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America's Long Struggle against Slavery

Course Guidebook

Professor Richard Bell
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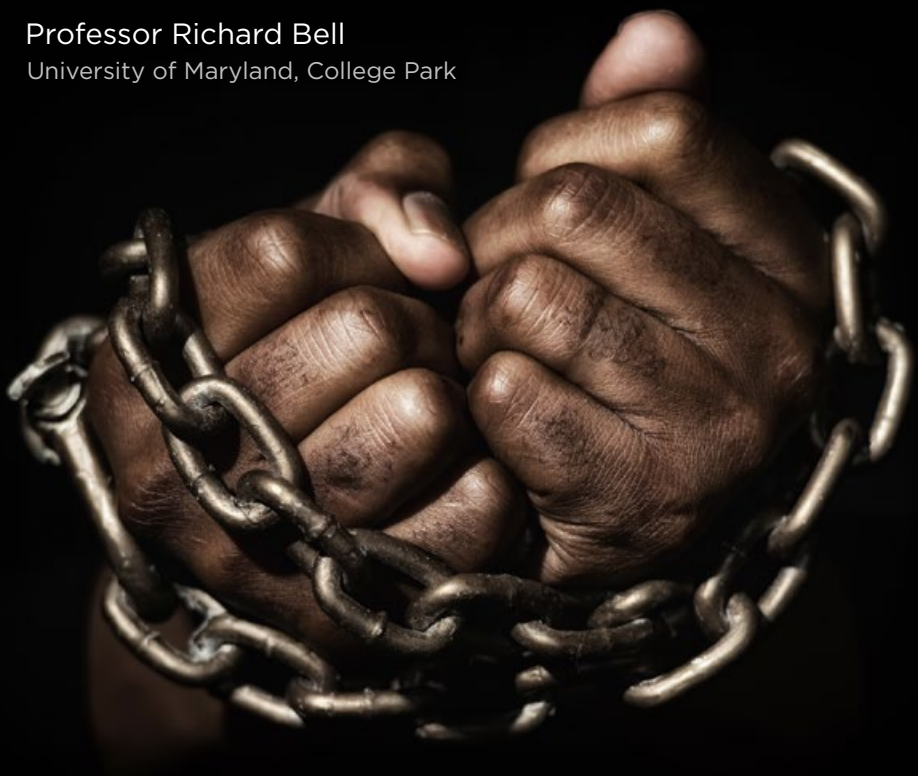

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Dr. Bell serves as a trustee of the Maryland Historical Society, an elected member of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and a fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He is the author or coeditor of multiple journal articles and three books: *We Shall Be No More: Suicide and Self-Government in the Newly United States*; *Buried Lives: Incarcerated in Early America*; and *Stolen: Five Free Boys Kidnapped into Slavery and Their Astonishing Odyssey Home*, which received a National Endowment for the Humanities Public Scholar Award.

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The lectures in this series, *America's Long Struggle against Slavery*, contain offensive and dehumanizing language, graphic violence, and sexual violence, which may be disturbing and may not be suitable for minors or other audiences. Such accounts are used historically to depict the culture in the relevant time period. The opinions and positions provided in these lectures reflect the opinions and positions of the relevant lecturer and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or positions of The Teaching Company or its affiliates.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

LECTURE GUIDES

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

TO GO BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS CLICK ON

AMERICA'S LONG STRUGGLE AGAINST SLAVERY

How do you slay a many-headed monster? How do you defeat an economic system deaf to the cries of conscience and morality? How do you destroy an entrenched special interest that profits from treating people like property?

For three centuries, men and women committed to resisting the spread of slavery in British North America and the new United States grappled with these questions, searching for ways to save themselves and others from the dehumanizing consequences of commodification.

This course offers a rare chance to step into their shoes. As we examine the different tools and tactics, means, and methods that Americans, both black and white, have used to escape slavery or try to exterminate it, we will confront the grand problems that animated all those who fought to end slavery: Should slavery be fought with violence? How do you generate moral outrage? How do you convert moral outrage into political action? Whose responsibility is it to act?

The year 2013 marked the 150th anniversary of President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which abolished slavery within the 11 jurisdictions that comprised the Confederate States of America during the Civil War. The year 2015 marked the 150th anniversary of the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States in 1865, an act of law that formally and finally outlawed slavery across the entire country. These momentous events—reminders of the blood and treasure spilled during the Civil War to secure slavery's destruction—deserve commemoration, and their authors deserve their plaudits. But these two important anniversaries also obscure as much as they illuminate, suggesting that the work of achieving slavery's demise was achieved by lawmakers in Washington with a few scratches of their pens.

That version of events is profoundly misleading. This course offers a different, more complicated vision of the fight against slavery. It advances the proposition that the demise of slavery in America was a long time coming, the result of many decades of struggle, opposition, and resistance by a large and often-unfamiliar cast of characters. It offers participants the chance to rethink the commonly held view that Lincoln's scrawled signature on the Emancipation Proclamation was the most important event in this nation's struggle with slavery.

On the contrary, this course presents a dramatic conceptual alternative to this triumphal view of presidential courage. This alternative places the acts of black field workers and fugitives, of preachers and vigilantes, and of white soldiers and activists alongside the familiar figure of President Lincoln. The rapacious diversity and dynamism of slavery in America between 1619 and 1865 has been matched only by the unceasing variety and adaptability of attempts to overthrow it.

The Civil War, which began in 1861, marked the climax of this fight, but the slave system had been compromised long before the Republican Congress, President Lincoln, and the Union Army drove a stake through its heart and finished the job. Decades before the Civil War, African Americans had set about finding ways to free themselves, to exit slavery any way they could, to ameliorate its worst effects, and to claim for themselves some sense of agency, dignity, and individual identity.

Without enslaved people's daily demonstrations that they preferred freedom to bondage, no larger biracial movement to obliterate slavery would have emerged before the Civil War.

This course follows the story of opposition to African slavery in America from the dawn of European overseas expansion in the late 15th century to the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and beyond. The course is divided into five generational periods, using categories popularized by Ira Berlin, a professor, in his 2003 book *Generations of Captivity*. The first section encompasses a cluster of lectures and readings devoted to the Charter Generations, covering the period from roughly 1492 to roughly 1699. Subsequent clusters of lectures describe the Plantation Generations, the Revolutionary Generations, the Migration Generations, and, finally, the Freedom Generations in and around the era of the Civil War.

Lecture 1

UNDERSTANDING THE FIGHT AGAINST SLAVERY

Slavery never had the consent of those it sought to oppress. Before the end of the 18th century, enslaved people fought this institution largely on their own, unable to imagine that their descendants would one day secure the support of armies of white allies united in the cause of immediate abolition. Until Vermont became the first American state to prohibit slaveholding within its borders in 1777, the concept of abolishing slavery had no meaning. For generations prior, individual enslaved people had preferred to focus on liberating themselves and their families.

An Isolating Challenge

African slaves were very isolated in the beginning, and it took many decades for any organized coalition of Northern free blacks and their white allies to emerge. Even then, it was the slaves themselves who continued to take the lead. As the Northern free black population grew in the aftermath of the Revolutionary War, the activists in this community linked their fates to those still enslaved, relying on black fugitives from the Southern states to testify to the regime's horrors to Northern white people who could never experience it for themselves. Without enslaved people's daily demonstrations that they preferred freedom to bondage, no larger biracial movement to obliterate slavery would have emerged before the Civil War.

Thankfully, it did emerge, and it grew. The cause of antislavery adopted one set of tactics and strategies after another. First the movement was elitist, then it was popular. It was legalistic, then moralistic; it was secular, then evangelical; it was religious, then political; and it was nonviolent, then, belatedly, militant. There was nothing linear about this development. When one strategy failed, another replaced it, only to give way to something else.

They had to try everything. For every blow inflicted by the slaves and their free, Northern allies, slaveholders hit back harder. If liberty was on the march after the American Revolution, so, too, was slavery.* It expanded furiously, gobbling up millions of acres in the territory ceded to the United States by the Louisiana Purchase to create a new cotton kingdom. While the number of ex-slaves and their descendants surged in the Northern states in the first half of the 19th century, topping 200,000 by 1860, the number of slaves in the Southern states rose much faster and higher, touching 4 million souls the same year.

* Thomas Jefferson held more slaves at his death on July 4, 1826, than he had on the date, 50 years earlier, when he had famously declared that "all men are created equal."

Weapons against Slavery

The antislavery movement featured strong, brave leaders of slave revolts like Nat Turner. It also featured the muscular courage of plantation rebels like Frederick Douglass, who once wrestled his overseer to the ground, fighting in the dirt with him for the best part of two hours, in a macho display of physical power.

Even small acts can have outsized consequences. Power relations on plantations could be shifted and subverted by all manner of everyday actions, including foot-dragging, work slowdowns, the destruction of tools, thefts, feigned illnesses, abstinence, abortions, satirical songs, and backtalk. These acts reveal the quiet, less confrontational means by which so many enslaved people tried to reclaim a measure of control over their lives.

However, we must also keep in mind that individuals who resisted were simultaneously victims of the slave regime. Enslaved people could perform acts of willful opposition that undercut planters' power, even as plantation economies grew and thrived and as masters developed ever more brutalizing tools of oppression.

Looking Ahead

It is important to note that this is a course about opposition to African slavery in America. As such, it does not purport to be a full or well-rounded history of enslavement or of the slave experience, of slavery's relationship to capitalism, or of the fate of freedmen and women within the United States after the Civil War. It does not examine Native American slavery or child labor, and it deals with white indentured servitude only in passing and for the sake of comparison.

While opposition to slavery was a global phenomenon in the 18th and 19th centuries, this course focuses narrowly upon the Caribbean and the British American mainland in the colonial period and the United States thereafter. The course makes brief excursions to Great Britain, Canada, France, Haiti, and Liberia, but its focus is on the ways that action overseas impacts opposition to slavery on American shores.

Lecture 2

ORIGINS OF SLAVERY IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE

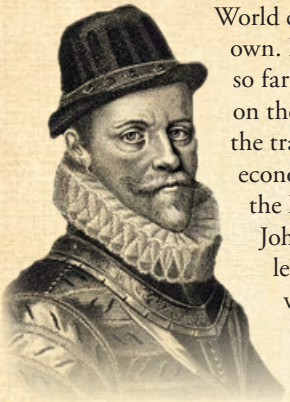
Slave trading had been a fact of life in Africa for more than seven centuries before the founding of the first English colonies in the New World. For generations, African elites, especially Muslim traders from the north of that vast continent, had profited from buying dark-skinned people who were captured in wars or sold into slavery to pay debts or as criminal punishment. These traders made their living by transporting their slave captives across the Saharan desert before selling them to European, African, and Asian buyers eager to display their wealth and status.

The Portuguese Arrival

Portuguese explorers arrived on the west coast of Africa in the early 15th century, eager to hunt for gold and ivory and to claim this territory for their Catholic rulers. African Muslim slave traders quickly spied an opportunity to stimulate a new market for their human property and readily diverted a share of the trans-Saharan traffic to the Portuguese entrepreneurs they met along the continent's western shores. In turn, the Portuguese put their newly acquired slaves to work in the sugar mills that had recently begun to spring up on Portuguese islands like São Tomé and Madeira, located just a few hundred miles off the African coast.

Over the course of the next 400 years, this traffic would grow from a trickle to a flood, quickly eclipsing the trans-Saharan slave trade entirely. In fact, more than 90 percent of the 12 million African men, women, and children to board European slave ships over this defining period in human history were destined for sugar plantations, most of them in new slave societies created by Portugal or Spain.

The Queen's Slave Trader



For much of the 16th century, England had no New World colonies of its own. England had so far languished on the sidelines of the transatlantic economy. However, the Englishman John Hawkins led three slaving voyages to the west coast of Africa in the 1560s.*

The Canary Islands are a chain of Spanish islands that, at the time, were newly populated with thousands of African slaves working in sugar mills and plantations. It was there that Hawkins met the Portuguese trading family who would become his partners for his slaving voyages. Using hired Portuguese pilots to navigate his three ships, Hawkins's first slaving voyage arrived off the coast of Sierra Leone in 1562, where his crews set about capturing several Portuguese slaving vessels and a large number of Africans.

