THE GREAT COURSES®

Topic
History

Subtopic
American History

African American History
From the African Coast to the Civil War

Course Guidebook

Leslie Alexander

4840 Westfields Boulevard, Suite 400
Chantilly, VA 20151-2299
USA
1-800-832-2412
www.thegreatcourses.com

Leslie Alexander

Leslie Alexander is the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of History at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. She earned a PhD in History from Cornell University. She is the author of *African or American? Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784–1861* as well as *Fear of a Black Republic: Haiti and the Birth of Black Internationalism*. She also coedited the *Encyclopedia of African American History* and served as president of the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora.

Table of Contents

1 THE ORIGINS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

This course explores more than 400 years of African American history. It begins with an overview of the empires and societies that existed along the West African coastline long before the arrival of Europeans. It then examines slavery's development during the colonial era and how the American Revolution fueled the debate over slavery. Later lectures look at the process of emancipation in the North alongside the dramatic expansion of slavery in the South and how the two regions began to splinter. The course concludes with the era of Reconstruction following the American Civil War.

GHANA EMPIRE

By the time the first European ships began exploring the west coast of Africa in the early 15th century, the region had already been home to thriving settled communities for more than 2,000 years. What sustained these communities more than anything was the vast trade network that spanned across the Sahara desert, supplying West African societies with much-needed salt. Salt was so highly valued that these societies willingly exchanged gold for it. This trade economy eventually became vitally important to the region known as the western Sudan, where three empires dominated West Africa in the centuries immediately before Europeans arrived.

Salt was an extremely valuable commodity in West Africa because it allowed people to preserve meat and to nourish their bodies in intense heat.

The first known western Sudanese empire was the kingdom of Ghana, just north of the modern-day country of Ghana. Founded by the Soninke people around 600 CE, the kingdom was strategically situated between the southern forest region and the northern desert region, along two major rivers. It forged a powerful economic network that linked societies to each other. North Africans supplied cotton, silk, glass beads, horses, and salt, and Ghana provided pepper and gold in return.

But the Soninke did not mine the gold themselves. They were simply middlemen who profited from taxing it as it passed from the southern region to North Africa. They could maintain their position only because they had a strong military.

In the 7th and 8th centuries, Ghana's wealth expanded significantly, and it gradually became a massive empire. Salt and gold clearly dominated the economy during this era, but it's important to acknowledge that the empire also traded humans—typically captives of war who were sold as laborers. Even so, slavery never became the empire's primary focus, and enslavement in the region never developed into the brutal system that emerged in the Americas.

The empire of Ghana eventually collapsed due to economic rivalries and a decrease in agricultural production due to climate change. Internal rivals sought to gain control over Ghana's trade network. The Mandinka people finally emerged victorious and established the empire of Mali in the year 1235.

MALI EMPIRE AND MANSA MUSA

The Mali empire dominated West Africa between the 13th and 15th centuries. Under its first ruler, Sundiata Keita, Mali grew even more wealthy than Ghana had been, primarily because Sundiata seized the gold mines located in Wangara, which allowed the empire to reap all the profits themselves rather than serve as middlemen.

The empire also experienced significant cultural change, particularly in the religious realm. As trade with Arab nations expanded, so did the Islamic faith. During Sundiata's reign, Mali witnessed the rise of key cities, such as Timbuktu, which served as Mali's main trading hub. Timbuktu became home to numerous mosques and schools, eventually making it a center for Islamic learning.

Sundiata died in 1255, leaving three sons who each served as Mali's leader successively over the next few decades. In 1312, however, Sundiata's grandnephew, Mansa Musa, rose to power. During his rule, Mali reached the zenith of its wealth and influence. So how did this empire become so famous, and why did Mansa Musa become so important to African American history?

It began in 1324, when Mansa Musa began a pilgrimage to Mecca, nearly 3,000 miles away. Accounts are filled with descriptions of his pilgrimage and his subsequent arrival in Mecca. His caravan, which contained 80 camels and more than 100 elephants, was loaded down with gold that he distributed in villages throughout his journey. He eventually arrived in Cairo and remained in Egypt for 3 months. During that time, he distributed so much gold that its value depreciated—and remained depreciated—for the next 12 years.

Rumors of his extraordinary wealth spread quickly across the Mediterranean world, eventually reaching Spain and Portugal. As these tales circulated, European explorers went in search of Mansa Musa. And eventually, they began mining the African coastline—not only for gold but also for humans.

Mansa Musa invested in Mali's infrastructure. Mosques and universities built in Timbuktu brought celebrated legal scholars, astronomers, and mathematicians to conduct research and teach citizens. Timbuktu also became a center for Islamic culture and learning.

Historians agree that his death, which likely occurred around 1337, led to the gradual collapse of the empire. In 1464, the entire province of Songhay declared its independence from Mali. By 1468, they'd captured Timbuktu and assumed control over the empire.

SONGHAY EMPIRE

The Songhay empire's first leader was Sunni Ali—a powerful military leader who eventually created the largest empire in the western Sudan. It even rivaled its counterparts around the world. Perhaps the most important development during his reign was his ability to gain control over the salt mines in Taghaza, just north of Timbuktu. By controlling both the gold mines and the salt mines—the two most desirable trade items in the region—the empire achieved tremendous wealth and power.

In 1492, Ali died in a drowning accident. His son initially succeeded him, but a coup d'état quickly removed him from power and established Askia Muhammad Ture as the new leader. Ture, also known as Askia the Great, is

The fall of the Songhay empire was profoundly important to the eventual rise of the transatlantic trade in humans. When the empire crumbled, the region was left without an overarching governmental structure to unite various ethnic groups together. Therefore, when Europeans arrived along the African coast, that region of West Africa was largely defenseless against foreign invasion—especially invaders with guns.

best known for his role in promoting Islam. Under his guidance, theology and medicine became central to Timbuktu's university in hopes that his citizens might become literate and convert to Islam.

Ture also created a centralized government, established a taxation system, and even implemented wide-ranging trade regulations. Although the Songhay empire flourished under his leadership, Ture began to suffer from blindness and senility toward the end of his life. In 1528, his family removed him from power and replaced him with his son.

Yet again, a series of short-lived, ineffective leaders followed, and the empire weakened. Worse, Arab and European traders and explorers began invading Songhay territory in search of gold. The rumors of gold that began during Mansa Musa's reign—and had continued for centuries—finally began to have consequences.

The death knell for the Songhay sounded in 1591, when the king of Morocco, desperate to gain control over the gold mines, sent thousands of troops into the heart of the empire. Although the Songhay possessed the strongest military in West Africa, their soldiers—armed primarily with bows and arrows—quickly succumbed to the gun-toting Moroccans, and the last western Sudanese empire collapsed.

COMMONALITIES AMONG WEST AFRICAN SOCIETIES

It's always a dangerous prospect to provide a general overview of a region's cultures and communities because the beauty and uniqueness of its diversity can get lost. But it's important to look at the commonalities that existed among West African societies at the time of European arrival because they influenced what became Black or African American culture and community in colonial America.

The focus here is primarily on the forested region of West Africa, from which most Africans who came to mainland North America originated. This region encompassed the 2,000-mile-long coastal strip between Senegambia in the northwest and the kingdom of Benin, or what is modern-day Nigeria and Cameroon, to the southeast.

Most economies in this region were based on a combination of agriculture and trade. Socially and politically, communities tended to be structured around complex systems of family, community, and lineage in which everyone was viewed as part of an interconnected network.

Some family units were based on a traditional nuclear family. Others involved extended family units, with multiple generations living collectively under one roof. And still others allowed polygynous families, in which men had multiple wives.

Community structures were similarly complex. Most societies were class based and emphasized hierarchy. In other words, everyone was not equal. In fact, in most West African societies, there was a population of people that were considered slaves. But in most cases, these unfree people did not occupy the same dehumanizing status that enslaved people came to occupy in the Americas. While some were habitual debtors or criminals, most were captives of war. And except in the most extreme cases, they could eventually repay their debts and regain their status as a free and equal citizen.

In most societies, community needs were prioritized over private property. And unlike in Western culture, one's status did not come from individual success. It came from family and kinship relations. Societies also tended to be

politically decentralized, organized around villages and kinship networks—with all adults having an equal voice in political and economic decisions. Even women possessed power in these communities.

Most West African societies assigned differing societal and economic functions to people based on gender, which meant that men and women were viewed as different, with unique roles to play in society. But different did not mean unequal. Women were often active in the marketplace as traders and merchants, and they could own or control their own property.

Women were also viewed as spiritual leaders. It often took generations for African peoples to convert to Christianity in the mainland colonies. Even when they did, they often blended Christianity with their own spiritual practices to create a uniquely African American form of Christianity.

Among the most enduring cultural influences that enslaved Africans brought to the Americas were their religious and spiritual beliefs.

Islam had become a powerful force in West Africa as early as the 7th century. It transformed the region because it stressed monotheism (the belief in one God) and encouraged literacy. As a result, a minority of Africans who came to the Americas were both literate and Muslim. But scholars estimate that at the time of European arrival, about 95% of West Africans practiced their own indigenous religions, which were typically based on polytheism. These societies also emphasized pantheism—the belief that there is a spiritual force present in all life-forms, including the earth, plants, and animals.

Perhaps the most resilient spiritual belief among enslaved Africans related to their notions about life and death. Many West African societies believed that death was simply another phase in the life cycle and did not necessarily represent the end of a person's existence. They also believed that their deceased ancestors were part of their daily lives and had the power to influence events on earth. These notions remained a crucial part of African American life and culture in the generations that followed.

READING

Bennett, Herman. *African Kings and Black Slaves: Sovereignty and Dispossession in the Early Modern Atlantic*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.

Gomez, Michael A. *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Thornton, John. *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

2 EUROPE'S EXPANSION IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD

This lecture investigates the rise and expansion of European exploration in West Africa and the eventual development of human trading along the coastline. In particular, the lecture considers the internal dynamics that inspired Europeans to expand into West Africa as well as the technological advances that made exploration possible. It also looks at the role that the Portuguese played in invading Africa and beginning a trade in humans that eventually spanned the Atlantic Ocean.

PRINCE HENRY'S EXPLORATIONS

In 1418, Prince Henry of Portugal concocted a radical plan to send Portuguese ships around the western edge of the African continent, down the coastline, past Cape Bojador. This was a risky proposition because Europeans had never been able to safely travel beyond that point. Lack of sufficient navigational technology had prevented them from exploring any farther south and returning alive. But by 1418, times had changed.

Three years earlier, Henry's father, King John I, had commenced a successful invasion into North Africa. In 1415, the Portuguese military conquered a key port on the North African coast, just across from the Strait of Gibraltar, and tapped into the thriving trade network.

It was there that Prince Henry learned about the vast, profitable trans-Saharan trade that transported salt, spices, and gold. He also heard rumors about gold mines and endless riches just south of the Sahara desert. According to historical accounts, Henry was most interested in the caravans of gold that arrived regularly in the marketplace, and he wanted to locate the source of the gold. So he resolved to send exploration parties farther south, into the heart of the African continent.

Over the next 30 years, Prince Henry, later known as Henry the Navigator, financed numerous explorations seeking wealth in Africa. He and his team strategically launched their journeys from islands located off Africa's western shores, allowing them to slowly—but steadily—make their way down the African coast. First, they came in search of gold, but quickly thereafter they came in search of human laborers.

FACTORS LEADING TO EUROPEAN EXPANSION

To fully understand how and why the human trade began, we must first understand the issues and dynamics within European culture and society that created the desire for exploration, expansion, and, eventually, colonization.

There were three main factors that led to European expansion during the 15th century. The first was a massive population boom, which led to shortages in land and resources. As a result of this dramatic growth, Europeans became increasingly curious about where around the world they might migrate.

The second factor was technological advancement. During this era, Europeans developed new strategies that radically improved their agricultural productivity. The resulting surplus meant that there was increasing demand for new markets where goods could be sold. It also created a new merchant class, composed of people who were wealthy enough to finance exploration.

The third, and perhaps most important, factor was the Renaissance. Most scholars believe that the Renaissance was largely inspired by the Crusades, a series of military campaigns that the Catholic Church launched beginning in the 11th century that were intended to reclaim Jerusalem and the Holy Land from Muslim rule. Although the Crusades ultimately failed, the military returned to Italy with technological, literary, and scientific information that inspired a cultural revolution.

Classical texts obtained during the Crusades brought a renewed emphasis on philosophy and science that ultimately prompted the rise of a philosophy known as humanism. Humanism inspired Europeans to become more intellectually and scientifically curious, which fueled desires to investigate and learn more about the world.

And prior to the Renaissance, Western Europeans were urged to place God and religion above all. But humanism placed new emphasis on the individual and the human, causing people to reflect more on their lives on earth rather than on their souls in the afterlife. This was a crucial ideological shift. It inspired a powerful movement to accumulate wealth and to explore the world to find it.

It was also from the Crusades that Europeans gained access to gunpowder, which was perhaps one of the most important factors in European expansion and colonization. It gave Europeans the military advantage they needed to conquer and seize land from Native American societies and to overpower and enslave African peoples.

CHALLENGES FOR EUROPEAN EXPLORATION

At the beginning of the 15th century, Western Europeans' attempts at long-distance exploration were stymied by poor seafaring technology. Mediterranean cargo ships were essentially ancient barges. They were

extremely heavy, slow, and surprisingly fragile, and they were not well designed or equipped for long voyages. And no Europeans had explored the West African coastline before, so there were no maps or signposts to guide them.

In 1418, Portuguese explorers painstakingly began to explore the western coast of Africa. They encountered trouble when a massive storm blew them off course. But that accident became fortuitous for the Portuguese because the sailors stumbled across an island off the West African coast that they later named Porto Santo. Under Prince Henry's direction, the Portuguese claimed and colonized Porto Santo and soon extended their reach to an island chain that eventually became known as the Madeira Islands.

In the early 1420s, the Portuguese began using settlements on the Madeira Islands to launch investigations along the northwestern African coast. Their initial exploration yielded little, and many Portuguese scoffed at Prince Henry for his wasteful spending. But starting in the early 1440s, everything changed, as Portuguese traders began trading in humans.

THE HUMAN TRADE BEGINS

Scholars don't know the name or identity of the first person that the Portuguese enslaved, but they do know when and where it happened. In 1441, one of Prince Henry's ships finally reached Cape Blanco, on the border between modern-day Western Sahara and Mauritania. Initially, the captains engaged in small local trade, exchanging items for food and trinkets.

But one Portuguese sailor decided to capture some Africans and bring them to Portugal as gifts for Prince Henry. After encountering an African man and woman near a river, he ambushed them, captured them, and brought them to his ship.

Other crew members then repeated his strategy. A raiding party captured 10 more Africans, including one member of the local ruling elite. Having seized a total of 12 Africans, the captain and his crew triumphantly returned to Portugal. According to one report, Prince Henry responded with "joy, not so much for the number of captives taken, but for the prospect of other captives that could be taken."

In 1444, Portuguese merchants formed a trading company, and Prince Henry provided them a license to buy and sell humans along the African coastline. Armed with six ships, they began trading in human flesh.

Meanwhile, Portuguese explorers continued their slow and steady progress down the African coast, searching for gold, treasure, and humans. In 1445, they reached the Senegal River, which stretches more than 1,000 miles from the coast into the interior. The following year, they found the Gambia River, another major thoroughfare also linking the interior to the coast. Rivers eventually became essential to European traders who wanted to penetrate the interior and capture Africans to enslave.

The caravel was the single most important technological advancement in the story of European expansion. It allowed European incursion into Africa to increase rapidly, and it enabled expansion across the Atlantic into the Americas.

By 1448, a regular trade had developed in which Africans were enslaved and sent to Portugal as domestic laborers. The trade had become so extensive that Prince Henry built a fort and warehouse on a small island just off the coast of Mauritania to facilitate the sale of humans.

The most significant development occurred around 1450, when Prince Henry resolved to create a ship that could withstand seafaring more effectively than a typical barge. Under his guidance, shipbuilders created the caravel. A much lighter, more maneuverable ship, the completely redesigned caravel could sail farther and faster than any of its predecessors. Captains could also sail in shallower water along the coastline and up large rivers.

PROGRESSION OF ENSLAVEMENT

As early as 1460, 700 to 800 Africans were being enslaved and imported into Portugal on an annual basis. And in 1472, the Portuguese created a formal arrangement with the king of Benin, who gave them permission to trade gold, ivory, and humans.

Over the next 40 years, the removal of Africans increased as the Portuguese—and later the Dutch, Spanish, and French—established forts and trading stations along the West African coastline. By the year 1500, about 50,000 Africans had been enslaved, most of whom were brought into Europe, where they were used mainly as domestic and agricultural laborers. The remainder were enslaved on the Madeira, Canary, and Cape Verde Islands, where they toiled on sugar plantations in a system that eventually became the model for commercial crop cultivation in the Americas.

Enslavement progressed aggressively during this period, but the process of exploring and forging trade relationships was not easy for Portuguese and other European traders. Africans did not always desire to trade humans, and in the early years, the Portuguese struggled with poor planning, ineffective negotiation strategies, and tropical diseases.

Over time, the Portuguese became more successful at establishing trade agreements along the coast, and by about the year 1600, people became the dominant commodity. Europeans used raiding and military force to extract humans from the African interior in an insatiable desire to obtain labor for the rapidly growing plantations in the Americas.

LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

You may have noticed that words such as *tribe*, *slave*, or *slave trade* have not been used in this course. This is intentional. Until recently, everyone—including historians and scholars—used that word *tribe* to describe communities of people, especially Native Americans and Africans, living in historical times. But *tribe* began to take on negative connotations.

Europeans were described as living in cities, communities, villages, and societies under the rule of kings. Meanwhile, Native Americans and Africans were described as living in huts, teepees, and tribes ruled by chiefs or warlords. The implication was that Europeans were inherently civilized, orderly, respectable, and superior, while Native Americans and Africans were inherently primitive, disorganized, savage, and inferior.

For this reason, the term *tribe* is not used in this course. Instead, terms such as *communities*, *societies*, and *villages* are used to show that Native Americans and Africans lived in very similar social and political structures as their European counterparts.

Historians have also moved away from using the word *slaves* toward the use of *enslaved people*. Ultimately, this decision is about recognizing a person's fundamental humanity. Rejecting the term *slave* is a way of insisting that being a slave is an unnatural state because all people are first born as humans. And all humans have an inherent right to liberty and freedom. Only oppressive economic, social, and political systems allow humans to be enslaved. The same rationale applies for using *trade in humans* or *human trade* rather than *slave trade*.

It's important for people to be mindful of their language so that they never lose sight of what they're really talking about: kidnapping, stealing, and torturing men, women, and children—human beings—and selling them for profit. These people were bought and sold like property to enrich the lives of those who sought to deny their fundamental right to live freely.

READING

Blackburn, Robin. *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800*. New York: Verso, 2010.

Gomez, Michael A. *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Northup, David. *Africa's Discovery of Europe, 1450–1850*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

3 THE TRANSATLANTIC TRADE IN HUMANS

This lecture examines the development and expansion of the trade in humans, giving particular attention to how various European nations became involved in the trade, why Africans were initially willing to trade humans, and how the demand for labor in the Americas caused the trade to spiral out of control.

EL MINA FORT

In 1481, the king of Portugal developed a plan to construct a fort on the West African coastline. Strategically placed near the village of Edina, in modern-day Ghana, the fort would benefit from its location near an active trade network with ample amounts of gold and plenty of resources. Most importantly, the king believed that establishing a military installation would protect Portuguese traders against their growing competitors in the region.

The crew arrived at Edina in January 1482 to begin construction. However, the local African people, known as the Fante, had not approved—and were strongly opposed to—the building of a fort or anything else the Portuguese had planned. Their political leader, Kwamin Ansah, believed that Portuguese traders should be allowed to pass through the region on trade missions but not remain on a permanent basis. Ansah believed this was the only way to avoid future disputes.

In response, the Portuguese tried to convince Ansah that the fort could be mutually beneficial. It would allow the Portuguese to trade more effectively, but their military presence would also protect the Fante people from other foreign invasions. Ansah finally relented, but in the end, he had been right—the fort's construction only led to resentment, tension, and further disputes.

The fort became the first European building on the West African coast. Initially named St. George of the Mine, it soon became known simply as El Mina (The Mine), reflecting the Portuguese king's desire to mine the West African coast for gold and other trade goods. Over time, however, the Portuguese and other European nations would soon be mining Africa for humans, and El Mina became a terrifying dungeon where Africans were stored, awaiting transport to the Americas.

THE QUESTION OF AFRICAN WILLINGNESS

It's important to acknowledge that in the early years of trading with Europeans, some (although not all) African rulers were willing to sell humans. Let's consider three reasons why this occurred. First, as you may recall, many West African societies had preexisting systems of enslavement and servitude. Although their notions of slavery were different than the system that emerged in the Americas, West Africans did routinely sell their enemies or captives of war into bondage. So, when the Portuguese arrived and wanted to purchase a few people along with gold, ivory, and pepper, it did not seem radically different from the trading most West Africans were already conducting.

Second, in the early years of the trade, no one could have imagined the cruel, inhumane system that American slavery would become. West Africans had no reason to think that servitude and unfreedom elsewhere would be any different than what it was among themselves.

Third, during this period, there really was no such thing as "Africans selling other Africans" into slavery. What does that mean? Today, people think of Africa as a singular continent, and they refer to people from that continent as Africans. But in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, the people who lived there did not necessarily think of themselves that way. They certainly did not identify with each other as a united people. After all, there were thousands of languages, cultures, and societies across the continent, each with their own unique ethnic identity.

In West Africa alone, there were hundreds of ethnic groups. So, when people today think about trading of humans along the coast, they need to think of it as, for example, Akan people selling Igbo people into bondage (or vice versa) rather than Africans selling Africans into slavery. This distinction is vitally important to understand, especially once the demand for human labor became insatiable.

Over time, the trade relationship between Europeans and Africans became entirely unbalanced, and most African societies, especially those located along the coastline, had no choice except to participate in the human trade. It was either sell others or be sold yourself.

EXPLORATION EXPANDS BEYOND AFRICA

As the Portuguese were exploring West Africa, they, along with other European nations, were beginning to explore and colonize the Americas. In 1488, a Portuguese explorer finally rounded the Cape of Good Hope, successfully locating the path around Africa to India. This fueled Portugal's fascination with trade in Africa and India, and they ultimately only colonized one main country in the Americas. While the Portuguese sailed south and east, the Spanish went west.

For centuries, Christopher Columbus was celebrated as the man who "discovered" America. But it's hard to discover a place where millions of people have already been living for thousands of years. Columbus, who had been a merchant and sailor in Portugal and had participated in constructing El Mina, convinced the Spanish crown that he could bring wealth to the country by establishing a new trade route to Asia. In 1492, he set sail and stumbled on the region that would become known as America, and he urged the Spanish crown to colonize it.

After a few initial attempts, Columbus and his crew finally came upon a group of islands that are now known as the Bahamas, Cuba, and Hispaniola, which is the island that Haiti and the Dominican Republic share. But Columbus believed that he had landed somewhere near Asia. Thinking he was in the Indies, he began referring to the native peoples as "Indios," and to this day, many people still refer to the Caribbean as the West Indies. Although Columbus never knew his true location, it apparently mattered little to him.

What mattered most was the enormous profit he believed he could glean from these islands. In both Hispaniola and the Bahamas, Columbus excitedly reported about how easy he believed it would be to enslave the indigenous population and exploit their labor to extract the islands' natural resources.

The Spanish crown responded by authorizing the use of their ancient encomienda system, a labor system that required Native Americans to submit to Spanish rule and gave Spanish explorers the right to enslave, kill, and raid all native populations who resisted. Columbus died in 1506, but the Spanish continued his plan for conquering the Americas. In less than a decade, millions of the indigenous Taino and Arawak had been enslaved or slaughtered as the Spanish expanded their bloody campaign of conquest.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

COMPETITION OVER EUROPEAN EXPANSION

As the Spanish blazed into the Americas, they battled with the Portuguese for supremacy. Spain and Portugal finally reached an agreement in 1494. Known as the Treaty of Tordesillas, the two nations created a demarcation line, dividing up territories for exploration and colonization. The line was located about halfway between the Cape Verde Islands and the Bahamas, and it arched just wide enough in the middle to include modern-day Brazil.

Regardless of the millions of people who already inhabited the Americas, the treaty dictated that any of the lands west of that line would belong to Spain and that all lands to the east would be claimed by Portugal. This arrangement worked well for the Portuguese, who were already focused on Africa and India. Plus, the strategic placement of the demarcation line allowed them to colonize Brazil. Meanwhile, Spain could continue in its mission to raid, plunder, and colonize the rest of the Americas.

Over the next century, the Dutch, French, and English also began to push aggressively into West Africa and the Americas. After one failed attempt in 1596, the Dutch seized El Mina from the Portuguese 40 years later. And beginning in 1637, the Dutch assumed control over most of Portugal's holdings along the upper West African coast. The English were the last to join the movement for exploration and colonization, but when they did, they came with a vengeance.

Following the route from Europe to Africa and to the Americas and back, the trade flowed in this fashion: Europeans exported luxury items, such as guns, alcohol, and clothing, into West Africa in exchange for gold, spices, and human beings, which were then brought to the Americas for sale. Then, traders would take raw materials produced by enslaved labor in the Americas, such as sugar, rice, silk, indigo, and tobacco, and sell them for extremely high prices back in Europe. This trade relationship turned out to be exactly what Christopher Columbus had predicted.

ENSLAVEMENT IN THE AMERICAS

By the early 16th century, almost 200,000 Africans had been transported to Europe and the islands that had been claimed off the West African coast. But Spanish expansion into the Americas altered human history forever. Within only a few decades, Spanish explorers and traders began colonizing the Americas and settling across the region, particularly in what are now the Caribbean islands. Colonists quickly learned that the Americas were highly conducive for high-yield agricultural production, and they began enslaving the indigenous population, forcing them to cultivate sugar and then tobacco, coffee, rice, cotton, and indigo.

By 1619, when the first Africans were sold into bondage in the British colonies in mainland North America, European ships had already brought a million Africans to colonies and plantations in the Americas and forced them to work as enslaved labor.

Although Europeans initially relied on enslaved Native American labor, that plan quickly began to fail for many reasons. Most obviously, Native Americans could more easily escape enslavement since they were familiar with the terrain and could run, hide, and even ambush their enemies more effectively. The real issue, however, was disease. Europeans came to the Americas carrying horrific communicable diseases that devastated the indigenous population by the millions.

Meanwhile, as labor demands became insatiable, Europeans turned to Africa. By the year 1510, the Portuguese were already purchasing and enslaving about 3,500 Africans every year. By 1560, that number increased to more than 5,000 per year.

The dramatic increase started in 1518, when the king of Spain, Charles I, issued a charter authorizing the transportation of Africans directly from Africa to the Americas. This forever altered the nature and scale of human trafficking. Within several decades, raiding the African interior and trading human bodies had become full-time professions—particularly as other nations, especially France, England, and the Netherlands, became heavily invested in the trade.

In 1713, England assumed control over the transatlantic human trade, enslaving about 20,000 Africans per year. By the 1790s, the number increased to about 50,000 humans each year. Banning the international trade in humans was finally put in effect in 1808, but it continued illegally for nearly another century.

After lengthy debate among historians, most scholars now agree that there were more than 50,000 voyages across the Atlantic Ocean transporting human cargo, and about 12 million Africans were enslaved and arrived alive in the Americas. This number does not include the people who died at various points along the enslavement process. So, when considering everyone who suffered enslavement but did not survive the trade, the number reaches into the tens of millions. Six out of every seven people who made the journey across the Atlantic and arrived in the Americas prior to the American Revolution were Africans.

READING

Davis, David Brion. *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Diouf, Sylviane A. *Fighting Slave Trade: West African Strategies*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003.

Rediker, Marcus. *The Slave Ship: A Human History*. London: Penguin Books, 2007.

4 ENSLAVEMENT FROM CAPTURE TO SALE

This lecture and the next explore the experience of the transatlantic trade from the perspective of the enslaved. Typically known as the Middle Passage, the enslavement process was composed of four steps: capture, the long march, sale at the coast, and the journey across the sea. This lecture discusses the first three phases, and the next one delves deeply into the long, painful journey across the sea.

OLAUDAH EQUIANO

Sometime around 1745, a child was born in an Igbo village in the kingdom of Benin, in what is now southern Nigeria. At the age of 11, he and his sister were captured, imprisoned, and enslaved. After being sold several times, the boy was separated from his sister. He never saw her again.

Months later, the boy arrived on the African coast, and like millions of others before and after him, he was placed on a ship headed for the Americas. After enduring a terrifying ordeal during the Middle Passage, he was first brought to Barbados before being sent to Virginia and sold.

He was eventually purchased by a British lieutenant in the Royal Navy and served as his valet during the Seven Years' War. He was later sold a few more times before finally convincing his master to allow him to purchase his freedom. Once free, he took the name Olaudah Equiano, settled in London, and became active in the abolitionist movement.

His memoir, published in 1789, became an important weapon in the battle against slavery, particularly in the crusade to ban the transatlantic trade in humans. From him, we get rare insight about how Africans felt about their journey to the Americas—from their capture through their ordeal on the ships and their ultimate sale in the Americas.

His story is filled with heart-wrenching descriptions, but there is also much he did not share. To grasp the full nature of enslavement, then, one has to fill in the blanks with depictions from other enslaved people and from ship captains and traders who were honest enough, or callous enough, to document how free human beings were enslaved.

THE MOMENT OF CAPTURE

Contrary to popular belief, kidnapping was not the primary method during the early years of the trade. As you may recall, the human trade initially began as a commercial venture in which a few human beings—typically prisoners of war—would be sold along with gold, pepper, ivory, and other trade goods. But once the demand for labor on American plantations began to skyrocket, insatiable European traders insisted that more Africans be sold.

Faced with superior weaponry and the threat of enslavement, many African ethnic groups along the coast began attacking neighboring communities and selling entire villages into bondage. Over time, kidnapping and raiding parties became widespread and pushed farther into the interior of the African continent to meet demand. So, by the time Equiano was captured in 1756, the strategy had become commonplace.

Capture represented the ultimate dividing line between freedom and unfreedom: the moment when an independent, free person is suddenly under the control of another person.

Ottobah Cugoano was captured as a teenager with a group of his young friends in 1770. "Several great ruffians came upon us suddenly," he wrote. "Some of us attempted, in vain, to run away, but pistols and cutlasses were soon introduced, threatening, that if we offered to stir, we should all lie dead on the spot."

