

Learning About U.S. Slavery Through Trade Cards

A "Picnic Style History"



The image features a young girl in a red shirt looking at a trade card. In the background, there is a large illustration of a riverboat on a river. To the right, a blue box contains several trade cards, some of which are visible and labeled: "The Black Man Westward Expands", "Going to America", "Transportation", "Indefinite South", and "The Black Man". Below the box, several more trade cards are laid out on the surface, including one showing a Native American figure and another showing a person on horseback. The text "America's Roots \$100" is written in a large, stylized font across the middle. A green oval in the bottom right corner contains the text "plus FREE \$8.00 worth of collector's materials!".

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Foreword...

by Mariame Kaba

I'm a collector of various things. I've run the gamut between collecting dolls, stamps, postcards, prison ephemera and items related to Black social movement history. I'm fascinated by what people choose to collect: ceramic bunnies, crystals, stuffed animals, baseball cards, shot glasses, key chains and so much more.

At the turn of the 20th century, women's magazines like Ladies' Home Journal helped to usher in the rise of recipe cards. As Katie Arnold-Ratliff writes in Slate Magazine:

"They began offering readers subscriptions of recipes printed on heavy cards branded with the magazine's logo and mailed out every six to eight weeks. Between the 1930s and the mid-'90s, few women's magazines neglected to offer this service, which delivered regular installments of full-color, uniformly sized recipe cards to your door, divided into categories like "entrees," "starches," or "vegetables and sauces."

These recipe cards are the precursors of oversized trading cards like Sportscasters and Safari cards that would show up in your mailbox in the late 1970s and early 80s. Send a dollar or place a cash on delivery (COD) order by calling an 800 number and you would get a set of 24 cards and sometimes a free case to organize them. If you liked them, you could keep receiving new sets of cards every month for \$2.49 plus 0.39 cents shipping.

Subscription cards weren't limited to only sports and recipes. If you were interested in American history, you could order Panarizon's Story of America cards. These sets of picture cards were published and sold from 1979 to 1981 in packets of 24 via commercials on television and ads in magazines like Boys' Life. A total of 2,256 cards in 94 decks were released in a short period, each featuring a different person, trend or event in the American experience. They were pitched to consumers as "a lively encyclopedia of American history."

A TV commercial featuring a white father and daughter announced:

“Story of America are a panorama of our past: how we lived, America’s great men and women, our battles for freedom, our inventions, industries and people, historical events and fascinating side lights.” At one point, the father in the commercial says: “Story of America cards are fun, colorful, and instructive. Each card treats a single interesting subject. My daughter can’t get enough of them. She collects them into a card encyclopedia of our nation’s past.”

An ad in the November 1979 issue of Boys’ Life opens with the following paragraph:

“Open your children’s eyes and hearts to the Story of America – its glories and shames, its triumphs and tragedies. Let them learn our history not classroom-style with intensive cramming, but picnic-style with Story of America Cards – where they can nibble at whatever appeals, without biting more than they can chew.”

At once described as “a card encyclopedia of our nation’s past” and “picnic-style” history, the Story of America cards included a lot of information (~300 words) for one roughly 4” x 6 “ card. On the front there’s a large picture as well as several icons at the top that show how the card fits into history. It also includes a map that shows what part of America the subject affected. The back offers an annotated story that sums up not only the event in question, but also offers a fair amount of other details. They were sold to parents as a valuable tool for their children’s informal self-education. This was a resource intended to supplement classroom learning.

An internet search of Panarizon’s Story of America reveals almost no public record of the cards, no Wikipedia page, no directory of their total holdings. The cards by the Panarizon Publishing corporation have been out of print since the early 1980s. As late as the mid-1990s however, the Grolier company was advertising similar cards in magazines like Working Mother and Boys Life.

I'm old enough to remember seeing the TV commercials publicizing Story of America cards. About five years ago, I began to collect the cards specific to Black history. After accumulating over a hundred, I began to wonder about the historical narrative that was being advanced through the cards. I find it interesting that these subscription cards encapsulate historical moments in bite sized portions. These are stories told by a company trying to make money. How does this shape the story of America they tell and circulate?

This zine focuses on the particular narrative about U.S. chattel slavery told through some of the Story of America trade cards.

I believe that these cards can illuminate what the popular ideas about U.S. slavery were in the late 70s and early 80s. As we continue to contend with the afterlife of slavery in our current socio-political moment, it seems useful to interrogate the stories Americans have told themselves over the years about the enslavement of Africans in the United States.

About twelve million Africans were forcibly brought across the Atlantic to the Western Hemisphere from 1450 to 1850. Of this number, only about five percent were brought to British North America and later, to the United States from Africa, most of them arriving between 1680 and 1810. A small number of Africans went first to the British West Indies and then to North America. Racism and anti-Blackness are enduring legacies of slavery and continue to structure all aspects of American life in the 21st century. Throughout the 17th, 18th and most of the 19th centuries, most white Americans either accepted slavery or actually owned slaves. Indeed, the Constitution of the United States sanctioned and supported slavery.

The U.S. Constitution created a provision that counted three-fifths of the slave population in determining a state's representation in Congress and its number of electoral votes; it permitted the slave trade to continue for 20 years; and it required every state to return fugitive slaves. Lest you think that this was an aberration, we can also turn to

the earlier Colonial slave statutes of 1630 to 1740 for more evidence of institutional and structural racism in the U.S.

In 1639, at a time when there were less than 200 black people in Virginia out of a population of over 7,500, the settlers passed statutes stating that all persons except negroes would be provided with arms and ammunition. In Maryland, they passed a statute in 1663 that read:

“All negroes or other slaves within the province, and all negroes and other slaves to be hereafter imported into the province, shall serve durante vita; and all children born to any negro or other slave, shall be slaves as their fathers were for the term of their lives.”

The key point is that slavery not only deprived Black people of freedom and the benefits of their labor, it was also a system of physical and psychological intimidation and control that structured a racial hierarchy in the U.S. We are still living with its terrible consequences today. This is why it's important to learn accurate history about U.S. chattel slavery.

When I conceived the idea for this zine, I reached out to my friend Dr. Edward Onaci who is a historian for his thoughts on whether I should pursue it. He was enthusiastic in his response so I of course asked him to collaborate with me to create this publication.

We selected 31 out of 45 cards that we think are representative of the general U.S. slavery narrative offered by Panarizon corporation through its Story of America cards.

We envisioned this zine being read by high school and college-aged students and also serving as a resource for educators across the country.

As you read this publication, we invite you to consider the following questions:

1. What is the *official* story about slavery that is told through these cards which were specifically being promoted and sold to (white) children?
2. What is missing from the story that is promoted?
3. Who are the heroes and who are the villains?
4. If you were to create your own flashcards/ subscription cards on the topic of U.S. chattel slavery today, how would you narrate this history in 2018?
5. What would you add and what would you leave out?



Edward has written an afterword for this zine that underscores how slavery transformed the lives of enslaved Africans and continues to shape the outcomes of their descendants. His essay challenges us to question why this history is represented (for better or worse) as it is. He also shares a valuable reading list for further education.

In the end, we think that these trade cards offer an opportunity to both get a sense of some of the history outside of the Civil War and to complicate how we have been taught to think about American ideals, progress and shames. We hope that this zine will spark more conversation inside and outside of classrooms about chattel slavery and its consequences.

Thanks to Rachel Hoffman for designing this publication, Ashon Crawley for helpful editing suggestions and special thanks to Edward for working with me on this!

Author Biography

Mariame Kaba is an organizer, educator and curator who's active in numerous social movements for prison abolition, racial justice, gender justice, and transformative justice. She is the founder and director of Project NIA, a grassroots organization with a vision to end youth incarceration, and a co-founder of numerous organizations including the Chicago Freedom School, Love and Protect, the Chicago Taskforce on Violence against Girls and Young Women and most recently Survived and Punished. Her writing has appeared in the Nation Magazine, the Guardian, The Washington Post, In These Times, The New Inquiry, Teen Vogue and more. She runs the Prison Culture blog (www.usprisonculture.com/blog).

Footnotes

1. http://www.slate.com/articles/double_x/doublex/2011/12/recipe_cards_a_brief_history.html
2. <http://www.runningpast.com/mem.htm>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkqgH9ji0oY>

Capture of a Slave



1620-1865

THE BLACK MAN



Capture of a Slave

1620-1865

Trading in Human Flesh

Whether lured with trinkets or clubbed and taken in a raid, the capture of African natives was a terror-filled preface to the horrors and indignities of the cargo ships that carried them into slavery. As early as 1620, tribal drums or an occasional escapee began warning potential slaves along the 3,000-mile (4,828 km.) "Slave Coast" of West Africa about the arrival of raiding parties.

But the black slave hunters hired by the Muslim slave traders could still take a man by surprise. Hunting parties would descend upon whole villages, routing the people with guns and fire, rounding up all but the elderly for the forced march in chained caravans back to the coast. There they were packed onto the slave ships, or waited for ships' arrivals in the dungeons of the slave castles built by the Europeans along the African coast. Here captives were graded and branded before the final bargaining commenced with the slavers' captains.

Early slave hunters had been able to bargain directly with village chiefs for the small number of slaves a village held as a result of tribal wars. In those areas where the trade was still unknown, slavers could take advantage of the African's curiosity. Slaves taken to America later described how this worked. A

strange ship would anchor offshore, and the natives would hide and watch as white men rowed ashore to scatter bright objects and trinkets on the beach, then rowed back to the ship while the Africans scooped up the prizes. The next day the whites left more, so that by the third day the blacks were emboldened to board the ship to collect the bright objects scattered on the deck. Suddenly they felt the ship move and found themselves bound and hauled below, while the natives left on shore reacted in anger and confusion.

As word of the coastal raiders spread, the blacks fled inland, so slave hunters began offering rum, guns, and powder, enlisting the aid of African merchants, and giving tribal chiefs the means and incentives to conduct more wars against their rivals. Armed with guns, these war parties yielded new captives to be traded for fresh supplies of rum and powder. The merchant intermediaries, in turn, were paid as little as \$10 for a black who might command as much as \$600 in the illegal American slave trade. After 1845, when demand for new field hands became even more intense, the price rose as high as \$1,500. For the slaves themselves, however, the result was the same—a life of grim servitude and exploitation.

Illustration: *A caravan of newly captured slaves is driven toward the African coast*

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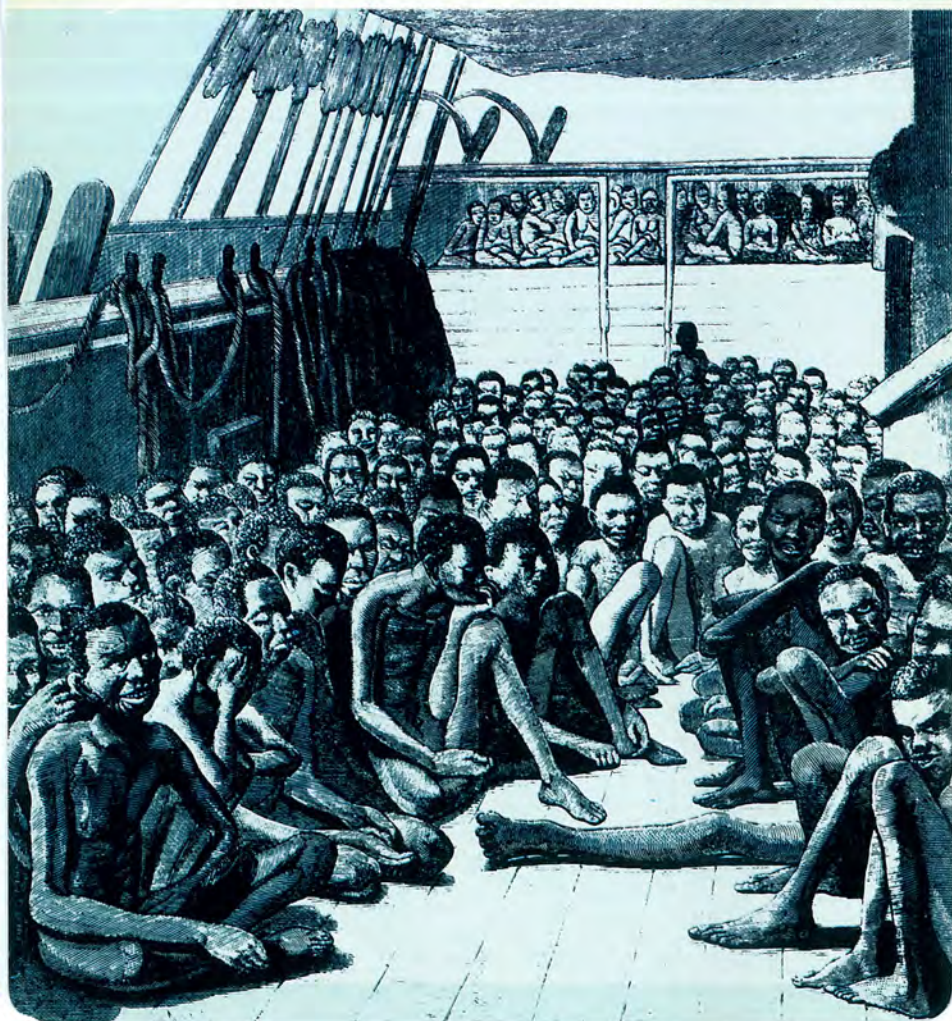
“In those areas where the trade was still unknown, slavers could take advantage of the African’s curiosity.”