More than half of the 800-person human cargo Hawkins accumulated by these means would perish as his three ships made passage to the Caribbean that winter. In the spring of 1563, this unlicensed English trader surreptitiously sold most of the surviving slaves at bargain prices to Spanish sugar planters on Hispaniola in return for Spanish coins, jewels, and trade goods.

Hawkins's success in this unprecedented act of piracy and black market dealing drew the attention of the English queen, Elizabeth I. She encouraged him to mount a second voyage in 1564. Elizabeth even became an underwriter of this new expedition, contributing a huge if dilapidated 700-ton ship, the *Jesus of Lubeck*, to the voyage in return for 15 percent of the profits. Many of her trusted advisors, as well as merchants and financiers from the city of London, also invested in the project.

* John Hawkins came from a family who had made their name as pirates and black-market merchants over the years.

Hawkins's second rampage along the African coast delivered those investors a 60 percent profit after Hawkins sold his second batch of human captives to Spanish plantation owners in modern-day Venezuela. In gratitude, Elizabeth I now granted Hawkins the status of gentleman and a new coat of arms. The design he chose—which featured an English lion, the ocean, and a bound African man—made no secret of the means he had found to make his name.

Hawkins would set out upon a third slaving voyage two years later, in October 1567. The queen furnished two of his ships, while more than 30 investors supplied his other logistical needs.

This time, nothing went smoothly. Many of the Africans he tried to enslave fought hard to preserve their freedom, and Hawkins lost about 60 of his own men in pitched battles with local people.

Ultimately, Hawkins's raiders did prevail, and they left the continent with roughly 450 enslaved Africans. Hawkins ran into further trouble when he tried to sell the survivors of the grueling Atlantic crossing to planters in Spanish Mexico.

Tired of English slavers trying to muscle in on their empire's economy, three Spanish ships engaged the English convoy in a firefight that cut many of Hawkins's men to ribbons.

Many more were taken prisoner and interrogated. Hawkins limped home to England with his fleet in tatters.

This deadly debacle taught Hawkins and his London investors that slave trading in someone else's empire was a gamble with high costs and mortal dangers.

With Hawkins no longer willing to risk life and limb in the Spanish Caribbean and no New World colonies of its own, England's transatlantic slaving business now stalled for more than 50 years, only resuming after the settlement by the English of Jamestown in 1607 and Barbados in 1627.

The 1600s

The English would build their first sugar mills and refineries on Barbados in 1641. The English slave trade resumed, and by 1645, English slave ships following Hawkins's familiar route from England to Africa to America had already brought 6,000 slaves to work the island's sugar fields.

Hawkins's voyages almost a century earlier had also set another important precedent: royal patronage of the slave trade. Queen Elizabeth's successors, James I and Charles I, would each encourage London sailors and entrepreneurs to supply slaves from Africa to Barbados, Virginia, and other English colonies in the New World. In 1672, King Charles II granted a very valuable monopoly to a group of London investors known as the Royal African Company.

Richard Harris and the Free Trade in Unfree People

Thanks in great part to its royal charter and legal monopoly, the Royal African Company would quickly establish itself as the largest slaving operation in the Atlantic. In its first 50 years of operations, it transported nearly 150,000 enslaved men, women, and children from Africa, mostly to Barbados, Jamaica, and other slave societies in the English Caribbean. Royal African Company ships, which were based at the port of London, accounted for 97 percent of all English transatlantic slave traffic as early as 1687.

Guaranteed a monopoly, the company's business was absurdly profitable, returning dividends to shareholders of 10 percent every year between 1676 and 1688. For that reason, the company quickly made enemies, not just with its European rivals, but also at home in England.

As the historian William Pettigrew has explained in an important book about the company, no single individual worked harder to dismantle the Royal African Company's monopoly than Richard Harris. To protest the company's monopoly, Harris signed petitions, authored public pamphlets and private reports, and appeared in person before the Board of Trade, the government agency responsible for regulating maritime commerce. The arguments he and others like him made against the Royal African Company's monopoly deserve attention because the eventual deregulation of the British slave trade in 1712 would be a transformative moment in the history of New World slavery.

In a flurry of lobbying, independent English slave traders pointed repeatedly to the economic benefits to be gained by expanding England's commerce in slaves.

Working from the assumption that the transatlantic slave trade was not only moral and legitimate but also of national strategic importance, the independent traders argued that slaving voyages were profitable engines of commerce upon which jobs, careers, families, and fortunes depended.

Another of their arguments hinged on what it meant to be a free Englishman. As one deregulator put it, "Freedoms of trade are the fundamental point of English liberty." Separate traders tried to make the case that Englishmen had a natural right to trade freely in slaves. No one paused to consider what rights and privileges Africans may have felt entitled to. The racialized assumption in these debates was plain as day: Africans are different from Englishmen—inferior, imperfect, and unworthy of the freedoms that Englishmen hold dear. The hypocrisy is breathtaking.

Conclusion

In 1698, the English Parliament dismantled the Royal African Company's treasured monopoly, renewing its charter only on the condition that the slave trade now be open to all English subjects willing to pay a 10 percent share of their profits to the company. In 1712, Parliament completed the process of deregulation by dropping the 10 percent duty entirely.

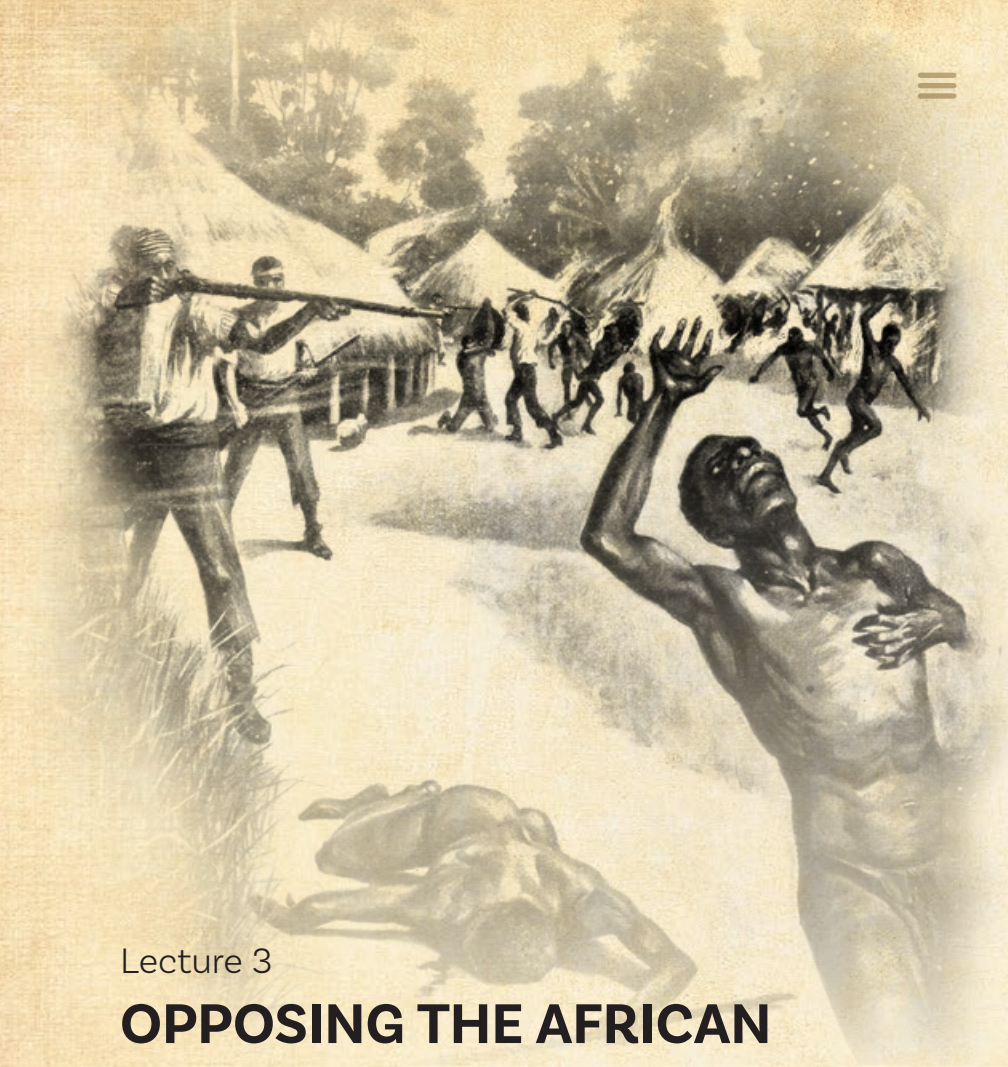
The deregulated slave trade that emerged in the wake of these two legislative changes would transform the size and scope of international slave trafficking in several very important ways.

The Royal African Company's share of the English slave trade quickly began to plummet, from 97 percent at its height in 1687 to just 4 percent by 1720.

The overall scale of English slave trading increased. Before the monopoly was broken, the Royal African Company had mustered 23 slaving voyages each year. After deregulation, the number of English slaving voyages averaged more than 75 each year.

Independent British traders took to competing on price and succeeded in driving down the cost of transportation by carrying more and more slaves per ship, packed into tighter spaces. Taking advantage of the sophistication of London's financial markets and financial services, British traders embraced the use of insurance and bills of exchange to lower their risk and to extend very generous levels of credit to their plantation-owning buyers.

The net result of such changes was that the availability of slave labor in the English Caribbean and on the American mainland grew. As the average number of slave voyages destined for the tobacco colonies of Virginia and Maryland rose, the greater availability of slave labor accelerated a shift away from white indentured servant labor.



Lecture 3

OPPOSING THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE

This lecture examines varieties of resistance to the transatlantic slave trade within Africa before any African captives ever boarded the great prison hulks that would carry them across the Atlantic. Drawing upon excellent work by scholars such as Sylviane Diouf, Winston McGowan, and Roquinaldo Ferreira, the lecture argues that local resistance to the transatlantic slave trade could be preemptive, defensive, or offensive.

Preemptive Strategies

In a continent increasingly consumed by the ravages of transatlantic slavery, the single best way to avoid ever being enslaved was to be a stakeholder in that very trade. Slavery was a legal institution long sanctioned by law and custom in Africa.

The lack of stigma around slavery would play to their advantage as European traders entered and enlarged the market for slaves in Africa. As more and more of the continent's peoples were sucked into this vortex, those African merchants and rulers who entered into agreements to supply Portuguese, French, Dutch, and English slaving crews preemptively insulated themselves from becoming human cargoes bound for the New World.

The same was true of the canoe operators who paddled supplies and slaves out to the ships as well as the raiders and guards who captured and transported prisoners from the interior to the forts at the coast. Even the money men who brokered deals and the peddlers who sold fresh provisions were essential personnel who could not be sacrificed as slaves.

The insulation that these business relationships with European slaving companies provided also had a military dimension. African trading dynasties sold people to the Portuguese, French, Dutch, or English in exchange for guns or for iron to forge better, stronger swords and knives. These were used to protect themselves from enslavement by their African enemies.

To insulate themselves and their loved ones from the threat of deportation, thousands of African men and women chose to supply and support the growth of the transatlantic slave trade. Slave trading, in short, was a highly effective way to resist being traded as a slave.

However, there were several tribal groups unwilling to try to preemptively protect themselves in this way. Several African peoples—including the Baga, the Balanta, and the Jola—wanted nothing to do with the transatlantic slave trade and instead built their subsistence economies upon agriculture and the manufacture of salt.

Still, there was evidently no prospect of a coordinated, continent-wide resistance movement. The transatlantic slave trade's very business model precluded that, relying as it did on exploiting and monetizing divisions between tribes and kin groups who had deep-seated suspicion of and animosity toward each other.

It is sadly ironic that the largest and most significant attacks by Africans upon European slavers were motivated not by antipathy to the trade but by the desire to protect and enlarge their share of this thriving business. For instance, local people along the Gambia River continually ambushed and massacred European raiding parties to punish these foreign sailors for bypassing African suppliers. The European architects of trading posts like Elmina, which is in modern-day Ghana, took care to ensure that they could be defended from external attack from the landward side.

Defensive Strategies

The volume of the transatlantic slave trade rose over time, and its reach spread ever further into Africa. In the 17th century, most captives had come from within 50 miles of the coast. By the early 18th century, that catchment area had expanded several hundred miles into the interior as warlords, raiders, and merchants went in search of more and more people to enslave and sell.