European traders often sought young, strong boys for the trade because they needed people who could perform intense physical labor. And they used extreme violence and guns to execute their kidnappings. Over time, however, the enslavement of women and children became increasingly common. Females ultimately comprised about one-third of the human trade, while children eventually made up approximately 25% of the trade.

Children were special targets because traders and plantation owners believed that they would be less rebellious, simpler to control, and easier to enslave. They hoped that children would quickly forget their families—and their lives as free people—and simply resign themselves to slavery.

The demand for women steadily increased, as traders and plantation owners quickly discovered that through forced reproduction, they could essentially "breed" Africans and produce generations of enslaved people for little additional cost.

THE LONG MARCH

Africans were often captured far from the coastline and forced to travel hundreds of miles before being sold and placed on a ship. During the long march, they were shackled together with ropes and chains. In long lines, known as coffles, they were marched from the point of capture until they reached the coast.

Throughout the journey, they suffered from hunger, thirst, exposure, and fatigue to the point of utter exhaustion. Many committed suicide rather than endure enslavement, and those who resisted were killed. Nearly one-third of captives died during the long march—or were brought to the brink of death—by the time they arrived on the coast.

Traders conducted business during the journey, so captured Africans might change owners several times, and it might take months to reach the coast. For some, especially for children, this was a terrifying time since they had no idea what their fate might be.

The last sight the African captives witnessed before leaving the El Mina dungeon was an iron door—which became known as the door of no return, for once a person passed through it, they never returned to their homeland again.

Those who managed to reach the ocean alive would soon discover that the horror had only begun. There, they waited days, weeks, months, or even a year before being sold and placed on a ship. In most cases, Africans were imprisoned in forts like El Mina, now known as factories or dungeons. During the time of the trade, these dungeons were called castles, but they were horrific sites of torture, blood, and suffocation where close to a million Africans perished. Deprived of sufficient water, food, or fresh air, many simply expired from their conditions.

To better understand what Africans endured along the African coastline, it's instructive to return to El Mina. In recent years, El Mina has been restored and preserved as an international historic site. Extensive research has been conducted regarding how it functioned as a dungeon during the trade in humans.

The male dungeons were subterranean, dark, crowded, and filthy. The cement walls held the putrid smell of the sweat, blood, feces, and death of those who came before. And the only air that passed into the chamber came from a tiny, grated shaft at the top of the high ceilings. Those who resisted would be thrown into a special cell and starved until they perished.

The female dungeons were above ground and positioned around a central courtyard, but once the doors were closed, the space became as dark and suffocating as the men's dungeon. Even worse, the courtyard had a chilling and disturbing purpose.

Above the courtyard was a grand terrace where ship captains, crew members, and the dungeon's overseer and staff could come and observe the females. And when one of these men desired a sexual encounter, the female Africans would be herded into the courtyard for selection. Once a woman or girl was

chosen, she would be dunked into the well in the middle of the courtyard to be cleaned off and then sent to the man's quarters. Any woman who refused to comply would be shackled to a metal ball in the center of the yard and left there to die a public and gruesome death.

Mortality rates were extremely high, as Africans rarely had access to sufficient food, water, or basic sanitation and hygiene. Disease spread like wildfire through the holding cells. European traders struggled to keep Africans alive just long enough to sell them and turn a profit. Those who persevered remained in these unspeakably disgusting cells until they were finally prepared for sale.

SALE AT THE AFRICAN COAST

Once traders were ready to place a group of Africans up for auction, the captives would be forced onto the coastline or into a holding pen for inspection. During this era, ship captains and plantation owners wanted only what they called "prime" Africans—ones who were young, healthy, and strong enough to perform intense physical labor. Value and pricing varied according to age. Men between 15 and 25 years old were most valuable, followed by boys aged 10 to 15 and then females aged 10 to 18.

The inspection itself was an utterly humiliating process. Africans were stripped naked and examined—every opening and orifice of their bodies searched and inspected for signs of age, disease, or defect. Older people were routinely rejected because traders knew they would not bring a high price in the marketplace.

Africans were then forced to perform physical exercises to demonstrate their strength and ability. And women, of course, were openly fondled and probed as buyers assessed their potential as breeders. Women were even evaluated for their beauty, since all these factors influenced their ultimate price on the market.

> Buyers recognized the inhumanity of the inspections, often comparing them to the same routines that were used when purchasing a cow or a horse.

Men and boys were also forced to submit to public molestation to ensure that they did not have a sexually transmitted disease or reproductive ailments.

Africans who were deemed less desirable were still sold into bondage—they were just sold at a much lower price than a trader might have hoped. There are some examples of enraged traders who executed Africans that they were unable to sell rather than grant them freedom.

After purchase, Africans were subjected to the painful process of branding with hot iron prods, which left permanent scars of their new owner's initials or plantation symbol. The final phase of this journey involved being loaded onto a ship. The large ships were anchored some distance off the coast, so crew members had to use smaller boats to ferry Africans onto what became floating torture chambers.

When Equiano first arrived at the ocean, he immediately saw slave ships out in the sea and grew fearful. He became particularly alarmed after seeing a boiling cauldron on the deck because he believed that the slave traders planned to cook him and eat him.

"When I looked round the ship too," he remembered,

> and saw a large furnace … boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted.

When Equiano gained consciousness, the other Africans assured him that he would not be eaten, which temporarily brought him some relief. But the nightmare aboard the ship had only just begun. That is the topic of the next lecture.

READING

Rediker, Marcus. *The Slave Ship: A Human History*. London: Penguin Books, 2007.

Smallwood, Stephanie. *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.

5 THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

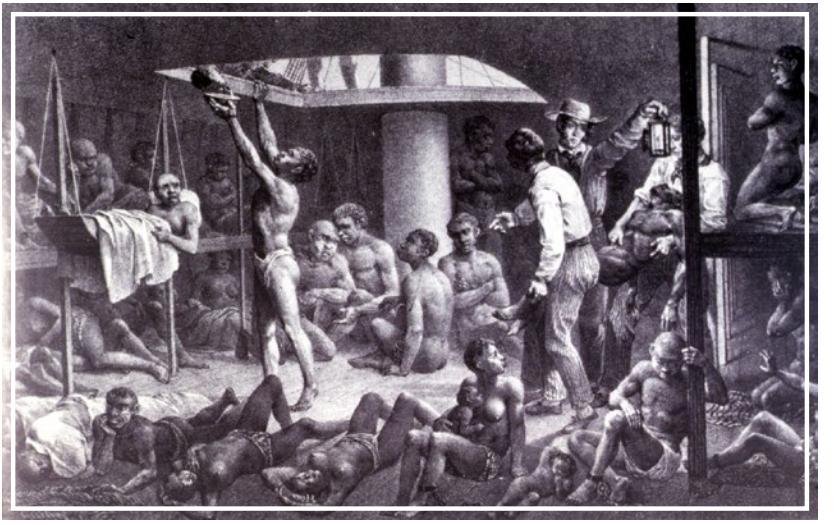
This lecture explores the painful and ugly truth about the journey from Africa to the Americas—during which Africans were subjected to unspeakable conditions and cruel punishment and often succumbed to horrific deaths. You'll also learn about how Africans coped and survived during their unimaginable ordeal and how they even took up arms to fight for their freedom.

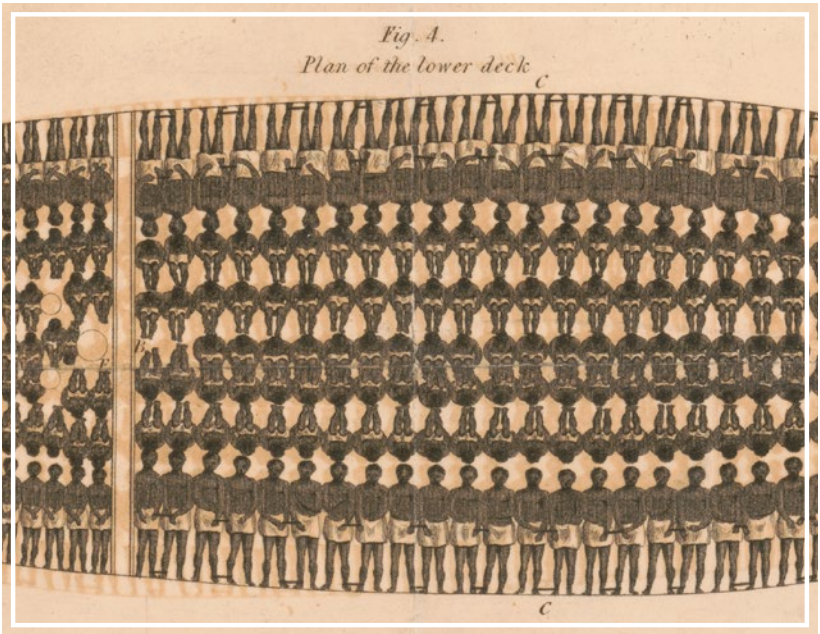
CONDITIONS ON SLAVE SHIPS

Conditions aboard the ships were unimaginably horrific, and the area below deck where Africans were held was overcrowded, unbearable, and toxic. After all, the primary goal of trading in humans was profit, and therefore, there were no regulations governing the environment or treatment. Ship captains often debated the most cost-efficient way to transport their human cargo and ensure maximum profit in the Americas.

There were two primary schools of thought. Some captains and traders believed they should use a system that became known as loose packing. Ship captains using that strategy transported fewer Africans on each ship, in hopes that they would reduce mortality rates and arrive in the Americas with healthy Africans that would bring a high price on the auction block.

The problem with loose packing, from a profit standpoint, was that captains typically made less money on each voyage because they had fewer people to sell upon arrival. So, as the trade expanded, most ship captains used a system of tight packing. They crammed as many Africans as possible onto a ship, in the hopes that even if they suffered higher mortality rates, they would still potentially receive more profit once they reached the Americas.





Each person barely had enough space to lie down, and in most cases, they couldn't even turn over. Voyages across the Atlantic were long and incredibly slow. Most journeys lasted about 2 to 3 months, but many could take as long as 6 months. Meanwhile, hygiene was often totally neglected, leaving Africans to lay beneath the deck in their own sweat, feces, and vomit.

MORTALITY RATES

Mortality rates during the Middle Passage were extremely high, often topping 25%. Many factors influenced mortality rates, including the length of the journey, the season of travel, how tightly the Africans were packed, and the point of departure. New England traders had the highest mortality records—with some losses totaling 50%. Estimates of mortality rates during 300 years of the Middle Passage range anywhere from 1 million to 2.2 million human lives.

Tight packing was unquestionably the largest factor since it influenced every aspect of the voyage. Basic air circulation and ventilation were lacking on most slave ships, causing Africans to faint or even to suffocate to death.

Captains did not want to spend too much on supplies. Africans were given the bare minimum in terms of food and water—mostly subsisting on beans, porridge, and boiled vegetables and only about 8 to 16 ounces of water each day. Access to meat and fish varied.

As you might imagine, malnutrition and dehydration plagued most Africans en route to the Americas, resulting in weakened immune systems and rampant disease. Most common were malaria, yellow fever, measles, smallpox, scurvy, pneumonia, and dysentery, which was often referred to as the bloody flux.

Diseases like the flux were caused by the extremely unhygienic conditions, but diseases also created an extremely unhygienic environment, especially since Africans were typically expected to lie naked in extremely close quarters. Between voyages, the crew washed the ship down with vinegar—a process they called liming—but such measures did little to combat the unspeakable bodily excretions that flowed throughout the hold.

Many captains began employing ship doctors, who were responsible for keeping the human cargo alive and free of deadly disease. Other captains, however, simply threw living people overboard to prevent the spread of disease.

On most ships, African women were housed separately from African men. White men, however, captains and crew members alike, had constant and continual access to African girls and women, leading to rampant sexual abuse and rape.

Women also faced the challenges of motherhood during the journey since it was not uncommon for women to be pregnant at the time of capture and sale. Under impossible circumstances, African women gave birth to new life, only to watch as their children were either killed or sold. One ship captain, for example, reported a scene when a crew member, frustrated with an infant's incessant crying, "tore the child from the mother and threw it into the sea."

Suicide occurred frequently throughout the Middle Passage, often at the beginning of the journey, when enslaved people realized that they would be permanently taken from their homeland. Many Africans hurled themselves into the ocean.

Over centuries, the Atlantic Ocean became a massive graveyard, harboring the bodies of millions of Africans who lost their lives during the human trade.

Ship captains and crews dedicated considerable time and energy to developing ways to prevent suicide, often keeping Africans in shackles even while they were above deck. They also created complex netting systems to catch anyone who tried to leap overboard.

But such efforts were often ineffective since those who truly wanted to end their own suffering often found a way—even resorting to hanging, starving, or stabbing themselves. For many Africans, suicide was preferable to their fate as enslaved people. They believed that, in death, their spirits would return to the motherland—a belief known as transmigration.

WAYS OF COPING AND SURVIVING

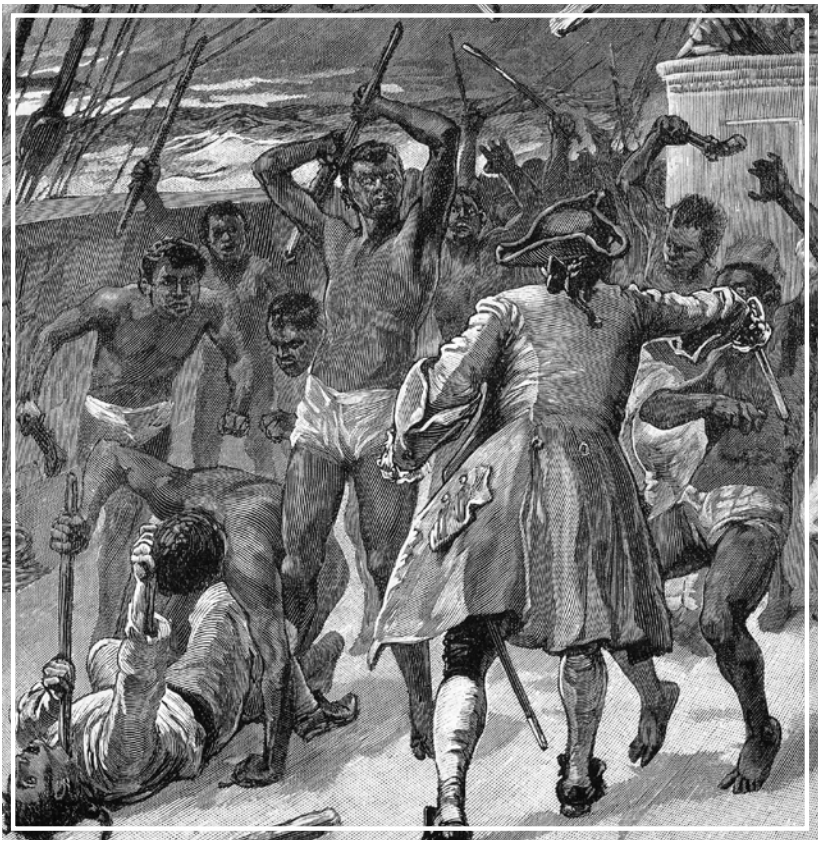
Those who did not succumb to suicide suffered from severe depression and psychological distress. Ship captains and crew members routinely described depressive conditions among their African captives, including their somber dispositions, their melancholy state, their sluggish behavior, and the howls of anguish and grief that escaped from the lower decks.

But others found ways to endure, cope, and survive. Those who spoke different languages developed rudimentary ways to communicate with each other. They used music and song to ease their sorrows and to imagine a better future. And, of course, they never gave up on freedom—finding ways to resist their conditions and even to plot rebellion.

To maintain some semblance of health among Africans, most ship captains allowed them to come above deck—in small groups—for exercise and fresh air. During these brief moments of reprieve, Africans would sing, dance, and even play drums. In many West African societies, music, drumming, and dance were used for celebration and as a tool to bridge the material world and the spiritual world. They were encouraged to sing happy, upbeat songs, but they resorted to sad tunes that articulated their suffering.

Despite language barriers, some Africans found ways to express discontent and challenge White authority. Women noticeably argued, talked back, and, in some cases, even fought back physically. There are records of hundreds of attempted revolts on ships, but they were not usually successful. Still, it's important to remember that they fought against enormous odds and willingly sacrificed their lives for their own freedom and for the liberty of their fellow Africans.

Despite the best efforts of Africans who sought freedom, most ships arrived safely in the Americas, carrying hundreds for people intended for sale. Thus began the final phase of the Middle Passage: arrival and sale in the Americas.



ARRIVAL AND SALE IN THE AMERICAS

As ships neared a port, the crew began preparing Africans for the market. They were washed, shaved, oiled, and exercised to make them appear as strong and healthy as possible. Even so, many remained weak, emaciated, sick, and sometimes even maimed or disabled.

Once a ship landed, Africans were sent to market, where they were, again, subjected to the humiliating process of inspection and evaluation. Special attention was paid to their skin, teeth, muscles, limbs, and genitals.

In most cases, ship captains sold Africans at auction, either on the ship's deck or in a saleyard near the dock. If a captain could not sell his entire cargo at one port, he would continue to the next until every African was sold or had perished in the process. Older people, young children, and those who had clear physical weaknesses were most difficult to sell, but this did not stop traders from trying. Often accepting extremely low prices for an individual, traders made profit everywhere they could.

While shipboard auctions proved to be the most popular method of sale, some captains preferred a method known as the scramble—a cruel and terrifying ordeal in which African men, women, and children were valued at a set price and then herded into a corral where potential buyers would chase and grab the Africans they wanted to purchase.

No matter the method, being sold was a frightening experience for sick and exhausted people who had just endured months at sea in the hold of a slave ship. And it was a terrible beginning to an even worse life that awaited them.

THE SEASONING PROCESS

Once an African had been purchased and made the journey to the new site of their enslavement, typically a plantation, the final stage of being enslaved commenced. This stage, known as seasoning, could take up to 2 years, during which newly arrived Africans were acculturated to their surroundings and trained for plantation life.

The responsibility for seasoning new Africans typically fell to enslaved people who had already been seasoned for many years or, ideally, an enslaved person born in America who had never known freedom. Newly arrived Africans—usually referred to as saltwater Africans—were taught to adapt to the work routines and expectations of slave life.

Most commonly, seasoning required accepting a new name, which symbolically represented accepting their new identity as a slave—the property of another person. They were also expected to learn a European language, submit to the harsh work routines, and obey all plantation rules.

For plantation owners, the goal of seasoning was to psychologically "break" Africans—to rob them of their desire for freedom and make them obedient.

Many Africans did not survive the seasoning process. Having barely survived the horrors of a slave ship, most Africans arrived weak, sick, and traumatized. At least one-third died within the first 3 years after arrival.

For those who did survive, the success of seasoning was assessed according to their adaptability. Did they accept new food? Did they acclimate to the new climate and environment? Did they learn the language spoken on their plantation?

Finally, plantation owners wanted to know if Africans psychologically accepted their new status as slaves. This was the most important factor because plantation owners wanted slaves who could be trusted not to rebel, run away, or kill themselves.

Rarely did an African meet all the criteria. Despite the plantation owners' best efforts, Africans retained their culture and identity. They also retained their desire to be free. And White colonists in the Americas quickly learned that Africans could never be trusted not to resist or rebel because, like all humans, they wanted liberty.

Even so, plantation owners constantly tried to break their spirits. And when they failed, they resorted to brutal punishment. Extreme physical brutality became the governing principle of slavery, for without it, Africans would never stop seeking their freedom.

READING

Mustakeem, Sowande. *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016.

Rediker, Marcus. *The Slave Ship: A Human History*. London: Penguin Books, 2007.

Taylor, Eric Robert. *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009.

6 SLAVERY TAKES ROOT

This lecture begins by exploring the early development of slavery in the original 13 English colonies that formed in mainland North America. Specifically, it looks at the arrival of Africans in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619; the roots and development of slavery in the colonies; and how the legal structure of slavery took shape. It also discusses how slavery became based exclusively on race.

ARRIVAL OF THE *WHITE LION*

In August 1619, a slave ship called the *White Lion* landed in Jamestown, Virginia, with a human cargo of what were described as "twenty and odd Negroes." Originally captured in Angola, in west-central Africa, the ill-fated group was bound for Mexico, where they were to be enslaved on local sugar plantations. But during a stop in Jamaica, their ship was seized by two English ships, one of which was the *White Lion*. They were eventually brought to Virginia, where they were sold into bondage.

Until recently, those Africans were believed to be the first sold into slavery in the English mainland colonies. But historians have uncovered new evidence from colonial records proving that 32 other Africans—15 men and 17 women—had arrived in Virginia and had begun working on plantations earlier that year. While the year 1619 may have marked the introduction of slavery in English North America, slavery had dominated other parts of the Americas—including Spanish Florida—for decades prior.

Yet, there were also legally free Africans in the Virginia colony in the early 17th century. And it appears that they had what many would consider to be civil rights. They bought and sold land, filed successful suits in court, married, and had children, and their children were able to live as free people. Evidence even suggests that free Black people had voting rights.

So, what happened to radically change their destiny within just a few decades, as the complicated and shifting definitions of Blackness and slavery took root? It's a process that historians have since called the terrible transformation.

THE RISE OF CARIBBEAN PLANTATIONS

The founding of American plantation slavery had its origins in the Caribbean. Spain was the first European nation to colonize the Americas, ruthlessly plundering and occupying Caribbean islands and Mexico beginning in the late 15th century.

Originally searching for silver and gold, the Spanish instead stumbled upon rich and productive agricultural enterprises. The Americas proved to offer ideal soil and climate for producing desirable cash crops, such as sugar, tobacco, coffee, and indigo, and the Spanish quickly began establishing plantations.

Large-scale plantations, however, required substantial labor. Initially, the Spanish brutally enslaved the indigenous population. But European disease rapidly devastated the native peoples of the Caribbean, leaving the Spanish desperate for workers. They soon cast their eyes to Africa and began importing Africans into their American colonies as early as 1526.

For nearly a century, Spain dominated colonization and slavery in the Americas. But in the early 17th century, France and England saw economic opportunity there as well. In Barbados and Jamaica, English colonists began growing sugarcane around 1640, after their plans to cultivate tobacco failed. Although sugarcane was not indigenous to the region, it thrived in the Caribbean. The timing was fortuitous for English planters because the demand for sugar in Europe was on the rise.

The increased desire for sugar led to more Caribbean plantations, which in turn created a need for more laborers. In the decades that followed, an estimated 5 million Africans were enslaved and brought to the Caribbean, almost half of whom were imported into English colonies.

As England's Caribbean settlements slowly took root and became increasingly profitable, English merchants attempted to establish colonies in mainland North America. Previous efforts to create settlements on Roanoke Island, off the coast of the Virginia colony, had failed in 1585 and 1587. But in the early 17th century, they tried again.

THE INTRODUCTION OF TOBACCO

In 1606, King James I established the Virginia Company of London with a charter to colonize mainland North America. At first, the company's prospects seemed grim. Although they managed to create a colony at Jamestown in 1607, their initial plans to turn a profit ended in disaster.

But everything changed starting in 1612. Two years earlier, John Rolfe, a prospective settler, had arrived in Jamestown with a small batch of tobacco seeds. He established a commercial venture for his tobacco in 1611 and began exporting it in 1612. Within just a few years, tobacco cultivation consumed the Virginia colony and eventually spread to Maryland.

Tobacco is the reason that Jamestown had African laborers as early as 1619. In fact, John Rolfe was the person who bought the "twenty and odd" Africans who were brought to Jamestown on the *White Lion*.

The introduction of tobacco marked the first step in the terrible transformation. As tobacco plantations sprung up across the Chesapeake region, English settlers looked to Africa for laborers. They decided that slaves were needed not just to clear the land and build homes but also to plant, cultivate, package, and transport tobacco for the international market.

THE TERRIBLE TRANSFORMATION

Historians disagree about the early status of Africans in the English mainland colonies. It is clear, however, that most Africans during this period occupied varying levels of unfreedom. Some were treated as slaves from the beginning, while others began as unfree laborers but eventually managed to become free.

English settlers faced a challenging situation regarding the status of Africans. Unlike other European nations, such as Spain and France, England did not have a set of legal codes defining slavery. Therefore, when Africans first arrived in mainland North America, English colonists were unsure how to categorize them or what rights to allocate to them. But within two decades, colonial lawmakers began drafting legal codes defining slavery and limiting enslaved Africans' rights.

Massachusetts was the first of the original 13 English colonies to formally legalize slavery. In 1641, Massachusetts created the Body of Liberties, a code that defined who had the right to liberty—and who did not. It also clearly equated Whiteness with freedom and Blackness with unfreedom. Other colonies, most notably Virginia, Maryland, and Carolina, soon followed suit. By the end of the 1640s, most colonies had imposed laws explaining that slavery would be a permanent and lifelong condition.

In 1662, the Virginia colonial legislature further clarified that slavery was a hereditary condition, passed from mother to child. From that day forward, any child born to an enslaved mother would be deemed a slave by law.

Throughout the 1660s, laws governing Africans and defining slavery became more complex and nuanced. In 1664, for example, colonial leaders passed one of the harshest slave laws in the colonies, declaring that all Black people, even those who had previously been free, would henceforth be regarded as slaves for life.

As slave laws became more widespread, the efforts to exert White supremacy and control became more obvious and substantial. In 1669, for example, the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina openly endorsed the enslavement of Africans in the colony and granted every freeman "absolute Power and Authority over his Negro slaves." The notion that White people possessed "absolute power and authority" over Black people undergirded every slave code that followed and ultimately defined the nature of race relations in America.

THE DRIVERS OF RACE-BASED SLAVERY

Some scholars, such as Winthrop D. Jordan, argue that slavery was driven by racism. Citing compelling examples of English views about Blackness and Africans long before slavery began, he insists that racism created a particularly cruel system of race-based slavery.

Other historians present an equally compelling economic argument. Noting the rapid expansion of sugar, rice, and coffee plantations across the Caribbean (and eventually mainland North America), they maintain that slavery was entirely based on economic profit. They argue that Africans became the primary enslaved population only because disease among Native Americans created the need for a new labor source.

There is also a third school of thought regarding the origins of slavery. Over the last 30 years, historians have looked more closely at a single event, Bacon's Rebellion, which they believe illustrates the main motivation for race-based slavery—fear of interracial alliances among the laboring classes. In their view, colonial authorities actively created legislation to articulate clear dividing lines between enslaved Africans and White indentured servants.

By the 1670s, growing discontent boiled among White indentured servants and other Whites newly freed from their indenture. Although they believed they were entitled to land following the termination of their contracts, the Virginia colony often could not deliver on its promise. The governor, William Berkeley, became public enemy number one after he refused to capitulate to demands from poor Whites.

In 1676, Nathaniel Bacon, a recent emigrant from England who deeply resented the colonial elite, constructed a coalition of White indentured servants and enslaved Africans, offering freedom to anyone who took up arms against colonial authority. And in September 1676, after a series of standoffs, Bacon and his followers marched on Jamestown and burned it to the ground.

Although the rebellion soon collapsed after Bacon died of dysentery, one group of protestors—comprised of 80 enslaved Africans and 20 indentured servants—held out until the bitter end, causing terror throughout the colony. Colonial authorities quickly reimposed control and rebuilt Jamestown. They also publicly executed 23 alleged conspirators to deter future uprisings.

Many historians believe that Bacon's Rebellion played a significant role in defining slavery because it prompted a new wave of legislation designed to prevent alliances along class lines between Whites and Blacks.

EXTREME LEGAL MEASURES

Between 1680 and 1720, lawmakers throughout the colonies enacted legislation that clearly distinguished between White indentured servitude and African slavery. The resulting system of slavery established strict legal codes and strategies of enforcement that rendered Black and slave synonymous, making slavery entirely based on race.

Laws also sanctioned slavery for life, made slave status hereditary, and defined enslaved people as chattel—legal "property." Henceforth, enslaved people had no more rights or freedoms than a horse or a cow. They could not own property, leave their master's estate without a pass, testify against White people in court, congregate in groups larger than three, marry, or bear arms.

The only time the legal system considered an African as a person rather than property was if they were accused of committing a crime.

Such extreme legal measures revealed that White colonists lived in deep fear of Africans—a fear that was not limited to enslaved people. In most colonies, legally free Africans were subjected to a series of laws designed to deny rights to the small free Black population. Typically, they were denied all rights to vote, own property, testify in court, or have freedom of mobility. And to reduce the free Black population, many colonies severely restricted slaveholders' manumission rights, making it difficult and expensive to grant slaves freedom.

It's important to emphasize that such regulations existed across all 13 colonies. Despite the comparatively small Black community in the North, colonists still painstakingly monitored and controlled the enslaved population. Yet slavery was not identical across the colonies, as you will see in the next lecture.

READING

Brown, Kathleen. *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Jordan, Winthrop D. *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

7 SLAVERY IN COLONIAL AMERICA

This lecture reveals the depth, breadth, and complexity of slavery in the era before the American Revolution. It examines how slavery became deeply entrenched in all 13 colonies and how slavery in this era varied—ranging from maritime trade to tobacco cultivation to rice cultivation—depending on the region in which it was located.

SLAVERY IN THE CHESAPEAKE REGION

Although the system of slavery took a few decades to become firmly established, once it gained a foothold in Maryland and Virginia, it quickly became a cruel and unrelenting institution. In that region, typically known as the Chesapeake, slavery was largely predicated on tobacco cultivation. By the eve of the American Revolution, the colony was exporting 55 million pounds of tobacco each year.

Of course, those profitable success rates were possible only because of African labor. And as tobacco plantations expanded and became more structured, life for enslaved people became harsher and crueler. Plantation owners in tobacco-growing regions typically employed the gang system—a labor regimen in which groups of 8 to 12 enslaved people worked under the supervision of an overseer from sunup until sundown, usually 7 days a week.

Spread throughout the gangs were "pace setters," enslaved people who were forced to drive everyone else to labor faster and faster. And those who failed to keep up with the pace suffered unspeakable punishments.

By the early 18th century, plantation owners increasingly resorted to excessive measures to enforce labor regulations, including the whipping post, the gallows, branding irons, and maiming. Legal codes supported such actions and even affirmed the slaveholders' right to kill their slaves if deemed necessary.

SLAVERY IN THE NORTHERN COLONIES

The first Africans were imported into New England in the 1620s, at nearly the same time that Africans arrived in Virginia. For this discussion, New England included Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire. Although the Black population never rivaled that of the Southern colonies, the Northern economy quickly became dependent on African labor.