The Slave Ship



1619-1860

THE BLACK MAN



The Slave Ship

1619-1860

Journey into Bondage

The exact number of blacks carried into slavery from Africa to America is unknown. It is estimated that 20,000,000 African men, women, and children were shipped to the New World over a period of 400 years or more. Nor is it known how many ships were involved. But between 1783 and 1793 alone, 878 slave ships left Liverpool, England, to transport over 300,000 blacks from Africa, at a gross profit of \$12,294,116.

First to enter the trade, the Portuguese had opened more than 4,000 miles of the West African coast to the slave traffic by the mid-15th century. Soon the Dutch, Spaniards, English, Swedes, Danes, French, and Americans were also drawn into this inhuman but lucrative business. The first slaves brought to America arrived at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619, and by 1775 one out of every six Americans was a slave.

Raiding parties attacked small African villages in the night, capturing blacks between 16 and 30 years of age. With iron collars fastened around their necks, the prisoners were sometimes driven hundreds of miles to stockades along the coast to await the arrival of a European slaver loaded with "African goods" for barter. Most Africans were taken to the West Indies or South

America to be sold into bondage. Only about ten percent of the slaves imported into the New World were taken to what is now the United States.

A typical slave ship measured 100 feet long by 25 feet 4 inches wide (30.48 m. x 7.72 m.) with as many as 450 frightened and naked captives crowded between its decks. Their drinking water was stagnant, their food scarce and unpalatable. Men, women, and children were separated and forced to lie on their backs on a series of platforms for at least 15 hours a day, with each person's right leg chained to the left leg of his neighbor. Their hands were tied as well. The hatches were closed, so there was little air below. Terrified and hot, blacks struggled to breathe. Some even leaped overboard in desperation and many others died from disease. For those who survived, the journey lasted 10 weeks or more.

After the slave trade was officially abolished by Great Britain and the United States in 1807, the slave ships were built for speed so that they could elude capture by the war sloops that guarded the African coast. The captains of these ships were known to have thrown as many as 500 blacks to the sharks in order to escape detection. In fact, the traffic in black slaves did not end until slavery itself was abolished.

Illustration: *Slave deck of the ship Wildfire, brought into Florida, 1860*

© 1979, Panarizon Publishing Corp, USA
Illust: *Harper's Weekly*, June 2, 1860

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"After the slave trade was officially abolished by Great Britain and the United States in 1807*..."

**Slavery in the U.S. was abolished in 1865.*

The Zong Atrocity



1781-1783

THE BLACK MAN



The Zong Atrocity

1781-1783 132 Slaves Thrown Overboard

In 1781 a former ship's surgeon named Luke Collingwood was placed in command of a ship named the *Zong*, which had been previously abandoned on the African coast. Although Collingwood had made several voyages on slave ships as a physician, he was now commanding a vessel for the first time in his life. Collingwood's plan was to pick up a cargo of blacks on the West African coast, carry them to Jamaica in the old *Zong*, and sell them there. He hoped to make enough money to last him the rest of his days.

Cruising the west coast of the Dark Continent, Collingwood began bartering for slaves with the local chiefs. He stayed on the coast too long, however, for by the time he sailed for the Caribbean with 440 slaves, his disgruntled crew of 17 had dwindled to only 10 men. These were scarcely enough to man the ship, and it was not possible for them to let the blacks come on deck for fresh air and exercise. As a result, many of the slaves died of sickness. Collingwood's inexperience as a navigator compounded his difficulties. He sailed past Jamaica and was then faced with the prospect of tacking back against the wind in a leaky vessel that was short of hands. Collingwood feared, too, that if he sailed into Kingston with half the blacks dead and most of the rest ailing,

he would lose his share of the profits. After studying the maritime insurance laws, therefore, he decided to throw overboard 132 of the sickest slaves. He rationalized this act by arguing that it was less cruel than to let them die of disease.

News of the atrocity leaked out and, in time, the case came up for trial in a London court. Incredibly, it was not a case of murder but merely an insurance dispute. The underwriters were refusing to pay the value of the 132 claimed by Collingwood and the *Zong*'s owners for each jettisoned slave. The decision went in favor of the *Zong* owners, because the jury believed Collingwood's false story that water on the ship had been in such short supply that some of the sickest slaves had to be sacrificed in order to save the others on board and the ship itself. The question of murder, or even of inhumanity, never came up in court. Later, a lawyer named Granville Sharp, who was famous for his work against slavery, asked the British authorities to punish those who were responsible for the crime. When the government refused to act, Sharp pleaded for a new trial—but none was ever held. The case created an uproar and unleashed political activity against slavery. Finally, in 1807, England passed a bill abolishing the slave trade.

Illustration: *Inhuman conditions on slave ships led to the Zong Atrocity*

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Illust: The Bettmann Archive

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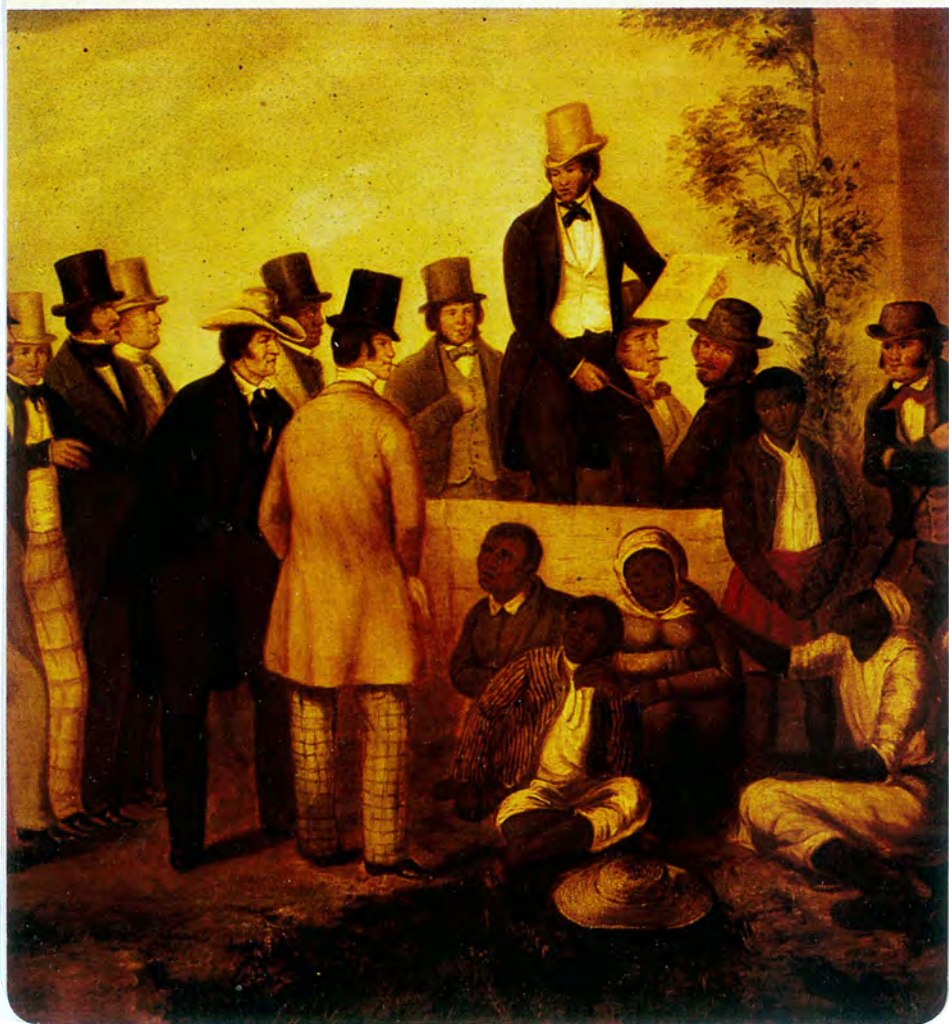
**“The case created an uproar and
unleashed political activity
against slavery.”**

The Slave Auction



1620-1860

THE BLACK MAN



The Slave Auction

1620-1860

Sold to the Highest Bidder

Long before—and long after—the United States banned the importation of slaves from Africa and the West Indies in 1808, slave auctions represented the heart of the American slave system. The auction itself reflected the white man's view of blacks as property to be bought and sold, much like cattle or other livestock.

The process began when slave ship captains arranged their sales in various ports up and down the Atlantic coast, from New York to Florida, by advertising new arrivals in local newspapers. Those slaves who survived the terrible "middle passage" across the Atlantic—during which as many as one out of five perished—were washed and oiled as soon as the slave ship landed in America. This was designed to make them look healthy and more salable, after which they were divided into groups. Sick and dying blacks were usually sold separately, as one lot. The able-bodied were chained together, hand and foot, and marched from the dock to the auction place. There they were assembled in "pens," given a clean suit or dress, and instructed to "look smart" for the customers. Prospective bidders then checked their teeth and bodies as if they were horses, and some requested the blacks to strip—to make sure they were not too badly scarred

from previous whippings. The auctioneer would then begin the bidding, and the highest price bid for a given black was the sole requirement for ownership. Papers were signed and the new owner transported his slaves back to the plantation.

The auction also served to establish current values in slave property. In 1790 a healthy field hand might be worth \$300 to \$350, but by 1860, just before the Civil War, the price had escalated to \$1,500. Part of the reason was Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin in 1793, which made cotton the South's leading crop. The demand for slaves to work the cotton fields soared and by 1845 there were more than ten prospective buyers for each slave.

To the slaves themselves, of course, the auctions were a dreaded event. Not only did they represent the possibility of acquisition by a more brutal owner; but often whole families were separated in a few moments on the auction block. Diaries kept by slaves include accounts of mothers begging in vain for their new masters to buy their children too. This disregard for basic human feelings shocked Americans in the North as well as the South, building the demand for the emancipation that President Abraham Lincoln finally declared on January 1, 1863.

Illustration: *A family of slaves is auctioned off to the highest bidder*

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Illust: Chicago Hist. Soc.

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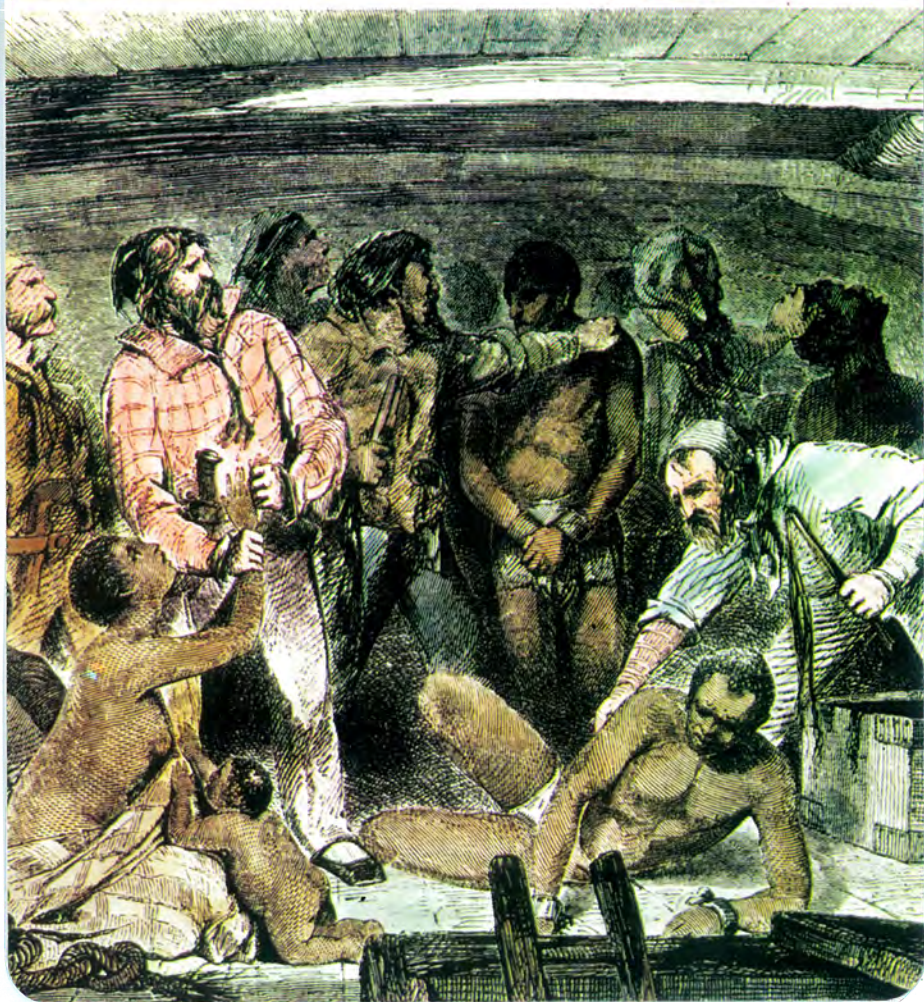
"This disregard for basic human feelings shocked Americans in the North as well as the South."