To raise their chances of preserving their freedom in the face of this ever-growing onslaught, African civilians took all manner of precautions to avoid ever being captured and trafficked. Some took to fortifying their homes. Many in the West African region known as the Gold Coast enclosed their yards with high circular walls to try to defend themselves against raids by the Amina tribe, while in the Sokoto Caliphate, which was in modern-day Nigeria, people planted poisonous and thorny trees and bushes to deter introducers from encroaching on their property.* Others made preparations to take to their heels and run for it in the event of a slaving raid on their community.

Perhaps the most extreme action to avoid being ensnared by traffickers was taken by those kin groups who abandoned their homes and homelands permanently. Some heads of household sent their wives and children to resettle further inland in difficult to find and reach locations. Others moved with their families to caves, underground tunnels, and hillside dens. In Benin, people took to building their homes on stilts at the edge or in the middle of the region's many lakes. From that vantage, they could clearly see all approaching invaders. Such defensive moves often came at great economic costs, as families had to abandon plots of land they had farmed for generations.

* Defensive wariness forced changes in local agricultural practice. In areas vulnerable to raiders, farmers took to planting crops very close to their fortified villages and to working collectively to farm the terrain as quickly as possible.

Offensive Strategies

Despite defensive strategies, raiders succeeded in kidnapping vast numbers of free people, usually by attacking settlements in the middle of the night, torching houses, and then capturing villagers as they fled their homes. Many of their targets immediately went on the offensive, fighting or trying to run by fleeing into the darkness of the woods.

Those who were rounded up in this manner were quickly shackled, subdued, and prepped for a long march to the coast. To stymie runaways during that journey, their captors bound them individually, using vines, cords, and chains. The captors then strapped each person by the neck in groups of two and four, which were tied to other groups. Sometimes, the whole party was shackled to a heavy log. The slavers also carried weapons to use against those who dared to try to break these fetters.

They would march for weeks, sometimes months, in long human convoys known as coffles. On that journey, many would try to break free and run. Others would stubbornly refuse to take a single step, enduring extreme beatings for their recalcitrance. Some captives attempted suicide, either by eating earth or by letting themselves starve to death on the journey.

At night, members of the coffle were stashed in hastily built temporary jails—known as barracoons—that served as relay transfer points on the route from the interior to the coast. To deter midnight escapes, their guards would sometimes cut holes in the barracoons' mud and raffia walls, thrust their European-made muskets through the openings, and fire upon slaves they suspected of plotting resistance.

The possibility of resistance did not abate once these sad convoys reached the European slave forts on the coasts. Some of these stone warehouses, including Gorée in Senegal and Bance in Sierra Leone, were actually built on islands just off the coast to reduce the chances that their prisoners would escape. Inside these hulking prisons lay deep dungeon pits that could hold as many as a thousand slaves. These pits were never cleaned and thus filled with stench, vermin, dysentery, and layers of feces and blood.

There is a mountain of evidence about attempts made by African captives to escape from these forts.

Some individuals somehow broke their leg irons and burrowed their way under prison walls. Others freed their fellow captives and tried to overpower their guards. One slave revolt on Gorée Island led to the death of the island's governor and of several soldiers, while an uprising at an English fort in 1667 left all but one of the 32 guards dead.

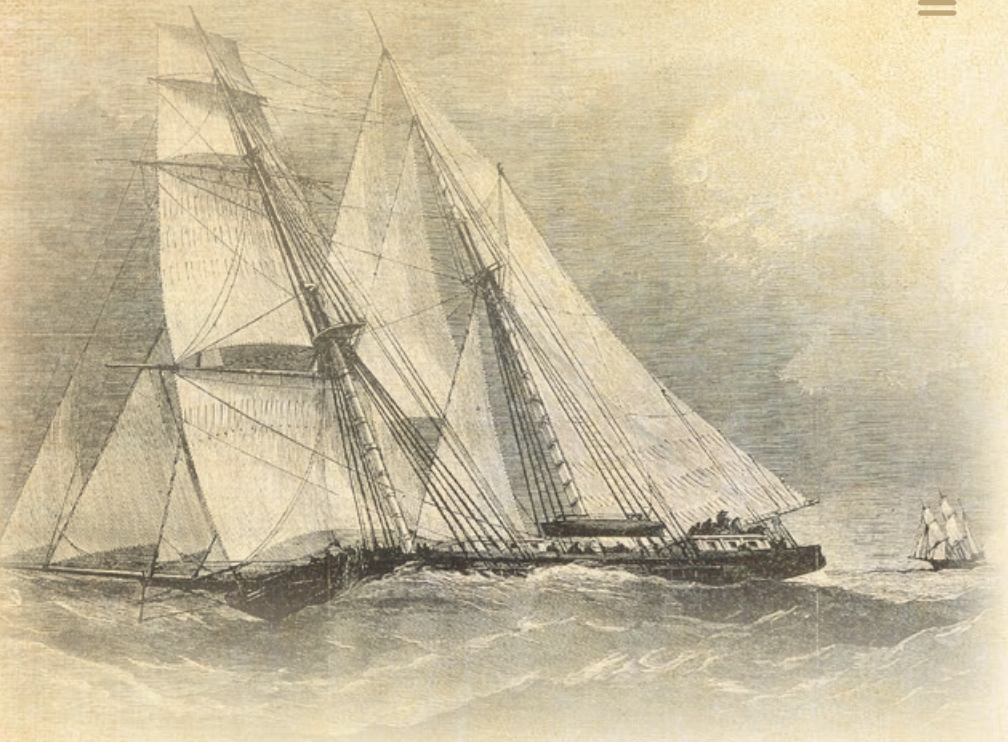
More typical perhaps was a revolt at Fort Christiansborg, a Danish warehouse on the Gold Coast, in 1727. There, a group of slaves ambushed the fort's commander, compelled him to release them, and took to their heels. Half were never heard from again, but Danish troops succeeded in rounding up the rest.

At Fort Christiansborg, the commander of the garrison took his time exacting his revenge for the revolt, breaking the ringleader on the wheel before beheading his corpse. Such grisly post-mortem punishments were evidently designed to deter others from imitation.

Despite their martial character, the essential function of these slave forts was to warehouse human commodities and then relay them to waiting ships. To do so, guards tried to load still-shackled slaves onto sturdy canoes rowed by local men, who then paddled slowly out towards the anchored vessels.

Many slaves flung themselves on the sand, desperate to stay on land, refusing to get into the boats. Specially trained individuals beat and dragged them into the canoes and then pushed them out to sea. Even then, the desperate captives would launch themselves overboard if they found the chance.

Most enslaved Africans did not fully understand where they were being taken or why they were being taken. They could only guess at their fate, so they assumed the very worst. Fear and terror gripped the imagination.



Lecture 4

SHIPBOARD REBELLION AND RESISTANCE

Over four centuries, more than 12 million African souls set out on the Middle Passage from Africa to the New World. During these journeys, 1.8 million men, women, and children would die. As the historians David Richardson, Marcus Rediker, Stephanie Smallwood, Michael Piersen, and Eric Taylor—whose work informs today's lecture—have each argued, the numbers do violence by abstraction. Behind them are human lives. Indeed, each shipboard act of resistance—whatever form it took—marked an assertion of personhood, a challenge to the process of objectification and commodification that the Middle Passage was designed to achieve.

Suicide

Suicide was the product of the horror of displacement and unbearable uncertainty surrounding their final destination. Suicides took place with striking frequency onboard slave ships. Depression and hopelessness often quickly set in as the sense of loss and separation grew more intense. Emotionally traumatized, and often laboring under the belief that they were destined to be eaten by their white captors, many slaves looked for ways to end their ordeal permanently. Some refused to eat or drink, hoping to die in a matter of days.

Far more tried to drown themselves, usually in ones and twos but occasionally, as aboard the *Prince of Orange* in 1737, en masse.* Fearful that this ship's crew intended to pluck out their eyes and eat them, more than 100 slaves jumped overboard together. One in three was never recovered.

Revolt

The only way to escape slavery, short of suicide, was to revolt—that is, to initiate a violent collective action against ship captains and their crews. According to surviving shipping records, 10 percent of all slaving voyages experienced a revolt at some point along the Middle Passage.

That is more than 388 slave ship mutinies, more than 350 of which fell between 1698 and 1807.

* It seems that proportionally more African women than men succeeded in jumping overboard. Because they were physically smaller and perhaps weaker than most of the male crew, they enjoyed greater freedom of movement onboard ships than black men, and that freedom afforded them greater opportunities for self-harm.

More often than not, we know precious few details about the precise causes, course, or consequences of these revolts. Royal African Company sources are noticeably terse. The immediate purpose of each revolt was to seize control of the ship. This required at least three bodies of knowledge: first, how to get out of one's chains; second, how to find and use weapons to subdue the crew; and third, how to sail and navigate the ship.

Breaking chains was not simply a question of determination. It was usually a matter of luck. If the crew had mistakenly fitted one's irons too loosely, then perhaps with lubrication, effort, and pain, it might be possible to squirm out of them. Another route was to steal a tool to smash or pick one's locks.

Revolt-minded individuals needed to be able to communicate. They also needed trust in each other and the element of surprise. The hours of 2:00 and 3:00 in the morning and whenever crews were sick or busy with meals or repairs were peak times for revolts to begin.

To gain control of the ship required mutineers to capture or kill the crew. Usually, they did both, throwing the most dangerous men overboard or running them through. Slaves usually knew better than to kill every white person on board: Doctors and navigators could be useful in ensuring their safe passage to shore. In fact, shore was usually relatively close at hand. More than half of all revolts occurred when ships were still moored off the African coast, loading up. These coastal mutineers hoped to simply run the ship aground or steal its smaller boats and row to safety before they could be stopped.

However, precious few revolts were successful. Fewer than one in four, perhaps 120 revolts in all, resulted in the liberation of some or all of the slaves aboard.

The Balance of Power

Preserving the balance of power between slavers and slaves was paramount to the slavers. Captains knew to feed their crew well to cultivate their energy levels and to provide just the bare minimum to their human cargo, in hopes of sapping their strength and will to fight. Sailors were placed on constant guard. In fact, captains hired many more crew than were usually needed on ships this size to ensure that there were always enough hands on deck to suppress a revolt. They also tried to separate slaves who spoke the same language to maximize linguistic barriers.

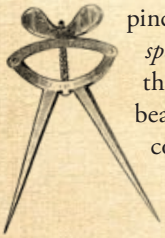
Crews worked to minimize risk. Captains gave strict orders to carpenters, coopers, cooks, and anyone else who used iron tools in the course of their daily work to keep them under lock and key. Gun cabinets and gun rooms were locked and often guarded. Captains also employed spies and informants among the slaves themselves, a practice that drove a wedge of silence and mistrust among the captives. Crews also knew to avoid bringing male slaves up to the main deck unless absolutely necessary, a strategy that meant bathing was rare, and personal hygiene and sanitation below decks deteriorated rapidly.

Every daily activity was an opportunity to demonstrate the crew's absolute power over their human cargo. Sailors yelled at, pushed, tripped, and beat their charges, sometimes cutting slaves' flesh with knives and rubbing pepper or vinegar into wounds to subdue the recalcitrant.

When such measures failed and a revolt began, sailors typically had the upper hand. Crews were armed to the hilt with muskets, rifles, axes, cutlasses, and swords, and captains readily gave orders to their men to train the ship's swivel guns and cannon on the hatches.

Captains and crews could also usually count on assistance from any nearby vessel. Even out at sea, slaving crews knew that the sound of three cannon blasts or a flag flying at half-mast on a distant ship was a mayday call. For these reasons, most revolts were quickly quelled and most mutineers killed. The punishments for those who survived were brutal, sadistic, and designed to deter any repeat attempt.

Captains and crews dealt with slaves' attempts at suicide with similar focus, determination, and creativity. To break life-threatening hunger strikes, sailors took to force-feeding the captives, using a funnel and a jaw-breaking pincer-like screw known as a *speculum oris* to ratchet open their mouths. Others were beaten or burned until they could be made to choke down some food and water.