New Englanders essentially operated their own triangular trade. First, they sent ships from the mainland colonies, loaded with fish, meat, and grain, to the Caribbean to feed the enslaved population there. In the Caribbean, they obtained sugar and molasses that could be distilled into rum and sold in Africa in exchange for human beings, who were then brought back to the

Americas to be sold as slaves in the Caribbean or in the middle and Southern colonies. As a result, Boston, New Haven, Portsmouth, and Newport became bustling port cities based on their role in the human trade.

In New England, slavery felt most apparent in the cities, where the Black population was heavily concentrated. Urban slavery in that region was largely based on maritime labor—men were engaged in the building and maintenance of ships and were also expected to load and unload cargo.

In some cases, enslaved men worked as carpenters, sailors, blacksmiths, printers, bakers, shoemakers, and distillers. They were also routinely used as body servants—they dressed wigs, shaved their masters, waited tables, and drove carriages. Women's labor in the cities was largely limited to providing domestic labor.

In stark contrast to popular perception, life in the Northern colonies was defined by the deeply rooted presence of slavery and slave trading, and slavery persisted in the North nearly as long as it did in the South.

There was one important exception. Narragansett County, Rhode Island, became home to a thriving plantation economy, mainly based on raising cattle, producing dairy products, and cultivating tobacco. There, more than anywhere else in the North, a system emerged that looked strikingly similar to Southern plantation colonies.

SLAVERY IN THE MIDDLE COLONIES

As slavery and human trading took root in New England, a similar dynamic was taking shape in the middle colonies. There, in New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania, several European nations competed for control.

In 1624, the Dutch became the first Europeans to establish permanent settlements in the middle region, quickly followed by Sweden in 1638. Both used enslaved Africans to build their basic infrastructure—Africans were forced to clear land, construct towns, lay roads, grow food, and build fortifications to protect colonial settlements.

But by 1664, the English seized control over the region. English settlers there were primarily associated with the Royal African Company—a commercial enterprise that was heavily invested in slavery and the slave trade. In 1713, the company assumed power over the international trade in humans, causing slavery in the middle colonies to boom.

Demand for slavery in this region was largely due to the growth of tobacco cultivation in Maryland's eastern shore. This spilled over into neighboring colonies, such as Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Over time, tobacco, wheat, and other grains became the heart and soul of the slave economy.

By the early 18th century, significant plantation-style holdings emerged in the middle colonies that demanded large-scale enslaved labor and rivaled Southern plantations. In the grain-producing regions—which included Pennsylvania, northern New Jersey, and New York's Hudson Valley and Long Island—enslaved Africans performed intense physical labor on expanding plantations. Enslaved men also worked as blacksmiths, tanners, and boatmen. In certain territories, they even worked in copper mines and performed ironworking.

Unlike the Chesapeake, where Africans worked in a gang system, enslaved people in the rural areas of the middle colonies initially worked in the task system, which allowed them to manage their own time and pace as long as they finished their tasks. But in the 1720s, as slaveholders from Barbados settled in large numbers in northern New Jersey, slavery in that area became heavily influenced by the harsh system that had formed in the Caribbean.

SLAVERY IN THE CAROLINA COLONY

English settlers established the Carolina colony in 1663, seeking financial opportunity. Initially, they had hoped to import sugar cultivation, but they quickly realized that the climate was not conducive for it. Over the next 2 decades, settlers continued importing Africans and trying different crops, but nothing took hold. However, in an ironic twist, while English settlers struggled to find a profitable crop suitable for Carolina, Africans found it for them.

Many enslaved Africans in the colony originated from the Senegambia and other rice-growing regions of West Africa. Rice, for them, was not only a staple food but also a central part of their social and cultural lives. As Carolina's climate was remarkably similar to that of their mother country, enslaved people began cultivating rice to supplement their diets.

By 1690, Carolina slaveholders realized that rice flourished in their colony, and within several decades, it was exporting 84 million pounds of rice annually. But large-scale rice cultivation required vast amounts of land and endless labor. Aware that West Africans possessed keen knowledge about rice cultivation, Carolina colonists began importing enslaved Africans by the thousands.

Enslaved Africans here functioned according to the task system, working in small groups of four to seven on specific

The first Africans arrived in the Carolina colony nearly 50 years after they arrived in the other colonies, but slavery expanded rapidly across the region, and by 1740, Africans composed a shocking 90% of the population in some counties.

plots of land. There were a few benefits to this system versus the gang system. Once their tasks were completed, enslaved people had some control over their own time, which they used to fish, grow small gardens, worship, create music, and even plot rebellion. And while the gang system employed the constant use of an overseer, under the task system, Africans typically labored beyond the watchful eyes of White folks.

But no one could deny the horrors of large-scale rice cultivation. While White plantation owners sought refuge from the unrelenting heat in lavish homes on the coastline, enslaved Africans labored in unbearably hot, humid weather, knee-deep in mosquito-infested waters. Mortality rates soared as enslaved people succumbed to overwork, mistreatment, and diseases, such as smallpox, malaria, and yellow fever.

Despite these horrors, the enslaved population in Carolina continued to grow, prompting White settlers there and throughout the 13 colonies to enact harsh regulations monitoring their movement and restricting their freedoms. Drawing heavily upon Caribbean slave law, Carolina statutes branded enslaved people a distinct threat to White settlers' safety. In 1712, the Carolina colony was partitioned, creating North Carolina and South Carolina. But the laws governing enslaved people developed similarly in the two colonies.

In 1740, following an attempted revolt, South Carolina implemented a Negro Act that became the model for slave codes throughout North America and policed every aspect of Black people's lives. The law prohibited enslaved people from moving beyond the boundaries of their plantation, assembling in groups, growing their own food, earning money, or learning to read. It also authorized all White people to "search all suspected places for arms, ammunition or stolen goods" and to take suspicious enslaved people into custody.

EXPERIENCES OF ENSLAVED WOMEN

Enslaved women experienced and endured everything that enslaved men suffered. There were, however, a few significant differences. In the North, for example, enslaved men were more likely to learn a skilled trade—which served them well once emancipation came. Meanwhile, women were limited to domestic labor, allowing them only to serve White people's whims.

In the Chesapeake, particularly in the early colonial era, enslaved men dramatically outnumbered women due to the demands of tobacco cultivation. Not until after 1730 did women reach parity with men. And since women had been heavily involved in rice cultivation in West Africa, rice plantation owners in the Carolina colony sought female laborers and worked them intensely—often to death.

But women across the colonies shared some experiences in common. On most plantations and in most Northern households, women performed domestic labor for the enslaved community. They cooked, cleaned, sewed, and repaired clothing. They also made soap and candles, planted gardens, wove baskets, and used their knowledge of herbs and medicines to provide health care to enslaved and free people.

More painfully, however, no matter where they were located, enslaved women suffered sexual abuse, rape, and forced breeding. The problem was so widespread that colonial authorities passed laws against interracial sex as early as 1664. But nothing could stop White men's belief that they owned and controlled African women's bodies—and their offspring.

Lawmakers passed new legislation in 1662 establishing a radical new ideology about lines of descent. Under English law—and most European law—children followed the status and line of descent from their fathers. But in the colonies, the new "womb law" drew upon an ancient Roman legal code, *partus sequitur ventrem*, which meant "that which is born follows the womb."

So, all children born to enslaved women—regardless of who fathered the children—would assume the status of the mother. The law was quickly adopted in the other colonies, effectively making Black motherhood "a legal curse."

Over time, it turned women into "breeders" for profit. By the mid-18th century, slaveholders were breeding the enslaved population to increase their holdings and give them cash if needed. They also believed American-born slaves adjusted better to enslavement and were less likely to rebel. But White colonists soon discovered they were wrong, for enslaved people retained their culture and their desire to be free against all odds.

READING

Foote, Thelma Wills. *Black and White Manhattan: The History of Racial Formation in Colonial New York City*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Hall, Gwendolyn Midlo. *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992.

Morgan, Philip. *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Piersen, William Dillon. *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

Wood, Peter H. *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996.

8 BLACK CULTURE AND REVOLT IN THE COLONIES

Despite the horrific conditions that enslaved Africans endured, they managed to retain their culture and forge new communities. This lecture explores their cultural lives in detail, giving special attention to work routines, spiritual beliefs, and burial practices as well as music, dance, and celebration. It also looks at how cultural practices formed the foundation of several resistance movements during the colonial period.

THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

In October 1991, while constructing a new federal building in lower Manhattan, workers uncovered a coffin. And then another. And another. By January 1992, more than 200 skeletons had been revealed, and it was clear that there were many more. Four hundred and twenty-seven skeletons were excavated and removed before the process was halted, and scholars believe that close to 20,000 graves may still remain there.

This sacred space, located near Wall Street in downtown New York City, is now known as the African Burial Ground. Based on colonial maps, it appears that the cemetery was about 5 or 6 acres in size and was used to bury enslaved Africans for more than a century beginning in the 1650s. But in 1795, officials closed the cemetery to expand the city. Once banned from use, the burial site was covered with tons of dirt and soon forgotten.

Nearly 200 years later, a portion of the African Burial Ground was excavated, and analysis of its contents revealed a great deal about the lives of the Africans who lived and worked in that region during the colonial era—not only about their labors and struggles but also about their cultural and spiritual lives.

WORK PRACTICES AND OTHER SKILLS

Much of what we know about the persistence of African culture during the colonial period comes from the observations of English settlers, who were intrigued by behaviors they witnessed. Alternative labor practices, such as African methods of rice cultivation, were particularly obvious to Whites since they carefully monitored the work of enslaved people.

In Rhode Island, an African woman known as Doctress Phillis was widely consulted by both Black and White people for her abilities in the healing and medicinal arts.

African methods of cooking and consuming food were also quite different from European styles. For example, Africans typically ate communally from bowls rather than using individual plates. And African women were celebrated for their culinary skills, especially the use of alternative spices. Their knowledge about plants and herbs proved useful for medicinal purposes as well.

Africans were even responsible for teaching White New Englanders about the success of inoculation in the treatment of smallpox. Inoculation eventually became the primary method for combating many diseases that had previously devastated the White settler population.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

While some cultural retentions proved beneficial to White people, others served as points of irritation. Perhaps most frustrating to the English, especially religious leaders, was the persistence of various African spiritual practices that violated the tenets and customs of Protestant Christianity.

Africans did not quickly convert to Christianity. The slow process of conversion was due, in part, to the unwillingness of White enslavers to allow Africans to become Christian. But Africans also clung tenaciously to their indigenous religious and spiritual beliefs. Even after they began converting to Christianity, most practitioners blended various rituals from their homeland with Christianity.

Another fascinating example of African cultural retention can be found in transmigration, the spiritual belief that one's soul will transcend and return to Africa to be with the ancestors at the time of death. Spanning numerous African ethnic groups, this belief was common among enslaved Africans throughout the colonies and often led to suicide.

Before killing themselves, Africans would often perform certain rituals—removing their clothes, placing food and water nearby, or wrapping chains around their waists—because they believed that such actions would aid them in transmigration. Many African societies believed that water served as a conduit between the earthly and spiritual realms. Whenever possible, then, enslaved Africans who took their own lives did so by drowning.

BURIAL PRACTICES

For many enslaved Africans, cemeteries were not considered a final resting place but instead represented a home for the continuation of the spirit. One notable feature in the African Burial Ground was the placement of the bodies in their graves. Almost without exception, their heads were facing west, toward the setting sun, a symbolic acknowledgment of the ending of a phase—their life on the earthly plane.

Even more significant was the method of burial in nearly every site. The bodies were carefully wrapped in linen shrouds and placed in well-built cedar or pine coffins. The Black community's use of shrouds was particularly telling because it had strong roots in many parts of West Africa.

Scholars also recovered more than 200 shells during the excavation, including cowrie shells that were placed in the coffins as symbols of transmigration. In many West African societies, shells operated as vessels to "enclose the soul's immortal presence." Once in the Americas, people of African descent expanded this notion into a distinct philosophy representing a return to Africa.

It was also common to bury people with treasured possessions in many West African societies. Therefore, many of these graves contained beads and clay pipes of various kinds. Beads were used in many West African societies as a form of monetary currency and to mark important passages in life, such as birth, marriage, and death.

CELEBRATORY PRACTICES

English observers made special note of African musical and dance forms, which felt foreign but also strangely provocative to White colonists. In the Southern colonies, especially in the Carolinas, enslaved people engaged in the ring shout, a counterclockwise dance in which people hold hands and move rhythmically in a circle, singing, dancing, and praying to their ancestors.

Music was also important in secular gatherings. African peoples transported a variety of instruments into the Americas that were unfamiliar to Europeans, including three-string fiddles, banjos, tambourines, and drums. Drumming

served multiple functions in West African cultures. In addition to providing musical accompaniment, it allowed people to communicate across long distances and even warn others about coming disaster or the beginning of war.

Since drumming allowed enslaved Africans to surreptitiously communicate with each other, White colonists quickly banned the formal use of drums in enslaved communities. But Africans still found ways to make music: clapping and stomping their feet to create a beat and retaining instruments like the tambourine and banjo.

Despite their numerical minority, Africans in the North did not assimilate into English culture and society as quickly as you might think. They were a clustered minority—meaning that they were able to establish strong enclaves in urban areas, which allowed them to maintain deep connections to their African heritage.

Since a version of the ring shout was performed in multiple West African societies, it effectively served as a tool to bridge and unite enslaved Africans across ethnic lines.

Enslaved Northerners reveled in their cultural heritage during festivals, such as Negro Election Day and Black Coronation Day. Negro Election Day was a ritual in which a Black man in the enslaved community would be chosen as the "king" or "governor" of a particular region. Clearly, the role was largely ceremonial and carried little tangible power, though in some colonies, such as Rhode Island, the Black governors did exercise some power and were even called on to settle disputes within the enslaved community. The splendid festivals that accompanied the election included parades, competitive games, and feasts that could last up to a week.

It's important to note that these celebrations were gendered activities, ones in which women were not allowed to vote and were never allowed to hold elected office. Even so, the cultural expressions could be enjoyed by all. They also demonstrated an act of resistance against enslavement and colonial authority.

RESISTANCE BY RUNNING AWAY

Throughout the colonial period, Africans often risked their lives to gain their freedom. Running away was a particularly effective strike against slavery since it potentially brought freedom to an individual and denied labor to plantation owners.

While runaways were common in all 13 colonies, flight was most successful in the Carolinas, where the size of the enslaved population and the dense woods and swamps made it somewhat easier to escape. Sometimes, maroon colonies were created—small communities composed entirely of free or fugitive Africans.

Runaways in the North faced considerable challenges since the demographics made them more easily identifiable and there were fewer places to hide. But in the urban areas of the North and the South, where the Black community was larger, African people could blend in and move undetected.

Others tried to make it all the way to Florida, where a small free Black community existed under Spanish rule. Chasing down fugitives was costly, time-consuming, and dangerous, so many overseers and plantation owners simply abandoned their attempts to locate runaway Africans entirely.

RESISTANCE BY REBELLION

White settlers faced a continuous stream of revolts throughout the colonial era—there were more than 50 documented conspiracies against slavery in the years before 1790 and nearly 50 more in the English Caribbean during the same era. But three rebellions in particular shook the slave system to its core, demonstrating the revolutionary nature of African culture and the commitment among the enslaved to gain their freedom.

The first occurred in New York City in April 1712, when approximately 24 enslaved men and women gathered at about 2 am, armed with a variety of weapons. Likely enraged by a series of restrictive laws recently passed, the rebels set the city ablaze, and during the ensuing hysteria, they ambushed and killed nine White people and wounded six others.

Reports about the uprising revealed that White colonists were particularly concerned about the rebels' use of African cultural and spiritual practices, which in this case involved a mystery powder, a potion, and a loyalty oath. The colonists quickly squashed the rebellion, and the authorities' response was brutal. A few rebels committed suicide rather than be captured, but approximately 70 others faced trial. All but one suffered conviction. Twenty suffered horrifying executions. Colonial authorities then placed the rebels' decapitated heads on display for weeks to dissuade future uprisings.

Colonial leaders also passed a new set of oppressive mandates that prevented Africans from freely associating with each other, authorized slaveowners to beat their slaves without cause, forced slaveholders to post a £200 bond before setting an African free, and banned free Black people from owning property.

Another uprising occurred in New York approximately 30 years later, in the spring of 1741. Enslaved Africans again used arson and African cultural rituals in a battle against slavery but were again crushed in defeat.

Southerners also succumbed to rampant rebellion. Prior to the American Revolution, 15 revolts rocked South Carolina alone, but none compared to the events beginning in September 1739, when enslaved Africans commenced an attack in the countryside near Charleston. Beginning with only about 20 participants, rebels gathered near the Stono River. Led by a man named Jemmy, they raided a local store, where they obtained weapons and ammunition.

Strategically marching from plantation to plantation, they burned and raided property and killed nearly 30 slaveholders. Using drums and other musical instruments, the rebels attracted supporters, and soon the uprising blossomed to more than a hundred. According to at least one source, the rebels stopped in a field, where they called out "Liberty!" while singing, dancing, and drumming. Certainly, the use of music, song, and dance were crucial cultural elements in this revolt.

In the Kongo-Angola region, where many Africans enslaved in South Carolina originated, drums and dance were specifically used for military purposes. During the Stono rebellion, music and dance sustained the rebels and fueled their liberation struggle.

The local militia eventually quelled the rebellion, leaving at least 40 enslaved people dead. By 1740, South Carolina officials had arrested more than 150 Black people, and they publicly hanged 10 victims per day in a gruesome scheme to deter future uprisings. They also decapitated rebels and displayed their heads on massive wooden poles for weeks as a warning. Despite the grim conclusion to colonial-era rebellions, enslaved people's quest for freedom could not be stopped.

READING

Lepore, Jill. *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan*. New York: Vintage, 2006.

Rucker, Walter. *The River Flows On: Black Resistance, Culture, and Identity Formation in Early America*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007.

Stuckey, Sterling. *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Wood, Peter H. *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996.

9 BLACK PROTEST IN THE AGE OF REVOLUTION

During the American Revolution, thousands of Black men fought with the Americans. But thousands of others fought with the British in hopes that they would gain their freedom at the end of the war. Hundreds more rejected both sides and battled independently for their own freedom. So, what inspired Black men—enslaved and free—to take up arms during the war, and how did they decide where to place their loyalty? How did Black women and children respond to the outbreak of the revolution? This lecture explores the answers to those questions and more. It also looks at how Black people influenced the American Revolution and how their actions forever altered the course of American history.

LORD DUNMORE'S PROCLAMATION

In April 1775, political and economic tensions in the original 13 colonies exploded into violence, officially signaling the beginning of the American Revolution. Immediately, people throughout the colonies were faced with an overwhelming, and sometimes painful, decision: Would they join the revolutionary fervor that was sweeping across the region, or would they remain loyal to their mother country? This question of where to place one's allegiance was not only being contemplated by White colonists. Black people—enslaved and free—also struggled with questions about their position in the war.

To fully understand Black people's strategic decisions during this era, let's consider the story of Titus, an enslaved man in New Jersey. One night in November 1775, 22-year-old Titus fled the farm in Monmouth County where he had labored in bondage for most of his life. His timing was impeccable. On November 7, 1775, just one day before his owner reported him missing, John Murray, the earl of Dunmore and royal governor of Virginia, issued a surprising declaration. Later known as Lord Dunmore's Proclamation, the document promised freedom to all Black men who fled their American masters and joined the British army to bear arms against the Americans who enslaved them.

Now, it's important to note that this proclamation did not reflect a moral commitment to ending slavery. Instead, it was a logical, strategic decision that they believed would destroy the rebellion and end the war. Regardless of Lord Dunmore's intentions, Titus seized the opportunity to obtain his liberty. Just months after his escape, Titus took the name Tye and enlisted in the British army. And he was not alone. Although estimates vary, most scholars agree that nearly 20,000 Black men served in the British military during the American Revolution.

Tye quickly won respect in the army and became a celebrated and decorated member of the Ethiopian Regiment, which was Lord Dunmore's most famous and successful Black regiment. And regardless of how British military leaders felt, members of the Ethiopian Regiment clearly believed that they were waging war against slavery.

By the end of 1776, after more than a year on the front lines, Lord Dunmore disbanded the Ethiopian Regiment. Even so, Black soldiers continued to fight with the British in integrated units. Initially, Tye was among them. And although he was not allowed to become a commissioned officer due to his race, he was given the honorary title of colonel as a sign of respect for his tactical and leadership skills.

But late in 1778, Colonel Tye left the British army and amassed a group of followers, which at its largest included nearly 800 men. Over the next several years, Tye's guerilla army routinely raided slaveholders' farms, destroyed their property, and freed their slaves. By 1780, his army had become a powerful and feared military force. And even after his death, his army continued fighting until the British surrender in 1783.

Black people's responses to the American Revolution varied widely. Historian Benjamin Quarles explained it best when he wrote that Black people's major loyalty during the war was "not to a place, nor to a people, but to a principle." That principle, of course, was their right to freedom. Therefore, during the American Revolution, Black people carefully chose sides according to who they thought would abolish slavery and extend freedom to all.

THE PHILIPSBURG PROCLAMATION

While Lord Dunmore's Proclamation targeted only men and required military service in exchange for freedom, 4 years later, the British commander in chief, Sir Henry Clinton, issued another decree. The Philipsburg Proclamation of 1779 dramatically expanded Dunmore's promise and guaranteed freedom to any Black person—man, woman, or child—who sought refuge with the British army. It also promised to provide full security and an occupation to every Black person who escaped their American patriot owners.

The response to the proclamation was quick and powerful. Across the newly formed United States, enslaved people secretly spread the word that freedom might be near, causing a massive exodus from farms and plantations as Black people pursued liberty.

Between 1775 and 1783, when the American Revolution ended, an estimated 100,000 enslaved people escaped and fled to the British.

But because the British were never really committed to emancipation as a moral issue, their responses to the flood of Black refugees varied. As the British army became overwhelmed with fugitives, they sometimes greeted Black freedom seekers with uniforms and promises of liberty. Other times, they turned them away, and occasionally, they returned them to their enraged owners. A few reports even suggested that the British captured fugitives and sold them back into slavery to raise money to fund the war effort.

SLAVERY'S IMPACT ON THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

In June 1776, a committee of five delegates was appointed to create the Declaration of Independence. The committee included John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson. Together, they wrote and revised the document over several weeks.

Driven by their desire to depict the British crown as a deeply oppressive regime, these delegates created a first draft that took a bold position on slavery by emphasizing the role of the British in oppressing colonists and enslaved Africans alike. The original language in the Declaration of Independence harshly chastised the British for their role in the human trade—and the development of slavery in the Americas—describing slavery as a "cruel war against human nature itself." They also highlighted the contradiction between Christianity and slavery, mocking the king for declaring himself a Christian while still allowing the capture and enslavement of human souls.

As you probably know, none of this language ever made it into the final version of the Declaration of Independence. Since the economy in both the Northern and Southern states was heavily dependent upon slavery and the human trade, delegates were unwilling to deliver such a devastating indictment against slavery.

They opted, instead, to remove the offensive passages and to remain silent about slavery. This momentous decision solidified the perpetuation and eventual expansion of slavery in a country that eventually became known as the "land of the free."

In many ways, the existence of slavery in the rebellious American colonies was the ultimate contradiction. While White colonists issued appeals for equality and freedom from tyranny, they simultaneously upheld the violent oppression and enslavement of their human property.

BLACK SOLDIERS IN THE PATRIOT MILITARY

In the earliest days of the American Revolution, several Northern colonies allowed Black men to serve in the state militia. Therefore, Black soldiers fought in the first military campaigns in 1775, including the battles at Lexington and Concord, Boston, and Bunker Hill.

But 5 days after George Washington was appointed commander in chief, he banned all future enlistment of Black soldiers. Undoubtedly, his views were influenced by the discussions that took place as the founding documents of the United States were drafted.

But by the end of 1776, after witnessing the success of Lord Dunmore's Proclamation, Washington became convinced that victory in the war would go to whoever "could arm the Negro faster." As a result, Washington begrudgingly allowed the enlistment of Black men in the rebel army. State militias soon followed suit, though South Carolina and Georgia never allowed Black soldiers in their militias.

Black men responded to America's call to action in large numbers. By the end of the war, more than 5,000 Black men had served with the rebels in both the army and the navy. In the Continental Army, they served in integrated units, and a few even managed to become junior officers. Even so, Black soldiers comparatively faced more violent action on the front lines and were usually the lowest ranking and lowest paid in the military.

Given the founding fathers' acquiescence to slavery and their fear about arming slaves, George Washington initially banned Black men from military service in the Continental Army.

Despite the challenging circumstances they faced, Black soldiers were deeply proud of their service and fervently hoped that their White counterparts would reward their sacrifices with freedom at the war's end. Others who were already free fought for the principles of the revolution in hopes that freedom would eventually be extended to all Black people.

RE-ENSLAVEMENT AFTER THE WAR

Ultimately, the British defeat was devastating to most Black people in the United States. Although the British initially attempted to keep their promises to Black loyalists, their unexpected loss forced them to evacuate the United States quickly, leaving thousands of Black people behind to face the wrath of their masters.

In fairness to the British, it initially appeared that they would remain true to their word. When their ships departed American harbors in 1783, the largest group of evacuees was composed of Black loyalists. More than 20,000 Black men, women, and children left on British ships, desperately hoping to find freedom in their new homes. But since an estimated 100,000 Black people sought refuge with the British army during the war, nearly 80,000 were left behind and forced back into slavery.

Sadly, the 20,000 Black loyalists who left with the British did not necessarily find the freedom they were seeking. A lucky few did find freedom either in Nova Scotia or in the newly established West African country of Sierra Leone, a colony that the British created for the resettlement of free Black people. But thousands more were sold into slavery on the return voyage. British ships made stops in the Caribbean, where they tried to combat their financial losses by selling their human cargo into bondage.

The system of slavery expanded dramatically after the American Revolution. Between 1783, when the war ended, and 1808, when the international slave trade was outlawed, the slave population in the United States nearly doubled, increasing from just over 500,000 to more than 1 million.

The story was equally painful for Black patriots. Following the war, most Black people in the United States were re-enslaved and faced the grueling challenge of rebuilding farms and plantations that had been destroyed by war.

The American Revolution proved to be a painful lesson for Black people in America. Even so, the revolutionary principles of freedom, equality, brotherhood, and justice struck a powerful chord with enslaved and free Black people throughout the nation, and they creatively used the philosophy and ideology of the revolution to wage their own campaign for freedom.

READING

Adams, Catherine, and Elizabeth H. Pleck. *Love of Freedom: Black Women in Colonial and Revolutionary New England*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Dubois, Laurent. *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution*. New York: Belknap, 2005.

Holton, Woody. *Liberty Is Sweet: The Hidden History of the American Revolution*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2021.

Horne, Gerald. *The Counter-Revolution of 1776: Slave Resistance and the Origins of the United States of America*. New York: New York University Press, 2016.

Nash, Gary B. *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Pybus, Cassandra. *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty*. New York: Beacon Press, 2007.

10 BLACK ENLIGHTENMENT THOUGHT

Enslaved people certainly did not need the American Revolution to tell them that they wanted and deserved freedom. But it did give them the language they needed to argue for their right to liberty. This lecture looks at how enslaved and free Black people drew upon the core principles of the revolution—liberty, equality, justice, and brotherhood—to assert their rights and to prove their potential for intellectual genius.

IMPACTS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The Enlightenment was a cultural movement among European scientists and philosophers in the late 17th and early 18th centuries that sought to understand the relationship between human beings and the universe. Isaac Newton, one of the most famous Enlightenment thinkers, argued that the universe—the physical world—operated according to natural laws. He is most famous today for explaining the law of gravity.

In 1690, John Locke, an English philosopher and physician, began to extend natural law to human beings. According to Locke, human beings are endowed with a certain set of innate, natural rights, including the rights to life, liberty, and property. That probably sounds familiar because, of course, natural rights philosophy eventually formed the ideology of the American Revolution and became the foundation of the language in the Declaration of Independence.

During the revolutionary era, the Enlightenment inspired creative and scientific thinking among Black and White people alike. Of course, most Black people did not have the luxury or the opportunity to share their profound thoughts. But a few Black intellectuals during this time demonstrated that Africans possessed the potential for much more than slavery allowed. They proved that Africans had souls, intelligence, and even a touch of genius.

PHILLIS WHEATLEY

Perhaps the most well-known example of the Black Enlightenment was a young woman named Phillis Wheatley. In many ways, she was an unexpected intellectual. Being both Black and female, she would normally have been denied access to all formal education. But Phillis Wheatley was not a typical person.

Born in 1753, Phillis was brought as a young child from Africa to Boston in 1761 aboard a slave ship. Immediately thereafter, John Wheatley, a wealthy merchant, purchased her to be a personal slave for his wife, Susanna.

Phillis Wheatley was the first Black woman and only the second American woman to publish a book.

Phillis spoke no English when she arrived but soon demonstrated a noticeable intellectual ability, which inspired Susanna Wheatley to teach Phillis how to read and write. Phillis eventually became conversant in both English and Latin, and at the age of 12, she began writing poems.

In 1773, at the age of 20, Phillis traveled to London with the Wheatleys. Their associates in London marveled at Phillis's intellect and encouraged her to publish a book of her poetry. She soon published a volume entitled *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*. But doubts lingered about whether Phillis, as a Black woman, was actually intelligent enough to have written the poetry herself. In the introduction to her collection, 18 White men signed a testimonial affirming that she was, indeed, the sole author.

After returning to Boston, the Wheatleys freed Phillis, but she continued to live in their home and work for them. But the coming of the American Revolution changed everything in the Wheatley household. Although the Wheatleys were staunch loyalists, Phillis was a supporter of the American rebel cause, and she even wrote a poem celebrating George Washington.

She mailed her poem to him in October 1775, and shockingly, he replied, thanking her and inviting her to visit him. It's the only known letter that Washington ever wrote to an enslaved—or formerly enslaved—person. And in March 1776, just a few months before the Declaration of Independence was signed, Phillis visited him. She was the only person of African descent who was treated as a guest at Washington's Cambridge headquarters.

In 1778, Phillis married John Peters, a free Black man. Together, they had three children, all of whom tragically died in infancy. Phillis herself died in 1784 while giving birth to their third child. But more than 200 years later, she is still celebrated for her poetry—and how her words proved that Black people, even slaves, could be intellectuals.

BENJAMIN BANNEKER

Unlike Phillis Wheatley, Benjamin Banneker was born free in Baltimore County, Maryland, in 1731. As a young man, he inherited a farm, which gave him the time and luxury to pursue educational and intellectual endeavors.

