical Communism applied by Mao Zedong (1893-1976) in China, and determined that Cambodia needed to undergo a purifying process. All foreign influences would have to be removed, and the people would need to return to the land and work the soil by ancient methods.

This was a recipe for a slave-labor system of unparalleled brutality. Following their victory on April 17, 1975, Khmer Rouge tanks rolled into the capital city, Phnom Penh (NAHM PEN) and forced Cambodians into the countryside. Anyone who asked questions was shot, as was anyone suspected of corruption in any form—including people who wore eyeglasses, which was seen a sign that they were educated, sophisticated, and therefore, dangerous.

The survivors were herded into the countryside and put to work on rice farms, where they labored for incredibly long hours, without days off, and did not receive adequate nutrition. In the rare hours when they were not working, the people were forced to undergo "re-education" classes, in which they were encouraged to report on suspicious activities of their neighbors.

It was all part of the remaking of Cambodia, which the Khmer Rouge renamed as Kampuchea. The year 1975 also had a new name: "Year Zero," the beginning of a new era. François Ponchaud, a Roman Catholic priest who lived for many years in Cambodia, chose the phrase as the title for his book exposing the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. Ponchaud had been

forced to leave, along with all other foreigners, in 1975, and obtained most of the material for the book by interviewing Cambodian refugees.

### Things to remember while reading

- The following passage includes extensive references (some of which have been removed) to Cambodian geography. Cambodia is a nation of slightly less than 70,000 square miles, or approximately 181,000 square kilometers, about the size of Missouri. The majority of the country lies in the basin of the Mekong River, and it includes a heavy concentration of jungles. Phnom Penh, the capital city, lies along the Mekong in southeastern Cambodia, and Sisophon is a city in the northwest, along the border with Thailand.

Children collect water from a bomb hole left by the Khmer Rouge on Phnom Penh, Cambodia in 1974. The Khmer Rouge forced many Cambodians living in Phnom Penh to become slaves in the rice paddies of the Cambodian countryside.

Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation (Bellevue).



*Angkar Leu*, sometimes referred to as *Angka Loeu*, means "Higher Organization." This seems to have been the name for the higher ranks of the Khmer Rouge. Yet if someone were "sent to Angka," it seldom meant they would actually appear before high-ranking party officials; rather, this was another way of saying they would be killed.

- Long before they entered Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge had "liberated" other parts of the Cambodian countryside and put peasants to work in slave-labor brigades. Hence the distinction between "new people" and "old people."
- In many passages from *Cambodia: Year Zero*, Ponchaud reported a sort of tit-for-tat mentality on the part of the Khmer Rouge. For instance, people were told that the Communist soldiers had "suffered ten times worse than you during the war; they had no rice and no medicine and nothing to eat but the leaves on the trees." One justification for the inhuman behavior of the Khmer Rouge toward their fellow Cambodians, then, appears to be the fact that the Khmer Rouge had suffered hardships in the process of "liberating" Cambodia.

### ***Cambodia: Year Zero***

*Almost everywhere, the work day was very long: a gong rang to wake people up around 5:00 a.m., then breakfast—rice soup and by 6:00 everybody left for work, sometimes very far away; there was either a pause or a return to the village around 11:00, to husk rice and eat. Back to work from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. or in some places 5:30 or 6:00.... [I]n other places, the refugees say that work went on at night until 8:00 or even 11:00 p.m.; when there was a moon they worked by moonlight and when there wasn't huge torches were lit.*

*All the refugees complain of the relentless, \_ nature of the work. 'We were made to work like slaves, like beasts of burden, with no thought for the human losses!' \_ was used to the extreme limit of its physical endurance; no effort was made to spare it and it was never given a day of rest.*

*In some areas, work could be more immediately dangerous, because of the unexploded bombs and shells lurking in the grass or brush. In the region of Phnom Baset, northwest of Phnom Penh, a day never went by without several villagers being injured or killed by explosions.*

## Dith Pran

Dith Pran (1942- ) became famous to moviegoers in the West on account of his portrayal by fellow Cambodian Haing Ngor in the movie *The Killing Fields* (1984). As a guide and interpreter working with members of the U.S. media in his country during the early 1970s, Pran got to know *New York Times* journalist Sydney Schanberg. The two became close friends, and witnessed firsthand the horrors of the Cambodian government's war with the Khmer Rouge. Pran sent his wife and four children to America, but he stayed on to help Schanberg report on the war. The Khmer Rouge took power in April 1975 and evicted all foreigners, including Schanberg.