To prevent slaves slashing at their own throats, crews would trim their fingernails. To prevent their valuable human cargo from drowning themselves, most crews lashed wide nets to the sides of their ships. Whenever male slaves were allowed on the main deck, crews made sure they were chained together and to a ringbolt driven into the floor. If any slaves managed to evade these precautions and make it into the water, they could expect the captain to dispatch rescue parties to catch them and return them to the ship. To deter imitators, one captain even ordered the public decapitation of the corpse of a man who had drowned: a warning to survivors that neither they nor their spirits would ever succeed in returning to their homelands intact.

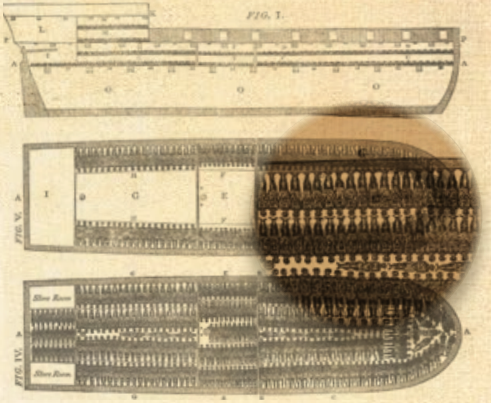
Conclusion

Far fewer saltwater slaves died as successful suicides or in failed revolts than died of disease. Angolans called the slave ships *tumbeiros*, or floating tombs, because of the gastrointestinal and airborne pathogens that claimed so many victims in these cramped, fetid holds. Allotted just four foot of space on British slavers, slaves' humanity was in constant risk of obliteration.

Only as the ships approached their New World destinations would the crews wash their now-filthy cargoes to spruce them up for sale. However, the toll taken on the slaves' bodies by the Middle Passage was often difficult to disguise.

In such miserable maritime conditions, it is remarkable that resistance of any form ever took place, but it did. The threat of suicides and shipboard insurrections haunted the imaginations of slaving companies, ship owners, their captains, and their crews. Slavers poured time, mental energy, and manpower into minimizing the ever-present threat of saltwater resistance.

The historian David Richardson has estimated that the cumulative financial cost of all these anti-resistance efforts—most notably the cost of hiring so many mercenary sailors—measurably reduced slave traders' budgets for buying slaves from Africa.



Richardson has calculated that without shipboard resistance and the costs that accrued to prevent, suppress, and deter it, the number of slaves trafficked from Africa to America would have been 9 percent higher. To put this another way: Saltwater suicides, shipboard revolts, and the ever-present threat of them saved at least 1 million Africans from ever experiencing the Middle Passage in the first place.

Looking ahead to America, shipboard resistance takes on additional significance. As the historian Eric Taylor has argued, "The holds of slave ships were perhaps the sites where the long tradition of African American resistance first developed into a coherent and somewhat unified movement." After all, men and women drawn from across Africa could not help but notice that everyone in chains was black and everyone responsible for keeping them enslaved was white.

Lecture 5

A FREE BLACK FAMILY IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA

The first Africans were brought to Virginia as slaves in 1619, but it wasn't until the 1670s that race slavery would actually come to dominate the Chesapeake region's tobacco economy. This lecture examines these first few decades in this region's history. Using a black man named Anthony Johnson as a case study and drawing on the work of historians J. Douglas Deal, James Brewer Stewart, Stephen Innes, and Tim Breen, the lecture demonstrates what was possible for black slaves in Virginia in this early transitional period. It also looks at how and why, in the span of a single generation after 1650, possibilities for men like Anthony Johnson were suddenly, drastically foreclosed.

Antonio

Antonio—as Anthony Johnson was originally known—was one of a handful of black slaves, many from Angola, sold to the English at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1621. He was bought by a planter named Richard Bennett and put to work raising tobacco. Antonio was among the few to survive a devastating Indian raid on the new colony a year later.

Antonio was hardworking, earning the obvious favor of his master, who allowed him the freedom to farm a patch of land for his own benefit. Bennett also sanctioned Antonio's marriage to a woman named Mary, the only black woman on this plantation. Together, Mary and Antonio had four children, two boys and two girls, and Bennett allowed them to baptize each one in the Anglican faith.

Around 1640, Antonio was able to buy his freedom from his master, using a legal arrangement known as self-purchase. Under the self-purchase system, slaves made long-term deals with their masters to work extra hard, to increase productivity, and to refrain from running away for a term of years, in return for the option to buy their freedom at some future date. Johnson bought his freedom after fully 20 years of dogged service to Bennett, using as currency tobacco that he had raised on days off on the small plot of land Bennett had given him for this purpose.

On the Eastern Shore

Soon afterward, Antonio moved his family—whose legal freedom he had also bought from Bennett—to Virginia's Eastern Shore. He had been given 250 acres on the north side of a creek in an isolated corner of the colony after falsely asserting that he had sponsored the passage of five servants across the Atlantic. Once settled, he used his remaining funds to buy four head of livestock and, importantly, a black slave of his own.

Renaming himself Anthony Johnson, he set out to replicate his former master's success planting tobacco. He bought a second black slave, a woman named Mary Gersheene, for this purpose. The Johnsons' unusual position—as ex-slaves now turned slaveholders themselves—caused them frequent problems.

Anthony's son, John Johnson, ran into trouble in 1653 when he bought 550 acres near his father's farm, only to find that a white neighbor with no legal claim to the property was occupying it. It took an unpleasant visit to court to settle the matter in Johnson's favor. Other neighbors also made life difficult for the family.

For example, in 1658, a white neighbor named Matthew Pippen claimed 100 acres of the Johnsons' land as his own. For reasons that go unrecorded, the courts sided with Pippen and compelled the Johnsons to hand over the land. The Johnsons, of course, protested, bringing suit against Pippen, but their complaints were dismissed, and Pippen took permanent control of this acreage.

Seven years later, in 1665, allegations surfaced that their son John had had repeated sexual liaisons with Hannah Leach, an unmarried white servant in the employ of a neighbor. Someone had blown the whistle on their tryst and the accusations had ended up in court, where John Johnson was found guilty of fornication and sentenced to hard labor in the local workhouse for an indefinite term. Only when John agreed to post bond for good behavior and pay child support was he allowed to return to his family.

Soon afterward, and perhaps as a result of this latest humiliation, Mary and Anthony, along with their son John and other family members, sold up and left the county, renting a 300-acre property further north on the same peninsula. Anthony was now in his 60s and would die illiterate and without a will five years later, in 1670. His wife Mary took over their new farm's lease. After her death, it passed to their sons, one of whom renamed the plantation Angola as if to honor the homeland from whence his parents had originally come.

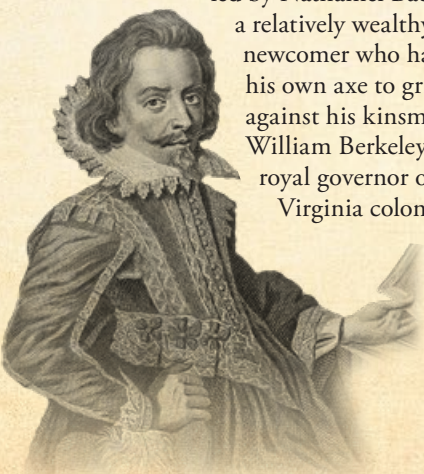
Bacon's Rebellion

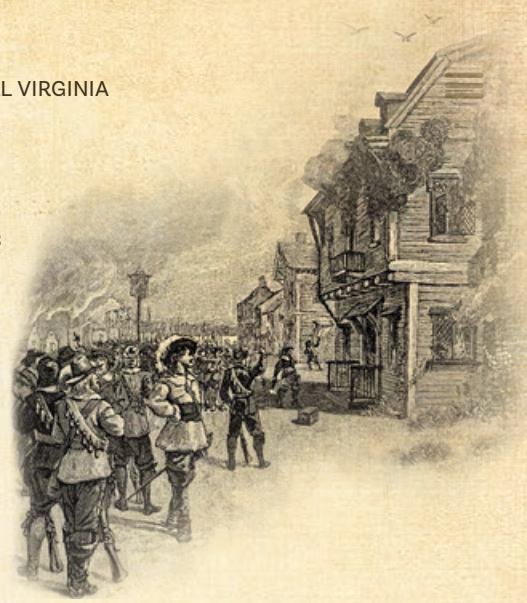
The Johnson family disappears from surviving records somewhere around the year 1700. For 50 years at that point, since about 1650, racial lines had been hardening in Virginia and Maryland, the result of a pressing labor crisis that was making it more difficult to acquire free white indentured servants from England.

The reasons were simple: Throughout the 1640s, England had been consumed by a civil war that had dramatically disrupted the regular supply of

white labor to the mainland colonies. At the same time, rising wages in England, poor conditions for white servants in Virginia, and the promise of better prospects for white servants willing to settle further north in Pennsylvania had all conspired to cause the number of white Europeans emigrating to the Chesapeake to work as indentured servants to fall dramatically. Additionally, the white servants already living in colonies like Virginia and Maryland were becoming restless and rebellious.

Those factors were the cause of growing political and social tension in Chesapeake society after mid-century. In 1676, matters came to a head when a coalition of black and white, landless ex-servants rose up to demand better treatment from the colony's planter elites. The revolting servants were led by Nathaniel Bacon, a relatively wealthy newcomer who had his own axe to grind against his kinsman, William Berkeley, the royal governor of the Virginia colony.





The two sides waged bitter, bloody war for three months, with Bacon promising to seize the governorship and turn over planters' lands to the landless ex-servants who fought with him. The Bacon rebels succeeded in sacking Jamestown, the colony's capital, and taking control of its assembly. Governor Berkeley was forced to flee, only returning to Jamestown when Bacon died, unexpectedly, of dysentery.

The governor's soldiers, aided by reinforcements sent from England, captured more than 80 of the rebels. It had been the largest uprising in colonial America to date, and it left the region's planter elite badly shaken.

Slave Codes and the Rise of Race

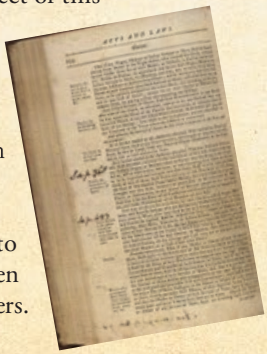
In the years following Bacon's Rebellion, the planter class endeavored to solve the labor crisis by reducing their dependence on white indentured servants and instead embracing race slavery. In 1698, the English Parliament had lifted the monopoly that had previously allowed only one company, the Royal African Company, to sell slaves on the American mainland. This created competition among slave traders, and that competition served to drive down the price Virginia planters paid for slaves, making them more affordable.

Because of these and other factors, the number of slaves in Virginia and Maryland began to take off in the 1670s at exactly the moment that the number of indentured servants was beginning to dwindle. While African slaves had comprised just 2 percent of the Chesapeake population in 1650, by 1700, their proportion had surged to 13 percent. It would reach 40 percent by 1750.

White colonists began to formalize in law what it meant to be a slave and what it meant to be free. They did so in a series of slave codes. Before Bacon's Rebellion, lawmakers had passed two significant pieces of legislation to advance this agenda. The first, a 1662 slave code, decreed that children in the Virginia colony would inherit the status of their mothers, which condemned millions of babies born to slave women to a life without freedom. The second, a 1667 act, added a clause that said that Christian baptism could not make an unfree person free.

After Bacon's Rebellion, these sorts of regulations multiplied as the numbers of enslaved Africans in Virginia and many other Southern colonies surged. New slave codes now restricted slaves' movement and their ability to trade with one another. New codes also prohibited more than four slaves from meeting together. The codes also allowed planters to set up slave patrols: bands of white militiamen who would roam the roads to capture any slaves out without a pass.

The cumulative effect of this flurry of new laws was to enshrine race slavery as a distinct and peculiar category in American law. No longer would there be any question as to the status of children born to slave mothers.



No longer would Africans be able to defend themselves in court or accumulate the private property necessary to secure self-purchase agreements. For the first time in the history of British America, lawmakers laid out a legal distinction between English servants and African slaves. Race now became the primary means to divide and distinguish between these two groups.

