

# Social Science Docket

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## Table of Contents Volume 1 Number 2 Summer-Fall, 2001

### Special Theme Issue: Slavery in the Northern States

<i>Editorial and Classroom Activity: Teaching About Slavery in the Americas</i> by Alan Singer .....	2
<i>Teachers Respond to Teaching About Slavery in the Americas</i> .....	11
<i>Teaching About Slavery: A Pedagogical Paradox</i> by John J. McNamara .....	15
<i>Slavery and the Northern States: Complicity and Resistance</i> by Alan Singer .....	16
<i>The Freedom Quest in New York State</i> , from the report of The N.Y.S. Freedom Trail Commission .....	19
<i>Abolitionists Among New York's Founding Fathers</i> by Kevin Brady .....	23
<i>Classroom Activity: New Yorkers Who Battled Against Slavery</i> .....	24
<i>The History of Slavery in New Jersey</i> by Giles Wright, New Jersey Historical Commission .....	26
<i>Fighting For Freedom</i> by Nancy Shakir .....	27
<i>John Woolman: New Jersey's Eighteenth Century Quaker Abolitionist</i> by Charles Howlett .....	30
<i>Underground Railroad Sites in New Jersey and New York</i> by Laura Peterson and Jennifer Pesato .....	31
<i>The Underground Railroad and Abolitionism in Central New York</i> by Judith Wellman .....	33
<i>Classroom Activity: Runaway Slave Advertisements from around the Region</i> .....	34
<i>Classroom Activity: Documenting Complicity with Slavery</i> .....	36
<i>Classroom Activity: Debating Resistance to Slavery</i> .....	42
<i>Elementary-level Activities: History-Mystery and Designing a Monument</i> by Andrea Libresco .....	47
<i>Slave Narratives: African American Lives in Early New Jersey</i> .....	51
<i>Slave Narratives: African American Lives in Early New York</i> .....	56
<i>A Science Teacher Looks at Social Studies: What is Race?</i> by S. Maxwell Hines .....	64
<i>Slavery on the World Wide Web</i> by Robin Edwards, Vonda-Kay Campbell and Charles Cronin .....	65
<i>Viewing History? Film and Historical Memory</i> by Cynthia Vitieri .....	67
<i>Slavery and Reconstruction in Literature for Middle and High School Students</i> by Sally Smith .....	69
<i>Teaching Young Children About Slavery</i> by Judith Y. Singer .....	71
<i>Book Reviews: Freedom Crossing and Where I'm Bound</i> .....	73
<i>Collaboration between Teachers and School Media Specialists</i> by Holly Willett .....	75
<i>Introducing the Authors</i> .....	75

## Special Theme Issue: Slavery and the Northern States

The New York State Education Department is preparing Human Rights curricula to promote the study of the enslavement of African peoples in the Americas, Nazi efforts to exterminate European Jewry during World War II, and the Great Irish Famine. This special section of *Social Science Docket* on Slavery and the Northern States includes an examination of the role of New York and New Jersey in opposition to and complicity with slavery. A special section on the European Holocaust including articles, documents and lesson ideas is scheduled for the Summer-Fall 2002 issue. Human Rights issues in the 21st century will be the focus of a special section in the Winter-Spring 2003 issue. For information about submitting articles and lesson ideas for these special sections, contact Alan Singer at [CATAJS@Hofstra.edu](mailto:CATAJS@Hofstra.edu).

The deadline for submitting articles for the Winter-Spring 2002 issue is October 15, 2001. The deadline for submitting articles for the Summer-Fall 2002 issue is March 1, 2002. We encourage early submissions.

## Editorial: Teaching About Slavery in the Americas

by Alan Singer, editor, Social Science Docket

Our goal is to have every issue of *Social Science Docket* include an essay on a key social studies concept or controversy to stimulate responses from readers and debate in the New Jersey and New York Councils for the Social Studies. Because the special section in this issue of *Social Science Docket* focuses on "Slavery in the Northern States," this essay discusses problems related to teaching about slavery. Prior to publication, the essay was circulated among social studies teachers at local meetings and via e-mail. Teachers were asked to respond to the essay, discuss how they address slavery in their own classrooms, and whether they believe teachers should adapt their approach to teaching about slavery based on the race and ethnicity of students in their classes and their own ethnic identities. Selected responses are included at the end of the article.

N.C.S.S. Thematic Strands: Time, Continuity, and Change. Production, Distribution, and Consumption. Power, Authority, and Governance.

In order to achieve New York and New Jersey social studies curriculum standards students will:

- analyze the development of American culture, explain how ideas, values, beliefs and traditions have changed over time and how they unite all Americans
- compare and contrast the experiences of different ethnic, national and religious groups, including Native American Indians, in the United States, explaining their contributions to American society and culture
- research and analyze the major themes and developments in local, state and United States history
- prepare essays and oral reports about the important social, political, economic, scientific, technological and cultural developments, issues and events from local, state and United States history
- understand the interrelationships between world events and developments in the state and the United States
- analyze historical narratives about key events in local, state and United States history to identify the facts and evaluate the authors' perspectives
- consider different historians' analyses of the same event or development in the United States history to understand how different viewpoints and/or frames of reference influence historical interpretations

In October, 1994, in an effort to fulfill its responsibilities as a major public historical resource and provide a more accurate portrait of the American past, Colonial Williamsburg conducted a "mock" slave auction. It was intended "to educate visitors about a

brutal yet important part of black American history" (*The New York Times*, 1994a; 1994b).

According to park spokesperson Christy Coleman, who directed the project and participated in the reenactment as a pregnant slave sold to pay her "master's" debts, "this is a very, very sensitive and

emotional issue. But it is also very real history.” Ms. Coleman felt that “only by open display and discussion could people understand the degradation and humiliation that blacks felt as chattel” (1994a).

Critics, mobilized by the Virginia chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, protested that the auction trivialized slavery by depicting scenes “too painful to revive in any form” (1994a).” A small group of demonstrators stood witness at the reenactment. Later, one of the demonstrators, who initially charged Colonial Williamsburg with turning Black history into a “sideshow,” changed his mind. He explained that as a result of witnessing the “mock” auction, he felt “(p)ain had a face. Indignity had a body. Suffering had tears” (1994b).

I believe the controversy surrounding the “mock” auction at Colonial Williamsburg is a reflection of a larger debate taking place in classrooms across the United States where social studies teachers consider ways to help students understand the impact of slavery and the slave trade on American society and the human beings who were its victims. There are both historical issues and pedagogical questions involved in these debates. Historians continue to argue over the nature of chattel slavery itself (for a recent synthesis published by the American Historical Association, see Foner, E., *Slavery, the Civil War & Reconstruction*), the treatment of enslaved people, and the long term impact of slavery on American society. There are disputes over the reliability of sources like slave narratives, which were often ghost-written and usually published by abolitionist organizations. Secondary school teachers have to decide whether to assign literature like Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* or show films like *Amistad* to provide students with historical background. There are also disagreements about the accuracy, sensitivity, and efficacy of teaching approaches like role playing and historical reenactments, especially given continuing racial segregation and ethnic tension in classrooms, schools, and communities.

My own experience as a secondary school teacher illustrates some of the difficulties teaching about topics like slavery. I am a white male and an ethnic Jew. For most of my career, I taught in schools where the majority or plurality of students were African American. Usually the remaining students were either of Caribbean ancestry or Latino/a. I often found

slavery was one of the most difficult topics to address as students and I were all uncomfortable. Over the years, a number of African American students raised that they resent continually learning about slavery and how their people were oppressed. These challenges forced me to reconsider how I felt as a teenager learning about the history of my own people, especially the devastation that I felt because Eastern European Jews, including my relatives, had died in the gas chambers of Nazi Germany. Knowledge of oppression did not satisfy me then. I felt humiliated and I wanted to scream out, “Why didn’t we fight back?” What finally helped me come to terms with the Holocaust was reading about Jewish resistance in Leon Uris’ (1961) book about the Warsaw Ghetto and the creation and defense of the State of Israel. I realize that the key for my coming to terms with the 20th century history of Jews was recognition of human resistance.

In response to my students and the connections they helped me understand about my own life, I shifted the focus on Black history in my classroom from emphasizing the burdens of oppression to exploring the history of people’s struggles for justice. Among other things, this meant that studying about the horror of slavery and the slave trade always had to be combined with examining the way people fought to establish their humanity (**A & B**).

Some of my most successful lessons have dealt with slavery, but also one of my greatest disasters. At the start of my teaching career, while working with African American middle school students, I presented a class with material on the Biblical defense of slavery that I had learned about in graduate school. The students believed these were my ideas and they were furious with me; it took weeks to reestablish a relationship of trust with them. Today I know effective, well-intentioned teachers who reenact the middle passage and slave auctions in their social studies classes. However, based on my experience, I think this is a serious mistake. While students may tolerate these reenactments and participate in them, I do not believe they can be done with either sensitivity or authenticity. I suspect most White students think they have experienced and learned more about slavery than they have any right to believe, while Black students are left embarrassed or alienated by the attempted reenactments.

For a number of years after my middle school debacle, I shied away from a serious discussion of slavery in my classes. Later, however, as a high school

teacher, I developed what I consider to be effective lessons. I used traditional African American folk songs to explore the meaning of slavery, the longing for freedom and resistance to oppression. These included “All the Pretty Little Horses”, “Go Down Moses, and “Follow the Drinking Gourd” (C). I also had students read passages from Solomon Northup’s autobiographical narrative, *Twelve Years a Slave* (Eakin and Logsdon, 1967; Eakin, 1990) (D) and we viewed segments from the PBS version of his life, *Solomon Northup’s Odyssey*. I even revived my lesson on the Biblical defense of slavery, though I was very careful to introduce the lesson with an abolitionist’s attack on slavery and a challenge to students that they respond to the quotations based on their own religious and moral beliefs (E).

While I reject role-playing and reenactments about an issue as controversial and painful as slavery, I have participated in very effective dramatic presentations with students on different academic levels. I prefer dramas because a prepared script provides structure to the activity and content on the history of slavery. One summer, I worked in a camp where the teens performed scenes from Martin B. Duberman’s documentary play about the Black struggle for freedom and civil rights, *In White America* (1964). Based on this experience, I had my high school social studies students edit and present to other classes excerpts from the speeches and writings of African American and white abolitionists.

In an after-school program where I assisted, a multiracial group of fifth graders performed a version of Virginia Hamilton’s story about slavery and the undying desire for freedom, “The People Could Fly.” In this story, an elderly African remembers magic words that allow enslaved people to soar off into the sky and return to Africa. The children were upset by a scene where a white overseer and a Black driver whip a young mother while she is holding her infant because she will not work harder. After discussing the meaning of the story and the fact that they “don’t treat people that way,” the children decided to perform it. However, they also decided not to cast the parts according to the race of the characters or of the actors. Later, I worked with a middle school class that performed the same play. The students were African American, Caribbean and Latino/a. Following a similar discussion, the students decided that none of them would play the oppressors. Instead, they built giant puppets to represent the overseer and driver (F).

What each of these four productions had in common, what I believe is the key to successful learning about slavery in America, was not the production itself, but student discussion of the meaning of the dramatization, how they wanted to cast it, what they believed about race and ethnicity in the United States, and what they had learned about slavery. In each case, the play was primarily the vehicle for promoting the discussion.

Another lesson that I learned while teaching about oppression and resistance is that a symbol can be more powerful than a reenactment. One of the most successful depictions of a human catastrophe similar to slavery in the Americas is the United States Holocaust Memorial in Washington, DC. The two exhibits that had the most powerful effect on me were the pile of thousands of shoes standing in stark reminder of what happened to their owners and the gradual narrowing and darkening of the corridor as museum visitors prepared to enter a model of a cattle car that transported European Jews to death camps. Significantly, the memorial is able to evoke what happened during the Holocaust without reenacting what happened in a gas chamber, displaying a pile of human bodies, or having actors dressed in prison garb digging their own graves. Similarly, the best exhibit I have seen on slavery in the Americas was at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City. It was a display of chains, metals collars, wooden yokes, metal rods and other instruments for branding and imprisoning enslaved Africans.

As a teacher, I have also learned that no activity or exhibit by itself substitutes for the context created by a teacher and the relationship that exists in the classroom among students and between students and their teacher. Despite the outstanding qualities of the Holocaust Memorial, there were problems with it as an educational tool. Even as I was moved by what I saw and felt, it was disconcerting to watch a group of high school students from Middle America running through the exhibits without reflection or even “seeing” the displays, as they raced to the next historical site on their itinerary. Clearly, the exhibit itself was insufficient to capture the imagination of students who were disengaged from the material. A lesson, a museum visit or a classroom activity may seem like a good idea in the abstract, but this does not mean it will achieve its intended goals with a particular group of students. For a lesson to be meaningful it has to take

into account who the students are in the class, what they already know, and how they will react.

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*Donniella McLoughlin, a teacher at Carey High School, Franklin Square, New York, assisted in the preparation of (D) Solomon Northup's Odyssey.*

## (A) Main Ideas: Understanding Slavery in the Americas

(adapted from Alan Singer, *Social Studies for Secondary Schools*. Mahwah, NJ: LEA , 1997, pp. 169-170)

These are the main ideas about slavery in the Americas that informed my own teaching as a high school social studies teacher. Which of these main ideas and understandings do you consider important to include in a high school curriculum? Which ones would you leave out? What ideas would you add?

1. West Africans were experienced agricultural workers whose labor was used to exploit the resources of the American continents. Profits generated by African slavery and the African slave trade made possible the commercial and industrial revolutions in Europe and the United States.
2. European societies accepted hierarchy, injustice, and exploitation as a normal condition of human life. Color and religious differences made it easier to enslave Africans. Europeans justified this slavery by denying the humanity of the African.
3. Africans had slaves and participated in the slave trade. But although slavery existed in many times and cultures throughout human history, slavery in the Americas, including the United States, was a fundamentally different institution. There was no reciprocal obligation by the elite to the enslaved. Enslavement was a permanent hereditary status; there was an impassable racial barrier.
4. Democracy and community among white, male, Christian property holders in the early American republic rested on the exploitation of other groups, especially the enslavement of the African. The founders of the United States were aware of the hypocrisy of owning slaves. Slavery was intentionally not addressed in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.
5. Africans in the Americas resisted slavery in many different ways. They built families, communities, and religious institutions that asserted their humanity. In the United States, enslaved Africans developed an emancipatory Christianity based on the story of Exodus and laced it with African symbols. In Haiti and Brazil, there were major successful slave rebellions. With 180,000 African Americans in the union army, the American Civil War can be seen as an African-American Liberation struggle.
6. White and African-American abolitionists struggled for decades against slavery. Most white abolitionists based their beliefs on their Protestant religion. Uncle Tom's Cabin was the "Common Sense" of the antislavery crusade because it presented the humanity of the enslaved African.
7. While Christian religious beliefs were used to challenge slavery, they were also used to justify it. Defenders of slavery, particularly in the south, used Biblical citations to defend the "peculiar institution."
8. Slavery was a national, rather than a southern, institution. There was limited slavery in the north until 1840 and prosperity in the north rested on the slave trade and the processing of slave produced raw materials.
9. The Civil War was not fought by the north to free Africans; it was fought to save the union. It ended legal bondage, but not the racist ideas that supported the system.

### **Electronic New Jersey: A Digital Archive of New Jersey History ([scc01.rutgers.edu/njh](http://scc01.rutgers.edu/njh))**

This site is designed for the in-depth study of New Jersey history. The six topical modules currently available were chosen after careful review of a range of sources available in the Special Collections and University Archives of the Rutgers University Libraries, Rutgers University-New Brunswick. Jersey Homesteads and the Great Depression and Social Change in the 1960s and 1970s were piloted by students and faculty at Hunterdon Central Regional HS and Spotswood HS in 1997. Recent additions to the site are the Civil War and NJ, Paul Robeson and Rutgers, New Jersey and the American Revolution, and World War II in NJ. Instructional activities accompany the digital sources located in each topical module. Bridgewater-Raritan High School and East Brunswick High School joined the project in 1998 and Northern Burlington Regional Schools and North Brunswick Township Schools were added to the consortium in 2000. Two new modules, History of Science and Technology and Mass Culture and Consumerism, are currently under development. Recipient of the NJ Historical Commission Award of Recognition for Study of NJ History in 1998. Recipient of a 1999 Award of Commendation from the American Association for State and Local History for Excellence in the Study of NJ History.



## (B) African Resistance to Slavery in the Americas

1630. (Pernambuco, Brazil) Over ten thousand Africans rebel against European control and slavery and establish the independent African Republic of Palmares in Brazil. In 1697 they were finally defeated by Portugal.
1734. (Jamaica) Maroons living in the interior of Jamaica battle British forces. After five years, they are declared legally free forever.
1793. (Haiti) Under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture, the African population of Haiti declares independence, abolishes slavery and defeats France and Napoleon's efforts to reestablish control.
1800. Gabriel Prosser's Rebellion (Virginia) Over 1,000 slaves meet outside of Richmond, Virginia and march on the city. The group is dispersed by a violent storm. The state militia learns of the planned rebellion. Thirty-five leaders are captured and executed.
- 1810-1860. As many as 100,000 enslaved Africans escape north to freedom on the Underground Railroad. Most are from border states like Kentucky.
1822. Denmark Vesey's Rebellion (South Carolina) An estimated 9,000 freemen and slaves plan a rebellion. The plot is uncovered, 139 people are arrested and 47 are executed.
1831. Nat Turner's Rebellion (Virginia) Sixty whites, members of planter families, are killed. State and federal troops overpowered an armed rebel force. More than one hundred rebels are killed and 16 are captured and executed, including Nat Turner.
1831. (Jamaica) Sam Sharpe, a literate slave preacher, leads an eight day rebellion that spreads across the entire island. Sharpe was captured and hung. The rebellion led to the abolition of slavery in the British Empire.
1835. (Florida) The Seminoles, including descendants of escaped Africans who joined the tribe, resist United States efforts to force removal to Oklahoma for eight years. They are ultimately forced to move.
1839. (Connecticut) Enslaved Africans capture the Spanish slave ship *Amistad* under the leadership of Cinque. They are declared free by the U.S. Supreme Court.
1851. (Pennsylvania) Five free Blacks prevent the arrest of an escaped slave at Christiana, PA. Thirty-six Blacks and five whites, most of them bystanders, are charged with treason for violating the Fugitive Slave law and rebelling against the government. Events are heavily publicized in the press, including *The New York Times*. The leader of the group escapes to Canada. The other people are found not guilty of treason and other charges were dropped. The trial helped to convince Southerners that their "property rights" would never be respected by the North.
1859. (Virginia) John Brown, a white abolitionist, attacked the U.S. arsenal at Harpers Ferry with a force that included 12 whites and five Blacks. Brown and his supporters were captured, tried, convicted and executed.
- 1862-1865. Approximately 200,000 Africans serve in the Union army and navy. Nearly 40,000 die as they battle to preserve the union and end slavery.

### Questions

1. Many of these events did not take place in the United States. Do you think they should be studied in a United States history class? Explain.
2. Select the three events that you believe had the greatest impact on slavery in the United States. Explain the reasons for your selections.

### **The African Burial Ground Project, 6 World Trade Center, Room 239, New York, N.Y. 10048**

In May, 1991, the first human remains from the 18th century African Burial Ground were uncovered in lower Manhattan when the U.S. General Services Administration was preparing to build a federal office tower at Broadway and Duane Streets. The African American Burial Ground may have served as a final resting place for as many as 20,000 Africans, both enslaved and free. Skeletal remains and artifacts have been examined by teams of scientists at Howard University and by the projects staff. The African Burial Ground Project provides site tours, historical slide presentations, and publishes a newsletter. For more information, contact NYABG@worldnet.att.net or call 212/264-6949.

## (C) Traditional African American Songs from the Era of Slavery

**A) All the Pretty Little Horses** - The key to understanding this lullaby is that there are two babies.

Hush-a-bye, don't you cry, go to sleep my little baby,  
When you wake, you shall have, all the pretty little horses,  
Blacks and bays, dapples and grays, all the pretty little horses.  
Way down yonder, in the meadow, lies my poor little lambie,  
With bees and butterflies peckin' out its eyes,  
The poor little things crying Mammy.

### Questions

- 1- Who are the two babies in this lullaby? Which baby is the woman singing to?
- 2- Why do you think the woman was assigned to care for this baby?
- 3- What does this song tell us about the experience of enslaved Africans?

**Am I Not a Man and a Brother?**

**B) Go Down, Moses** - This song is an African American version of Exodus from the Old Testament.

When Israel was in Egypt land, Let my people go.  
Oppressed so hard they could not stand, Let my people go.  
*Chorus-* Go down, Moses, Way down in Egypt land. Tell old Pharaoh to let my people go.  
"Thus spoke the Lord," bold Moses said, Let my people go.  
"If not, I'll smite your first-born dead." Let my people go.  
*Chorus-* Go down, Moses, Way down in Egypt land. Tell old Pharaoh to let my people go.  
Old Pharaoh said he'd go across, Let my people go.  
But Pharaoh and his host were lost, Let my people go.  
*Chorus-* Go down, Moses, Way down in Egypt land. Tell old Pharaoh to let my people go.  
No more shall they in bondage toil, Let my people go.  
They shall go forth with Egypt's spoil, Let my people go.  
*Chorus-* Go down, Moses, Way down in Egypt land. Tell old Pharaoh to let my people go.

### Questions

- 1- What does Moses say to Pharaoh?
- 2- Why do you think enslaved African Americans sang a song about ancient Israelites?
- 3- What does this song tell us about the experience of enslaved Africans?

**C) Follow the Drinking Gourd**- This song is supposed to contain an oral map of the Underground Railroad. The "drinking gourd" is the star constellation known as the Big Dipper.

When the sun comes up and the first quail calls, follow the drinking gourd,  
For the old man is awaiting for to carry you to freedom, if you follow the drinking gourd.  
*Chorus-* Follow the drinking gourd, follow the drinking gourd,  
For the old man is awaiting for to carry you to freedom, if you follow the drinking gourd.  
The river bank will make a mighty good road, the dead trees will show you the way,  
Left foot, peg foot, travelin' on, follow the drinking gourd.  
*Chorus-* Follow the drinking gourd, follow the drinking gourd,  
For the old man is awaiting for to carry you to freedom, if you follow the drinking gourd.  
The river ends between two hills, follow the drinking gourd,  
There's another river on the other side, follow the drinking gourd.  
*Chorus-* Follow the drinking gourd, follow the drinking gourd,  
For the old man is awaiting for to carry you to freedom, if you follow the drinking gourd.

**Questions**

- 1-Why does the song tell passengers on the Underground Railroad to follow the “drinking gourd”?
- 2- Why would runaway slaves prefer an oral map to a written map?
- 3- What does this song tell us about the experience of enslaved Africans?

## (D) Solomon Northup's Odyssey

(Edited from Eakin, S. and Logsdon, J., eds. (1967). *Twelve Years a Slave*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State U. Press.)

Solomon Northup was a free Black man and a citizen of New York State. He lived in Saratoga Springs with his wife and three children. Northup was a skilled carpenter and violinist and also worked on the Lake Champlain Canal and on construction of the Troy and Saratoga railroad.

In 1841, Solomon Northup was kidnapped by slave traders and his freedom papers stolen while on a trip to Washington, DC. He was transported to Louisiana and sold as a slave. In Louisiana, Northup worked on cotton plantations until he was able to smuggle a letter to his wife and friends in New York. Using a New York State law designed to protect free Black citizens from being sold into slavery, they secured his freedom through the courts.

Northup was finally released from bondage after twelve years as a slave. When he returned to New York abolitionists helped him publish his memoirs as part of their campaign to abolish slavery. Solomon Northup's account is especially important as an historical because he is able to describe slavery from the point of view of a free man and a skilled worker. It is also unique because Northup was enslaved on plantations in the "deep" South.

These passages are from Solomon Northup's memoir. Read them and answer the questions at the end. As an extra-credit assignment, draw pictures that illustrate his story.

**A.** "The pain in my head had subsided in a measure, but I was very faint and weak. I was sitting upon a low bench, made of rough boards, and without a coat or hat. I was hand-cuffed. Around my ankles also were a pair of heavy fetters. One end of a chain was fastened to a large ring in the floor, the other to the fetters on my ankles. I felt in my pockets to ascertain that I had not only been robbed of liberty, but that my money and free papers were also gone. Then did the idea begin to break upon my mind, at first dim and confused, that I had been kidnapped." (19-20)

**B.** "James H. Burch, as I learned afterwards, was a well-know slave-dealer in Washington, D.C. 'Well, my boy, how do you feel now?' said Burch, as he entered through the open door. I replied I was sick, and inquired the cause of my imprisonment. He answered that I was his slave, that he had bought me, and that he was about to send me to New Orleans. I asserted, aloud and boldly, that I was a free man. Burch ordered the paddle and cat-o'-ninetails to be brought in. The paddle, as it is termed in slave-beating parlance, was a piece of hardwood board, eighteen or twenty inches long, molded to the shape of an ordinary oar. The flattened portion, which was about the size of two open hands, was bored with a small auger (drill) in numerous places. The cat was a large rope of many strands, the strands unraveled, and a knot tied at the extremity of each. As soon as these formidable whips appeared, I was seized and roughly divested of my clothing. With the paddle, Burch commenced to beat me. Blow after blow was inflicted upon my naked body. When his unrelenting arm grew tired, he stopped and asked if I still insisted I was a free man. I did insist upon it, and the blows were renewed, faster and more energetically. At length the paddle broke, leaving the useless handle in his hand. Still I would not yield. All his brutal blows could not force from my lips the foul lie that I was a slave. Casting madly on the floor the handle of the broken paddle, he seized the rope. This was far more painful than the other. My sufferings I can compare to nothing else than the burning agonies of hell!" (21-25)

**C.** "Next day many customers called to examine the 'new lot.' He would make us hold up our heads, walk briskly back and forth, while customers would feel our hands and arms and bodies, turn us about, ask us what we could do, make us open our mouths and show our teeth, precisely as a jockey examines a horse which he is about to barter for or purchase. Sometimes a man or woman was taken back to the small house in the yard, stripped, and inspected more minutely. Scars upon a slave's back were considered evidence of a rebellious or unruly spirit, and hurt his sale." (52-53)

**D.** "How heavily the weight of slavery pressed upon me. I must toil day after day, endure abuse and taunts and scoffs, sleep on the hard ground, live on the coarsest fare (food), and not only this, but live the slave of a blood-seeking wretch, of whom I must stand in continued fear and dread. Why had I not died in my young years before God had given me children to love and live for? What unhappiness and suffering and sorrow it would have prevented. I sighed for liberty but the bondman's chain was round me, and could not be shaken off. I could only

gaze wistfully towards the North, and think of the thousands of miles that stretched between me and the soil of freedom, over which a black freeman may not pass.” (92)

**E.** “Tanner was in the habit of reading the Bible to his slaves on the Sabbath. He was an impressive commentator on the New Testament. The first Sunday after my coming to the plantation, he called them together, and began to read the twelfth chapter of Luke. When he came to the 47th verse, he looked deliberately around him, and continued, ‘And that servant which knew his lord’s will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.’” (94)

**F.** “His principal business was raising cotton. The ground is prepared by throwing up beds or ridges, with the plough. Oxen and mules are used in the ploughing. The women as frequently as the men perform this labor, feeding, currying, and taking care of their teams, and in all respects doing the field and stable work, precisely as do the ploughboys of the North. The beds are six feet wide. A plough drawn by one mule is then run along the top of the ridge, making the drill, into which a girl usually drops the seed, which she carries in a bag hung round her neck. Behind her comes a mule and harrow covering up the seed, so that two mules, three slaves, a plough and harrow are employed in planting a row of cotton. This is done in the months of March and April. In the latter part of August begins the cotton picking season. At this time each slave is presented with a sack. A strap is fastened to it, which goes over the neck, holding the mouth of the sack breast high, while the bottom reaches nearly to the ground. When a new hand, one unaccustomed to the business, is sent for the first time into the field, he is whipped up smartly, and made for that day to pick as fast as he can possibly. At night it is weighed so that his capability in cotton picking is known. He must bring in the same weight each night following. If it falls short, it is considered evidence that he has been laggard, and a greater or less number of lashes is the penalty. An ordinary day’s work is considered two hundred pounds.” (123-125)

**G.** “The only respite from constant labor the slave has through the whole year, is during the Christmas holidays. It is the only time to which they look forward with any interest of pleasure. It is the time of feasting and frolicking and fiddling, the carnival season with the children of bondage. They are the only days when they are allowed a little restricted liberty. It is the custom for one planter to give a ‘Christmas supper,’ inviting slaves from neighboring plantations to join his own on the occasion. When the viands (food) have disappeared and the hungry maws of the children of toil are satisfied, then next in the order of amusement is the Christmas dance. My business on these gala days always was to play on the violin. Had it not been for my beloved violin, I scarcely can conceive how I could have endured the long years of bondage.” (163-166)

**H.** “Marriage is frequently contracted during the holidays, if such an institution may be said to exist among them. The only ceremony required before entering into that “holy estate” is to obtain the consent of the respective owners. It is usually encouraged by the masters of female slaves. The law in relation to divorce, or to bigamy, is not applicable to property of course. If the wife does not belong on the same plantation with the husband, the latter is permitted to visit her on Saturday nights if the distance is not too far.” (169)

**I.** “On larger estates an overseer is deemed indispensable. These gentlemen ride into the field on horseback armed with pistols, bowie knife, whip, and accompanied by several dogs. They follow in the rear of the slaves keeping a sharp lookout upon them all. The requisite qualifications in an overseer are utter heartlessness, brutality and cruelty. It is his business to produce large crops, no matter what amount of suffering it may cost. Goaded into uncontrollable madness, even the slave will sometimes turn upon his oppressor. One was executed a year ago for killing his overseer.” (170-171)

### Questions

1. What did you learn about slavery in the United States from each passage?
2. What questions do you have about what is reported in the memoir?
3. What would you have done if you were in Solomon Northup’s position? Why?

4. What would you have done if you were an abolitionist and learned about Northup's story? Why?

## (E) Arguments in Favor of Slavery

Henry David Thoreau, a Northern abolitionist, argued that “I cannot for an instant accept a political organization that is the slave’s government also. If the law is of such a nature that it requires you to be an agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law.” In response to Thoreau and other abolitionists, a number of Southerners and their supporters defended the institution of slavery. They included people who believed that slavery was supported by the Judeo-Christian Bible.

Read the quotations that follow. Write a paragraph responding to these advocates for slavery based on your own religious and moral beliefs.

- Richard Nesbet: “The scriptures, instead of forbidding it (slavery), declare it lawful. The divine legislator, Moses, says ‘Both thy bond-men and thy bond-maids, which thou shall have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; . . . Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy. . . . And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession.’”
- Thomas Drew: “We deny most positively, that there is anything in the Old or New Testament, which would go to show that slavery, when once introduced, ought to be abrogated (abolished), or that the master commits any offense in holding slaves. The children of Israel themselves were slaveholders, and were not condemned for it. . . . When we turn to the New Testament, we find not one single passage at all calculated to disturb the conscience of an honest slaveholder. No one can read it without seeing and admiring that the meek and humble Savior of the world in no instance meddled with the established institutions of mankind.”
- Representative Charles Pinckney: “Is there a single line in the Old or New Testament either censuring or forbidding it (slavery)? I answer without hesitation, no....The Jews in the time of theocracy, and the Greeks and Romans, had all slaves...This world was formed by a great and omnipotent being,...nothing is permitted to exist here but by his will.”
- William Harper: “The coercion of slavery alone is adequate to form man to the habits of labor...It is as much in the order of nature, that men should enslave each other, as that animals should prey upon each other.”
- John C. Calhoun: “It is a great and dangerous error to suppose that all people are equally entitled to liberty. It is a reward to be earned...and not a boon (gift) to be bestowed on (given to) a people too ignorant...of enjoying it...Instead of being born free and equal, (men) are born subject...to the laws and institutions of the country where they are born...”
- Supreme Court Justice Charles Taney: “Dred Scott was not a citizen of Missouri within the meaning of the Constitution of the United States...The right of property in a slave is distinctly and expressly confirmed in the Constitution.”

## (F) Creating Giant Puppets for Virginia Hamilton’s “The People Could Fly”

**Materials:** Clean plastic gallon water jug; latex acrylic paint (black, brown, white, red, yellow and green); brushes; water; marker; stapler; wool; corn husks; broomstick; wire clothes hanger; duct tape; large, old, long sleeve shirt; 2 thin three foot wooden dowels (*Note: Tempera paint cracks and peels off plastic jugs*).