The Arithmetic of the Slave Trade



1773-1774

THE BLACK MAN



The Arithmetic of the Slave Trade

1773-1774

How Much Rum Buys a Man?

Much of what we know about the colonial era's slave trade is based on records kept by the traders themselves. One such record is the account book for 1773/74 of the *Adventure*, a sloop owned by two brothers, Christopher and George Champlin, of Newport, Rhode Island.

Christopher Champlin, the *Adventure's* chief owner, was a Newport shopkeeper who also engaged in the "triangular trade." (That is, he would send his sloop, laden with rum and sometimes also manufactured goods, to Africa, where its cargo would be bartered for slaves. These were then taken to the West Indies, where they were sold, part of the proceeds going to buy molasses. This last was then brought back to Newport to be made into rum, thus completing the third leg of the triangle.)

According to Captain Samuel Tuell's record of the *Adventure's* voyage, she left Newport at the end of October 1773 with a crew of ten and 24,380 gallons of rum (valued at £1,500) in her hold. There were also, among other things (including handcuffs, shackles, and padlocks), some 26 gallons of vinegar with which to clean the suffocatingly cramped quarters of the slave deck. There, a man could not stand to his full height, and

decks such as these often accommodated hundreds of slaves.

To insure his stake in the *Adventure*, Christopher Champlin paid out £78. (He enjoyed the advantage of an extremely low premium because the "black trade" had become known as a fairly safe and highly profitable investment.)

After five weeks at sea, the *Adventure* reached the coast of Sierra Leone, but Captain Tuell found the price of slaves there too high. (Only a year earlier, the average price per slave was 150 gallons of rum. Now females were fetching 190 gallons and males as much as 220.) Therefore the captain sailed southward beyond the Gold Coast to Whidah, where he was able to get 62 slaves in exchange for his rum, which he managed to extend with 500 gallons of water. He also purchased pepper, palm oil, and gold dust.

After several weeks at sea the *Adventure* arrived at the island of Grenada; 58 of her slaves were still alive. These were sold for a total of £2,146, of which Captain Tuell put some £715 into molasses. He then sailed back to Newport, where—after all wages and expenses had been covered—the Champlins realized a profit of some £400, or 23 percent net on their investment.

Illustration: *Slaves on board ship are packed into their sleeping positions*

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"...58 of *her slaves were still alive.
*These** were sold for a total of £2,146..."**

**The author calls the ship, Adventure, a "her" and the slaves "these".*

The Slave Caste System



1700-1865

THE BLACK MAN



The Slave Caste System

1700-1865 *Field Hands vs Indoor Slaves*

The black slaves in America did not need to be reminded that they were considered inferior by the white society — the law and daily experience took care of that. In the early days of slavery in America, for example, farm units were generally small and self-contained. They were staffed by only a few slaves who learned to build and repair farm and craft machinery. This learning process soon produced a class of skilled black artisans who performed most of the necessary services on the plantation, from manufacturing bricks to making shoes. As blacksmiths, cabinetmakers, and plasterers, they often worked on the *task system*, hiring out their services on their own time under arrangements that helped keep their owners' costs down while providing the slaves with an opportunity to buy their freedom. Many did, and one result was that in 1860 half of the seamen in the U.S. Navy were black men.

But as slavery became an exclusively Southern institution, and farms in the South grew in size, the demand grew for prime field hands who worked under foremen or overseers, mass-producing a single crop of cotton, rice, or tobacco on thousands of acres of land. The field hand, who was almost always poorly dressed and fed,

might not even be known by name to the master for whom he or she toiled from dawn to dusk. But this cruel method of farming brought power and wealth to the white owners, and some of that prestige, oddly enough, carried over to those blacks who were skilled and trusted enough to serve their master directly. These housekeepers, cooks, and butlers tended to be very loyal; for example, when a bright young child of a field hand was sent up to serve in "the big house," they took an active role in teaching the newcomer how to behave. As a minority, these indoor slaves on the large plantations were the most likely to win special privileges, such as being taught to read, going on a special trip, or simply being given a hand-me-down dress. Their gradual support of white values, and their attempts to introduce such "proper behavior" into their own families, ironically brought against them charges of being "uppity" from the other slaves.

During the final phase of slavery in the deep South, the indoor slaves had the best opportunity to learn firsthand about the complex white power structure. But this status in itself demonstrated the degree to which all blacks had been robbed of their own history and cultural values.

Illustration: *A black house slave presents a plate of rolls*

© 1979, Panarizon Publishing Corp, USA

Printed in Italy
03.012.20.22

"These housekeepers, cooks, and butlers tended to be very *loyal*..."

Slave Breeding



1620-1865

THE BLACK ...



Slave Breeding

1620-1865

The Business of Selling People

For more than a hundred years, colonial sea captains had smuggled their slave cargoes onto the long, unprotected American coastline in order to avoid local tariffs. But when the international slave trade was outlawed in 1807, and European nations agreed to patrol and enforce the ban, the old practice of smuggling took on major new incentives. For one thing, many of the domestic slave traders were in favor of ending the African trade so as to enhance their own business interests. The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 and the opening of new states following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 had created a huge demand for prime field hands. This meant not only the addition of new ships to the smuggling fleets operating out of major ports up and down the Atlantic coast, but a new emphasis on slave breeding in the domestic trade. From 1800 on, a special value was placed on black women who were "good breeders," in marked contrast to the old days when white slave owners often sold slaves who became pregnant because they lost too much work time.

As the Southern coastal land became exhausted in the 1820s, and planters moved inland to farm rich new land, their slave supply came in part from domestic breeders in the older states of

Maryland and Virginia. The latter, which was openly referred to as a "Negro raising state," exported 6,000 slaves a year by 1832, often with the help of Northern sea captains who ferried cargoes of slaves from Norfolk, Virginia, to New Orleans, Louisiana. The captains also continued their illegal African trade, because a black could be purchased for \$10 there and sold in Georgia for \$650. Moreover, the demand for prime field hands remained so strong that their price doubled again between 1845 and 1860. Smuggling fleets began using the fast clipper ships to outrun foreign patrol boats, or they would simply hoist a Spanish flag should an American warship come into view. This spirit of lawlessness was matched by domestic traders, who knowingly sold kidnapped free blacks into slavery.

And so both smugglers and breeders worked to fill the pens and caravans that became common sights in Baltimore, Maryland; Richmond, Virginia; and Washington, D.C. It was not until the middle of the Civil War, in 1862, that the Union government finally enforced the law by executing the first and last U.S. slaveship captain ever arrested off the African coast with a cargo of blacks.

Illustration: *Blacks raised for the slave market awaiting sale, 1840*

© 1979, Panarizon Publishing Corp, USA
Photo: The Bettmann Archive

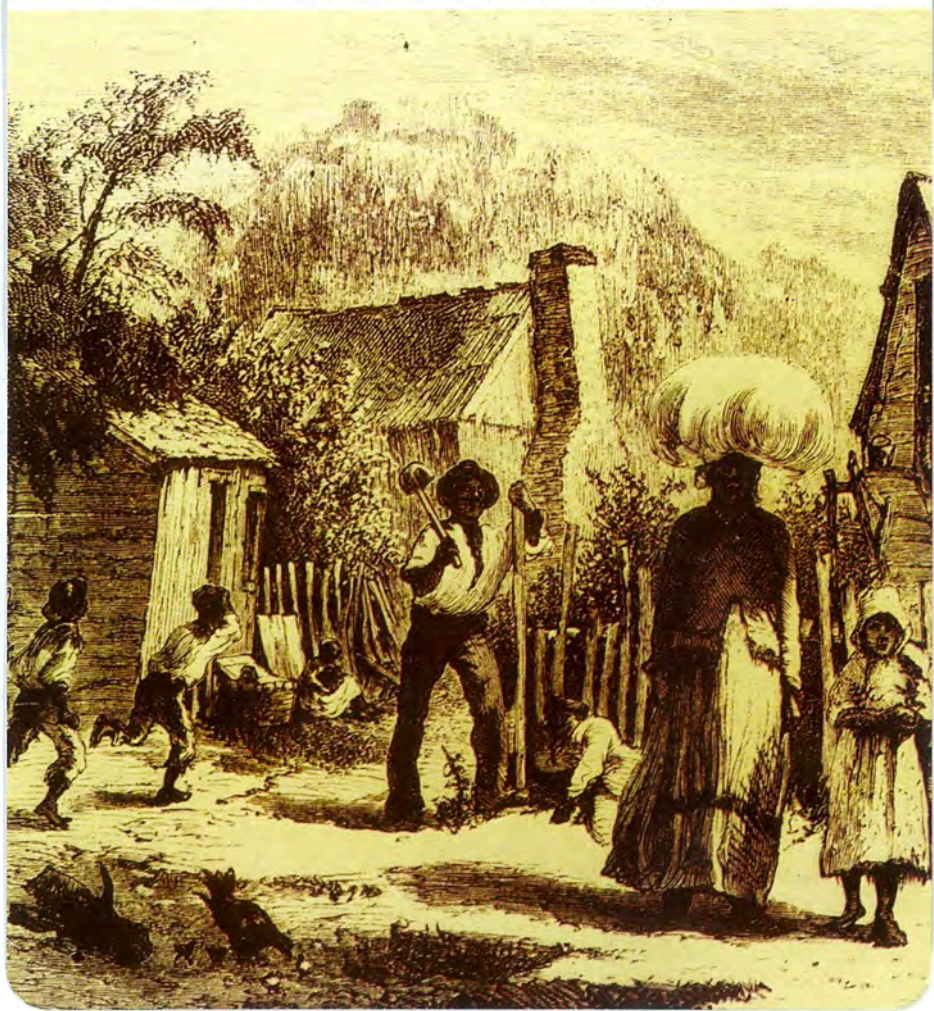
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"This spirit of lawlessness was matched by domestic traders, who knowingly sold kidnapped free blacks into slavery."

Slave Quarters



1620-1865



Slave Quarters

1620-1865

Homemade Beds and Tables

Depending upon the wealth and generosity of its owner, a black slave family's community might appear to be a thriving little village, including cabins for each family; work houses—a tannery, perhaps, along with a wash house; a day nursery or children's house, a "sick house," and bachelor quarters where unmarried male slaves lived.

While some homes were not kept neat and orderly, both slaves and owners had a special interest in seeing that the cabins were clean, healthy, and protected from the cold. Two or three rooms might house a large family, but most cabins were one-room log huts with trundle beds for children pushed under the parents' bed to save space. These shelters were mortared or caulked with mud and sticks, to which animal hair was sometimes added to fill crevices. Cabins located near the sea might be plastered with oyster shells, lime, and sand.

The central feature of a slave cabin was usually the fireplace, which provided winter warmth and cooked the nightly food that simmered in hanging pots, while potatoes and cornpone baked in the ashes. Unfortunately, chimneys that were made of mud and sticks were a frequent source of fires, and often the slaves had to get out of bed at midnight to extinguish a burning chimney.

Slave cabins were usually located several hundred yards from the owner's mansion, near a spring and a forest where water and fuel could easily be obtained. The cabins were furnished with homemade beds, tables, and chairs that could readily be scoured and cleaned with sand. Wooden boxes provided extra tables, chairs, or storage space; and each cabin also had a wooden water bucket and large wash tub where the children could be washed at night with water heated at the fireplace. Drinking and eating utensils were often made from gourds. In summer, slave families often cooked over outdoor fires, and women carried dirty clothes to a stream, using wooden paddles to beat them clean (washboards not having been invented yet). Twice a year the cabins were emptied for a thorough cleaning. Mattress stuffing made of straw, cotton, moss, leaves, or feathers was replaced; walls were repaired and whitewashed; earth floors were limed.

Like all plantation life, however, the work at home was scheduled only when the master's chores had been done. City slaves who "lived out," or those who were permitted to hire out, prized the special privacy afforded by even the humblest shack, no matter how inferior it might be to the plantation cabins.