Virginia's white planters, fearful of a biracial repeat of Bacon's Rebellion, now set about trying to build stronger ties with all the white non-slaveholders in their region. These planters offered incentives for poor white farmers and white ex-servants to sign up to be militiamen, and they passed a series of laws designed to make poor whites and enslaved blacks detest each other. In 1680, for instance, Virginia's legislature passed a law promising 30 lashes to any black slave who threatened or did violence to any white person. Subsequent laws drove this wedge between poor whites and enslaved blacks in deeper by forbidding interracial marriage and making ministers who performed such marriages subject to a fine of 10,000 pounds of tobacco.

These new laws also criminalized interracial sex when the woman was white. This law said nothing about sex between white men and black women, thereby turning a blind eye to white masters who raped their female slaves.

History on a Hinge

These new laws effectively closed the loopholes that men like Anthony Johnson had once used to bargain their way out of slavery, creating in their place the foundations of a slave society: a new social order with race slavery as its foundation. When Mary and Antonio had arrived in Virginia in the 1620s, there had been no laws limiting their opportunities to procure freedom, own land, testify in court, or inherit property. By 1700, those avenues to legal and economic freedom had been closed off.

Lecture 6

QUAKERS AND PURITANS JOIN THE FIGHT

In 1694, a Boston landowner named John Saffin hired out one of his male slaves to a hard-charging livestock farmer named Thomas Shepherd. The term of the loan was seven years—long enough, Saffin hoped, to break the will of this slave, whose name was Adam. Saffin promised Adam that he would grant him his freedom at the end of this term, an incentive for Adam to buckle down.

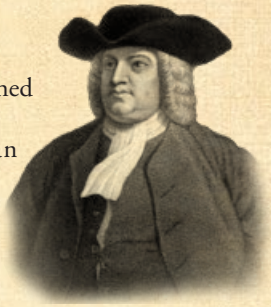
Adam did no such thing. His new master thought him lazy, rude, and quarrelsome. Shepherd demanded that Saffin take him back, and Saffin eventually, reluctantly obliged. Adam continued to display an independence of mind and character, threatening Saffin's other slaves and servants to the point that they were sometimes afraid to be in the room with him. In 1700, a year before the date on which Saffin had agreed to grant Adam his liberty, feeling exasperated and vengeful, he changed his mind.

Adam was furious and took his master to court, demanding that Saffin honor his promise. The dispute between the two men later came before Judge Samuel Sewall. This judge's response marks the occasion of the first antislavery activism by white Europeans in colonial America. In fact, as historians such as Darold Wax, Eve LaPlante, Mark Peterson, and Katharine Gerbner have argued, this Puritan's unprecedented denunciation of slavery in New England coincided with the moment when the first American Quakers, 300 miles to the southwest in Pennsylvania, were also beginning to question their colony's embrace of slavery as an economic system.

Commerce over Conscience

By 1700, every single British colony in the New World depended either directly or indirectly on income from slavery. Even the pious Puritans of the New England colonies—at that time comprised of Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire—embraced slavery readily, quickly inserting themselves into the transatlantic slaving business by building and operating ships to carry slaves destined for Barbados, Jamaica, Virginia, and South Carolina. In fact, the Puritans even briefly ran their own Caribbean slave colony.

In Massachusetts, some of the colony's very first laws pertained to the treatment of slaves within its borders. This was a sure sign of its government's intentions to cultivate a small slave labor force there in New England.



At the same time, slavery was also becoming entrenched in another famous bastion of Christian perfection, the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania. William Penn, an English Quaker, had founded the city of Philadelphia in 1682 as a haven for religious dissenters.

The first slave ship soon arrived. The *Isabella*, an English slaver, docked in Philadelphia in 1684, delivering some 150 Africans to the city. Its captain found no shortage of Quaker buyers, and subsequent smaller deliveries ensured that the city's African population quickly swelled to about 15 percent of all residents. Their new masters put these African slaves to work on a wide variety of projects, including farm work, domestic service, construction, and dockwork.

Evidently, like their Puritan counterparts further north, the first Quakers saw no contradiction between their religious convictions and the business of owning or trading human beings. In 1690, William Penn himself boasted that 10 Philadelphia ships had been fitted out for slave trading in the past year.

The Germantown Protest, 1688

The earliest antislavery protest took place not in Massachusetts but in Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1688. It occurred when a group of German and Dutch Quaker immigrants living about a half-day's walk from Philadelphia composed a statement criticizing all those members of their church who owned or traded in African slaves. By such means, these German and Dutch Quakers tried to differentiate themselves from the English Quakers among whom they lived, a process that had begun years earlier.

The Germantown Protest, as it became known, was written by this community's learned leader, Francis Daniel Pastorius. In it, the Germantown Quakers spoke of blacks as the social and spiritual equal of whites, and they argued that keeping black slaves was thus as unconscionable as keeping white slaves. They compared the enslavement of Africans in Pennsylvania to the historic oppression of Quakers in Europe a century earlier. They pointed out, too, that the slaves already living in Pennsylvania had not come there voluntarily but had been swiped by traders or captured in wars that were anything but just.

Slavery, they concluded, was not legitimate; it was simply theft on a grand scale. The protesters in Germantown also informed readers that their friends back in Europe were reluctant to emigrate to a slaveholding society. This was a decidedly and revealingly self-interested argument given that Pennsylvania was in desperate need of more European settlers.

Pastorius and the other signatories addressed their letter to their church's regional council, making sure to press their case against slavery in ways that reminded their fellow Quakers of the central tenets of their shared faith. Thus, Pastorius took care to point out that if Pennsylvania's slaves ever rose up in armed revolt, that members of their faith would be peculiarly powerless to suppress it. Quakers were opposed to all forms of violence, and that commitment to pacifism would prevent them from raising a hand in self-defense if ever a slave revolt occurred in their midst.

Adam, Samuel, and *The Selling of Joseph*, 1700

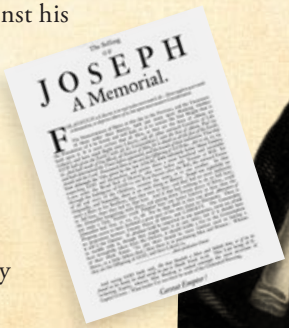
In Puritan New England, the first antislavery protest occurred 12 years after the Germantown Protest in 1700, when Judge Samuel Sewall heard Adam the slave's case against his master, John Saffin. Judge Sewall was a British-born migrant to Massachusetts. He had graduated from Harvard, made his money as a merchant and diplomat, and was now enjoying another career as one of the colony's most important judges.

Sewall owned no slaves himself, but members of his family, including his nephew, did. So, too, did many in his private prayer group and among his neighbors. However, as he wrote in his diary on June 19, 1700, something about slavery had always bothered him: "Having been long and much dissatisfied with the trade of fetching Negroes from Guinea, I have a strong inclination to write something about it."

News of Adam's suit against his master gave Judge Sewall the prod he needed to pick up his pen. The resulting pamphlet, titled *The Selling of Joseph*—a reference to an Old Testament boy who is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers—sounded more like a Puritan church sermon than a piece of social and political commentary.

Sewall began with the Bible, in which, he wrote, we are told that "man Stealing is ranked among the most atrocious of capital crimes.'" Significantly, Sewall also rejected the long-popular belief that Africans bore the curse of Ham: that their black skin was a mark of an ancient sin committed by one of the sons of Noah.

The judge also argued that every arriving African slave took a job that could have been done by a white servant. Believing that Africans were sufficiently different from white Europeans, Sewall saw no hope for their assimilation and integration into Puritan society.



Afterlives

Obviously racist in its own peculiar 17th-century ways, Sewall's brief tract nonetheless refuted all of the era's typical justifications for slavery, and it did so by linking the cause of antislavery to biblical chapter and verse. For that reason, it caused a firestorm, not least with John Saffin, Adam's master. He published a blistering 16-page response a few months later, in 1701. The piece was called *A Brief and Candid Answer*, and it was the only major piece of proslavery writing published in America before the American Revolution.

Equality, Saffin said, was not a natural state; indeed, equality for all would turn God's order on its head. Some men were born to be kings, Saffin noted, and others to be slaves. That was the way of the world, in his view.

In his court, Judge Sewall had ruled that John Saffin must free Adam on the date in 1701 that the two men had originally agreed seven years earlier. Until then, Adam would remain in bondage. Saffin, of course, bristled at Sewall's directive and contrived a plan to get Adam out of Boston, beyond Sewall's jurisdiction, before that date arrived. Adam had other ideas and ran away, disappearing into Boston's maze of alleys.

After a few months at large, Saffin found him, caught him, and threw him in jail, demanding that the case be tried again. Despite trying to bribe the jury, Saffin did not get the result he sought. In November 1703, a panel of four judges, including Sewall, declared Adam free, once and for all.

Beyond securing Adam's liberty, the longer-term significance of Sewall's antislavery activism was modest. The following year, several of Sewall's friends in the Massachusetts government did urge that body to end African slavery in the colony and to instead promote the further importation of white indentured servants, but nothing came of that proposal.

While Sewall was able to secure modifications to the harshest provisions of a 1705 law punishing mixed-race marriages, nothing he said or did sparked a large-scale antislavery movement in New England before the American Revolution. On the contrary,

Saffin's proslavery arguments had found many sympathetic readers beyond the judiciary, while Sewall's little pamphlet, *The Selling of Joseph*, quickly disappeared into obscurity.*

In some ways, responses to the Germantown Protest in Pennsylvania were quite similar. The statement's uncompromising tone and finger-pointing language alienated otherwise honest and godly Quakers, who found themselves described as robbers and tyrants. As a result, one Quaker governing council after another passed the buck. In a larger sense, however, the impact of the Germantown Protest would be transformative. For example, it inspired an irregular series of other antislavery statements by vocal Quakers.

One of those Quakers was George Keith, a radical who, in 1693, published a pamphlet that owed an obvious debt to Pastorius's 1688 manuscript. In his *Exhortation and Caution to Friends Concerning Buying or Keeping of Negroes*, Keith recommended that Quakers refuse to buy any African slaves unless it was in order to free them.

He also recommended that those men of conscience who already owned slaves should teach them to read, give them a Christian education, and then emancipate them as soon as possible.

Other Quaker pamphleteers would offer similar prescriptions in the years to come, suggesting that the ideas contained in the original Germantown Protest enjoyed an afterlife long after its creation. Additionally, Quaker leadership in Pennsylvania did eventually begin to issue directives designed to reduce Quaker participation in the slave trade.

* Scholars know of only one copy of *The Selling of Joseph* that still survives.

Lecture 7

THOMAS THISTLEWOOD'S PLANTATION REVOLUTION

In the decades between 1700 and 1776, the Southern and Caribbean colonies of British America underwent what historians have described as a "plantation revolution." Part of this revolution was demographic: The number of slaves in British America grew dramatically. Another component was economic: During this century, landowners established vast profit-driven plantations.

However, the defining component of the 18th-century plantation revolution was social: As large landowners sought ever-greater economies of scale, they took ever-more drastic steps to maximize their slaves' efficiency, obedience, and loyalty, practicing the art of domination through brutal disciplinary regimes and repressive slave codes.

Building on the work of historians Vincent Brown and Trevor Burnard, this lecture shows that the naked hunt for power was nowhere more visible than in the three slave societies of Barbados, Jamaica, and South Carolina.

Barbados

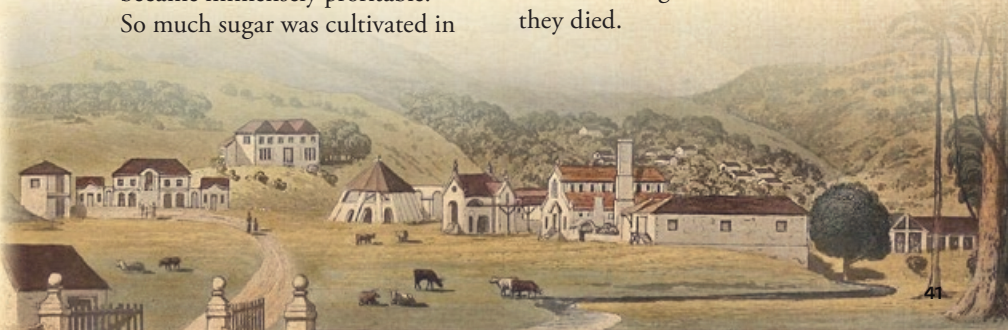
English people first settled on Barbados in the 1620s in hopes of using it as a base from which to raid Spanish treasure ships sailing between Hispaniola and Spain. Only slowly did it occur to Englishmen that this little island might also be transformed into a permanent agricultural colony. After a failed experiment trying to raise tobacco using poor, white indentured Englishmen as labor, Barbadian planters began raising cane sugar for export, using enslaved black Africans.