Forced to remain in the new Cambodia, or "Kampuchea" as the Khmer Rouge had renamed it, Pran realized that he had better make himself as inconspicuous as possible. Therefore he dressed like a peasant, adopted a limited vocabulary, and pretended to be a simple villager. It was a wise decision, given the fact that the Khmer Rouge had orders to execute anyone who wore eyeglasses, perfume, makeup, watches, or other evidence of nontraditional influences. Had they learned he was an educated man who had worked closely with foreigners, Pran would have been killed instantly.

Instead he went to work, like most other Cambodians, in the rice paddies of the slave-labor camps. Their days consisted of excruciating labor, while their nights were filled with long political reeducation sessions. Though they were growing food, the ration of rice for the slaves was reduced to just one spoonful per day. Starving, Pran and other villagers ate anything they could find: bark, snakes, snails, rats, and other vermin. Some even dug up dead bodies—one of the few things that Kampuchea produced in abundance—and gnawed human flesh.

Meanwhile Schanberg had returned to the United States, where he looked after Pran's wife and children in New York City. The *New York Times* also helped support the family financially. Through intermediaries at border camps in Thailand, where Cambodian refugees fled their homeland, Schanberg circulated photographs of his lost friend with the hope that Pran had been able to flee Cambodia. In 1976, his reporting on the Cambodia earned him a Pulitzer Prize, which he accepted on behalf of Pran as well. He never stopped searching for his friend.

After the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in January 1979, Pran made his way to his hometown, where he found that almost all his relatives had been killed. He ultimately escaped to the Thai border, where in October 1979 he was reunited with Schanberg. Schanberg assisted Pran in relocating to the United States, where he joined his family. The *New York Times* gave him a job as a reporter, and Pran became a U.S. Citizen in 1986.

*During the month of May people were apparently not \_ to work, but food was distributed in proportion to work accomplished, so the result was the same.*

*At Bak Prea, on the other hand, workers who did not meet their day's quota were reprimanded, and if they did not improve they were sent to the Angkar Leu (Higher Organization) from which none ever returns.*

*Around Thmar Puok, during the harvest season at the end of 1975, the quota for harvesters was twenty 'heaps' a day. 'If we didn't make it,' one of them relates, 'we got only half a bowl of rice that day and had to make up the short heaps the next day. Failing to make the quota meant being sent up to the Angkar Leu.'*

*Between September and December the authorities began relocating large numbers of people, either to meet the requirements of the central work program or for some other, unknown reason. Hundreds of thousands of the original inhabitants of Phnom Penh...were moved again to the Pursat, Sisophon, or Oddar Mean Chey regions. This time they were transported by truck or boat to Pursat, then to Sisophon by train.*

*A single account is enough to show what this second migration was like. Im Sok reached Thailand early in July 1976; he had left Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, with his father, mother, wife, and a three-year-old daughter....*

*"In September 1975 the Khmer Rouge told the 'new people' and the 'old people' in some areas to assemble ...in preparation for their return to Phnom Penh. 'You don't need to take anything with you,' they told us, 'because everything has been made ready to welcome you in Phnom Penh: you will all have identical houses, equipped with everything you need.' More than thirty large trucks were waiting for us; we traveled more than a hundred to a truck. As we were getting in, the soldiers took away everything we had brought with us; all we*

*could keep was a kettle, four tins of rice, and a bit of food for two days on the road.*