Illustration: *Slaves at work outside their cabins in Virginia*

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Illust: Library of Congress

Printed in Italy
03.012.61.23

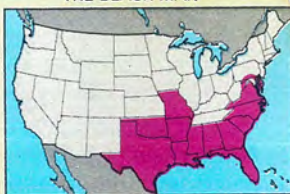
"...both slaves and owners had a special interest in seeing that the cabins were *clean, healthy, and protected from the cold.*"

Family Life of a Slave



1620-1865

THE BLACK MAN



Family Life of a Slave

1620-1865

Communities in Bondage

A Southern slave's earliest memory was most likely the sense of community that developed within his or her own plantation "family." This included not only the slave child's own parents and close relatives, but all the other slaves who lived close by. These family ties were encouraged by the slave owners because they tended to lift the slaves' morale and keep them pacified. The slaves, in turn, kept the feeling alive mostly by slave songs and the older slaves' accounts of Africa, the plantation's history, or of the grandparent, uncle, or aunt the child had been named after. However, the fear of separation was constant. Some slave mothers hid their children in the woods at word of their possible sale, feeding them on ground water and berries until the master sent word he had changed his mind. Many slave children, for that same reason, reportedly hid at the mere sight of strange white men.

Most plantation owners, realizing that new babies were morale boosters, as well as a free source of new workers, allowed the slave mother a month's lying-in time with her new infant. Large plantations had nurseries where blacks too old for field work became midwives who cared for newborns and fed the younger children at noon. Mothers returned from the fields sev-

eral times a day to nurse their babies, while older brothers or sisters took over their care after the young ones became active toddlers. Most slave children started working in the fields around nine or ten years of age. The brightest children, however, were requisitioned for work in the master's home, where they helped prepare meals, cleaned house, and performed other domestic tasks.

Marriages and baptisms among slaves were usually held in secret services, even when the master insisted on formal ceremonies in the white man's church. Most slaves resented the fact that the phrase "Until death do us part," which they considered essential, was frequently omitted in the white church's marriage vows.

Slave families usually came together for an evening meal cooked by the mother in the large fireplace that was the central feature of most slave cabins. Furnished with homemade chairs, tables, and beds, these plain white-washed huts were kept as clean as circumstances allowed. Sometimes a small yard for growing vegetables or keeping livestock was permitted. This, along with the products of the mother's spinning and weaving, was used to supplement the slave family's meager funds.

Illustration: *A family of slaves outside their cabin*

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Photo: Library of Congress

Printed in Italy
03.012.32.24

“A Southern slave’s *earliest memory* is most likely the *sense of community*...”

The Slave Gang System



1617-1865

THE BLACK MAN



The Slave Gang System

1617-1865

People Working in Groups

Under slavery it was common to set people to work in groups rather than as individuals, and this practice gave rise to the “gang system.” Many anthropologists studying the work patterns of West African tribes—the Yoruba, among others—have commented on the communal aspect of work within these societies. The tradition of collective work, cultural historians conclude, influenced work patterns among slaves in America.

Slaveowners tailored the work on their plantations to this method of labor. Although many might have wished to institute a program of “task labor”—the performance of set duties on an individual basis during specified time periods—such disregard for slaves’ preference was inefficient. As Georgia planter Edmund Ruffin confided in 1857: “A Negro cannot abide being alone and will prefer work of much exposure and severe toil in company, to any lighter work, without any company.”

Much of the work on plantations indeed called for a great deal of exposure and toil. The gangs were sent to the fields before dawn and began to work when the sun rose, continuing their toil until the sun went down. Overseers would assign gangs of 10 to 20 to a stretch of field, often setting a

black “driver” over them to keep the gang working—with or without a whip—at a steady and rapid pace. The “supervisor” drove his gang at clearing land, planting, picking cotton—whatever the season demanded. The work pace would often be set by singing, and “quick-time” songs were favored by masters since these speeded production. Gangs also had songs for assembling in the morning and special shouts and hollers to celebrate the end of the day.

Overseers sometimes let slaves assemble themselves into gangs of family and friends. But most often the groups—especially on large plantations—were subdivided according to age and sex. Although men and women worked side by side in the fields, special “prime hand” gangs were arranged on an all-male basis. Additionally, groups of very young and older women were paired together in gangs to do lighter assignments. The very least taxing tasks were given to groups of children ranging in age from eight to 15. Despite these subdivisions, the gang system did help the slaves to feel a collective spirit; it also served the best interests of the planter by providing a unified and efficient labor force on the pre-Civil War plantation.

Illustration: *A slave gang leaves the fields with loaded baskets of cotton*

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Illust: The Bettmann Archive

Printed in Italy
03.012.92.24

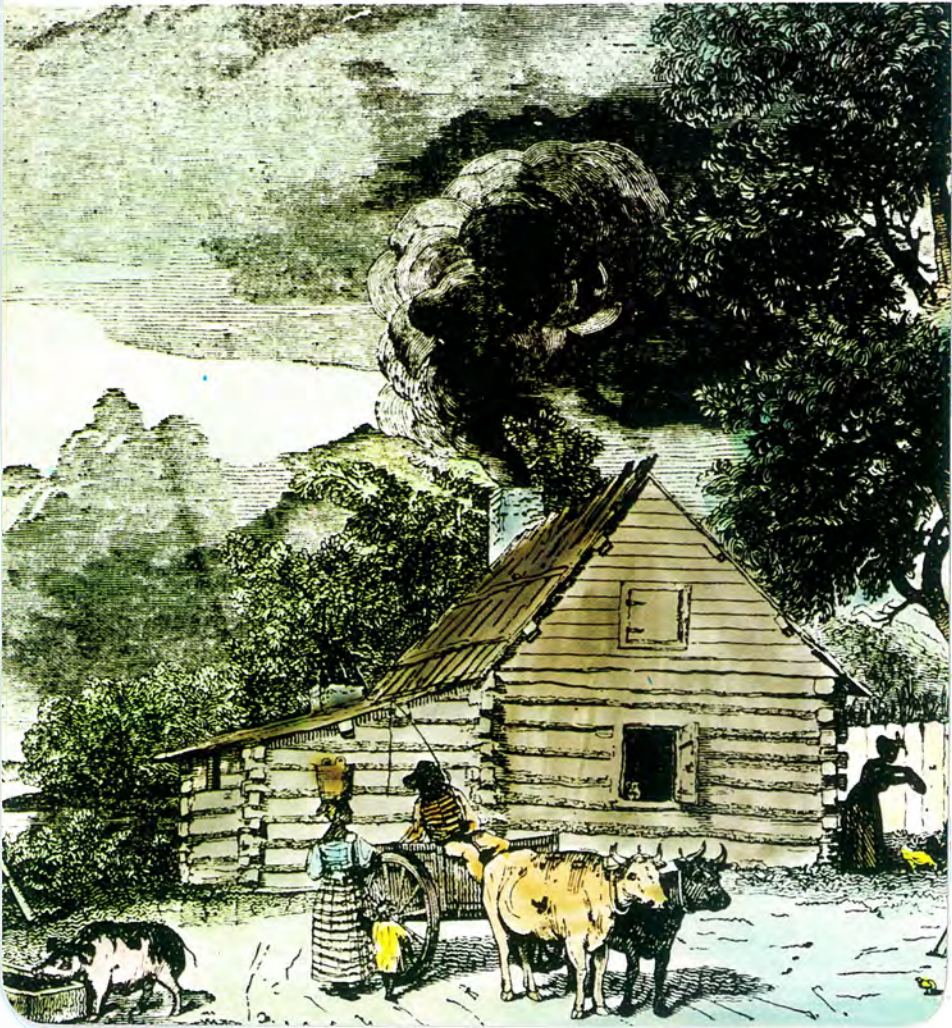
“A Negro cannot abide being alone and will prefer work of much exposure and severe toil in company...”

Slave Gardens



1620-1865

THE BLACK MAN



Slave Gardens

1620-1865

In the Old South, planters often allowed their slaves to plant their own gardens in order to supplement the regular plantation diet. Most blacks were eager to grow their own vegetables, not only to increase their food supply, but because they yearned to express some measure of independence from their masters. While the slave-owners provided the seeds and tools for these gardens, blacks were expected to cultivate only crops which their families could consume. Still, many blacks traded and bartered their produce among themselves. In order to keep this slave business within the confines of the plantation, planters agreed to purchase any surplus goods the slaves might produce. This would prevent the slaves from selling their overstock on an illegal or "black" market (hence some claim the origin of that term).

Sometimes these gardens were shared by all the slaves on a communal plot of land. More often, each slave family tended to a small garden adjacent to its own cabin. In this way, slaves developed a sense of ownership and pride that had been denied them under the harsh conditions of chattel slavery; in fact, on many plantations slaves actually demanded their "right to keep a garden." Since it was

"Tilling His Own Soil"

owners' best interests to keep the slaves content and well-fed, most owners granted the slaves their demands—so long as the slaves' work was not interfered with. Because blacks were very possessive of their own land, most masters were able to extract more work from their slaves by allowing them this leeway of their private gardens. The system worked for both blacks and whites, in giving slaves a sense of independence while providing masters with some measure of control.

Thus, most slaves spent their free hours on Sundays "tilling in their own fields." The most popular crops in the slave gardens were collards, turnips, cabbages, and corn. More lenient masters allowed their slaves to plant small plots of cotton or tobacco, which the owners bought for cash. Although some slaves hoped to earn enough money to buy their freedom, most looked upon gardening simply as a way of improving their lot under slavery.

Once freedom had been secured, the former slaves were well served by the agricultural skills they had developed. Instead of starving, as the white Southern planters had predicted they would, the ex-slaves were able to tend their own gardens and feed their families.

Illustration: *Slave cabins and gardens in antebellum Virginia*

© 1980, Panarizon Publishing Corp, USA
Illust: The Bettmann Archive

Printed in Italy
03 012 56 24

"...it was in the owners' best interest to keep the slaves *content and well-fed*, most owners *granted the slaves their demands*..."

Slave Narratives



1620-1865

THE BLACK MAN



TWELVE YEARS A SLAVE.

NARRATIVE

OF

SOLOMON NORTHUP.



Slave Narratives

1620-1865

Tales of Bondage and of Freedom

In 1847 a former black slave named William Wells Brown published a narrative entitled *A Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself*. Brown's account read in part: *Travelling along the road, I would sometimes speak to myself, sounding my name over, by way of getting used to it, before I should arrive among civilized human beings . . . I travelled on at night until I became so chilled and benumbed—the wind blowing into my face—that I found it impossible to go any further, and accordingly took shelter in a barn, where I was obliged to walk about to keep from freezing. The thought of death was nothing frightful to me, compared with that of being caught, and again carried back into slavery. Nothing but the prospect of enjoying liberty could have induced me to undergo such trials for*

Behind I left the whips and chains

Before me were sweet Freedom's plains!

Brown's narrative was one of the many popular works published by former slaves during the period before the Civil War. Northerners who were opposed to slavery sponsored these people, and the antislavery movement as a whole supported the work of those blacks who had managed to escape to freedom. Indeed, literature of this type became so popular to

readers in the North that some enterprising whites manufactured fictional tales of fugitive slaves and published them for profit.

Before the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's great novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in 1852, slave narratives were the main source by which Northerners learned about life on the Southern plantations. Most black writers, like Brown, provided their readers with vivid descriptions of the cruelty of slaveowners and the harshness of slave family life. Most black authors also devoted a great deal of space to their escapes from slavery. Henry "Box" Brown was so named because he escaped to freedom in a box. Other slaves succeeded in shipping themselves North in barrels, crates, and trunks. Stowaways on ships were sometimes successful, hiding below decks until their ships crossed into free waters. In one unique and daring attempt, a slave roped himself securely to the bottom of a northern-bound railway car.

Throughout their adventures, these black men and women — including young children on occasion — demonstrated courage and fortitude that amazed both their Southern owners and their Northern liberators.

Illustration: *The frontispiece of a slave narrative features a portrait of the author*

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Illust: Schomburg Center for Research, N.Y.P.L.