Slave traders soon thronged to Barbados to satisfy demand for labor, and by the 1670s, Barbados had become the first English colony in the New World to have a black slave majority. However, conditions of work, exposure to tropical diseases, terrible diets, and poor-quality shelter all meant that most Barbadian slaves died before they could have children. This was an English colony devoted to pure profit, regardless of the human costs.

Jamaica

Barbados is a very small island. As planters ran out of new land to cultivate, some of them sold up and went to try their luck on other Caribbean islands, including Jamaica, a much larger island recently captured from the Spanish that lay 1,000 miles west of Barbados.

These Jamaican plantations became immensely profitable. So much sugar was cultivated in Jamaica that by 1700, the island had eclipsed Barbados as the wealthiest and most important colony in the British Empire. As in Barbados, English planters in Jamaica couldn't keep their slaves alive, and rather than trying to improve working conditions so that slaves might live longer, they simply worked slaves to death and then bought more when they died.



South Carolina

At the same time they settled Jamaica, English planters had also begun to explore areas on the American mainland where they might cultivate sugar. In 1670, with the permission of the English king, Charles II, they established the Carolina colonies, which at first included present-day North and South Carolina and later grew to include present-day Georgia.

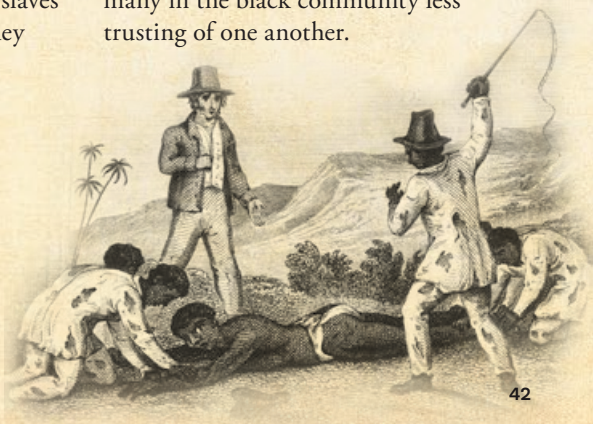
Two hundred Barbadian settlers arrived on the Carolina coast that year and set up their capital on the water's edge, calling it Charles Towne after their king. During the 1690s, Carolina planters eventually found success cultivating rice, another back-breaking, labor-intensive crop that they could sell in large quantities. They quickly embraced African slavery as the best means to make their rice fortunes.

By 1710, South Carolina had become the first English colony on the American mainland to have a black majority population. In some parts of the coastal plain where most of the rice growing was done, black Africans actually outnumbered white Europeans by nine to one.

White Supremacy

The white minority in the Carolina colonies took brutal measures to ensure that their black majority remained docile and controllable. As in Virginia, slaves were violently punished if they traveled without a pass or met together in large numbers. Carolina laws also prevented them from owning firearms, learning to read, or being caught with a newspaper.

The Carolina planters also rewarded black informants for spying on their fellow slaves, a tactic that succeeded in making many in the black community less trusting of one another.



In 1724, slaveholding legislators passed legislation that required all white planters to carry guns to church service on Sundays in case the slaves rebelled while their owners were at prayer. Whenever there was even a whiff that a plot was afoot, plantation owners launched interrogations, often using torture and often culminating in slaves being hanged or burned at the stake for their alleged roles in one imagined conspiracy or another.

On the plantations themselves, white masters employed a variety of dehumanizing tactics in order to maintain their personal authority over large numbers of slaves. That process began as soon as new slaves arrived and their new masters gave them new names, which were often the names they would have given to animals or young children. The purpose was obvious: to belittle their human property and strip them of an important part of their African identity.

Masters also set about exerting their authority over black families. Enslaved people detested the fact that many owners did not think twice about breaking up their marriages and kin groups.

Thistlewood's Tactics

In one year in the 1750s, Thomas Thistlewood, a Jamaican estate manager, whipped 35 of his 42 slaves, giving each of them a minimum of 50 lashes. He also raped 10 of his 16 female slaves. He recorded all of this and more in his diary.

In all, the diary spans 2 million words. It charts Thistlewood's slowly rising fortunes as he moves from one overseer's job to another before finding the money, in 1767, to buy his own small plantation, which he named Breadnut Island.

Thistlewood's writings tell a great deal about how Thistlewood treated slaves. To deter runaways and rebellions, propel productivity, and command respect and deference, Thistlewood made daily displays of his power. When an individual tried to flee the plantation, favorite punishments included making another slave urinate in the eyes and mouth of the recaptured runaway or rubbing molasses on the skin of the offender before exposing him naked to flies and mosquitoes.

These spectacles were vindictive enough, but perhaps nothing exceeded what Thistlewood referred to as "Derby's dose." After administering a flogging, Thistlewood would rub salt, lime juice, and pepper into the recalcitrant's bloody wounds before ordering another slave to defecate into the culprit's mouth. Thistlewood would then immediately put a bung into his mouth, and the victim would remain like that, gagged and gagging, for four or five hours.

Thistlewood was nearly murdered in 1752 as a slave called Congo Sam tried to flee his plantation. On other occasions, Thistlewood seized guns from slaves on his property, and on another, he had to defend himself against a slave who pulled a knife when his master caught him picking fruit when he shouldn't. Thistlewood was also among the white survivors of Tacky's Revolt in 1760, the largest slave rebellion anywhere in the British Atlantic world in the 18th century.

Conclusion

Thistlewood's actions and beliefs are no different than those of any other white slaveholder on the island. In 18th-century Jamaica, none of his actions or beliefs made him special.

Thistlewood considered himself a creature of the Enlightenment, but he somehow missed the fundamental lesson of the Enlightenment: He remained fundamentally incapable of finding any empathy or sympathetic identification for the sad souls whose lives he made miserable. On the contrary, he saw only difference and distance between himself and them.

In this jaundiced Jamaican worldview, the only way to advance the extraction of labor was to incite terror.

Violence was always the answer. Leniency was a sign of weakness. Savagery signified strength. Given these conditions, it should not come as a surprise that Thistlewood recorded a number of suicides or attempted suicides in his diary over the years.

Although self-destruction was a tragic form of protest against the endemic violence of plantation slavery, not even the dead were left un-tormented. To try to terrorize living slaves, masters and overseers repeatedly mutilated the corpses of African suicides to assert their hegemony.

However numerous slave suicides may have been, many more deaths occurred as the direct result of the crippling labor burdens placed upon slaves by the task of raising sugar, by far the most grueling and life-shortening of any of the cash crops cultivated in early America. On average, Jamaican slaves could labor in the sugar fields for only 13.2 years before exhaustion and ill health broke down their bodies, sending most to early graves long before their 50th birthdays.

Lecture 8

PHIBBAH THISTLEWOOD: SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY

This lecture draws upon the work of scholars such as Trevor Burnard, Hilary Beckles, Barry Gaspar, Darlene Hine, and Sharon Block. It examines how enslaved women on 18th-century plantations responded to the peculiarly gendered circumstances in which they were compelled to live.

Resistance Methods

As a group, enslaved women generally had little geographic familiarity with the world beyond their plantation. When they did run, they usually didn't go far, playing the role of truant rather than fugitive. They typically fled to nearby woods or swamps for a few days or weeks with the hope of bargaining with their owners over the conditions of their return. Given that women were more likely than men to have been pressed into domestic service, their absences were often keenly felt by masters and their families.

The essential roles enslaved women played in the domestic entourage also gave them other unique opportunities. Masters were constantly concerned that their cooks, serving girls, and nurses might tamper with their food, wine, or medicine, poisoning them at breakfast or dinner or as they recovered from illness. In fact, slave owners went so far as to lobby their legislators to pass laws explicitly deterring would-be poisoners on their plantations.

While enslaved women often did distinctive, specialized work, they also used their bodies to contest the terms of their enslavement. The historian Hilary Beckles has coined the term *gynecological resistance* to describe the myriad ways in which black women used their capacity for childbearing to fight slavery.

Beckles argues that female field workers may have sometimes used pregnancy as a strategy to reduce their work hours. Other historians have argued the exact opposite, noting that planters frequently railed against slave women who did not get pregnant or who aborted their pregnancies, bitterly complaining that such behaviors lowered the plantation birth rate and constrained the rate of expansion of the labor force.

Masters were continually suspicious of enslaved midwives, regularly accusing them of sabotage and child murder. To try to ensure successful live births, planters bribed pregnant women with extra days of rest.

An important note here is that a woman's ability to conceive, incubate, and deliver live, healthy offspring is conditioned by environmental factors beyond her control. As the historian Barbara Bush has written, "under extreme conditions, women's desire and ability to have children is reduced. The classic example here is the concentration camp."

Another important note is that enslaved women's reluctance to carry some babies to term might reflect their distress about the circumstances of their conception or the identity of their fathers. The rape of black women by white men was endemic on 18th-century slave plantations. Because slavery followed the status of the mother, any child born of rape in this context only added to the master's labor force. Rape was a category with no legal meaning in such situations.

Coobah

Enslaved women were at constant risk of sexual exploitation by their masters and the male members of their masters' families. For example, on Thomas Thistlewood's Jamaica plantation, Thistlewood raped no fewer than 138 enslaved women during his 37 years there. According to his diary, Thistlewood engaged in 3,852 acts of rape against his slaves.

A handful of enslaved women seem to have experienced Thistlewood's attentions as a catalyst for overt forms of resistance. Coobah is a case in point. She was a small girl who was 15 when Thistlewood purchased her in 1761. Coobah had just turned 16 when her new master first raped her. From him, Coobah quickly contracted venereal disease, which plagued her for years afterwards.

She first tried to run away from Thistlewood's plantation in August 1765, absenting herself for five days. When she was recaptured, her master had her flogged and fastened a collar and chain around her neck to try to deter a repeat performance. Two years later, Coobah's first child, conceived with a free black man living close to Thistlewood's plantation, died while still a toddler. Coobah was 21 at that point.

In the months and years that followed, Coobah redoubled her efforts to flee her master's gaze. In 1770, for example, she ran away no less than eight times. She did everything she could to display her contempt for Thistlewood's authority. By 1774, Thistlewood had had enough and sold her for £40 to a master in Georgia. It is not clear whether such a sale had been Coobah's hope all along, but her campaign had nevertheless ultimately succeeded in putting an ocean between herself and the man who had raped her repeatedly for the past 12 years.

Sally

After Coobah came Sally, another enslaved woman under Thistlewood's control. Originally from the Congo, Sally, too, developed a habit of running away, usually two or three times each year, remaining at large for just a few days each time. The timing of her truancy corresponded to the dates on which Thistlewood raped her, something he did at least 37 times.

Her disappearances seem like a direct response to the trauma of sexual violence, a recurring search for safety and sanctuary that brought only diminishing returns.

After more than a decade of this nihilistic back and forth, something seemed to snap in Sally. Her behavior grew strange and infantile, as if her sanity and sense of self were collapsing. Thistlewood concluded that she could no longer work and had given up on life, selling her for $40 to a planter somewhere on the mainland in 1784.

Abba

A third woman, Abba, purchased in 1758, responded to Thistlewood's advances quite differently, and we can surmise that this was because of her different circumstances. In the course of almost 30 years on his plantation, Abba became pregnant 13 times, delivering 10 live births. Six of them survived the first year of life, and four were still alive when Thistlewood died in 1786.

It is not clear how many of these pregnancies are attributable to Thistlewood, though he raped her repeatedly: 128 times between 1771 and 1774, for instance.

The presence of these dependents in her life had a significant impact on her experience as a slave. Unlike Coobah or Sally, Abba had mouths to feed, and as such, she found that she had no option but to forsake the outright rebellions that the other two women had mounted.

Instead, to protect and provide for her growing brood, Abba seems to have acquiesced to almost every aspect of Thistlewood's vile plantation regime, including his repeated sexual predations. She never once ran away. Instead, she tried to cope, accommodating herself to her master's demands in order to make sure that her children could live and grow.