*"During the trip we were crushed together like a load of pigs. The trucks stopped every five or six hours to let people relieve themselves. We took Highway 2 and then Highway 3 to Phnom Penh, but then we bypassed the city center ... and the trucks turned north down Highway 5. We were all surprised at this, and everybody fell silent. It was already dark and we were still going. The children were crying and the babies screaming because they were hungry. Around eight o'clock the trucks stopped... to let us cook some rice. At midnight we drove on again, as far as Pursat. There we were given enough rice and salt for three days. There were no camps or shelters, so we had to sleep alongside the railroad. Several thousand people had been brought there, from all over. The sun was hardly up the next morning when the Khmer Rouge soldiers ordered us to get ready to continue the journey by train; they removed anything we had managed to keep hidden until then, and after that we had nothing but a mat, a kettle, and one plate. The train came in; we were shoved into the cars like a herd of cattle, more than a hundred and fifty to a car. After a day of traveling we reached Sisophon. From there tractors hauling trailers took some of the people to Phnom Srok; others went by oxcart. Many old people and children died on that trip, certainly not less than ten percent.*

*"It was growing dark. Around four o'clock the carts transporting us reached the edge of the forest near the village of Pongro in Phum Srok sector. I climbed down quickly to find shelter under a tree for my wife and child because the sky was full of threatening clouds. The Khmer Rouge handed out enough rice and salt for one day. Then the sky favored us with several downpours. We were shivering with cold, having nothing to cover ourselves with, and we looked and felt like the objects of divine malediction .*

*"The next day each family was assigned to a particular plot of land. We had to clear the ground and build cabins, each ten meters away from the next and all identical. It was the group*



*of ten families that took charge of building the houses; we built them with the trunks of trees we felled in the forest and covered them with straw. There was no [water] jar, no mosquito netting, no blanket. As the Khmer saying goes, we had the ladle by the handle and the kettle by the spout, but there was nothing inside. The chief would tell us, 'The revolutionaries suffered ten times worse than you during the war; they had no rice and no medicine and nothing to eat but the leaves on the trees.'*"

*According to many of the refugees this second deportation was even more deadly than the first, for people's systems were weaker and could not take the journey. A doctor, redeported from Phnom Baset to Sisophon, says that the Khmer Rouge stood, with stretchers, waiting for every train that came in to remove the dead and sick. People were gaunt as skeletons, their legs full of abscesses. Another witness says that some people fell under the train on purpose to commit suicide. He speaks of 250 such suicides near Mongkol Borei. Yet another says, "On the road to Phnom Srok there were tens of thousands of people from Phnom Penh, all gaunt and lifeless, marching in columns several kilometers long. They were going to the rice paddies for the harvest. Some were laughing and dancing, shouting and eating raw rice—many had gone crazy from fatigue, privation, and fear."*

*Apart from the fiercely aspect of the work, what the deportees felt most keenly was the lack of food and inhuman discipline.*

**Pol Pot one of the most feared leaders of the Khmer Rouge.** Reproduced by permission of AP/Wide World Photos, Inc.



## **What happened next...**

Between April 17, 1975, and January 1979, when Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge killed about one-third of Cambodia's estimated eight million people. This makes them the worst mass murderers in history, with a record exceeding that of Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia, or Mao's China.

It is easy to understand *how* the Cambodian murders occurred, given the fact that the Khmer Rouge shut their nation off from world attention. As to *why* it happened, this is a more perplexing question. To an extent, it appears that the Khmer Rouge were attempting to re-create the triumphs of the Khmer Empire, a Cambodian civilization of the medieval era that had built the vast temple complex of Angkor Wat. They believed—wrongly, according to archaeological studies of Khmer Empire lands—that the Khmer kings had built Angkor Wat and the neighboring city of Angkor Thorn as giant "rice factories." To replicate these "rice factories," and to do so using the methods that would have been available to the Khmer kings in the twelfth century, the Khmer Rouge had to use slave labor.

Though many outsiders criticized the Vietnamese invasion, Cambodia was far better off under the rule of Vietnam than it had been under the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge never returned to power, though they did take part in a government formed after the Vietnamese withdrawal in 1989. By the late 1990s, the Khmer Rouge had dwindled to insignificance. In 1998, one of their most feared leaders, Pol Pot, died after being denounced by his former comrades. Few people mourned his passing.

## **Did you know...**

- After the Thais invaded the Khmer Empire in the mid-1400s, the great temple of Angkor Wat was abandoned and eventually hidden by the jungle. It was not rediscovered until the 1860s.