Banneker's unique scientific abilities became clear in 1753, when he built a wooden clock entirely from scratch—which kept perfect time for more than 50 years. Throughout his twenties, Banneker continued to learn and study, becoming particularly adept at astronomy.

Years later, in 1791, his neighbor Major Andrew Ellicott was chosen to survey the boundaries of Washington DC, where the new federal capital was to be located. Recognizing Banneker's skill, Ellicott selected him as part of his team. This proved to be a fortuitous decision because it was Banneker's astronomy skills that made the project successful.

When Banneker returned from Washington, he began writing a farmer's almanac. Almanacs are not commonly used in modern society, but for farmers in the 18th century, the scientific knowledge contained in them was crucial to their success and survival.

His first almanac, published in 1792, was extremely impressive. When a renowned mathematician, astronomer, and surveyor in Philadelphia reviewed a copy, he wrote to Banneker and commended him for his extraordinary performance "considering the colour of the Author."

Although the letter was intended as a compliment, it enraged Banneker. He then resolved to gain the endorsement of another influential White man and contacted Thomas Jefferson, who was then serving as secretary of state. In his letter, Banneker did not simply introduce the almanac—he also included a plea for racial justice and criticized Jefferson for allowing slavery to flourish in the United States. Banneker also wrote extensively about the contradiction between the language of the Declaration of Independence and the continuation of slavery.

Jefferson replied, but he carefully dodged Banneker's political critique and simply wished him success with his almanac. Banneker's book did, indeed, become quite successful, and he remained committed to sharing his knowledge for the remainder of his life. In 1806, at the age of 75, Banneker died quietly in the cabin on his farm. Yet while he lived, his work struck a powerful blow against those who tried to insist that Black people did not possess scientific genius.

LEGAL PETITIONS FOR FREEDOM

Petitions from Black people opposing slavery appeared as early as 1661, but they were relatively rare until the revolutionary era. Once the language of natural rights—freedom, equality, brotherhood, and justice—began floating through the American colonies, Black people seized on the opportunity to issue demands for freedom from slavery.

Although most states did not allow enslaved people to use the judicial system to seek restitution on their own behalf, a loophole in Massachusetts law allowed Black people to use lawsuits and petitions to assert their civil rights in the courts. And during the American Revolution, enslaved and free Black people used that loophole to their advantage.

Perhaps the most famous Black petition from the revolutionary era was written by Felix Holbrook, an enslaved man in Boston, who wrote to the governor of Massachusetts in 1773, pleading for him to pass an act of legislature to bring an end to slavery. In his appeal, Felix emphasized that enslaved people possessed strong character and could be good citizens if they were given a chance. He also used Christianity to emphasize the contradiction between God's law and the laws of man that upheld slavery.

After legislators tabled it, Felix returned with another petition, this one signed by three other Black men: Peter Bestes, Sambo Freeman, and Chester Joie. They still demanded freedom for slaves but did not ask for citizenship. Instead, they promised that they would leave the United States and return to Africa if they were emancipated. Again, the state legislature ignored their plea. But this did not dissuade other Black people from submitting their own petitions.

In 1780, two brothers, Paul and John Cuffe, joined with five other petitioners to assert the country's founding principle that there should be no taxation without representation. The Cuffe brothers were somewhat unique during their time. They were born free in the 1750s to relatively wealthy parents—John Sr., a previously enslaved man, and Ruth Moses, a Native American. John and Ruth, through dedicated labor, acquired a 100-acre farm in Westport, Massachusetts, and they raised 10 children, including Paul and John Jr.

John Sr. died when Paul was only 14, leaving his children with the responsibility of managing a large farm. Paul and John Jr. worked hard to maintain it, but the tax collector soon demanded that they pay taxes on their property. Having been influenced by revolutionary era rhetoric, however, Paul and John argued that there should be no taxation without representation, and they refused to pay on the grounds that, as Black men, they had been denied voting rights and all rights of citizenship.

Their first petition was denied, but in April 1781, they submitted another one, demanding that all free Black men should be afforded the same privileges as White people. Their second request was also denied, but on appeal, their plea eventually resulted in a surprising decision. In 1783, the Massachusetts state legislature declared that the small free Black population that was subject to taxation should be allowed to vote.

FREEDOM LAWSUITS

While some Black people relied on petitions, others filed freedom suits, which were civil cases in which they sued their masters for their freedom. In 1716, even before the American Revolution began, Joan Jackson became the first enslaved woman to successfully emancipate herself by suing for her freedom in a court of law.

Typically, such lawsuits were based on one of several different rationales, including fraudulent sale. They also argued that a manumission agreement or self-purchase agreement had been violated. And they even argued for freedom on the grounds that the person being held in bondage was not really Black.

Women were particularly successful using freedom suits, winning more than 70% of such cases filed between 1716 and 1783. While some managed to secure their individual freedom, one enslaved woman, named Elizabeth, decided to try to take down the entire system of slavery in Massachusetts.

Elizabeth was born into bondage around 1744. Little is known about her early life except for a famous story in which she physically fought off her mistress to protect a young, enslaved girl from torture. We also know that she served as a midwife, eventually earning her the nickname Mum Bett.

But amid the American Revolution, Elizabeth made history. After listening to a public reading of the Massachusetts Constitution in 1780, she became convinced that natural rights belonged to all people. So, she challenged the fundamental legality of slavery itself. With a lawyer's help, she filed suit in the Massachusetts Court in 1781 on the grounds that slavery was a violation of natural rights and the state constitution.

Elizabeth Freeman's case has been called "the trial of century"—one that struck at the very heart of slavery.

Quite surprisingly, the 12 White male jurors ruled in her favor, granting her freedom and awarding her 30 shillings in damages. Afterward, she changed her name, becoming Elizabeth Freeman. At the time of her death in 1829, she owned a house, 20 acres, $300, and a long list of possessions. Most importantly, she died knowing that her victory became the precedent that eventually struck down slavery in Massachusetts.

READING

Countryman, Edward. *Enjoy the Same Liberty: Black Americans and the Revolutionary Era*. New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2011.

Nash, Gary B. *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Waldstreicher, David. *The Odyssey of Phillis Wheatley: A Poet's Journey through American Slavery and Independence*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2023.

11 FREEDOM'S FAILURES

While some people were able to gain their freedom through the courts, most Black Northerners had to wait for state legislatures to abolish slavery outright. And in the North, that was often a painfully slow process since many Northern slaveholders—even when confronted with natural rights philosophy—were not yet ready to abandon the economic system that sustained them. This lecture explores the process and aftermath of legal emancipation in the North.

ECONOMIC SHIFTS

There were four primary influences on the rise of antislavery sentiment in the North: economic changes, religious reform, natural rights philosophy, and Black protest. Previous lectures have discussed the role of Black protest during the American Revolution, particularly the strategies that Black people used to leverage the court system to gain their freedom. So, the focus here is on the other three factors.

During the colonial period, the North's economy was almost entirely dependent on the trade in humans. But during the decade before the American Revolution, that dynamic shifted dramatically.

As traders along the African coastline struggled to meet the demand for labor, the price of Africans skyrocketed. The trade in humans soon became costly and significantly less profitable. Therefore, many Northern merchants slowly abandoned the trade, seeking other financial opportunities. As the North's dependence on the slave trade decreased, it became easier for them to imagine abolishing slavery in their territories altogether.

RELIGIOUS REFORM

Northerners also began to reconsider their relationship to slavery on moral grounds. The first denomination to openly question the morality of slavery was the Society of Friends, otherwise known as the Quakers. The Quakers had been deeply involved in the establishment of New England, particularly Pennsylvania, and they believed in religious tolerance, pacifism, and brotherly love.

Given their founding principles, the Quakers confronted the immorality of slaveholding as early as 1688. But even they could not reach a consensus about whether to ban slaveholding in their denomination. Decades passed, and slavery remained firmly in place throughout the colonies.

> The Great Awakening challenged White people to see everyone as their spiritual equals and as their spiritual brothers and sisters.

The dynamic slowly began to shift, especially among devoutly religious Northerners, as a religious revolution known as the Great Awakening swept across the colonies in the 1730s and 1740s. It began when religious leaders—seeking to reinvigorate religious sentiment—held massive local revivals involving enthusiastic, emotional religious worship that often lasted for days.

This powerful religious renaissance challenged people to think more deeply about society and social equality. At their core, the revivals were fundamentally inclusive and tended to break down hierarchy and racial categories. As people of all ages, races, creeds, and colors flocked to the revival tents, religious leaders began to articulate a new religious philosophy known as spiritual equality, which holds that all humans have souls and are equal in the eyes of God.

From there, it became difficult to justify enslavement. So, as the Great Awakening progressed, a group of radical religious reformers emerged—determined to abolish slavery and save the soul of the nation. Even so, slavery had a powerful hold in the colonies, including the North. Even the Quakers did not ban slaveholding until 1787, nearly a century after they first began to debate its morality.

NATURAL RIGHTS PHILOSOPHY

As American rebels began calling for freedom from English rule, it became increasingly difficult—although obviously not impossible—to justify their own appeals for freedom while holding hundreds of thousands of people in bondage. A few American rebel leaders began to acknowledge the contradiction between slavery and natural rights philosophy—an ideology that celebrated every human's right to liberty, justice, and equality.

Thomas Paine, author of the 1775 pamphlet *Common Sense*, became an outspoken abolitionist both during and after the American Revolution. He argued that slavery violated the laws of nature and the principles of justice and humanity. And in the years that followed, he pleaded with Thomas Jefferson and other political leaders to prevent the expansion of slavery in America.

John Jay, another rebel leader, also expressed his own concerns about slavery, writing, "To contend for liberty and to deny that blessing to others, involves an inconsistency not to be excused." Therefore, by the end of the American Revolution, antislavery thought had begun to penetrate the Northern political agenda.

THE PROCESS OF ABOLISHING SLAVERY

In most cases, Northern politicians elected to phase slavery out slowly, determined to protect lingering economic interests. In fact, legislators initially chose not to disrupt slavery at all. Instead, they prevented future slavery by banning the trade in humans in most Northern states. They also lifted restrictions on manumission, making it easier for slaveholders to voluntarily free their human property.

Shortly after the American Revolution concluded, the federal government assisted in this process, passing the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which restricted the expansion of slavery into new territories north of the Ohio River. Slowly, this led to the creation of laws that eliminated slavery entirely, but there was variation on the state level about the nature and method of emancipation based on economic and political demands.

Only two Northern states abolished slavery outright: Vermont and Massachusetts. Vermont passed its abolition act in 1777, not long after the Declaration of Independence.

Vermont deserves significant credit for being the first state to eradicate slavery, but it's also important to keep in mind that Vermont had little to lose by issuing an emancipation act, since the Black population remained very small.

Massachusetts had been heavily influenced by natural rights philosophy. Boston had been the heart of revolutionary activism and rhetoric, and the activists there were having a difficult time reconciling ideas about freedom and liberty with the existence of slavery.

In addition, Black people had been pressuring the Massachusetts legislature through petitions and lawsuits to uphold their state constitution, which declared that all men were equal and entitled to liberty. As a result, Massachusetts did not eradicate slavery through an act of legislature. Instead, it came as a court decision.

By the end of the American Revolution, the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that slavery had been effectively abolished. This was an important decision because Massachusetts had a sizeable Black population, so it was potentially setting a trend for other slaveholding states.

GRADUAL EMANCIPATION

Almost all other Northern states—Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey—adopted some strategy of gradual emancipation. Pennsylvania was first, in 1780, with Connecticut and Rhode Island a few years later. Slavery did not legally end in New York until 1827, and although New Jersey passed an emancipation act in 1804, it did not mandate a definitive end to slavery until 1866—when a state constitutional amendment brought an absolute end to it there.

Gradual emancipation created a form of indentured servitude, slowly phasing out slavery over time. In most cases, state legislatures selected a particular date and announced that anyone born after that date would no longer be legally enslaved but instead would owe service to their masters until they reached a particular age. That specific age ranged between 21 and 28, depending on state law and the person's gender—men were typically expected to labor longer than women.

Rhode Island offered the one exception to this strategy, electing to allow slavery to literally die out. Any Black person born before March 1, 1784, would be forced to remain in slavery for the rest of their lives. Anyone born after that date would automatically be free. As a result, slavery in Rhode Island did not legally end until the state issued a new constitution in 1843, officially outlawing enslavement.

There is much to honor and celebrate about gradual emancipation. Enslaved people in the North knew that by a particular date they would be free. And they knew that their children would one day be free. Gradual emancipation broke the cycle of inherited slavery—no longer would Black parents pass down the legacy of lifelong servitude and slave status to their children.

New York and New Jersey were the last Northern states to abolish slavery since they were the most dependent on agricultural slavery.

But Northern gradual emancipation laws were illusory in many respects since they did not immediately "free" anyone. All enslaved people who were born before the state-designated dates were still resigned to a life of bondage. Even for those born after that date, freedom was postponed. These laws also took a toll on Black families, as relatives were freed at different times.

It's important to understand the challenges and limitations of gradual emancipation because people typically envision the North as a free, antislavery region. But gradual emancipation is a reminder that Northerners were reluctant to end slavery. Recognizing this reality is vitally important because it helps provide context for the lingering opposition to abolition and Black freedom that plagued Northern society during much of this era.

CHALLENGES FOR THE NEWLY EMANCIPATED

During the early 19th century, Black emancipation created outright indignation among White Northerners. As Black people gradually sought opportunity in Northern cities, White people grew increasingly resentful, convinced that Black people drained resources and economic opportunities for White citizens. Soon, Black communities succumbed to poverty, segregation, arson attacks, and racist mob violence, as Whites patently refused to accept Black people as free and equal citizens.

Jobs were not as plentiful or as rewarding as Black migrants had hoped, and as economic prospects became scarce, the situation became desperate. By the 1820s, some Black leaders even began urging people to stay in the rural areas, arguing that opportunities were drying up in the cities and that new migrants were making it difficult for the entire community.

Those enslaved in the countryside had few skills beyond working as domestic servants or as agricultural laborers. And they were, for the most part, totally uneducated. During slavery, some Black men had received training in skilled labor, such as blacksmithing, carpentry, or tailoring. They had a distinct advantage over those who had no marketable skill, and these men often formed the leadership of the Black community simply out of necessity.

But most Black men and women who found employment were reduced to menial labor. In the end, they performed the same work that they had done as slaves, and they also continued to be under the constant surveillance of Whites.

Despite the hope that emancipation would allow Black people to form nuclear family units, economic conditions in most Northern cities continued to disrupt their communities and families. In the early years of emancipation, only about one-half of the Black population lived in independent households. The other half lived in the White households where they worked.

Worse, many parents were so impoverished that they were forced to indenture their children. This arrangement was painfully disturbing and stressful. Relinquishing their children's care and control to a White stranger was too reminiscent of slavery and exposed them to possible mistreatment and abuse.

White rage became particularly acute as Black people sought independence, issued demands for justice, and boldly displayed their freedom and African heritage in public spaces.

Anti-Black racism expanded in the mid-19th century, forcing Black community leaders and activists in the North to find solutions to the problems that plagued their people. In the end, they resolved to build a strong community that would uplift and liberate them from slavery and inequality. Meanwhile, slavery was reborn in the South, eventually creating a rampant and unstoppable social, political, and economic system that devastated millions of Black lives.

READING

Alexander, Leslie M. *African or African American?: Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784–1861*. Champaign and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.

Dunbar, Erica Armstrong. *A Fragile Freedom: African American Women and Emancipation in the Antebellum City*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

Melish, Joanne Pope. *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Pryor, Elizabeth. *Colored Travelers: Mobility and the Fight for Citizenship before the Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.

12 HOW COTTON REVIVED SLAVERY

This lecture examines the rapid expansion of slavery in the South following the American Revolution. It looks at how cotton became "king" of the Southern economy and how plantation owners obtained enslaved laborers. It also explores the nature of life on a cotton plantation, including the labor routines and the process of cotton cultivation. And it delves into the laws and systems of control that plantation owners used to restrain enslaved people.

THE COTTON GIN

The Southern economy had been hit hard during the American Revolution. England had created a military blockade that cut off Southern seaports, and plantations had been devastated by the English proclamations that had promised freedom to those who fled bondage. By war's end, many wondered if slavery would survive at all.

But one invention changed everything. In 1794, Eli Whitney obtained a patent for a device he called the cotton engine. Debate continues about who actually invented the cotton engine, but Whitney got the patent and the credit for its invention. Later known simply as the cotton gin, this new technology made cotton cultivation extremely profitable.

Prior to the cotton gin, raw cotton was nearly impossible to process into finished products because seeds and debris clung to the cotton after being picked. The cotton gin quickly removed the undesirable components and allowed cotton to be easily manufactured and sold.

THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE

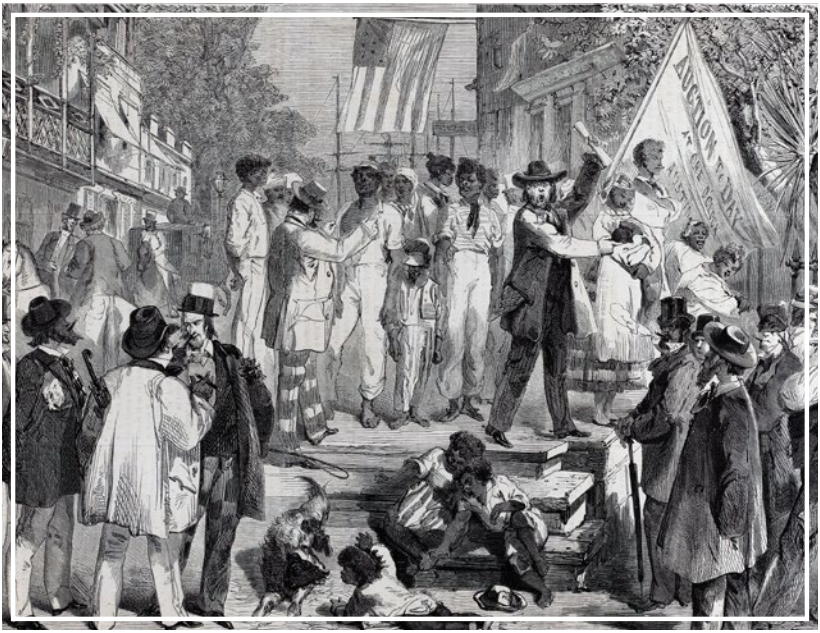
Despite the cotton gin's importance, the rapid expansion of cotton plantations was possible only because of the Louisiana Purchase, which added 530 million acres of land to the United States. France sold the territory in 1803 for $15 million in a desperate effort to recoup their financial losses from the Haitian Revolution.

In a painfully ironic twist, the Louisiana Purchase was possible only because enslaved people in the French colony of Saint-Domingue won a revolution. As they gained their independence and formed the new nation of Haiti, the Louisiana Purchase gave rise to generations of enslavement in the United States.

By 1800, large-scale cotton plantations started developing throughout the Deep South—first into Georgia and later into Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas. Cotton even made its way into the Carolinas, Tennessee, and Virginia. Of course, certain parts of the South continued producing the same cash crops that had built wealth for generations of White plantation owners, including rice, sugar, and tobacco. But after 1820, cotton was king.

DOMESTIC TRADING OF HUMANS

To produce and sell cotton, human laborers had to first drain swamps, clear forests, prepare the land, and construct buildings. Then, they had to plant seeds, nurture the seedlings, pick the cotton, and prepare it for sale. But the South faced something of a labor shortage. Its demand for labor skyrocketed just as the federal government banned the international trade in humans.



The US law went into effect in 1808. But even though it banned trading humans across the ocean, there was nothing to stop the buying and selling of humans within the US. As a result, a thriving domestic trade developed, in which enslaved people were sent from the upper South into the Deep South. In some cases, they were even illegally smuggled from the North.

In the antebellum era, more than 1 million enslaved people were sent to labor on the Southern cotton plantations. In the early 1800s, most people were marched, on foot. In shackles and yokes, they shuffled through city streets and across the open countryside, sometimes for hundreds of miles. They were driven from plantation to plantation like cattle and placed on public auction.

In the 1830s, traders began sending enslaved people to the South on steamships. And in the following decades, they relied heavily on steam engines and trains to move humans quickly and cheaply. Marketplaces and auction blocks sprung up in Southern urban areas, such as Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans. Even in Washington DC, humans were sold every day, in sight of the Capitol building.

Corporations, known as trading firms, spread across the South, specializing in advertising, buying, and selling humans. Northern merchants also grew rich during this era—especially bankers who extended loans and credit to Southern plantation owners. So did Northern factory owners who used raw cotton to manufacture finished products. And, of course, ship owners and railway companies that transported humans into the Deep South profited as well.

FORCED "BREEDING"

The domestic trade was an obvious and ever-expanding method for plantation owners to obtain labor. But it often proved quite expensive. For owners who could not—or chose not to—spend the money, a diabolic strategy known as "the breeding mentality" began to emerge.

As the name suggests, plantation owners routinely forced or coerced enslaved people into forming sexual relationships to produce children. The average enslaved woman typically had her first child by the age of 18 or 19. Everyone on the plantation clearly understood that her role was to produce multiple children for the slaveholder's financial benefit.

Those who refused were brutally punished. In some cases, enslaved people were rewarded for producing children. Women who became pregnant were sometimes temporarily given lighter workloads or even small gifts.

And in a chilling reflection on slavery, some historians have even speculated that White men's rampant sexual violence against Black women and girls throughout the plantation South was part of an intentional strategy to impregnate them and enslave their children.

LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS

As you might expect, enslaved people lived in abject poverty. They lived in ramshackle cabins with dirt floors, sometimes without beds or blankets. They wore rough clothing made by enslaved women, and they were usually given an allotment of clothing only twice each year.

They also often went hungry, typically receiving a weekly ration of only a few pounds of bacon and cornmeal. To sustain themselves, they were forced to forage in the woods or swamps for other food. In some cases, enslaved people were allowed to cultivate their own gardens, albeit on their own time.

Overwork combined with poor diet and substandard living conditions caused enslaved people to fall victim to numerous endemic and European diseases. Enslaved women used their knowledge of herbs and other medicines to treat their community, but suffering remained all the same.

Cotton cultivation was particularly difficult and labor-intensive. First, the land had to be cleared and prepared for use. In the early years, that required chopping and removing trees and draining swamps. It also necessitated the construction of the main house, cabins for the enslaved, and cotton houses, where the cotton gins were kept.

Then, each spring, women and men worked in teams to plow the ground and prepare it for seeds. Following behind, a young girl with a bag of seeds around her neck would carefully drop seeds into the soil.

Within a week or two, the exhausting process of hoeing began, to ensure the healthy growth of seedlings. For months, between April and July, enslaved people painstakingly tended the plants. Then, in August, during the intense heat and humidity of summer, cotton picking commenced and did not end until December.

During cotton-picking season, every able-bodied enslaved person on the plantation labored from sunup to sundown. Once cotton arrived at the gin house, it would be fed through the cotton gin, where the seeds and debris would be removed.

Even at the end of the day, labor continued. Enslaved women usually repaired clothing, prepared food, attended to the sick, and kept the cabin tidy, while men foraged for food, fed the mules, and chopped wood. Children were usually put to work at about the age of 7. They were given a variety of tasks, including bringing water to the field laborers, weeding plants, and gathering firewood.

On most plantations, enslaved people were expected to pick 200 pounds of cotton each day. If someone failed to reach the assigned amount, brutal torture followed. And if they picked more, the expectation for the next day's picking increased by that amount.

LAWS AND SYSTEMS OF CONTROL

The ongoing, central challenge that plantation owners faced was the struggle to control enslaved people, who longed for nothing more than freedom. Brute violence was the law of the land on most plantations, with whipping routinely used as the most common method of labor enforcement and punishment.

In most cases, punishments were conducted in public to deter "undesirable" behavior and terrorize others into upholding proper conduct. Penalties for trying to run away were particularly vicious, sometimes leaving a person's nearly lifeless body suspended from a rope. Enslaved people were often forced to whip each other, adding to the horror and inhumanity.

Violence and control against enslaved people were not limited to individual plantations. State and federal governments supported such efforts, placing stringent regulations on enslaved people's movement, activities, and interactions and delivering cruel punishments to those who violated the laws or sought freedom.

Enslaved people were understood to be legal property. Therefore, they were not considered human under the law and were denied all basic civil rights: They could not vote, own property, legally marry, receive an education, move or associate freely, or assert any rights in a court of law. But they could be legally bought and sold, transferred as property in a will, and even given as a gift or to settle a debt.

Stemming back to the early 18th century, colonies (and later states) employed slave patrollers, often called pattyrollers, to search for fugitive or rebellious people. At least once each month, they visited each plantation in their region, where they invaded slave cabins and searched for contraband. They would confiscate any items that they believed had been stolen or could be used as weapons.

Federal law also criminalized Black people who ran away to gain their freedom. A 1793 law empowered slaveowners to try to regain their "property" in federal or state court and imposed a fine on anyone who prevented the capture and return of a runaway.

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was even more devastating. It not only authorized slave catchers to pursue suspected fugitives across state lines but also stripped Black people of their right to habeas corpus. Alleged fugitives had no right to a jury trial, and they could not offer evidence on their own behalf or vouch for the status of a captive. Only White people were allowed to provide proof of a Black person's freedom, and if none could be found,

the authorities had the right to make the final decision. The act also turned the North into a virtual hunting ground, as it required all White citizens to physically pursue and restrain suspected fugitives.

Enslaved men and women never surrendered to their conditions, despite the horrors and brutality of their existence. Instead, they built families, created communities, escaped bondage, and fought back—determined that one day they would be free.

Rape and sexual exploitation became such an embedded part of slavery that a special trade in sex slavery emerged throughout the South. Traders advertised women and girls for sale as "fancy maids." Girls tended to be light-skinned and very young, often little more than 12 years old. They usually sold for $5,000 to $10,000.

READING

Baptist, Edward. *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*. New York: Basic Books, 2016.

Cooper Owens, Deidre. *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019.

Hadden, Sally. *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Johnson, Walter. *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Schwartz, Marie Jenkins. *Born in Bondage: Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

13 BLACK CULTURE AND RESISTANCE IN THE SOUTH

This lecture explores a fascinating and complex question: How did enslaved people draw upon culture and spirituality to cope with the horrors of slavery? Here, you will examine how enslaved people resisted against slavery socially and culturally through, for example, "social" resistance, which refers to the ways that enslaved people created meaningful lives despite how slavery tried to strip them of their humanity. Enslaved people created alternative conceptions of family, cultivated liberatory notions of Christianity, and even creatively used humor and music to battle against slavery's efforts to dehumanize them.

FICTIVE KIN

Due to the nature of slavery, opportunities to maintain stable family units were extremely rare. Instead, as the institution of slavery rapidly expanded in the early 19th century, enslaved people were routinely bought and sold across the South as enslavers sought to gain more laborers and to raise capital. Once sold away, many enslaved people never saw their biological family members again. Given these circumstances, how did enslaved people manage to sustain notions of family and community? In the absence of reliable biological family units, then, enslaved people formed what later became known as fictive kin networks.

In recent years, sociologists have created this term—*fictive kin*—to describe a type of family relationship that develops between people who have no actual biological or marital connection. In other words, fictive kin are people who interact as siblings, parent and child, aunt or uncle, even though they are not actually related by blood or marriage. Forging fictive kinship was a vital and essential component of coping with slavery. Given the frequency of sale, enslaved people had to build—and rebuild—family connections as they moved from place to place. Only by forging new family and community connections could they hope to create meaningful, loving lives in the midst of slavery.

Interestingly, fictive kin networks also resuscitated and revitalized the importance of kinship in West Africa. Among most ethnic groups in West Africa, village and ethnic identities were extremely important, and their kinship networks and lineage were vital to how they lived.

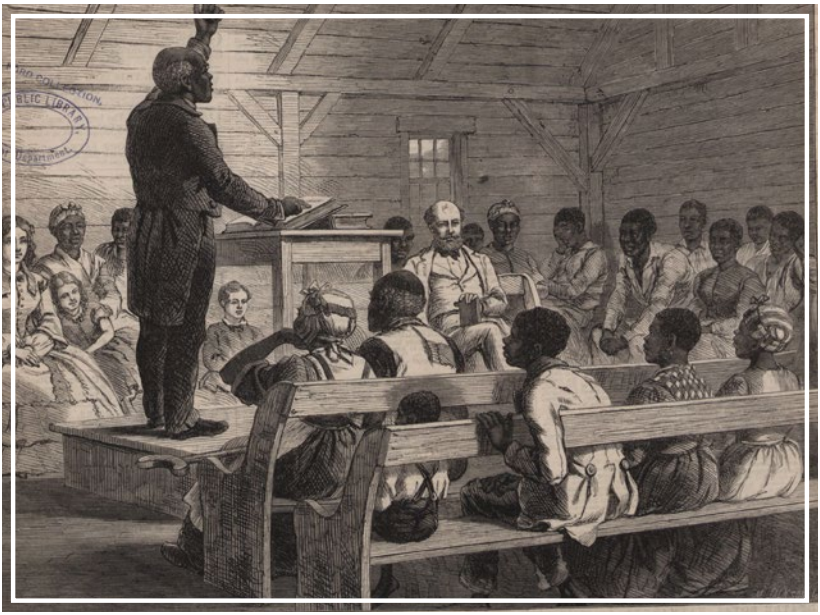
LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Enslaved people also resisted against slavery through religious worship. It took multiple generations for Christianity to fully take root in Black communities, partly because slaveholders initially discouraged conversion and partly because African people held tightly to their own spiritual beliefs. But slowly, these cultural patterns began to shift. And once Christianity spread through enslaved communities, it took on an entirely new meaning and purpose.

A few factors influenced this dramatic religious change, including a movement that swept across the United States beginning in the late 1790s and early 1800s. Later known as the Second Great Awakening, this religious

movement encouraged mass conversion to Christianity across racial lines. It particularly took root in the North, especially New York and Ohio, but also spread rapidly across the South, especially in the coastal regions of Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

As both White and Black people increasingly embraced Christianity, many plantation owners allowed enslaved people to practice religion and engage in public worship. In fact, some plantation owners began to manipulate Christianity, hoping that religious devotion could operate as a form of social control. Throughout the South, enslavers began selectively using Biblical stories to encourage deference, docility, and submission from the enslaved community. In some cases, they even allowed enslaved people to become preachers, hoping that it would encourage Black people to embrace the message and accept their condition in life more readily.