Phibbah

In the course of their 33-year entanglement, Phibbah used her privileged position as Thistlewood's favored sexual object to purchase property, protect and advance members of her family, and to carve out an identity as a powerful, respectable, quasi-independent woman. At terrible cost, then, Phibbah transcended slavery.

Thomas Thistlewood first raped Phibbah in 1753, when she was likely in her 20s. Over the next three decades, he would do so 2,142 more times, continuing to exploit her until two months before his final illness in 1786. In the first years of their relationship, his encounters with her accounted for about 75 percent of his sexual activity with his slaves.

His affections bred a cluster of opportunities that she readily exploited. Phibbah quickly took on the role of chief housekeeper, a position that commanded the deference of all of Thistlewood's household slaves and required her to make purchases, manage budgets, and handle cash. She used this role to achieve economic independence for herself and, by extension, her children,

leveraging her master's favor to engage in the sale of surplus trade goods and agricultural products that came into her hands. She also sold clothing and food that she had sewn and baked herself as well as gifts that Thistlewood had given her.

It all added up, allowing her to buy her own livestock, a few scraps of real estate, and two slaves, a woman named Bess and her son, Sam. Because of Phibbah's legal status, much of this capital remained under Thistlewood's name, though in his will, he would later make provisions to free her and to transfer her accumulated investment to her own lawful and independent ownership.

As the master's mistress, Phibbah's utility among the slave community rose measurably. Overnight, she was transformed into an informant of sorts, capable, if she wished, of secretly passing crucial tidbits about the master's state of mind or recent activities to field workers and domestics in need of inside information. By the same means, she also accrued power as an intermediary, repeatedly acting to intercede on behalf of slaves whose requests for favor or pleas for mercy might otherwise have been overlooked or dismissed.

Tellingly, she steered one of her children, a daughter named Jenny whose birth predated Thistlewood's attentions, into a relationship with the master of a nearby plantation, evidently committed to the belief that such unions were ultimately advantageous.

Thistlewood himself was likely the father of Phibbah's other child, a boy named John, born in 1760. While some slave owners refused to acknowledge their paternity of their mistress's children, Phibbah convinced Thistlewood to free John when the boy was just two years old and to pay for his education at a local school.

Thistlewood died in 1786. In 1792, after several years of delay and wrangling, Phibbah was finally given the manumission he had promised her in his will. She was now in her 60s, a wealthy woman, and legally free.

Thistlewood exploited Phibbah using the legal, social, and physical tools at his disposal to prey on hundreds of women, including this one. But Phibbah used their relationship to secure advantages for herself, her family, and her community that nudged the balance of power.

Lecture 9

SLAVE INSURRECTIONS IN THE 18TH CENTURY

In September of 1739, about 80 of South Carolina's slaves, led by a man named Jemmy, carved a bloody path beginning near the Stono River and heading southward toward Spanish Florida. Over the first 24 hours of the Stono rebellion, these slaves burned seven plantations and killed 25 white men, women, and children. Petrified local Carolina planters wasted no time assembling local militia, and they ambushed the slave rebels at their campsite on the second day of the uprising. Thirty rebels quickly fled into the woods, while others stood their ground.

The majority of the slave rebels were killed in this skirmish, many after surrendering. To terrify and deter the colony's remaining slave population, the militiamen cut off several rebels' heads and spiked them on posts. The 30 rebels who had managed to flee became prey in a massive manhunt, and they, too, were soon captured and killed. Those final brutal massacres put an end to the rebellion.

Fallout

The next spring, the South Carolina General Assembly overhauled its slave code to try to prevent any future insurrection in this black-majority colony. The new 1740 Negro Act was premised on the idea that slaveholders' strength resided in their unity; thus, it dramatically restricted the small freedoms some masters had previously granted their slaves. From now on, it was illegal for masters to teach their slaves to read or to give them their legal freedom (a practice known as manumission).

It barred slaves from carrying firearms, from purchasing liquor, and from leaving their plantation without a signed pass.

Significantly, it also prohibited slaves from owning wooden swords as well as drums, horns, or other loud instruments that might be used by rebels to recruit during an insurrection. The same act also limited the workday to 15 hours in summer—and fewer in winter—and decreed that all slaves be granted a day of rest each Sunday.

Patterns and Possibilities

According to historian Herbert Aptheker, the 1739 Stono rebellion was the bloodiest of perhaps as many as 250 slave uprisings or conspiracies in British North America and the United States. Every colony and state, Aptheker argues, experienced multiple insurrections in which at least 10 slaves plotted schemes to achieve their freedom by force of arms.

However, in terms of plots in which slave rebels actually managed to initiate their plans in some substantive way before reprisals against them commenced, Stono stands alone as the only significant armed challenge to slaveholders' supremacy on the mainland before the 19th century.

The historian David Geggus has argued that New World slave insurrections on the same scale as Stono typically only occurred in the following circumstances:

1. On large plantations, in which 100 or more enslaved people lived and worked.
2. On plantations in which high proportions of enslaved people had been recently enslaved.
3. In heavily black-majority societies.

4. In colonies facing external attack from foreign powers.
5. In economies that were suffering through depressions or recessions.
6. In urban environments in which enslaved people might be more readily exposed to ideas and information from elsewhere.
7. In geographies where would-be fugitives had nowhere to run.
8. In geographies proximate to significant maroon communities.
9. Amid rumors that local slaveholders had failed to implement a distant central government's decision to abolish slavery.
10. In societies in which master absenteeism was common and the master-slave relationship was estranged and depersonalized.
11. In societies in which the slaveholding regime permitted the emergence of an autonomous black leadership.

These conditions are sometimes mutually exclusive, and Geggus suggests that major New World slave insurrections have occurred when only a handful of them have been met. The 1739 Stono revolt, for instance, occurred in a context in which only the second, third, and fourth conditions were operative. Additionally, in Geggus's reckoning, there were other circumstantial obstacles to insurrection:

1. Atomization: the idea that enslaved individuals on a given plantation would have little blood, family, language, or culture in common with one another.
2. Self-debasement: the idea that enslaved people internalized their master's view of them as inferior, childlike, and incapable of assertive personhood.
3. Military inferiority: the conviction among would-be rebels that they lacked the access to arms numerous and sophisticated enough to challenge their oppressors.
4. Unfamiliarity with freedom: the idea that people born into slavery cannot fully comprehend the prospect of a life in liberty.
5. Obedience to Christianity: the belief among enslaved converts that the Christian Bible teaches duty and loyalty rather than revolution.

Given the obstacles ranged against them and the very real possibility that there were informers, spies, and traitors among them, it's remarkable that any American slave making a rational appraisal of the costs of resistance decided to engage in armed revolt at all.

New York City, 1741

Slavery was also an important economic institution in many Northern colonies before the Revolution. As the historian Jill Lepore has explained, by the 1740s, slaves made up almost 20 percent of the population of the City of New York. The colony of New York had passed at least five sets of slave codes, each one designed to deter the city's slaves from coming together and rebelling.

In 1741, white New Yorkers thought they had discovered a slave plot in their city. The year began with the burglary of a shop in Manhattan from which some gold coins were taken. The city's sheriff soon received a tip from an informant that the thieves were two slaves named Caesar Varick and Prince Auboyneau. When the sheriff arrested them for the burglary, both men denied it.

Next, the sheriff questioned the keeper of a tavern where both Varick and Auboyneau were known to spend much of their time. John Hughson's tavern was well known as being a sort of speakeasy for slaves—a place where slaves could drink, gamble, and meet prostitutes. It seemed to the sheriff that it was pretty likely that John Hughson, even though he was white, was in on the plan to rob these local shops.

THE 1712 CONSPIRACY

One reason that white New Yorkers passed so many slave codes in the first few decades of the 18th century was that a slave conspiracy had been discovered in their city once already. In 1712, about 25 enslaved men and women originally from Ghana had set fire to barns and outhouses on the edge of the city. When neighbors arrived to put out the blaze, these slaves had attacked them with guns, axes, and swords and killed or wounded 15 of them. As the slaves tried to flee the city, they were captured and, after some cursory trials, 18 of the conspirators were executed. To deter any other slaves in the city from imitating these rebel arsonists, the city leaders displayed the heads of the executed slaves on spikes all around Manhattan.

When the sheriff interviewed the staff at the tavern, one of the servants, a 16-year-old white girl named Mary Burton, told the sheriff that she had seen the slaves and the tavern keeper plotting together, devising a much larger plot that they were about to set into motion. According to Burton, the slaves' plan was to enlist accomplices to start a great number of fires all across the city to distract residents while the slaves robbed their homes.

Before anyone could be arrested for conspiring to commit these crimes, the fires began, just as Mary had predicted. On March 18, 1741, someone started a fire on the roof of Fort George. It soon spread next door and began to consume the governor's mansion, the chapel, and the armory. When the raging fire was eventually put out, eyewitnesses told the sheriff that they had seen a slave named Quaco Roosevelt start the fire. It was beginning to seem as if Varick and Auboyneau's plot to set fires while robbing homes was becoming a reality. In the next few weeks, 13 fires hit the city.

As the number of fires multiplied, white residents began to panic. Eventually, the city council agreed to offer a reward of 100 pounds to any free person who could supply information about the suspected arson conspiracy.

This mountain of cash got Mary Burton's attention. She now claimed to have overheard meetings at Hughson's tavern at which Varick, Auboyneau, and other city slaves talked of burning down the fort and the whole city. Among other accusations, she also claimed that John Hughson had offered to do whatever he could to help them with the arson plot and that Auboyneau and Varick had at least 30 armed slaves ready to help them.

Prosecutions, Confessions, and Reckoning

This avalanche of new information provided the context in which Caesar Varick and Prince Auboyneau arrived in court to face charges for the burglary that had first focused attention on what the city's slaves were getting up to. Because of colonial two-strike laws, and because they had both been prosecuted for robberies before, they were now facing the death penalty for this repeat offence. Both pleaded not guilty to the burglary charges, and when questioned about the existence of a slave conspiracy in the city, they said nothing. To try to make an example of these two slaves, the court quickly found both guilty of the original thefts and sentenced them to death. They hanged on May 11, 1741.

With two of the suspected conspirators now executed—albeit for burglary—New York prosecutors next turned to the other people they suspected of conspiracy. The sheriff began rounding up all the black accomplices Mary Burton had named in her affidavit, and soon the jail cells at City Hall were filled with dozens of slaves.

The first trials for actual conspiracy followed soon afterward. First up were Quaco Roosevelt, the slave seen fleeing the scene of the fire at Fort George, and another man, Cuffee, believed to have conspired to burn the city to the ground. The charge was arson and "wickedly, voluntarily, feloniously, and maliciously conspiring, combining and confederating with … diverse other Negroes to kill and murder the inhabitants of this city." It was hardly a fair trial, and the jury handed down guilty verdicts for both Quaco and Cuffee. Both were burned at the stake.

Throughout June and July, city authorities continued to prosecute those they believed had played a part in planning the conspiracy—a conspiracy that had never actually been carried out. In fact, the investigation now expanded to consider suspicions that it was all a plot by a Spanish priest named John Ury, recently arrived in the city, to create anarchy and give Catholic Spain an advantage in its ongoing war with England. Conveniently, Mary Burton now suddenly remembered that Ury had been a ringleader, and her testimony soon sent him to the gallows. John Hughson was also executed for conspiracy on June 12, along with his wife.

The court was not finished. On the same day that it passed down Hughson's death sentence, it named the next six slaves it would try on charges of conspiracy. By now, the slaves locked in the jail cells beneath the city hall were ready to confess to anything to avoid being hanged or burned at the stake. Daniel Horsmanden, the judge who presided over some of these trials, told his diary, "Now many Negroes began to squeak."

Most of the confessions that poured forth from slave prisoners during June and July shared some common elements, elements that suggest that any plot that had existed was not as organized or deliberate as the judges had feared. In return for their confession, the court spared their lives, punishing them instead by transporting them out of the colony to be sold into slavery abroad.

The vagueness of these confessions helped to calm the hysteria. By the end of the summer, the executions had largely ceased. In total, 70 slaves were sold and sent away (mostly to faraway places like Jamaica), four white people were executed, 18 black slaves were hanged, and 13 more were burned at the stake.