- The term "killing fields" refers to the mass graves that dotted the Cambodian countryside.
- Even in the late 1990s, the per capita or average income in Cambodia was about \$700 a year—less than one-fortieth of the per capita income in the United States.

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# Watkin, Huw, Prashad, Vijay and All Africa News Agency

Huw Watkin

*"Rise in Women Forced to Work as Sex Slaves"*  
**Published in South China Morning Post, August 11,  
1999**

Vijay Prashad

*Excerpt from "Calloused Consciences:  
The Limited Challenge to Child Labor"*  
**Published in Dollars & Sense, September 1999**

All Africa News Agency

*"Humanitarian Group Buys Freedom for 4,300  
Sudanese"*  
**Published in Africa News Service, December 3, 1999**

On the edge of the 21st Century, it is unacceptable that human beings around the world are bought and sold into situations such as sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and debt bondage that are little different from slavery....

1

In 1989 the end of communism seemed to be coming to an end; in fact, within two years the Marxist-Leninist system had been abandoned in all but a handful of countries. The exposure of crimes under particularly severe regimes, such as the one in Romania, increased international awareness of the inhumanity that persisted under communist rule.

Despite the fact that much twentieth-century slavery had been associated with communism and other totalitarian ideologies, however, the end of communism did not bring an end to slavery. (Totalitarian systems demand that people submit completely to the state, or the government.) In fact, many

human rights organizations suggested that at the end of the twentieth century, more people were enslaved around the world than at any time in history.

In the last half of the twentieth century, China's economy was in the midst of a transition from an old, stagnant communist system to a hard-driving powerhouse that produced goods for export all over the world. During the 1990s, Americans became increasingly concerned that the manufactured items they bought from China and other Asian countries had been made by slave labor. The slaves included not only political prisoners in camps, but children in "sweat shops." factories in which workers labored under substandard conditions.

The articles that follow are not as famous or classic as Aristotle's *Politics* or Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. They are not significant legal documents, as was the case with the Code of Hammurabi or the Civil War amendments to the U.S. Constitution. They are simply three pieces out of thousands concerning slavery worldwide at the end of the twentieth century. Each article appeared in the final months of 1999, each in a different part of the world, each concerning a different variety of slavery.

The first, by journalist Huw Watkin, comes from the *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong, and concerns the growth of sex slavery—in particular, prostitution (the practice of engaging in sex acts for hire) and the selling of "mail-order brides" (financially disadvantaged women whose prospective husbands pay to marry them)—in Southeast Asia. Second is an editorial by Vijay Prashad, a professor from India, that appeared in the U.S. economic journal *Dollars & Sense*. Speaking out against what he perceived as the dishonesty and hypocrisy of Western governments, Prashad cited the extensive use of child labor in countries of South Asia such as India and Pakistan, nations with which the United States and other Western governments had economic and political ties. Finally, the All Africa News Agency reported on perhaps the most astonishing phenomenon of all: the persistence of old-fashioned chattel slavery, in which people were literally

bought and sold into lifetimes of service, just as Africans five centuries before had been.

### Things to remember while reading

- The three excerpts that follow are from three different parts of the world, and represent three different perspectives. The article on sex slavery in Southeast Asia by Huw Watkin, a journalist for the *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong, is a straight news report. This means that just the facts are reported objectively, or without inserting the writer's opinion. So is the piece from the All Africa News Agency, a news- and information-gathering bureau with offices in Nairobi, Kenya, on the persistence of chattel slavery in Sudan. Both Hong Kong and Kenya are former British colonies; hence the use of British spellings, such as "organisation" and "programme."

A small group of young Asian prostitutes. In the late twentieth century sex slavery, particularly prostitution, was on the rise in Southeast Asia. Reproduced by permission of the Corbis Corporation (Bellevue).



The piece by Vijay Prashad is an editorial, or opinion column, although he does use facts to support the thesis, or point, of his article. Prashad, an Indian scholar who served as assistant professor of international studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, was not simply reporting the news, but making specific points about it. *Dollars & Sense* is a magazine on economic issues from a leftist—that is,

politically nontraditional and sometimes socialist—viewpoint.