What slaveholders did not expect was that enslaved people would gradually embrace and accept Christianity on their own terms, molding it into a religious system they could believe in. In so doing, enslaved people created a form of religion and worship that White people did not know about and could not control. Historians refer to slave religion as the invisible institution because the actual worshipping usually happened without the plantation owners' knowledge. Unbeknownst to White people, enslaved men, women, and children would gather in secret, often in the surrounding woods or swamps. In such hush harbors, enslaved people held clandestine religious ceremonies celebrating aspects of Christianity that resonated with their experience. They created an entirely different interpretation of Christianity—liberation theology.

Black liberation theology was based on two main ideas, both of which emphasized Black people's eventual triumph over slavery. Enslaved people focused on the story of Exodus and the Israelites' flight from bondage. Convinced that the Israelites' salvation demonstrated God's opposition to slavery, they clung to the vision that, like the Hebrews, they would one day be delivered from slavery.

Liberation theology also promised spiritual redemption after earthly suffering. According to this philosophy, enslaved people might face unspeakable horrors in the earthly realm, but their sacrifice would be rewarded in the afterlife. Therefore, slave religion, and more specifically Black liberation theology, gave them hope, courage, and faith that their misery would eventually cease.

SYNCRETISM

Despite Christianity's powerful influence in enslaved communities, most enslaved people remained connected to West African spiritual beliefs. Employing a method that sociologists call syncretism, enslaved people strategically blended West African rituals, practices, and beliefs with Christianity. For example, many enslaved people relied on conjure men—or African spiritual practitioners—to provide them amulets, talismans, or other potions to ward off evil spirits.

In his world-famous autobiography, Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass described how he carried a packet of herbs and a talisman in his pocket to protect him from harm and violence from an overseer. The talisman had been given to him by an enslaved man named Sandy, who had recently arrived from Africa and was a practitioner of African spirituality. Even though Douglass identified as a Christian, he never forgot that gift—and he credited the talisman for helping him escape from slavery. After all, it was only while carrying the talisman that Douglass triumphed over a brutal overseer and eventually gained his freedom.

Another popular—and beautiful—ritual that survived in the Americas was the use of bottle trees. Drawing upon a spiritual practice from the Congo region of west-central Africa, Black people protected themselves against evil spirits by placing bottles upside down on tree branches near their homes. They believed that evil spirits would be attracted to the glittering bottles and get trapped inside. They would remain stuck there until the next morning, when new daylight shined on the bottle and destroyed the evil spirit.

Throughout the slavery era, even those who espoused Christianity continued to use this strategy to guard and defend against bad spirits. Traditionally, enslaved people used blue bottles since they believed that ghosts and spirits were drawn to the color blue. They also tried to use crepe myrtle trees whenever possible, likely because such trees were associated with emancipation in the Bible. Following emancipation, customs shifted slightly, as Black people began using multiple types of bottles and trees—but even now, bottle trees can still be found across much of the Deep South.

Syncretic or blended cultural practices could be seen in many aspects of Black religious practice in the 19th century. In fact, Christian worship in Black communities was infused with West African culture, ranging from boisterous enthusiastic prayer to infectious, dynamic music and dance. Perhaps the most famous example of African cultural influence on Christian worship is evident in a practice known as call-and-response. Still prevalent in Black churches today, call-and-response incorporates a West African ethic of community engagement and participation.

Using modes of worship such as call-and-response, enslaved and free Black communities were able to retain aspects of their own cultural values and norms while still embracing a liberatory Christian ethic.

The most common example of call-and-response would be when the preacher issues a particularly powerful statement and then says, "Brothers and sisters, can I get an 'amen'?" And the congregation responds, "Amen." Through that exchange, the preacher checks in and seeks an affirmation from his listeners and only continues once the affirmation is given from the congregation.

DAILY RESISTANCE

Over the past several decades, historians have uncovered overwhelming evidence of how enslaved people combined social and cultural resistance in daily forms of resistance against slavery. Daily resistance refers to a wide variety of strategies that enslaved people used to fight back against their conditions in large and small ways. These methods included talking back, deceiving the master or overseer, avoiding work, and even lobbying or negotiating for improved conditions.

One social and psychological method has become known as "the mask." This was a clever and unique strategy in which enslaved people wore a social mask—meaning that they behaved one way in front of White people and only revealed their "true" selves around other Black people. In most cases, that meant they tricked White people into believing that they accepted slavery, but privately, they rebelled. Enslavers and overseers were left stunned when they learned that their most "loyal" slaves had run off. This pattern was particularly apparent among enslaved people who worked in the house since they had regular and constant interaction with the slaveholding family members. These folks often believed that the people they owned deeply cared for them. In reality, enslaved people only sought their own freedom.

Enslaved women who worked in the house were especially well located to effectively fool their owners, and they often used their position to sabotage the plantation. Most often, they resorted to secret attacks, using poison or arson.

Enslaved cooks routinely attempted to poison their owners, putting ground-up glass or deadly weeds in the food.

While some enslaved people used direct methods to end their enslavement, others resorted to creative manipulation. If nothing else, enslaved people clearly understood that their labor was valuable and brought the plantation owner tremendous profit. Therefore, they used numerous methods to creatively avoid work. Such strategies included working slowly, breaking tools, faking illness, and faking stupidity. In fact, purposely sabotaging tools or equipment became so common that doctors began to believe it was a medical ailment.

Work avoidance also manifested as behaving erratically to trick the enslavers. One enslaved woman named Dinah avoided work by convincing her mistress that she was crazy. When her mistress tried to tell her to work, Dinah would reply with a laugh and scream out, "I won't! Catch me if you can." Then, she would take to her heels and run away. Dinah's mistress thought she was so crazy that she eventually just left her alone.

Finally, enslaved people also worked collectively to deceive overseers and plantation owners. Such collective action was particularly possible when plantations used drivers rather than White overseers to enforce labor routines. Like overseers, Black drivers were expected to push their fellow enslaved people to work harder, and yet sometimes they creatively protected their brothers and sisters, such as by manipulating the whip to make it appear as if they were lashing the workers but in fact not touching them.

READING

Abrahams, Roger. *Singing the Master: The Emergence of African American Culture in the Plantation South*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

Camp, Stephanie. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Gutman, Herbert. *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925*. New York: Random House, 1977.

Levine, Lawrence. *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Raboteau, Albert. *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Stuckey, Sterling. *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

14 ARMED REBELLION IN THE ANTEBELLUM ERA

This lecture explores the intense and painful topic of armed rebellion. In more recent years, scholars have discovered that revolts, especially small-scale revolts, were much more common and frequent than imagined. Even more, they've uncovered significant connections between uprisings in the Caribbean and revolts in the US that demonstrate how Black revolutionary thought and action spread rapidly across the Atlantic Ocean in the 18th and 19th centuries. Here, you will learn about the largest and most successful rebellion against slavery in the Western Hemisphere—the Haitian Revolution—and how it inspired and influenced uprisings in the United States that spanned across decades and culminated in the famous Southampton County rebellion in 1831, known as Nat Turner's rebellion after the enslaved man who masterminded it.

THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION

The French colony of Saint-Domingue, later known as Haiti, was located on the island of Hispaniola and played a crucial role in trade between Europe, the Caribbean, and the Americas. By the 1780s, it was the wealthiest colony in the Caribbean. In 1789, it contained about 8,000 plantations and provided France with approximately two-fifths of its annual trade profit.

Despite its comparatively small size, Saint-Domingue had the largest enslaved population in the Caribbean at about 500,000, while the White population was only 40,000. The main cash crop was sugar. Planting, growing, harvesting, and processing sugarcane required intense, grueling labor. More than half of the men and women imported into Saint-Domingue died within a few years. Those who survived were typically subjected to harsh punishments and outright torture. Some were even buried alive. It should come as no surprise, then, that enslaved people in Saint-Domingue desperately wanted their freedom.

Gathering nightly over several days in mid-August 1791 in the northern region of Saint-Domingue, enslaved people painstakingly planned an insurrection. Dutty Boukman and Cécile Fatiman, highly respected spiritual leaders, assembled hundreds of enslaved people in the woods and led them in a religious ceremony. They called upon their God to guide them and sealed their revolutionary pact with oaths and ritual sacrifices. Following the ceremony, enslaved Africans, armed with machetes, began beating drums, chanting, and marching from plantation to plantation—killing, looting, and burning everything in sight. Eventually expanding to an estimated 80,000 rebels, the revolt erupted into the largest, bloodiest, and most successful rebellion of enslaved people in history.

The rebel army successfully held off military invasions from the French, Spanish, and British. Finally, in 1794, the French National Convention agreed to abolish slavery throughout Saint-Domingue, hoping it would quell the resistance. But the territory remained under French control, and formerly enslaved people still labored under oppressive plantation systems. So, the rebels persisted in their demand for full freedom, equality, and sovereignty for all Black people. After more than a decade of warfare and conflict, the French military surrendered to the rebels in November 1803. On January 1,

1804, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, leader of the rebel army, declared Haiti an independent nation and became governor-general of the first independent Black nation in the Western Hemisphere.

GABRIEL'S REBELLION

It's impossible to overestimate the importance that the Haitian Revolution played in early African American history and the history of the African diaspora. It inspired revolts and conspiracies in many other countries, including Puerto Rico, Spanish Louisiana, and, eventually, the United States. In a broader sense, it transformed how Africans in the Americas viewed themselves and their destiny. After all, the Haitian Revolution was the only uprising in the Americas that actually resulted in the destruction of slavery and the creation of an independent Black nation.

It's not shocking, therefore, that at least four uprisings occurred in the United States in the early 19th century that were directly inspired by the Haitian Revolution. The first occurred in the middle of the Saint-Domingue revolt, as news of the Black rebellion rapidly circulated across the Atlantic Ocean. In the bustling port city of Richmond, Virginia, an enslaved blacksmith named Gabriel used it as a model for his own plot.

Influenced heavily both by natural rights philosophy and the news from Saint-Domingue, in the spring of 1800, Gabriel, his two brothers, and another close ally hatched a plan to destroy slavery in Virginia. Enslaved blacksmiths would first forge weapons for the rebels. Then, the rebels would invade the city of Richmond and secure additional weapons from the armory. Meanwhile, to distract attention away from the uprising, a few rebels were supposed to set fires on the far end of town. While White residents fled to douse the fire, more enslaved people would pour into the city and begin the rebellion. Gabriel hoped that their bravery would inspire other revolts and that, eventually, they would conquer every region where slavery reigned.

Gabriel selected Saturday, August 30, 1800, as the day they would strike. That night, hundreds of armed enslaved people gathered in the countryside outside the city. However, one enslaved man betrayed the rebellion in hopes that his master would reward him with freedom. His master sounded the alarm and notified the Virginia governor, James Monroe, who called out the

militia to defend the city. Moreover, just as the rebels prepared to march on Richmond, a catastrophic storm struck the region, washing away roads and bridges. All access between the plantation zones and the city was destroyed, as were the rebels' hopes for freedom.

The militia eventually arrested numerous conspirators. Gabriel remained in hiding for nearly a month but was finally captured in Norfolk while attempting to escape on a ship. Before the backlash ended, 50 enslaved people had been arrested. After lengthy trials, 35 were executed, 10 more were banished from the state, and 1 committed suicide.

THE GERMAN COAST UPRISING

About a decade after Gabriel's conspiracy, an estimated 500 rebels unleashed a rebellion in Louisiana, just outside New Orleans. Given its location, which had been settled by a small group of Germans in 1719, the revolt later became known as the German Coast uprising. This became the largest slave rebellion in US history. The uprising lasted for 2 days, between January 8 and January 10.

From the revolt's inception, the Haitian Revolution and independent Haiti provided a powerful example for the rebels, as the revolt was unleashed almost 7 years to the day after Haiti's declaration of independence.

The insurgents' ultimate goals are still being debated. Some historians believed the rebels may have intended to flee to Haiti following the revolt. Others have suggested that they plotted to create a Black republic along the Mississippi River modeled on the image of a free and sovereign Haiti.

Regardless, the German Coast uprising concluded with an agonizing backlash, as local militias descended in a battle of bloody retribution. By the end of January, the severed heads of more than a hundred rebels lined the levee from New Orleans to the outlying plantations in a terrifying warning not to repeat this audacious attempt for freedom. But while the planters' terroristic acts suppressed the 1811 revolt, they could not destroy enslaved people's longings for freedom.

Many of the insurgents in the German Coast uprising had been brought to Louisiana by their masters fleeing from Saint-Domingue amid the Haitian Revolution.

DENMARK VESEY'S REBELLION

Nearly 20 years after Haiti declared its independence, the Haitian Revolution and sovereign Haiti were still inspiring rebellions in the United States. In 1818, free Black abolitionist Denmark Vesey reportedly began colluding with several other rebels in South Carolina to destroy slavery in the US and find freedom in Haiti.

As a young child, Telemaque, as Vesey was known for much of his life, labored in Saint-Domingue for about a year between 1781 and 1782 before Captain Joseph Vesey brought him to Charleston, South Carolina. As a young man, he followed the news of the Haitian Revolution closely. In 1799, as the revolution raged, Telemaque won $1,500 in a lottery and used the money to purchase his freedom. Renaming himself Denmark Vesey and developing a revolutionary vision, he began plotting a massive armed strike in South Carolina, designed to bring his people to freedom.

Between 1818 and 1822, Vesey steadily recruited supporters throughout the region. Drawing upon religious gatherings or community meetings to gain a following, he relied upon Biblical references and liberation theology to amass a large following among enslaved Christians. But Vesey also appealed to those who continued to practice West African religions. His right-hand man, known as Gullah Jack, was African born and was widely believed to be a conjure man. Through Gullah Jack, Vesey's revolt found massive support in enslaved communities across the region.

Throughout the recruitment and planning phase, Vesey presented Haiti as the ideal model of unity, solidarity, and courage that Black people in the US must emulate. Haiti's postrevolutionary image—as a powerful, sovereign Black nation—also figured prominently in Vesey's plot, particularly regarding military strategy. He reportedly spoke to groups of Black people throughout the region, telling them that "the Haitian government would surely send a

Black army to aid North American slaves if only they would revolt." Even more, Vesey maintained, once the rebellion was successful, Haiti would serve as a refuge for rebels.

By late spring 1822, Vesey's plan was in place. With an estimated 9,000 enslaved people ready to strike, Vesey instructed them to gather on July 16 and invade the city of Charleston. Much like Gabriel's plot, the rebels were supposed to set fires to distract White residents and then attack the arsenals. Then, they were to secure weapons, seize funds from the bank, gain control of the harbor, and sail for Haiti, where they could find freedom. But the outcome had striking parallels to Gabriel's conspiracy, as an enslaved man, hoping to gain his freedom, revealed the plot to his owner. In June, Vesey and his lieutenants were captured, and he and five of his followers were hanged on July 2.

NAT TURNER'S REBELLION

On Sunday, August 21, 1831, exactly 40 years after the Haitian Revolution began, eight enslaved men gathered in the woods in Southampton County in the early evening to plan the final details of a rebellion that they had plotted for at least 3 years. At about 2 am, they began to attack nearby White plantation owners. The rebellion raged for 2 days, resulting in the destruction of numerous plantations and the deaths of some 60 White enslavers. Their leader was a man named Nat.

A few years before the rebellion began, Nat had begun having visions about a race war. He increasingly believed that God had chosen him to be the leader of a rebellion that would bring about the destruction of slavery. Enslaved people across the county reportedly viewed Nat as a powerful spiritual leader and responded eagerly to his call for revolt.

The day after the rebellion, hundreds of armed White men began tracking down the rebels, most of whom were captured and executed. And while Nat was still at large, roving gangs of White men attacked Black people in Southampton and nearby counties, killing as many as 200 to ensure that Black rebels would not dare to attempt another revolt. Finally, on October 30, Nat was captured and brought to trial. On November 11, he was brutally hanged, skinned, and dismembered.

The connection between the Haitian Revolution and the Southampton rebellion is not very clear. Nat never mentioned or acknowledged any connection to Haiti in his confession. However, he reportedly pledged that if enslaved people in Virginia courageously embraced rebellion, they would be able to "imitate" the Haitians and "establish a government of their own." But whether Nat was inspired by the Haitian Revolution or not, the Southampton County rebellion was critically important because it sent a clear message that enslaved people could—and would—take up arms against slavery. It also forced many antislavery advocates nationwide to recognize that they must bring an immediate end to the institution.

READING

Holden, Vanessa. *Surviving Southampton: African American Women and Resistance in Nat Turner's Community*. Champaign and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021.

Rucker, Walter. *The River Flows On: Black Resistance, Culture, and Identity Formation in Early America*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007.

15 FREE BLACK COMMUNITIES IN THE NORTH

In this lecture, you'll explore newly emancipated Black Northerners' hopes on the eve of freedom and examine why these hopes quickly dissolved into disappointment. More specifically, you'll see how their dreams and aspirations were stymied by the legacy of pervasive racism, creating what Reverend Williams described as a "defective" freedom. You'll also uncover how Black people eventually began to forge a nascent Black nationalism in response to the limits of legal emancipation and the backlash they suffered as they tried to make a permanent place for themselves as free people in the United States.

DEFECTIVE FREEDOM

Immediately following the American Revolution, the Northern Black population largely remained in bondage. But slowly and gradually, legal emancipation spread across the North, resulting in the rise of a free Black community. Initially, Black Northerners experienced a glimmer of hope about the future. Their newfound freedom represented the chance to marry, create families, move freely about the North, seek an occupation, and establish communities.

In most cases, those who lived in small towns or in the countryside seized the opportunity to flee the farms and plantations where they had labored as slaves. They relocated to urban centers, such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, which provided economic opportunity and social interaction with other Black people. But freed people soon learned the painful lesson that Black freedom would actually mean "defective" freedom. The ideas about racial inequality and inferiority that had been created to justify slavery continued to haunt them.

Most White Americans remained unconvinced about the merits of emancipation. Worse, they were not ready to accept Black people as free and equal members of society, and they were ill-prepared for a growing Black population that sought all the rights and privileges of full citizenship.

BLACK NATIONALISM

Perhaps the most powerful and significant response to Northern racism was the rise of early Black nationalism. In the 19th century, Black nationalism was a distinct political philosophy focused on the goal of community building as a means to achieve Black freedom and equality. It promoted the idea that Black people everywhere in the world were connected by their African heritage and, therefore, should work collectively to fight their common suffering. In some cases, Black nationalists also urged Black people to build independent Black nations outside the boundaries of the United States. But most of all, Black nationalism insisted that Black people should produce strong, viable organizations that addressed their issues and concerns.

Black leaders across the North agreed that developing autonomous political organizations and institutions could improve the conditions of their people. As a result, as early as the 1780s, Black men and women in Northern towns and cities formed benevolent and religious associations that emphasized community responsibility and a powerful racial consciousness. Perhaps the most obvious examples of Black institution building in the early 19th century were the churches that emerged in every major Northern city.

Most Black churches in this period were created to escape the racism that beset White religious services during this era, including Philadelphia's first Black church, founded in 1787. Officially established in 1794, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (later known as Mother Bethel) was led by Richard Allen. Independent Black churches soon took root across the North and became vitally important to the Black community as both religious institutions and community gathering places where Black Northerners could come together to discuss social and political issues plaguing their community.

In most major Northern cities, emancipated Black women and men also created community-based institutions to combat the uncertainty of unequal freedom. The first Black organization in the North was founded in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1780. Dubbed the African Society, this men's association served as a model for similar organizations that quickly formed in other Northern cities. Although each African Society functioned independently, they shared common organizational structures and political philosophies. More importantly, they each sought to uplift and aid their community in various ways, such as by supporting widows and orphans. They also provided proper burials for Black people, as most American cities denied Black people access to public burial grounds. And they also became important spaces where activists organized to fight against slavery, discrimination, and the denial of voting rights.

Black women's societies were particularly committed to combating illiteracy, which they viewed as a lingering badge of slavery. By the late 1820s, Black women had established their own literary societies as well. They also developed organizations such as the African Dorcas societies in Philadelphia and New York. The primary goal of these societies was to provide food and warm clothes to poor students during the winter months, allowing a new generation of Black youth to attend school.

However, as Northern Black communities began to grow and thrive, White hostility likewise increased, eventually infecting nearly every Northern community with anti-Black mob violence. Black institutions were constantly threatened by fear of violence. In New York City, for example, the African Methodist Church was a central target for racial hostility throughout the antebellum era. In 1815, a mysterious fire blazed through the church, and the building was destroyed, leaving the community to rebuild.

While localized attacks certainly operated as a successful act of terrorism, nothing was more devastating than the massive anti-Black riots that plagued Northern communities throughout the early 19th century. Nearly every major city succumbed to large-scale attacks numerous times between the late 1820s and the Civil War.

THE CINCINNATI RIOT

The first major anti-Black riot occurred in Cincinnati, Ohio, in August 1829. Given the city's location on the Ohio River, which divided North and South, many White Cincinnatians were sympathetic to the proslavery cause and profited economically from the continuation of slavery. But the city remained appealing to both free and fugitive Black people. It was a popular destination for many fugitives who crossed the Ohio River in search of freedom. Likewise, Ohio attracted legally free Black pioneers who sought to create a new life for themselves in a newly established territory, especially since Cincinnati offered jobs in the steamboat and shipping industries. Thus, the city became a breeding ground for racial tension and hostility.

Opposition to free Black people in Ohio was obvious from the beginning. In 1802, when state politicians held the first Constitutional Convention to obtain official statehood, they created a series of Black codes designed to control the free Black population. These laws required that Black people living in Ohio have a certificate of freedom and a bond for their good behavior and upkeep secured by two property owners. The codes also excluded them from public schools and disallowed their testimony in court cases involving White people. Within a few years, revised statutes added that Black people were forbidden from permanently settling in Ohio unless they could pay a fee of $500 within the first 20 days of arrival.

Despite such barriers, a free Black community had started to emerge in the city by 1820. Black Cincinnatians built homes, churches, schools, and businesses, and soon, the Black neighborhood, known as Little Africa, began to thrive.

Between 1826 and 1829, the Black population in Cincinnati nearly quadrupled. Black people soon constituted 10% of the city's population, making it home to the largest Black population in the region.

But some White residents saw the influx of Black people as jeopardizing the social order, and others perceived it as an economic threat. Economic panic swept the White population as rumors spread that Black people were stealing all the available jobs and that they posed a threat to White workers. As racial tension mounted, small White mobs launched attacks on Little Africa—a pattern that became so severe that many Black residents considered abandoning the city. In fact, in the summer of 1829, they began discussing a mass migration to Canada and sent two representatives to Ontario to investigate conditions there. While they waited for their delegates to return, one of the most furious race riots in US history broke out.

For over a week, beginning on August 15, 1829, a White mob descended on Little Africa with a vengeance. Black institutions were attacked and set ablaze. Men, women, and children were literally chased out of the city, and an estimated 1,200 Black Cincinnatians hid out in the surrounding woods.

The Black community's response to the riot was mixed. Approximately 200 people left immediately and migrated to Canada, where they established the Wilberforce Colony. Soon thereafter, hundreds more fled Cincinnati and joined the colony in Canada. Another 1,100 Black Cincinnatians, mostly those who owned property or businesses in the city, were determined to stay and claim their rights as Americans. But ultimately, those who remained paid a terrible price as violent race riots plagued the city over the next 12 years.

THE NEW YORK CITY RIOT

In July 1834, New York City convulsed with racial hostility and mob violence. As in Ohio, increasing political activism in the free Black community and the growth of Black institutions sparked a devastating backlash. One of the longest and most violent race riots in antebellum America began on July 9, 1834, in response to a rumor that an interracial, antislavery gathering would be held at the Chatham Street Chapel.

A few days prior, numerous Black New Yorkers had received threats and knew that mob violence was imminent. In hopes of quelling the violence, the event was canceled. But still, thousands of angry White men descended on the chapel in a rage. When they discovered the chapel was empty, they turned their fury onto the Black community. Homes were utterly demolished, and Black institutions and businesses were singled out for excessive violence. Most Black New Yorkers stood their ground, and a few even fought back against the rioters.

Since the police could not contain the violence on their own, city authorities summoned the militia. Soldiers from the state militia were placed throughout the city, particularly in the Black neighborhoods. They patrolled the streets until July 15, when it finally seemed that the mob would not resume its reign of terror.

THE PHILADELPHIA RACE RIOT

Just 1 month after the horrors in New York City, Philadelphia also fell victim to racial violence. The trouble began at a public carousel called the Flying Horses. On August 11, 1834, a conflict broke out between White and Black youth, resulting in a physical altercation. Outraged by the notion that Black boys would defend themselves against Whites, a mob formed the following night. Between 400 and 500 White men arrived at the carousel on the evening of August 12 and proceeded to demolish the entire building. Armed with clubs, bricks, and paving stones, the mob then headed to the center of Philadelphia's Black community.

For the next 3 nights, rioters brutally attacked private homes as well as churches and schools. Most Black people fled Philadelphia, seeking refuge across the Delaware River in New Jersey. The violence did not cease until the mayor brought in 300 militiamen. However, several more riots targeted the Black community in the years that followed.

Such anti-Black race riots illustrated the painfully slow pace at which White Americans accepted the notion of abolition and the growth of free Black communities in their midst. But perhaps even more important than the reality of White mob violence was the lingering question of how Black people responded to White hostility. While some boldly stood their ground and fought back against angry White mobs, others abandoned their property and fled the cities, hoping for safety and order to be restored. Still others, such as those who fled Cincinnati in 1829, left the United States altogether.

READING

Alexander, Leslie M. *African or African American?: Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784–1861*. Champaign and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.

Carter Jackson, Kellie. *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020.

Horton, James Oliver, and Lois E. Horton. *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700–1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

16 BLACK NATIONALISM AND EMIGRATION

An estimated 13,000 Black people departed cities such as New York, Boston, New Haven, and Baltimore in the 1820s and migrated to Haiti. Thousands more fled for West Africa, Jamaica, Canada, and elsewhere in the African diaspora, desperately seeking a home that would be more hospitable to the Black race. This lecture explores the rise of emigrationist thought in Northern Black communities and charts the development of emigration movements as Black leaders articulated a new vision of Black nationalism known as Pan-Africanism. You'll also learn why emigration was appealing to Black people in the US, which destinations were most popular, and why the movement temporarily fell into disrepute.

RISE OF THE EMIGRATION MOVEMENT

Between 1820 and 1850, thousands of Black people voluntarily fled the United States and tried to establish new lives in new countries. They sought to establish Black nations across the diaspora where they hoped Black people could live as free and equal citizens. Not surprisingly, the earliest discussions about emigration focused on West Africa. This desire for repatriation was perfectly logical given that Black people had been brutally ripped from their ancestral homeland.

Even so, the emigration movement did not take hold until 1812, with the increasing influence of an activist named Paul Cuffe, who had his own ships and crew. Cuffe was born of African and Native American heritage in Massachusetts, and he was deeply committed to improving conditions for Black people in the United States and abroad. After the international human trade was abolished in 1808, he expressed considerable interest in the growing country of Sierra Leone.

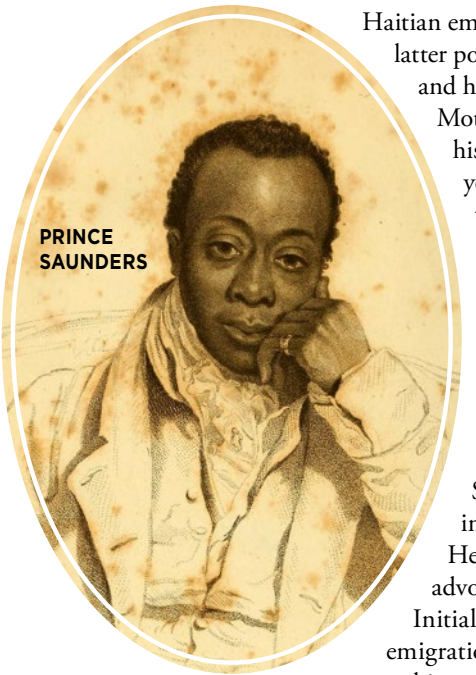
Activists in Great Britain had developed Sierra Leone in 1792 for the resettlement of African peoples who had been stolen from their homeland during slavery. In Cuffe's mind, it offered the possibility for formerly enslaved people to return to their African homeland and build a free Black nation. Thus, he and his predominately Black crew set sail from the United States in early 1811 to explore the possibility of launching a repatriation movement. They remained in Sierra Leone for over 2 months, collecting information on the development and condition of the colony.

After meeting with both British and African leaders, Cuffe was motivated to return to the United States and recruit more Black Americans to come to Sierra Leone. He also planned to create a commercial venture between Black Americans and Africans. Cuffe's burgeoning political philosophy reflected the development of early Pan-Africanism—the belief that all Black people, regardless of where they are located in the world, share a common destiny and ought to be socially, politically, and economically united.

In New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore, activists worked collectively to develop emigration strategies that supported Cuffe's plans. On December 10, 1815, Cuffe and the first group of 38 migrants left the United States, and they arrived in Freetown, Sierra Leone, about 2 months later. They were the first of thousands more who followed over the next decades.

RELOCATING TO HAITI

Although Cuffe's first repatriation effort was successful, he and other Black leaders throughout the North began to consider the possibility of other relocation sites, particularly the newly established Haitian republic. Haiti seemed to be the ultimate success story. Only in Haiti had enslaved people thrown off the shackles of slavery, toppled European imperialism, and established their own nation.



PRINCE SAUNDERS

Haitian emigration officially commenced in the latter portion of 1815, and once again, Cuffe and his associates were at the forefront. Motivated by Haiti's success, Cuffe sent his close associate Prince Saunders, a young Black schoolteacher from Boston, to investigate conditions in Haiti in 1816. Sadly, Cuffe fell ill and died before he could visit Haiti himself.

Prince Saunders was well received throughout the country, and he gained approval from Henry Christophe, who ruled northern Haiti. Upon his return to the US, Saunders set out on a speaking tour in Northern Black communities. He traveled throughout the North, advocating for Haitian emigration. Initially, there was only a small trickle of emigration to Haiti. But starting in 1820, everything changed.


JEAN-PIERRE BOYER

A new leader, Jean-Pierre Boyer, emerged in Haiti and successfully unified the country under his rule. Two years later, Boyer wrested power over the western side of the island and gained control over the entire island of Hispaniola. He sought to attract young, talented, educated men to the island to build the fledging Black nation, and soon, he implemented a program that resulted in a full-scale migration of free Black people to Haiti.

Boyer's plan found a receptive audience in Northern Black communities, largely because he espoused strong Pan-African ideologies. He also pledged numerous financial inducements. The Haitian government would pay immigrants' travel expenses and provide fertile land, tools, and schooling. Most importantly, Haiti offered full citizenship. In other words, he promised that Haiti would provide what the United States refused to bestow—freedom and justice for all.