**Procedure:**

1. Select a plastic jug. Hold it so the handle faces you and faces down. It will become the puppet face. Paint the entire jug with a base coat of paint. Allow to dry over night.
2. Use markers to sketch the face on the jug. Paint the face and allow to dry. Staple wool or corn husks to the jug as facial hair.
3. Straighten the top of the wire hanger and tape it to one end of the broom stick. Put the shirt on the hanger and button the shirt.
4. Tape one end of a wooden owl to each sleeve of the shirt.
5. Place the jug “head” on the end of the broom stick and tape the jug to the broom.
6. Tuck the bottom end of the broomstick into your belt. Use one hand to hold the puppet and the other hand to

## Teachers Respond to Teaching About Slavery in the Americas

Social studies teachers were asked to respond to the following questions.

1. What are your reactions to the ideas expressed in the editorial? Be as detailed as possible.
2. How do you teach about slavery in your classroom? Include specific lesson ideas if possible.
3. Do you believe teachers should adapt their approach to teaching about slavery based on the race and ethnicity of students in their classes and their own ethnic identities? Explain.

### **Nicole Williams, Westbury High School, Westbury, New York (11th grade):**

This article offers excellent ways to teach high school students from all ethnic backgrounds about slavery. Student feelings (which most teachers do not think about before teaching subjects like slavery and the Holocaust) should definitely be taken into account. In order for students to be involved in discourses about slavery, the Holocaust, and human rights abuses that have occurred throughout history, they need to feel comfortable talking about the subject matter.

In my experience, students are usually more comfortable talking about how people have struggled against oppression, than how they were oppressed, while most teachers prefer discussing the economic impact of slavery instead of exploring the reality of slave life and struggles in America. To my knowledge, teachers rarely introduce discussions of the justification for slavery or the impact of slavery on the North. My students are usually under the mistaken impression that all northerners were abolitionists.

I believe that an examination of slavery in the United States should include discussion of Africa and Eurocentric influences on the writing of history. I have had to struggle in my department to justify why I teach about West African culture, Eurocentrism and Native American history at the beginning of the American History course. Teachers are encouraged to start with the colonists struggle against the English. I always respond that the history of the United States has three roots, not just one.

I find that symbols of oppression and struggle are more powerful than words alone. I took an American History class to the Schomburg Library in New York City to witness a special exhibit on slavery and the slave trade. It included artifacts from slavery like chains, branding irons and whips. My students, who are primarily African American, Caribbean and Latino, were overwhelmed by what they saw at the exhibit. We had extended conversations about the exhibit before, during and after that trip. It is not enough just to

expose students to these things without engaging in extensive discussion. These topics require a commitment of time.

I am an African American woman teaching in a minority school district, but I also taught in a school where a plurality of the students were European American. No matter how uncomfortable the situation can become for a teacher, students must be allowed to talk with each other and discuss their feelings, otherwise we risk losing their trust and interest.

### **Charlie Capaccio, Magen David High School, Brooklyn, New York (11th grade):**

Until recently, I taught in a private religious school with students from Brooklyn’s insular Sephardic Jewish community. Many of them were children of immigrants from the Middle East. I found teaching about the atrocities inflicted upon Blacks throughout the history of the United States among the most difficult topics to address in my class. Because my students were relatively recent arrivals who live apart, they had little understanding of the dynamics of race in the past or today. I tried to organize lessons to take into account who my students were, their familial experiences and group history. As I am not Jewish, I often did not know specific stories or examples. The students, however, loved to talk about themselves and to teach their teacher something new. When I ask for examples of how people were discriminated against, persecuted or maltreated because of their differences from the dominant group in a society, hands were immediately waving in the air. This was followed by tales of how the Jews were persecuted and survived, killed, or driven from their land. I used their accounts to define themes like persecution, resistance, struggle, and survival of a people. Once we established or reintroduced these concepts, I used primary source documents to connect students with the experiences of African Americans and life during slavery. Sources that have had a particular impact on students included excerpts from the Louisiana slave code and the African American spiritual, “I Thank God I’m Free at Last.” I

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also show pictures of troops from the 2nd colored light artillery before the battle of Nashville in 1864 and selections from the movie *Glory* to establish that African Americans were not just oppressed, but were also active in challenging bondage and securing freedom.

**Michael Pezone, Campus Magnet High School, Queens, New York (9th/10th grade):**

When teaching about slavery, social studies teachers must avoid the danger of “antiquarianism”; they must be on guard against the tendency to limit the realities of slavery to the past, and to deny the fact that slavery still conditions our present-day United States. Of course, the judicial/social nature of antebellum slavery has been abolished, but not the systematic dehumanization of African-Americans (and others) that was the necessary condition of slavery. It is vital to consider the purposes of our educational mission: do we present lessons of history in order merely to elicit certain abstract cognitive effects in our students? Or do we, in addition, strive to empower students, to help them become activists? I believe it necessary to focus, first and foremost, on the present-day United States, and to “read” the past to further contemporary understanding and activity. I supplement documents like those offered here with material that brings the reality of slavery up to date, and that addresses the oppressive reality of modern day America in all its forms, functions, and effects. Students read selections from W.E.B. DuBois, Manning Marable, Mumia Abdul-Jamal, James Baldwin, Vine Deloria, Jr., a native American activist, Howard Zinn, Michael Parenti, Angela Davis, and others. There is a particularly powerful essay by James Baldwin directed to teachers that he wrote in 1963. In the essay, Baldwin says that if he were a teacher working with minority youth, “I would try to teach them - I would try to make them know- that those streets, those houses, those dangers, those agonies, by which they are surrounded, are criminal. I would try to make each child know that these things are the results of a criminal conspiracy to destroy him. I would teach him that if he intends to get to be a man, he must at once decide that he is stronger than this conspiracy and that he must never make his peace with it.”

**Stacey Cotten, Westbury Middle School, Westbury, New York (7th/8th grade):**

As an African American middle school and high school student, I always felt uncomfortable when the

subject of slavery was introduced. It generally was the first time, and often the only time, my classmates and I would learn about the history of Black people. Teachers never handled the topic or our feelings with sensitivity. They made it seem, at least to us, that slavery was proof that Black people were inferior and our inferiority was the reason for our continuing subordinate position in society. It also sounded like we would have remained as slaves forever if it not for sympathetic whites who secured our freedom for us. As a social studies teachers, one of my primary goals is to put an end to these humiliating myths that degrade Black students and mislead white ones.

In college, in graduate school, and at work, white teachers often expressed that I have an advantage teaching about slavery and African American history because I am Black, especially when students are also Black. I find this position condescending to both me and the students. The advantage I have is that I take the subject and the feelings of students seriously, so I invest time in studying about it and in planning lessons and projects. I do not have a personal connection to other human rights issues like the European Holocaust or the Great Irish Famine, but I feel I teach about them equally as well because I think they are important for students to understand.

**Jennifer Pesato, Massapequa High School, Massapequa, New York (10th/11th grade):**

I am a relatively new, and young, white, Italian American teacher, teaching students who are overwhelmingly of white, European descent in a *de facto* segregated school. My students live in a sheltered, suburban community where contact with racial and ethnic minorities is severely limited. Their lack of experience with people who are different from themselves and their lack of interest, is difficult to overcome. Needless to say, I find it extremely hard to relate slavery to their lives.

The topic of slavery makes my students uncomfortable because it presents images and introduces them to ideas they would rather not know about. I try to use their discomfort to my advantage and present the history of slavery in the United States in as accurate and unbiased way as possible. I focus on the details of the institution, its scope and its horror. The middle passage scene from *Amistad* is especially powerful. This focus provides us with a foundation to look at continuing racial bias in later historical periods and in the contemporary world.

I like the idea of dispelling the myth that slavery was only a Southern institution while the North was abolitionist. This makes history much more complicated and may help students understand connections I am trying to make between slavery and racism in the past and American society today. Avoiding the horrors of slavery or isolating it in an ante-bellum South that no longer exists makes it easier for students to avoid the implications of the system and contributes to perpetuating racial attitudes that continue to exist.

**Siobhan Miller, Herricks High School, New Hyde Park, New York (10th grade):**

Slavery has always been a difficult subject for me to teach. For one thing, I am of Irish descent, and I am very sensitive to the fact that slavery, while part of my heritage as an American, is not part of my cultural experience.

I find that teaching slavery is very much about dancing around politics. In my school district, most of the students are affluent and of European or Asian descent: there are no African-Americans. Students tend to be very sheltered from contemporary American conflicts. Even while surrounded by de facto segregation, students say with total sincerity that their neighborhoods are not racist. Why? Because Americans fought to end slavery 150 years ago. Racial oppression becomes a story with a happy and convenient ending, and they are the heroes. If racism remains in the United States, they are certain it must be

in Alabama, Mississippi or Louisiana, not in egalitarian northern suburbs. I try to wake students up out of their complacency and ask questions like, "Why are there no African Americans in your school? Why are there so few whites in other Long Island communities?" Dispelling myths that only the South was racist and that the Civil War was fought to free slaves are important if we are to have an open and honest dialogue about race relations in the U.S. today.

I often describe slavery in terms my students will identify with such as religious oppression in India and Pakistan or the Holocaust. I truly think that to understand slavery in the Americas, we need to examine economic statistics. Students need to know that slavery was not just about racism; it was part of an exploitative economic system. I like to use primary sources, however I wish there was an exercise that would create a more visceral reaction than just words on a page.

I confess that I do not give slavery the time the topic deserves. My class reads passages from Frederick Douglass and Harriet Beecher Stowe and watches selections from the PBS video "Africans in the Americas." I certainly do not spend more time on slavery than I do on other topics. It is not that I am unwilling, I am just not sure how to go about it. While I think the material included with this article provides a good start, it seems so ordinary. I think that slavery needs to be taught to the guts, not to the brain. I just do not know how to do it.

## Documenting African American Life

Historian William Loren Katz has published numerous books documenting African American life in the United States and New York State. Most of these books are intended for use as texts or resources in middle school and high school classrooms. Katz has generously made available illustrations from his books for this issue of *Social Science Docket*. The following books by William Loren Katz are available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

*Black Legacy: A History of New York's African Americans*, (hardcover) 1997. Examines the history of African Americans in New York City from Dutch settlement up to the present. Includes a rich collection of pictures. Intended for middle-level and high school students.

*Eyewitness: A Living Documentary of the African American Contribution to American History*, (paper) 1995. Combines a narrative of African American history with primary source documents from the era of European colonization of the Americas up to the present. Excellent for high school use.

*Flight from the Devil: Six Slave Narratives*, (paper) 1996. Narratives by five African American men and one woman who escaped from slavery. Includes Linda Brent, William Wells Brown, James Pennington, Lunsford Lane, Jacob Stroyer and Moses Grandy.

*Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage*, (paper) 1997. Explores the history of Black Indians, people of dual African and native ancestry. Intended for upper elementary and middle-level students.

*Black People Who Made the Old West*, (paper) 1993. Tells the story of thirty-five African Americans who helped shape life from colonial times to the post-Civil War west.

*Black Pioneers: An Untold Story*, (hardcover) 1999. Examines the history of African American pioneers in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. Intended for middle-level and high school students.

*The Black West: A Documentary and Pictorial History of the African American Role in the Westward Expansion of the United States*, (paper) 1996. A resource guide for teacher. Traces the history of African Americans in the American west from Lewis and Clark to the dawn of the twentieth century.

*Black Women of the Old West*, (hardcover) 1995. Uncovers the hidden history of Black women in the west. Includes 100 photos and clippings. Intended for upper elementary and middle-level students.

*Breaking the Chains: African-American Slave Resistance*, (paper) 1998. Challenges the myth that African Americans accepted slavery. Intended for upper elementary and middle-level students.

**Dean V. June, Attica Central School, Attica, New York (7th/8th grades):**

Our school is in a rural part of New York State. There are two K-4 elementary schools, and a main complex of grades 5-12 that is divided up by various hallways. Approximately 99% of our students are white and most live on farms. We teach about slavery in grades 5, 8, and 11. In most cases, we cover the traditional topics, its origins, the Middle Passage, the "Seasoning Process," the cruelty of slaveowners, and the Underground Railroad. In recent years we have been adding greater detail about what happened to the runaways once they arrived in the north and Canada. Even though we discuss the slave system and slavery, we try to downplay it as a major cause of the Civil War. We present it as one of a number of intertwined causes, including conflicts between rural areas and cities and over the meaning of federalism.

We do several activities with the students to make the topic more real to them. These include discussing "Uncle Tom's Cabin," playing "Follow the Drinking Gourd" and other songs, and watching videos such as "The Flight to Freedom", "The Underground Railroad", and "The Selling of Jamie Thomas."

Like other teachers who are driven by time constraints and mandated tests, I feel that many things must be omitted from the curriculum. Realistically, the number of activities discussed in this article have to be limited. If I had the luxury of teaching a single course dedicated to this topic, things would be different.

I believe that a teacher and students must be respectful of the feelings of others and sensitive to their backgrounds and traditions. If the proper rapport is created in class, the historical groundwork for studying the time period is established, and a teacher is careful about what is presented and said, no student should be offended by what is studied in class.

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# Teaching About Slavery: A Pedagogical Paradox

by John J. McNamara

In the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Social Studies, educators are charged with the pedagogical responsibility “to reinforce our nation’s most important ideals, including the dignity and equality of all individuals and the notion of the common good.” The challenge for American history teachers is to plan and present lessons which enable students to understand how the ideology of freedom and equality could develop concurrently with the establishment and evolution of slavery in colonial America, how the growth of democracy was accompanied by the western expansion of slavery during the national (ante-bellum) period, and why emancipation and the Civil War bequeathed a legacy of racial discrimination and segregation toward African Americans for the next century. In short, how does one effectively teach the great “American paradox,” that “the land of the free” was also the home of the slave?

The acronym “C. P. R.” (“Content,” “Purpose,” “Relevance”) can provide an effective approach in the design and delivery of Social Studies lessons, especially on the controversial and challenging topic of slavery. Firstly, the students should learn history through the voices of the participants, including northerners and southerners, both people who were free and slaves. The “content” of the lesson should feature primary source excerpts for the students’ critical reading and discussion. Brief selections from slave autobiographies and narratives, abolitionist and secessionist speeches and tracts, and northern refutations and southern defenses of slavery can provide students with an intimate flavor of the past as well as a solid base of information to actively participate in class discussion. In this way students can gain a deeper understanding why white northerners and southerners as well as free and enslaved African Americans acted and reacted in certain ways and accepted and rejected their counterparts arguments, behavior, and viewpoints concerning slavery.

Secondly, Social Studies lessons, especially about slavery, should have a clear, well-defined “purpose” or learning objective for the students’ analysis and assessment. This learning objective can be posed as an open-ended “essential question” which raises an important historical issue for students’ critical thinking, discussion, and evaluation. Examples of such “essential questions” on the topic of slavery are: (a) “Who should be blamed for the African slave trade?”; (b) “Was slavery the economic engine for the development of the United States?”; (c) “Were economic or racial factors more responsible for the development of slavery in North America?; (d) “Should the Founding Fathers have compromised on the issue of slavery?”; (e) Was the Constitution a covenant with evil?; (f) “Does militancy advance or retard the goals of a protest movement?”; (g) “Were

the abolitionists responsible reformers or irresponsible fanatics?”; (h) “Can legislative compromises resolve moral issues?”; (i) “Can the Supreme Court settle moral issues?”; (j) “Was slavery the primary cause of the Civil War?”; (k) “Does Abraham Lincoln deserve to be called the ‘Great Emancipator’?”; (l) “Could American slavery have been ended without civil war?”; (m) “Can today’s mores and values serve as ethical and moral standards to evaluate the past?”

Thirdly, effective Social Studies lessons on slavery should have “relevance.” Comparisons and connections should be established between past and recent or current events. Lessons could be designed to compare “chattel slavery” in the South to the alleged “wage slavery” in the North or the status of slaves with the status of women (both groups were omitted from the promises of freedom and liberty in the Declaration of Independence). Lessons could also compare instances of slavery in our contemporary world in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East with the lives of African American slaves in colonial America and the ante-bellum United States.

In 1776, the thirteen British colonies seceded from the Empire for the cause of liberty. In 1861, eleven southern states seceded from the Union to preserve and protect the institution of slavery. During this period the United States developed as a “beacon of democracy,” a “slaveholding republic,” and an “empire for liberty,” as well as forged a strong national “union” that eventually drifted toward “disunion.” These contradictions highlight the “American Paradox.” The institution of slavery can be the lens through which students learn the unfolding saga of American freedom which has had varying definitions and applications for different groups during the nation’s history. When Social Studies educators teach their students about the development and demise of slavery in the United States, their students are learning the story of American

freedom! This is the pedagogical paradox of teaching about slavery.

## Slavery and the Northern States: Complicity and Resistance

by Alan Singer

Last year, opinion essays in *The New York Times* by Brent Staples (Staples, 2000) and Eric Foner (Foner, 2000) challenged historians and teachers to rethink the way we think about and teach about slavery in the United States, especially slavery and the Northern states. According to Foner, “(o)n the eve of the Civil War, the economic value of slaves in the United States was \$3 billion in 1860 currency, more than the combined value of all the factories, railroads and banks in the country. Much of the North’s economic prosperity derived from what Abraham Lincoln, in his second inaugural address, called ‘the bondman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil.’”

In “History Lessons From the Slaves of New York,” Staples, a regular contributor to *The Times*’ editorial page, described how New York City’s ties with slavery go back deep into its colonial past. The Dutch, who built New Amsterdam, “recruited settlers with an advertisement that promised to provide them with slaves who “would accomplish more work for their masters, at less expense than [white] farm servants, who must be bribed to go thither by a great deal of money and promises.”” Enslaved Africans helped build Trinity Church, the streets of the early city and a wooden fortification located where Wall Street is today.

Staples’ essay reported the findings of biological anthropologists from Howard University who studied “the skeletal remains of more than 400 African slaves whose graves were accidentally uncovered during the construction of a federal office tower in lower Manhattan nine years ago.” When it was closed in 1794, the Negro Burial Ground, which was outside that era’s city limits, probably contained between 10,000 and 20,000 bodies. Staples believes the research team’s work shows that “colonial New York was just as dependent on slavery as many Southern cities, and in some cases even more so. In addition, the brutality etched on these skeletons easily matches the worst of what we know of slavery in the South. . . . Of the 400 skeletons taken to Howard, about 40 percent are of children under the age of 15, and the most common cause of death was malnutrition. . . .The adult skeletons show that many of these people died of unrelenting hard labor. Strain on the muscles and ligaments was so extreme that muscle attachments were commonly ripped away from the skeleton -- taking chunks of bone with them -- leaving the body in perpetual pain.”

In “Slavery’s Fellow Travelers,” Foner, a prominent author and historian, reminded readers “of the usually glossed-over participation of the North in America’s slave system. . . , even after Northern states no longer allowed slaveholding within their own

borders.” According to Foner, “Nowhere did the connection go deeper than in New York City,” where, as the nation approached Civil War, “Mayor Fernando Wood proposed that New York declare itself a free city, so as to be able to continue to profit from slavery.”

Foner argued that “(a)ccounts of the city’s rise to commercial prominence in the 19th century rightly point to the Erie Canal’s role in opening access to produce from the West, but they don’t talk about the equal importance to the city’s prosperity of its control over the South’s cotton trade. Because of this connection, New York merchants and bankers were consistently pro-slavery, pressing during the 1840’s and 1850’s for one concession to the South after another in order to maintain their lucrative access to cotton.”

In response to this forgotten history, Foner proposes that “when New York’s history is taught in public schools, the city’s intimate link with slavery should receive full attention.” In addition, “(t)he city should have a permanent exhibition --perhaps even an independent museum -- depicting the history of slavery and New York’s connection with it.”

The accounts of slavery in New York and the north presented by Staples and Foner powerfully echo the famous front-page editorial by William Lloyd Garrison in the introductory issue of the abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator* (Garrison, 1831). In the editorial, Garrison explained that on a “tour for the purpose of exciting the minds of the people by a series of discourses on the subject of slavery, every place that I visited gave fresh evidence of the fact, that a greater revolution in public sentiment was to be effected in the free states . . . than at the south.” He also related that in the north, he “found contempt more bitter, opposition more active, detraction more relentless, prejudice more stubborn, and apathy more frozen, than among slave owners themselves.”

In response to this reception, Garrison “determined, at every hazard, to lift up the standard of emancipation in the eyes of the nation, within sight of Bunker Hill and in the birth place of liberty.” He warned readers that he would not be silenced “till every chain be broken, and every bondman set free” and declared, “Let southern oppressors tremble -- let their secret abettors tremble -- let their northern apologists tremble -- let all the enemies of the persecuted blacks tremble.”

In Brooklyn, New York, Reverend Henry Ward Beecher of Plymouth Church, espoused similar sentiments. In a sermon delivered in January, 1861, in the midst of the nation’s secession crisis, Beecher declared that “(w)e who dwell in the North are not without responsibility for this sin. . . . When our Constitution was adopted; . . . All the institutions were prepared for liberty, and all the public men were on the side of liberty.” However, because of the “delinquency of the North,” the nation’s commitment to liberty was “sacrificed.” He calls the North’s failure to preserve liberty “an astounding sin! It is an unparalleled guilt!” (*The New York Times*, 2000).

The ante-bellum North’s “secret abettors” and “apologists” for slavery are also under attack on other fronts at the start of the 21st century. Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, a lawyer who grew up in Brooklyn, New York, has uncovered documentary evidence that prominent corporations still in operation profited from the nineteenth century slave trade (Finn, 2000). According to Farmer-Paellmann, Providence Bank of Rhode Island, a predecessor of the modern FleetBoston Financial Corporation, was one of the most serious offenders. One of its founders borrowed money from the bank to finance business operations that included slaving expeditions. He was eventually prosecuted in federal court for participating in the international slave trade after it became illegal under United States laws.

Because of Farmer-Paellmann’s efforts, two Connecticut companies have publicly apologized for supporting the slave system. The Aetna Insurance Company of Hartford insured slave owners against the loss of their human property. The horrors of slavery emerge in a rider to insurance policies that declares the company did not have “to pay the premium for slaves who were lynched, worked to death or who committed

suicide.” The *Hartford Courant*, founded in 1764 and the oldest continuously published newspaper in the United States, disclosed that it had published advertisements for the sale of slaves in the 18th and 19th centuries (Zielbauer, 2000).

Churches have also started to acknowledge the role of their parishioners in promoting African slavery. In Rhode Island, the United Church of Christ publicly repented for the participation of Northerners, particularly Bristol and Newport, R.I. merchants, who profited from the slave system (Niebuhr, 1999). While this denomination was historically tied to anti-slavery abolitionists, one of the church’s buildings was named after a family involved in the slave trade.

On a political level, Representative John Conyers Jr., Democrat of Michigan, has spearheaded a decade-long campaign to recognize broader national participation in slavery and slavery’s long term impact on American society (Cardwell, 2000). Conyers has repeatedly introduced a bill in Congress to establish a commission to study reparations for slavery. While the bill has never emerged from committee, the issue has garnered support from intellectuals like Randall Robinson, the president of TransAfrica, a lobbying group, and the author of “The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks,” and the Harvard University professors Charles T. Ogletree and Henry Louis Gates.

In response to these arguments and in support of the New York State human rights curriculum, the special section of this issue of *Social Science Docket* focuses on Slavery in New York and New Jersey, both complicity and resistance.

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#### New York State Archives

Holdings of the New York State Archives are listed in Guide to Records in the New York State Archives (1993). An updated version of the Guide and the online catalog of the State Archives and State Library may be accessed on the World Wide Web at [www.sara.nysed.gov](http://www.sara.nysed.gov). The public research room of the New York State Archives is located

on the 11th floor of the Cultural Education Center, Madison Avenue (U.S. Route 20), in downtown Albany. The research room is open to the public 9-5, Monday-Friday except state holidays. For further information on the holdings and services of the Archives, contact: NEW YORK STATE ARCHIVES Cultural Education Center 11D40 Albany, NY 12230. Phone 518-474-8955. E-mail [archref@mail.nysed](mailto:archref@mail.nysed).

## High School-Level Activity Sheet: Four Abolitionists View Slavery

Instructions: Working either individually or in a group, examine each quotation and answer the questions that follow it. After reading all of the quotations, answer the questions at the bottom of the activity sheet.

**A.** William Lloyd Garrison, 1831 - "I am determined at every hazard to lift up the standard of emancipation in the eyes of the nation until every chain be broken and every bondman set free! Let Southern oppressors tremble - let their secret supporters tremble - let their Northern defenders tremble - let all enemies of the persecuted blacks tremble. I shall strenuously contend for the immediate freeing of our slave population. I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice."

1. What does Garrison mean when he says he will lift up the "standard of emancipation"?
2. Some people accused Garrison of speaking too harshly against slavery. How does Garrison respond?
3. In his newspaper, *The Liberator*, Garrison said the North shares blame for slavery. Do you agree? Explain.

**B.** Theodore D. Weld, 1839 - "We will prove that the slaves in the United States are treated with barbarous inhumanity; that they are overworked, underfed, wretchedly clad and lodged, and have insufficient sleep. We will establish all of these facts by the testimony of scores and hundreds of witnesses, by the testimony of slaveholders, by slaveholding members of Congress, by planters, overseers and drivers. We shall show, not merely that these deeds are committed, but that they are frequent, not in one of the slave states, but in all of them."

1. Why does Weld say that slavery is "barbarous inhumanity"?
2. Why is Weld able to use the "testimony of slaveholders" to prove his case?
3. Why does Weld make a special point that members of Congress own slaves?

**C.** Henry David Thoreau, 1849 - "How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today? I answer that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant accept a political organization that is the slave's government also. If the law is of such a nature that it requires you to be an agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law."

1. Why does Thoreau feel disgraced by his government?
2. What does Thoreau believe a citizen must do about the laws which permit slavery to continue? Why?

**D.** Frederick Douglass, 1882 - "The real feelings and opinions of the slaves were not much known or respected by their masters. Colonel Lloyd's slaves were so numerous that he did not know them when he saw them. Nor, indeed, did all of his slaves know him. Riding along the road one day the Colonel met a colored man, and addressed him, "Well, boy, who do you belong to?" "To Colonel Lloyd", replied the slave. "Does the Colonel treat you well?" "No, sir", was the reply. "What does he work you hard?" "Yes, sir". "Well, don't he give you enough to eat?" "Yes, sir, he give me enough to eat, such as it is." The Colonel rode on and the slave went on about his business, not dreaming that he had been conversing with this master. Two weeks later the slave was informed by the overseer that, for having found fault with his master, he was now to be sold to a Georgia trader. He was immediately chained and handcuffed, and thus, without a moment's warning he was snatched away, and forever sundered from his family and friends.

1. According to Douglass, why were slaves afraid to express their true feelings?
2. In your opinion, what is Douglass trying to show by this anecdote?

### Final Questions

1. Garrison, Weld, Thoreau and Douglass were "abolitionists". Based on these quotations, define "abolitionism"?
2. Which of the four quotations comes closest to your own beliefs? Explain.
3. One of these abolitionists was a Black escaped slave. Which one? What evidence do you have from the passages?

### Lesson Idea

Organize the class to research and discuss the idea of individual and collective reparations for past injustices, including wars, the treatment of Native Americans, the European Holocaust, the internment of Japanese Americans

during World War II, and the Atlantic Slave Trade and slavery in the Americas.

# The Freedom Quest in New York State

edited from the report of The New York State Freedom Trail Commission

## The African Presence in New Amsterdam/New Netherlands: 1613-1664

Blacks have been present in the New York region since 1613, when Jan Rodriguez, the first recorded person of African ancestry to live in the early colony, traded with the native Algonquian people along the Hudson River. Rodriguez was a free Black sailor working for a Dutch trading company when he was left on Manhattan Island to live and trade with the Native Americans. He was the region's first merchant and first known non-native resident. In 1625, the Dutch West India Company established the village of New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island, and began importing and utilizing enslaved African labor to help make profitable their North American venture. The Black workers were assigned to clear land, plant and harvest crops, build houses, roads, bridges and fortifications. In 1658, a slave crew constructed the Road to Haarlem, the first major road development in New York City.

At Fort Orange (Albany) slave work crews also labored on village construction projects. Throughout the entire Hudson River valley groups of slaves and small slave families toiled on farms, manufacturing and crafting their farm tools, and often managing farms for absentee owners.

The legal status of Africans varied during the early period of Dutch colonial rule. On February 25, 1644, eleven enslaved Black workers successfully petitioned the local Dutch government, winning their freedom in the first group manumission in colonial North America. Apparently taking advantage of the state of war between the Dutch and Indians, each was given frontier farmland and freedom on the condition that food would be grown for the war ravaged colony. The Black farm region, known as "the land of the blacks," extended from Greenwich Village north to present day 34th Street; the free Black farms and property spanned over one hundred square city blocks. In Brooklyn, former slave Jan Francisco was among the founders of Bushwick and Anthony Jansen Van Salee, a free African, became the first property owner in Bensonhurst. The colony's free Black communities became known safe-havens for fugitive slaves. In 1648, the New Amsterdam town council imposed fines for anyone, Black or white, for harboring runaways.

Beginning in 1655 and continuing through the end of Dutch rule, colonial authorities transformed New Amsterdam into a slave trading port and increased restrictions on the rights and privileges of its African residents. Dutch slave-handling procedures included a special branding policy, mark-ing men, women and children twice with a branding iron, once at the African coastal port point of purchase and again at the American receiving port.

With an increasing number of slaves, runaways became more frequent. Indian camps were a popular

destination for runaway slaves and among the earliest indicators of cooperation and organization to aid fugitives. Prohibitions against Indians harboring runaway Blacks were often demanded by civil authorities.

## The African Presence in the New York Colony: 1664-1776

The English took control of New Netherlands in 1664, and soon positioned New York City (formerly New Amsterdam) as a major outpost in the developing British colonial empire in the Americas. Under British rule, New York increasingly became a slave dependent society. James II, the Duke of York, for whom the colony was renamed, was a major shareholder of the Royal African Company, the corporation that held the monopoly in the British slave trade. Granting port privileges and warehouse priorities to ships engaged in the slave trade were among the Duke's first actions in the New York colony. A slavemarket soon was constructed at Wall Street and the East River. From the start of the English occupation, a commercially profitable slave system became a common goal of both government and private interests. English-controlled New York also developed elaborate slave codes to control and restrict the behavior of enslaved Africans. For the first time in the colony's history, the Laws of 1665 confirmed the existence of slavery as a legal institution.

By the late 17th century, the number of enslaved Africans brought to the colony increased steadily as royal patents and manorial estates were given to wealthy New York families and businessmen in the Hudson River valley. Only a few Blacks were allowed to share in the land distribution. In 1679, free Black Claus Manuel left Manhattan to become one of only two non-white investors in the Tappan patent, which

purchased and divided among its owners a large tract of land in Rockland County. In 1693, enslaved laborers at Philipsburg Manor ran much of the estate's day-to-day operations for international merchant Frederick Philips. The master miller at the Manor was an enslaved African man named Caesar and tenant farmers brought their corn and wheat to the mill to be ground into flour. Sacks filled with flour were loaded onto sloops docked at the mill wharf. The sloops headed down the Hudson River to Manhattan, where the flour was transferred to ocean-going vessels for trade overseas. Enslaved Africans occupied many of the skilled positions at the site, including blacksmith, carpenters, sloop captain, bake-house cook, and seamstresses.

The slave trade became one of the cornerstones of New York's commercial prosperity in the 18th century. Slave auctions were held weekly, and sometimes daily at markets throughout New York City. According to historians, the demand for slaves, estimated at over 1,000 annually by the Board of Trade for New York and North Carolina in 1709, was enormously profitable to the local business community. Because of the importance of skilled slave labor, traders centered on West Indian imports. During the first half of the 18th century, thousands of slaves were transported to New York from Jamaica and Barbados. Ships also came directly from Africa, some with shipments of children under the age of thirteen. In 1711, the Wall Street slave market was established as the city's official slave market. The facility was advertised as a "place where Negroes and Indians could be bought, sold or hired."

By the 18th century, African peoples were legally considered slaves unless they produced evidence to the contrary. Fearing slave uprisings, most of the public controls were directed at restricting communication among slaves. Slaves needed a pass to travel more than a mile from home; adults were not allowed on the streets at night; and gatherings of slaves were limited to four, and reduced to three in 1702. Laws against slaves running away were particularly severe, allowing an owner to treat the matter as a private offense. Owners were thus permitted to use whatever force was needed to enforce their commands, though technically the willful killing of a slave was a capital offense.