- Both the Watkin and Prashad pieces make the point that economic factors have led to the persistence of slavery. Hence Watkin reported that a United Nations official had "said growing prosperity in some parts of Asia was fueling the demand for commercial sex." With even greater force, Prashad made the same point, noting that—to paraphrase his quote from Karl Marx—people were getting rich off the toil of children. Marx, a German philosopher whose ideas formed the basis for communism, believed that there was an economic explanation for every event in human life.
- Traditional chattel slavery, exactly the same form of bondage in which Africans had once been captured and sold for service on plantations in the New World, continued to exist in Africa during the late twentieth century. Reports of slave trading had surfaced in many parts of northern Africa, from Mauritania in the west to Sudan in the east. The All Africa News Agency report concerns the slave-trading activity in Sudan, an outgrowth of a lengthy war between the Arab-controlled Muslim government in the capital at Khartoum and the black population of southern Sudan, who were chiefly Christian or adherents of traditional African religions. Therefore slavery in Sudan had both a racial and religious character.

### ***"Rise in Women Forced to Work as Sex Slaves"***

*Young women and girls are increasingly being forced into sexual slavery abroad, with Cambodia, China and Taiwan emerging as the main markets in what welfare groups say is an increasingly serious regional problem.*

*Evidence suggesting Vietnam is being targeted by the international vice trade is largely anecdotal so far, but at*

*least three global organisations want tougher penalties and more co-operation between regional governments to stem the trade.*

*Concern intensified this week when figures revealed that more than 12,000 young Vietnamese women had "married" Taiwanese men between 1996 and 1998, with close to 50 per cent of them saying they had done so for economic reasons.*

*According to an official study reported ... yesterday, the marriages were arranged by intermediaries for up to US \$ 12,000... and there is growing concern about the link between "mail-order brides" and prostitution.*

*"False marriages and mail-order brides are often used as camouflage to bring women to work in overseas brothels, and the victims of this sort of trafficking find it difficult to argue in court that they are, in fact, victims," said Vu Ngoc Binh of Unicef [the United Nations Children's Fund].*

*"Huge profits can be made by forcing women into prostitution, and people-smuggling is a much less risky activity for criminals than other forms of crime, because many countries deport victims immediately, thereby losing valuable witnesses," she said.*

*Experts in the field say that despite existing, formulating workable in order to fight the trade is difficult because Vietnamese women often enter into prostitution abroad voluntarily with the expectation of making money quickly and then getting out of the industry.*

*"Many women from South Vietnam are known to be working by choice as prostitutes in Cambodia," said Jette Kjørtum of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).*

*"But in many cases brothel owners will their immigration papers and force them to pay exorbitant commissions—basically they end up as sex slaves."*



*Ms. Binh said growing prosperity in some parts of Asia was fuelling the demand for commercial sex, and the IOM said China in particular was emerging as a huge market for arranged marriages.*

*"Men outnumber women by between 15 and 20 million in China, and with the country's emerging status as an economic power, China is set to become a major destination for trafficked women and mail-order brides, " said Ms. Kjertum.*

*China, Cambodia and Thailand have joined a UN-sponsored project designed to stem the trade in women, but Vietnam, Laos and Burma are reported to be still considering the initiative.*



**Although the United States and other Western countries have extensive law against the use of child labor, these countries continue to export and sell products produced in Asian sweatshops by children.** Photograph by Neil Ulevich. Reproduced by permission of AP/Wide World Photos.

### **"Calloused Consciences: The Limited Challenge to Child Labor"**

*On June 16, [U.S.] President [Bill] Clinton stood before the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Geneva and declared that "we must wipe from the Earth the most vicious forms of abusive child labor. We must put a human face on the global economy, giving working people everywhere a stake in its success. "*

*Two days later, the ILO finalized a new convention on the "worst forms of child labor, " one that the U.S. President*

*promised to guide through Congress. The convention targets, not all 250 million child laborers (under the age of 15) worldwide, but "all forms of slavery [of children], forced or compulsory labor, debt bondage and serfdom , " child prostitution, and the use of children in the drug trade.*

*Clinton's qualified statement against the "worst forms" of child labor sounds like a coded way of telling us the United States is not opposed to the practice per se , but only to the "worst forms" targeted in this convention by the ILO. He promises not abolition, but amelioration .*