On August 23, 1824, the first ship set sail from Philadelphia with 30 families. Within months, 19 more ships followed—just from Philadelphia alone. Over the next few years, thousands more Black Northerners fled the United States and resettled in Haiti. But despite the movement's early success, a new organization, known as the American Colonization Society (ACS), formed in 1816, and it ultimately played a significant role in the emigration movement's demise.

THE AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY

To fully understand the ACS and its influence on the emigration movement, it is essential to understand the difference between emigration and colonization. Emigration was a movement that had been initiated by Black activists who felt that their people would never achieve full equality in the

United States and therefore should seek freedom elsewhere. Colonization, however, was an idea championed by White racists who did not want to extend equality and citizenship to free Black people.

This leads into the rise of the ACS. Originally founded in December 1816, it was committed to removing Black people from the United States through either persuasion or force. Exclusively composed of White people, the ACS contained two dominant factions. One group was wealthy slaveholders who hoped that the removal of free Black people would increase the value of their slaves and discourage runaways. The other faction consisted of Northern racists who feared that free Black people would ultimately dominate the entire country. The ACS's formation received approval from both James Monroe and James Madison, and soon, the membership list included a veritable "who's who" of prominent US politicians over time, including Andrew Jackson, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln.

Although the ACS's ultimate plan was forced removal, the members initially presented themselves as a society committed to uplifting and assisting the Black community. The US, they argued, would never extend freedom and equality to Black people, and therefore it was in the Black community's best interest to leave the US and return to Africa. The ACS further demonstrated its commitment to relocating the Black population by acquiring territory on the West Coast of Africa in 1821, which it named Liberia.

Colonizationists actively plotted to forcibly remove Black people from the United States before they gained American citizenship and posed a threat to Southern slavery.

Given the discrimination, poverty, and racial violence that most Black Northerners experienced, the ACS's message resonated with many. In the early 1820s, Black people began migrating to Liberia. Over the course of the 19th century, an estimated 16,000 fled from the United States under the auspices of the ACS. Enthusiastic migrants initially wrote home with beautiful stories about their return to their African homeland. But despite the migrants' enthusiasm—and the ACS's best efforts—the Black community in the United States became increasingly suspicious of the ACS and its plans for Black removal.

THE COLORED CONVENTIONS

By 1830, free Black leaders had become deeply troubled about the ACS and its commitment to remove the free Black population from the United States. Their primary concerns centered on two interrelated matters. Black activists worried that the emigration movement could undermine the efforts of those who chose to remain in the US and fight for American citizenship. In addition, many Black Northerners feared that the emigration movement might damage those who still remained enslaved in the South. After all, if free Black people abandoned the US entirely, who would fight against slavery?

Concerns about the political consequences of emigration and colonization became especially apparent in the early 1830s, when Northern Black leaders convened what became known as the Colored Conventions. These gatherings were initially intended to provide a forum where Black activists could collectively discuss the most salient question on their minds: Should they flee the United States or stay and fight for their rights? What is perhaps most striking about the conventions is what they reveal about the Black community's changing views on emigration.

During the first convention, held in Philadelphia in September 1830, delegates still endorsed emigration and passed a resolution urging Black people to consider migrating to Canada. Interestingly, they no longer considered Haiti or West Africa as viable options. Even if racist persecution continued, they insisted, "We would rather die at home."

Opposition to emigration and colonization grew. Delegates expressed particular concerns about the ramifications for their enslaved sisters and brothers. Therefore, in 1833, convention delegates denounced emigration entirely, dissolving the emigration committee. In its final report, the emigration committee simply stated: "There is not now, and probably never will be actual necessity for a large emigration of the present race of coloured people."

Black leaders had become obsessed with public perception and the abolitionist movement. If they wanted to abolish slavery and attain American citizenship, they concluded, they would have to stay in the United States and fight. They thus redoubled their attack on the ACS by creating a committee for the purpose of discouraging "the colonization of our people, anywhere beyond the limits of this continent."

EMIGRATION TROUBLES

It's important to acknowledge that considerable practical matters also influenced Black activists' decision. Liberia, of course, was fraught with political conflict from the beginning. It did not become free from American rule until 1847, which meant that the ACS dictated every aspect of the colony's functioning for the first 26 years of the nation's existence. What's more, death tolls on the transatlantic journey were horrifically high, often reaching 50%, particularly among children. Even after arrival in Liberia, death rates remained exceedingly high, largely due to the prevalence of tropical diseases.

Moreover, local Africans understandably resented Liberia's existence and sought to reclaim control over the land. Tensions climaxed in November 1822, when over 800 Africans attacked the settlers and tried to drive them out of the colony. Although the American settlers were able to fight them off, the indigenous Africans returned to do battle 3 weeks later with a larger military force of 2,000 African men. Again, the settlers emerged victorious. Even so, hostility from local Africans remained a constant threat.

And while the Liberian colony struggled with political and social challenges, the newly formed Haitian republic faced problems of its own. By 1825, several thousand free Black Northerners had migrated to Haiti with high hopes, but they soon found themselves confronting major problems. Black Americans were culturally distinct from their Haitian counterparts in a few important ways. They particularly struggled with language barriers and religious differences and were reluctant to assimilate into Haitian society.

The American settlers were also deeply disappointed by the quality of life they encountered in Haiti. The country had been devastated by decades of war, and it was clear that it would take decades more to rebuild. Migrants also quickly became frustrated by the process of land distribution, and they worried they would be permanent laborers rather than independent landowners. In the face of these obstacles, emigration to Haiti slowed, and, in fact, there was a sizable reverse migration of Black people returning to the United States.

READING

Alexander, Leslie M. *African or African American?: Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784–1861*. Champaign and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.

Miller, Floyd. *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787–1863*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975.

Moses, Wilson Jeremiah, ed. *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey*. New York: New York University Press, 1996.

———. *Liberian Dreams: Back-to-Africa Narratives from the 1850s*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.

Stuckey, Sterling. *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1972.

17 FROM ANTISLAVERY TO ABOLITION

This lecture examines the rise of the abolitionist movement in the United States. Specifically, you'll explore the shift in antislavery sentiment that began in the 1820s and reached its pinnacle in the 1840s and 1850s—a shift that radicalized the movement against slavery and ultimately led to the Civil War. This lecture will discuss, in particular, how Black activists inspired antislavery leaders to take a radical turn away from gradual emancipation toward immediate abolition. Finally, you'll explore the various strategies that abolitionists used to convince White Americans to bring an immediate end to slavery and the ideological rifts that eventually created an irrevocable split in the abolitionist coalition.

APPEAL TO THE COLORED CITIZENS OF THE WORLD

In 1829, David Walker, a Black activist in New England, published the most incendiary abolitionist tract the United States had ever seen—*Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*. In article one, he argued that slavery in the Americas was the worst, most brutal, and most inhumane system of human bondage that the world had ever known. In each of the following articles, Walker's *Appeal* highlighted three other key problems. Black people had internalized slavery, he warned, and had accepted their subordinate position in society. He also charged White Christian preachers with racism and criticized them for using the Bible to uphold slavery. Lastly, he attacked the ACS and its efforts to remove Black people from the United States.

But Walker also sought to inspire enslaved people to fight against slavery, to awaken Christian leaders to the immorality of slavery, and to prove that Black people had the same rights to freedom and citizenship in the United States as White people. Perhaps the most controversial sections in the *Appeal* declared that there must be an immediate end to slavery.

The *Appeal* spread rapidly across the North and soon found its way into the South. Reportedly, its appearance in the South was largely due to Black sailors, who smuggled it in by sewing pages into the lining of their clothes. Immediately upon the *Appeal*'s arrival, terrified slaveholders banned it from their territories. Black people in Southern cities such as Charleston and New Orleans were arrested for distributing the *Appeal*, and multiple port cities barred Black sailors from disembarking to prevent its dissemination. But nothing could hinder the *Appeal*'s growing distribution, nor could anything stem the tide of the growing radicalism within the abolitionist community.

RADICAL ABOLITION

For activists of the 19th century, there were critical differences between a person who was antislavery and a true abolitionist. Once the movement took a more radical turn, antislavery primarily referred to the earlier generation—the leaders and strategies that had been embraced following the American Revolution. This early movement was primarily led by benevolent White

people who wanted to use gradual approaches to eliminate slavery for political, economic, or moral reasons. But for abolitionists, there could be no compromise with slavery. Instead, they advocated a political philosophy known as immediatism, which demanded an immediate end to slavery everywhere.

Unlike previous generations, this new generation of abolitionists was a biracial coalition of activists who, much like David Walker, emphasized the injustice, immorality, and inhumanity of slavery. And true abolitionists also wanted to build a truly egalitarian society in which Black people would share the same rights as White people.

There were four primary influences that led to radical abolition. First, as Walker's *Appeal* demonstrates, Black abolitionists became more involved in the battle against slavery in the late 1820s and 1830s. As Black people joined the movement, they articulated a different vision and promoted a different

ANTI-SLAVERY MEETING ON THE COMMON.

agenda. For them, the battle against slavery was deeply personal. Thus, the radicalization of the abolitionist movement can be directly attributed to two other developments that were explicitly connected to Black activists.

One was the publication of Walker's *Appeal*. Before the *Appeal*'s circulation, no one had heard a Black person speak so clearly, passionately, and powerfully about slavery's horrors and why it needed to be eradicated. The other was Nat Turner's rebellion, which brought national attention to the issue of slavery. The coordinated, bloody uprising against slavery forced White people to consider that slavery posed a threat to national security, and it pushed many moderate antislavery advocates toward the realization that they must bring an immediate end to it.

The final shift toward abolition was marked by the national rise of William Lloyd Garrison, who eventually became the most famous White abolitionist in the United States. As a young man, Garrison was heavily influenced by the Second Great Awakening, a religious movement that held sway over the US during much of the 1830s and shaped a series of radical reform movements, including abolition. In Garrison's case, the goal of moral reform led him to embrace the battle against slavery.

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON

Only 25 years old when he joined the movement, Garrison quickly gained the respect and admiration of seasoned activists in both the White and Black communities. In 1830, he traveled across the northern United States, visiting with Black activists, such as William Watkins and Hezekiah Grice, who significantly influenced his thinking. Soon, Garrison began speaking publicly against slavery, and he spent 49 days in jail for slander after he chastised a slave trader. While incarcerated, he lived alongside fugitive slaves who were awaiting re-enslavement; upon release, he pledged to devote his life to righting the wrongs that White people had committed against the Black race.

The following year, in 1831, Garrison radically altered the national conversation about slavery when he created a newspaper entirely dedicated to the cause of abolition. Harnessing the power of the press, Garrison used *The Liberator* to expose the horrors of slavery and to garner support for the abolitionist movement across the nation. In its early years, *The Liberator* relied

almost exclusively on Black financial and political support for its survival, though few had the means to contribute much.

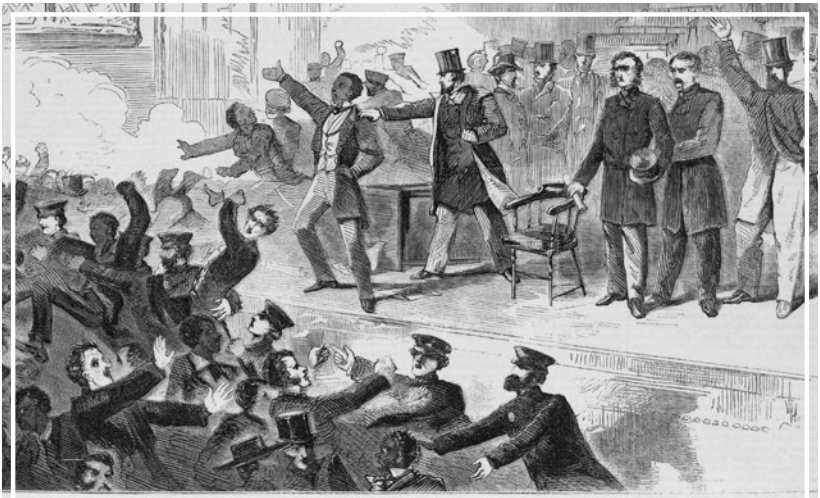
In the newspaper's first 3 years, three-quarters of its readers were free Black people, largely due to a dedicated corps of Black agents who sold and disseminated it. But *The Liberator* soon gained a much wider following—particularly in the North—after Garrison formed the first national abolitionist organization. In 1832, just 1 year after *The Liberator* began publication, he joined with other activists in Boston, including celebrated Black abolitionist Charles Lenox Remond, to form the New England Anti-Slavery Society.

Garrison's paper, *The Liberator*, used a strategy that eventually became known as moral suasion, predicated on the idea that White people could be persuaded to end slavery if they were shown the intensity of slavery's immorality and cruelty.

In 1833, Garrison urged the creation of a national organization, the American Anti-Slavery Society. The society quickly attracted members across the North and West. Like *The Liberator*, it embraced moral suasion as its core philosophy. Drawing heavily upon Christian appeals, members emphasized that slavery dehumanized all people, both Black and White. They insisted that it bred sinfulness among slaveholders because slavery led to brutal and ungodly conduct. They even criticized Northern White people who benefited from products produced by slave hands and profited from financial relationships with Southerners.

ABOLITION EFFORTS

As the abolitionist movement grew and became more organized, activists used multiple strategies to, as they put it, "plead the cause of the slave." In addition to developing several more abolitionist newspapers, they circulated antislavery literature. They also developed a public speaking circuit, largely composed of formerly enslaved people, to raise national consciousness about the immorality of slavery. Perhaps the most famous speaker on the circuit was Frederick Douglass, a formerly enslaved activist.



EXPULSION OF NEGROES AND ABOLITIONISTS FROM TREMONT TEMPLE, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, ON DECEMBER 3, 1860.—[SEE PAGE 787.]

Meanwhile, throughout the 1830s and 1840s, the American Anti-Slavery Society bombarded the US Congress with various petitions opposing slavery. Female activists were especially committed to petitioning, circulating thousands of petitions each year demanding an end to slavery and injustice. These efforts were so effective and so disruptive to the political system that in 1836, Congress banned petitions about slavery from being debated on the congressional floor. But if anything, activists redoubled their efforts. By the late 1830s and early 1840s, militant abolitionists poured their energy into the protection and defense of fugitives fleeing bondage in the South. Organizations known as vigilance committees sprung up across the North and West, helping enslaved people gain freedom.

Vigilance committees raised funds to supply food, shelter, and legal representation for alleged fugitives and often assisted in transporting fugitives to safe locations. They even provided money, clothing, and resources to help them begin new lives as free people.

Again, women were largely responsible for such efforts, regularly holding fairs and bake sales to raise money to fund the movement. These committees also became involved in daring rescues that delivered freedom-seeking Black people from the hands of enslavers. Their efforts eventually became the model for the Underground Railroad.

THE SPLIT OF THE ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT

Despite the abolitionist movement's relative success, several ideological conflicts ultimately caused the movement to splinter into warring factions. First, there was a fundamental debate over moral suasion as a philosophy. At its core, moral suasion was predicated on the idea that slaveholders could be convinced to voluntarily abandon slavery. But in a society driven by financial gain, why would an enslaver simply give up their property? Therefore, many in the abolitionist movement, particularly those in the radical wing, began to question, and eventually abandon, their belief in moral suasion as a strategy.

Moreover, even within the American Anti-Slavery Society, racism and sexism persisted. For instance, when the society was founded, only a handful of Black activists were allowed to participate, and this pattern continued as the years went by. Soon, Black activists began speaking out against the organization's racism.

By the late 1830s, growing concern emerged within the abolitionist community about the efficacy of Garrison's unique political philosophy. He had developed some fairly radical ideas that were not universally embraced in the movement. First, he turned his back on the religious philosophy that had originally inspired his abolitionist views. As Garrison pointed out, most Christian denominations allowed slaveholding members and refused to denounce slavery. Garrison also asserted that abolitionists should not engage in American politics and should even abstain from voting. In his view, the US government had been founded on slavery and racism, and all of the founding documents were fundamentally proslavery because they did not explicitly outlaw slavery.

The final issue that threatened the abolitionist coalition was women's rights. Garrison and his supporters strongly believed that women should exist on equal terms with men. But many in the abolitionist movement rejected this idea because they worried that women's rights would draw attention away from slavery and overshadow the abolitionist cause.

As these political and ideological conflicts gradually came to light, the ideological lines became more sharply drawn. Soon, there were two distinct factions within the American Anti-Slavery Society. Activists on both sides scrambled to prepare for the national convention in New York City in May 1840, which ultimately became a showdown, where the anti-Garrison faction attempted to wrest control of the national organization and eliminate Garrison's influence.

The coalition finally collapsed when Garrison presented a motion to appoint a woman to the business committee. After a vehement argument, the motion to allow female leadership passed, but only by a narrow margin. Immediately thereafter, the anti-Garrison faction, led by the Tappan brothers, abandoned the American Anti-Slavery Society and took more than 300 delegates with them. The following day, they convened in an alternate location and established their own organization, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. Soon thereafter, they also created an alternative political party, known as the Liberty Party; many of its members later went on to create the Republican Party in the 1850s.

READING

Blackett, Richard J. M. *Building an Antislavery Wall: Black Americans in the Atlantic Abolitionist Movement, 1830–1860*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983.

Quarles, Benjamin. *Black Abolitionists*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Sinha, Manisha. *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

18 BLACK POLITICAL THINKERS IN THE NORTH

Without question, Northern Black activists in the 19th century shared a common commitment to abolition, citizenship, and equality. However, they often had radically different ideas about what strategies they should use to end slavery and obtain citizenship, and they certainly had different views about the appropriate role for women in the struggle for justice. This lecture explores the development of Black political and intellectual thought in the antebellum North by highlighting a few key activists, including Frederick Douglass, David Walker, Maria Stewart, and Sojourner Truth, whose ideas shook the US political system to its core.

DAVID WALKER

Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World, published in 1829, was the first nationally circulated critique of slavery and racism written by a Black person, and it played a critical role in radicalizing the abolitionist movement. Most significantly, it issued a bold call for armed rebellion against slavery and even promised that God would support their efforts.

Although born in the South in 1785 to Black parents, David Walker was legally free because he was among the fortunate few to be born to a legally free Black mother in the South. But as a young man, he still routinely witnessed the brutality of slavery, and thus, he resolved to dedicate his life to abolishing it.

In 1825, Walker fled the South and settled in Boston, Massachusetts. By the late 1820s, he had become a rising figure in the abolitionist community. He was a Prince Hall Mason, a member of an influential Black benevolent association, and served as an agent for *Freedom's Journal*, the first Black newspaper in the United States. Local abolitionists encouraged him to join the speaking circuit, and his speeches eventually became the foundation for his *Appeal*.

In the *Appeal*, he urged enslaved and free Black people to fight unceasingly against slavery and to reject the myth of Black inferiority. He also sought to compel the American church to abandon proslavery ideology and to urge Black people to assert their rights as Americans. The *Appeal* also contained special messages for the White population, prophesizing a bloody conflict if White Americans did not quickly ban the slave regime. Released in the autumn of 1829, it was widely circulated throughout the United States and quickly led to a second edition. At first, it was disseminated primarily among Northern abolitionists and in free Black communities, but it eventually reached the hands of proslavery advocates as well.

White Southerners fought hard to keep the *Appeal* from entering their borders, but Black activists were both clever and persistent. Black sailors smuggled the *Appeal* into Southern seaports, and Black preachers secretly read it aloud to enslaved people on Southern plantations. In response, throughout the South, the *Appeal* was labeled as "seditious material," and politicians

imposed harsh sanctions on anyone who was caught in possession of it. But despite opposition, the *Appeal* still circulated across the country and served as a source of inspiration to Black and White abolitionists alike.

Walker's life was tragically cut short. In June 1830, just after the publication of the *Appeal*'s third edition, he was found dead on the steps of his tailor shop. His death certificate lists tuberculosis as the cause of death, but rumors persisted that he had actually been poisoned. Regardless, his passionate call for Black unity and empowerment lived on in the struggle against slavery and in the Black leadership's efforts to unite and find solutions to their plight.

MARIA STEWART

David Walker's influence can probably be most clearly seen in Maria Stewart. Before his death, Walker served as a mentor to Maria, and his political philosophy significantly shaped her own. Born free in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1803, Maria lost her parents at the age of only 5. She was quickly indentured to a local minister, for whom she worked as a servant for much of her young life. Sometime between the ages of 15 and 20, she moved to Boston, where she continued to work as a domestic servant. She also became literate, learning how to read and write during Sunday school classes.

In 1826, she married James Stewart, whose business acumen placed him in the small Black middle class. The Stewarts soon became part of the active free Black Bostonian community, and they became acquainted with David Walker and other radical Black abolitionists. Sadly, in December 1829, James Stewart died of a heart attack. Months later, David Walker also died, leaving Maria emotionally bereft. Even so, she quickly found solace in religion and in her political beliefs, and she began to express her views publicly.

For instance, appearing before a crowd in September 1832, she began with a simple, but powerful, question: "Why sit ye here and die?" That is, how could Black people sit idly by and watch as slavery grew, expanded, and thrived? And how could they passively observe as legally free Black Northerners were denied all the basic rights of citizenship and equality? She insisted that Black people must rise up and seek their rights, and women must join the fight.

"Who shall go forward," she asked, "and take off the reproach that is cast upon the people of color? Shall it be a woman?" For her, it was God's will for Black people to be free and for women to stand forth in equality.

In February 1833, she gave one of her last public addresses. Speaking at the African Masonic Hall, she again spoke to an integrated audience, demanding action from Black men. By this time, Maria had become increasingly incensed about the failure of activism and leadership in the Black community, and she castigated Black men, in particular, for lacking "ambition and requisite courage." Infuriated that she had criticized inaction in the Black community, male abolitionists angrily drove her from the public stage.

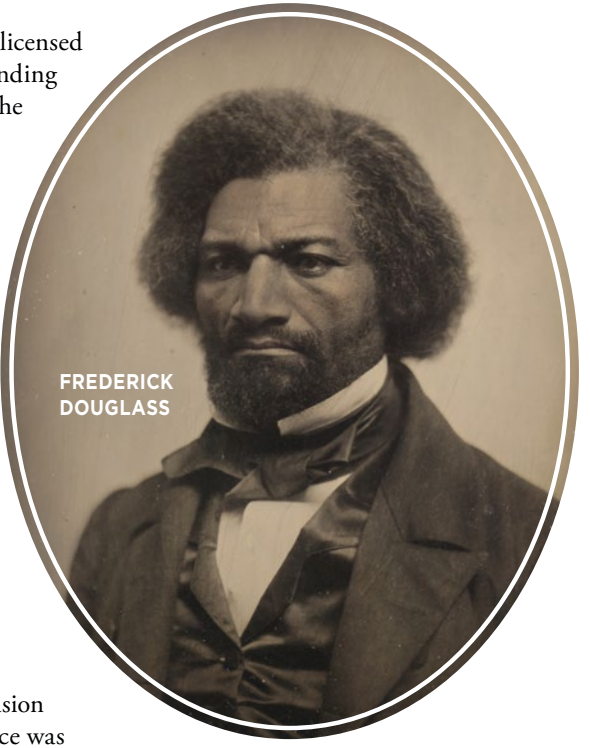
Maria never fully abandoned the movement, but she never spoke publicly again. For the remainder of her career, she worked as a teacher—first in New York and later in Baltimore and Washington DC. After the Civil War, she worked for the Freedmen's Hospital and retired at 75. One year later, she died.

As David Walker and Maria Stewart faded from the political scene, so did some of their radical ideas. Instead, most Black abolitionists embraced a more moderate and palatable version of abolition than Walker's and Stewart's.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

As the 1830s progressed into the 1840s, the leading Black spokesperson for the abolitionist struggle was Frederick Douglass. Douglass was born into slavery in Maryland in 1818. Separated from his mother as an infant, he was sent to labor on a plantation as a young boy and later as a domestic slave in a household in Baltimore. At about the age of 15, he was sent to work for a poor farmer, Edward Covey, who routinely beat Douglass quite severely. One day, Douglass decided to fight back and emerged victorious. From that point on, he resolved to be free.

Douglass finally fled from slavery aboard a train in 1838, with the assistance of his future wife, Anna, a free Black woman in Baltimore. Dressed in a sailor's uniform that Anna provided him, along with money and falsified free papers, he traveled safely to New York City. Anna soon joined him, and they eventually settled in Massachusetts and took the surname "Douglass."


FREDERICK DOUGLASS

In 1839, Douglass became a licensed preacher and also began attending abolitionist meetings. Soon, he became an avid supporter of William Lloyd Garrison, who endorsed moral suasion and strongly opposed David Walker's call for armed resistance. This philosophy, which became known as Garrisonian nonresistance, became central to Douglass's views. In 1841, Douglass delivered his first public speech against slavery and quickly became the most popular speaker on the antislavery circuit.

Douglass's faith in moral suasion and Garrisonian nonresistance was eventually put to the test as various Black activists openly challenged his views and reasserted Walker's endorsement of armed resistance against slavery. Douglass never explicitly embraced violent means, but over time, his ideas became increasingly radical. In 1847, he and Garrison had a very public split. The only issue on which the men continued to agree was women's rights, which Douglass unequivocally supported

In 1845, Douglass published his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, which became the most widely read piece of literature written by a Black person.

throughout his life. But he became convinced that the abolitionist movement needed a more radical approach if they ever hoped to win the fight against slavery.

In 1852, Douglass gave his most famous speech, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" Delivered on the anniversary of US independence, he highlighted the painful contradiction between America's purported freedom in the midst of slavery. About 5 years later, he nearly endorsed violent struggle. In 1857, he appeared at an abolitionist gathering in New York state and exclaimed:

> If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.
>
> This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.

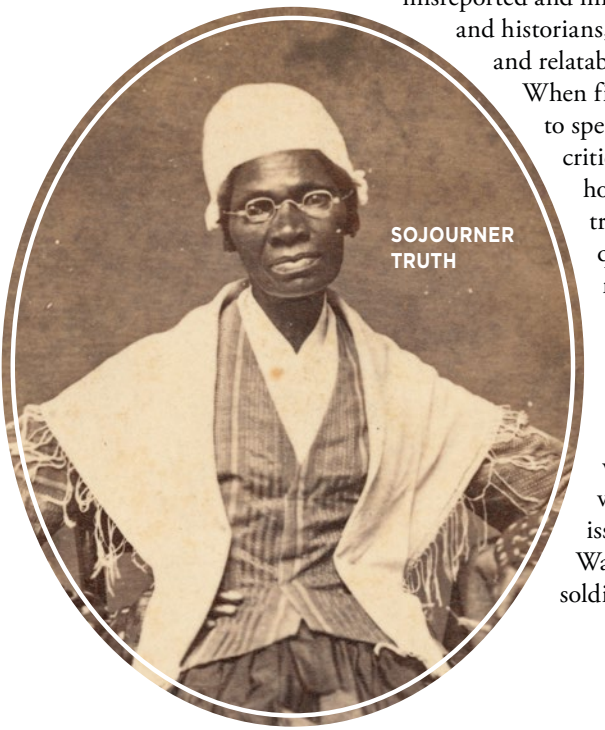
Douglass persisted in this view until 1861. But once the Civil War commenced, he regained hope that slavery would finally end in the United States and equality would be achieved.

SOJOURNER TRUTH

In 1797, a child named Isabella was born into slavery in rural New York. She and her parents were owned by a Dutch enslaver named Charles Hardenbergh. Although Isabella was able to live with her parents, Hardenbergh sold most of her siblings away. Worse, when she was only 9 years old, her owner died, and she was sold away from her parents and enslaved by a cruel man who beat her mercilessly. She was soon sold again and was owned multiple times by cruel and abusive owners until she finally fled from bondage in 1826—just 1 year before slavery was abolished in New York State.

After securing her freedom, she began a new life in New York City, working as a domestic servant. She also converted to Christianity, becoming a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. In 1843, she came to believe that God had called her to become an itinerant preacher. Taking a new name—Sojourner Truth—she began traveling across the North, preaching the gospel. The following year, she became acquainted with numerous leading abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, David Ruggles, and William Lloyd Garrison. In 1844, she delivered her first abolitionist lecture and committed her life to fighting against slavery and for women's rights.

Sojourner Truth never learned to read or write, but she spoke the truth, from her heart and from her own experience. And in so doing, she inspired generations of activists. Perhaps the most famous speech she delivered was at a Women's Rights Convention in 1851. This event, which has been largely misreported and misrepresented by activists and historians, reflected her wise and relatable way of thinking. When finally afforded a chance to speak at the event, she criticized the hypocrisy in how Black women were treated under slavery and questioned why White men couldn't simply embrace equality.


SOJOURNER TRUTH

In the years that followed, she continued advocating for abolition, women's rights, and a variety of social justice issues. During the Civil War, she recruited Black soldiers for the Union, and

following the war, she fought to gain land grants from the federal government to assist formerly enslaved people. Toward the end of her life, she even spoke out in favor of prison reform and condemned capital punishment.

READING

Blight, David. *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018.

Hinks, Peter. *To Awaken My Afflicted Brethren: David Walker and the Problem of Antebellum Slave Resistance*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.

Stuckey, Sterling. *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1972.

Washington, Margaret. *Sojourner Truth's America*. Champaign and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

Waters, Kristin. *Maria W. Stewart and the Roots of Black Political Thought*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021.

19 THE BLACK STRUGGLE FOR CITIZENSHIP

This lecture will continue the discussion of Black political thought in the antebellum North. It will focus, in particular, on the questions of strategy that plagued Black leaders during this era. By the 1840s, most Black activists had resolved to stay in the United States and fight for abolition, equality, and citizenship. But they did not agree about which strategy or method they should employ to achieve their goals. Here, you will delve deeply into the ideological conflicts that stymied the Black freedom struggle in the early 1840s and discover how activists finally forged a united front. You'll also explore how White Northerners responded to Black people's efforts to destroy discrimination and obtain the right to vote.

IDEOLOGICAL RIFTS

The abolitionist coalition splintered in the spring of 1840, causing deep, insurmountable ideological rifts among activists over strategy. Thus, Black activists turned within, keenly aware that they had to make their own decisions about which strategies they believed would be most effective to end slavery and bring social equality. So, throughout the 1840s, Black leaders resuscitated the Colored Conventions movement that they had begun in the 1830s. Through the conventions, they hoped to find common ground and create a plan for destroying slavery and gaining the rights of full citizenship. They also desperately wanted to establish a sense of solidarity.