Runaways were considered to be among the worst of all criminals as their behavior denied owners of the full value of themselves as property. Slave owners were suspicious of free Blacks and Indians for harboring runaways. Treaties with Indians often

contained a runaway clause which demanded that fugitive slaves be returned to white owners. Many slaves escaped through swamps and water-routes. Fugitives, often traveling alone or in small groups, were assisted by safe-havens and safe-houses as well as their own intelligence, wit, and wile

The Iroquois, Senecas, and Onondagas of northern New York assisted many runaways, as did the Monsey and Minisink tribes in southern New York. Native American communities in Eastern Long Island not only provided help but also welcomed many Blacks into the tribe. A runaway living among the Mohawks gained a reputation so fearsome in raids against British garrisons that his apprehension was a military priority. When finally captured in 1765, British General Thomas Gage ordered the man sold out of the province "so that he may never have an opportunity of getting among the Indians again."

#### **Slave ship Wildfire, 1860**

The 1705 "Act to Prevent the running away of Negro Slaves out of the City and County of Albany to the French at Canada" ruled that all slaves belonging to inhabitants of the city and county of Albany found more than forty miles north of the town of Saratoga were felons who could be executed. The law, reenacted in 1715 and 1745, was prompted by fear that slaves would flee to Canada and join forces with the French, who were perpetually at war with the British. In 1755, New York prescribed the death penalty for any slave

Social

older than fourteen who was sighted more than a mile from home without a pass. The law authorized white citizens “to shoot or otherwise destroy such a slave...without being impeached, censured, or prosecuted for the same.”

Serious uprisings caused fear among whites throughout the colony. In 1712 a group of enslaved Africans set fire to a building on Maiden Lane in Manhattan. The Africans ambushed whites who came to put out the blaze, killing eight white men. Several Blacks committed suicide rather than be captured. Thirteen Blacks were hanged, one chained and starved to death, one burned at the stake, and another “broken on the wheel” (his bones broken by the motion of a wheel-like apparatus until his death). In Livingston Manor in 1715, slave owner John Dykeman was killed by his slave, Ben, for selling Ben’s daughter off the Manor.

Following the 1712 uprising, more severe racial laws were enacted, including “An Act for Preventing Suppressing and Punishing the Conspiracy and Insurrection of Negroes and other Slaves.” The law prohibited free Blacks and native Americans the right to inherit or transfer land to their heirs. Within four years land owned by Francisco Bastien, the last Black landowner in colonial Manhattan, was sold, possibly because of the severe inheritance law. The ease by which fugitives passed into the local Black population also led New York to enact a law fining free Blacks ten shillings a day for every day a runaway was harbored.

African influences prevailed among free and enslaved Blacks. Blacks raised in Dutch-American environments adapted Pinkster, a Dutch Pentecostal observance, into a visibly African acculturated occasion. From Albany to New York City, Pinkster activities incorporated African harvest rituals and rites of passage ceremonies for adolescent men and women. Occasions like Pinkster Day provided opportunities for Blacks to gather and exchange information about escape routes and runaways.

In the alleged “Negro Plot” of 1741, thirty-two Black men were executed in lower Manhattan for allegedly plotting to overthrow the government. Thirteen were burned at the stake and eighteen hanged in the vicinity of New York’s City Hall Park. So intent were local authorities to make examples of the convicted men that their bodies were left hanging on public display for several days and weeks. Slave unrest occurred upstate as well as in New York City. Several Blacks in Kingston, New York, were charged with

conspiring to burn down the city in the Slave Conspiracy of 1775.

Throughout the colonial period many enslaved Blacks sought to escape by joining the militia, and New York made extensive use of Black manpower during the French and Indian War. In 1745 several slaves were among persons slain or taken captive by French-led Indians at Old Saratoga. Many sought refuge in the rugged Adirondack mountains where other ex-slaves farmed as free men and women. Throughout the Adirondack range were small enclaves of Blacks with names like Timbuktu and Blacksville and others derisively named “nigger hill,” “nigger lake” and “nigger ponds.” Towns like Witherbee, Northampton, Vermontville and North Elba all had significant Black populations.

Slaves ran away for a variety of reasons, including rebelliousness, harsh treatment, sexual abuse, and often to avoid family break-ups. In 1753, a slave in Long Island ran away seeking his wife who had been sold to a distant buyer. Male and females frequently ran off together, though this seriously reduced their chance of escaping. In 1755, the *New York Mercury* advertised a slave who made his break for freedom with a wife “in an advanced state of pregnancy.” Slaveholders warned the public when runaways could read and write and therefore could probably falsify a pass. Ads in newspapers throughout New York announced slaves who were fluent in several languages, including French, Spanish, Dutch, and Swedish, as well as English.

Spring and summer were the most likely seasons for slaves to run away, rather than winter with its harshness. During warmer weather they could more easily forage for food and sleep in open fields. Horses were sometimes stolen to expedite flight. In 1764, a New York slave rented a horse, which he charged to his owner’s account, and then fled the city. A violin or another musical instrument were taken along by many runaways who could make a living playing music.

During the American Revolutionary War, many enslaved Blacks gained freedom by joining British and American regiments. In 1776, Black soldiers fought at the battles of Brooklyn, Harlem Heights and Snake Hill (currently known as Marcus Garvey Park in Harlem). In 1777, Black soldiers fighting for the British were stationed at Fort Negro in the Van Cortlandt Park section of the Bronx. Many others joined the British Royal forces, fighting for the English side in battles in New York and New Jersey. Throughout the war Black

patriot soldiers fought in battles across the New York region.

### **The African and African American Presence in New York State: 1783-1860**

Following the War of Independence many northern states reviewed their own slave laws. In 1777, Vermont, became the first future state territory to abolish slavery outright. After the war the abolitionist movement gained strength in New York City. A “Manumission Society,” headed by John Jay and Alexander Hamilton helped to purchase the freedom of persons in bondage and sought also to help educate newly freed Blacks. In 1787 the society founded the African Free School. The school provided instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic for forty boys and girls in a single room at 245 William Street. Classes trained boys in navigational skills for seafaring careers as sailors. A woman was hired later to instruct girls in needlework and other domestic crafts.

By the 1790 census about one third of the state’s Black population was free. In 1793, fires started by enslaved Africans destroyed much of Albany. The fires, started to avenge an unpopular slaveowner, led to the hanging of two slave women and a male slave. In 1796, Blacks split from Manhattan’s John Street Methodist Church to form Zion Church. Known later as Mother Zion the church spawned affiliate churches—the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination—throughout the state and country.

In 1799 the state legislature approved the “gradual emancipation” of enslaved Blacks. Because Hudson Valley farmers, like southern planters, had placed a high value on slave labor, only slavery’s gradual elimination could win approval. Black females born that year would be freed at the age of 25 and Black males at 28 years of age, effectively delaying the state’s emancipation day until well into the 19th century.

In 1828, Sojourner Truth (Isabella Baumfree) successfully sued at a Kingston court house for the return of her son who was sold into slavery. In 1838, free African American James Weeks purchased part of the Lefferts estate in Brooklyn. Over the next several decades a Black village known as Weeksville emerged. The Black town served often as a safe haven for southern fugitives, as well as for free Blacks assaulted in neighboring Manhattan.

Skilled and literate slaves had the best chance of making it from the Lower South to the New York

City—most often by sea passage. In 1831, twenty-four year old Lydia, a slave from a plantation two miles outside New Orleans, was last seen on the docks near schooners bound for New York. New York’s four major ports—New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, and Albany—became entré ports for thousands of fugitives. In 1838 Frederick Washington Bailey, a fugitive from Maryland disguised himself as a sailor and arrived in lower Manhattan. Finding shelter at David Ruggles’ boarding house, Bailey completed his freedom journey to Massachusetts, where he changed his name to Frederick Douglass. By then New York was long established as a receiving point from which fugitives were assisted to upstate Albany and Troy, or northeast to Boston and New Bedford.

### **Sojourner Truth**

Beyond the state’s official Emancipation Day, July 4th 1827, because of flagrant legal violations and federal fugitive slave laws, slavery continued in the state until the Civil War. Even free Blacks lived in constant danger of being sold into slavery, a fate that befell many, including Peter John Lee, a free Black resident of Westchester County, who was kidnapped by four white men and sold into slavery in 1836, and Solomon Northup of Saratoga Springs in 1841. For more than the 200 years Africans lived as slaves in New York. For the next three decades fugitive Blacks

Social

had multiple experiences, either fleeing to known safe havens within the state or escaping out of its territory. Reaching Canada, many Blacks passed successfully through New York to settle as free men and women on the northern side of the St. Lawrence River.

On Independence Day, 1852, North Star publisher Frederick Douglass noted the difference between Black

and white perceptions of the national holiday, “What to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him more than all the days of the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.”

# Abolitionists Among New York's "Founding Fathers"

by Kevin Brady

In recent years, framers of the American republic, especially George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, have taken a public opinion thrashing for the allowing the institution of slavery to persist during and after the American Revolution. Their defenders respond that they are being judged unfairly by twenty-first century standards. However, other members of the founding generation did work to unlock the manacles holding Africans in slavery. Efforts by Aaron Burr, John Jay and Alexander Hamilton helped to end slavery in New York State, which at the time of the Revolution maintained a slave system more extensive than some of the southern states.

The Dutch, who settled the Hudson River Valley during the mid-seventeenth century, populated the region with farmsteads, worked by indentured European servants and slaves transported from western Africa. When the English took New Netherlands from the Dutch, it allowed settlers to keep most of their property and traditions, including slavery. By the early eighteenth-century, Dutchess County, New York had 3,400 white families and 1,360 enslaved Africans, while forty-three percent of the families in New York City owned slaves. During the American Revolution, New York State had a higher proportion of slaves than North Carolina. After independence, its leaders included powerful Jeffersonian Republicans like the Clinton family and the Livingston family, who had working relationships with Southern slave interests. In addition, the Livingstons were significant slaves owners. The strength of slavery in New York demonstrates that the institution could have survived in the mid-Atlantic, as it did in the South, if not for the efforts of members of the founding generation who worked to eradicate it.

Historians often malign Aaron Burr because of later developments in his political career. However, Burr, a leading Jeffersonian Republican in New York, was a stalwart opponent of slavery who argued that whites and Blacks were created equal and that women and men should have the same political rights. Burr's abolitionism was rooted in his religious beliefs. His father had served as the president of Princeton University. His grandfather was Jonathan Edwards, one of the igniting sparks of the Great Awakening. His political opponents, especially among the Jeffersonian Republicans, often complained that Burr entertained Blacks in his home as guests.

In 1785, Burr unsuccessfully introduced a bill in the state legislature to immediately end slavery in New York. Unfazed, he worked diligently for fourteen years against the slave-owning landlords and farmers, and artisans who feared competition from freed Blacks. His efforts led to alliances with John Jay and Alexander Hamilton, both leading Federalists. When Jay ran for

governor in 1792, Burr refused to run against him, and when New York finally agreed to begin gradual emancipation in 1799, Burr was a major ally of Governor Jay in the state legislature. For his efforts, Burr drew fire from powerful state Republicans and earned the distrust of Jefferson and his southern supporters. Later, during Jefferson's Presidency, Burr used his position as Vice President to frustrate the President's policy toward Haiti. Fearing a free Black Republic in the Caribbean, Jefferson issued an embargo against trade with the Haitian rebels. When the embargo came before the Senate, Burr organized Republican opposition that temporarily blocked it.

John Jay was an active opponent of slavery for fifty years. He proposed abolition in 1775 and in 1785 organized the New York Manumission Society. In 1819, during Congressional debate over the Missouri Compromise, Jay insisted that the interstate commerce clause of the Constitution gave Congress the authority to regulate the slave trade in the territories. Alexander Hamilton often worked with Jay and Burr to challenge slavery. As part of the New York Manumission Society, Burr, Jay and Hamilton won 34 of 36 cases of unlawful enslavement defending the freedom of Black New Yorkers threatened with kidnapping and being sent to the south as slaves. They also organized boycotts of merchants and newspapers that supported slavery and helped organize schools to educate Black children. In the 1790s, Jay, Burr, and Hamilton, vehemently objected to admitting Kentucky and Tennessee to the union as slave states.

Through the efforts of John Jay, the much-maligned Alexander Hamilton, and the often-vilified Aaron Burr, New York abandoned a labor system based on human bondage. This may be one reason why New York was able to grow into a prosperous commercial giant, while slavery-dependent Virginia's importance and wealth diminished throughout the antebellum nineteenth century.

## Reference

## Classroom Activity: New Yorkers Battle Against Slavery

### A. Lewis Tappan and the Amistad Case

Lewis Tappan, a white man, was a New York City merchant and a founder and officer of the American Anti-Slavery Society. At his urging, New York City's leading abolitionists formed a committee to aid in the defense of the Africans on the Amistad. During their trial in Connecticut, Lewis Tappan wrote reports published in the *New York Journal of Commerce*.

#### 1. Appeal to the Friends of Liberty, September 4, 1839

Thirty-eight fellow men from Africa, after having been piratically kidnapped from their native land, transported across the seas, and subjected to atrocious cruelties, have been thrown upon our shores, and are now incarcerated in jail to await their trial for crimes alleged by their oppressors to have been committed by them. They are ignorant of our language, of the usages of civilized society, and the obligations of Christianity. Under these circumstances, several friends of human rights have met to consult upon the case of these unfortunate men, and have appointed the undersigned a committee to employ interpreters, able counsel, and take all necessary means to secure the rights of the accused. It is intended to employ three legal gentlemen of distinguished abilities, and to incur other needful expenses. The poor prisoners being destitute of clothing, and several having scarcely rags to cover them, immediate steps will be taken to provide what may be necessary. The undersigned, therefore, makes this appeal to the friends of humanity to contribute for the above objects. Donations may be sent to either of the Committee, who will acknowledge the same, and make a public report of their disbursements. (Signed) SIMEON JOCELYN, JOSHUA LEAVITT and LEWIS TAPPAN

#### 2. Letter describing Africans from the Amistad

I arrived here last Friday evening, with three men who are natives of Africa...to act as interpreters in conversing with Joseph Cinquez and his comrades. On going to the jail, the next morning, we found to our great disappointment, that only one of the men, [John Ferry], was able to converse with the prisoners. Most of the prisoners can understand him, although none of them can speak his Geshee dialect. You may imagine the joy manifested by these poor Africans, when they heard one of their own color address them in a friendly manner, and in a language they could comprehend!

The four children are apparently from 10 to 12 years of age....They are robust [and] full of hilarity....The sheriff of the county took them to ride in a wagon on Friday. At first their eyes were filled with tears, and they seemed to be afraid, but soon they enjoyed themselves very well, and appeared to be greatly delighted.

Most of the prisoners told the interpreter that they are from Mandingo. The district of Mandingo, in the Senegambia country, is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, and is directly north of Liberia. Two or three of the men, besides one of the little girls, are natives of Congo, which is on the coast just south of the equator.

Cinquez is about 5 feet 8 inches high, of fine proportions, with a noble air. Indeed, the whole company, although thin in flesh, and generally of slight forms, and limbs, especially, are as good looking and intelligent a body of men as we usually meet with. All are young, and several are quite striplings. The Mandingos are described in books as being a very gentle race, cheerful in their dispositions, inquisitive, credulous, simple hearted, and much given to trading propensities.

I remain, very truly yours, LEWIS TAPPAN

### Questions

1. The "Appeal to the Friends of Liberty" describes the captives on the Amistad as "thirty-eight fellow men from Africa." Why is this phrase significant?
2. What does the appeal suggest about the connection between abolition and religious beliefs?
3. Why is the committee raising money?
4. What image does Lewis Tappan try to create in his report to the *New York Journal of Commerce*?

**Follow-Up Activities**

- Students can search for, evaluate and catalogue internet sites on the Amistad and slavery.
- Students can design a poster or flyer demanding freedom for the Amistad captives.

## B. Horace Greeley and the Debate over Emancipation

Horace Greeley, a white man, was the founder of the *New York Tribune* and edited the newspaper for over thirty years. Greeley took a strong moral tone in his newspaper and campaigned against alcohol and tobacco use, gambling, prostitution and capital punishment. However, his main concern was the abolition of slavery. In 1860, Greeley supported the presidential campaign of Abraham Lincoln, but was unhappy with Lincoln's attitude toward emancipation. He wrote an open letter to the President on August 19, 1862, complaining about the Union army's unwillingness to free slaves in captured territory.

In the letter, Greeley criticized Lincoln for failing to make slavery the dominant issue of the war and compromising moral principles for political motives. Lincoln replied on August 22, 1862 that, "My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it."

### 1. Horace Greeley, letter to President Abraham Lincoln, August 19, 1862

I do not intrude to tell you, for you must know already, that a great proportion of those who triumphed in your election, and of all who desire the unqualified suppression of the rebellion now desolating our country, are solely disappointed and deeply pained by the policy you seem to be pursuing with regard to the slaves of the Rebels.

We think you are strangely and disastrously remiss in the discharge of your official and imperative (necessary) duty with regard to the emancipating provisions of the new Confiscation Act. Those provisions were designed to fight slavery with liberty. They prescribe that men loyal to the Union, and willing to shed their blood in the behalf, shall no longer be held, with the nation's consent, in bondage to persistent, malignant (poisonous) traitors, who for twenty years have been plotting and for sixteen months have been fighting to divide and destroy our country. Why these traitors should be treated with tenderness by you, to the prejudice of the dearest rights of loyal men, we cannot conceive.

We ask you to consider that slavery is everywhere the inciting cause and sustaining base of treason. . . It seems to us the most obvious truth that whatever strengthens or fortifies slavery in the border states strengthens also treason and drives home the wedge intended to divide the Union.

We complain that the Union cause has suffered and is now suffering immensely from mistaken deference to Rebel slavery. . . . We complain that the officers of your armies have habitually repelled rather than invited the approach of slaves who would have gladly taken the risks of escaping from their Rebel masters to our camps, bringing intelligence often of inestimable value to the Union cause.

### 2. President Abraham Lincoln, letter to Horace Greeley, August 22, 1862

If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that.

#### Questions

1. Why was Greeley's position as editor of the *New York Tribune* an important platform for challenging slavery?
2. Greeley used the Tribune to campaign against alcohol and tobacco use, gambling, prostitution, capital punishment and slavery. In your opinion, are there connections between these issues?
3. Why did Greeley challenge Lincoln after supporting him in the election?
4. How did Lincoln respond to Greeley?

#### Follow-Up Activities

- Write a letter to the *New York Tribune* responding to the debate over emancipation between Horace Greeley and President Abraham Lincoln.
- Draw a political cartoon either denouncing or supporting President Lincoln.

# The History of Slavery in New Jersey

by Giles R. Wright, *New Jersey Historical Commission*

New Jersey, like the rest of the British colonies that became the United States, depended on enslaved Africans as part of its work force. It is conceivable African bondspersons were present on New Jersey soil as early as the 1620s. They may have used in the construction and maintenance of Fort Nassau, a Dutch military post established around 1623 on a site located in present-day Gloucester City, Camden County (Wright, 1988:18). There is more substantial documentation for a Black slave presence in 1639 in the Dutch settlement of Pavonia (near present-day Jersey City). It was part of the Dutch colony of New Netherlands and New Jersey's first permanent European settlement (Fishman, 1990:41). After the English seized New Jersey in 1664, Dutch settlers continued to import African slaves into New Jersey in significant numbers. They were encouraged by the colony's 1664 Concessions and Agreement that provided settlers additional land for every slave imported before 1668. (Cooley, 1896:9).

Initially, Africans brought into New Jersey by the English were acquired mainly from the West Indies, especially Jamaica and Barbados. After the mid-eighteenth century, most arrived directly from Africa (Wright, 1988:22). Cooper's Ferry (Camden) served as the port of entry for bondspersons bound for South Jersey counties of Burlington, Gloucester, Salem, and Cape May. Perth Amboy was its counterpart for the northern New Jersey counties of Bergen, Essex, Middlesex, and Monmouth (Greene and Gunther, 1997:51-52). The earliest documentation of a sizable holding of slaves in New Jersey is for 1680; between sixty and seventy slaves were recorded on the manor of Colonel Lewis Morris of Shrewsbury, Monmouth County (Price, 1980:2). There were about 2,600 slaves in New Jersey in 1726 and 4,700 in 1745. Throughout most of the slavery period, about 75 percent of New Jersey bondspersons were located in its northern counties. These counties tended to be both more economically developed and to suffer from labor shortages (Wright, 1988:23). They were also home to more Dutch, German, and non-Quaker settlers (Wright, 1988:23).

In the 18th century, the British crown supported the slave trade, which was a royal monopoly and lucrative source of revenue. The colonial legislature, in contrast to the crown, hoped to meet the colony's labor needs through the importation of white servants who were deemed more assimilable. The crown usually prevailed and between 1721 and 1769 New Jersey allowed duty-free importation of slaves. As a result, the colony becoming a haven for smugglers running slaves into neighboring New York and Pennsylvania, where tariffs were in effect (Wright, 1988:21).

In response to the growth of slavery in New Jersey, laws were passed regulating the treatment and behavior of those in bondage. The earliest legislation was a 1675 law that forbade transporting or harboring a slave who

had left his or her owner without permission (Cooley, 1896:11). In 1682, East Jersey enacted a law requiring that "all masters and mistresses having Negro slaves, or others, shall allow them sufficient accommodations of victuals and clothing" (Wolinetz, 1998: 2230-2231). A second law sought to prevent slaves from stealing from their owners by making it a crime to "buy, sell, barter, trade, or traffic with any Negro slave . . . for any rum, brandy, wine or strong drink, or any other goods, wares or commodities" (Wolinetz, 1998: 2231). At first, slaves were tried in the same courts as freemen. However, a 1695 East Jersey law changed this, establishing special slave courts consisting of three justices of peace to hear prosecutions against slaves for various crimes (Wolinetz, 1998:2231).

The royal colony established at the start of the 18th century imposed strict controls on slaves. Under a 1704 law, a slave guilty of stealing an item worth five shillings received forty lashes on his or her bare back and was branded with the letter "T" on the left cheek near the nose (Wolinetz, 1998:2233). This law also provided for the castration and then execution of any slave guilty of raping a white woman; forbade the children of freed slaves to purchase or inherit land; and negated a slave's automatic freedom through Christian baptism. When this law was repealed in 1709 because of its harshness, New Jersey enacted a more expansive slave code that once again prescribed severe penalties against slaves. For example, to encourage the cooperation of slave owners in criminal prosecutions,

they were compensated for each slave executed: thirty pounds for a man and twenty pounds or less for a woman (Wolinetz, 1998:2233-2235).

While most New Jersey bondspersons were farmhands who worked on small farms producing livestock and grain for export to the West Indies, there was considerable occupational diversity. Men, who outnumbered women during the colonial period, labored in mining, lumbering, nautical pursuits, and domestic service, and served as skilled craftsmen: blacksmiths, millers, carpenters, shoemakers, coopers, millwrights, and tanners. Women, when not farmhands, worked as nannies, cooks, maids, and washerwomen (Wright, 1988:21).

While working conditions for New Jersey slaves were generally less harsh than those of the large plantations of the South, many slaves absconded or engaged in other forms of protest, such as the murder of their owner, feigning illness, and the sabotage of equipment, animals, and crops. New Jersey was one of the few northern colonies where open, collective, resistance to slavery occurred, perhaps the most significant being a conspiracy discovered in Somerville in 1734. Subsequently, slave plots surfaced in 1741 in Hackensack, in 1772 in Perth Amboy, and in 1779 in Elizabethtown. Severe punishment was meted out to those found guilty of involvement in these conspiracies. The discovery of the 1734 Somerville plot led to the arrest of several hundred bondsmen, two of whom were hanged, another relieved of an ear, and many others flogged. In the wake of the hysteria triggered by the New York slave conspiracy of 1741, three New Jersey Blacks were burned alive after being convicted of setting fire to seven barns in Hackensack (Wright, 1988: 22). Being burned alive at the stake was a common punishment for a slave convicted of a capital or lesser offense (Wolinetz, 1998:2237).

New Jersey's slave population was recorded as 11,432 in 1790 for the first federal census and peaked in 1800 at 12,422, of whom only 507 were found in South Jersey. Burlington County in 1790 and 1800 had more free Blacks than any other New Jersey county, 598 and 770 respectively. The relatively large free Black population in South Jersey can be attributed to the considerable presence there of Quakers, who were America's first group of organized abolitionists.

Quaker anti-slavery sentiments were expressed very early in New Jersey. In 1688, the first anti-slavery tract written in the American colonies, a document prepared by Francis Daniel Pastorius of Germantown,

Pennsylvania, was read at the yearly meeting of Delaware Valley Quakers at the Friends Meeting House in Burlington. Among America's early foes of slavery was John Woolman (1720-1772), a Quaker leader and tailor who was born in Rancocas, Burlington County. Woolman believed that slaves should be freed by the personal action of their owners rather than by political measures and traveled extensively on horseback and foot championing the cause of manumission. His 1794 publication, *Some Consideration on the Keeping of Negroes*, was one of America's earliest anti-slavery statements. His opposition to slavery contributed to the 1776 decision by Quakers to excommunicate any co-religionist who was a slaveholder (Wright, 1998:7).

The American Revolution contributed to the demise of slavery in New Jersey. Some slaves used the Revolutionary War's chaos to escape and were able to pass as free Blacks. Others left New Jersey with the post-war departure of the British and settled in Nova Scotia, Great Britain, and later, Sierra Leone. Still others were manumitted by their owners or the state legislature because of service with the American forces or in keeping with the spirit of the Revolution's articulated message of freedom, liberty, and equality (Greene and Gunther, 1997:62).

### **Fighting For Freedom**

by Nancy Shakir

In spite of the enslaved African people fought in the Revolutionary War on both the Patriot and Loyalist side. The British royal governor of Virginia, earl of Dunmore, John Murray, issued a decree, which promised freedom to those enslaved Africans who were willing to fight on the side of the British. This decree of course had an influence on enslaved Africans on other colonies, including New Jersey. The African-Americans that fought on the British side were known as "Dunmore's People." Although few New Jersey records are available, we know, for example, that in June 1780, a group of Tories, African-Americans and British rangers carried out a raid at Conscung, Monmouth County. After the Revolutionary War, some African-Americans gained their freedom and returned to Africa; others relocated to England, while some settled in British Canada in Nova Scotia. Today, descendents of "Dunmore's People" reside in Nova Scotia, primarily near Halifax in the town of Dartmouth. Those known as "Dunmore's People," gained their freedom nearly a hundred years before the

United States passed the Thirteenth Amendment which freed enslaved Africans in the United States.

The confluence of the anti-slavery efforts of New Jersey Quakers and the egalitarian ideals associated with the American Revolution led to the passage in 1786 of a landmark law regarding slavery in New Jersey: *An Act to Prevent the Importation of Slaves into the State of New Jersey, and to Authorize the Manumission of Them Under Certain Restrictions, and to Prevent the Abuse of Slaves*. This act banned slave imports; it encouraged manumission by eliminating the requirement that a slave owner financially support any slave who was to be emancipated; and it allowed owners to be indicted for the inhumane treatment of slaves (Wolinetz, 1998:2240-2241). Two years later the state enacted legislation that forbade the removal of slaves from the state without the slave's consent; provided that slaves convicted of criminal offense receive the same punishment as white lawbreakers; required slave owners to teach slave children to read; and permitted the state to seize and sell slave ships (Wolinetz, 1998:2241).

Further evidence of the growth of anti-slavery sentiments in New Jersey was the founding in 1793 of the New Jersey Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. In 1804, it petitioned for the gradual abolition of slavery, an appeal that helped facilitate the enactment of the state's abolition law of 1804. Under the provisions of this act, which made New Jersey the last northern state to manumit its slaves, all children

born of slaves after July 4 of this year were to be emancipated after serving apprenticeships to their mother's owner, females after twenty-one years of age and males after twenty-five. In a concession to slave owners, the law provided that slave children over the age of one could be abandoned to the poorhouse, where they would be bound out to individuals who would receive compensation from the state for their maintenance. Since the children were often bound to their former owners, the law benefited the latter because they now had an "apprentice" paid for by the state. These maintenance fees led to considerable abuse, became a tremendous financial burden to the state, and were repealed by the legislature in 1811 (Wright, 1988:25).

During the early part of the 19th century New Jersey experienced another slavery-related problem: the kidnapping and selling of the state's slaves to the South. A law passed in 1812 sought to deter slave traders by increasing the penalties for transporting slaves out of the state without their consent. In the wake of a scandal in 1818 in Middlesex County that involved slaves and free Blacks being sold to the slave markets of New Orleans, more stringent legislation was enacted. Under the new law, those convicted of removing a slave from the state with the intent of selling this person in the South were subject to a fine of \$1,000 or imprisonment up to two years. Penalties were doubled for those who purchased a slave with the intent of selling him or her outside the state (Wolinetz, 1998:2249).

While the number of slaves in New Jersey declined in the antebellum period (2,254 in 1830 and 684 in 1840), slavery remained an issue because of the Underground Railroad (UGRR), the secret network of people and places that assisted southern fugitive slaves in finding freedom in the northern states and Canada. New Jersey, located geographically between two major UGRR centers, Philadelphia and New York City, was an integral part of the Underground Railroad's eastern corridor, with "stations" in Salem, Woodbury, Greenwich (Springtown), Camden, Mount Holly, Burlington, Bordentown, Trenton, Lambertville, Phillipsburgh, Princeton, New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Newark, and Jersey City. Because New Jersey was a "free state" after the passage of the Abolition Act of 1804, some UGRR participants decided to settle in the state. In the process they helped create new all-Black communities (e.g., Saddlertown in Haddon, Camden County) and expand others (e.g., Lawnside,

Camden County, and Timbuctoo, Burlington County) that served as havens for runaway slaves from the South (Greene and Gunther, 1997:74). Despite the operation of the Underground Railroad in New Jersey, the state was not completely welcoming of fugitive slaves. Unlike Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maine, Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, New Jersey never enacted personal liberty laws or legislation designed to nullify the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

New Jersey's last abolition act, passed in 1846, was in large part a response to the work of the state's second major abolitionist organization, the New Jersey Anti-Slavery Society. The society campaigned for total and immediate emancipation and submitted petitions to the legislature arguing that the state's second constitution, adopted in 1844, automatically outlawed slavery through its "Bill of Rights." The society lost this legal argument in *State v. Post*, which was adjudicated by the New Jersey Supreme Court in 1845 (Wright, 1988:27). While the 1846 abolition law freed all Black children born after its passage, it left the state's few remaining slaves as "apprentices for life." This group numbered eighteen people in 1860, making New Jersey the last northern state to have slaves. The 1846 abolition law also accomplished two other objectives. By obligating owners to support indigent former slaves after emancipation, it prevented elderly slaves from becoming wards of the state. It also maintained New Jersey's tradition of respecting

property rights by ending slavery without confiscating the property of slaveholders (Wright, 1988:27).

Because the Emancipation Proclamation applied only to slaves that were in the states in rebellion against the Union, it did not affect the status of New Jersey's remaining slaves. It was not until the ratification of the 13th Amendment in 1865 that all New Jerseyans were finally free.

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## Teaching Ideas

by Nancy Shakir

- Show the film *Sankofa*, which depicts the slave trade through the dream-like remembrances of a present day woman. The film (125 minutes) can be obtained from Mypheduh Film, 403 K Street NW, Washington, and DC. 20001. (202) 289-6677. Have students imagine they are the protagonists of the story and have experienced enslavement. They are asked to write as part of an autobiography, a 300-500 word account of this experience.
- Compare and contrast the nature of slavery in the northern colonies and the southern colonies. Because the towns and cities of the north did not require the large numbers of slaves used in the sprawling plantation system of the south, differences may have occurred involving maintaining African cultural traditions, acculturation and work patterns. Students should work in teams to present their findings on two enslaved persons and the variables of those experiences.
- Evaluate and assess why African-Americans fought on the American or the British side during the Revolutionary War. Divide the class in two, one side pro British, the other pro American, and have them debate their positions.
- Examine Underground Railroad routes in New Jersey and New York. Students will explain the Underground Railroad and their state's place in that network.
- Visit historic sites that were part of the Underground Railroad.
- Research the life of a local resident who played an important role in the Underground Railroad.
- Show students the film *Glory*, the story of the 54 th Massachusetts Regiment and its effect on the acceptance of African Americans in the military during the Civil War.