*Yet it is not at all clear that the policies of the U.S. government, taken as a whole, will deliver even that. In June, Clinton signed an executive order preventing the U.S. government from purchasing goods made by the "worst forms" of child labor—but then exempted goods from Mexico and countries that are members of the World Trade Organization.*

*Or take the example of Bangladesh, where 20% of the workforce—some 6.5 million laborers are children. In 1994, the Bangladesh Garment and Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) agreed to eliminate child labor in its factories in the face of U.S. pressure. That pressure grew after NBC's Dateline aired a segment in 1993 on modern forms of slavery, including child labor in South Asia. After thousands of young children left the factories with no safety net to catch them , the U.S. government pressured the Bangladesh garment association to reverse its decision. In July 1995, the association and the United States signed a memorandum in which the employers agreed to retain the child workers and to create schools for them, but to refuse to hire any more. Meanwhile, the United States and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which controls short-term loans to governments, were forcing the Bangladeshi government to reduce expenditures on health and education.*

*The United States may formally oppose child labor, but by pressing for —especially in provision for basic needs ... it just as surely consigns children to the workshops and the fields.*

*And by isolating out some children to be "saved," the United States and opponents of child labor implicitly suggest the abject poverty of the children's parents is acceptable.*

### *The Will to Regulate*

*The special to child labor was fed, historically, by the campaign against it in Victorian England. During the Industrial Revolution, English children worked in large numbers within factories while Indian children worked in English-owned mills in Bombay. Government action was instrumental in preventing, as Karl Marx wrote, "the coining of children's blood into capital." Children were rescued from the factories, not primarily in response to the onrush of liberal sentiment, argue scholars like Douglas Galbi, but because of the technological need for skilled adult labor instead of their unskilled toil. This shift set the stage for government regulation against child labor. In the United States, it was encoded in federal law only during the making an exception for agricultural labor that continues to this day.*

*Few places now allow children to work in industrial factories. But child labor is epidemic in agriculture and in production. The tasks of the field and the small workshop still can, and do, call upon young hands, since there are few technical skills required for the harvesting of fruit or the knotting of carpets. In India, where 11 million children work, the use of young girls in agricultural production is on the increase, according to the All-India Democratic Women's Association, as is the global use of children in the apparel industry. According to a recent U.S. Department of Labor report, children make fireworks in Peru, Mexico, and the Philippines. In Mexico, children work in garment and footwear factories. In Nepal, India, and Pakistan, children hand-knot carpets.*

*In India and other South Asian countries, tens of millions of children are working mostly in export-oriented industries (carpets, diamonds, glassware, footwear) and tourist services (including sex work) owned by local elites. Their labor, then,*

*supports sectors tied to the global economy and is not a remnant of some older, agrarian order. It is a modern business practice, especially within nations committed to fulfilling IMF terms to cutback government programs....*

### **"Humanitarian Group Buys Freedom for 4,300 Sudanese"**

*Christian Solidarity International (CSI) has bought the freedom of more than 4,300 enslaved southern Sudanese people, according to a statement released by the organisation.*

*"CSI redeemed 4,300 slaves at four locations ... paying the retrievers a fee of 50,000 Sudanese pounds equivalent to US \$50," the statement said.*

*The statement says CSI officials John Eibner and Gunnar Wiebalck and a prominent Colorado antislavery campaigner cum schoolteacher Barb Vogel bought the slaves between October 1 -8 during a visit to the borderlands between northern and southern Sudan.*

**A group of slaves gather under a tree as they wait for freedom in the southern Sudan village of Yargot after the human rights group Christian Solidarity International paid for their freedom. Reproduced by permission of Reuters/Stringer/Archive Photos.**



*The slaves, mainly Christian and women from the Dinka tribe were bought out of captivity in the Northern Sudan and*

*returned to their homelands in the south by eight networks of Arab retrievers. To date, CSI has bought back over 15,400 slaves since the exercise started in 1995.*

*The statement says that all the returning slaves were captured during the raids conducted by the armed forces of Sudan's radical National Islamic Front NIF regime, in particular, its Popular Defence Force (PDF).*