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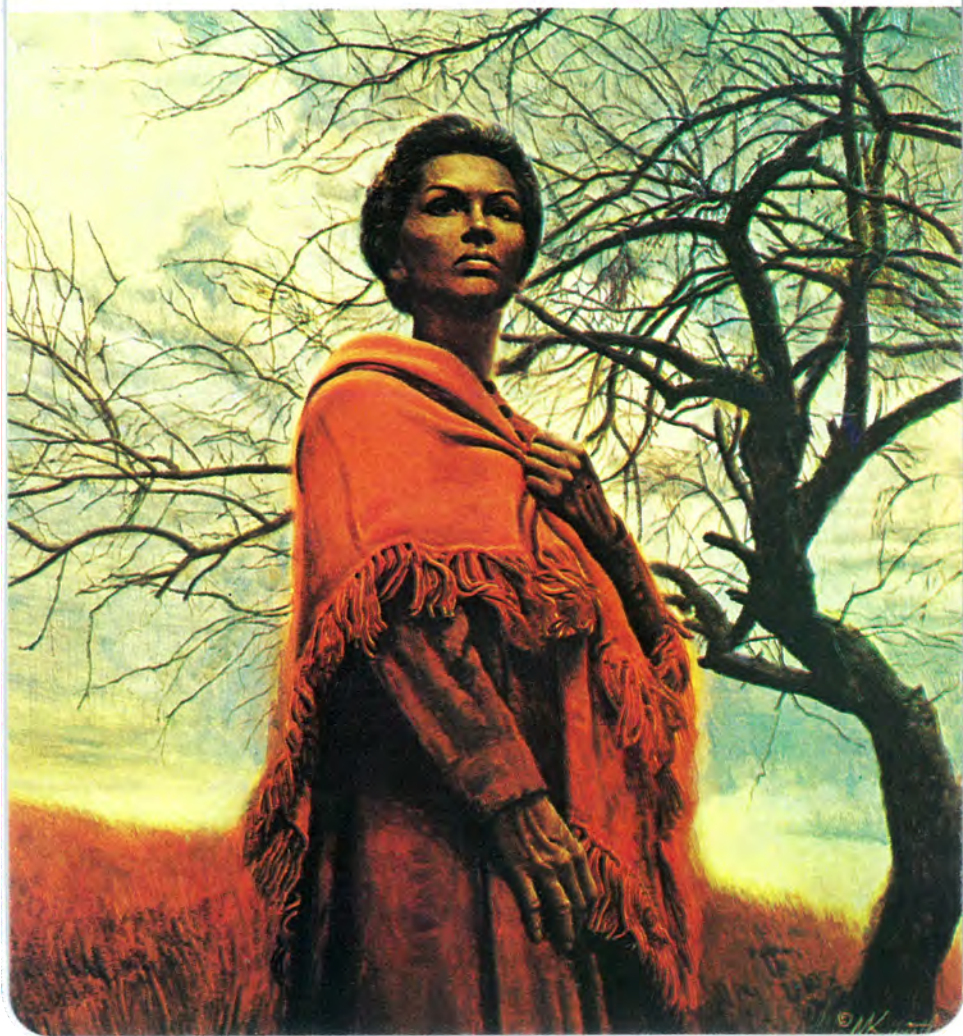
“...some enterprising whites manufactured fictional tales of fugitive slaves and published them for profit.”

Sojourner Truth



1797-1883

THE BLACK MAN



**If you are able, please look up a real photograph of Sojourner Truth. How does it compare to this one?*

Sojourner Truth

1797-1883

Crusader for Blacks and Women

She was tall and gaunt, and her deep contralto voice, powerful personality, and fearlessness in the face of hostile audiences made Sojourner Truth, a former slave, a compelling speaker. She traveled throughout the Midwest pleading for the freedom of her race; although illiterate, she had a natural grace of speech and a thorough knowledge of the Bible.

Her parents, known simply as James and Elizabeth, were slaves of Charles Hardenbergh, a wealthy Dutch landowner in Ulster County, New York. Born about 1797 and named Isabella, the young slave girl grew up speaking only Dutch. She was sold several times; from 1810 to 1827, she served in the home of John J. Dumont in New Paltz, New York. During this period, Isabella had five or more children by a slave named Thomas; two of her daughters were taken from her and sold. In 1827, the year before New York state abolished slavery, she fled the Dumont farm and took refuge with Isaac and Maria Van Wagener, who lived nearby. She took their name and, as Isabella Van Wagener, moved to New York City about 1829.

Having joined the John Street Methodist Church and, later, the African Zion Church, Isabella created

a stir by claiming to see visions and to hear God's voice, which, in 1843, told her to take the name Sojourner-Truth and to become a traveling preacher. During this period she also joined the abolitionist movement and, about 1850, went west to appear with Frederick Douglass and other leaders against slavery. Though beaten by mobs in Kansas and Missouri, she remained firmly committed to her work, supporting herself by selling the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, written for her by Olive Gilbert. She also took up the cause of women's rights, for which she spoke at many meetings.

During the Civil War, Sojourner Truth walked the roads seeking gifts of food and clothing for black soldiers in the Union army. In 1864 she went to Washington to meet President Abraham Lincoln, to whom she said: "Mr. President, when you first took your seat I feared you would be torn to pieces, for I likened you unto Daniel, who was thrown into the lions' den, and if the lions did not tear you to pieces, I knew that it would be God that saved you, and I said if He spared me I would see you before the four years expired, and He has done so, and now I am here to see you myself."

Sojourner Truth died on Nov. 26, 1883, in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Illustration: *Sojourner Truth, preacher and fighter for racial equality*

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Illustration by Mort Künstler, illustration copyrighted by Mort Künstler, 1979

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03 012 92 23

“...fearlessness in the face of *hostile audiences...beaten by mobs in Kansas and Missouri...*”

Slave Punishment



1619-1865

THE BLACK MAN



Slave Punishment

1619-1865 Nothing Too “Cruel or Unusual”

Although the Constitution of the United States protected citizens from “cruel and unusual punishment,” it did not protect the slaves who toiled in the plantation fields of the South. Slaves were not thought of as “citizens” but as property. Therefore many slaveholders felt free to punish their slaves as they saw fit.

The various forms of punishment meted out to slaves had their origins in the colonial period, when English law was still in force. England’s harsh punishments during the 1600s were transported to the colonies along with the prisoners who became some of America’s earliest inhabitants. These punishments included whipping, branding, ducking under water, and the use of imprisoning stocks. Mutilation — the cutting off of an ear or other appendage of a captured runaway slave — was also common.

These measures continued to be applied to slaves even after such punishments were no longer part of the American legal system. For even as slavery became an entrenched institution in the South, the rules governing the treatment of slaves were never codified. On plantations owned by harsh masters, slaves were continually punished for the slightest infractions. These punishments ran the gamut —

from simply boxing the ears of a domestic servant for being too slow in fulfilling a request to slapping, kicking, flogging (often 50 to 100 lashes), tarring and feathering, stringing up, branding, and other forms of mutilation. Slaves who ran away were chased by savage dogs and, when caught, were often shackled with iron weights or tied to stakes. Sometimes they were put over a barrel and beaten on the bare buttocks with special paddles that caused painful blisters. Floggings were often so severe that they left permanent scars.

Although slaves feared these forms of corporal punishment, one form of punishment was feared over all the others: the threat of being sold away from their families to a strange master in a strange place. This threat became a major weapon in the arsenal of slaveholders who sought absolute control over their slaves.

There were, of course, slave masters who recognized that less violent punishments were more effective in the long run, and who did not wish to physically harm their valuable property (the slaves). But the institution of slavery itself made punishment a necessity, and it was not until the system was destroyed that this cruel and unusual corporal punishment ended.

Illustration: *A black slave is brutally beaten by his owner’s foreman*

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03.012.21.16

***Do you see any type of common punishment for slaves *missing* from this card?**

Slave Patrols



1780-1861

THE BLACK MAN



Slave Patrols

1780-1861

The Planters' Police Force

Because of the fear of slave insurrections in the South, many planters instituted a system designed to prevent them. They organized slave patrols—a voluntary program of policing cities and plantations. The slave patrols involved a “pass system” whereby, in areas supervised by these groups, all slaves either off their plantations (in rural areas) or on the city streets (especially after sundown) were required to carry written passes—permission for travel authorized by their masters. For this reason slaveowners forbade the education of blacks, and in some areas it was a crime to teach a slave to write. If slaves learned the alphabet, they could forge their own passes and thus make their way to freedom.

Although planters in isolated and rural areas also sought protection, the places that were most threatened and insecure were the South's urban centers. In the cities and towns the climate was ripe for unrest. Two of the three major slave rebellions plotted during the antebellum era—Gabriel's revolt in Richmond in 1800 and Denmark Vesey's rebellion in Charleston in 1822—were in cities. Not only were the paramilitary mounted police a constant presence in the city streets but the whipping post also became a symbol of the planters' authority. The patrols

publicly disciplined those slaves who broke curfew, who ventured out alone without a pass, or who disturbed the peace. The enforcement of punishment was a public spectacle. In 1783 a southern matron in Edenton, North Carolina, described the situation as she had experienced it: “The Patrols have been taking up all the country negroes that they find in town without Passes and whipping them in our hearing for this hour past.” Although this woman may have found the noisy disturbance unpleasant and annoying, she may well have been glad to know that the patrols were out there, actively preserving white authority.

In the countryside, posses of patrolers roamed the roads. It was forbidden for blacks to gather in groups without white supervision. The patrols would search for campfires, torches, or other signs of unauthorized activity during the most dangerous hours, after sundown. Often these guards would stumble upon slave runaways, who would be picked up and returned to their owners for punishment. Thus the patrols policed and protected those areas of the South where slaves were numerous, preserving the system and safeguarding the South's white population against insurrection and bloodshed.

Illustration: *A slave-patrol officer examines the written passes of black slaves*

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03 012 90 24

**“...paramilitary mounted police a
constant presence in the city streets...”**

Slave Resistance— Poisonings



1690-1865

THE BLACK MAN



Slave Resistance—Poisonings

1690-1865 • “A Sweet and Secret Revenge”

The African slaves who were brought to the New World were wrenched from their homes, families, and language. But they were able to carry along their knowledge of folk medicine, which most slaves continued to practice in their cabins behind the “big house.” Since they were agricultural workers, they knew the herbs and plants of their rural environment, finding many that were similar to those of their homeland. Mothers and folk doctors would pass down remedies from generation to generation, while conjurers had their own concoctions. These often proved as successful in curing illnesses as the medicines used by whites. In fact, the whites often sought the slaves’ advice in these matters.

Along with their extensive knowledge of medicinal roots, herbs, and berries, the blacks were, quite naturally, also familiar with poisonous plants. This knowledge, together with many slaves’ easy access to the master’s home, made poisoning as a means of revenge a fairly simple matter. The whites were, of course, aware of the danger; they all feared vengeance for the cruel captivity in which they kept their slaves, but there was little they could do to allay these fears. Some tried to treat their house slaves well so as to gain their loyalty, but

even this approach was known to backfire.

Harriet Martineau, a British traveler who toured the South before the Civil War, was amazed by the stories she heard. Many planters feared poisoning, others had uncovered plots, and still more told of suspicious deaths that were thought to be due to poisoning by slaves. An especially shocking story came from a soft-hearted plantation mistress who, as she told it, has confessed her anti-slavery convictions to her maid, saying that she detested the institution so strongly that she planned to have her own slaves—especially her trusty maid—set free after she herself had died. This maid, a young slave girl, no sooner heard her mistress’s words than she tried to speed things up by giving her poison. Fortunately, the mistress became aware of it in time and survived. Brokenhearted and disbelieving, she confronted the slave, who freely admitted that of course she had tried to kill her mistress because she wanted to be free. A similar tale involved a Southern planter, a doctor, who realized that he was gradually being killed by small daily doses of poison. Upon confronting his “faithful” house slaves, however, he promptly had his throat cut.

Illustration: *Slave owners often feared death at the hands of their black cooks*

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03.012.89.24

“...soft-hearted plantation mistress...
fortunately the mistress...survived.”

Denmark Vesey's Rebellion



1822

THE BLACK MAN



Denmark Vesey's Rebellion

1822

A Slave Revolt Backfires

One of the most extensive slave revolts ever planned was led by a former black slave named Denmark Vesey. Born about 1767, Vesey had been a shipyard carpenter and a seaman before buying his freedom in 1800 with some lottery winnings. Vesey established his own carpentry business in Charleston, South Carolina, and was soon a wealthy man and a leader in the local African Methodist Church. His knowledge of French and Spanish, which he had picked up during his seafaring days, enabled him to keep in touch with news from other port cities. He learned among other things that a slave uprising in Haiti led by Francois Toussaint L'Ouverture, had been successful in 1791, and that the U.S. Congress was holding frequent debates on the slavery issue in Washington, D.C.

Vesey used these ideas to foster the principle of equality among Charleston's blacks, and to make them realize their common power. Working with him were Peter Poyas, Mingo Harth, and Gullah Jack, who were also leading members of the African church, and together they developed a conspiracy involving thousands of blacks. Their plan was to kill all of the slave-owners and take control of the city. They spent months stealing and hiding arms and ammunition. They organized

their army in secret cells, so no one person knew the names of everyone involved, and only certain blacks were authorized to recruit new members. To reach the black slaves, they pretended to hold religious classes.

Shortly before the planned uprising, one of the slaves was overheard trying to enlist another slave, and two weeks later a white man reported to local authorities that he had heard about a plot, scheduled for either June 16 or the second Sunday in July. Vesey and Poyas were arrested, and although they remained silent they were convicted and hanged on July 2, 1822, after another black man had confessed. With these leaders died the full story of one of the most extensive slave revolts ever devised.