# John Woolman: New Jersey's Eighteenth Century Quaker Abolitionist

by Charles F. Howlett

One of the most influential early colonial abolitionists was a simple tailor and Quaker from Mount Holly, New Jersey, named John Woolman. Woolman's efforts to abolish slavery are richly recorded in his *Journal* which serves as a valuable primary source document all students of American history should read. According to historian Staughton Lynd (1966: 5), Woolman was also a significant figure in the early history of American non-violence, part of "the tradition of the radical Reformation, with its insistence on pacifism, civil disobedience, and community of goods, and its mystical intuition of the oneness of creation"

John Woolman was born on October 19, 1720 in the town currently known as Rancocas, New Jersey. While his youth was spent working on his family's farm and his early education was limited to the nearby Quaker schoolhouse, he improved his own learning by wide reading. At the age of 21, prompted by his desire to learn a trade, Woolman moved to Mount Holly where he apprenticed as a tailor until he was able to set up his own shop. Like nineteenth century abolitionists and peace advocates, William Lloyd Garrison and Elihu Burritt, Woolman "belonged to the class of self-educated craftsmen and small shopkeepers then known as 'mechanics and tradesmen'" (Lynd, 1966: 5).

While living in Mount Holly, Woolman began to preach in the Quaker meeting house. His success as a tailor and the ability to supplement his income by working at various times as a surveyor, conveyancer, and schoolteacher enabled him to make a prosperous living, however, he felt constrained by such prosperity and decided to curtail these activities. "I saw that a humble man," Woolman admitted, "with the Blessing of the Lord, might live on a little, and that where the heart was set on greatness, success in business did not satisfy the craving; but that commonly with an increase of wealth, the desire for wealth increased" (*Dictionary*, 1966: 517).

During this period, Woolman embarked on numerous preaching journeys determined to assist "the pure flowing of divine love" (Tollis, 1972: xi). Denouncing materialism and reaffirming the virtue of simplicity, Woolman frequently carried his itinerant ministry throughout the colonies along the Atlantic seaboard. In 1743, he preached against the dangers of Quaker wealth and worldliness following "an intense personal crisis after assisting in the sale of an enslaved woman" (DeBenedetti, 1980: 5). He brought his anti-slavery message to the shipowners in Rhode Island, however most of his efforts were directed at the evils of institutionalized slavery in the South. Following a trip to Virginia in 1746, Woolman wrote, "I saw in these Southern Provinces so many vice and

Corruptions increased by this trade and this way of life, that it appeared to me as a dark gloominess hanging over the Land, and . . . in future the Consequence will be grievous to posterity." (*Dictionary*, 1966: 517).

Because of Woolman's adherence to Quaker simplicity, when possible, he made trips on foot, did not wear garments made with dye, and abstained from using any product even remotely connected with the "peculiar institution." As "the apostle of antislavery" within Quaker society, Woolman "was one of those most responsible for bringing about the abolition of slaveholding among Friends and for launching the Society on its antislavery career" (Brock, 1969: 52). Most importantly, by the 1760s, long before the creation of the American Anti-Slavery Society or the New England Non-Resistance Society, the Friends became "the first group of white Americans to turn from slaveholding to outright abolitionism" (DeBenedetti, 1980: 15). Not only was Woolman successful in getting Quaker communities to go on record against chattel slavery, but he persuaded numerous individuals to emancipate enslaved Africans.

His abolitionism was closely tied to Woolman's pacifist beliefs. In his public ministry, and during all his contacts with fellow members, Woolman pointed out "the implicit hypocrisy of asserting the wrongfulness of all wars and at the same time holding in bondage fellowmen whose subjection was the result of armed force" (Brock, 1969: 52). His remarks to one Virginia Yearly Meeting forcefully sums up his hatred for slavery: ". . . purchasing any merchandise taken by the sword, was always allowed to be inconsistent with our principles. Negroes being captives of war, or taken by stealth, those circumstances make it inconsistent with our testimony to buy them; and their being our fellow creatures, who are sold as slaves, adds greatly to the [difficulty]" (Brock, 1969: 52).

Woolman's *Journal*, published in 1774, tells the story of his life and illustrates the development of his thoughts. It begins in his 36th year and continues until his death on October 7, 1772 in York, England. It is

distinguished in style by his purity and simplicity of expression and “stands as a moving testimony to the ways in which one person can alter human relations in a manner that was at once simple, decent, and loving” (DeBenedetti, 1980: 15).

Although a considerable portion of his *Journal* is devoted to his pacifist views, Woolman’s anti-slavery efforts are thoroughly recorded. The *Journal* includes a report on the experience when Woolman was twenty-three that transformed him into an ardent opponent of slavery. A close reading of Woolman’s *Journal*, with particular attention to his abolitionist views, highlights the efforts of one early colonial reformer who was devoted to “living in the real substance of religion, where practice doth harmonize with principle” (Schlissel, 1967: 37).

As the first native-born peace hero and abolitionist in Colonial America, Woolman is deserving of our attention. “If the world could take John Woolman for an example in religion and politics. . . ,” wrote the eminent British historian G. M. Trevelyan, “we should be doing better than we are in the solution of the problems of our own day. Our modern conscience-

prickers often are either too ‘clever’ or too violent” (*Dictionary*, 1966: 517).

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### From the Journal of John Woolman, Colonial New Jersey Abolitionist

(“John Woolman’s Journal” is available on the internet through [www.as.wvu.edu/coll03/relst/are/linkfig.htm](http://www.as.wvu.edu/coll03/relst/are/linkfig.htm))

“My Employer having a Negro woman sold her, and directed me to write a bill of Sale, the man being waiting who had brought her. The thing was Sudden, and though the thoughts of writing an Instrument of Slavery for one of my fellow creatures felt uneasie, yet I remembered I was hired by the year: that it was my master who [directed] me to do it, and that it was an Elderly man, a member of our society who bought her, so through weakness I gave way, and wrote it, but at the Executing it I was so Afflicted in my Mind, that I said before my Master and the friend that I believed Slavekeeping to be a practice inconsistent with the Christian religion: This in some degree abated my uneasiness, yet as often as I reflected seriously upon it I thought I should have been clearer, if I had desired to be Excused from it, as a thing against my conscience, for such it was. . . .”

#### Questions

1. What is John Woolman asked to do by his “master”?
2. Why is Woolman upset by what happened?
3. If you were in Woolman’s position, what would you have done? Why?

#### “History Need Not Be Dull: Bringing the Past to Life Using Primary Source Documents and Local Historic Sites.”

K-12 Workshops for New Jersey teachers (attendees receive professional service credit). Topics include using archival materials from local archives in the classroom; internet sources for New Jersey-related historic documents; and school/historic site cooperative programs. Workshops scheduled for October 5 at Seton Hall University and October 11 at the Monmouth County Library Headquarters in Manalapan. Additional workshops will be held at the Atlantic City NJEA Convention and in Morristown and Trenton. Speakers at the October 11 workshop include David S. Cohen, author of “The Guide to Materials for Teaching New Jersey History”; Ronald Becker (Director, Special Collections and Archives, Rutgers University), Thomas J. Frusciano (Rutgers University Archivist), Heather Welliver-Farr (Electronic Records Archivist, American College of Physicians), and Gary D. Saretzky (Monmouth County Archivist); public school teachers Frank Byrne, Linda Gesek, and Bernard A. Olsen; and Peggi Carlsen (Director of the Rockingham Historic Site).

For the Seton Hall workshop, contact Alan Delozier at 932-275-2378 or [delozial@shu.edu](mailto:delozial@shu.edu). For the Morristown workshop,

contact Al Lucibello, 973-331-7100 x252 or ALucib2869@aol.com. For the Trenton workshop, contact Karl Niederer at 609-292-633-8334 or karl.niederer@sos.state.nj.us For all other information, including the Manalapan workshop, contact Gary D. Saretzky, 732-308-3772 or saretzky@rci.rutgers.edu.

# Underground Railroad Sites in New York and New Jersey

by Laura Peterson and Jennifer Pesato

Study of the Underground Railroad allows teachers to focus on moral, religious and heroic efforts to challenge slavery and provides an opportunity to include more local history in the curriculum. The following Underground Railroad sites in New York and New Jersey are well documented. Some are open to the public. Many are listed on the National Park Service website [www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground).

**Grimes Homestead: Morris County, N.J.** Home of a Quaker family active in the New Jersey anti-slavery movement. Dr. John Grimes (1802-1875) was repeatedly harassed by supporters of slavery while living at this house and was once arrested for harboring a runaway slave. The Grimes Homestead is located in Mountain Lakes, New Jersey. A private residence, it is not open to the public.

**Peter Mott House: Camden County, N.J.** Peter Mott (c. 1807-1881), an African American farmer, constructed this house around 1844 in a free Black community known as Snow Hill. Mott and his wife provided refuge to escaping slaves before the Civil War. The house is located in Lawnside, New Jersey. The Historical Society is raising money to restore and open it to the public.

**Bethel AME Church: Cumberland County, N.J.** Bethel AME Church was located in the Black community of Springtown in Greenwich Township. Harriet Tubman used the Springtown/Greenwich station from 1849-1853 during her passage north from Delaware. The Bethel AME Church is located on Sheppards Mill Road in Greenwich Township, New Jersey. It is private property and not open to the public.

**Murphy Orchards: Niagara County, N.Y.** Charles and Libby McClew moved to the property in 1850 and built the house and barn which houses the entrance to a secret underground chamber used to hide people escaping slavery on their way to freedom in Canada. The farm is located about 20 miles from the Niagara River in Lewiston, and was one of the last stops before the fugitives crossed into Canada. It is open to the public. Call 716-778-7926 for information. [www.murphyorchards.com/ur.html](http://www.murphyorchards.com/ur.html)

**Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged and Thompson AME Church: Cayuga County, N.Y.** Harriet Tubman (1820?-1913), a renowned leader in the Underground Railroad movement, guided approximately 300 people to freedom in the north and Canada. She established the Home for the Aged in Auburn, N.Y. in 1908. The Home for the Aged is located at 180 South Street, her home is located at 182 South Street, and the church is located at 33 Parker Street, Auburn, N.Y. The Home for the Aged is open to the public by appointment.

**St. James AME Zion Church: Tompkins County, N.Y.** Built in 1836, it is believed to be the oldest church in Ithaca, N.Y. and one of the first AME Zion churches in the country. It was an important transfer point for fugitive slaves en route to Canada. The congregation officially expressed its anti-slavery sentiments through the writings and preaching of pastors such as the Reverend Thomas James. The church, located at 116-118 Cleveland Avenue, Ithaca, N.Y., is open to the public.

**Gerrit Smith Estate and Land Office: Madison County, N.Y.** Gerrit Smith (1797-1874), a nationally prominent and influential abolitionist and social reformer, served as president of the New York Anti-Slavery Society between 1836 and 1839. During the 1840s and 1850s, Smith acted as a "station master" in the Underground Railroad. His Peterboro, New York estate, a widely recognized safe haven for runaway slaves en route to Canada, was designated a National Historic Landmark. The Gerrit Smith Estate and Land Office are at the corner of Nelson and Main Streets. The Land Office is the only building open to the public. John Brown Farm and Gravesite: Essex County, N.Y. A National Historic Landmark and New York State Historic Site.

**John Brown Farm and Gravesite: Essex County, N.Y.** John Brown's home during the ten year period prior to the Harpers Ferry raid in 1859. After Brown was buried on the farm, it became a pilgrimage site for free African

Americans and white abolitionists. It is located just south of Old Military Road in Lake Placid, New York. It is open to the public.

**Orson Ames House: Oswego County, N.Y.** In 1838, Orson Ames was part of Mexico township's first Vigilance Committee, organized to help fugitives escape to Canada. The Ames family housed the fugitive Jerry McHenry for one night in 1851 before sending him to Asa Beebe's barn north of the village. Orson Ames then wrote to a brother in Oswego (probably Leonard Ames, Jr.), who made arrangements with a boat captain to take Jerry McHenry to Canada. [www.oswego.edu/Acad\\_Dept/a\\_and\\_s/history/ugrr/contents.html](http://www.oswego.edu/Acad_Dept/a_and_s/history/ugrr/contents.html)

**Starr Clark House: Oswego County, N.Y.** Starr Clark's tin shop on Main Street in Mexico, New York. Starr Clark housed fugitives in this from the mid-1830s to the Civil War. James Chandler, who owned the brick bank next door, was also an abolitionist. It is believed that a tunnel ran from the basement of the tin shop to the house next door. The arrangement of rocks in the east wall of the tin shop basement suggests a possible filled-in tunnel. [www.oswego.edu/Acad\\_Dept/a\\_and\\_s/history/ugrr/contents.html](http://www.oswego.edu/Acad_Dept/a_and_s/history/ugrr/contents.html)

**Foster Memorial AME Zion Church: Westchester County, N.Y.** Founded in 1860. During the Civil War, members of Foster AME provided food and shelter to fugitive slaves escaping to Canada and fugitive slaves who settled in Tarrytown. Foster AME Zion Church is located in Tarrytown, New York at 90 Wildey Street. It is open to the public.

**Main Maid Inn: Nassau County, N.Y.** This restaurant in Jericho on Long Island was once the home of Valentine Hicks. On the second floor of this building a cupboard door hides stairs leading to an attic where there is a hidden crawl space. The cellar also had an unseen passageway behind a wall leading outdoors

**Bialystoker Synagogue (formerly Willett Street Methodist Episcopal Church): New York, N.Y.** The church became a Jewish synagogue in 1905. Behind a wall in the women's gallery is a narrow shaft with a tall wooden ladder leading to the attic. In the attic additional ladders lead to loft spaces. According to oral history, fugitive slaves were hidden here.

**Wunsch Student Center (formerly the African Wesleyan Methodist Episcopal Church): Brooklyn, N.Y.** In 1854 the first Black congregation in Brooklyn was located at 311 Bridge Street. Fugitive slaves stayed in the basement of the building, but hid in a subcellar when there was danger of capture.

**Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims: Brooklyn Heights, N.Y.** The church where Henry Ward Beecher preached from 1847 to 1887. Fugitive slaves hid in the basement and tunnel-like passageways that run the length of the building. A statue of Beecher commemorating his role as an abolitionist is in front of the church.

**Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church: Fort Greene, Brooklyn, N.Y.** The building, built between 1860 and 1862 and contains a basement and heating tunnels where fugitives were often hidden. This is documented in letters written by Dr. Theodore Cuyler, the congregation's first preacher.

**Macedonia A.M.E. Church: Flushing, Queens, N.Y.** The church was built in 1811. Runaway slaves slept in its basement (now boiler room) and then slipped them out through a side door to move to their next stop.

**1661 Browne House: Queens, N.Y.** The original meeting place for local Quakers before the Friends Meeting House was built on Northern Boulevard. The Browne family were active in abolitionist. The building is now a museum.

**A.M.E. Zion Church: Staten Island, N.Y.** A free Black community developed at Sandy Ground in the 1840s. The church offered sanctuary to fugitive slaves.

**Dr. Samuel McKenzie Elliot Home: Staten Island, N.Y.** Built around 1850 in the community of Rossville. Home of a well-known abolitionist. A New York City landmark.

**Learning Activities:** Locate sites on maps of New York and New Jersey. Trace Underground Railroad escape routes. Take a journey to escape slavery on a virtual tour of the Underground Railroad at [www.nationalgeographic.com/features/99/jl.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/99/jl.html).

## The Underground Railroad and Abolitionism in Central New York

by Judith Wellman

Most underground railway people and places in central New York remain relatively unknown. But local stories abound, and people in small towns and large cities across the region still identify hundreds of places associated with the underground railroad. Some of the most famous people in abolitionist history lived and worked in this region, from Frederick Douglass (himself an escaped slave and editor of the *North Star* in Rochester) to Harriet Tubman (who helped so many people escape from slavery that she became known as the “Moses of her people” and who settled in Auburn in the 1850s) to Reverend Jermain Loguen (who escaped from slavery in Tennessee to become a minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and whose home in Syracuse became a center of underground railroad activity) to Samuel J. May (Unitarian minister in Syracuse) to Gerrit Smith (landowner and abolitionist whose home became a major center for abolitionism, women’s rights, and land reform), to Samuel Ringgold Ward (a Black minister, author, and publisher, who was nominated for Vice-President of the United States at a Liberty Party convention in Oswego, New York).

Mexico, New York was a key center of abolitionist activity in Oswego County. Mexico residents formed the earliest anti-slavery society in the county and sent the earliest anti-slavery petition. Local tradition suggests that Starr Clark maintained the headquarters of the underground railroad in his tin shop on Main Street. Clark’s granddaughter remembered both a tunnel connecting Clark’s tin shop with his house next door and a “tank room” in the house itself, used as a refuge for fugitives.

While Mexico was an agricultural trading center, Oswego was a city of almost 16,000 people in 1850. As a major U.S. port for trade with Canada, Oswego offered haven to many African Americans before the Civil War. Some of them worked as sailors, laborers, or washerwomen; a large number were barbers. Gerrit Smith, a prominent abolitionist from Peterboro, New York, owned the eastside harbor facilities. A network of very active local abolitionists organized societies, sent anti-slavery petitions to Congress, wrote letters, and helped organize among the very third-party political abolitionist campaigns in the country. In 1837-38, Oswego Town sent three petitions to Congress containing almost 500 signatures of both women and men, asking for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and protesting the annexation of Texas as a slave state.

In the 1830s, the growth of a more active phase of underground railroad activity was closely related to the development of a new and more radical phase of the anti-slavery movement in general. In 1835, under the supervision of Theodore Weld, who grew up near Syracuse, New York, the American Anti-Slavery Society sent about seventy agents across the northern states to organize anti-slavery societies. Between 1835-1850, upstate New York residents sent more than 400 anti-slavery petitions to Congress. Seventy percent of them were signed either by women alone or by men and women together.

In October 1836, a mob led by future State Supreme Court Judge Samuel Beardsley and other “gentlemen of property and standing” attacked a meeting of hundreds of abolitionists at the Presbyterian church in Utica. At the invitation of Gerrit Smith, this group met the next day in Peterboro, New York, where they organized the New York State Anti-Slavery Society. From 1836-1842, this Society published a monthly newspaper, the *Friend of Man*, which reported in detail about abolitionist activities, including underground railroad activities in upstate New York.

By 1838, many male abolitionists, especially in central New York and Ohio, were beginning to wonder why they voted for state and congressional representatives who refused to support the anti-slavery cause. Beginning in places such as Oswego County in 1838, abolitionists began to query candidates nominated by Democrats and Whigs about their anti-slavery views. In 1840, a coalition of these political abolitionists from throughout the Northeast organized the Liberty Party in Warsaw, New York.

The Fugitive Slave Act spurred resistance all across the North. When agents captured Missouri fugitive William (‘Jerry’) Henry in Syracuse in October 1851, local abolitionists, both Black and white, broke into his cell,

Social

rescued him, and sent him through Mexico, New York, to Oswego and then to Kingston, Ontario. Several central New York citizens were tried for the rescue of Jerry Henry. None of them ever served time. Many African Americans who had settled in upstate New York fled to Canada in the early 1850s, fearful of capture under the Fugitive Slave Law. By the mid-1850s, however, fugitives once again came relatively freely through Syracuse and surrounding areas. Jermain Loguen, himself a fugitive, and his wife Caroline openly maintained a center to help fugitives at their home on East Genesee Street.

### Classroom Activity:

## Runaway Slave Advertisements from New Jersey

A. *The American Weekly Mercury*, July 9, 1724. Runaway on the 9th instant from Alexander Morgan Pensawkin Creek, in the County of Gloucester in West New Jersey, a white servant Lad named RICHARD BOON, a well set full faced fellow with short brown hair, aged 18 years old, also a Negro boy named CAESAR, aged about 10 years, they took a Wherry (small boat) with two sails, the white boy has on a homespun brown kersey coat, a felt hat, and a leather jacket. Whoever shall take up the said lads and secure them so that their master may have them again, shall have 40 shillings as reward for each and reasonable charges.

B. *The New York Gazette*, August 13, 1750. Runaway on the 5th day of August from Jacob Ford, of Morris-town, East New Jersey, a Negro boy named ISHMAEL, aged about 16 years, short and thick, full faced, has a very large foot, born in the country, and has a sly look; had on when he went away a flannel jacket, dyed with logwood of purple color, two woolen shirts, a new felt hat, and leather breeches. Whoever takes up and secures said boy so that his Master may have him again, shall have three pounds reward and all reasonable charges paid by Jacob Ford.

C. *The New Jersey Journal*, Westfield, May 7, 1780. Ranaway from the subscriber the evening of May 2nd, a Negro boy named ROBBIN, but sometimes calls himself Levi alias Leave, about fifteen years old, somewhat tall for his age, is an artful fellow, very modest in speech, has a sober look and can frame a smooth story from rough materials, naturally very lazy but capable of activity; went off in haste, having on an old felt hat, white woolen waistcoat with stocking sleeves, brown under ditto, pair of white woolen overalls, tow shirt, pale blue stockings, old shoes without buckles; supposed to have enlisted in the service or else secreted by some evil minded person whose hearts are as black as the fugitives face. If the former should be the case, the proprietor is under no apprehensions but he will immediately be given up. A handsome reward will be paid to the person who secures him for his master besides generous payment for trouble. Noah Marsh. N.B. All persons are forewarned, harboring the said Negro at their peril.

### Questions

1. What distinguishing features are used to describe Ishmael? Why are they listed in this advertisement?
2. The advertisements for Robbin, Ishmael and Richard Boon describe their clothing. Why?
3. Of the four runaways, only one has a last name. How do you explain this?
4. As an historian trying to understand the past, “brainstorm” a list of things you learn about New Jersey in the 18th century from these advertisements. Make a second list of questions you have about New Jersey in the 18th century.

## Runaway Slave Advertisements from New York City

A. *New York Gazette*, December 19, 1737. Ranaway from John Bell of New York City, carpenter, one Negro woman named Jenny, 14-15 years old. Born in New York speaks English and some Dutch. She has a flat nose, thick lips, and a full face. Had on when she went away, a birds-eyed waistcoat and petticoat of a darkish color, and a calico petticoat with a large red flower, and a broad stripe. Whoever shall take said Negro wench and bring her to said John Bell, or secure her and give notice, so that he can have her again, shall have three pounds as a reward, and all reasonable charges.

B. *New York Gazette*, July 24, 1758. Runaway from Ide Meyer on the 20th of June last, a Mulatto wench named Ohnech, but goes by the name Hannah and pretends to be free: She is about 4 feet 4 inches high and 28 years of age; is well set and speaks both English and Dutch very well, had on when she went away a homespun stole, a

petticoat, blue short cloak and white cap; whoever takes up and secures the said wench so that her Master may have her again shall have TWENTY SHILLINGS reward and all reasonable charges paid.

C. *New York Gazette*, June 30, 1760. Runaway on Monday the 20th instant from Dennis Hicks of this city, Shipwright, a likely Negro Lad of about 14 years old, a short chubby fellow, full faced: had on a blue sailors jacket with a striped homespun one under it, an old brown cloth pair of breeches, an old hat and cap. Whoever takes up and secures said Negro, in that he may be had again, shall have Twenty Shillings reward and charges paid by Dennis Hicks.

### Questions

1. What distinguishing features are used to describe Jenny? Why are they listed in this advertisement?
2. The advertisement placed by Dennis Hicks describes the clothing worn by the "Negro Lad." In your opinion, will this description lead to his capture? Explain.
3. Jenny and Ohnech speak both English and Dutch. Why is this information included in the advertisement?
4. As an historian trying to understand the past, "brainstorm" a list of things you learn about New York City in the 18th century from these advertisements. Make a second list of questions you have about New York City in the 18th century.

## Runaway Slave Advertisements from New York State

A. *New York Weekly Journal*, October 6, 1735. Runaway from Arent Bradt of Schenectady in the County of Albany, on Sunday the 28th of September last, a Negro Man, named William Smith, he is an indentured servant and no slave; he is a pretty lusty well set fellow, full faced, and in color like the Madagascar Negroes, speaks English and Low Dutch, understands all sorts of husbandry work, and something of the trade of a black-smith. Any person that takes up the said Negro man servant, and secures so that his master may have him again, shall have five pounds reward and all reasonable charges.

B. *The New York Weekly Journal*, October 2, 1738. Runaway from Frederick Zepperly of Rhinebeck in Dutchess County, a copper colored Negro fellow named Jack, aged about 30 years, speaks nothing but English and reads English. Whoever takes up said run away and secures him so his master may have him again or gives notice of him to Harry Beekman or to John Peter Zenger shall have forty shillings and all reasonable charges.

C. *New York Gazette*, July 18, 1748. Runaway the 12th instant from Alexander Allaire of New Rochelle, two Negro boys, one aged 10, a tall slim fellow, his eyes look red and speaks tolerable good English, had on a hat printed red, an olive colored coat, with close sleeves and a large pair of coarse trousers. The other, aged about 16 or 17, a short thick set fellow, with a blue ragged jacket, coarse trousers and speaks bad English. Whoever secures the said Negroes shall be rewarded for their pains by Alexander Allaire.

D. *New York Gazette*, August 13, 1750. Runaway about four weeks ago, from Simon Cregier of the City of New York, a Negro wench named Phoebe aged about 45 years, middle sized, and formerly belonged to Dr. Cornelius Van Wyck at Great Neck; she is well known at that part of Long Island, and about Flushing; she had a note with her to look for a master, but has not returned again; her clothing is uncertain. Whoever takes up and secures said Negro wench, so that her Master may have her again, should have forty shillings reward and all reasonable charges paid by Simon Cregier.

E. *New York Gazette*, September 28, 1776. Ten Dollars Reward. Runaway from the subscriber, living in Ulster county, two mulatto slaves, remarkably white, on the 22nd, both well set, about 5 feet eight inches high, black hair, blue eyed, one of them stoop shouldered, and long chinned. Whoever takes up said mulatto slaves and secures them in an goal on this continent, so that their masters may have them again, shall be entitled to the above award paid by Col. James McClughery and Joseph Houston, Hanover, Ulster county.

F. *Long Island Farmer*, July 11, 1822. Ranaway form the subscriber; on the sixth of May, a Black boy named DAVID APPLEBY, five feet five inches high, very black, and very large white teeth. All persons are warned against harboring or employing said boy, at the peril of the law. Whoever will secure said boy and return him to his master, or lodge him in any public Prison, shall receive the above reward, but no charges paid.

## Questions

1. Why is William Smith accused of being a runaway if the advertisement says he is “no slave”?
2. The advertisement placed by Alexander Allaire describes the clothing worn by the two runaways. Why?
3. Who placed the advertisement for the return of Phoebe? Why is a previous owner mentioned?
4. The advertisement for “Jack” says to give notice to John Peter Zenger. Who was John Peter Zenger?
5. What do we learn about the definition of slavery from the description of the Ulster runaways?
6. What distinguishing features are used to describe David Appleby? Why are they listed in this advertisement?
7. As an historian trying to understand the past, “brainstorm” a list of things you learn about New York in the 18th and 19th centuries from these advertisements. Make a second list of questions you have about New York in the 18th and 19th centuries.

## Classroom Activity: Documenting Complicity with Slavery

### A) The Amistad Case as reported by New York Morning Herald

(Based on material from the Gilder Lehrman Institute and available on its websites, [www.gliah.org](http://www.gliah.org) and [www.yale.edu/glc](http://www.yale.edu/glc) )

In June 1839, 52 African captives revolted as they were being transported on the Spanish schooner Amistad from Havana to Guanaja, Cuba. Led by Joseph Cinque, a Mende from the Sierra Leone region of West Africa, the rebels ordered two surviving Spaniards to sail the ship eastward to Africa. The crew sailed eastward during the day, but veered north-westward at night, hoping to encounter a British ship patrolling for vessels engaged in the illegal slave trade or to reach a friendly port.

In late August, the U.S.S. Washington seized the Amistad near the Long Island coast. A hearing was held in New London, Connecticut, and the Africans were charged with mutiny, murder, and piracy. Abolitionists quickly took up the cause of the Amistad rebels. They insisted that since the Africans had been illegally imported into Cuba and were legally free at the time that they entered U.S. waters, the rebels should be released from jail.

Ultimately, former President John Quincy Adams represented the Amistad rebels before the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court ruled that the Africans had been illegally transported as slaves from Africa to Cuba and were thus free. However, it also made it clear that the case was highly exceptional and that slaves in general had no right to rebel or escape their bondage.

### “The Case of the Captured Negroes,” September 9, 1839

A) The highly important nature of the case connected with the disposal of the Negroes recently captured on board of the L’Amistad, has induced us to take more than the ordinary measures to get all the facts and main features of this interesting affair as fully and as accurately as possible. The extraordinary fabrications that have been put forth by the “Journal of Commerce,” in relation to this important case, require to be promptly exposed and refuted. The whole affair is of too serious a nature to be treated with levity, or to be made the subject of the ridiculous invention, overdrawn and exaggerated statements, and catch-penny falsehoods, to which the Journal of Commerce, copying from some penny paper, has given credence, publicity, and sanction. It is a matter of the utmost moment; affecting the credit and character of the Spanish government, of the authorities of this country, and of the lives of 30 or 40 human beings.

## Questions

1. According to this passage, what is the goal of the *New York Morning Herald*?
2. What does the article say about coverage by other newspapers?
3. According to the *Morning Herald*, why is this case important?

B) In order, therefore, to arrive at the truth, and the full details of the affair, we have dispatched two highly intelligent and competent correspondents, for that purpose, to Connecticut; one to New London, and one to New Haven, to obtain all the facts of the case, a letter from each of which we this day lay before our readers, promising that all our information is obtained from the most direct and unquestionable source. In addition to this, Senor Ruiz, the owner of a majority of the Negroes on board of the L’Amistad, called on us personally, yesterday, and furnished us with full and accurate information in connection with this curious transaction from its commencement down to this time. He states the two thirds of the account in the “Journal of Commerce” is but a tissue of falsehoods, without

Social

the least foundation in fact; calculated to injure all parties, to mislead the public on every important point, and to make an entirely false issue in a case that is of itself, upon the strength of its simple facts, sufficiently complicated to create a great deal of ill feeling, and difficult in arriving at a correct decision on its merits.

**Questions**

1. What does Senor Ruiz claim?
2. In your view, is he a reliable source? Explain.

C) Senor Ruiz states that the character and conduct of the Negroes as totally different from the statements published and endorsed by the “Journal of Commerce;” so far from being a hero, Cinguiz is as miserably ignorant and brutalized a creature as the rest of them; that the speeches and declarations reputed to have been uttered by him, are all pure invention from beginning to end; that he made no speech whatever; and that if he had, there was no one who could translate what he said; the cabin boy knows nothing of the language, as asserted by the “Journal;” and had he been able to tell Mr. Hyde, according to the “Journal’s” account, Mr. Hyde knows nothing of Spanish, and the boy cannot speak English. The accounts, therefore, in the “Journal of Commerce” must be looked upon, by all who are desirous of understanding the real merits of the case, and of getting at the facts, as worthy only of derision and contempt; and as an impudent attempt on the part of that paper to palm off upon an intelligent community, the most infamous fabrications in a matter that deeply concerns the character, the credit, and the best interests of all classes of our citizens.

Senor Ruiz informs us, that he first met these Negroes in the fields close to Havana; he saw them and examined them for two or three days before he made his purchases; and even then he did not purchase the whole of those that he found there. He did not inquire whether they were Congo Negroes, or Mandangoes, or where they came from; he saw they were stout bodied men and he bought them; he took them to Havana, entered them according to the laws of the place, got out his bill of lading, and shipped them under the sanction of the authorities of the place. These are the topics and points upon which the whole difficulty of the case will hinge. These are the pivots upon which the decisions turn. Senor Ruiz says that he had no idea of the Spanish minister claiming them from this government as property; but he believes the minister will claim them as murderers, to be delivered up and sent to Havana for trial, for murdering a Spanish ship master, on board a Spanish vessel, in Spanish waters.--And, as we see, by the papers, that Senor D’Argaiz, the new Spanish minister, has arrived at Washington, the presumption is that they will be demanded forthwith, and therefore that all these difficult, intricate, troublesome and long mooted points will come up at once, be met, and set at rest at once and forever.

**Questions**

1. According to Senor Ruiz and the *Morning Herald*, how are other newspaper accounts false?
2. What does the newspaper believe will be the reaction of the Spanish government?