*Slavery has been one of the tactics applied by the NIF regime in its quest of unleashing the jihad on southern Sudanese population. The civil war in the country which started in 1983 is estimated to have claimed 1.9 million people while 4 million people, mostly the Southerners, have been displaced .*

*Redeemed slaves provided the testimony to CSI personnel and accompanying independent journalists of the many gross human rights abuses that are inherent in the Sudanese slavery, the statement said.*

*It added: "During the raids, villages are torched, men are shot dead, the elderly are beaten and abused and women, children, cows, goats and food stores are captured as war booty . The women and children are forced to walk for days to the North. "*

*On the way, beatings, public executions and gang rape are commonplace, witnesses say. In the North, the slaves are divided among their captors. They are routinely subjected to forced labour, sexual abuse, forced Islamisation , beatings, death threats and meagre diet.*

*The Khartoum government and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Carol Bellamy are spearheading the campaign against the redemption of Sudanese slaves. They have condemned CSI and the victimised Dinka community for violating the 7926 Slavery Convention, which prohibits trafficking in human beings.*

## The Arab Slave Trade

The majority of slaves brought to the New World between the mid-1400s and the mid-1800s came from West Africa. Yet just as slavery was abolished in the Americas, a new trade in slaves from East Africa was just beginning. This time the slave traders were primarily Arabs, and the markets in which they sold their slaves were in the Middle East, India, and even China.

Long before Europeans began buying and selling slaves, Arab slavers had conducted a profitable slave trade. This trade entered a second phase around the same time the United States and other countries outlawed slavery. America had certain ideals about freedom, human dignity, and the rights of individuals, ideals that made the persistence of slavery in the southern United States a glaring dichotomy. By contrast, most nations in the Arab world did not place the same kind of value on individual human lives—particularly the lives of foreigners and people who did not embrace the Islamic religion. Thus the slave trade in the Middle East did not raise the same kinds of emotional issues as slavery in America had.

Making a base at Zanzibar, an island off the east coast of Africa that is now part of Tanzania, Arab slavers in the mid-1800s began moving into the interior, capturing slaves for sale in the Zanzibar markets. An estimated 20,000 to 40,000 slaves a year passed through Zanzibar, some bound for service in Arabia and other far-off lands, some put to work on the island's plantations.

Among the most prominent East African slave traders was Tippu Tib (about 1837-1905), a merchant of mixed Arab and black African heritage. Ironically, Tippu Tib's move inland, which led to the enslavement of many people, provided the justification for Leopold's takeover of the Belgian Congo. Leopold's reign proved to be far worse for the locals than Tippu Tib's slaving raids had been.

Another important Arab slave-trading center was in Egypt, as slavers went southward from Egypt into the Sudan. Missionaries, or religious teachers, from Europe helped put an end to this trade, yet by the end of the twentieth century, Arabs from northern Sudan were once again buying and selling black Africans from southern Sudan. This activity was part of a larger war between the country's Arab Muslim government and its black majority, who were either Christians or adherents of traditional African religions.

*However, Dinka Chiefs and a section of observers continue to support the role played by CSI in freeing the slaves. They accuse UNICEF of condemning the CSI while doing little to stop the menace despite the UN agency's vast resources.*

*CSI's International President Reverend Hans Stuckelberger confirmed during a BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] World Service broadcast last month that CSI intends to continue its slave redemption programme and broader anti-slavery campaign until the last Sudanese slave has been freed.*

*Hans also appealed to United Nations General Secretary Kofi Annan to take all the necessary and urgent steps to immediately stop slavery and other related "crimes against humanity" that are being committed by the government of Sudan and its agents.*

*Last month, 14 women Foreign Ministers, among them United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, petitioned Annan seeking an end to the widespread trafficking in women and children.*

*"On the edge of the 21st Century, it is unacceptable that human beings around the world are bought and sold into situations such as sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and debt bondage that are little different from slavery, " the Ministers noted.*

*Other petitioners were from South Africa, Niger, Madagascar, Bahamas, Barbados, Bulgaria, Salvador, Finland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Sweden.*

### **What happened next...**

Watkin and Prashad made a valuable point in their observation that economics drives slavery. Without men pouring money into the sex-slave industry, and without Westerners purchasing goods produced by slave labor in developing lands, slavery would not exist.