In the full conspiracy trial that followed, evidence about the scope of the plot horrified the South, as did the boldness of Vesey and other leaders and the ease with which free blacks were able to contact blacks in the slave community. A system of tighter slave controls began at once in the deep South that soon extended to Virginia and the border states. Meanwhile, of the original group of 130 men arrested, another 35 slaves were executed and 32 more were deported from South Carolina. The rest were acquitted.

Illustration: *Vesey's belief in his right to freedom inspired his ill-fated revolt*

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Illust: Goodspeed Coll., Worcester Art Museum

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03.012.43.18

“...a white man reported to *local authorities* that he had heard about a plot...”

Nat Turner's Rebellion



THE BLACK MAN



Nat Turner's Rebellion

1828-1831 *An Early Fighter for Freedom*

Nat Turner was not like most slaves in the South during the early 1800s. He had somehow learned to read and write, and he became convinced as a youth that he was "intended for some great purpose." Turner was born in Southampton County, Virginia, on October 2, 1800, to an unknown father who escaped from slavery soon after Nat's birth. His mother was a recently arrived African slave named Nancy. Born the property of Benjamin Turner, from whom he took his surname, Nat soon became the property of Thomas Moore. After Moore's death, Mrs. Moore remarried, and Nat was put to work for her new husband, Joseph Travis.

Although he was well cared for by his master, Turner was acutely aware of the terrible injustices and cruelty inherent in the slave system. Religion also played a large part in Nat Turner's life, and by the time he was 20 his fellow slaves accepted him as their Baptist minister, even though he was never formally ordained. Indeed, Turner's ability to organize a slave rebellion stemmed from the position of leadership his religious teachings had given him—especially when it came to convincing his fellow slaves that miraculous religious visions had come to him.

In May, 1828, Turner believed he

had been informed by the spirits that he would soon be given a sign to commence war against the whites. Three years later, the sign he had been waiting for finally appeared: it was an eclipse of the sun. Turner and seven trusted men set July 4, 1831, as the date for their uprising, but Turner became ill and the plan was postponed. On August 13, Turner awoke to a strangely lit sky and, taking that for a new sign, decided to take action. On August 21, he and his small band entered the Travis house and killed the entire family.

The rebels continued their attack, going from house to house killing all the occupants. By then they had acquired arms, horses, and some 60 new supporters. The whites, meanwhile, were beginning to organize. Government troops were called in, and by August 25 the rebellion had been quelled. Turner managed to escape and went into hiding for six weeks before he was captured, tried, and convicted. He was hanged on November 11, 1831, in Jerusalem, Virginia. While in jail, he had dictated his confessions to a white lawyer, Thomas Gray, whose eventual publication of Turner's memoirs remains the best source of information about the rebellion to this day.

Illustration: *Discovery of Nat Turner*

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Illust: Lib. of Cong.

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03.012.04.05

“white lawyer, Thomas Gray...best source of information about the rebellion...”

Runaway Slaves



1619-1865

THE BLACK MAN



Runaway Slaves

1619-1865 "Bound For The Promised Land"

In his book *Roots*, author Alex Haley described an escape attempt by a slave who desired freedom more than life itself. The slave was captured within 24 hours and, as punishment, the toes of one foot were cut off by his white master with a hatchet. Frederick Douglass, the renowned black abolitionist who escaped from slavery and lived to tell about it, once said that he first thought of escape when he was only seven.

Throughout the South slaves often took flight to reach relatives from whom they had been separated, and whole families might flee at word that one of them was about to be sold. A spiritual or work song, such as "I'm bound for the promised land," often alerted other slaves to an escape in progress. Some escaped slaves returned to help others escape, while some lived as "maroons," escapees who hid deep in the swamps and forests. So many other runaways found refuge with the Indians that they triggered the Seminole War that began in 1835 and continued for seven years. Special identification papers were eventually required of a slave when he was away from his workplace. Without these, he could be whipped. In 1712 South Carolina introduced the death penalty for escaped slaves and set up special patrols and bounties for their capture. Some slave

owners preferred to sell their captured runaways at once rather than risk spreading the "mania for freedom" among the other slaves.

Flight was easier the farther north a slave lived. It was also easier in the cities than the rural areas, because the escaped city slave had a better chance of contacting whites or free blacks who could offer aid. Making a successful escape took a strong sense of individualism. The runaway had to be familiar with the roads so that he could make his way in a purposeful manner and not arouse suspicion. He also needed enough mastery of the language to talk his way out of difficulty, and he required a skill with which to earn money while he tried to blend into free black society.

Some bounty hunters challenged blacks who had escaped as much as ten years before, and so families often took the precaution of not telling their children where they'd been born lest they be quizzed someday by slave hunters. Although recaptured slaves were given severe punishments as an example to others, many slave owners tried to discourage running away by more humane methods. Some tried to preserve the slave family structure and make certain that punishment, when resorted to, was moderate.

Illustration: *A young slave family makes a dangerous dash for freedom*

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Illust: The Bettmann Archive

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03.012.30.21

“...many slave owners tried to discourage running away by more *humane* methods.”

Runaway-Slave Posters



1620-1860

THE BLACK MAN



\$100 REWARD!

RANAWAY

From the undersigned, living on Current River, about twelve miles above Doniphan, in Ripley County, Mo., on 2nd of March, 1860, **A NE GRO MAN**, about 30 years old, weighs about 160 pounds; high forehead, with a scar on it; had on brown pants and coat very much worn, and an old black wool hat; shoes size No. 11.

The above reward will be given to any person who may apprehend this said negro ou. of the State; and fifty dollars if apprehended in this State outside of Ripley county, or \$25 if taken in Ripley county.

APOS TUCKER.

Runaway-Slave Posters

1620-1860

Ads with Cruel Messages

Throughout the South, during the antebellum period, slaves rebelled against their servitude in a variety of ways. The most popular expression of individual protest was simply to run away, but these flights to freedom were seldom successful. Many reasons contributed to the high rate of returns for runaways, among them slave patrols, slave catchers, and the voluntary return of slaves to their families. One of the main reasons for the success of these methods was the advertisements posted by slave owners seeking the apprehension and return of their escaped slaves.

Most of the advertisements focused on the runaways' physical attributes. Some of the newly imported African slaves, for example, were more easily identifiable by their ritual scars and facial markings, which made them noticeably different from their Afro-American brothers in bondage. Also, some African slaves had their teeth filed into points, or certain teeth were missing in accordance with tribal custom.

On the other hand, many runaway posters and notices called attention to features that were primarily Afro-American, rather than African. Harsh masters whose slaves had run away before would mutilate those blacks to

punish them for their "transgressions." These mutilations—whether they were missing ears or eyes, or brands on the cheeks or shoulders—also made runaways more easily identifiable. In extreme cases, a master might maim a slave by damaging an arm or a leg, or by chopping off several toes.

Another common item found in runaway advertisements was the "manner" of the slave. In the following notice, master Michael Sherman gave equal space to the deportment as to the appearance of his fugitive-at-large:

RUN AWAY about the First Day of June last from the Subscriber, living on *Chickahominy* River, *James City* County. A Negroe Man, short and well-set, aged between 30 and 40 years, but looks younger having no Beard, is smooth-fac'd and has some Scars on his Temples, being the Marks of his Country; talks pretty good *English*; is a cunning, subtle Fellow, and pretends to be a Doctor. It is likely, as he has a great Acquaintance, he may have procur'd a false Pass. Whoever brings him to me at my House aforesaid, shall have two Pistoles Reward, besides what the Law allows.

Illustration: *A poster offers \$100 for the return of a runaway slave*

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Illust: The Bettmann Archive

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“Many reasons contributed to the high rate of returns for runaways, among them *slave patrols, slave catchers...*”

The *Amistad* Affair



1839-1841

THE BLACK MAN



The *Amistad* Affair

1839-1841 *Captured Slaves Gain Freedom*

The so-called *Amistad* case began in February 1839 when a group of Portuguese slave traders captured a large number of African tribesmen from Sierra Leone. Then, in violation of all treaties then in force (slavery was illegal in Spain at the time), the slaves were shipped to Havana, Cuba, which was then a hotbed of unlawful slave trading. There, 54 of the blacks were bought by two Spanish planters and put aboard the Cuban schooner *Amistad* for shipment to a plantation in the Caribbean Sea.

At sea, on July 1, 1839, the desperate slaves, under the leadership of an African named Cinque, took over the *Amistad* by sheer force of numbers, and during the struggle the ship's captain and two members of the crew were killed. The Africans then put the rest of the crew members on an island and demanded that the owners take them back to Africa. Instead, the white helmsman of the *Amistad* tricked the slaves into capture by an American brig off Long Island, New York, whereupon the Spaniards were set free and the slaves were sent to prison at New Haven, Connecticut, charged with murder. The story received wide attention in American newspapers, most of which were in favor of sending the slaves back to Cuba—a course also en-

dorsed by President Martin van Buren. Northern abolitionists were against such extradition, however, and they began raising funds for legal defense. Even though the Spanish planters still claimed the slaves, as did the government of Spain itself, the murder case went to trial in 1839 in Connecticut. The court ruled that the slaves, because they had been held illegally, were therefore not responsible for their acts.

The case came up for review before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1841, and former President John Quincy Adams, arguing for the defendants, accused van Buren's administration of "utter injustice" in seeking to satisfy the claims of the Spanish. Adams also defended the right of the accused slaves to sue for their liberty, even though only 32 of the blacks now remained alive, the rest having died at sea or in prison while awaiting trial. The Supreme Court, impressed with Adams's eloquent argument of the case, decided in favor of the Africans and they were returned to their homeland.

The *Amistad* case thus established the precedent—some 20 years before the Civil War—that any slaves who escaped from illegal bondage should be treated as free men by United States authorities.

Illustration: *Captured Africans gain control of the slave ship Amistad*

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**“The Supreme Court, impressed with
Adams’s eloquent argument of the case...”**

“Pap” Singleton’s Crusade



1861-1892

THE BLACK MAN



“Pap” Singleton’s Crusade

1861-1892

Black Exodus from the South

In August 1882 many dignitaries, including the governor of the state, came from all over Kansas to honor “the originator of the Colored Emigration from the south to the west” for his “untiring efforts to ameliorate human suffering.” The guest so honored was Benjamin “Pap” Singleton, a carpenter who had fled to Canada from slavery in Tennessee, returning South after the Emancipation Proclamation. He got back home just as blacks’ post-Reconstruction “freedom” became an increasingly horrid nightmare of burned schools, fraudulent sharecropping tactics, and—for those who protested—the nighttime terror of the Klan. Early black “agitators” for migration had been horsewhipped and driven away, but Singleton was a “persuasive talker and a compulsive promoter” who had noted in his travels the sparsely settled free-soil areas of Kansas. Thousands of poor black farmers were already pooling meager savings to hire agents for an escape to the West. Singleton, in his sixties, became their agent: as he later told a Congressional committee investigating this great migration, “I started it all, I was the cause of it all.”

Singleton first led some 300 blacks

to “Singleton’s Colony” in Cherokee County, Kansas. Soon, handbills announced departure dates for “All Colored People That Want to Go to Kansas”: the fee was \$5. The governor of Kansas met one group and organized the Freedmen’s Relief Association to give them food and temporary shelter. Newspapers picked up their story, and the clippings helped Singleton persuade yet more blacks that there was an alternative to oppression. Others, like Henry Adams of Louisiana and Isaiah T. Montgomery of Mississippi, helped organize this movement, which peaked in the great “Exodus of 1879”: over 19,000 “Exodusters” entered Kansas in one 20-month period and 5,000 left South Carolina in a single week. Their movement on foot or by water, train, and on horseback was sometimes opposed by whites, who saw the migration as a serious drain on the South’s labor force, as well as a political setback engineered by the Republicans. Nearly 80,000 black men and women had left the South by 1881, when the migration ended, and “Pap” Singleton, the man who “started it all,” returned to his home state of Tennessee, where he died at the age of 83 in 1892.

Illustration: *One of the thousands of black families that followed Singleton north*

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Photo: Nebraska State Historical Society

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“...for those who *protested*, the nighttime terror of the *Klan*...”

The Dred Scott Case



1846-1856

GOVERNMENT



The Dred Scott Case

1846-1856 *Slavery is Law Of The Land*

In 1857 the U.S. Supreme Court hastened the advent of the Civil War by its controversial ruling in the so-called *Dred Scott Case*. The case involved the legal status of Dred Scott (c. 1795-1858), an illiterate black slave. In 1833 Scott became the property of Dr. John Emerson, an army surgeon who was then stationed at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis, Missouri, which was a slave state. When Emerson moved with the army in 1834 to Rock Island, Illinois, and later to Fort Snelling in the Wisconsin area of the Louisiana Purchase Territory, he took Scott with him. Illinois was a free state and, under the Missouri Compromise, the area of the Louisiana Territory in which they resided was also free. Emerson returned to St. Louis in 1838, bringing Scott with him.