D) In the meantime the abolitionists are making immense exertions to get the Negroes set free; they are raising subscriptions, collecting money, clothing and feeding them; employing the most able counsel, riding over the country, by night and day, to get interpreters who can converse alike in their language and in English; rummaging over musty records, old statutes, treaties and laws, in order to “get a peg to hang a doubt upon” in relation to delivering them up. Some of them they will endeavor to have used as states evidence, (if tried here) in order to prove that there was no legal authority for shipping them on board the L’Amistad. The canting semi-abolition papers, like the “Journal of Commerce” and the “American” and “Post” are all endeavoring to mis-state, misrepresent, and throw difficulties upon the matter in order to get the Black murderers set free. The Southern papers have articles proving the propriety of the surrender. Meanwhile, the Negroes are getting fat and lazy; perfectly indifferent to the disposal to be made of them. They only do two things on the coast of Africa; that is, eat and steal. On board the L’Amistad, after the murders, they did little else but eat and steal. They quarreled with themselves about the food, they drank up what little liquor there was on board; and then, although having entire possession of the vessel, they began to steal individually every thing they could lay their hands on and to cram the articles into bags. After this, they rummaged and searched parts of the vessel daily. One day they would find one thing, and another day another; at last they opened a locker and found six demijohns of wine; these they drank in two days, and then they began to steal from each other. And if released and sent back to Africa, they will have no other occupation than eating and stealing again.--Senor Ruiz says that they are all great cowards, and had the

captain killed one on the night of the mutiny they would have been subdued instantly, and all have run below. His impression is that they will be sent out to Havana, the ringleaders executed, and the rest given up to him. We shall see. It is a most singular case; we shall follow it up closely; and, unlike the “Journal of Commerce,” we shall do so accurately.

**Questions**

1. What are abolitionists trying to do?
2. How does the *Morning Herald* describe the appearance and behavior of the Africans from the Amistad?
3. The *Morning Herald* claims, “It is a most singular case; we shall follow it up closely; and, unlike the “Journal of Commerce,” we shall do so accurately.” How do you respond?

**Follow-up:** In this newspaper article, Africans and African Americans are referred to as “Negroes.” Do you think documents like these should present the original language or be edited to reflect modern usage of words? Explain. Write a letter to the editor of the *New York Morning Herald* responding to what you have read.

## B) A Slaver Describes the Atlantic Slave Trade

In 1859, eighty-five slave ships, capable of carrying between thirty and sixty thousand slaves, were outfitted in New York to serve the slave markets of Cuba. Captain James Smith was one of the few slave traders convicted of violating U.S. and international laws. Even though participation in the slave trade was considered piracy and a capital offense, he was sentenced to only two years in prison and a \$1,000 fine. The treatment of convicted slave traders finally changed during the Civil War. In February, 1862, Nathaniel Gordon was executed in New York City because of his involvement in the slave trade. The document that follows is an edited version of an interview with Smith. It originally appeared in a book written in 1857 and published in 1864.

“New York is the chief port in the world for the Slave Trade. It is the greatest place in the universe for it. Neither in Cuba not in the Brazils is it carried on so extensively. Ships that convey Slaves to the West Indies and South America are fitted out in New York. Now and then one sails from Boston and Philadelphia; but New York is our headquarters. My vessel was the brig ‘Julia Moulton.’ I got her in Boston, and brought her here, and sailed from this port direct for the coast of Africa.”

“But do you mean to say that this business is going on now?”

“Yes. Not so many vessels have been sent out this year, perhaps not over twenty-five. But last year there were thirty-five. I can go down to South Street, and go into a number of houses that help fit out ships for the business. I don’t know how far they own the vessels, or receive the profits of the cargoes. But these houses know all about it.”

“But when you reach the African coast, are you not in great danger from British Ships-of-War?”

“Oh, no, we don’t care a button for an English squadron. We run up the American flag, and if they come aboard, all we have to do is show our American papers, and they have no right to search us.”

“How many Slaves could you carry on your vessel?”

“We took on board 664. She would carry 750 with ease. The boys and women we kept on the upper deck. But all the strong men - those giant Africans that might make us trouble - we put below on the Slave deck.”

“Did you chain them or put on handcuffs?”

“No, never; they would die. We let them move about.”

“Are you very severe with them?”

“We have to be very strict at first - for a week or so - to make them feel that we are the masters. Then we lighten up for the rest of the voyage.”

“How do you pack them at night?”

“They lie down upon the deck, on their sides, body to body. There would not be room enough for all to lie on their backs.”

“Did many die on the passage?”

“Yes, I lost a good many on the last cruise - more than ever before. Sometimes we find them dead when we go below in the morning. Then we throw them overboard.”

“Are the profits of the trade large?”

“Yes, sir, very large. My brig cost \$13,000 to fit her out completely. My last cargo to Cuba was worth \$220,000.”

### Questions

1. How many enslaved Africans did Smith transport on this voyage?
2. How much money were these people sold for in Cuba?
3. Smith says “New York is the chief port in the world for the Slave Trade.” According to Smith, what role does New York play in this trade?
4. When Smith was convicted of illegal slave trading, he was sentenced to two years in prison and a \$1,000 fine. In your opinion, was this a fair punishment? Explain.

**Follow-up:** The South Street Seaport Museum in Manhattan commemorates New York City’s role in 19th century shipping. Check out its website at [www.seaport.com](http://www.seaport.com). Do you think the museum should include an exhibit on the port’s involvement in the Atlantic Slave trade? Explain. Write a letter to museum officials expressing your views.

## C) The Africans of the Slave Bark Wildfire

Harper's Weekly began publication in New York City on January 3, 1857. In an era before news photography, its stories were illustrated by detailed drawings. According to the magazine's website, "before the Civil War, the editorial practice of Harper's Weekly was to avoid discussion of the divisive issue of slavery whenever possible, and to calm anxiety and tempers when compelled to confront it. That editorial inclination was grounded in both the conservative political principles of the Harper family and their financial self-interest not to alienate readers in any area of the country. When the editors did speak directly on the subject of slavery, they consistently blamed sectional tensions on small but vocal groups of extremists on both sides—Northern abolitionists and Southern secessionists." Despite its general practices, the magazine reported on the Dred Scott case, the slave trade, abolitionism, and John Brown's raid.

The document is an edited version of the article, "The Africans of the Slave Bark Wildfire." It appeared on June 2, 1860. A picture and the full text are available at "[blackhistory.harpweek.com/SlaveryHome.htm](http://blackhistory.harpweek.com/SlaveryHome.htm)".

On the morning of the 30th of April last, the United States steamer Mohawk, came to anchor in the harbor of this place, having in tow a bark of the burden of about three hundred and thirty tons, supposed to be the bark Wildfire, lately owned in the-city of New York. The bark had on board five hundred and ten native Africans, taken on board in the River Congo, on the west side of the continent of Africa. She had been captured a few days previously within sight of the northern coast of Cuba, as an American vessel employed in violating our laws against the slave-trade. She had left the Congo River thirty-six days before her capture.

Soon after the bark was anchored we repaired on board, and on passing over the side saw, on the deck of the vessel, about four hundred and fifty native Africans, in a state of entire nudity, in a sitting or squatting posture, the most of them having their knees elevated so as to form a resting place for their heads and arms. They sat very close together, mostly on either side of the vessel, forward and aft, leaving a narrow open space along the line of the centre for the crew of the vessel to pass to and fro. About fifty of them were full-grown young men, and about four hundred were boys aged from ten to sixteen years. It is said by persons acquainted with the slave-trade and who saw them, that they were generally in a very good condition of health and flesh, as compared with other similar cargoes, owing to the fact that they had not been so much crowded together on board as is common in slave voyages, and had been better fed than usual. It is said that the bark is capable of carrying, and was prepared to carry, one thousand, but not being able without inconvenient delay to procure so many, she sailed with six hundred. Ninety and upward had died on the voyage. But this is considered as comparatively a small loss, showing that they had been better cared for than usual. Ten more have died since their arrival, and there are about forty more sick in the hospital. We saw on board about six or seven boys and men greatly emaciated, and diseased past recovery, and about a hundred that showed decided evidences of suffering from inanition, exhaustion, and disease. Dysentery was the principal disease.

From the deck we descended into the cabin, where we saw sixty or seventy women and young girls, in Nature's dress, some sitting on the floor and others on the lockers, and some sick ones lying in the berths. Four or five of them were a good deal tattooed on the back and arms, and we noticed that three had an arm branded with the figure "7," which, we suppose, is the merchant's mark.

### Questions

1. When was the slave bark Wildfire captured?
2. Why was the boat and its "cargo" seized by the United States Navy?
3. What was the boat's connection with New York City?
4. Why does the author of the article believe the captured Africans were in "very good condition of health and flesh"?
5. What evidence is there in the article of inhuman treatment?

**Follow-up:** Locate the entire article is on the internet at "[blackhistory.harpweek.com/SlaveryHome.htm](http://blackhistory.harpweek.com/SlaveryHome.htm)". Visit the site and write a paragraph describing the scene portrayed in the illustration. The full text of the article reports that the healthy Africans "looked happy and contented" and claims that they were "ready at any moment to join in a song or a dance whenever they were directed to do so by 'Jack' -- a little fellow as black as ebony, about twelve

years old, having a handsome and expressive face, an intelligent look, and a sparkling eye. The sailors on the voyage had dressed 'Jack' in sailor costume, and had made him a great pet." In your opinion, is this an accurate portrait of these people or is it distorted by the racial bias of the author and editor? Explain.

## D) Message of the New York City Mayor

As a Congressman in the 1840s, Fernando Wood was a strong supporter of slavery and the South. He continued his support of the South when he became Mayor of New York City in the 1850s. On January 8, 1861, *The New York Times* published the transcript of Mayor Wood's annual report to the city's Common Council. In this message, Wood spoke about the city's options as the United States federal union appeared to be dissolving. An unedited version of the text is available in *The New York Times* on microfilm for that date on page 2. *The New York Times'* editorial response is on page 4.

We are entering upon the public duties of the year under circumstances as unprecedented as they are gloomy and painful to contemplate. The great trading and producing interests of not only the City of New York, but of the entire country are prostrated by a momentary crisis.

It would seem that a dissolution of the Federal Union is inevitable. Having been formed originally upon a basis of general and mutual protection, but separate local independence - each State reserving the entire and absolute control of its own domestic affairs, it is evidently impossible to keep them together longer than they deem themselves fairly treated by each other, or longer than the interests, honor and fraternity of the people of the several States are satisfied. It cannot be preserved by coercion or held together by force. A resort to this last dreadful alternative would of itself destroy not only the Government, but the lives and property of the people.

With our aggrieved brethren of the Slave States we have friendly relations and a common sympathy. We have not participated in the warfare upon their constitutional rights or their domestic institutions. While other portions of our State have unfortunately been imbued with the fanatical spirit, the City of New York has unfalteringly preserved the integrity of its principles in adherence to the compromises of the Constitution. Our ships have penetrated to every clime, and so have New York capital, energy and enterprise found their way to every State. New York should endeavor to preserve a continuance of uninterrupted intercourse with every section.

New York may have more cause of apprehension from the aggressive legislation of our own State than from external dangers. No candid mind can fail to perceive the extent of the usurpations that have been made on the municipal rights and civil liberties of New York.

I claim for the City the distinction of a municipal corporation, self-existing and sustained by its own inherent and proper vigor. As a free City, with but a nominal duty on imports, her local government could be supported without taxation upon her people. In this she would have the whole and united support of the Southern States as well as of all other States to whose interests and rights under the Constitution she has always been true. If the Confederacy is broken up the Government is dissolved, and it behooves every distinct community as well as every individual to take care of themselves.

When disunion has become a fixed and certain fact, why may not New York disrupt the bands which bind her to a corrupt and venal master. New York, as a *Free City*, may shed the only light and hope for a future reconstruction of our once blessed Confederacy.

### Questions

1. What crisis is facing New York City and the United States in January, 1861?
2. Why does Mayor Wood believe this crisis cannot be prevented?
3. What path does Mayor Wood recommend for New York City? Why does he make this recommendation?
4. In your opinion, what would have happened to New York City and the United States if the city had tried to follow this course of action? Explain.

**Follow-up:** At the end of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln argued for conciliation and that “(w)ith malice toward none, . . . let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, . . . to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace.” However, at other times in United States history, especially at the end of World War II, the United States supported trials for people suspected of war crimes or treason. Write an introductory statement directed towards a jury either indicting or defending the actions of New York City Mayor Fernando Wood.

## E) Debate Over the Anti-Slavery Constitutional Amendment

On June 15 and June 16, 1864, *The New York Times* reported on debate in the House of Representatives over passage of “the Anti-Slavery Constitutional Amendment,” which would become the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. At the time, New York City was represented by former Mayor Fernando Wood. On June 16, 1864, *The New York Times* published an editorial on the issue. In these edited articles, enslaved Africans are referred to as “Negroes”.

**A)** June, 15, 1864: “Mr. Fernando Wood of New York said that this was no time for a change of the organic law. We were in the midst of civil war. The din of the conflict and the groans of the dying and wounded are sad evidences of the destruction around us. The entire people are involved directly or indirectly in the dreadful conflict. There was too much excitement in the public mind to admit of calm and cautious investigation. If such a change could be made in the Constitution, this was not the time for it. The effect of such an amendment would produce a revulsion widespread and radical in character and add to the existing sectional hostility, and if possible, make the conflict more intense.”

“Among his reasons for opposing the resolution, he said it proposed to make social institutions subject to the Government, and this was an antagonism to the principles which underlie our republican system. It was unjust. It was the breach of good faith, and not reconcilable even with expediency. It struck at property, and involved the extermination of the whites of the Southern States and the forfeiture of their property, and lands to be given to the black race, who may drive the former out of existence.”

“Mr. Wood argued that the Constitution was a compact and a covenant and that the control of the domestic institutions of the States was never delegated to the general Government, and could not be delegated excepting by the consent of all the States.”

**B)** June 16, 1864: “Mr. Thayer of Pennsylvania replied to the assertion of the gentleman from New York (Mr. Wood) that Slavery was the best possible condition of the Negro. He (Mr. Thayer) denounced the assertion as monstrous, infamous, barbarous and inhuman.”

“Mr. Fernando Wood” replied, “I reaffirm it.”

“Mr. Thayer” stated, “He has a right to the sentiment. Let him and his friends go before the country upon it, if they dare. Let him go to posterity with the record he made yesterday.”

“Mr. Fernando Wood” answered, “That was what I made it for. It was for posterity and not for members of this House.”

**C)** (Editorial) June 18, 1864: “That there is and long has been a thoroughly systematized plan of converting New York City into a rebel foothold is no secret. The assumption of the Southern conspirators before the war was that this Metropolis would abet (support), if not actually join, their movement.”

“In our opinion the hearts of the great majority of our people have at no time for the last two years been so firmly on the side of the Government as now. The success of our arms since Lieut.-Gen. Grant was given the chief command, has had a marked effect in clearing up misapprehension, and in inspiring faith. Under the wonderfully increased activity of business, the almost unprecedented prosperity which now exists in every line of industry, this war has almost ceased to produce a sense of hardship, or to be a trial of patience. In spite of all the plotting here of the retainers (supporters) of the Confederacy, and all the malign influence of former political associations, this city can be carried for Abraham Lincoln next November.”

“Crush Copperheadism (pro-Southern sympathizers) at our polls; with it will vanish the last suspicion that New York is a disloyal City.”

### Questions

1. Why does Congressman Wood oppose amending the Constitution to outlaw slavery?
2. Why is Congressman Thayer outraged by the statements by Congressman Wood?
3. What does *The New York Times* believe will happen in the next election? Why?

**Follow-up:** The Aetna Insurance Company of Hartford, which insured slave owners against the loss of their human property, and the *Hartford Courant*, which published advertisements for the sale of slaves, have recently apologized for their actions. Fernando Wood was a Mayor of New York City and a Congressional Representative. Do you think the government of New York City should formerly apologize for his behavior and actions during the

Civil War? Explain. Slavery in the 19th century is usually presented as a “Southern Institution.” Based on these documents, would you argue that slavery was a “Southern” or a “National” institution? Explain.

## Classroom Activity: Debating Resistance to Slavery

This is an imagined debate over whether it was right to resist slavery. While Jupiter Hammon, Henry Highland Garnet, Henry Ward Beecher, and William Cullen Bryant never met and had this discussion, they did express these ideas in speeches and in writings.

- Read each statement carefully.
- Identify the main ideas of each speaker.
- List supporting arguments presented by the speakers.
- If you were in the audience and could ask each speaker a question, what would you ask?
- Write your own response to each speaker.
- As a follow-up activity, imagine it was the 1850s and you are asked by Abolitionists to write a speech titled “Resistance to Slavery.” Write a speech and be prepared to present it in class.

	Jupiter Hammon	Henry Highland Garnet	Henry Ward Beecher	William Cullen Bryant
Main Ideas				
Supporting arguments				
Your questions				
Your responses				

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## A) An Enslaved African Argues Against Rebellion

Jupiter Hammon and was the first Black poet published in the United States. He was born a slave during the Colonial era, lived into the early 1800s, and remained a slave his entire life. Hammon belonged to the Lloyd family of Lloyd’s Neck in Queen’s Village, Long Island. He wrote a statement on slavery addressed to the African population of New York in 1786. It was published by the African Society in 1806. Both his poetry and his statement to fellow enslaved Africans reflect his deep religious beliefs.

### A. Respecting obedience to masters.

Now whether it is right, and lawful, in the sight of God, for them to make slaves of us or not, I am certain that while we are slaves, it is our duty to obey our masters, in all their lawful commands, and mind them unless we are bid to do that which we know to be sin, or forbidden in God’s word. The apostle Paul says, “Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling in singleness in your heart as unto Christ.” Here is a plain command of God for us to obey our masters. It may seem hard for us, if we think our masters wrong in holding us slaves, to obey in all things, but who of us dare dispute with God! He has commanded us to obey, and we ought to do it cheerfully, and freely.

### B. Our own peace and comfort.

This should be done by us, not only because God commands, but because our own peace and comfort depend upon it. As we depend upon our masters, for what we eat and drink and wear, and for all our comfortable things in this world, we cannot be happy, unless we please them. This we cannot do without obeying them freely, without muttering or finding fault. If a servant strives to please his master and studies and takes pains to do it, I believe there are but few masters who would use such a servant cruelly. If your master is really hard, unreasonable and cruel, there is no way so likely for you to convince him of it, as always to obey his commands, and try to serve him, and take care of his interest, and try to promote it all in your power.

### C. Honesty and faithfulness.

It is very wicked for you not to take care of your master’s goods, but how much worse is it to pilfer and steal from them, whenever you think you shall not be found out. This you must know is very wicked and provoking to God.. I know that many of you endeavor to excuse yourselves, and say that you have nothing that you can call your own, and that you are under great temptations to be unfaithful and take from your masters. But this will not do, God will certainly punish you for stealing and for being unfaithful. All that we have to mind is our own duty. If God has put us in bad circumstances that is not our fault and he will not punish us for it. If any are wicked in keeping us so, we cannot help it, they must answer to God for it. Nothing will serve as an excuse to us for not doing our duty. The same God will judge both them and us. Pray then my dear friends, fear to offend in this way, but be faithful to God, to your masters, and to your own souls.

### D. Liberty is a Great Thing

Now I acknowledge that liberty is a great thing, and worth seeking for, if we can get it honestly, and by our good conduct, prevail on our masters to set us free. That liberty is a great thing we may know from our own feelings, and we may likewise judge so from the conduct of the white people, in the late war. How much money has been spent, and how many lives have been lost, to defend their liberty. I must say that I have hoped that God would open their eyes, when they were so much engaged for liberty, to think of the state of the poor blacks, and to pity us. He has done it in some measure, and has raised us up many friends, for which we have reason to be thankful, and to hope in his mercy.

Heaven is a place made for those, who are born again, and who love God, and it is a place where they will be happy forever. We live so little time in this world that it is no matter how wretched and miserable we are, if it prepares us for heaven. What is forty, fifty, or sixty years, when compared to eternity. If we should ever get to Heaven, we shall find nobody to reproach us for being black, or for being slaves. Let me beg of you my dear African brethren, to think very little of your bondage in this life, for your thinking of it will do you no good. If God designs to set us free, he will do it, in his own time, and way.

## **B) New York City Minister Urges Resistance to Slavery**

In 1843, Rev. Henry Highland Garnet of New York City called upon slaves in the South to rise up and revolt in a speech at an abolitionist conference in Buffalo, New York. Rev. Garnet was African American and a former slave himself. His ideas were considered radical at the time because most abolitionists preferred using moral and economic arguments to challenge slavery and opposed violence.

### **A. How the African arrived in America**

Two hundred and twenty-seven years ago, the first of our injured race were brought to the shores of America. They came not with glad spirits to select their homes in the New World. They came not with their own consent. The first dealings they had with men calling themselves Christians, exhibited to them the worst features of corrupt hearts, and convinced them that no cruelty is too great, no villainy and no robbery too abhorrent (horrible) for even enlightened men to perform, when influenced by avarice (greed) and lust. They came with broken hearts, from their beloved native land, and were doomed to unrequited (unending) toil and deep degradation (disgrace). Nor did the evil of their bondage end at their emancipation by death. Succeeding generations inherited their chains, and millions have come and have returned again to the world of spirits, cursed and ruined by American slavery.

### **B. Slavery is Defiance of God**

To such degradation it is sinful in the extreme for you to make voluntary submission. The divine commandments you are in duty bound to reverence and obey. If you do not obey them, you will surely meet with the displeasure of the Almighty. He requires you to love him supremely, and your neighbor as yourself, to keep the Sabbath day holy, to search the Scriptures, and bring up your children with respect for His laws, and to worship no other God but Him. But slavery sets all these at nought, and hurls defiance in the face of Jehovah.

### **C. Resistance to bondage is justified**

Brethren (brothers), it is as wrong for your lordly oppressors to keep you in slavery, as it was for the man thief to steal our ancestors from the coast of Africa. You should therefore now use the same manner of resistance, as would have been just in our ancestors, when the bloody foot-prints of the first remorseless soul-thief was placed upon the shores of our fatherland. The humblest peasant is as free in the sight of God as the proudest monarch. Liberty is a spirit sent out from God and is no respecter of persons.

Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and the hour. Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. You cannot be more oppressed than you have been, you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. Rather die freemen than live to be slaves. Remember that you are four millions!

### **D. Let your motto be resistance!**

It is in your power so to torment the God-cursed slave-holders, that they will be glad to let you go free. If the scale was turned, and black men were the masters and white men the slaves, every destructive agent and element would be employed to lay the oppressor low. Danger and death would hang over their heads day and night. Yes, the tyrants would meet with plagues more terrible than those of Pharaoh. But you are a patient people. You act as though you were made for the special use of these devils. You act as though your daughters were born to pamper the lusts of your masters and overseers. And worse than all, you tamely submit while your lords tear your wives from your embraces and defile them before your eyes. In the name of God, we ask, are you men? Where is the blood of your fathers? Has it all run out of your veins? Awake, awake; millions of voices are calling you! Your dead fathers speak to you from their graves. Heaven, as with a voice of thunder, calls on you to arise from the dust.

Let your motto be resistance! resistance! resistance! No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance. Trust in the living God. Labor for the peace of the human race, and remember that you are four millions.

## C) A Brooklyn Minister Discusses Resistance to Slavery

Henry Ward Beecher, a white man, was a minister at the Plymouth Congregationalist Church in Brooklyn, New York and a leading opponent of slavery in the 1850s. He was also the brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe. In 1848, 1856 and 1859, to protest against the evil of slavery, Beecher raised money in his church to purchase the freedom of slaves. Because of his popularity as a minister, many of his sermons were published. Beecher believed it was necessary to oppose the Fugitive Slave Law and the extension of slavery into the west. He thought it was a mistake to actively oppose slavery in the South or encourage slaves to run away. The following passages are excerpts from his writings in 1850 and 1859.

### A. A Response to the Compromise of 1850

“There are two incompatible and mutually exclusive principles brought together in the government of this land . . . These elements are slavery and liberty . . . One or the other must die. . . . The South now demands room and right for extension. She asks the North to be a partner. For every free state she demands one for slavery. . . . It is time for good men and true . . . to stand for God and humanity. No compromise will help us which dodges the question, certainly none which settle it for slavery . . . There never was a plainer question for the North. It is her duty to openly and firmly, and forever to refuse to slavery another inch of territory. . . . It is her duty to refuse her hand or countenance (help) to slavery where it now exists. It is her duty to declare that she will under no consideration be a party to any further inhumanity or injustice. . . . If the compromises of the Constitution include requisitions (rules) which violate humanity, I will not be bound by them, not ever the Constitution shall make me unjust . . .”

### B. Should Righteous Men Break Unjust Laws?

“Nothing could be more mischievous (wrong) than the prevalence of the doctrine that a citizen may disobey an unjust burdensome law . . . How can we as good citizens subscribe to such wholesome doctrines and yet openly resist the Fugitive Slave Laws? . . . Every citizen must obey a law which inflicts injury upon his person, estate and civil privilege (rights), until legally redressed (corrected); but no citizen is bound to obey a law which commands him to inflict injury upon another. We must endure but never commit wrong. . . . Let no man stand uncommitted, dodging between day light and dark on this vital principle. . . . Obedience to laws, even though they sin against me; disobedience to every law that commands me to sin.”

### C. The Future of Slavery in the United States

“Our policy for the future is plain. All the natural laws of God are warring upon slavery. Let it go to seed. . . . Shut it up to itself and let it alone. We do not ask to interfere with the internal policy of a single State by constitutional enactment. . . . We only ask that a line be drawn about it. . . . that it be fixed and forever settled that slavery must find no new sources (or) new fields. . . .”

### D. Response to John Brown’s Call for a Slave Rebellion and the attack on Harpers Ferry.

“ We have no right to treat the citizens of the South with acrimony (anger) and bitterness because they are involved in a system of wrong doing . . . .The preaching of discontent among the bondsmen of our land is not the way to help them . . . . No relief will be carried to the slaves or to the South as a body by any individual or organized plans to carry them off or to incite them to abscond (runaway). . . . If we would benefit the African in the South we must begin at home. No one can fail to see the inconsistency between our treatment of those amongst us who are in the lower walks of life and our professing of sympathy for the Southern slave . . . We must quicken all the springs of feeling in the free states on behalf of human liberty . . . We must maintain sympathy and kindness toward the South . . . . You should care for both the master and the slave . . . You ought to set your face against and discountenance (oppose) anything like an insurrectionary spirit.

**Historic Hudson Valley.** Philipsburg Manor, in conjunction with the Reinterpretation Project and with support

from Con Edison, is distributing a 20-page teachers' guide on slavery in New York appropriate for grades 4 - 8. It includes an overview, a vocabulary list, a timeline, and suggested activities. To receive a copy of the guide, contact: Ms. Ross W. Higgins, Historic Hudson Valley, 150 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, N.Y. 10591, (914) 631-8200, [www.hudsonvalley.org](http://www.hudsonvalley.org)

## **D) Can a “Moderate” Voice Against Slavery be a Hero?**

Source: Charles Brown, *William Cullen Bryant* (New York: Scribner, 1971)

William Cullen Bryant, a famous American poet, was the editor of the *New York Evening Post*, and a founder of the Republican Party. A white man, he was born in 1794 in Massachusetts and died in 1878 at his home in New York City. His poem, “The African Chief,” attacked the inhumanity of slavery and the slave trade, however, his primary concern in the era before the Civil War was preservation of the Union. Bryant opposed both the expansion of slavery in the west and radical calls for the abolition of slavery. During the Civil War, he argued that while it was “not a war directly aimed at the release of the slave,” saving the Union required that Lincoln emancipate the slaves.

### **A. Bryant responds to William Lloyd Garrison and the Radical Abolitionists, 1832**

“Garrison is a man who, whatever may be the state of his mind on other topics, is as mad as the winds on the slavery question. . . . As to the associates of Garrison in this city, some of them may be of good intentions, but they are men whose enthusiasm runs away with their judgment - and the remainder are persons who owe what notoriety they have to their love of meddling with agitating subjects. . . . They are regarded as advocating measures which, if carried out, would most assuredly deluge the country in blood, and the mere discussion of which has a tendency to embroil (pit) the south with the north, and to endanger these relations of good will which are essential to the duration of the Union. . . .”

### **B. Bryant defended the right of abolitionists to free speech, 1837**

“The right to discuss freely and openly, by speech, by the pen, by the press, all political questions, and to examine and animadvert (speak out) upon all political institutions, is a right so clear and certain, so interwoven with our other liberties, so necessary, in fact to their existence, that without it we must fall at once into depression or anarchy. To say that he who holds unpopular opinions must hold them at the peril of his life, and that, if he expresses them in public, he has only himself to blame if they who disagree with him should rise and put him to death, is to strike at all rights, all liberties, all protection of the laws, and to justify and extenuate (worsen) all crimes.”

### **C. Bryant’s description of slavery in the South is unsympathetic toward Blacks, 1843**

“The blacks of this region are a cheerful, careless, dirty, race, not hard worked, and in many respects indulgently treated. It is of course the desire of the master that his slaves shall be laborious; on the other hand it is the determination of the slave to lead as easy a life as he can. The master has the power of punishment on his side; the slave, on his, has invincible inclination, and a thousand expedients learned by long practice. . . . Good natured though imperfect and slovenly obedience on one side, is purchased by good treatment on the other.”

### **D. Bryant wants to bar slavery in the western territories, 1847**

“A man who does not approve of slavery . . . may tolerate it where it exists, from want of constitutional authority to extinguish it, . . . and the difficulties of change; but how can he justify himself in instituting it in new communities. . . . The federal government represents the free as well as the slave states; and while it does not attempt to abolish slavery in the states where it exists, it must not authorize slavery where it does not exist. This is the only middle ground - the “true basis of conciliation and adjustment.”

### **E. Response to John Brown’s call for a Slave Rebellion and the attack on Harpers Ferry, 1859**

“The great body of the northern people have no desire nor intention to interfere with slavery within its present limits, except by persuasion and argument. They are unalterably opposed to the spread of it, as the south ought to

be, but they are willing to leave the extinction of it in the states to the certain influences of commerce, of good sense, of the sentiment of justice and truth, and the march of civilization.”

#### **F. Bryant endorses Lincoln and the Republicans, 1860**

“The slave interest is a spoiled child. . . . The more we give it the louder it cries and the more furious its threats . . . if we exercise the right of suffrage, and elect a president of our own choice, instead of giving it one of its own favorites.”

#### **Elementary-Level Classroom Activities**

## **Using History-Mysteries with Elementary Students: Or, How you can stop worrying and learn to love the test**

By Andrea S. Libresco

With the advent of high stakes exams required for graduation in New York State, the standardized testing mania has, rightly or wrongly, seeped into the middle and elementary schools. The good news is that at all levels the tests require students to analyze historical documents, think critically about them, and write essays based on them; thus teachers must use more primary source documents in their classrooms. The bad news is that elementary teachers and principals, unaccustomed to using documents with eight, nine and ten year olds, may resort to an almost exclusive reliance on test-prep materials. If the experience with the fourth grade English/Language Arts (ELA) test is any guide, the danger is real. Rather than having upper level discussions based on the reading of award-winning literature, too many third and fourth grade teachers, egged on by administrators eager to report high scores to the newspapers, have fallen into the trap of xeroxing reams of ELA exercises for their students. And the misplaced priorities are not confined to elementary school. A middle school colleague recently informed me with regret that he would no longer be able to organize the grade-wide moot court activity (a favorite among the students) because he could not afford to take time away from preparing the students for the New York State eighth grade social studies exam.

Certainly, teaching to low level tests produces low-level instruction. But, for the most part, the new New York State assessments require upper level thinking and, therefore, should drive upper level instruction. But that upper-level instruction need not be devoid of fun; on the contrary, doing the stuff of history ought to be exciting. What are historians, after all, but detectives who get to read other people’s diaries, letters and speeches, finding clues, putting together puzzle pieces, until a more complete picture of an event or time period emerges. Instead of opting to jettison the moot court experience, social studies teachers at all levels should build in more activities like it, for students reading and interpreting Supreme Court cases are engaged in authentic document analysis and will be more than prepared for their DBQs.

The activity below, which has been used with fourth and fifth graders of mixed abilities, is designed to quell at least some of the test-prep hysteria. It illustrates that elementary students can investigate historical questions worthy of study by examining excerpts from actual primary source documents and have fun in the process. The lesson is presented in the form of a mystery to be solved through historical research. While this particular lesson focuses on the conditions of slavery in New York State, it is possible to use the history mystery model to explore other topics. I have created and used history mysteries on the encounter between the cultures of Europe, Africa, and the Americas (Did such encounters result in progress for all?); women’s rights in the 1800s (Were the lives of 19th century women so bad as to require an organized movement?); and Native Americans (What became of the Matinecocks?), to name a few. In all of these lessons, the students’ curiosity is piqued by the problem to be solved. They then are eager to decipher the primary source documents as clues to help them solve the puzzle, so eager, in fact, that I actually had a fourth grade student utter these words at the end of the activity below: “I wanna be a historian when I grow up.” I somehow doubt that this would have been his sentiment upon the completion of yet another test-prep packet.