Over time, the ideas surrounding slavery have differed, ranging from the typically nonracist practices of ancient times to the highly racist institutions of the early modern era; or from the political slavery of Nazi Germany to the sexual slavery of child-pornography rings in the late twentieth

century. Yet economic needs have almost always been a driving force.

A particularly troublesome example of slavery and economics involves efforts by CSI to purchase people out of bondage in Sudan. On the one hand, these efforts are unquestionably admirable, representing the best in the Western and Christian tradition of respect for human life. On the other, as many critics have charged, CSI's offer of payment to slave traders only gives them greater incentive to capture and sell more humans. It is also disturbing that the UN seems to have sided with the government of Sudan in condemning CSI for violating laws against buying slaves—when in fact it is the Sudanese government that makes it possible for people to purchase slaves.

For slavery to end in Sudan, or India, or China laws will have to change. Yet before laws can change, or at least before they can become effective, change will have to occur in people's hearts. If the world ever becomes a place in which everyone respects the rights of others, slavery will wither away and die for good.

### **Did you know...**

- In 1996, controversial Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan (1933- ) visited a number of countries, including Sudan, on a world tour. Many observers criticized him for visiting a country in which black people were enslaved, and Farrakhan publicly denied that slavery existed in Sudan. To prove that this was not true, two reporters for the *Baltimore Sun* traveled to Sudan in August 1996, purchased two slaves, and freed them.
- In the 1990s, slavery reappeared in what had been one of the largest slave societies of the 1800s: Brazil. There many thousands of unfortunate people became victims of kidnaping and other scams to place them in varieties of bondage ranging from debt slavery to sex slavery. Among these were Indians enslaved in charcoal mines,



where children as young as nine worked for twelve hours a day in extremely hazardous conditions.

- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

### **Child Labor—Old and New**

The Industrial Revolution, a period of rapid development that transformed agriculture economies to manufacturing economies, began in England around 1750. This was a painful transition, as economic needs forced many people to leave farms and the countryside to move to the city. There they toiled for long hours in dirty, smelly factories; and at night these workers went home to sleep in extremely substandard quarters.

Among the hardest-hit victims of industrialization were children. Poverty forced many working-class children into the grim, gloomy sweatshops of nineteenth-century England. These years produced many horrible scenes of six-year-olds forced to labor like adults; of children who lost fingers or hands in dangerous machinery; of youngsters who worked twelve or sixteen hours a day, six days a week.

As the nineteenth century progressed, industrialization—and the evils associated with it—spread to Germany, France, and other nations of the European continent, as well as to the United States. In many of these countries, children had worked on a family farm, or at least on a plot of ground that the family tilled together. In contrast, the factories separated children from parents, wives from husbands, and so on.

Given the negative side effects, it is easy to conclude that industrialization did not improve the lives of working-class people. Yet that conclusion is based on the short-term impact of industrialization, not the long-term effects. It is because of industrialization and the forces that motivated it, for instance, that scientists are able to develop life-saving medicines, which pharmaceutical companies then produce and sell to the public. Furthermore, the transition from agriculture to industry in the United States helped ensure that a slave-based economy such as that of the South would never be an issue again.

The Industrial Revolution was a huge societal change, but it did not last. Eventually England absorbed the effects of the transition, and rising humanitarian concerns forced a number of changes—including child-labor laws. The United States adopted its own series of laws prohibiting child labor in the years between 1900 and 1930.

During the late twentieth century, industrialization spread to underdeveloped countries such as India. Unfortunately, with it came even greater abuses of child labor. This situation prompted Vijay Prashad's critique of child-labor practices in *Dollars & Sense*. In Prashad's opinion (and that of scholar Douglas Galbi, referred to by Prashad), Western nations did not end child labor for humanitarian reasons, but simply because of changes in the economy. There is no doubt a great deal of truth in this. In fact, it is probably a combination of both economic changes and humanitarian concerns that prompts reforms such as child-labor laws.

(HHS) reported in the 1990s that there were as many as 300,000 child prostitutes—some as young as nine years of age—in the United States.

*From "Humanitarian Group Buys Freedom for 4,300 Sudanese"*

## **For more information**

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