Emerson died in 1844 and his wife became Dred Scott's owner. Then, in 1846, Scott sued for his freedom on the ground that his previous residence in a free state and a free territory made him a freeman. The Missouri Supreme Court denied his petition because, it claimed, residence in a free territory did not make a slave free. Mrs. Emerson, meanwhile, had married Massachusetts Congressman Calvin Chaffee, an abolitionist, who sold Scott to Mrs. Emerson's brother, John San-

ford (spelled *Sandford* in the court case due to a clerical error). Chaffee and Sanford then arranged to bring the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The case was heard in February 1856 and involved a number of separate questions: Was Scott a "citizen" of Missouri and therefore entitled to the rights and privileges of a citizen? Were he and his family free because he had resided in a free state? Were they free because they had lived in a free area of the Louisiana Territory? The Court ruled against Scott, saying it made no difference where a black person lived...he or she could not be considered a citizen of *any* state. In his majority opinion, Chief Justice Roger Taney stated that a black person, "had no rights which a white man was bound to respect." The Court also ruled that the Missouri Compromise was illegal and further denied Scott's case because the status of a slave depended on the law in the state in which he resided. The South was elated with the decision, but the Republicans denounced the Court's decision and vowed to fight it. The election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 was a direct result of that vow. Dred Scott himself never lived to see the consequences of his historic act. He died in St. Louis on September 17, 1858.

Illustration: *Dred Scott, citizen or slave?*

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Illust: Missouri Hist. Soc.

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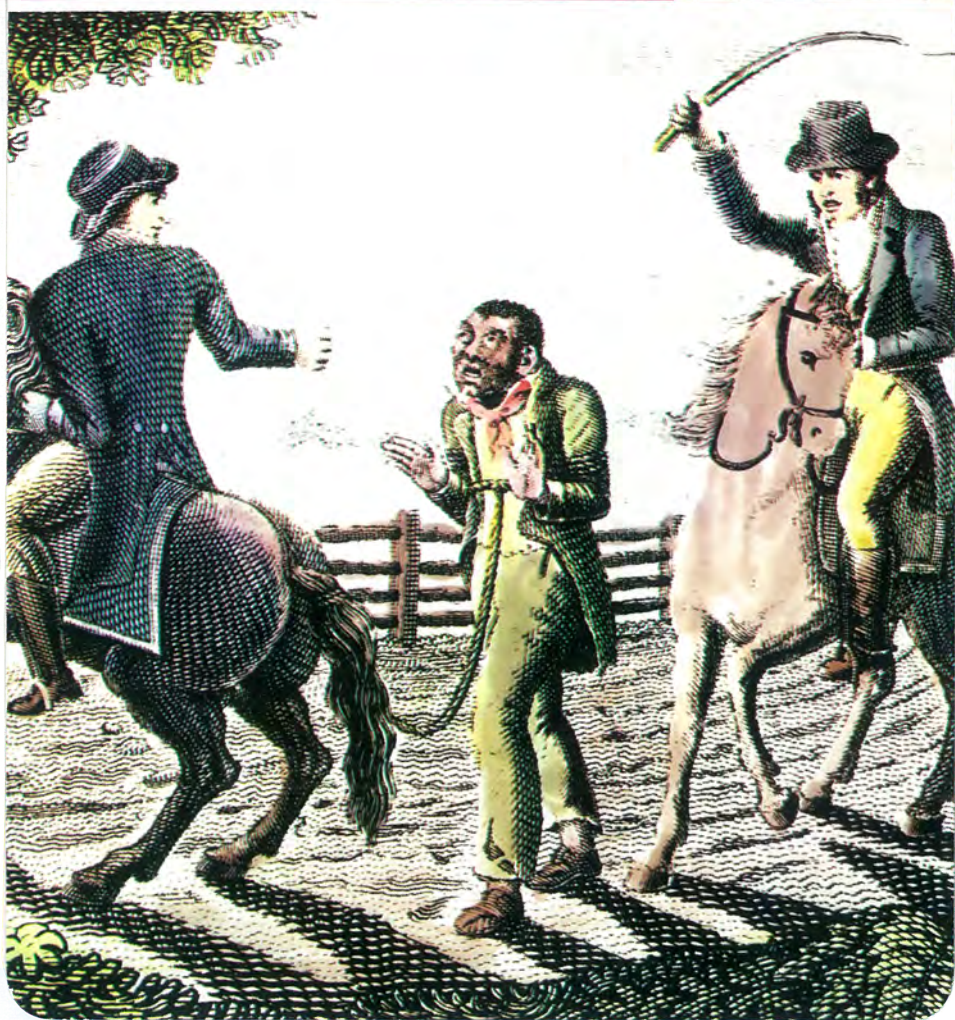
"The election of Abraham Lincoln was a direct result of that vow."

The Fugitive Slave Law



1850-1864

THE CIVIL WAR



The Fugitive Slave Law

1850-1864

“God-defying, God-denying”

Passed as a part of Henry Clay's Compromise of 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law proved to be more effective in outraging Northern abolitionists than in guaranteeing the return to their owners of runaway Negro slaves. At the time of its passage, the slave states were growing increasingly alarmed by the efforts of Northern antislavery groups, actually quite sporadic and local, to help runaways reach freedom in the North or in Canada. As tension over the slavery issue mounted and the possibility of armed conflict loomed, the Fugitive Slave Law was proposed as an appeasement to the Southern states, where militants were becoming convinced that the federal government was unwilling or unable to guarantee their rights to their slave “property.”

The law itself quickly became the most controversial provision of the 1850 compromise because of the extreme harshness of the measures against fugitive blacks. Anyone capturing an alleged runaway was authorized to take him or her before a federal commissioner, who could order the fugitive's extradition and return to the state from which he or she escaped, regardless of how long ago that escape had been effected. There was no trial to determine whether the Negro was in fact a runaway slave—the oath of the

owner was all that was required for delivery into bondage. In addition, the act mandated a \$1000 fine and six months in prison for anyone found guilty of aiding or harboring a fugitive slave.

The reaction in the North was violent; there, antislavery sentiments had a strong foothold. Many Northerners refused to obey the “enactment of Hell,” referring to it as a “bill” rather than a law, and calling those who passed it “traitors to Freedom, serviles of Slavery.” There were numerous celebrated rescues of escaping slaves, such as that of William Henry in 1851, who was taken from a Syracuse, New York, courtroom and spirited safely to Canada. The furor over such events prevented many Americans from realizing that the notorious Fugitive Slave Law was in fact rarely enforced. Between 1850 and 1860, only about 200 slaves were actually returned to bondage under the act and there were only some dozen cases in which those aiding fugitives were prosecuted by the federal government.

The importance of the law undoubtedly lay in its effect of rallying the abolitionists and of awakening those previously indifferent to the horrors of slavery.

Illustration: *A free black is cruelly taken into custody as a fugitive slave*

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Illust. New York Historical Society

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03 012 81 24

“...no trial...the act mandated a \$1,000 fine and six months in prison...”

The Underground Railroad



1780-1865

THE BLACK MAN



The Underground Railroad

1780-1865

Escape Route from Slavery

Until the Civil War ended slavery in America, it was not uncommon in the South to see crudely lettered signs nailed to trees informing passers-by of runaway slaves. One such sign might read: "Runaway slave, prime condition, 18 years or thereabouts. Answers to name of Toby. Property of Jeremiah Higgins."

In this case, "runaway slave Toby" may have been one of the lucky ones who managed to escape slavery by making use of the Underground railroad, which was not really a railroad and was not located under the ground. It was a system used before the Civil war to transport escaped slaves into the 14 "free" states in the North or into Canada. It was called the Underground Railroad because its activities usually took place in darkness and always in secret, and because the 3,000 or more people who were part of the system used railroad terms when they communicated with one another. The slaves were called "freight"; those who helped them were known as "conductors"; the resting places, which were mostly farms located about a night's march apart, were called "stations"; and the routes north were referred to as "lines."

The most frequently used lines led through Pennsylvania and Ohio, but the network extended as far west as

Iowa and north to the Canadian border. Along the way, anti-slavery Northerners and free blacks assisted the runaways with food, hiding places, and directions to the next stop. Often elaborate disguises, including wigs, moustaches and powder, were used to help make the runaways appear white. The "conductors" included some famous names, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; Quaker leader Thomas Garrett; and Harriet Tubman, who escaped from slavery in 1849 and spent the next few years leading more than 300 blacks to freedom.

Of course, not all the slaves escaped. Some were captured, despite the secrecy, and taken back to their masters for flogging, and sometimes death. But a surprising number did reach the North, some estimates ranging as high as 100,000 men, women and children during the period from 1780 or thereabouts to 1865. In addition to the people it rescued from slavery, the Underground Railroad forced many otherwise uninvolved Northerners to face up to the problem of slavery and the plight of the blacks. It also helped to convince the South that the North would never leave the issue of slavery alone. Both of these factors played a part in the bloody and tragic Civil War that began in 1861.

Illustration: *Fugitive slaves are brought to a farmhouse station to be fed and sheltered.*

© 1979, Panarizon Publishing Corp, USA
Illust: C. T. Webber, Cincinnati Art Museum

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03.012.02.22

"...the Underground Railroad forced many...Northerners to face up to the problems of slavery..."

Harriet Tubman: Black Moses



1820-1913

THE BLACK MAN



Harriet Tubman: Black Moses

1820-1913 *Leading Slaves to Freedom*

John Brown, the well-known abolitionist, once referred to Harriet Tubman as "... one of the best and bravest persons on this continent." Born into slavery in Dorchester County, Maryland, around 1820, Tubman became a nurse, a spy, an abolitionist, an activist, a guide, and a courageous worker for freedom of blacks.

Harriet Tubman escaped from slavery on a Maryland plantation in 1849 and worked her way north with the help of the Underground Railroad. This was a huge, secret network of people — both black and white — who were dedicated to helping slaves in the South escape to the northern states or into Canada. The following year Tubman herself became a "conductor" — one who actually guided the runaway slaves from one station to the next along the Underground Railroad. She returned in secrecy to Maryland shortly after that to bring her own family to freedom. That trip proved to be only the first of at least 19 other secret missions Harriet Tubman made into the South to bring back her people.

During the next few years word about this courageous black woman — whom the freed slaves called "Moses" — spread both North and South. In the North she became a friend and confidante of leaders within

the abolitionist movement, and an aggressive fighter for the end of slavery. In the South she was a wanted fugitive with a price on her head, and huge rewards were offered to anyone who would bring her in. But Harriet Tubman was not captured. In all, she guided about 300 slaves to freedom, sometimes — when they grew afraid or too exhausted — at gunpoint. When the Fugitive Slave Act was passed by Congress in 1850, promising stiff penalties for anyone who helped runaway slaves, Tubman began taking her people all the way to Canada.

During the Civil War Tubman went to work for the Union as both nurse and spy, traveling mostly with Northern troops along the coast of South Carolina. A tireless woman, she gained strength and confidence, she said, by relying on her unwavering belief that God would protect her. When the war was over, the Black Moses returned north and made her home in Auburn, New York, where she died on March 10, 1913, at the age of about 93. Long before she died, however, Harriet Tubman had asked for a small pension in return for her many services to the Union. The government of the United States finally awarded her a pension of \$20 per month — thirty years after the end of the Civil War.

Illustration: *Portrait of the brave and determined black leader Harriet Tubman*

© 1979, Panarizon Publishing Corp. USA
Illustr: National Portrait Gall.

Printed in Italy
03.012.19.22

**"...United States finally awarded her
a pension of \$20 per month— *thirty*
years after the end of the Civil War."**

**William Lloyd
Garrison**



1805-1879

THE BLACK MAN



William Lloyd Garrison

1805-1879

Crusader Against Slavery

One of the great antislavery crusaders of his day, William Lloyd Garrison is perhaps best known as the editor and publisher of the outspoken *Liberator*, which promised in its very first issue in 1831 to be "... as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice ...". The *Liberator's* leading article ended with this call to battle: "I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—and *I will be heard.*"

Born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, on December 10, 1805, Garrison was raised in poverty. At 13 he became a printer's apprentice, and at 17 he was already contributing essays to his hometown newspaper. After working as a journalist on various papers, Garrison met Benjamin Lundy, who inspired the young writer to join the antislavery cause. Soon Garrison was editing a paper published by Lundy in Baltimore, Maryland, which adopted a hostile attitude toward all slave traders. In 1830 he was convicted of libel and spent seven weeks in jail.

Garrison began publishing the *Liberator* on his own in Boston in January 1831. The journal was supported mainly by free Negroes and never had more than 3,000 subscribers. It demanded "immediate" abolition and denounced the holding of slaves as an outright

crime. Garrison also formed the New England Anti-Slavery Society, the first American abolitionist organization based on "immediatist" principles. Its early members included local blacks and elements of the Boston aristocracy.