All of the sources included for students in the activity below come from two web sites: [www.pbs.org/wnet.newyork/laic/sitemap.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet.newyork/laic/sitemap.html) (a site accompanying Ric Burns’ *New York: A Documentary Film*

shown on PBS two years ago) and [www.lihistory.com](http://www.lihistory.com) (a site accompanying *Newsday's* Long Island Our Story series). The Newsday website can be used to add illustrations to the "History Mystery."

**Illustrations of Slavery Available on [www.lihistory.com](http://www.lihistory.com)**

- Illustration of a slave auction in Manhattan; unlike at plantations in the South, slaves on Long Island lived just a few to a house, usually away from friends and relatives.
- Illustration shows Africans packed into a cargo hold of a ship. The space is only 3 feet, 3 inches high.
- "Slave Quarters" says the small sign at the entrance to the room above at the Joseph Lloyd Manor House on Lloyd Neck. If they lived in the main house, slaves often lived in a cramped back room with no source of heat in the winter. A spinning wheel in the room might allow them to work well past sunset.
- The upper gallery at Caroline Church in Setauket is believed to have been added to seat slaves.

## HISTORY MYSTERY INSTRUCTIONS

You have all become historians. Historians are really detectives who find clues and put together puzzle pieces until a more complete picture emerges. Below is the statement of a White male 46 year old farmer made sometime during the mid-1700s. Your task is to compare this statement against all of the evidence presented in your packets. You are trying to find out how accurate his statement is.

“The lives of slaves on Long Island are not so bad. It’s not like in the South. And besides, we don’t have that much slavery here anyway...”

1. Each group should read through the documents in the packet.
2. As you read, you should record evidence you discover in the chart, indicating whether it proves or disproves the statement above.
3. If you find that you need information beyond what the documents provide to help you answer the question, make note of this in the space provided.
4. Record interesting points or have any questions that do not seem to fit into the chart.

<u>More evidence needed</u>	<u>Interesting points</u>	<u>Questions</u>
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<u>Evidence which proves the statement</u>	<u>Evidence which disproves the statement</u>
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Now that you’ve been doing the work of real historians, you should be able to answer these questions:

How do historians know what they know? What types of sources do they use as evidence?

## HISTORY MYSTERY DOCUMENTS

### A. POPULATION STATISTICS

- 1626 11 Black slaves\* in New Netherlands  
1698 2,130 Blacks in New York, almost all of whom are slaves (1/2 of whom are on Long Island, 1/5 of all residents in Suffolk are Black slaves)  
Mid-1700s Only 7 people in the entire colony of New York held 10 or more slaves. In Huntington, 53 masters owned 81 slaves.  
1771 3,623 people in Kings County; 1/3 of whom are Black slaves; 10,980 people in Nassau County; 1/5 of whom are Black slaves; 13, 128 people in Suffolk County; 1/10 of whom are Black slaves; 20,000 Blacks in New York State (almost all of whom are slaves)

\* “Slave” was the word used in the census at the time. Today we often say “enslaved person” instead.

### B. LAWS CONCERNING SLAVERY

- 1702 “An Act for Regulating Slaves”  
--No person may trade with a slave without permission of the slave’s master or mistress.  
-- Owners may punish their slaves at their own discretion, though they are not allowed to take a slave’s life or sever a body part.  
-- Slaves may not carry guns.  
-- Except when working for their owners, slaves may not congregate in groups larger than three, with whipping the penalty, up to 40 lashes.  
-- Towns may appoint a public whipper, who will be paid up to three shillings for each slave whipped.  
-- A slave who assaults any free Christian man or woman is subject to prison for up to 14 days as well as reasonable corporal punishment.  
-- No slave may give evidence in court, except against other slaves who are plotting to run away, kill their master or mistress, burn their houses and barns or destroy their corn or cattle.
- 1706 -- Negro, Indian and Mulatto slaves may be baptized as Christians, though this will not automatically free them from slavery.  
-- Any child born of a slave woman will carry the slave status of the mother (even if the father is a free white man).
- 1708 “An Act for Preventing the Conspiracy of Slaves”  
-- Any slave who killed or conspired to kill anyone who was not Black or a slave will be subject to execution. The owner of the executed slave will be reimbursed by the colony up to 25 pounds sterling.
- 1712 -- Freed slaves may not hold property.  
-- Slaves may not own or use a gun, except with permission of their masters.
- 1732 -- Slaves may not be out at night except on an extraordinary occasion (Town of Brookhaven).
- 1757 -- No Negro shall be found without a pass from his master, not to exceed one mile (Smithtown).
- 1827 -- New York State bans slavery within its borders.

### C. SLAVE LIFE SERVING THE WEALTHY LLOYD FAMILY

This information was found in the ledgers, letters and wills of the Lloyd family of Lloyd Neck, Long Island. The original language appears below; therefore, the misspellings and incorrect punctuations also appear.

**Bill of Sale of Negroes, Sixth Day of December A.D. 1773:** Know all Men by these present that I Joseph Conkling...for and in consideration of Twenty five pounds of Current money...sell...unto Joseph and John Lloyd and to their heirs one Certain Negro Girl named Phoebe of about Six Years of Age...

**Letter from John Lloyd to Henry Lloyd, October 16, 1746:** If it is no asking more than becomes me...I Desire that I should be next purchaser of one of your Negro men.

**Letter From Henry Lloyd II To John Lloyd II, September 13, 1773:** I am much better pleased with Hesters being sold as she was with 10 pounds loss than she should be sent to Carolina against her will, though by what I can

learn of the treatment Negroes meet with at the plantation she was design'd for is Such as that Some of those I have Sent prefer their Situation to that they have left.

**Letter from Dr. George Muirson to Henry Lloyd, May 19, 1730:** Jupiter is afflicted with Pains in his Leggs, Knees and Thighs, ascending to his Bowels....Give one of the Purges, In the morning fasting,...the next day take away about 12 or 14 ounces of blood...

#### D. A SLAVE BECOMES FREE

##### “Black Tom” Becomes Tom Gall in Oyster Bay, October 26, 1685

- Tom the Negro which was formerly my mother’s servant...[is] therefore no longer in bondage, but to be a free man from the day or the date hereof to the day of his death...
- The Town of Oyster Bay grants unto Negro Tom and his children a two-acre plot (1697).
- “Black Tom” purchases the black slave Obed for 60 pounds from Nathaniel Weeks (February 7, 1717).
- Tom Gall purchases an additional 8 acres of land from George Balden or Baldwin for 85 pounds (1720).
- Tom Gall sells the 8 acres of land to Thomas Rodgers for 85 pounds (1722).
- Tom and Mary Gall’s daughter marries Obed. Obed is freed from slavery (1721).

#### E. SLAVE BURNED AT STAKE IN 1741.

The mysterious fires . . . began on March 18, 1741. Around noon, flames broke out at the governor’s house at Fort George. The winter breeze helped the fire travel quickly. Although a bucket brigade tried to put it out, helped by new, hand-pump fire engines, the chapel next door caught fire. Both buildings were destroyed. During the next month, more homes and businesses fell victims to smoke and flames.

The . . . government not only smelled smoke -- they smelled a conspiracy, a rebellion by the slaves, which the whites greatly feared. Justice Daniel Horsmanden was appointed to investigate.

During the trial, the judge spoke with Mary Burton, a white indentured servant. Even though Mary’s stories were full of contradictions, she told the government what they wanted to hear: that the fires were part of a “Negro plot.” (To encourage her to testify, the government promised to free her from her indenture.)

Even though there was little evidence that the fires were part of a large organized effort, almost half of the male adult slaves in the city were thrown in jail. In the end, seventeen blacks and four whites were hanged, thirteen slaves were burned slowly at the stake, and seventy-two slaves were deported.

## Designing a Monument Depicting Slavery

**How graphic a monument?** (adapted from *Newsday* 2/25/01, p 23, story by Hugo Kugiya)

Savannah, Georgia is in the process of designing its first African-American monument. Slightly more than half of its citizens are African-American, yet their history and particularly their slave history, is blatantly ignored or “rosed over” in the words of one local tour guide in so many of the city’s museums and historic sights. The planned riverfront monument of bronze and granite, depicting a Black family of four with broken shackles at their feet, will be put directly behind City Hall, where many of the city’s forbearers arrived as cargo to be sold.

The City Council’s four Black and four white members cannot agree on the inscription proposed by Abigail Jordan, a retired educator. The passage, from the poet Maya Angelou, reads in part: “We were the stolen, sold and bought together from the African continent. We got on the slave ships together. We lay back to belly in the holds of the slave ships in each others’ excrement and urine together, and our lifeless bodies thrown overboard together.

Maya Angelou said that, if asked, she will give her permission for use of the passage, but she would prefer the uplifting conclusion also be used: “Today we are standing up together, with faith, and even some joy...” The point of the passage, Angelou said in a phone interview, “is that we’ve come this far by faith, that it does not expunge in any way the pain and the horror, but it does speak to the human spirit, that we are still here, still rising.”

### Discussion Questions:

1. If you were on the Savannah City Council, how would you vote on the proposed monument? Why?
2. What changes, if any, would you make to the proposed monument? Why?
3. What other monuments have you seen that depict difficult chapters in history? How would you assess those designs? What made them succeed or fail as monuments?

### Follow-up Activity: Design a Monument Depicting Slavery in Your Community or State

In your design process, be sure to take into account the following: Statistics on slavery in your community or state; Conditions of slavery; Economic, political and social effects or costs of slavery; Quotes and other primary sources you wish to include; Setting of your monument; Materials used in the creation of your monument; Tone you wish your monument to convey.

## **African American Lives in Early New Jersey: Excerpts from the narratives of Abraham Johnstone, William Boen, Quamino Buccau and Samuel Ringgold Ward**

(Source: “North American Slave Narratives, Beginnings to 1920” at the “Documenting the American South” website of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, [docsouth.unc.edu](http://docsouth.unc.edu).)

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. describes the African American “slave narrative” as a unique achievement in literature. As part of the campaign to abolish slavery, hundreds of ex-slaves and runaways told their personal accounts as lectures and in autobiographical narratives. Their stories provide eloquent testimony against their captors and the inhuman institution, and bear witness to the urge of every slave to be both free and literate. Over one hundred book length narratives were written before the end of the Civil War. By the 1940s, over six thousand former slaves had told their stories of human bondage through interviews, essays and books. Many of these stories are available on the internet at [docsouth.unc.edu](http://docsouth.unc.edu) and [newdeal.feri.org/asn](http://newdeal.feri.org/asn).

As you read the edited slave narratives that follow, consider the following questions:

1. What does this story tell me about the life of this individual?
2. What does this story tell me about the institution of slavery?
3. What does this story tell me about the impact of slavery on American society prior to the Civil War?

### **A) The Dying Words of Abraham Johnstone (1797)**

**a.** I was born in the state of Delaware, at a place called Johnny-cake landing Possom town. I was born a slave and the property of Doctor John Skidmore who died while I was very young, and I with the other goods and Chattels descended to his Nephew Samuel Skidmore, he being the heir at law. He soon ran through most of the property left him, and was obliged to sell me to John Grey a blacksmith, and from whom I learned that business; by him I was sold after some time to Edward Callaghan, him I did not like, therefore I would not live with him, and insisted on having another master, he accordingly sold me to James Craig at my own request, for he was very loth to part with me, as I was a very handy hard working black. My new masters confidence I soon gained by unremitting attention to his business and interest.

**b.** A black man was very insolent to my master. I watched him narrowly for fear he should do my master personal injury, I having heard that he intended it, and just as my master was going to strike I saw the fellow put his hand behind and grasped a very long knife. I seeing the knife, and the meditated blow which my master could not possibly defend himself from, instantaneously threw myself between, and notwithstanding the knife grappled with him, and told him he must bury the knife in me before he should hurt my master. My master owned that he owed his life to me and told me that after such a time I should be free, and gave me a considerable length of time to pay the money in. During that time I went off and staid away a whole year, and then was taken up as a run away, and put into Baltimore jail, from whence I let my master know my situation. He had me put into Dover jail, and while I was there he died drunk.

**c.** The executors of my late master sent for me to chop some wood, and while out in the woods, they came with two Georgia men (to whom they had sold me) and tied me, and these two Georgians took me away. Having waited until they were asleep I stole away. To avoid trouble I came to New-Jersey, and changed my name for I well knew that my poor color had but few friends in that country, where slavery is so very general. The first place I went to work at when I came here, was Major Joshua Howell’s, where I worked six weeks at that time, it being the year 1792, and continued working about some time longer, and went back and brought my wife from Delaware state, and commenced housekeeping. My wife was born free, and we had been long married before my master died. I have one son now aged 13, who was born free.

d. I had not long been here with my wife before reports were circulated to my disadvantage, and I now solemnly declare without just grounds. The first of which that did me any injury was that I had stolen some carpets from Mrs. Lockwood. I was charged as unjustly by William Tatem with robbing his smoke house; but I now solemnly declare that I never was inside of his smoke house, nor took nor received there out a pound of meat in all my life. The meat I was seen to carry home through the country at that time, I bought when on my way home at the Stone Tavern, as may be fully known on a little inquiry. I also do solemnly declare that I never took a pound of meat out of the slaughter house of Samuel Folwell, but what I had rendered a strict and true account of to him.

e. And now before I come to speak of the crime that I am to die for. Enoch Sharp swore, “that on the day Tom (Read) was missed, he was at my house. Henry Craver who almost every day saw the place, and who was there that very morning, swore directly the contrary, and Henry Craver is an honest man, and a man of character. At this awful solemn moment when with the ignominious cord round my neck, and standing on a stage beneath that gallows that must in a few moments transport me into that boundless eternity there to meet my righteous, awful and omnipotent Judge before whom no earthly considerations nor the evil suggestions of prejudiced persons can avail, now at this moment so dreadful and tremendous, I most solemnly declare with my dying breath in presence of that God from whom I hope to find mercy and forgiveness, and before all the good people here assembled to see me make my exist from this world. That I am innocent, and unknowing to the death of Thomas Read (that I die for).

f. I do solemnly declare as I am a dying man, that I never have killed, nor been accessory nor privy to the killing any person whatsoever, neither have I ever seen one killed nor hung in my life. I most fervently pray that God may bless my two lawyers, the Sheriff, and all the people in this jail, and all mankind; and bless and forgive my enemies, and grant them grace to repent. I with heartfelt gratitude, bless them, for they have been the chosen instruments of my heavenly father, to bring me home to him. I bless and pray for them, and may thou O Lord bless them, and receive my spirit. Amen--I bid ye all an eternal Farewell.

### Questions

1. How did Abraham Johnstone become a free man?
2. Why was Abraham Johnstone sentenced to death?
3. In your opinion, why did Abraham Johnstone keep having trouble with the law?
4. Would you have supported executing Abraham Johnstone? Explain.

## **B) William Boen, a Colored Man, Who Lived and Died Near Mount Holly (1834)**

a. “Died, near Mount Holly, on the 12th instant, in the ninetieth year of his age, William Boen, (alias Heston) a colored man. Rare, indeed, are the instances that we meet with, in which we feel called upon to record the virtues of any of this afflicted race of people. The deceased, however, was one of those who have demonstrated the truth of that portion of scripture, that “of a truth God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, they that fear him and work righteousness, are accepted with him.”

b. He was an exemplary member of the religious Society of Friends; and as he lived, so he died,--a rare pattern of a self-denying follower of Jesus Christ. He had no apparent disease,--either of body or mind; but, as he expressed himself a short time before his death, he felt nothing but weakness: which continued to increase, until he gently breathed his last; and is, no doubt, entered into his heavenly Father’s rest.

c. He was born in the year 1735, in the neighborhood of Rancocas. Being a slave from his birth, he had very little opportunity of acquiring useful learning; yet by his own industry and care, he succeeded in learning to read and write. About the twenty-eighth year of his age, he contracted for his freedom; and having entered into marriage engagements with a woman in the neighborhood, but not being, at that time, a member of our society, he was straitened in his mind how to accomplish it; as he was fully convinced of our testimony in that respect. In this difficulty, he made known his situation to our friend, John Woolman, who, to relieve him, had a number of persons

convened at a friend's house, where they were married after the manner of our society, and a certificate to that effect, furnished them by those present.”

**Questions**

1. Why was this article about William Boen published?
2. Why was William Boen unable to learn to read and write as a child?
3. Why is William Boen described as a “rare” man? Do you agree with the way he is described?

## C) Memoir of Quamino Buccau, a Pious Methodist (1851)

a. Quamino was born in the vicinity of Brunswick, New Jersey, in the 2nd month, 1762. He was born a slave. In his ninth year, he was hired for a term of years to a person of the name of Schenk, who employed him as a house servant, and who, soon afterwards removing to Poughkeepsie, took the lad with him. The unsettled state of the country during the Revolutionary war, prevented communication with his old master; and Quamino had relinquished the hope of again seeing his former friends, when, in his eighteenth year, a stranger arrived on horseback; and, after a conference, Schenk called Quamino into the parlor, and queried whether he would like to see his father and mother, his master and mistress, his young masters and mistresses. On his giving an affirmative reply, he was told: "Well, your master has sent for you, and this man has come to take you."

b. About the age of twenty-six, he married Sarah, a slave on a neighboring place. She was soon sold to a distance of five miles, and for some years they only met once a week. One Sabbath morning he went to see her, and found that she and her infant had been sold, leaving her little son, a boy nearly four years old. She now had a hard mistress; but, through the efforts of her husband, she was purchased by a neighbor, and, at length, on the removal of this purchaser, Quamino induced his second master to buy her.

c. On the death of Buccau, it was provided, that Quamino, his brother, and three sisters, should have the privilege of choosing an owner among their late master's children; Quamino chose the eldest son, who thus became his legal owner. After some years, however, the faithful servant received from his master an unreasonable and severe blow, which so wounded his feelings, that he immediately announced his determination to work for him no longer. He was allowed to seek a purchaser, and was sold to a neighbor. Subsequently, Dr. Griffith bought Quamino for £100, and Sarah for £50.

d. On the death of Dr. Griffith, his son, William Griffith, was his executor. The decision of this noble man was soon made to take the slaves as a part of his own portion. William Griffith residing in Burlington, his brother attended to the sale of their father's effects. Quamino was sent to get advertisements printed, and to post and circulate them about the country; and, although he and his wife were included in the list of chattels, and he fully expected to be sold with the rest of the estate, he faithfully executed the commission. After the sale had commenced, he was sent on horseback to the Post-Office, and brought a letter from William Griffith, which directed that everything should be sold to the highest bidder, except the horse and carriage, and that with these Quamino was to bring with Sarah to Burlington.

e. William Griffith bore a prominent part in originating and conducting the New Jersey Abolition Society. For this excellent man Quamino worked to the best of his ability. One day, as he worked in the garden, Quamino saw his master beside him. His master said, 'I've made up my mind to give you free. On such a day, when I call you, you must take your wife by the hand, and come into my office.'

f. One day he called me to bring my wife. We went and found the office full of gentlemen, and I made my bow to the gentlemen; and there we stood as if we were just married. It seems many questions were asked them, and the conclusion was arrived at that they would be able to do well for themselves. They were dismissed, and returned to their work as though nothing had occurred out of the usual line. In the afternoon, William Griffith promised Quamino that he would teach him how to get along. They were then hired to him for ten dollars per month. Shortly after his emancipation, he made a visit to his old friends, in the neighborhood of New Brunswick. They asked him whether he was any happier than before. "I don't know much about freedom," he replied; "but I wouldn't be a slave again, not if you'd give me the best farm in the Jerseys."

### Questions

1. What injustice did Quamino Buccau experience as a slave?
2. How did Quamino and Sarah Buccau secure their freedom?

3. What do you learn about life for Blacks in New Jersey before the Civil War from the story of Quamino Buccau?

### **D) Samuel Ringgold Ward, Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro (1855)**

a. I was born on the 17th October, 1817, in that part of the State of Maryland, commonly called the Eastern Shore. My parents were slaves. I was born a slave. They escaped, and took their then only child with them. I was not then old enough to know anything about my native place; and as I grew up, in the State of New Jersey, where my parents lived till I was nine years old, and in the State of New York, where we lived for many years, my parents were always in danger of being arrested and re-enslaved. To avoid this, among their measures of caution, was the keeping their children quite ignorant of their birthplace, and of their condition, whether free or slave, when born.

b. My father was a pure-blooded Negro, perfectly black, with woolly hair; but, as is frequently true of the purest Negroes, of small, handsome features. He was about 5 feet 10 inches in height, of good figure, cheerful disposition, bland manners, slow in deciding, firm when once decided, generous and unselfish to a fault; and one of the most consistent, simple-hearted, straightforward Christians, I ever knew. After his escape, my father learned to read, so that he could enjoy the priceless privilege of searching the Scriptures. Supporting himself by his trade as a house painter, or whatever else offered, he lived in Cumberland County, New Jersey, from 1820 until 1826; in New York city from that year until 1838; and in the city of Newark, New Jersey, from 1838 until May 1851, when he died, at the age of 68.

c. My mother was a widow at the time of her marriage with my father and was ten years his senior. To my father she bore three children, all boys, of whom I am the second. Her mother was a woman of light complexion; her grandmother, a mulattress; her great-grandmother, the daughter of an Irishman, named Martin, one of the largest slaveholders in Maryland. My mother was of dark complexion, but straight silk like hair; she was a person of large frame, as tall as my father, of quick discernment, ready decision, great firmness, strong will, ardent temperament, and of deep, devoted, religious character. Like my father, she was converted in early life, and was a member of the Methodist denomination (though a lover of all Christian denominations) until her death the first day of September, 1853, at New York.

d. My eldest brother died before my birth. My youngest brother was born April 5th, 1822, in Cumberland County, New Jersey; and died at New York, April 16th, 1838. Being the youngest of the family, we all sought to fit him for usefulness, and to shield him from the thousand snares and the ten thousand forms of cruelty and injustice which the unspeakably cruel prejudice of the whites visits upon the head and the heart of every black young man, in New York. To that end, we secured to him the advantages of the Free School, for colored youths, in that city.

e. I doubt the legal validity of my brother's freedom. According to slave law, "the child follows the condition of the mother, during life." My mother being born of a slave woman, and not being legally freed, those who had a legal claim to her had also a legal claim to her offspring, wherever born, of whatever paternity. Besides, at that time New Jersey had not entirely ceased to be a Slave State. Had my mother been legally freed before his birth, then my brother would have been born free, because born of a free woman. As it was, we were all liable at any time to be captured, enslaved, and re-enslaved, first, because we had been robbed of our liberty; then, because our ancestors had been robbed in like manner; and, thirdly and conclusively, in law, because we were black Americans.

f. At the time of my parents' escape it was not always necessary to go to Canada; they therefore did as the few who then escaped mostly did, aim for a Free State, and settle among Quakers. This honored sect, unlike any other in the world, in this respect, was regarded as the slave's friend. This peculiarity of their religion they not only held, but so practiced that it impressed itself on the ready mind of the poor victim of American tyranny. To reach a Free State, and to live among Quakers, were among the highest ideas of these fugitives; accordingly, obtaining the best directions they could, they set out for Cumberland County, in the State of New Jersey, where they had learned slavery did not exist, Quakers lived in numbers, who would afford the escaped any and every protection consistent

with their peculiar tenets, and where a number of blacks lived, who in cases of emergency could and would make common cause with and for each other.

g. They safely arrived at Greenwich, Cumberland County, early in the year 1820. They found, as they had been told, that at Springtown, and Bridgetown, and other places, there were numerous colored people; that the Quakers in that region were truly, practically friendly, “not loving in word and tongue,” but in deed and truth; and that there were no slaveholders in that part of the State, and when slave-catchers came prowling about the Quakers threw all manner of peaceful obstacles in their way, while the Negroes made it a little too hot for their comfort.

#### **Runaway slaves battle slave-catchers**

h. We lived several years at Waldron’s Landing, in the neighborhood of the Reeves, Woods, Bacons, and Lippineutts, who were among my father’s very best friends, and whose children were among my school fellows. However, in the spring and summer of 1826, so numerous and alarming were the depredations of kidnapping and slave-catching in the neighborhood, that my parents, after keeping the house armed night after night, determined to remove to a place of greater distance and greater safety. Being accommodated with horses and a wagon by kind friends, they set out with my brother in their arms for New York City, where they arrived on the 3rd day of August, 1826. Here we found some 20,000 colored people. The State had just emancipated all its slaves on the fourth day of the preceding month and it was deemed safer to live in such a city than in a more open country place, such as we had just left.

i. I grew up in the city of New York. I was placed at a public school in Mulberry Street, taught by Mr. C. C. Andrew, and subsequently by Mr. Adams, a Quaker gentleman, from both of whom I received great kindness. Poverty compelled me to work, but inclination led me to study; hence I was enabled, in spite of poverty, to make some progress in necessary learning. Added to poverty, however, in the case of a black lad in that city, is the ever-present, ever-crushing Negro-hate, which hedges up his path, discourages his efforts, damps his ardor, blasts his hopes, and embitters his spirits.

j. In 1833 it pleased God to answer the prayers of my parents in my conversion. My attention being turned to the ministry, I was advised and recommended by the late Rev. G. Hogarth of Brooklyn, to the teachership of a school for colored children, established by the late Peter Remsen of New Town, N.Y. I afterwards taught for two-and-a-half years in Newark, New Jersey, where I was living in January 1838, when I was married to Miss Reynolds of New York. In October 1838, Samuel Ringgold Ward the younger was born, and I became, “to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever,” a family man, aged twenty-one years.

k. In May, 1839, I was licensed to preach the gospel by the New York Congregational Association, assembled at Poughkeepsie. In November of the same year, I became the traveling agent of first the American and afterwards the New York Anti-Slavery Society. In April, 1841, I accepted the unanimous invitation of the Congregational Church of South Butler, Wayne Co., N.Y., to be their pastor; and in September of that year I was publicly ordained and inducted as minister of that Church.

#### **Questions**

1. Why did the Ward family move to Cumberland County in the State of New Jersey?
2. Why did Samuel Ringgold Ward doubt “the legal validity” of his “brother’s freedom”?
3. Why did they eventually move to New York City?
4. What professions attracted Samuel Ringgold Ward?
5. What do you learn about life for Blacks in New York and New Jersey before the Civil War from the story of Samuel Ringgold Ward?

## **African American Lives in Early New York State: Excerpts from the narratives of Venture Smith, Sojourner Truth, William Brown and Reverend Thomas James**

(Source: “North American Slave Narratives, Beginnings to 1920” at the “Documenting the American South” website of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, [docsouth.unc.edu](http://docsouth.unc.edu).)

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. describes the African American “slave narrative” as a unique achievement in literature. As part of the campaign to abolish slavery, hundreds of ex-slaves and runaways told their personal accounts as lectures and in autobiographical narratives. Their stories provide eloquent testimony against their captors and the inhuman institution, and bear witness to the urge of every slave to be both free and literate. Over one hundred book length narratives were written before the end of the Civil War. By the 1940s, over six thousand former slaves had told their stories of human bondage through interviews, essays and books. Many of these stories are available on the internet at [docsouth.unc.edu](http://docsouth.unc.edu) and [newdeal.feri.org/asn](http://newdeal.feri.org/asn).

As you read the edited slave narratives that follow, consider the following questions:

1. What does this story tell me about the life of this individual?
2. What does this story tell me about the institution of slavery?
3. What does this story tell me about the impact of slavery on American society prior to the Civil War?

### **A) Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture Smith (1796)**

**a.** After an ordinary passage, except great mortality by the small pox, which broke out on board, we arrived at the island of Barbadoes; but when we reached it, there were found, out of the two hundred and sixty that sailed from Africa, not more than two hundred alive. These were all sold, except myself and three more, to the planters there. The vessel then sailed for Rhode Island, and arrived there after a comfortable passage. Here my master sent me to live with one of his sisters until he could carry me to Fisher’s Island (New York), the place of his residence. I had then completed my eighth year. After staying with his sister some time, I was taken to my master’s place to live. I was pretty much employed in the house, carding wool and other household business. In this situation I continued for some years, after which my master put me to work out of doors.

**b.** I then began to have hard tasks imposed on me. Some of these were to pound four bushels of ears of corn every night in a barrel for the poultry, or be rigorously punished. At other seasons of the year, I had to card wool until a very late hour. These tasks I had to perform when only about nine years old. Some time after, I had another difficulty and oppression which was greater than any I had ever experienced since I came into this country. For my master having set me off my business to perform that day and then left me to perform it, his son came up to me big with authority, and commanded me very arrogantly to quit my present business and go directly about what he should order me. I replied to him that my master had given me so much to perform that day, and that I must faithfully complete it in that time. He then broke out into a great rage, snatched a pitchfork and went to lay me over the head therewith, but I as soon got another and defended myself with it. He immediately called some people who were within hearing at work for him, and ordered them to take his hair rope and come and bind me with it. They all tried to bind me, but in vain, though there were three assistants in number. I recovered my temper, voluntarily caused myself to be bound by the same men, and carried before my young master, that he might do what he pleased with me. He took me to a gallows made for the purpose of hanging cattle on, and suspended me on it. I was released and went to work after hanging on the gallows about an hour.

**c.** After I had lived with my master thirteen years, being then about twenty-two years old, I married Meg, a slave of his who was about my own age. My master owned a certain Irishman, named Heddy, who about that time formed a plan of secretly leaving his master. After he had long had this plan in meditation, he suggested it to me. At first I cast a deaf ear to it, and rebuked Heddy for harboring in his mind such a rash undertaking. But after he had

persuaded and much enchanted me with the prospect of gaining my freedom by such a method, I at length agreed to accompany him. Heddy next inveigled two of his fellow-servants to accompany us. We stole our master's boat, embarked, and then directed our course for the Mississippi River. We mutually confederated not to betray or desert one another on pain of death. We first steered our course for Montauk Point, the east end of Long Island. After our arrival there, Heddy and I made an incursion into the island after fresh water, while our two comrades were left a little distance from the boat, employed in cooking. He returned to our companions and I continued on looking for my object. Heddy went directly to the boat, stole all the clothes in it, and then traveled away for East Hampton. I returned to my fellows not long after. They informed me that our clothes were stolen, but could not determine who was the thief, yet they suspected Heddy, as he was missing. I then thought it might afford some chance for my freedom, or at least be a palliation for my running away, to return Heddy immediately to his master, and inform him that I was induced to go away by Heddy's address. I informed my master that Heddy was the ringleader of our revolt, and that he had used us ill. He immediately put Heddy into custody, and myself and companions were well received and went to work as usual.

**d.** At the close of that year I was sold to a Thomas Stanton, and had to be separated from my wife and one daughter, who was about one month old. He resided at Stonington Point. About a year and a half after that time, my master purchased my wife and her child for seven hundred pounds old tenor. I hired myself out at Fisher's Island, earning twenty pounds; thirteen pounds six shillings of which my master drew for the privilege and the remainder I paid for my freedom. This made fifty-one pounds two shillings which I paid him. In October following I went and wrought six months at Long Island. In that six month's time I cut and corded four hundred cords of wood, besides threshing out seventy-five bushels of grain, and received of my wages down only twenty pounds, which left remaining a larger sum. I returned to my master and gave him what I received of my six months' labor. This left only thirteen pounds eighteen shillings to make up the full sum of my redemption. My master liberated me, saying that I might pay what was behind if I could ever make it convenient, otherwise it would be well. The amount of the money which I had paid my master towards redeeming my time, was seventy-one pounds two shillings. Being thirty-six years old, I had already been sold three different times, made considerable money with seemingly nothing to derive it from, had been cheated out of a large sum of money, lost much by misfortunes, and paid an enormous sum for my freedom.

**e.** My wife and children were yet in bondage to Mr. Thomas Stanton. I worked at various places, and in particular on Ram Island, where I purchased Solomon and Cuff, two sons of mine, for two hundred dollars each. During my residence at Long Island, I raised one year with another, ten cart loads of watermelons. What I made by the watermelons amounted to nearly five hundred dollars. Various other methods I pursued in order to enable me to redeem my family. In the night time I fished with set nets and pots for eels and lobsters, and shortly after went a whaling voyage in the service of Col. Smith. After being out seven months, the vessel returned laden with four hundred barrels of oil.