But much like the broader abolitionist movement, Black activists argued over the method that would be more likely to eradicate slavery. Tensions over strategy exploded in August 1843, when two of the nation's most famous young Black activists, Frederick Douglass and Henry Highland Garnet, squared off over moral suasion versus direct action. Moral suasion had been the dominant political philosophy among abolitionists during much of the 1830s. It was predicated on the idea that slavery could be effectively eliminated through moral appeals. But by the early 1840s, many activists, especially young Black leaders like Henry Highland Garnet, had come to believe that moral suasion might need to be replaced with direct action.

In August 1843, when Garnet delivered his address to the slaves during the Colored Convention, he unleashed the most militant manifesto on the Black experience since David Walker's *Appeal*. Garnet, who strongly opposed Garrisonian nonresistance, boldly dismissed moral appeals and insisted that the time had come for Black people to liberate themselves. He urged enslaved people to seize their own freedom, peacefully if they could but by force if necessary.

Garnet's message created tremendous concern among those who endorsed Garrisonian nonresistance. Convention leaders and various delegates worried that his words were too contentious and revolutionary. Among the strongest detractors was Frederick Douglass, who, at the time, was a staunch Garrisonian. At the conclusion of Garnet's speech, Douglass rose in opposition, arguing that there was "too much physical force" in the address.

Debate over Garnet's speech consumed much of the convention's agenda over the next 2 days. After two rounds of voting, Garnet's address ultimately failed to receive the endorsement of the convention, which revealed a deep rift within the leadership over strategy.

As former supporters of moral suasion embraced direct action, Black men who had previously supported conservative policies toward women acquiesced to the demand for women's participation.

While the 1843 convention failed to reach a decisive consensus, two additional Colored Conventions were held in 1847 and 1848 that brought hope to the Black freedom struggle. Reflecting national trends, Black leaders distanced themselves from moral suasion and issued urgent calls for action and racial solidarity. In fact, during the 1847 convention, Frederick Douglass led a committee that issued a powerful statement highlighting the failure of moral suasion and calling for action.

The leaders also unveiled a startling resolution regarding the role of women, which proclaimed that, based on their belief "in the equality of the sexes," they would invite women to participate in future gatherings. Their decision signaled a crucial victory for Black women and demonstrated that Black activists were moving toward reconciliation.

The same spirit of solidarity dominated the Colored Conventions in the 1850s, as delegates articulated a burning sense of urgency about the plight of their people. They focused their attention on the interrelated issues of slavery and discrimination and pledged to use all reasonable means to obtain freedom for the enslaved and justice for the entire race. But they still struggled to determine which tactics would be the most effective weapons in their battle against slavery and racism.

By the 1850s, most Black leaders had abandoned moral suasion, but some activists still hoped that they could liberate their people by transforming American consciousness. In 1853, for example, delegates turned to the United States' founding documents, insisting that the Constitution and the principles of American society guaranteed all humans, including Black people, equal access to citizenship rights. But most White Americans were not prepared to

recognize Black people's humanity or their rights to freedom and citizenship. After all, the social, political, and economic foundation of American society depended too strongly on slavery and oppression to allow a moral or political awakening.

NORTHERN SEGREGATION

During the 19th century, segregation was common practice in the North, particularly in public spaces, such as public streetcars. The fight against Northern segregation in the 1850s began with a few brave Black women. On July 16, 1854, two Black women, Elizabeth Jennings and Sarah Adams, attempted to board a streetcar in New York City. According to their testimony, they were "brutally outraged and insulted" by a streetcar conductor who denied them entrance and told them that they must wait for the next car that was specifically intended for Black passengers.

Elizabeth Jennings replied firmly, insisting that she did not want to be detained, and she refused to leave. The conductor and the driver violently dragged her from the car. Fearful about the brute force being used against Jennings, Sarah Adams repeatedly yelled, "Don't kill her!" Meanwhile, Jennings continually tried to regain her seat until the frustrated conductor finally brought her to a police officer. The policeman claimed that she was attempting to start a riot and ultimately forced Jennings and Adams to leave.

In response to Jennings's ordeal, the New York City Black community organized a mass meeting, passing a series of resolutions denouncing the conductor's actions and declaring their equal right to ride in the streetcars. Several months later, a young attorney, Chester Arthur, who later became president of the United States, brought Jennings's case before a judge and jury. Surprisingly, the judge found in her favor, concluding that Black people had the same right to ride as other citizens and could not be excluded based on race.

Even so, the struggle against segregated streetcars continued across the North. Within months, other Black people, including activists Henry Highland Garnet and Peter Porter, were attacked and removed from public streetcars. These continued attacks prompted Elizabeth Jennings's father, Thomas Jennings Sr., and others to create the Legal Rights Association to lobby for

integrated transportation. They filed a series of lawsuits attacking the system of segregation. In the end, the Jennings case was a crucial victory. Due in part to this precedent, the New York State Supreme Court finally declared in 1858 that Black people had the same rights in public conveyances as any other citizen. This ruling desegregated public transportation in New York State and eventually across the North.

NORTHERN DISENFRANCHISEMENT

As Black Northerners battled against segregation, they simultaneously reaffirmed their commitment to fighting against the denial of citizenship. By 1830, nearly all White men in America had the right to vote, but only four states in the North allowed Black men the unrestricted right to vote: New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and Massachusetts. The first three states had miniscule Black populations, which meant that extending voting rights to Black men posed no real threat to White political authority. Massachusetts had a slightly larger Black population, but there, politicians had been influenced by natural rights philosophy. Even so, the only place in the state with a sizable Black population was Boston, so Black men still exercised little political power on the state level.

Only one other Northern state, New York, extended Black men voting privileges, but on a very limited basis. The state instituted property qualifications, which required Black men to own $250 worth of property to gain voting rights, thus limiting the number of eligible voters among New York's Black male population. In New York City, for example, out of 16,000 Black residents in 1840, less than 90 Black men were eligible to vote.

Disfranchisement became particularly frustrating in the late 1830s and 1840s, as recent European immigrants began gaining voting rights while Black men did not. According to the Naturalization Act of 1790, full citizenship was granted to any White man who resided in the United States for longer than 2 years. As the United States received an influx of migrants, particularly from Germany and Ireland, thousands of European men received voting rights, while Black men remained politically impotent. In response, Black activists across the North organized on the local, state, and national levels to obtain unrestricted suffrage rights.

On the national level, perhaps the most compelling effort came from William Cooper Nell, a Black activist who published a manifesto in 1855. Titled *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*, Nell's book was designed to appeal to American notions of respectability. Hoping to prove that Black men were worthy of citizenship, he documented Black men's service in the American Revolution and the War of 1812. In a poignant conclusion, he claimed that Black people had demonstrated more loyalty to the United States than any other group because they continued to love America even though America hated them.

But most Black men in the North did not gain the unrestricted right to vote until the passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870. And Black women, of course, did not gain voting rights until the 19th Amendment in 1920. Instead, by the dawn of the Civil War, most Black people in the North remained second-class citizens without a political voice. Perhaps for this reason, beginning in the late 1840s, Black people turned their attention, once again, to the emigration question.

REVITALIZING EMIGRATIONISM

Quite significantly, Henry Highland Garnet was among those who revitalized emigrationism. In January 1848, he wrote to Frederick Douglass expressing frustration about the slow progress regarding abolition and equal rights. The following year, Garnet publicly declared his support for emigration to any country that could provide freedom, equal rights, and citizenship to Black people. He felt particularly enthusiastic about Liberia, which had gained its independence from the United States in 1847. He soon created the African Civilization Society—an organization designed to promote emigration to West Africa.

During this era, many other prominent Black activists shared Garnet's desire to flee the United States, but not everyone agreed on the proper destination. For example, Garnet promoted Liberia and later considered Jamaica and Haiti; Martin Delany also encouraged repatriation to West Africa, while Mary Ann Shadd Cary and her supporters endorsed Canada.

Quite shockingly, even Frederick Douglass began to change his views. The United States offered no compelling reason to remain, he said, since "the inducements offered to the colored man to remain here are few, feeble and very uncertain." Thus, in the spring of 1861, Douglass planned a trip to Port-au-Prince to investigate the possibility of migrating to Haiti. Instead, shots were fired signaling the start of the Civil War, causing him to refocus his energy on the United States.

Although Frederick Douglass had been a staunch anti-emigrationist for most of his career, the political climate in the 1850s caused him to lose hope.

Most Black emigrationists waited to see how the war would unfold. But by 1863, following the Emancipation Proclamation, most Black activists finally turned their attention to the United States in hopes that slavery would finally be abolished.

READING

Alexander, Leslie M. *African or African American?: Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784–1861*. Champaign and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.

Jones, Martha. *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Pryor, Elizabeth. *Colored Travelers: Mobility and the Fight for Citizenship before the Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021.

20 RUNNING FOR FREEDOM

In January 1856, an enslaved woman named Margaret Garner fled from slavery with her husband and their four children. But when Archibald Gaines, their enslaver, chased them down, Garner resolved to give her children freedom in the afterlife and attempted to kill them, which resulted in the death of her 2-year-old daughter. She was quickly taken into custody. Over the next 2 weeks, a complicated court battle ensued, based on one central question: Was Margaret a "person" or "property"? As you'll see, this became not only one of the most tragic but also one of the most famous cases in the battle against slavery. This lecture explores the stories of fugitives—enslaved people who seized their own freedom and sacrificed everything to emancipate themselves from bondage.

FUGITIVES

During much of the 19th century, fugitives were a constant source of frustration to enslavers. The problem increased starting in the 1820s and expanded dramatically in the 1830s and 1840s. That's because by 1804, almost every state in the North had passed gradual emancipation acts, making most of the North legally free in the 1820s. And by the early 1830s, the entire North was essentially free territory. Northern cities, in particular, were viewed as safe havens for fugitives, where they could blend into the larger Black population.

From the perspective of plantation owners, runaways posed a serious threat. In their minds, every enslaved person they owned was a massive financial investment. And whenever someone managed to flee bondage and gain freedom, that person's triumph undermined slavery socially and psychologically, too. It reminded enslaved people and enslavers alike that freedom was possible and within reach. And for White Southerners, it also served as a reminder that Northerners offered a safe harbor for those who sought their freedom, at least in theory.

However, flight was dangerous, difficult, and often unsuccessful. For this reason, most fugitives who attempted to gain freedom would only take temporary refuge in nearby woods or swamps to avoid work or punishment and then return. In other cases, enslaved people intended to run all the way to freedom but found the journey far too perilous.

Some fugitives engaged in a temporary form of flight that gave them a brief reprieve from slavery. This practice, which historians often call *petit marronage*, was quite common.

For those who ran and were caught, the punishments were often unspeakable. Captured fugitives were beaten, tortured, mutilated, and sometimes dismembered—in part to prevent the person from running again but also as a form of psychological terrorism that would deter anyone else from making

a similar attempt. Even those who successfully reached freedom still knew severe, violent punishment awaited—not only for themselves, if they were caught, but also for those they left behind. Many enslavers would torture, beat, and even sell away the fugitive's family members as retribution.

THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Given the myriad challenges that fugitives faced, organizations began to form across the North and West, designed to hide, harbor, assist, and defend fugitives. These vigilance committees labored to protect fugitives coming from the South and to prevent those in the North from being captured and returned to slavery. The committees initially operated on the local level. But sometime in the early 1840s, and perhaps even earlier, a more coordinated, regional effort began to take shape. Soon, there was a vast network of abolitionists, known as conductors, who transported fugitives and used safe houses to hide them. This system eventually became known as the Underground Railroad.

According to at least one estimate, by 1850, the Underground Railroad had brought over 100,000 enslaved people to freedom. A massive collective of clandestine routes and committed activists, the system, at its height, expanded northward deep into Canada, and it went as far south as Mexico and the Caribbean, including Jamaica and Haiti. Conductors comprised former slaves or fugitives, White abolitionists or religious leaders, and even sympathetic Native Americans. Most of what is known about the Underground Railroad's operations is based on a few letters and documents as well as narratives that were later written either by fugitives or by conductors.

One of the most detailed narratives was written by a formerly enslaved man named Thomas Smallwood, who had managed to purchase his own freedom near Washington DC. Some historians believe he created the first branch of the Underground Railroad, using his own home as a center for organizing. In 1842,

The Underground Railroad had no headquarters and no published materials to organize it. It functioned almost entirely based on word of mouth.

just between March and November, Smallwood and his supporters managed to smuggle at least 150 enslaved people to the North. Soon, fearing detection, he and his family fled in early 1843, first to Baltimore and then to Toronto, Canada. But his efforts continued in his absence and eventually blossomed into the Underground Railroad.

Of course, the most famous figure on the Underground Railroad was Harriet Tubman. Born into slavery in Maryland sometime in the early 1820s, she was originally known by the name Aminata, or Minty. At the age of only 5, she was required to continually rock the master's baby in its cradle. Whenever the baby cried, Minty received a brutal beating—and she carried the scars forever after. As a teenager, she received another traumatic injury when an overseer hit her in the head with a large metal weight. She never fully recovered, suffering from headaches and seizures for the rest of her life.

Finally, in 1849, after engaging in temporary flight more than once, Minty permanently escaped. Tapping into the Underground Railroad, she received assistance along the way and arrived safely in Philadelphia. Eventually, she took the name Harriet and began life as a free person, and over the next 11 years, she returned to Maryland 13 times and brought an estimated 70 people to freedom.

THE CRAFTS

While Harriet Tubman received acclaim for her tenacity and persistence, others gained fame for their creative escapes. William and Ellen Craft, for example, traveled over 1,000 miles from captivity in Georgia, and no one could have imagined the extraordinary strategy they used to gain their freedom.

Although enslaved, Ellen was only one-quarter Black and was extremely light-skinned. Using her appearance to their advantage, William and Ellen decided to disguise her as a White man. Gaining passage on a train, Ellen pretended to be a sickly White man seeking medical care in the North, and William posed as her slave.

Although they narrowly escaped detection a few times, they mostly traveled quite easily, staying in first-class accommodations on trains and steamships. After traveling by train and steamboat through South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Washington DC, and Maryland, the Crafts arrived safely in Philadelphia before moving on to Boston. There, they became ardent activists, advocating for abolition at every opportunity. But 2 years later, their former owner attempted to capture and re-enslave them. Thankfully, with the assistance of the abolitionist community, they fled to England, where they lived and fought against slavery until their return to the United States following the Civil War.

HENRY BROWN

Born into slavery in Virginia in 1815, Henry Brown toiled on a plantation for much of his early life. But as a young man, he was sent to the city to work in a tobacco factory in Richmond. At some point in the 1840s, he was allowed to take a wife—an enslaved woman named Nancy—and they had three children together. But in 1849, Nancy and their children were cruelly sold away. He never saw them again.

Traumatized by this loss, he resolved to escape from slavery. He convinced two men—a free Black man and a sympathetic White man—to assist with his escape. He urged them to nail him into a wooden crate and ship him northward. The two men did as Brown requested and mailed him with a label marked "dry goods" to a man named Passmore Williamson.

Williamson was an ardent abolitionist in Philadelphia and a member of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, which served as a branch of the Underground Railroad. The crate was only 3 feet tall by 2 feet wide and had just one hole for air. The journey from Richmond to Philadelphia took 27 hours—during which Brown was transported by steamship, wagon, and

railroad. Brown carried only some water and a few biscuits with him, and numerous times he was placed upside down for hours. But finally, he arrived in Philadelphia.

Brown became a popular speaker on the antislavery circuit and quickly earned the nickname Box. He later published a narrative of his life but eventually fled to England for his safety and protection.

ANTHONY BURNS AND MARGARET GARNER

Unfortunately, most stories of escape were painful, harrowing, and deadly. One of the most famous stories involved a man named Anthony Burns, who was publicly seized and taken into custody after the passage of a new federal Fugitive Slave Act in 1850.

Burns was born into slavery in Virginia. At about the age of 20, he was sent to work in Richmond, where he met free Black sailors who encouraged him to seek freedom. And in early February 1854, one of his sailor friends managed to sneak him onboard a ship headed for Massachusetts and stow him in a small, hidden compartment. He remained in the tiny, cramped space for about 3 weeks. Once he finally reached Boston, Burns sent a letter to his brother, who was still enslaved. Unfortunately, in the letter, Burns reported his location. When his brother's owner found the letter, he immediately notified Burns's former owner, Charles Suttle.

Suttle went directly to the local courthouse and obtained a warrant for Burns's capture. Within days, Burns was arrested. To prevent his escape, prison officials placed him in chains and under constant guard at the federal courthouse. Meanwhile, the Boston Vigilance Committee heard of Burns's plight, and in May 1854, a group of about 25 abolitionists, Black and White, stormed the building with axes, guns, and a battering ram. However, the police called in reinforcements, and the abolitionists were arrested.

Soon thereafter, US president Franklin Pierce sent federal troops and the US Marines to aid the police in squashing further resistance. On June 2, 1854, thousands of Bostonians gathered to watch Burns marched in shackles through the streets to a ship in the harbor that would send him back to

bondage. Perhaps for this reason, Burns's story became a celebrated cause throughout the North—the horror of enslavement was too much for observers to bear. Over the long term, Burns finally gained his freedom after a group of abolitionists negotiated with his new owner and purchased him out of slavery.

Although Anthony Burns roused support for the abolitionist cause, no case became more contentious or aroused deeper sympathy than that of Margaret Garner, the enslaved mother who killed her own child rather than see her doomed to a life of enslavement. Every day during Margaret's trial, over a thousand people lined the streets outside the courthouse in a demonstration of support. But in the end, Margaret and her children were returned to bondage. After a trial lasting 2 weeks, the court had decided that Margaret was indeed a piece of property.

As the conflict surrounding Anthony Burns and Margaret Garner demonstrated, political conflict over slavery and fugitivity grew dramatically in the late 1840s. By 1850, the issue grew into a massive powder keg that threatened to blow the Union to smithereens.

READING

Blackett, Richard J. M. *The Captive's Quest for Freedom: Fugitive Slaves, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, and the Politics of Slavery*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Camp, Stephanie. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Franklin, John Hope, and Loren Schweninger. *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

21 SLAVERY SPLINTERS THE UNION

In 1846, Dred and Harriet Scott, an enslaved couple in Missouri, filed lawsuits demanding their freedom. They had been periodically transported into free states, Illinois and Wisconsin, and illegally held in bondage there for extended periods of time. In *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, Chief Justice Roger Taney narrowed the case to one central issue: Did they, as Black people, even have the right to file a lawsuit in the first place? On March 6, 1857, the Supreme Court decided "no." This decision contributed mightily to the dissolution of the Union. This lecture explores "the crisis of the 1850s," when battles over slavery tore the Union apart and eventually caused the Civil War.

WHAT CAUSED THE CIVIL WAR?

Three primary issues caused the United States to splinter along regional lines. The first was a debate over economics. In the mid-19th century, politicians, Northern merchants, and Southern slaveholders were obsessed with whether free labor or slavery should dominate the nation. In the North, the economy had become largely based on industrial development and factory work, while the South remained almost entirely dependent on slavery.

The second conflict was the core political debate of to what extent states should have political authority and to what extent the national government should control the states. Significantly, opinion on this issue increasingly reflected a North/South divide. Since Northerners had the majority population, the North controlled the federal government. Thus, the Northerners tended to support a strong federal government, while Southerners wanted individual states to be able to control their own affairs. Southerners wanted to retain political authority in their territory to allow slavery to thrive, and Northern politicians wanted the power to restrict slavery's expansion if they saw fit.

To a much lesser extent, the third conflict was the moral debate over slavery. Since abolitionists had made modest progress in challenging Northern politicians to limit slavery's expansion, Southerners increasingly resented their role and influence over national politics.

FREE VERSUS SLAVE STATES

The debate over the expansion of slavery into new territories caused tension in 1820 when Missouri and Maine were admitted to the Union. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 was especially important in staving off political clashes since Missouri had been admitted as a slave state. A boundary line, known as the Mason-Dixon Line, had been drawn between North and South, allowing slavery to flourish across the South and preventing its growth in the North.

But conflict emerged in 1848, following the Mexican-American War. When the United States emerged victorious, the region now known as Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and California became US territory. Texas clearly fell below the boundary line established in 1820, which

made it a slave state. And although parts of Utah, Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico could technically have been in dispute, those regions were not particularly desirable for large-scale cash crops, so slavery's expansion was not important there. But about half of California was positioned above the Mason-Dixon Line and half below it, and the territory was ripe for agricultural production. So, would it enter the Union as a free state or a slave state?

Even before the war had ended, one Northern congressional representative, David Wilmot, had introduced a radical addition to a bill authorizing funds for the war effort. He argued that any new territory acquired after the war should automatically ban slavery. The Wilmot Proviso would have, in effect, canceled the Missouri Compromise and ensured that no new slavery would be allowed in the United States.

On the opposing side, William Wick, a representative from Indiana, argued that the Mason-Dixon Line should simply be extended to the Pacific Ocean. However, the House of Representatives, which was dominated by Northerners, passed the Wilmot Proviso. Yet, when the issue reached the Senate, where representation was more evenly split between North and South, the proviso failed. All the Northerners voted in favor of the proviso, and all the Southerners voted against it.

Historians have pointed to the debate over the Wilmot Proviso as a turning point in US history. It was the first time in the nation's history that politicians abandoned their political party affiliations and voted strictly along regional lines.

THE COMPROMISE OF 1850

Politicians' efforts to find a solution and prevent the growing divide between North and South came in the form of the Compromise of 1850. According to the agreement, Texas would be admitted as a slave state and California as free territory. All the other land, which at the time contained the Utah and New Mexico territories, would be subject to popular sovereignty; that is, the residents of each new territory would hold an election to decide whether slavery would be allowed in their region.

Slavery and slave trading were still alive and well in Washington DC in 1850, which served as a serious affront to abolitionists. Southerners were equally outraged that the North had become a safe haven for fugitives fleeing bondage. So, the compromise also banned slavery in Washington and implemented a much more stringent Fugitive Slave Act. The compromise passed Congress and went into effect in September 1850. But less than 4 years later, politicians had already started to squabble about slavery again.

The problem came to a head in 1854, when congressional representatives introduced a bill to bring the Kansas and Nebraska territories into the Union. Their admission was vitally important, given that the transcontinental railroad was planned to run through the middle of that region. Unfortunately, the Compromise of 1850 only addressed the territories acquired as the result of the Mexican-American War, making the situation regarding Kansas and Nebraska unclear. Technically, they should have been subject to the Missouri Compromise and admitted as free. But the Compromise of 1850 had set a precedent overturning that agreement, so proslavery advocates recommended that the territories' fates be determined by popular sovereignty.

Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act in May 1854, opening the territories to popular sovereignty. But no one expected what happened next: Proslavery activists from Missouri charged across the border, while abolitionists, known as Free Staters, migrated to the region also hoping to stake a claim.

In 1855 and 1856, the conflict turned violent. It eventually became so intense and deadly that Kansas was soon nicknamed Bleeding Kansas. The brutal violence ended only when President Franklin Pierce sent federal troops to restore order. In the end, Kansas was admitted as a free territory. But this only served as another affront to the South and brought the nation another step closer to war.

THE FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT

A clear concession to the South, the Fugitive Slave Act significantly increased a slaveholder's authority to pursue a potential fugitive into the North. It also provided federal marshals to support such endeavors, and it implemented harsh penalties for anyone who aided and abetted an enslaved person or

prevented a slaveholder from pursuing an alleged fugitive. Local officials were even paid $10 for identifying someone as a fugitive and only $5 for declaring someone free.

The new law also denied habeas corpus, which had been a central part of US law from the nation's founding. Habeas corpus was based on a fundamental idea—that every human being has a right to protest against unlawful detention or imprisonment and to provide evidence in court that their detention is unlawful. The act rejected that core principle and stated that once a Black person was claimed as a fugitive, only the slaveholder or their representative had a right to speak or provide evidence.

Equally frustrating was Section 5 of the new law, which demanded compliance from ordinary citizens in the pursuit of alleged fugitives. The law explicitly stated that the police, local authorities, and federal agents were "authorized and empowered … to summon and call to their aid" any citizen in the county. Essentially, if any ordinary White citizen was walking down the street in a Northern town and encountered slaveholders or local police trying to detain a fugitive, that person could legally be forced to assist in the capture. If they refused to comply, they were subject to fines up to $1,000 and imprisonment up to 6 months.

Black and White abolitionists across the North protested against the Fugitive Slave Act. As the 1850s progressed, hundreds of cases of fugitive abuse came to light, creating increasing tension and resentment in the North. And no case received more attention than an uprising that occurred in Christiana, Pennsylvania.

THE CHRISTIANA UPRISING AND THE JOHN BROWN RAID

At about 20 miles north of the Maryland border, Christiana had become a refuge for fugitives by the late 1840s and thus was also frequently targeted by slave catchers. In September 1851, it became the site of an infamous and deadly standoff between abolitionists and slaveholders. Four enslaved men, Noah Buley, Nelson Ford, George Hammond, and Joshua Hammond, had fled from a plantation in Maryland. Soon thereafter, armed with a federal warrant, their former owner, Edward Gorsuch, came in hot pursuit. The four

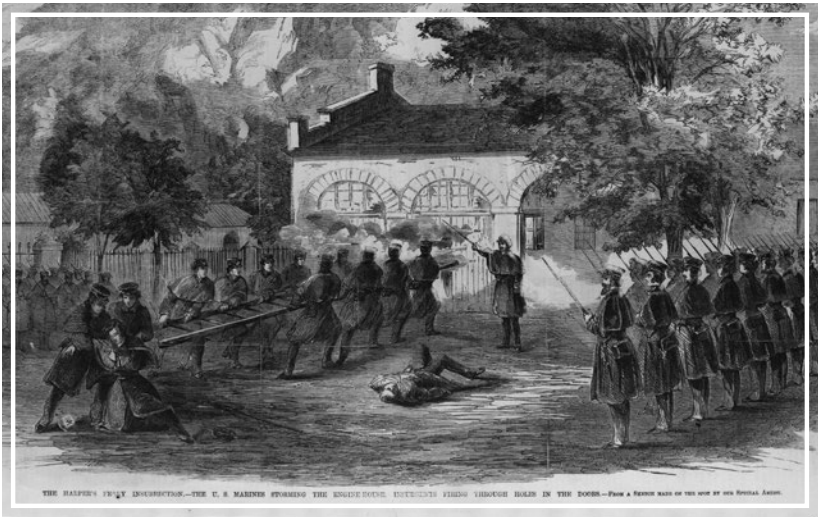
fugitives had taken refuge with William Parker, a formerly enslaved man. When Gorsuch and a raiding party arrived at Parker's home, a large group of Black and White abolitionists was waiting, ready to protect and defend the fugitives.

Gorsuch and the federal marshals quickly surrounded the house and announced their intention to seize Nelson Ford. The abolitionists sounded a horn, alerting everyone in earshot that they needed additional reinforcements. Shortly thereafter, shots were fired. An estimated 75 to 150 Black and White local people soon arrived on the scene to defend the fugitives. A scuffle quickly broke out between Gorsuch and one of his former slaves, and the abolitionists inside began to fire on the slave catchers, killing Gorsuch.

William Parker and the fugitives escaped, eventually ending up in Canada. But President Millard Fillmore dispatched the Marines, who swept the area of Christiana and eventually arrested 41 men. Fillmore charged all 41 men with treason—including Parker and the others who had escaped, who were charged in absentia. But when the first defendant, a White man accused of being a ringleader, was acquitted, the federal government withdrew the remaining charges against the others, recognizing that it could not prove a claim as strong as treason. For Southerners, this served as another insult that brought them closer to civil war.

Moreover, in 1859, one group of men went to extreme measures and enacted what became known as the Raid on Harpers Ferry, or the John Brown raid. As early as 1840, a White radical abolitionist named John Brown began hatching a plot to destroy slavery. His plan was to attack and seize weapons from the US arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Once in control of a major government arms warehouse, Brown believed that he and his followers could incite slave revolts across the South and crush slavery. In 1856 and 1857, he traveled through Northern abolitionist communities, raising funds. By spring 1859, he had recruited about 22 men who were willing to participate in the raid. Fifteen were White, and seven were Black.

On October 16, 1859, the men raided the arsenal and quickly seized control over it. But soon, local militias arrived from across the region, and gunfire broke out, killing several of the raiders. The survivors were forced to barricade themselves inside one of the interior buildings, and they remained there for almost 2 days, waiting for reinforcements. But the US Marines were



dispatched and broke down the doors. Brown and his surviving followers were arrested and taken into custody. Seven, including Brown himself, were executed following trial.

Although the raid failed, it did bring the nation another critical step closer to war. White Southerners viewed the raid as an act of Northern aggression, and many Northerners, especially abolitionists, mourned Brown and celebrated him as a hero. The raid, then, was perhaps the penultimate nail in the Union's coffin—because almost exactly 1 year after Brown's execution, the Southern states began seceding from the Union.

READING

Blight, David. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge: Harvard Belknap, 2001.

McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Potter, David. *The Impending Crisis: America before the Civil War, 1848–1861*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2011.

22 THE POLITICS OF EMANCIPATION

On June 16, 1858, Abraham Lincoln appeared before the Illinois Republican Party's state convention and delivered an address accepting his party's nomination to run for a seat in the US Senate. He insightfully recognized that a divided house could not stand and that the conflict over slavery would have to be resolved. But quite ironically, it was his election to the presidency in 1860 that pushed the Union to ultimate dissolution. This lecture will examine how the Union disbanded and the Civil War began and explore Black people's immediate response to the war. You'll also delve into the political quandary Lincoln faced as he confronted increasing pressure to pass an emancipation act, as well as the consequences of his reluctant decision to enact this measure.

SOUTHERN SECESSION

Following Lincoln's "house divided" speech in 1858, he ran an unsuccessful campaign for the US Senate, narrowly losing to Democrat Stephen A. Douglas. Undaunted, he spent much of 1859 and 1860 raising support within the Republican Party for his presidential campaign. Positioning himself as a moderate on slavery, he was something of a Free-Soiler—meaning that he opposed the extension of slavery into new territories but was willing to allow slavery to thrive where it already existed. He won his party's nomination for the presidency, but in the presidential election, when he faced off against Stephen Douglas again, Lincoln was painted as an abolitionist, especially in the South.

Southerners increasingly believed that Lincoln posed a serious threat to slavery and to the Southern way of life. Even so, Lincoln emerged victorious. Almost immediately after his election, Southern politicians and slaveholders began to consider secession. Already frustrated with the Compromise of 1850, Bleeding Kansas, and the Raid at Harpers Ferry, they could not stomach his election, and this became the straw that broke the Union's back.