In the late 1830s, with antislavery sentiment rising throughout the North, many abolitionists wanted to carry their fight to the polls. But Garrison insisted on his initial approach of "immediate" repudiation of all forms of slavery. Indeed, he went so far as to brand the U.S. Constitution itself as a proslavery document. During the 1850s Garrison's "moral crusade" gained fresh acceptance, and the rise of anti-Southern feeling in the North caused Garrison to become a national figure. When events led inevitably to the Civil War, Garrison, although a pacifist by nature, saw the conflict as a necessary evil to resolve the slavery issue.

Until the 13th amendment to the Constitution ended slavery in 1865, Garrison continued to publish the *Liberator*. After that he discontinued the journal and resigned as president of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Until his death in New York City on May 24, 1879, Garrison concentrated on other reform movements, including the rights of American Indians and women's suffrage.

Illustration: *A portrait of the pacifist and abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison*

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Illust: Library of Congress

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"During the 1850s Garrison's 'moral crusade' gained fresh acceptance.."

American Anti-Slavery Society



1832-1865

THE BLACK MAN



American Anti-Slavery Society

1832-1865

The Abolitionists Fight Back

It was called “a covenant with death and an agreement with hell.” That was how William Lloyd Garrison, the most outspoken of the abolitionists of the 1830s and 1840s, described the compact that existed between the North and South over the institution of slavery. In 1831 this zealous Puritan from Massachusetts founded the magazine *The Liberator* in order to promote his views. The following year Garrison organized the New England Anti-Slavery Society in Boston, and a few months later he took over a newspaper called *The Emancipator* to broadcast his uncompromising opposition to slavery. Garrison’s firebrand kind of journalism won him enemies as well as followers—both North and South—and in 1835 he was beaten by a mob in Boston because of his strong views.

In 1833 abolitionists from other states met with Garrison and his followers in Philadelphia to form a broader-based American Anti-Slavery Society. Local chapters were set up in all the northern states, until by 1840 some 130,000 to 170,000 persons were members of the Society. Most of its chapters were set up in rural areas where the revivalist Protestant church was strong. The Society’s members were largely ardent churchgoing women, and its leaders were mostly

clergymen. A few blacks also belonged to the organization, but except for some who were prominent in the Underground Railroad, which had been set up to help slaves escape from the South, they were not leaders in the organization.

In 1835 the Society launched a postal campaign to flood the South with its antislavery literature, but local mobs burned most of the publications and the postmasters refused to circulate what was left. The Society also presented petitions against slavery in Congress, but Southern politicians used the gag rule, which prevented these petitions from being heard. In 1840 Garrison and his supporters took control of the Society, causing the more moderate wing to split away and form the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. This new faction soon became involved in American politics, supporting the Liberty Party in the 1840s, the Free Soil Party in the 1850s, and the beginnings of the Republican Party in 1854. Despite the fact that abolitionists represented a minority in America up to the start of the Civil War, the Society’s views were eventually vindicated by President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation of 1863.

Illustration: *A speaker addresses the Anti-Slavery Society on the Boston Common*

© 1979, Panerizon Publishing Corp, USA
Illustr: The Bettmann Archive

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“A few blacks also belonged to the organization...*they were not leaders...*”

John Brown's Raid



1859

THE BLACK MAN



John Brown's Raid

1859

"His Soul Goes Marching On"

All his life John Brown was driven by a passionate hatred of slavery. Born in 1800, one of 16 children in a poor, white New England family, Brown dedicated his life to the dream of freeing every slave in America. In the decade before the Civil War, the country began to divide into two opposing camps, with the Northern states opposing slavery and the Southern states favoring it. To make matters worse, several territories in the West were in the process of becoming states, thus threatening to upset the delicate balance between slave and free states in Congress. The new states had to choose carefully whether or not to allow slavery. To effect this decision, men from both sides streamed into the new territories, and among them was John Brown who, together with four of his five sons, led a guerilla band against the proslavers in the Kansas Territory. Here, Brown became famous for his role in the murder of five adherents of slavery in what is thought to be retaliation for the deaths of five fellow abolitionists in an earlier massacre.

Forced to leave Kansas, Brown, with the secret support of some wealthy abolitionists, rented a farmhouse near Harper's Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia), in the summer of 1859.

Brown's plan was to seize the federal armory there and distribute arms and ammunition to the slaves whom he hoped would rush to join him. On October 16, he and a band of 21 highly disciplined followers—composed of 16 white men and five blacks—made their attack. They rounded up several hostages, and throughout the next day and night Brown and his men held out against the local militia. But on the morning of October 18 they were forced to surrender to a small group of U.S. Marines under the command of Colonel Robert E. Lee. Brown himself was severely wounded, and ten of his men (including two of his sons) were killed. Five men managed to escape, but Brown was captured on October 19.

Tried for murder, for inciting slave insurrection, and for treason against Virginia, Brown was sentenced to death and was hanged on December 2, 1859. The popularity of his cause and his dignified conduct during the trial caused him to become a martyr and a folk hero in the North. He became immortalized in the song "John Brown's Body," which became a rallying cry for all abolitionists and later a marching song for Union soldiers during the Civil War.

Illustration: *John Brown leads his followers in their crusade against slavery*

© 1979, Panarizon Publishing Corp, USA
Illust: State House, Topeka, Kansas

Printed in Italy
03 012 05 20

*"...caused him to become a martyr
and a folk hero in the North..."*

The Last American Slave Ship



1858-1861

THE BLACK MAN



The Last American Slave Ship

1858-1861

Grim Saga of the Wanderer

After the abolition of the slave trade in 1808, the price of slaves soared dramatically. By 1858 a prime field hand could cost as much as \$2000. In that year a group of southern planters got together to see what could be done about the situation. A syndicate was formed and a yacht with a Yankee skipper was quickly acquired. The yacht, which flew the pennant of the exclusive New York Yacht Club, was called the *Wanderer*, and she was destined to become the last in the infamous line of American slave ships.

The *Wanderer*, a 104-ft. (31.7 m.) schooner built for speed, was sold by her sportsman owner in May 1858 to a Captain W.C. Corrie. Corrie proceeded to sail south to Charleston, S.C., where he had unusually large water tanks installed in his ship. Corrie then set sail for Africa. Aboard were a Mr. Semmes and a Mr. Farnum, both members of old and respectable American families.

After a brief stop at St. Helena to take on water and crude food supplies, the *Wanderer* approached the African coast. Dodging U.S. and British patrol ships, Farnum, the venture's business manager, sneaked ashore. He purchased some 750 slaves from the local African king, mostly in the preferred age group of 13 to 18. After packing

them ruthlessly into the hold, Farnum and his confederates made a fast trip back across the Atlantic and landed their illegal human cargo first on Jekyll Island off the Georgia coast. At this point the activities of the slaving syndicate attracted public notice, and antislavery forces started to agitate for an investigation.

Within days the government began prosecution of the shady syndicate under the 1808 ban on the African slave trade. Most of the venture's principals were arrested in January 1859 and released on bail. While the legal proceedings against them dragged on, they brazenly sold the Africans at a net profit to each investor of \$10,000. The trial resulted in little more than a wrist-slap: no one went to jail and the *Wanderer* was merely condemned and put up for sale at public auction. There an agent for the slaving syndicate bought her back and the group got back into the slave smuggling business.

The *Wanderer* made at least three more profitable voyages to Africa, illegally importing slaves into America until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. She was finally wrecked off the coast of Honduras and her ignominious career was ended.

Illustration: *The speedy Wanderer, last of the American slave ships*

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Illustr F. D. Roosevelt Library

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03 012 93 04

“The trial resulted in *little more than a wrist-slap; no one went to jail...*”

Afterword...

by Dr. Edward Onaci

In pursuit of serious study of slavery

The enslavement of Africans in North America continues to be a difficult topic for people to discuss thoroughly and honestly. Some people see discussion of such crimes as taboo, something best left in a collective past as African Americans work toward becoming fuller citizens at the present. Others see discussions about the trafficking and forced and uncompensated labor of Africans and their descendants as a way to shame them and keep them in a position of cultural subjection and sociopolitical disempowerment. Still others believe that enslavement in the United States was bad, but that the country has overcome it and has given the victims of this foundational American institution a great opportunity than they would have had if they had not been kidnapped and forced to enrich this country while they remained essentially impoverished and mistreated.

Each of these perspectives attempts to minimize, if not ignore, the following facts about American slavery and its legacies:

1. The trafficking, bondage, dehumanization, and torture of African people was essential to the development of American economic and political power.
2. Enslavement continues to have lasting detrimental effects on its victims, even as it continues to empower those who most benefitted from it. Guyora Binder claims it is the “slavery of emancipation” and Saidiya Hartman considers it the “afterlife of slavery.” One of the most visible legacies is the mass incarceration of African American men and women, as well as the policing of Black communities and near immunity from punishment and accountability when police brutalize and murder men, women, and children of African descent.
3. The commoditization and trafficking of African peoples helped shape beliefs about their intellectual and moral inferiority. Such racist ideas led directly to the country’s first “Jim Crow” laws. Racial

segregation and discrimination across the country continue to disproportionately influence the life chances of African-descended people.

4. This country, as with most countries that benefited from the global market of chattelized Africans, has never taken steps to repair the damage it has done to a significant degree; nor did it ever compensate survivors or their descendants for the theft of enslaved people's bodies, labor, and intellectual and cultural innovations. In fact, the United States government refuses even to study the long-term impact of slavery on the descendants of the enslaved.

5. This country continues to blame people of African descent for their victimization (much like it does the victims and survivors of numerous atrocities) while benefitting culturally, politically, and economically from its crimes. Again, mass incarceration is an example.

Considering this situation, it is important that educators, students, and activists take seriously the study of human trafficking and bondage in the United States. This includes acknowledging the multiple interpersonal relations and realities that shaped the experiences of the enslaved and the beneficiaries of the system, taking an honest look at its geography and economics, and developing a thorough analysis of the range of interactions that African peoples had with the system.

While many were actively rebellious, more people were just trying to survive and live, and some were complicit in its machinations. All of these positions require study.

Using visual images and information, such as those in this zine, provides us with an opportunity to help young people rethink America's history and legacy of human trafficking in ways that are honest and productive. They hone in on the legal and extralegal methods by which this country abused an entire group of people, and they begin mapping slavery's terrain. The cards' depictions and blurbs about slave patrols and punishment, as well as the range of self-activity that remind us of African people's resilience, all help humanize people who were treated as subhuman. Importantly, attempts to form and protect loving bonds are explored. So is the reality that as

superexploited people, the enslaved could not even depend on nourishment from their captors. However, the cards are less than perfect. Although the traffic in Africans was practiced by all of the North American British colonies, and even though every single state in antebellum America benefitted (especially New York and Rhode Island), the cards emphasize the South at the expense of revealing the extent of slavery's reach. The image of Sojourner Truth should call into question how the illustrators imagined the demographics of the slaveholding North. And, uncritical heroization of William Lloyd Garrison and the American Anti-Slavery Society may prevent us from questioning the racial politics of white abolitionists.

Keeping these complications in mind, what IS the story of America and how do the cards in this zine tell it? Who was the target audience for such a collection when the creator originally marketed them? What can students, activists, and educators learn from such a set, and how can we push the narrative in directions that clarify the connections between the master narrative of history and how we think about and respond to problems in our own lives? By asking questions about history and how history is narrated, we will develop the critical thinking and historical insight required to address some of our most pressing problems.

Author Biography

Edward Onaci is an educator who is passionate about social justice, music, and health. He earned his B.A. in History at Virginia State University, and his M.A. and PhD, also in History, at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Professor Onaci's courses and scholarship focus on African American and African Diaspora history with an emphasis on social movements, culture, and gender. His current research explores the history of the New Afrikan Independence Movement, which seeks to establish the Republic of New Afrika by turning five states in the U.S. South into an independent Black nation-state. Outside of academia, "Brotha Onaci" (as he is known) is a DJ-producer who uses "music as the weapon" to help create a healthier and more just society.

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CAUTION!!

COLORED PEOPLE

OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,

You are hereby respectfully **CAUTIONED** and advised, to avoid conversing with the

Watchmen and Police Officers of Boston,

For since the recent **ORDER OF THE MAYOR & ALDERMEN**, they are empowered to act as

KIDNAPPERS

AND

Slave Catchers,

And they have already been actually employed in **KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING SLAVES**. Therefore, if you value your **LIBERTY**, and the *Welfare of the Fugitives* among you, *Shun* them in every possible manner, as so many **HOUNDS** on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

Keep a Sharp Look Out for KIDNAPPERS, and have TOP EYE open.

APRIL 24, 1851.