**f.** About this time I became possessed of another dwelling house, and my temporal affairs were in a pretty prosperous condition. This and my industry was what alone saved me from being expelled that part of the island in which I resided, as an act was passed by the selectmen of the place, that all Negroes residing there should be expelled. Being about forty-six years old, I bought my oldest child, Hannah for forty-four pounds. I had already redeemed from slavery, myself, my wife and three children, besides three Negro men. About the forty-seventh year of my life I disposed of all my property at Long Island, and came from thence into East Haddam, Conn.

### Questions

1. How did Venture Smith arrive on Fisher's Island?
2. How was he treated as a young man? What evidence supports your view?
3. Why did he allow himself to be tied up by his master's son?
4. In your opinion, was he right to turn Heddy in to the master? Explain.
5. Why did Venture Smith purchase slaves? Do you agree with what he did? Why?

6. What do you learn about life for Blacks in New York before the Civil War from the story of Venture Smith?

## **B) Isabella Van Wagener, also known as Sojourner Truth (1878)**

a. Among Isabella's earliest recollections was the removal of her master, Charles Ardinburgh, into his new house, which he had built for a hotel. A cellar, under this hotel, was assigned to his slaves, as their sleeping apartment, all the slaves he possessed, of both sexes, sleeping in the same room. She carries in her mind, to this day, a vivid picture of this dismal chamber; its only lights consisting of a few panes of glass, through which she thinks the sun never shone; and the space between the loose boards of the floor, and the uneven earth below, was often filled with mud and water. She shudders, even now, as she goes back in memory, and revisits this cellar, and sees its inmates, of both sexes and all ages, sleeping on those damp boards, like the horse, with a little straw and a blanket; and she wonders not at the rheumatisms, and fever-sores, and palsies, that distorted the limbs and racked the bodies of those fellow-slaves in after-life.

b. Isabella's father was very tall and straight, when young, which gave him the name of 'Bomefree,' low Dutch for tree. The most familiar appellation of her mother was 'Mau-mau Bett.' She was the mother of some ten or twelve children; though Sojourner is far from knowing the exact number of her brothers and sisters; she being the youngest, save one, and all older than herself having been sold before her remembrance. Of the two that immediately preceded her in age, a boy of five years, and a girl of three, who were sold when she was an infant, she heard much; and she wishes that all who believe that slave parents have not natural affection for their offspring, could have listened as she did, while Bomefree and Mau-mau Bett would sit for hours, recalling and recounting every endearing, as well as harrowing circumstance that taxed memory could supply.

c. Isabella and Peter, her youngest brother, remained, with their parents, the legal property of Charles Ardinburgh till his decease, which took place when Isabella was near nine years old. At length, the never-to-be-forgotten day of the terrible auction arrived, when the 'slaves, horses, and other cattle' of Charles Ardinburgh, deceased, were to be put under the hammer, and change masters. Not only Isabella and Peter, but their mother, was now destined to the auction block, and would have been struck off with the rest to the highest bidder, but for the following circumstance: A question arose among the heirs, 'Who shall be burdened with Bomefree,?' He was becoming weak and infirm; he was no longer considered of value, but must soon be a burden and care to some one. It was finally agreed, as most expedient for the heirs, that the price of Mau-mau Bett should be sacrificed, and she received her freedom, on condition that she take care of and support her husband.

d. A slave auction is a terrible affair to its victims. Isabella was struck off, for the sum of one hundred dollars, to one John Nealy, of Ulster County, New York; and she has an impression that in this sale she was connected with a lot of sheep. She was now nine years of age. She could only talk Dutch, and the Nealys could only talk English, and this, of itself, was a formidable obstacle in the way of a good understanding between them, and for some time was a fruitful source of dissatisfaction to the mistress, and of punishment and suffering for Isabella. They gave her a plenty to eat, and also plenty of whipping. One Sunday morning, in particular, she was told to go to the barn; on going there, she found her master with a bundle of rods, prepared in the embers, and bound together with cords. When he had tied her hands together before her, he gave her the most cruel whipping she was ever tortured with. Scars remain to the present day to testify the fact.

e. A long time had not elapsed, when a fisherman by the name of Scriver appeared at Mr. Nealy's and inquired of Isabella 'if she would like to go and live with him,' and she soon started off with him, walking while he rode; he had bought her at the suggestion of her father, paying one hundred and five dollars for her. Scriver, besides being a fisherman, kept a tavern. She was expected to carry fish, to hoe corn, to bring roots and herbs from the wood for beers, and go to the Strand for a gallon of molasses or liquor as the case might require. After living with them about a year and a half, she was sold to one John J. Dumont, for the sum of seventy pounds. This was in 1810. Mr. Dumont lived in the town of New Paltz, and she remained with him till a short time previous to her emancipation by the State, in 1828.

**f.** Isabella was married to a fellow-slave, named Thomas, after the fashion of slavery, one of the slaves performing the ceremony for them; as no true minister of Christ can perform what he knows to be a mere farce, unrecognized by any civil law, and liable to be annulled any moment, when the interest or caprice (whim) of the master should dictate. In process of time, Isabella found herself the mother of five children. When Isabella went to the field to work, she used to put her infant in a basket, tying a rope to each handle, and suspending the basket to a branch of a tree, set another small child to swing it. It was thus secure from reptiles, and was easily administered to, and even lulled to sleep, by a child too young for other labors.

**g.** After emancipation had been decreed by the State, some years before the time fixed for its consummation, Isabella's master told her if she would do well, and be faithful, he would give her 'free papers,' one year before she was legally free by statute. In the year 1826, she had a badly diseased hand, which greatly diminished her usefulness; but on the arrival of July 4, 1827, the time specified for her receiving her 'free papers,' she claimed the fulfillment of her master's promise; but he refused on account of the loss he had sustained by her hand. She plead that she had worked all the time, but her master remained inflexible. The question in her mind now was, 'How can I get away?' One fine morning, a little before day-break, she might have been seen stepping stealthily away from Master Dumont's house, her infant on one arm and her wardrobe on the other.

**h.** Mr. and Mrs. Van Wagener listened to her story, assuring her they never turned the needy away, and willingly gave her employment. She had not been there long before her old master, Dumont, appeared. Mr. Isaac S. Van Wagener then interposed, saying, he had never been in the practice of buying and selling slaves; he did not believe in slavery; but, rather than have Isabella taken back by force, he would buy her services for the balance of the year, for which her master charged twenty dollars, and five in addition for the child. She resided one year, and from them she derived the name of Van Wagener; he being her last master in the eye of the law, and a slave's surname is ever the same as his master.

**i.** A little previous to Isabella's leaving her old master, he had sold her child, a boy of five years, to a Dr. Gedney, who took him with him as far as New York City; but finding the boy too small for his service, he sent him back to his brother, Solomon Gedney. This man disposed him to his sister's husband, a wealthy planter, who took him to his own home in Alabama. This illegal and fraudulent transaction had been perpetrated some months before Isabella knew of it. The law expressly prohibited the sale of any slave out of the State. When Isabella heard that her son had been sold South, she immediately started on foot and alone, to find the man who had thus dared, in the face of all law, human and divine, to sell her child out of the State; and if possible, to bring him to account for the deed.

**j.** Quakers gave her lodgings and saw that she was taken and set down near Kingston, with directions to go to the Court House, and enter complaint to the Grand Jury. The clerk now gave her a writ, directing her to take it to the constable of New Paltz, and have him serve it on Solomon Gedney. She obeyed, walking or rather trotting, in her haste, some eight or nine miles. Solomon Gedney, meanwhile, consulted a lawyer, who advised him to go to Alabama and bring back the boy, otherwise it might cost him fourteen years' imprisonment, and a thousand dollars in cash..

**k.** (A lawyer told Isabella) if she would give him five dollars, he would get her son for her, in twenty-four hours. She performed the journey to Poppletown, collected considerable more than the sum specified by the barrister (from the Quakers); and paid the lawyer a larger fee than he had demanded. The next morning saw Isabella at the lawyer's door. He now assured her that before noon her son would be there. She went to the office, but at sight of her the boy cried aloud, denying his mother, and clinging to his master. When the pleading was at an end, Isabella understood the Judge to declare, that the 'boy be delivered into the hands of the mother, having no other master, no other controller, no other conductor, but his mother.'

## Questions

1. Why did Isabella's mother cry when her master died?

2. Why was Sojourner Truth known as Isabella Van Wagener?
3. Why were the Quakers continually helpful to Isabella?
4. How did Isabella Van Wagener secure the freedom of her two youngest children?
5. What do you learn about life for Blacks in New York before the Civil War from the story of Isabella Van Wagener?

### **C) From the Narrative of William W. Brown, an American Slave (1849)**

a. During the autumn of 1836, a slaveholder by the name of Bacon Tate, from the State of Tennessee, came to the north in search of fugitives from slavery. On his arrival at Buffalo he heard two of the most valuable of the slaves that he was in pursuit of were residing in St. Catharine's, in Upper Canada, some twenty-five miles from Buffalo. Bacon Tate was a man who had long been engaged in the slave-trade, and previous to that had been employed as a Negro-driver. He was as unfeeling and as devoid of principle as a man could possibly be.

b. Stanford and his little family were as happily situated as fugitives can be, who make their escape to Canada in the cold season of the year. Tate, on his arrival at Buffalo, took lodgings at the Eagle Tavern, the best house at that time in the city. And here he began to lay his plans to catch and carry back into slavery those men and women who had undergone so much to get their freedom. He soon became acquainted with a colored woman, who was a servant in the hotel, and who was as unprincipled as himself. This woman was sent to St. Catharine's, to spy out the situation of Stanford's family. Under the pretense of wishing to get board in the family, she was taken in. After remaining with them three or four days, the spy returned to Buffalo, and informed Tate how they were situated.

c. A carriage was hired, and four men employed to go with it to St. Catherine's, and to secure their victims during the night. The carriage, with the kidnappers, crossed the Niagara river at Black Rock, on Saturday evening, about seven o'clock, and went on its way towards St. Catherine's; no one suspecting in the least that they were after fugitive slaves. About twelve o'clock that night they attacked Stanford's dwelling by breaking in the door. They found the family asleep, and of course met with no obstacle.

d. The carriage re-crossed the river next morning at sunrise and proceeded to Buffalo, where it remained a short time, and after changing horses and leaving some of its company, it proceeded on its journey. The carriage being closely covered, no one had made the least discovery as to its contents. But some time during the morning, a man, who was neighbor to Stanford came on an errand, and finding the house deserted, and seeing the most of the family's clothes lying on the floor and stains of blood, soon gave the alarm, and the neighbors started in every direction, to see if they could find the kidnappers. One man got on the track of the carriage, and followed it to the ferry at Black Rock, where he heard that it had crossed some three hours before. He went on to Buffalo, and gave the alarm to the colored people of that place. The colored people of Buffalo are noted for their promptness in giving aid to the fugitive slave. The alarm was given just as the bells were ringing for church. I was in company with five or six others, when I heard that a brother slave with his family had been seized. We started on a run for the livery-stable, where we found as many more of our own color trying to hire horses to go in search of the fugitives. There were two roads which the kidnappers could take, and we were at some loss to know which to take ourselves, and so divided our company, one half taking the road to Erie, the other taking the road leading to Hamburg. I was among those who took the latter.

e. We traveled on at a rapid rate, until we came within half a mile of Hamburg Corners, when we met a man on the side of the road on foot, who made signs to us to stop. We halted for a moment, when he informed us that the carriage that we were in pursuit of was at the public house. We proceeded to the tavern, where we found the carriage standing in front of the door, with a pair of fresh horses ready to proceed on their journey. The kidnappers, seeing us coming, took their victims into a room, and locked the door and fastened down the windows. We all dismounted, fastened our horses, and entered the house. One of our company demanded the opening of the door, while others went out and surrounded the house. The kidnappers refused to let us enter the room, and the tavern-keeper, who was more favorable to us than we had anticipated, said to us, "Boys, get into the room in any way that

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you can; the house is mine, and I give you the liberty to break in through the door or window.” This was all that we wanted, and we were soon making preparations to enter the room at all hazards. One of our company, who had obtained a crow-bar, went to the window, and succeeded in getting it under the sash, and soon we had the window up, and the kidnappers, together with their victims, in full view.

**f.** The door was thrown open, and we entered, and there found Stanford seated in one corner of the room, with his hands tied behind him, and his clothing, what little he had on, much stained with blood. Near him was his wife, with her child, but a few weeks old, in her arms. Neither of them had anything on except their night-clothes. They had both been gagged, to keep them from alarming the people, and had been much beaten and bruised when first attacked by the kidnappers. Their countenances (faces) lighted up the moment we entered the room. Most of those who made up our company were persons who had made their escape from slavery, and who knew its horrors from personal experience, and who had left relatives behind them.

**g.** After an hour and a half’s drive, we found ourselves in the city of Buffalo. On our arrival in the city, we learned that the man who had charge of the carriage and fugitives when we caught up with them, returned to the city immediately after giving the slaves up to us, and had informed Tate of what had occurred. Tate immediately employed the sheriff and his posse to re-take the slaves. News soon come to us that the sheriff, together with some sixty or seventy men who were at work on the canal, intended to re-take the slaves when we should attempt to take them to the ferry to convey them to Canada. About four we started for Black Rock ferry, which is about three miles below Buffalo. We had in our company some fifty or more able-bodied, resolute men, who were determined to stand by the slaves, and who had resolved, before they left the city, that if the sheriff and his men took the slaves, they should first pass over their dead bodies.

**h.** A mile below the city, the sheriff and his men surrounded us. The sheriff came forward, and read something purporting to be a “Riot Act,” and at the same time called upon all good citizens to aid him in keeping the “peace.” This was a trick of his, to get possession of the slaves. His men rushed upon us with their clubs and stones and a general fight ensued (started). Our company had surrounded the slaves, and had succeeded in keeping the sheriff and his men off. We fought, and at the same time kept pushing on towards the ferry. In the midst of the fight, a little white man made his appearance among us, and proved to be a valuable friend. He was a lawyer; and as the officers would arrest any of our company, he would step up and ask the officer if he had a “warrant to take that man;” and as none of them had warrants, and could not answer affirmatively, he would say to the colored man, “He has no right to take you; knock him down.” The command was no sooner given than the man would fall. If the one who had been arrested was not able to knock him down, some who were close by, and who were armed with a club or other weapon, would come to his assistance.

**i.** After a hard-fought battle, of nearly two hours, we arrived at the ferry, the slaves still in our possession. Here another battle was to be fought, before the slaves could reach Canada. The boat was fastened at each end by a chain, and in the scuffle for the ascendancy, one party took charge of one end of the boat, while the other took the other end. The Blacks were commanding the ferryman to carry them over, while the whites were commanding him not to. While each party was contending for power, the slaves were pushed on board, and the boat shoved from the wharf. Many of the blacks jumped on board of the boat, while the whites jumped on shore. And the swift current of the Niagara soon carried them off, amid the shouts of the blacks, and the oaths and imprecations of the whites. We on shore swung our hats and gave cheers, just as a reinforcement came to the whites. Seeing the odds entirely against us in numbers, and having gained the great victory, we gave up without resistance, and suffered ourselves to be arrested by the sheriff’s posse.

**j.** On Monday, at ten o’clock, we were all carried before Justice Grosvenor; and of the forty who had been committed the evening before, twenty-five were held to bail to answer to a higher court. When the trials came on, we were fined more or less from five to fifty dollars each. Thus ended one of the most fearful fights for human freedom that I ever witnessed. The reader will observe that this conflict took place on the Sabbath, and that those

who were foremost in getting it up were officers of justice. The plea of the sheriff and his posse was, that we were breaking the Sabbath by assembling in such large numbers to protect a brother slave and his wife and child from being dragged back into slavery, which is far worse than death itself.

**Questions**

1. Why was Bacon Tate in Buffalo, New York?
2. How was the Stanford family captured?
3. Why was Buffalo's free Black population prepared to fight for the freedom of the Stanford family?
4. What would you have done if you were a Black citizen of Buffalo and heard the alarm?
5. What do you learn about life for Blacks in New York before the Civil War from the story of William Brown?

## D) Life of Reverend Thomas James, By Himself (1887)

a. I was born a slave at Canajoharie, New York, in the year 1804. I was the third of four children, and we were all the property of Asa Kimball, who, when I was in the eighth year of my age, sold my mother, brother and elder sister to purchasers from Smithtown, a village not far distant from Amsterdam in the same part of the state. My mother refused to go, and ran into the garret (attic) to seek a hiding place. She was caught, tied hand and foot and delivered to her new owner. I caught my last sight of my mother as they rode off with her. My elder brother and sister were taken away at the same time. I never saw either my mother or sister again. Long years afterwards my brother and I were reunited. From him I learned that my mother died about the year 1846, in the place to which she had been taken. My brother also informed me that he and his sister were separated and he never heard of her subsequent fate. Of my father I never had any personal knowledge, and, indeed, never heard anything. My youngest sister, the other member of the family, died when I was yet a youth.

b. While I was still in the seventeenth year of my age, Master Kimball was killed in a runaway accident; and at the administrator's sale I was sold with the rest of the property, my new master being Cromwell Bartlett, of the same neighborhood. My new master had owned me but a few months when he sold me, or rather traded me, to George H. Hess, a wealthy farmer of the vicinity of Fort Plain. I was bartered in exchange for a yoke of steers, a colt and some additional property. I remained with Master Hess from March until June of the same year, when I ran away. My master had worked me hard, and at last undertook to whip me. This led me to seek escape from slavery. I arose in the night, and taking the newly staked line of the Erie Canal for my route, traveled along it westward until I reached the village of Lockport. No one had stopped me in my flight. Men were at work digging the new canal at many points, but they never troubled themselves even to question me. I slept in barns at night and begged food at farmers' houses along my route. At Lockport a colored man showed me the way to the Canadian border. I crossed the Niagara at Youngstown on the ferry-boat, and was free!

c. I began to look about for work, and found it at a point called Deep Cut on the Welland Canal, which they were then digging. I found the laborers a rough lot, and soon had a mind to leave them. After three months had passed, I supposed it safe to return to the American side. A farmer residing near Youngstown, engaged me as a wood chopper. In the spring I made my way to Rochesterville. I was then nineteen years of age. As a slave I had never been inside of a school or a church, and I knew nothing of letters or religion. The wish to learn awoke in me almost from the moment I set foot in the place, and I soon obtained an excellent chance to carry the wish into effect. After the opening of the Erie Canal, I obtained work in the warehouse of the Hudson and Erie line. I was taught to read by Mr. Freeman, who had opened a Sunday-school of his own for colored youths. But my self-education advanced fastest in the warehouse during the long winter and spring months, when the canal was closed and my only work consisted of chores about the place and at my employer's residence. The clerks helped me whenever I needed help in my studies. Soon I had learning enough to be placed in charge of the freight business of the warehouse. I became a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Society in 1823 and my studies took the direction of preparation for the ministry.

d. In 1828 I taught a school for colored children, and I began holding meetings at the same time. In the following year I first formally commenced preaching, and in 1830 I bought the lot now occupied by Zion's church. I was ordained as a minister in May, 1833, by Bishop Rush. I had been called Tom as a Slave, and they called me Jim at the warehouse. I put both together when I reached manhood, and was ordained as Rev. Thomas James. Two years before, Judge Sampson, Vice-President of the local branch of the African Colonization Society of that day, turned over to me a batch of anti-slavery literature. It was these documents that turned my thoughts into a channel which they never quitted until the colored man became the equal of the white in the eye of the law, if not in the sight of his neighbor of another race. In the early summer of 1833 we held the first of a series of anti-slavery meetings in the court house. There was a great crowd in attendance on the first night, but its leading motive was curiosity. The second night we were pried with questions, and on the third they drowned with their noise the voices of the speakers and turned out the lights.

e. (We) engaged the session room of the Third Presbyterian church; but even there we were forced to lock the doors before we could hold our abolition meeting in peace. There we organized our anti-slavery society, and when the journals of the day refused to publish our constitution and by laws, we bought a press for a paper of our own and appointed the three leaders to conduct it. It was called *The Rights of Man*. I was sent out to make a tour of the country in its interest, obtaining subscriptions for the paper and lecturing against slavery. At LeRoy I was mobbed, my meeting was broken up, and I was saved from worse treatment only by the active efforts of Mr. Henry Brewster, who secreted me in his own house. At Warsaw, I was aided by Seth M. Gates and others, and I was also well received at Perry. My tour embraced nearly every village in this and adjoining counties, and the treatment given me varied with the kind of people I happened to find in the budding settlements of the time. In the same fall I attended the first Anti-Slavery State Convention at Utica.

f. In 1835 I left Rochester to form a colored church at Syracuse. I joined anti-slavery work to the labor which fell upon me as a pastor. (T)he opponents of the movement laid a trap for me, by proposing a public discussion of the leading questions at issue. I was a little afraid of my ability to cope with them alone, and therefore, quietly wrote to Gerrett Smith, Beriah Green and Alvin Stewart for help. When the public discussion took place, and these practiced speakers answered the arguments of our opponents, the representatives of the latter, left the church in disgust. After their retreat from the hall, the two champions of slavery stirred up the salt boilers to mob us, but we adjourned before night, and when the crowd arrived at the edifice they found only a prayer meeting of the church people in progress. I was stationed nearly three years at Syracuse, and was then transferred to Ithaca, where a little colored religious society already existed. Thence I was sent to Sag Harbor, Long Island, and, finally to New Bedford, Massachusetts.

g. It was at New Bedford that I first saw Frederick Douglass. He was then, so to speak, right out of slavery, but had already begun to talk in public, though not before white people. He was then a member of my church. On one occasion, after I had addressed a white audience on the slavery question, I called upon Frederick Douglass, whom I saw among the auditors, to relate his story. Not long afterwards a letter was received from him by his fellow church members, in which he said that he had cut loose from the church; he had found that the American Church was the bulwark (defender) of American slavery. We did not take the letter to mean that Mr. Douglass had repudiated the Christian religion at the same time that he bade good-by to the churches.

h. It was soon after this that great excitement arose in New Bedford over the action of Rev. Mr. Jackson, who had just returned from a Baltimore clerical convention, which sent a petition to the Maryland Legislature in favor of the passage of a law compelling free Negroes to leave the state, under the plea that the free colored men mingling with the slaves incited the latter to insurrection. Printed accounts of the proceedings were sent to me, and at a meeting called to express dissent from the course taken by the minister and his brethren, I introduced a resolution, of which the following is a copy: "Resolved, That the great body of the American clergy, with all their pretensions to sanctity, stand convicted by their deadly hostility to the Anti-Slavery movement, and their support of the slave system, as a brotherhood of thieves, and should be branded as such by all honest Christians."

i. The resolution was tabled, but it was decided to publish it, and to invite the ministers of the town to appear at a meeting and defend their course, if they could. Nearly thirty ministers of New Bedford and vicinity appeared at the next meeting, and with one voice denounced the resolution and its author. The result was that a strong prejudice was excited against me, the whole due to the fact that the respectable and wealthy classes, as well as the lower orders, at the time regarded abolitionists with equal aversion and contempt. The conscience of the North had not yet been fairly awakened to the monstrous wrong of human bondage.

### Questions

1. How did Thomas James become a free man?
2. Why was learning to read so important in the life of Thomas James?

3. How did Thomas James work to abolish slavery?
4. Do you agree with the charges made by Frederick Douglass and Thomas James about American churches before the Civil War? Explain.
5. What do you learn about life for Blacks in New York before the Civil War from the story of Reverend Thomas James?

## A Scientist Looks at Social Studies: What is Race?

by S. Maxwell Hines

In the nineteenth century descriptions of race in the United States and Europe were based primarily on skin color and secondarily on ethnicity. The development of the concept of race at its inception was dependent on visual cues as conquerors, commercial traders, theologians, policy makers and social commentators mirrored similar efforts in the sciences to develop categories of plants, animals and geological features. Harvard University scientist Stephen J. Gould, in *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1981) and in essays in *Natural History* magazine, documents ways that racial preconceptions both tainted science and shaped social policy during this period. Possibly the three most famous incidences of scientific bias and blundering are Broca's measurement of skull capacity, Cyril Burt's twin "experiments," and Piltdown Man.

Broca was a meticulous scientist who attempted to document unequal intelligence in men and women and in different "racial" groups by measuring the volume of their brain cavities. He stuffed an assortment of skulls with seeds and then counted the seeds to determine volume. When Gould repeated the experiment, he discovered that if he used ball bearings that could not be compressed instead of seeds, differences in cranial capacity could largely be explained by the height and weight of subjects. Broca, influenced by his preconceptions about race and intelligence, had inadvertently squeezed extra seeds into the skulls of dead white men.

Cyril Burt's "experiments" with identical twins have been used to support claims that intelligence is overwhelmingly determined by heredity. When scientists were unable to replicate results showing that sets of identical twins, separated at birth and raised in different social settings, had the same scores on intelligence tests, they reexamined his documentation. They discovered that in order to prove what he already "knew to be true," Burt had apparently fabricated his data.

The Piltdown controversy was the result of a hoax in the era prior to World War I intended to prove that human beings evolved in England rather than Germany or Africa. Someone, whose identity is still disputed, buried a human skull with an ape's jaw in a gravel pit - setting up British scientists to discover the missing link and proclaim English biological superiority.

In the United States, with its long history of racist thought and law, the faulty nineteenth century

biological doctrine of race was used to direct social policy decisions. As early as the 1880s, Chinese immigrants were barred as unassimilatable. During World War I, U.S. army "intelligence tests" were used to exclude Blacks and Europeans of Slavic descent from work requiring higher level thought, as they were classified as having sub-normal intelligence. One of the inexplicable ironies of these tests was that they showed northern Blacks with higher average scores than southern Whites.

These tests were also used as the 'empirical evidence' that provided the rationale for limiting the immigration of Jews and southern Europeans to the U.S. during the 1920s. The biological understanding of race also provided a rationale for the Nazi ideology of ethnic cleansing and the social Darwinism of 'nature vs. nurture,' and 'ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny,' both of which still persist in some form today. William Jennings Bryan, was so upset with the use of Social Darwinian ideas to justify racism and war that in the 1920s he launched a campaign against the teaching of evolution that culminated in the infamous Scopes trial.

With the advent of more precise and empirical means of scientific study, scientists have abandoned the concept of race, concluding that the concept of race cannot be justified using truly scientific paradigms and discounting skin color and ethnicity as fundamentally ambiguous and imprecise descriptors. Stripped of its scientific credibility, the concept of race can be seen for what it was used to do; as a means to legitimize the subjugation or elevation of various people, ultimately for social and political domination and monetary gain.

### Recommended Work of Stephen J. Gould

*Ever Since Darwin: Reflections In Natural History*. N.Y: Norton, 1977.

*The Mismeasure Of Man*. N.Y.: Norton, 1981.

*Hen's Teeth And Horses Toes: Further Reflections In Natural History*. N.Y.: Norton, 1983. *The Flamingo's Smile: Reflections In Natural History*. N.Y. : Norton, 1985.

*Bully for Brontosaurus: Reflections In Natural History*. N.Y.: Norton, 1991.

"American polygeny and craniometry before Darwin: Blacks and Indians as separate, inferior species," in S. Harding, (Ed.), *The "Racial" Economy Of Science: Toward A Democratic Future*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

# Slavery on the World Wide Web

by Robin Edwards, Vonda-Kay Campbell and Charles Cronin

As we searched for web sites on slavery useful for students and teachers, we discovered that each site had unique characteristics. The reading material on some web sites was very difficult to understand, while on other sites it was much easier. Some sites had material directed at teachers or researchers, while others were more appropriate for secondary school student use. To assist teachers, we devised a code for describing the sites we visited. Please note that web sites are constantly changing or moving. While we visited all of the sites listed below, we can not guarantee they will still be there when you read this list. We also remind readers that sites reflect the point of view of the site's host. CODE: (T) Useful for teacher; (S) Useful for students; (P) Primary sources; (L) Valuable links; (M) Maps or pictures; (LP) Useful for lesson plans; (R) Useful for research. Level of Difficulty: (A) Difficult; (B) Not too difficult; (C) Relatively easy.

## Black History Sites

<http://members.aol.com/donnpages/holidays.html> Lessons, activities, biographies and links related to Black History. Includes an Interactive Web Treasure Hunt and The Amistad Case: A Mock Trial. (T,S,P,L,LP,B)

<http://www.nypl.org/research/sc/sc.html> The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Digital images of slavery, lesson plans, and useful links. (T,S,P,L,M,LP,R,B)

<http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/bhm/afroam.html> Links to popular and informative sites on the African American experience. (L,R,B)

<http://www.blackquest.com/link.htm> Alphabetical list of links to African American History, Culture, and Black Studies resources. Includes slave narratives and the history of slavery in America. (T,S,L,P,B)

<http://www.africanhistory.com> Includes links to African American history, culture, and Black Studies resources. (T,S,L,P,B)

## African Experience / Slavery in Ancient World / Middle Passage

<http://www.africanhistory.com> United States Black On-Line. Slave narratives and the history of slavery in America. (T,S,R,A)

<http://www.africanhistory.com> African history, culture, and Black Studies resources. (T,S,R,A)

<http://www.africanhistory.com> African history, culture, and Black Studies resources. (T,R,A)

<http://www.africanhistory.com> Lessons and activities related to African history, culture, and Black Studies resources. (T,S,M,LP,C)

<http://www.africanhistory.com> Hosted by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. African history, culture, and Black Studies resources. (T,S,M,LP,C)

<http://www.africanhistory.com> African history, culture, and Black Studies resources. (T,S,R,M,LP,B)

<http://www.africanhistory.com> African history, culture, and Black Studies resources. (T,S,R,M,LP,B)

from before 19th century Europe to Africa. (T,R,A)

### Slavery in the Americas Sites

- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/> Africans in America. Includes images, documents, stories, biographies, commentaries. (T,S,M,LP<B)
- <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk> Slavery in the United States from 1750-1870 and the American Civil War. Excerpts from narratives of Olaudah Equino, Solomon Northup, and Sojourner Truth. Accounts range from 1000 to 2000 words. (T,S,P,LP,R,B)
- <http://web.uccs.edu/~history/index/afroam.html> Links to primary source documents on the history of slavery, slave narratives and the slave trade. (T,S,P,LP,R,B)
- <http://blackhistory.harpweek.com/2slavery/levelone.htm> News articles and illustrations from Harper's Weekly on the slave trade, slavery, the Dred Scott case, John Brown's Raid, and abolitionists. (T,S,H,LP,R,A)
- <http://www.afroam.org/history/slavery/index.html> Black resistance to slavery in the United States and a brief introduction to slavery, short stories, the role of women, and a chronology of revolts. (T,S,P,LP,B)
- <http://www.liunet.edu/cwis/cwp/library/aaslavry.htm> Brief explanations of the African-American experience from slavery to freedom written by professors at C.W. Post. (T,LP,R,B)
- <http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/slavery> Limited number of pictures from the era of slavery. (T,S,M,P,C)
- <http://www.eca.com.ve/wtutor/juli/gallery.htm> Gallery of pictures on slavery gathered from the book "A Kidnapped Prince" by Olaudah Equino. Sponsored by the Equiano Foundation. (T,S,M,P,C)
- <http://www.inform.umd.edu/arhu/depts/history/freedman/fssphome.htm> Freedman and Southern Society Project at the University of Maryland. Primary sources on Emancipation and the Civil War. (T,S,P,R,B)
- <http://www.archives.state.al.us/teacher/slavery.html> Slavery unit with three lessons. Primary sources. Slave Code of 1833 in Alabama; accounts of former slaves; accounts of former slaveholders. (T,P,LP,C)
- <http://www.amistadamerica.org/history/welcome.html> A brief history of Amistad, links for Amistad research and primary source documents. (T,S,P,L,B)
- <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/99/railroad> National Geographic site that takes you on an interactive trip on the Underground Railroad. (S,C)
- <http://www.undergroundrailroad.com/home.html> The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Features alphabetical list of major participants in the Underground Railroad movement. (L,S,T,B)
- <http://www.gliah.org> and [www.yale.edu/glc](http://www.yale.edu/glc) Primary source material from the Gilda Lerner Institute includes documents on Amistad. (T,S,P,B)
- [www.as.wvu.edu/coll03/relst/are/linkfig.htm](http://www.as.wvu.edu/coll03/relst/are/linkfig.htm) Looks at religious influence on abolition. (T,R,A)

### Slave Narratives Sites

- <http://docsouth.unc.edu> Unedited North American Slave Narratives, beginnings to 1920 at the Documenting the American South site of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (T,R,A)
- <http://vi.uh.edu/pages/mintz/primary.htm> Edited versions of slave narratives including Venture Smith and Olaudah Equiano. Documents average 2,000 to 5,000 words. (T,S,LP,R,P,B)
- <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/wpahome.html> American Slave Narratives: An Online Anthology. Narratives and pictures from the Works Progress Administration, 1936 to 1938. (T,S,LP,R,P,B)
- <http://newdeal.feri.org/asn/> Selections from the Works Progress Administration American Slave Narratives. Seventeen narratives capture the experience of former slaves. (T,S,LP,R,P,B)
- <http://www.io.com/~mjolly/> Vanderbilt University's site on slavery in America includes edited narratives by Olaudah Equiano, Venture Smith, Solomon Northup, Frederick Douglass, and John Brown. Includes information on the Underground Railroad and the mistreatment of slaves. (T,S,LP,R,P,C)

### Local History Sites

<http://projects.ilt.columbia.edu/Seneca/start.html> Seneca Village site examines the history of African Americans in New York City. Links, background information, pictures and cartoons. (R,T,B)

<http://www.nyhistory.com/ugrr> New York Underground Railroad sites. Map of routes in New York State. Lists people involved in the Underground Railroad in NYS. (L,S,M,C)

<http://www.nyhistory.com/encyclopedia/abolitionism.html> The Encyclopedia of New York provides in-depth background on the abolition movement in New York State. (LP,S,T,C)

<http://www.nyhistory.com/harriettubman/website.htm> Harriet Tubman page has a history of her life and the house where she lived. Links to African-American abolitionists and Underground Railroad sites. (LP,S,T,C)

<http://www.abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/amistad00072.html> Tells the story of the re-creation of the slave ship Amistad. (T,S,C)

<http://www.history.rochester.edu/class/ugrr/home.html> Underground Railroad in Rochester, NY. (R,S,T,B)

<http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~densmore> Underground Railroad in Western New York. Documents African-American resistance to slavery. (L,LP,P,S,T,B)

<http://www.leap.yale.edu/lclc/webtour/webtour4.html> Regional Underground Railroad sites (T,S,LP,M,C)

<http://www.state.nj.us/state/history/material.html> New Jersey Underground Railroad routes and maps (T,S,LP,M,C)

<http://www.nysed.gov/freedom.htm> Report of the New York State Freedom Trail Commission (R,T,LP,B)

### **Slavery in the Contemporary World**

<http://www.anti-slavery.org> American Anti-Slavery dedicated to abolishing slavery worldwide. (R,T,A)

<http://www.antislavery.org> Anti-Slavery International and Human Rights Watch. Includes reports prepared by students at Immaculata High School in Somerville, NJ. (R,T,S,B)

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html> United Nations High Commissioner report on human rights and slavery in the contemporary world. (R,T,A)

# Viewing History? Film and Historical Memory

by Cynthia Vitieri

*Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision*, Natalie Zemon Davis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000)

In *Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision*, Natalie Zemon Davis addresses the complicated marriage of history and film and provides some useful guidelines to make sense of the relationship. Davis comes to this task with intimate knowledge of the symbiotic relationship between author and director, paper, ink and celluloid screen. In the early 1970s she simultaneously authored the critically acclaimed *Return of Martin Guerre* and served as the consultant to the French film of the same name. It was during this process that Davis saw the great power that films have to teach history and decided that viewers must be taught how to evaluate film according to the accepted standards of both history and film criticism.