In December 1860, South Carolina held a convention and voted to secede from the Union. Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas rapidly followed. In February 1861, even before Lincoln's inauguration, the seceding states formed the Confederate States of America and drafted their own constitution. Interestingly, the Confederacy was modeled heavily on the United States and even kept most of the original language from the US Constitution. But the Confederates stressed the importance of states' rights and essentially made the idea of abolition unthinkable. Confederate representatives selected Jefferson Davis as their president, and he was inaugurated shortly before Lincoln.

At first, Northern political leaders considered letting the South secede in peace or wooing the South back into the Union with more compromises. In fact, in late 1860 and early 1861, a group called the Committee of Thirteen formed to consider possible compromise. Composed of Northern and Southern elected members of Congress (including Jefferson Davis), the committee eventually drafted a document known as the Crittenden Compromise. It essentially conceded to the South on every significant issue related to slavery. It protected the right of states to maintain slavery and the

rights of individuals to control property (meaning slaves). It also forbade Congress from abolishing slavery or interfering in the internal human trade, and it even provided financial compensation for slaveholders who spent money recovering fugitives.

However, Northern Republicans soundly rejected the compromise. They argued that it made too many concessions and was leading the US down the road to becoming a "slave empire." Following the failure of the Crittenden Compromise, the Confederacy became stronger. In spring 1861, the original secessionist states were joined by Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina.

START OF THE CIVIL WAR AND BLACK NORTHERNERS' SUPPORT

In April 1861, just days after the newly seceding states joined the Confederacy, the first shots in the US Civil War were fired. The conflict began at Fort Sumter, which was situated just off the Charleston, South Carolina, trading port and essentially controlled the South's access to the rest of the world. The fort was contested ground, and both the Union and the Confederacy claimed it as their territory.

Since Fort Sumter was a federal military installation, the Union still technically controlled it. But by the middle of April 1861, the army was low on supplies and would have to surrender to the Confederacy unless they got reinforcements. President Lincoln developed a brilliant strategy. He informed the South Carolina governor that he was going to send a relief effort to the troops housed inside the fort. Calling it a "peaceful mission," he promised that he would send only one unit with food and provisions but no weapons.

The Confederates ultimately fired on the Union ship, bombarded the fort with artillery fire, and forced the Union soldiers inside to surrender. The battle at Fort Sumter was decidedly a Southern victory, but the attack, which most Northerners viewed as "unprovoked," galvanized the North against the South.

When the war first commenced, it seemed that the North would be perfectly content to bring the South back into the Union and allow slavery to persist in that region. So, did Black Northerners support the Union? And if so, why?

The South needed Fort Sumter to remain economically viable in the global trade network, and the North wanted to control it to block Southern trade and crush the Confederacy economically.

About a month after the Civil War began, the *Weekly Anglo-African*, a Black newspaper published out of New York City, urged its readers to consider the war's significance. "We are concerned in this fight," the editorial read,

> and our fate hangs upon its issues. The South must be subjugated, or we shall be enslaved. In aiding the Federal Government in whatever way we can, we are aiding to secure our own liberty; for this war can end only in the subjugation of the North or the South.

Black men across the North quickly concluded that they should volunteer to fight in the war, and they even began organizing themselves into drilling companies. In Boston, Black men drew up a resolution based on the Declaration of Independence and appealed for permission to go to war. Likewise, Black Ohioans issued an appeal to the secretary of war. But the Union government refused to let Black men serve, fearful that White men would not fight alongside Black men as equals. Even more, Northern politicians worried that military service could be viewed as a tacit acknowledgement of citizenship and open the possibility of universal Black male suffrage rights.

Bitterly disappointed, many Black Northerners questioned the Union government and its motives. In one outraged editorial, an anonymous Black author insisted that Black people should stop pleading for military service until enslaved people were freed in the South and Black Northerners received the full rights of citizenship. But despite these concerns and frustrations, Black men in the North resolved that they would support the Union and fight against slavery themselves, even if White Northerners would not.

THE GENERAL STRIKE

In the meantime, the situation in the South was quite different. As soon as the war commenced, thousands of enslaved people fled Southern plantations, cities, and households in search of freedom. Activist and intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois later called this movement the general strike to emphasize what it meant for enslaved people to abandon cotton fields, shipyards, rice paddies, and tobacco fields and claim their freedom. Over time, this meant that enslaved people shut down the Southern economy and ultimately brought about a Northern victory.

The general strike actually began rather slowly. In Virginia and the Carolinas, as news of the outbreak of war spread, people gradually escaped and sought refuge in the North or with the Union army.

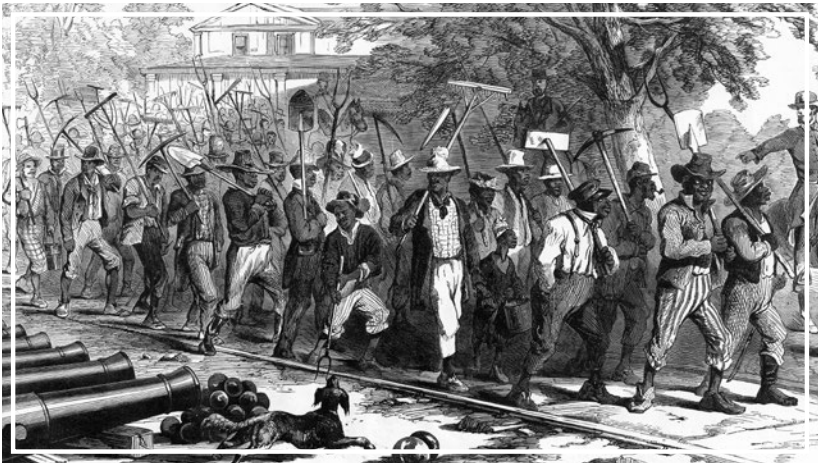
But there was a major problem: The Union army camps quickly became overwhelmed, and soldiers didn't know how to respond. Initially, the army simply brought fugitives back to their plantations, but finally, the US Congress decided to use the fugitives to the North's advantage. In August

1861, Congress passed the Confiscation Act, which stated that all property seized from the Confederacy could be permanently confiscated and used to support the Union war effort. This "property" included enslaved people. Fugitives were declared "contraband," which means "property taken as the result of war," and put to work.

Women and children were typically sent to relocation sites or labored as cooks and laundresses for the military. Black men performed hard labor, including ripping up railroad tracks to prevent supplies from reaching the Confederacy. But in their minds, being labeled "contraband" rather than "slaves" brought them one step closer to freedom.

Quite unexpectedly, the general strike had a significant impact on Union military strategy and on the future of slavery in the United States—particularly once Northern politicians began to assess the strike's positive impact. Soon, they began to consider whether formal emancipation might turn the war in their favor.

As the Union army advanced deeper into the South, the general strike progressed. Enslaved people literally dropped their tools in the fields and followed the army.



Union political officials had become desperate by late 1861. The Union army had struggled in the first year of the war, losing early, important battles, including the Battle of Bull Run. As the war dragged on, Northern enthusiasm began to wane, particularly since Northerners had assumed the Union should have won an early and decisive victory. After all, they had entered the war with nearly every important military advantage. The North's population was about three times larger than the South's, and the Union's financial holdings were more than triple the Confederacy's.

But by early 1862, Northern politicians and military strategists were scrambling for solutions. Based on the general strike's success, it seemed that formally emancipating the slaves would be a good idea, particularly to undermine the Southern economy. But Lincoln believed that the long-term solution to slavery should be gradual, compensated emancipation followed by colonization. In other words, once Black people were free, he believed they should be returned to Africa. But he came under increasing pressure from abolitionists and Republican strategists to issue an emancipation proclamation.

THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

By spring 1862, rumors began circulating that Lincoln intended to abolish slavery in the South. However, he dragged his heels and came under crushing criticism throughout the North for the delay. By then, he had been storing a draft of the Emancipation Proclamation in his desk for months, keenly aware that he had no choice: To win the war, he must resort to emancipation.

So, on September 22, 1862, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and it took effect on January 1, 1863. Why didn't it immediately go into effect? The truth is that Lincoln first tried to use the Emancipation Proclamation as a warning to the Confederacy and as an opportunity to surrender. According to Lincoln, the proclamation would become law if, and only if, the Confederacy refused to surrender. So, if the Confederacy had surrendered before January 1, 1863, the proclamation would have become null and void.

EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

ISSUED JANUARY 1st 1863

Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as commander in chief of the army and navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States and as a fit and proper war measure for suppressing said rebellion do on this first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days from the day first above mentioned in my proclamation issued on the 22d day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty two, and in accordance with the purpose so often declared order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively are in rebellion against the United States the following to wit: Arkansas Texas Louisiana, (except the parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terre, Bonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, Ascension, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, St. Martin and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, both Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia, (but excepting the forty eight counties designated as West Virginia, Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Anne, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth) and which excepted parts are for the present left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States and parts of States are, and henceforward shall be free, and that the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, except in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known that such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington this first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the independence of the United States the eighty seventh.

By the President: Abraham Lincoln

William H. Seward Secretary of State.

Designed and Executed [illegible]

BY

GILMAN B. RUSSELL

Published by J. B. Russell, Phila. Pa.

Of course, the Confederacy did not concede, and the proclamation became law. But it explicitly only applied to the states "in rebellion" against the Union, which meant that slavery remained legal in the border states allied with the Union, including Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and Delaware. This also meant that the Emancipation Proclamation had no real legal authority. Since it only targeted the states "in rebellion" against the Union and the Confederate States of America had actually been formed as a separate country, Lincoln had no power or authority to enforce it.

So, why did the Emancipation Proclamation become important at all? The answer is because although the proclamation had no legitimate legal standing in the Confederacy, enslaved people believed that it did. After Lincoln's announcement, the news of freedom spread rapidly throughout the South, and Black people believed that they were finally free. The general strike grew in size, and enslaved people fled from bondage. Ultimately, then, the Emancipation Proclamation eventually caused a full-scale collapse of the Southern economy—and, eventually, the collapse of the entire Confederacy.

READING

Bennett, Lerone. *Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream*. Chicago: Johnson Publishing, 2000.

McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Potter, David. *The Impending Crisis: America before the Civil War, 1848–1861*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2011.

23 BATTLING THE CURSE OF SLAVERY

This lecture will delve into the experiences of people who risked and sacrificed everything so that others could live free. But you'll also explore the lingering problem of racism in the Union, both within the military and among ordinary White Northerners who resented the war. In particular, you'll investigate the painful events in 1863, when angry White Northerners devastated New York City's Black community in retaliation for the military draft. The lecture closes with an examination of how the Civil War finally came to an end and how the Confederacy collapsed.

BEING BLACK IN THE UNION ARMY

By the middle of 1862, opposition to the Civil War had grown dramatically throughout the North, and enlistments had significantly dwindled. Thus, in July 1862, desperate to gain new recruits into the Union army, the War Department announced that it would allow Black men to fight. Almost immediately, the army received Black volunteers from Massachusetts, Tennessee, and South Carolina. Black activists joined the recruitment campaign, and by May 1863, Black volunteers had overrun the Union army, forcing them to establish the Bureau of Colored Troops just to manage the enlistments.

Black soldiers faced severe discrimination in the military. They served in segregated units led by White officers, most of whom found it demeaning. Moreover, while White soldiers received $13 a month plus a $3.50 clothing allowance, Black men received just $10 a month and no clothing allowance. Worse, their paychecks typically only contained $7 each month because $3 was deducted to pay for clothing and provisions. Black soldiers also suffered jeers and harassment from White Union soldiers; menial, backbreaking labor; low-quality provisions; substandard medical care; and brutal punishment for minor infractions. Black regiments were also often sent on impossible missions and used as cannon fodder, in some cases to create better strategic positioning for White regiments. Perhaps the most famous example of this unfortunate military strategy was the attack on Fort Wagner by the 54th Regiment.

In February 1863, the Massachusetts governor issued a call for Black soldiers, and in less than 2 weeks, more than a thousand Black men had volunteered—not only from Massachusetts but also from New York, Indiana, Ohio, and Canada. Less than 2 months earlier, on Christmas Eve 1862, the Confederate government had passed a stinging set of resolutions declaring that any Black man captured in a Union uniform would be taken into custody and sold into slavery. Moreover, White officers in their command would be treated as criminals and summarily executed if captured. Even so, in late May 1863, the 54th Regiment set sail for Charleston, South Carolina.

On July 18, the 54th agreed to unleash a full-frontal assault on Fort Wagner, just outside Charleston. Fort Wagner occupied a key position on the Charleston harbor. If the North could capture it, they could potentially shut down the port and crush the Southern economy. But, in many ways,

Black soldiers made up about 10% of the Union military, and more than 68,000 of them either lost their lives or were designated as missing in action and presumed dead. More than three-fifths of these soldiers had been enslaved.

the frontal assault was a suicide mission. Only 600 men strong, the 54th would face gunfire from nearly 4,000 Confederate soldiers defending the fort. And since there was only a narrow strip of land providing access to the fort, Confederate soldiers could practically pick off Union soldiers one by one as they advanced along the sandy beach. But the 54th Regiment volunteered to lead the attack anyway, determined to prove Black men's bravery and dedication.

After a bloody battle, the Union army failed again to seize Fort Wagner, and nearly 40% of the 54th Regiment soldiers lost their lives or were captured. The soldiers were widely hailed throughout the North for their courage, and even Abraham Lincoln later admitted that Black soldiers successfully turned the tide of the war in the Union's favor. But most Black regiments continued to suffer criticism, ridicule, and abuse. Perhaps the most devastating incident occurred in April 1864, when Confederate soldiers resolved to punish Black men for their audacious bid for freedom.

In 1862, Union forces had captured a Confederate installation, Fort Pillow, in Tennessee. By early 1864, about 600 Union forces occupied the fort, approximately half of whom were Black. In March, the Confederate major general Nathan Bedford Forrest and his troops arrived at Fort Pillow and surrounded it. Soon after their arrival, a Confederate sniper shot and killed the Union troops' commanding officer. Severely outnumbered, many of the remaining Union soldiers attempted to peacefully surrender, but the Confederate soldiers ruthlessly slaughtered them. One historian described the event as an "orgy of death" and a "mass lynching" driven solely by racism. Yet, despite these horrific conditions, Black men remained fully committed to the Union cause and the fight against slavery.

HARRIET TUBMAN'S SERVICE

At least one brave Black woman shared Black soldiers' passion and commitment—Harriet Tubman, who became the first woman in US history to lead military troops into battle. Soon after the Civil War began, the governor of Massachusetts asked Tubman to serve in the Union army. At first, she worked primarily as a nurse, but in 1862, the army began using her as a military scout and asked her to develop a spy ring in South Carolina to monitor the Confederate troops' movements. She even received a small fund from the Secret Service to pay informants for details about the Confederacy's operations.

During a campaign in the summer of 1863, the Union army asked Tubman to lead Union soldiers on a treacherous mission. It all began months earlier, when the Union army began developing a plan to move aggressively up the South Carolina coastal rivers. Their goal was to destroy bridges, raid local rice plantations, and cut off Confederate supply lines. But the rivers were laden with hidden mines that the Confederate army had planted to prevent Union infiltration. Fortunately, Tubman had a solution that literally no one else could provide.

Given her work on the Underground Railroad, she had a vast intelligence network, partly composed of Black riverboat operators who knew where the mines were located. So, late on the night of June 1, 1863, Tubman led hundreds of Black Union soldiers on a journey along the Combahee

River. Safely navigating them through the mines, Tubman helped the soldiers destroy bridges, disrupt railroad service, confiscate supplies, set rice plantations ablaze, and rescue hundreds of enslaved people.

According to the Union army, more than 700 enslaved people were rescued during the Combahee Ferry Raid. The successful mission was an embarrassing loss for the Confederacy since their troops fled in terror as Tubman and her soldiers advanced. Tubman only received $200 for her military service, but when she died in 1913, she was buried with full military honors.

THE NEW YORK DRAFT MOB

Quite ironically, about 1 month after the successful Combahee Ferry Raid, the city of New York went up in flames. For 5 days, beginning on July 13, 1863, an angry White mob ravaged New York City's Black community in an outbreak of unspeakable racial violence. But what caused this?

By early 1863, there was growing resentment among White Northerners as the war seemed to drag on endlessly. An estimated 100,000 Union soldiers abandoned the battlefields, with no new recruits volunteering to replace them. Thus, in March 1863, Congress passed a stringent Conscription Act, which subjected men between the ages of 20 to 35 and all unmarried men aged 35 to 45 to possible military service. According to the new law, eligible men would be placed into a lottery and randomly selected to determine who would fight on behalf of the Union. On July 11, the first draft lottery was held in New York City, and by that evening, the streets and taverns bustled with outraged White men expressing their discontent with the draft, the Civil War, and the free Black community.

By the following evening, several Black men had been attacked and severely beaten. As the night progressed, numerous arson attacks plagued the Black community. On the morning of July 13, 1863, New York City's streets flooded with protesters marching through the city carrying signs stating, "NO DRAFT!" White male rioters immediately set to work destroying telegraph lines, and women angrily pried up the railway tracks with crowbars. The message was clear and strong: No labor would be performed until

politicians responded to their appeal. Soon, the mob began attacking police officers and severely beating them. By that afternoon, the riot ballooned to more than 12,000 people.

Government officials tried to proceed with the draft lottery, but the mob quickly descended on the draft headquarters and set the building ablaze. For the next several hours, the city was in chaos. And by that afternoon, rioters also wanted to intimidate and eliminate the free Black population.

Black men, women, and children were randomly and savagely beaten. The mob then looted and torched Black homes on the west side as well as the Colored Orphan Asylum. That evening, Black New Yorkers began to flee the city, but the mayor refused to declare martial law. As the second day of the riot began, attacks on individual Black people and institutions persisted.

Eventually, the mayor asked the secretary of war to send troops to the city and restore order, but it was not until the evening of July 16 that safety slowly began to return. By then, the city contained 4,000 federal soldiers, and the number grew to 10,000 by the weekend. But of the estimated 12,000 rioters, only 443 were arrested, and more than half of those cases were immediately dismissed. Only 81 men had a day in court, and most escaped with minor penalties. In August 1863, the draft quietly recommenced, and the Black community slowly began to rebuild.

END OF THE CIVIL WAR

Most historians describe the Civil War's end as "the collapse of the Confederacy." Rather than obtaining a clear military victory, the Union simply witnessed the Confederacy's disintegration. There were a few key factors that led to the fall of the South. First, the Emancipation Proclamation's strategy was entirely successful. Enslaved people fled plantations, households, and urban shipping ports by the thousands, leading to the Southern economy's utter destruction.

Second, as economic conditions plummeted, the South experienced extraordinarily high desertion rates as soldiers returned home to care for their families. Moreover, as the war dragged on and the South struggled financially, many Confederate soldiers began to question why they were fighting. After all, the war's primary purpose was to protect and defend elite Southerners' rights to own slaves. But most White Southerners held few, if any, slaves. In truth, the only appeal was a nonsensical attachment to the myth of White racial superiority.

During the war's early years, Confederate leaders had used racism to try and convince yeomen farmers to fight. That is, Southern elites convinced poor Whites that their poverty did not matter because, as White people, they would always occupy an elevated status in society. Determined to maintain a racial dividing line between White and Black, as many as 1.2 million White Southerners donned uniforms. But soon, the war lost its appeal, and Confederate soldiers simply abandoned the front lines.

In spring 1865, the Southern army essentially collapsed. On April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox in Virginia. On April 14, John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Abraham Lincoln at Ford's Theatre in Washington DC. And in May, Union forces captured Confederate president Jefferson Davis in Georgia. With those final events, the Civil War ended.

But then, the real challenge began: How would Americans put the Union back together again, and how would Black people navigate their new lives as emancipated people in a hostile environment?

READING

Berlin, Ira. *Freedom's Soldiers: The Black Military Experience in the Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Dunbar, Erica Armstrong. *She Came to Slay: The Life and Times of Harriet Tubman*. New York: 37 Ink, 2019.

Escott, Paul D. *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978.

McPherson, James M. *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

24 THE FRUITS AND FAILURES OF RECONSTRUCTION

In this lecture, you will examine one of the most challenging times in US history—the aftermath of the Civil War. Here, you will explore the difficulties that the nation faced as it tried to "reconstruct" the Union, as well as the trials and tribulations that newly emancipated Black Southerners contended with as they made the transition from enslavement to emancipation. As you'll see, many newly freed people wondered what their next steps might be. Should they flee to the North in search of new opportunities, or should they remain in the South, where they could try to reconstitute their families and farm for themselves?

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

With emancipation, Black people could finally choose for themselves and explore a range of possibilities. Following the Civil War, White people commented endlessly on the thousands of Black people moving about the South. But Black migrants had purpose—mostly, they went in search of jobs, economic opportunity, and their lost family members.

Slavery had stolen family units, so once freed, Black people desperately tried to reconstitute their families. Movement in the South was also driven by economic conditions. Most formerly enslaved people wanted to shake off the remnants of slavery and start anew. And in most cases, they wanted women to escape labor and get as far away from the threat of sexual violence as possible.

Thousands went North, assuming conditions would be better there. But many lacked the resources to relocate, and others wanted to remain in the South in hopes of reconnecting with missing family members. Still others believed that their skill as agricultural laborers could finally be put to use for their own benefit. But how would Black people actually get access to land?

SHARECROPPING

Even before the Civil War ended, Northern politicians and military leaders knew that land ownership in the South would be especially crucial for Black people emerging from bondage, both economically and psychologically. Thus, Union military officers tried to implement land redistribution programs even during the war. Perhaps the most famous example is Field Order No. 15—more commonly known as "40 acres and a mule."

Shortly before the war's end, in January 1865, Union general William Sherman announced that the coastal area from Charleston, South Carolina, down to Jacksonville, Florida, would be divided up in plots no larger than 40 acres and distributed to Black families. Sherman also agreed to lend army mules to work the land, which resulted in the slogan "40 acres and a mule." Within 6 months, 40,000 freed Black people had relocated to the land and were working over 400,000 acres of that region. But in 1866, President Andrew Johnson evicted the Black people from the land, and it was returned to its previous White Southern owners.

The failure of Sherman's plan reflected a larger pattern of Black economic struggles across the South. As a group, Black people were overwhelmingly landless following the war, causing them to struggle for survival. Precisely for this reason, sharecropping became the dominant agricultural system in the South, with nearly three-quarters of the Black Southern population working as sharecroppers.

In brief, sharecropping was an economic arrangement in which plantations were divided into smaller plots of land worked by tenant farmers. In the South, of course, the landowners were White former slaveholders, and the tenant farmers were primarily Black formerly enslaved people. White landowners supplied the tools, seeds, and work animals, and in essence, Black tenants performed the exact same labor they had performed as slaves.

Under the rules of sharecropping, tenant farmers worked on a sort of credit system. At harvest time, Black farmers were required to surrender a significant portion of their profits and pay back the cost of the initial supplies. And, in most cases, the fees that tenant farmers had to pay to the White landowners far exceeded their profits, causing cycles of debt that steadily sent Black people deeper into poverty.

THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA

Following the Civil War, the North considered how to bring the South back into the Union. Efforts to reunite the Union were termed *reconstruction* in reference to the idea of reconstructing the nation. But the Reconstruction era was a time of resentment, tension, and conflict because the North and South had very different feelings about reunification and reconciliation following the war.

Immediately following the war, Northern politicians focused primarily on strategies that they believed would heal the nation. White Southerners, however, clung to a very different vision. They felt deeply resentful about being forced back into a Union that they didn't want to rejoin. As the postwar era continued to unfold, their resentment grew in three key areas.

First, much of the South faced severe economic devastation. The war had destroyed key regions, and most plantations had fallen into complete disrepair. So, White Southerners anxiously wondered how the South would ever rebuild without slave labor. Economic frustrations were connected to the second area of Southern resentment—social upheaval, as Southern life was predicated on the idea of White supremacy. Politics became the third topic of frustration. Political conditions were extremely tense since Southern states did not initially have national political representation or power. The federal government required each Southern state to be reconsidered for admission to the Union, pending key stipulations. Meanwhile, the South remained politically disfranchised.

In light of Southern hostility, Northern politicians engaged in fiery debates over how to reincorporate the Southern states. Ultimately, the movement to reconstitute the Union resulted in two separate reconstructions—Presidential and Congressional—which revealed deep political fissures even within the North.

PRESIDENTIAL AND CONGRESSIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

To some degree, Presidential Reconstruction happened in two phases since two different presidents were involved in the process. The first phase began during the war, before Lincoln's assassination. Lincoln was consumed with preserving the Union, and his plan centered largely on reconciliation. In December 1863, he passed the Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction. All Confederate political leaders who signed oaths of allegiance to the Union were offered pardons. The proclamation also promised to return all land and property (except slaves) to Southerners as long as they declared Union loyalty.

Following Lincoln's assassination at the end of the war, his successor, Andrew Johnson, continued the project of Presidential Reconstruction. Johnson was a Democrat and a former slaveholder, so he seemed an unlikely ally for Northern Republicans. Even so, the Radical Republicans urged him to treat the South as a "conquered province" and to follow a more punitive strategy. But Johnson chose to follow Lincoln's plan—offering amnesty and pardons as long as states and individuals took oaths of allegiance to the Union.

Johnson's strategy infuriated the Radical Republicans, and since they had a temporary majority in Congress, they passed a series of bills that later became known as Congressional Reconstruction. On the one hand, they sought to punish the South for secession and the subsequent war, and on the other hand, they hoped to ease Black Southerners' transition from slavery to freedom. In March 1865, just before the war officially ended, Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau, a national institution intended to address newly emancipated people's needs. Initially, the bureau focused on immediate concerns, including supplying food and clothing, operating refugee camps, and reconstituting families. Later, the bureau began supervising labor contracts between landowners and freed people, establishing schools, and helping Black soldiers receive their military pensions.

In December 1865, Congress ratified the 13th Amendment, which sought to offer a corrective to the Emancipation Proclamation: It abolished slavery everywhere in the United States, except as punishment for a crime. And in April 1866, Radical Republicans also implemented the Civil Rights Bill, which was designed to overturn the Black codes and the 1857 *Dred Scott* decision. It clearly defined the rights of citizenship and declared unlawful any act that deprived a person of citizenship rights "on the basis of race, color, or prior condition of slavery or involuntary servitude."

Andrew Johnson angrily attempted to veto the bill, but Congress invoked its own veto power and overrode him. Concerned that the president would try to undermine their efforts again, Radical Republicans adopted the 14th Amendment 2 years later, which more strongly defined Black people as citizens. They also divided the South into five military districts and reinforced federal military occupation in each district. Congress even mandated that Southern states could not rejoin the Union until they drafted new constitutions declaring their loyalty and accepting the 14th Amendment.

In February 1870, just as the Radical Republicans' power began to wane, Congress passed the 15th Amendment. It guaranteed all men the right to vote and insisted that race could not be used as a barrier to suffrage rights.

In the years following the 15th Amendment, nearly 1,500 Black men held political office in the South. Most of these positions existed on the local level, but 17 Black men also served in the US Congress between 1870 and 1887.

END OF THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA

Unfortunately, the rise of Black political power in the South coincided with the Radical Republicans' decline. Faced with a severe economic depression throughout the country, congressional leaders, especially the Republicans, were blamed for spending too much money on Reconstruction, especially programs such as the Freedmen's Bureau.

Meanwhile, the Democrats experienced a resurgence in the South, as White Southerners gradually began to reclaim their economic and political power. Southern Democrats enjoyed considerable support from the Ku Klux Klan, a White supremacist vigilante organization that led terror campaigns against Black people. First established in 1866 by ex-Confederate soldiers, the Klan eventually grew to several hundred thousand members. Its first leader was Nathan Bedford Forrest, a former slave trader and Confederate general.

Following the war, under Forrest's leadership, the Klan used arson, lynching, and outright murder against Black people to reestablish White control over the South. In response, Black Southerners pleaded with the federal government to send help, and in fact, the Ku Klux Klan Act, passed in 1871, made it a federal offense to interfere with a person's right to vote, hold office, serve on a jury, or have equal protection under the law. But as Republicans faded from the political scene, the federal government retreated from radical Reconstruction, and thus began Southern Redemption—an era when conservative White Democrats reclaimed the South and the Ku Klux Klan unleashed a bloody reign of terror.

Every election thereafter was marred by racial violence. During the election of 1872, 280 Black people in a small Louisiana town were slaughtered while attempting to vote. And in 1874, a White mob murdered an entire Black military regiment, forcing President Ulysses S. Grant to send federal troops into Louisiana. Such minor governmental interventions were futile, though. By 1875, Reconstruction had clearly ended, and Black Southerners were utterly abandoned without any meaningful governmental support or protection.

By late 1875, Southern Democrats declared that they would reclaim all the political seats across the South in the 1876 election. We will do it, they said, "peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must." In Mississippi, they created a "shotgun policy" in which Republicans were simply hunted down and murdered.

Most historians mark the election of 1876 and the resulting political compromise as the official end to the Civil War/Reconstruction era. During that election, Ohio Republican Rutherford B. Hayes faced off against New York Democrat Samuel Tilden. Neither candidate decisively won the election,

and there were widespread allegations of electoral fraud, election violence, and other forms of disfranchisement, especially regarding Black Southern voters. Even so, both the Republicans and the Democrats declared victory, leading to a political standoff. After intense negotiations, congressional leaders agreed on the Compromise of 1877. This agreement awarded the presidency to Republican Rutherford Hayes but only if the federal government removed all of its troops from the South.

With that, Southern Redemption was complete, creating serious ramifications for Black people in the decades that followed. But it's important to consider what historian Vincent Harding reminded us: From the shores of Africa to the contemporary moment, there has always been a river of resistance flowing within Black people.

READING

Du Bois, W. E. B. *Black Reconstruction in America*. Reprint ed. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

Litwack, Leon. *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*. New York: Random House, 1979.

Rosen, Hannah. *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Williams, Heather Andrea. *Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Image Credits

i: © Candace Boissy; 3: Plank/Wikimedia Commons/CC BY-SA 4.0; 7: Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library/Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African ; 13: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, www.metmuseum.org/Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1928; 23: Rijksmuseum; 29: Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora; 32: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division; 36: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division; 54: Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora; 57: Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora; 63: Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora; 73: fiverr; 78: Library of Congress, Rare Books and Special Collections; 94: Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Donato Esposito, 2018; 102: New York Public Library; 114: New York Public Library; 124: John Carter Brown Library/Internet Archive; 125: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division; 135: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division; 142: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; acquired through the generosity of an anonymous donor ; 156: Collection of the National Museum of African American History and Culture shared with the Library of Congress; 159: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division; 167: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division; 171: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division; 179: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division; 182: Boston College Libraries/archive.org; 184: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division