In *Slaves on Screen*, Davis explores the difference between telling history in prose and on film. She acknowledges that film cannot and does not accommodate the complexities of evidence possible in prose, but suggests that film can transcend these limitations. Historical prose has had the benefit of over two thousand years of refinement. Filmmaking is still in its infancy, comparatively unrefined, with a fantastic potential to transform how history is delivered. Davis highlights its strengths and possibilities and encourages her readers to be an astute and critical audience.

As an historian, Davis demands an essential respect for truth in filmmaking. Filmmakers are not expected to include all aspects of historiography relevant to the film topic, but must remain loyal to what they know of the truth, and whenever possible relate the full essence of the historical moment. *Spartacus* (1960), *Burn* (1969), *The Last Supper* (1976), *Amistad* (1997) and *Beloved* (1997) are examined for their portrayal of slavery and slave resistance in diverse historical moments. For the social studies teacher, Davis provides a useful framework for using movies while teaching about ancient Rome, the Caribbean in the 1850s, Cuba in the 1790s, Antebellum New England, and the Reconstructing South.

Davis also discusses the insight movies provide into the era and ideology of film-makers. For example, in Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus*, screenwriter Dalton Trumbo, who had been blacklisted by the House Un-American Activities Committee, transformed

fragmentary reminiscences about Spartacus into a critique of oppression and a reflection on resistance. While *Spartacus* is a product of the American Red Scare, it is also soundly grounded in Plutarch's *Crassus* and Appian's *Roman History*.

So what exactly is it that film brings to the task of history that is so different than the lonely historian plucking away at a word processor in the depths of some archive? Unlike historical prose, which ultimately is generated through the voice of one or two authors, in film all members of the production influence how history is told. For example, an actor's choice of expression helps to define our understanding of a character and an event. As students watch a movie, they need to consider the following questions. How does Brando's use of method acting influence the audience's understanding of white imperialists in *Burn*? Does Spielberg's desire to create a hopeful and uplifting vision of America's leadership taint his treatment of John Quincy Adams in *Amistad*? What role does a real sugar plantation and the participation of native tribes play in the religious metaphor of *The Last Supper*? How does Jonathan Demme use light, color and music to express exultation and despair in *Beloved*? In Davis' step by step analysis of the filmmaking process, the role of the director, historical consultant, cameraman, and music composer in recreating history all emerge.

Davis argues that the critique of historical films cannot rest with a simple historical analysis of the plot. To truly understand the depth to which film impacts our historic sensibilities we must also explore the importance of location, film technology, lighting, sound, framing, props, editing, the ordering of space, and even the choice between color and black and white film. Viewers must consider the techniques of the filmmaker as much as the plot summary.

Davis also offers a note of caution for teachers. Some movies try to use historical moments to prove a universal truth. This can be dangerous because it redefines the historical incident in order to serve contemporary needs and desires. To help students become critical viewers who are able to evaluate movies according to basic rules of evidence and film

criticism, teachers must engage them as active learners rather than as a passive audience.

**General questions to consider while viewing historical movies:**

- What are the historical themes that are developed by the film?
- Does the film’s portrayal adhere to the historiography of the era?
- How does the film maker use light and color, or its absence, to enhance the story?
- How does the filmmaker use the camera to express action in a contemporary or historically appropriate manner?
- How is music used to enhance or detract from the narrative?
- Is the casting of actors appropriate: age, race, and ethnicity?
- Does the film develop the characters fully?
- Does the film rely on simple dichotomies, or does it express the full range of character and story development?
- What visual symbols and metaphors does the film utilize?
- How does the film reflect the culture, politics and economics of the era it portrays? in which it is produced?

**Questions to consider when watching movies about slavery and slave resistance:**

**Spartacus**

- How does Spartacus depict the social distance between free and slave, rich and poor?
- What is the connection between love, friendship and death in the gladiator school?
- What is the symbolic role that family and children play?
- How does the author’s experience with anti-communism in the U.S. emerge in the “I’m Spartacus” scene?
- Explain and describe the domestic world of slavery?
- What is the emotional and visual impact of the filming of major battle scenes?
- Discuss the moral predicament of the gladiator school: how do you kill someone for whom you have no animosity?

**Burn**

- How does Burn portray economic interests in Cuba through political control, foreign investment, trade, and labor?
- How are historical transitions linked: slave to free labor; colony to independent nation dominated by foreign capital?
- What is the political, ideological and personal conflict between white colonialism and Black slavery?
- Explain how events of the past are experienced by village groups and through the personal relations of the main characters.
- How are children used as symbols of hope and despair?

**The Last Supper**

- What role do Christian and Yoruba practices and beliefs play in slave systems and rebellions?
- How did carnival and religious ceremonies become preludes or avenues to revolution?
- How does the film reconstruct the life, procedures, calculations, and struggles of those that work, manage, and own the sugar mills?
- What is the connection between Christian and Yoruba creation stories?
- Discuss the conflict between the Spanish Church practices and Spanish colonial work practices?
- How does the film portray the inner conflicts of the white count, the white priest, the mulatto technician, and the slaves?

**Amistad**

- What attention does the film pay to political and legal thought of the era?
- What methods are used to portray the Middle Passage?
- How are fictional elements in Amistad used to fill in the gaps in the historical record?
- Are the fictional elements plausible or do they override good history in a way that risks misleading the audience?
- What is the effect of the physical atmosphere on the audience: the New Haven prison-yard and Cinque’s African village
- What is the effect of the fictionalized and romanticizing ending speech by John Quincy Adams?
- How does it serve the egalitarian hopes of the late 20th Century, as opposed to the historical record of the 19th century?
- How does Spielberg’s minimalist use of camera movements help to keep the action in the 19th century?

**Beloved**

- How does Beloved portray the traumas of slavery and the process of healing?
- How do memories of slavery continue to disturb the free?
- How are the resources of the African American community used to define, quarrel over and heal wounds?
- What role does music, specifically lullabies, play in setting the mood and tell the story? How do lullabies act in contrast to the practice of infanticide?

- What is the role of scarred flesh?
- What role does color and light play in both the book and the movie?
- How does the film portray Beloved as the Trickster?
- How are Baby Suggs Christian/African healing methods portrayed?
- Does the movie rely on threatening all as hero's and villains?
- Are Black characters pictured in all of their diversity?
- Are white characters portrayed as human beings, with fears, loves, anger, guilt, jealousy and affection?

## Perspective and Engagement: Slavery and Reconstruction in Literature for Middle and High School Students

by Sally Smith

The textbook treatment of the institution of slavery and its practice in the United States can provide a useful historical framework and a brief glimpse of the lives of slaves and Abolitionists. But due to coverage constraints, textbooks often exclude the previous history of enslaved people, stories of free Blacks living in the North, and stories of everyday resistance to bondage, as well as an examination of cultures that arose in slave quarters blending African and European customs and beliefs. Novels, memoirs and autobiographies can offer students access to these missing perspectives, while involving them in the emotional impact of these experiences. Historian Howard Zinn recommends their use to help students understand what it was like to be a slave, to be jammed into slave ships, and to be separated from your family. He wants students to “learn the words of people themselves, to feel their anger, their indignation” (Zinn, 1995: 93).

This review of literature for use in the study of the institution of slavery and its historical contexts in the United States focuses on the work of two African American authors whose books explore the socio-political, cultural and personal contexts of slavery and its aftermath. Joyce Hansen, an author of realistic fiction as well as historical and nonfiction books, has written widely on this period. Her books range from the carefully researched, fictionalized story of a West African boy kidnapped and sold into slavery in *The Captive*, to *Between Two Fires: Black Soldiers in the Civil War* and *Bury Me Not in a Land of Slaves*, nonfiction works that address the Civil War and Reconstruction. Her work has received popular and critical acclaim including recognition as a notable book from the National Council for the Social Studies and Parents’ Choice and Coretta Scott King Honor Book Awards. While working in New York City middle schools, I had the opportunity to see enthusiastic and thoughtful responses to her historical fiction.

Virginia Hamilton has written widely in several genres for young adults, from mysteries with historical themes such as *The House of Dies Drear*, to contemporary fiction like *Sweet Whispers*, *Brother Rush*, and a fictional biography, *Anthony Burns: The Defeat and Triumph of a Runaway Slave*. She has also collected, edited and introduced an anthology of folk tales, *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales*.

Hamilton, like Hansen, is an African American author writing about Black history. Both authors emphasize the importance of their personal perspectives as they research and write about African American history. Hansen, speaking to students at several New York City schools, stated that she believed her own experience as an African American and a descendent of slave enabled her to look at and interpret primary source and secondary source data in a way that accentuates the meaning of a text. Hamilton, comparing her work to those of white writers, especially well-known Abolitionists, wrote, “I wanted readers to have a book in which the oppressed slave. . . was at the center of his own struggle.” In *Anthony Burns*, she gives readers that story.

As in other aspects of history, it is important to look beyond famous and familiar names and events to obtain an in depth understanding of a period and of the experiences of a people. This adds to the importance of including such books in the social studies curriculum.

### Books by Joyce Hansen

*The Captive* (1994). New York: Apple Books. Hansen used an early slave narrative to construct a fast paced novel about Kofi, an Ashanti chieftain’s son, sold into slavery and shipped to Massachusetts just after the Revolutionary War. Incorporating historical persons such as the Colonist Paul Cuffe, a Black ship owner, she tells the story of Kofi’s enslavement and eventual freedom, through the intervention of Cuffe and other free Blacks. The

carefully researched story provides a vivid picture of post-colonial Massachusetts and the active community of free Blacks in Boston and other New England cities. Kofi is an engaging protagonist and his personal story and the historical context are skillfully interwoven. Recommended for grades 6-8.

*Which Way Freedom* (1986). New York: Camelot. Based on actual events including accounts of the First South Carolina Volunteers and the Massacre at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, this novel narrates the story of Obi, a young slave whose life-long plan to escape and find his mother are realized as the Civil War begins. About to be sold during the upheaval at the first sign of war, he volunteers to serve in the Confederate Army until he is able to slip away to join the Union forces. The opening chapters picture daily life in slave quarters. A helpful and moving historical framework is provided by the quotations from primary sources that begin each chapter. Recommended for grades 6-8.

*Out From This Place* (1994). New York: Camelot. This novel continues the story begun in *Which Way Freedom*. It is told from the point of view of Easter, a young woman who was Obi's close friend. Set in the turbulent period of Reconstruction just after the end of the War, the story is based on events in South Carolina, the Sea Islands, and the coast of Florida. Easter finds herself working for wages for the government on an abandoned plantation. Determined to find Obi and others from her slave-times "family," she joins those wandering the roads looking for their kin. She eventually locates Obi and they help found New Canaan, an all-Black community based on an actual all-Black community that developed after the war. Recommended for grades 6-8.

*Bury Me Not in the Land of Slaves: African Americans in the Time of Reconstruction* (2000). New York: Franklin Watts. While the focus of this text is the period of Reconstruction, it provides a thorough and accessible background to first African slaves to in the colonies and the development of the institution of slavery in the North and the South. This history is enhanced by the inclusion of primary documents such as political cartoons from the period, slave narratives, maps, excerpts from government documents, photographs and illustrations from period newspapers and journals. The text also includes brief biographies of African Americans whose lives and or writings were critical to the period, such as Frederick Douglass, Martin Delaney, and Charlotte Forten. Recommended for grades 9-12 and adults.

### **Books by Virginia Hamilton**

*The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales* (2000). New York: Random House. All ages. Twenty-four stories organized according to theme and type, including "Tales from Bruh Rabbit"; "Tales from the Real, Extravagant, and Fanciful"; "Tales of the Supernatural"; and "The Running Ways and Other Slave Tales of Freedom." This beautifully illustrated collection is a winner of the Coretta Scott King Award. Hamilton uses the stories to examine the strength of the human spirit under oppression and the role of story in that setting. Stories from "The Running Ways" are of particular importance to the study of slavery in the South. The Bruh Rabbit tales echo the African Trickster Tales of the slaves' ancestors, brought to the new world and modified to fit new circumstances. Also available on audio tape. Recommended for grades 4-12.

*Anthony Burns: The Defeat and Triumph of a Fugitive Slave* (1988). New York: Knopf. Hamilton's fictional biography of Burns, based on historical documents and accounts from the period. It provides a vivid picture of the impact of the Fugitive Slave Act on people who escaped to the North and tried to begin productive, normal lives. The text alternates between Burns' imagined memories of his life as a slave in South Carolina and his trial in Boston where he is charged with being a fugitive. The chapters detailing his experiences as a slave are poignant and harsh. The author includes selections from the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and a bibliography. This text is an important contribution to understanding the range of experiences of slaves working on and off the farms and plantations of the South and the dangers they faced even when free in the North. Recommended for grades 7-9.

### **Suggested Activities for Students**

1. In *Bury Me Not in a Land of Slaves*, Hansen describes the formation of the Confederacy when Lincoln became President in 1860. Imagine you are a foreign visitor to the United States. Using your knowledge of slavery and the plantation system, write: a) a detailed letter to a friend describing what life looks like in the North and the South; b) an article for your hometown paper describing the similarities and differences between Americans living in the Union and in the Confederacy.

2. Like most slaves, Obi and Easter were illiterate while living on the plantation. Imagine that Obi and Easter could read and write. Take on the voice of either Easter or Obi and write a journal of your experiences during one week of the time period discussed in one of the two books.
3. Using a web search and library and media resources, prepare a presentation for your classmates on one of the following historical topics. Your presentation should include visual aids. a) The First South Carolina Volunteers (Union Army) and the Twenty-fifth Corps (*Which Way Freedom*); b) New Canaan, a town based on an all-Black community formed in South Carolina just after the Civil War (*Out From This Place*).
4. Abolitionists had to decide whether to forcefully resist efforts to arrest escaped slaves like Arthur Burns. Write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper explaining your views on violating the Fugitive Slave Laws.

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## Teaching Young Children About Slavery

by Judith Y. Singer

One goal of social studies education is to help children learn to care about how people are treated in the world, whether we are talking about the enslavement of Africans in the Americas, the systematic removal of Native Americans to barren lands in the western part of the United States, the devastating repercussions of the Great Famine in Ireland, the calculated extermination of Jews in Nazi Europe, or the neglect of homeless people living on the sidewalks of New York City.

Slavery is a painful and frightening part of our history as Americans, a part which many elementary school teachers would rather not discuss. But our silences about slavery are potentially more damaging to the well-being of our children than the pain associated with learning about slavery. The silences hide from Black children who they are and prevent all children from thinking about what kind of people they want to be.

Children of all backgrounds need to feel empowered when they are faced with the fearful events of slavery, and I believe that stories about resistance to slavery and the hope of freedom are critical to giving them that sense of power. Children also have to learn about the pain of slavery, however, or they won't be able understand why people struggled as they did to become free.

The books described below, all picture books, are suitable for elementary school students of varying ages. They were selected because of the different ways they help us think about hope and struggle, as well as their extraordinary illustrations. Most of the books can be read to children in grades kindergarten through second grade with appropriate discussion and interpretation from their teachers.

*In the Time of the Drums* by Kim L. Siegelson (1999), illustrated by Brian Pinkney. New York: Hyperion.

"In the long ago time before now. . . men and women and their children lived enslaved." So begins the story of Twi, an Ibo conjure woman enslaved in the Georgia South Sea Islands and a little boy, Mentu, whom she is raising to be "strong-strong." Twi teaches Mentu to play the drums and to sing the songs of Africa, and she tells him that unless he is strong, his memories of who he is will slip away. She admonishes Mentu, "Takes a mighty strength not to forget who you are. Where you come from. To help others remember it, too."

This story helps children see that the Africans brought to the U. S. to work as slaves were people with rich cultures and significant skills. It is one of many stories about a magical escape from slavery, using supernatural powers begotten in Africa. Twi escapes with a newly arrived boatload of Ibo people, who reputedly walk beneath the water back to their homes across the sea. Mentu remains on the island, helping others become "strong-strong" by passing down the songs, stories and music of Africa.

*Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* by Deborah Hopkinson (1993), illustrated by James Ransome. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Dragonfly Books.

This story provides the reader with some windows into the daily life of a slave. It begins by portraying the sorrow Sweet Clara feels when she is sent away from her mother to work in the fields. "When I got there, I cried so much they thought I was never gon' eat or drink again. I didn't want to leave my mother." As she adapts to her new

home, we see Clara picking cotton in the fields with Young Jack. Then Aunt Rachel teaches her how to sew so that she can become a seamstress and work in the Big House. Children can see in this book that slaves did different kinds of work, some of which was highly skilled. Clara applies her skills as a seamstress to sewing a map which she believes will lead her and Young Jack to freedom.

The quilt map may actually help Clara and Young Jack find freedom, or it may help them dream of freedom. Either way, the quilt is a symbol of hope. At the end of the book, the dream continues as Clara tells us, "Sometimes I wish I could sew a quilt that would spread over the whole land, and the people just follow the stitches to freedom, as easy as taking a Sunday walk."

*A Place Called Freedom* by Scott Russell Sanders (1997), illustrated by Thomas B. Allen. New York: Aladdin.

This is the story of a town in Canada created by freed Blacks and runaway slaves in the mid-1800's. A freed slave named Starman from Tennessee brings his family to Canada where he begins to farm with supplies and help from a Quaker family. The farm grows into a town as Starman makes trips back and forth to Tennessee to bring back family and friends who were left behind. The narrator describes the skills that former slaves brought with them. "Papa could grow anything, and he could handle horses, and he could build a barn or a bed." Mama "could sew clothes that fit you like the wind." Others who came to the town were "carpenters and blacksmiths, basket weavers and barrel makers." When the railroad runs tracks through the town, the townspeople have to give it a name. They decide to call it Freedom, as a reminder to all that they have left slavery behind them.

*The Wagon* by Tony Johnston (1996), illustrated by James E. Ransome. New York: Mulberry Paperback.

"Like all my family, birth to grave, my skin made me a slave." Black people did not suffer slavery easily. This book conveys the deep anger a young boy feels at being a slave. Part of the appeal of the book is that the boy continuously expresses his anger. Even while he helps his father build a beautiful wagon, he yearns to be free to go where he pleases. When he hears stories of battles, he hacks at the wagon with an ax in his frustration at not being able to join the Union army. "I got striped good for that" he tells us.

"Then everything changed. The President wrote some words one day. We had gone to bed slaves. But we woke up free." The boy's father asks Master for the wagon he and his son built. As the family rides away from the plantation in the wagon, they learn that President Lincoln has been shot. At the end of the story, as their first free act, the boy and his family take the wagon to Washington to say good-bye to Mr. Lincoln.

*The Red Comb* by Fernando Picó (1991), illustrated by María Antonia Ordóñez. New York: Troll Medallion.

This story takes place in Puerto Rico in the mid-eighteenth century, when slavery was legal but there were also towns of former slaves who had escaped from neighboring islands. The story tells of two women who use their wits to help a runaway slave escape from a slave-catcher. The villagers, eager to earn eight pesos for helping to capture the runaway, are taken to task by Rosa Bultrón, who asks if they have "forgotten that our grandparents came to this island on a tiny, water-logged boat after fleeing from an Englishman's plantation in Antigua?" This story has an important message for children about caring for others and taking responsibility for one another.

*Follow the Drinking Gourd* by J. Winter (1988). New York: Alfred A. Knopf. *Harriet and the Promised Land* by Jacob Lawrence (1993). New York: Aladdin. *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky* by Faith Ringgold (1992). New York: Crown.

The most persistent theme in children's stories about slavery is escaping to freedom. Each of these three books is about escaping on the Underground Railroad. The first features a conductor named Peg Leg Joe who teaches slaves a song, "Follow the Drinking Gourd," which helps them follow the North Star to freedom. The book provides the readers with words and music to this song so they can learn to sing it. *Harriet and the Promised Land* is illustrated by Jacob Lawrence, a renowned African American artist. The book is an introduction to his work as well as to Harriet Tubman, a famous conductor on the Underground Railroad. The third version of this story takes the protagonists, Cassie and her little brother Be Be on a magical journey into the past to learn about the bravery of conductors and passengers on the Underground Railroad. Children can benefit from reading all three of these stories and discussing their similarities and differences.

Other books to consider: *From Slave Ship to Freedom Road* by Julius Lester (1998), illustrated by Rod Brown. N.Y.: Puffin. *Freedom Child of the Sea* by Richardo Keens-Douglas (1995), illustrated by Julia Gukova. Toronto: Annick. *Freedom River* by Doreen Rappaport (2000), illustrated by Bryan Collier. N.Y.: Hyperion.

### **Jackdaw Resources on Slavery**

Jackdaws provides document packages, photographs, cartoons and posters on over one hundred topics in United States and global history for use in middle and high schools. A number of Jackdaw collections offer primary source material for teaching about slavery and the slave trade. The Jackdaw catalogue is available on the web at [www.jackdaw.com](http://www.jackdaw.com).

*Archaeology and Slave Life at Mount Vernon* (B-301). Investigate colonial, African-American slave history using invoices, census records, and other documentation original to George Washington, as well as 20th century archeological findings from Mount Vernon. Includes a 1761 slave ad, cargo shop invoice, a 1799 slave census, and historic letters.

*Nat Turner's Slave Revolt - 1831* (B-A1). Establishes the historical context for Turner's revolt. Includes material from his trial and laws designed to place stricter controls over Virginia's slave population.

*The Slave Trade and Its Abolition* (B-12). Traces slavery in the Americas from 1503 through its abolition in the British Empire in 1833. Includes plan of the slave ship Brookes, scenes from slave life, an advertisement for a slave sale and documents opposing slavery in Jamaica. Available in a middle school version (B-613M).

*Slavery in the United States* (K-A30). Traces slavery in the British American colonies and the United States from Jamestown in 1619 to the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Includes pages from newspapers, a slave sale poster, portions of slave code, and a petition to free a slave. Available in a middle school version (B-612M).

# Book Reviews: Freedom Crossing and Where I'm Bound

Margaret Goff Clark (1991). *Freedom Crossing*. New York: Scholastic. Reviewed by Rachel Gaglione

I teach in an urban middle school with students from a predominantly white, working class neighborhood that has had a recent influx of immigrants from Europe, Central and South America. Because issues of racial and ethnic prejudice and injustice remain current and sensitive in our community, teaching about slavery and the United States Civil War is one of the more difficult units for me to present in my classes.

I introduce the topic of slavery by asking students to discuss what they already know. Invariably, they think know a great deal about slavery, however, most of their knowledge is not accurate. I find that textbooks, which are usually dry and fact-laden, are little help in getting them to reconsider what they think and that most primary source documents are too difficult and long to read in class on a regular basis. On the other hand, historical fiction provides a means to examine historical events from multiple perspectives while piquing their curiosity and enthusiasm. One of the best books for this purpose is *Freedom Crossing* by Margaret Goff Clark.

*Freedom Crossing* is the story of young white girl named Laura who returns to her family's farm in western New York State after living with an aunt and uncle in Virginia. She discovers that her brother and a childhood friend are now conductors on the Underground Railroad and the farm is a station on the route to Canada. She must decide whether she is willing to violate fugitive slave laws and help a 12 year-old boy named Martin Paige escape to freedom. Based on their reading of this book, my students learn, on a very personal level they can identify with, how Blacks struggled to survive during slavery. They also learn how ordinary people like themselves can take responsibility for events going on around them and contribute to creating a more just world.

Students enjoy comparing the story in *Freedom Crossing* with events described by historical documents. The book reports one escape route for runaway slaves, so we compare the book's account with information and maps on the Underground Railroad. Why were some routes better than others? How did slaves find their way along these routes? What were their journeys like? How were they helped or hindered along the way? How did slaves send messages about routes? As an activity, we create our own Underground Railroad "maps."

In chapter six of *Freedom Crossing*, the author describes Martin's former master making him forget how to read. I use this as a starting point to explore laws about the education of slaves and living conditions under slavery. One topic students love to debate is the similarities and differences between Martin's attitude toward education and the attitudes of young people today.

One of the more powerful moments in the book is when Laura sees Martin's back, scarred from whippings. We use this scene to discuss how enslaved people were treated, what it meant to be a slave, and why people were so determined to runaway and secure freedom.

We finish the unit by discussing what students would have done if they were Laura and why. We also look at the way that life and attitudes about race have changed since the Civil War, what still needs to be changed, and how individuals can be involved in changing it. These discussions lead to an examination of child labor in the world today and what must be done to stop it.

Allen B. Ballard (2000). *Where I'm Bound*. New York: Simon & Schuster. Reviewed by David Golden

Dr. Allen B. Ballard teaches African American history at SUNY Albany. He was a graduate of Kenyon College in Ohio and holds a Ph.D. from Harvard University. This is his first work of fiction. The centerpiece of this historical novel is the "Third United States Colored Cavalry," a military unit, that served in the Deep South during the last three years of the Civil War. The author intertwines actual historical events with a story about an African American family that is torn apart by the quest for freedom and the flow of the war.

*Where I'm Bound* is a statement of condition, aspiration and destination. It provides the reader with an apt description of the conditions of bondage that define the lives of enslaved people and the degradation of morality and corrosion of civilization that were part of the South's "peculiar institution." It is also a book about human aspiration

and destination as it explores the pull of freedom and the struggle to achieve it as members of the “Third United States Colored Cavalry” return to the land of their birth and fight to end the enslavement of their people.

Ballad paints a vivid picture of the oppressive nature of slavery and its affect on people, Black and white, slave and free. No one’s spirit is spared the poisoning that comes with this institution; neither the slave owners who think of themselves as having achieved the height of civilization nor the traumatized and enslaved who fear freedom and sometimes contribute to their own exploitation

The author’s use of the denigrating language of slavery is a bit shocking to the reader, but it serves to bring to life the spirit of the time. The author also effectively explores the inner tensions in the lives of characters. Zenoba and Joe help us understand the impact of slavery on the human spirit of enslaved people in a profound way. Sue and Richard illustrate the moral dilemma of slave owners who define themselves as good, upstanding people.

The fate of the slave family is set against the fate of their former owners. Both experience the devastating impact of war. Both suffer the loss of loved ones. The “irregulars” who fight for the Confederate and Union armies threaten both. One of the human tragedies portrayed in the book is that their wartime experiences cannot transform their understanding of the world and each other. The hold of the slave system is just too great. For example, when a band of irregulars takes possession of a plantation, the mistress and her children are threatened with horrible consequences. They are saved by the arrival of Black Union troops, but instead of showing appreciation, the mistress can only express her disdain and disgust with the Black soldiers.

The propriety of the conduct of the Colored Cavalry men is in sharp contrast to that of the Confederate soldiers. Confederate soldiers seethe with anger at the thought of a Black man with a gun and as a result, fail to follow the basic tenets of war. Surrendering prisoners are often summarily executed.

I found this to be an interesting and useful book, accessible to high school students learning about this historical epoch. There is drama and action to suit every taste and desire. There is also tenderness and love, passion and betrayal. The range of emotion and action make the book memorable.

If the book has a flaw, it is the author’s over reliance on coincidence to resolve plot issues. Time and again, disaster is averted, virtue saved, and a happy-ending achieved by the happenstance of coincidence. There is also some unevenness to the story line and plot development. The principals are given less time and attention than their characters deserve. I was left wanting to know more about their lives and eagerly anticipating another installment in this saga.

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## Collaboration between Teachers and School Media Specialists

by Holly Willett, Program in School and Public Librarianship, Rowan University

There are many ways for social studies teachers and school library media specialist to collaborate. While the most common form of collaboration is when a teacher requests materials on a particular topic, either from the school's print or audiovisual collections, media specialists also help with Internet searches. In some schools, however, collaborations have become much more extensive. At Middle Township Elementary #1 in Cape May Court House, Cape May, New Jersey, the media specialist arranged a virtual field trip to the Cold Spring Harbor historical site for her K-2 students and their teachers. Students visited the site through interactive video and were able to ask questions of the interpreters. They prepared for their visit by readings that the media specialist located and provided to their teachers.

In a project that can be replicated in any locality, a fourth grade class in Dallas, Texas was studying local history and geography. Their teacher designed a unit that combined writing, mapping, and research skills; each child had to find specific facts about a particular city and draw a map of Texas with the city located on it. The school's media specialist instructed students in the use of print and CD-ROM encyclopedias and Internet sites to help them research their cities. At Glassboro Intermediate School, Glassboro, New Jersey, the media specialist and classroom teachers rearranged the media center into four thematic learning centers: encyclopedias, trade books, one computer for CD-ROM use, and two computers for Internet access. Classes were divided into groups and given their topics; group members were assigned roles which rotated as they moved from center to center.

At Clearview Regional High School in Mullica Hill, New Jersey, the media specialist helped prepare materials for a new course where students studied about prejudice and genocide. The teacher and the media specialist evaluated the library's book and periodical collections and made plans to add more materials; investigated curricula available through the New Jersey Department of Education website; ordered curricula on the Holocaust and genocide, the Irish potato famine, the massacres in Armenia and Cambodia, and the genocide of the American Indian; and collaborated in structuring the course and assignments. This type of collaboration is especially effective when flexible scheduling allows students to come to the media center as often as needed while working intensively on their projects, then for short periods or occasional follow-up visits during the rest of the course.

### Resources

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