While a minority of those accused of conspiracy were probably guilty of meeting together to plan some sort of plot, the majority of the accused were surely not guilty. Paranoia, fear, and hysteria were the real conspirators, widening the circle of accusation until it included far more people than could have ever likely been involved in a genuine plot.

Lecture 10

MAROONS: THOSE WHO ESCAPED

Disappearing in ones, twos, or small groups of friends and family, thousands upon thousands of enslaved people sought freedom from slavery by vanishing into the Southern wilderness, to Virginia's mountains, South Carolina's swamps, and Georgia's lush forests. There, they built communities and neighborhoods hidden from view, living there for years. These people are called maroons, and they are the subject of this lecture.

Background Information

It is important to distinguish maroons from truants and runaways. Maroons were not truants—they did not use flight to achieve a brief respite from work, to visit relatives, or as a bargaining chip to try to compel masters to improve conditions once they voluntarily returned to the plantation. Maroons had no intention of returning to slavery. Maroons were not runaways either—or at least, not all runaways were maroons. For instance, many runaways were swiftly captured and returned, while maroons were those who succeeded in disappearing largely without a trace.

Most runaway slaves set out heading south toward Spanish Florida or north toward white jurisdictions where, they believed, their freedom could be legally guaranteed. Maroons, by contrast, headed west, moving inland toward woods, swamps, bayous, marshes, creeks, and wetlands. They were headed to marginal lands far from any white settlement, where they could live independently and undisturbed.

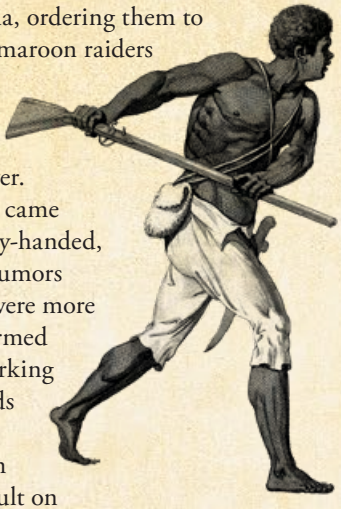
The Development of Maroon Communities

The easiest way to examine the development of maroon communities is to use the law. On June 8, 1680, legislators in the Virginia colony passed legislation called An Act for Preventing Negroes Insurrections. Much of it had to do with plantation slaves and how to preclude and deter armed rebellions. Additionally, the new act made it lawful for absconders to be killed if they resisted arrest and recapture.

In 1691, legislators in Virginia returned to the same subject, passing an act that gave justices of the peace powers to issue warrants against maroons and empowered local sheriffs to raise the forces they deemed necessary to capture them. The catalyst for this 1691 law, it seems, was a recent series of hunting raids by maroons on white settlers' food and animals.

In 1705, their successors went further, passing a parcel of anti-maroon measures that defined any slave who hid in the "swamps, woods, and other obscure places" as an outlaw who could be legally killed and whose former owner could be reimbursed from public funds for the assessed value of their absconded property. The same 1705 law also proscribed punishment by the cutting off of toes, ears, and penises for those runaways who could be located, arrested, and returned to slavery.

Leaders of the Carolina colonies passed laws similar to those in Virginia. In South Carolina, legislators also turned to the white militia, ordering them to apprehend maroon raiders in the region of the Wando River. The militia came home empty-handed, spreading rumors that there were more than 100 armed maroons lurking in the woods who were planning an all-out assault on the colony.



Increasingly fearful of an impending attack, South Carolina legislators passed an act in 1751 that offered rewards if colonists—whether white or black, slave or free—would confront, disarm, and subdue one of these bogeymen. There was much paranoia in such directives. In reality, we know of no offensive campaigns by maroons against white populations.

Reasons for Running

Slaves born free in Africa were two or three times more likely to run away from their colonial masters than those born into slavery in America. The more recently they had arrived, the more likely they were to try to escape. They were familiar with freedom and unused to barbarous and brutal treatment.

However, the newest slaves also lacked the English-language fluency to ever hope to fit in among urban communities of free blacks, and they lacked the geographic knowledge to strike out confidently for distant destinations such as Spanish Florida.

Some among these recently arrived Africans avoided the coast, turning in the other direction and heading into the backcountry, off the grid. Those who did, like a man named Arrow, who fled on his second day as a South Carolina slave, stood the best chance of evading capture.

Place of birth was not the only variable that determined the frequency of maroonage. Particularly brutal treatment by a master or overseer also catalyzed escapes. Additionally, gender influenced who could make it to the woods and who could not. More than four out of five runaways were men. Women's work in the fields and in plantation houses kept them more tightly tethered to the plantation and limited their familiarity with the borderlands to which menfolk so often fled. So, too, did their reproductive capacity. James Curry, a runaway who reached Canada, remembered that for his mother, "Having young children … tied her to slavery."

Life at the Margins

The distance from white settlements runaways would venture varied tremendously. Many disappeared into deep cover dozens, if not hundreds, of miles away from anything that white people might call civilization. Hoping never to be seen or heard from again, they sought isolation, unfettered independence, and freedom from fear. They spent weeks scouting the best sites on which to build their refuges.

They sought out locations with good vantage points for sentries and that were proximate to escape routes. They looked for soil that could be cultivated and irrigated, for trees that could be felled and turned into lumber, for places where open fires could not be seen, and for concentrations of wild plants that could be used as sustainable long-term sources of food and medicine. Too distant to pilfer from plantations, they needed rich and reliable hunting and fishing grounds. Once gathered on such a site, maroons put down roots, turning rough, uncultivated land into centers of production where they manufactured timber, honey, fish, shellfish, and game.

Many other runaways chose to settle surprisingly close to the farms and plantations from which they had fled. By staying close, they hoped to maintain some sort of surreptitious contact with friends and family they had left behind. Some even chose to live out their days hiding in outbuildings or on a neighbor's property to maximize proximity to those they loved. Living so close to their former masters carried huge risks. Maroons were constantly on the lookout for patrol dogs sent out to find runaways.

Those homes had to be well hidden, too. The natural world provided a few options. Harry Grimes, for instance, lived in a tree trunk. Others built platforms in the tops of tree. Many more maroons lived in caverns or caves, natural refuges from danger and from the elements, with space for family groups. To disguise these dwellings, maroons dragged fallen trees across the entrances. Inside, they made themselves at home. Plenty of dugouts were furnished with items handmade or appropriated from plantation homes.

The people of the woods were at particular risk of discovery during daylight hours, so they tended to save their walkabouts for night, especially on days when the moon was not too bright. Then they went searching for food. Notably, many borderland maroons also used the cover of night to venture gingerly onto plantations to help themselves to bacon, flour, salt, cheese, corn, and molasses stored in outbuildings, or to steal a hog or cow.

Breaking Cover

Although maroons staked their lives on the hopes of never being recaptured and returned to slavery, not everyone got their wish. Much of what we know about maroon communities comes, unfortunately, from sources written by slaveholders following the apprehension of one recaptured maroon fugitive or another.

Professional slave hunters launched frequent incursions into woods, forests, and swamps in hopes of tracking maroons to their homes and then dragging them back to their former masters for large bounties. A woman named Martha Collins recalled that her father, Cornelius Gilliam, had made his livelihood this way.

Men like Gilliam took their lives in their hands, as maroons fought tooth and nail to resist capture. When a slave hunter named Reuben Nash approached a wanted fugitive in the woods of Alabama, the maroon in question pulled a double-barreled gun and shot him, killing him on the spot.

Other maroons were discovered serendipitously. Game hunters traipsing through forests stumbled on their camps by accident. White youngsters playing in high trees caught glimpses of faces they weren't expecting and gave the alarm. Other maroons came to light during risky daytime forays onto plantations in search of food. Others stumbled out of the forests of their own accord, usually because they were ill or wounded and desperate for care or the comfort of loved ones.

One man who left the woods, named Emmanuel, told his owner's surprised wife that he had come back to die.

The longer their absence, the more it seemed that the maroons' time in the woods, marshes, and swamps of the South had changed them. When they emerged from the trees, they often wore little clothing. They looked wild. Their hair had grown long; the men had thick beards that hid their faces.

Most found the adjustment back to slave life too much to take. They found beatings and whippings to be unbearable, though masters laid on such punishments thickly. Many maroons refused to be taken alive. Two named Cudgoe and London, when finally cornered in North Carolina, jumped into a river to drown. Those with guns engaged in firefights with their pursuers. They were hoping to escape but were willing to die rather than face recapture.

Conclusion

Maroon communities did not disappear after the American Revolution. However, as Native Americans were pushed back and eventually forcibly relocated in the 1820s and 1830s, making way for new, forest-clearing settlements, maroons' preferred habitats were repeatedly threatened and diminished. Still, maroonage continued up through the era of the Civil War. Their persistence throughout three centuries of slavery in North America represented a consistent challenge to planter domination.

Lecture 11

THREE QUAKER ACTIVISTS

One of the early sources of white opposition to African slavery in America emerged on the fringes of the Quaker Church, also known as the Society of Friends. The transformation that turned Quakers toward the cause of antislavery occurred gradually in the middle decades of the 18th century. Drawing on wonderful scholarship by Marcus Rediker, Thomas Slaughter, Brycchan Carey, Maurice Jackson, and others, this lecture examines three Quaker men who helped to make that happen.

Background

One reason that Quakers were primed to oppose slavery was that they had become, by the early decades of the 18th century, remarkably successful businessmen. Their prosperity—the result of hard work, discipline, and the labor exacted through slaveholding itself—brought fears of laziness, temptation, and worldliness to the fore. Alarmed by the potentially immoral consequences of their economic success, introspective Quakers obsessively looked for signs of religious decline. Their gradual embrace of the cause of antislavery can be partially understood as a means to remind themselves that they were indeed the servants of God.

Another reason to explain the growing centrality of Quakerism to early antislavery activism is doctrinal. Quakers believed that any true believer could feel Christ's presence and inner light in their hearts. Quakers were thus more likely to question the conventional wisdom that Africans were naturally inferior.

The Hermit's Bleeding Book

Benjamin Lay was born a hunchback in England in 1682. When he grew up, his poor, Quaker parents bound him out to apprentice to a glovemaker, a trade he grew to hate. In his 20s, he rebelled and went to sea. It was a rough life for a person with disabilities, and Lay soon grew tired of it too. After a brief return to England, where he married a woman named Sarah who endured a similar disability, Lay and his new wife struck out for the New World, alighting in Barbados, where they set up a general store.

Life in that slave society confounded their expectations. He and Sarah quickly discovered the grinding poverty in which this island's black majority lived. Though not a slaveholder himself, Lay soon started to recognize his own complicity in the island's brutal slave regime, and he began to hate himself for it.

Months later, when the couple came across a naked, "trembling and shivering" slave hanging from a beam in front of a fellow Quaker's house as a punishment for running away, Benjamin and Sarah found their limit. They quit Barbados and set out for the mainland—that is, for Pennsylvania.

Sarah died in 1735, soon after the pair's arrival in Pennsylvania. Her death sent Benjamin spiraling, and if many historians have judged his later actions to be those of a madman, the grief that now consumed him was surely partly responsible. His experiences in Barbados also haunted him.

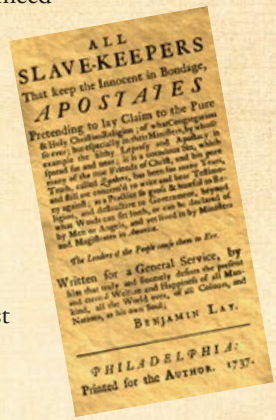
He began an evolving campaign against slaveholding among the Quakers, which would pioneer three tactics that would later prove popular among subsequent generations of white antislavery activists. The first thing Lay did was to set himself apart from the sinners he was trying to shame. To demonstrate his difference and nonconformity to the social and religious values that permitted Pennsylvania's Quakers to own slaves, Lay endeavored to live self-sufficiently. He embraced vegetarianism, took to walking everywhere rather than riding on horseback, and set up a home inside a cave.

The second tactic he pioneered was the use of dramatic protests designed to shock, surprise, and shame. In his most famous piece of political theater, Lay disrupted a Quaker service by turning up in a soldier's uniform. He drew a sword and impaled a Bible he carried in his other hand, which then spectacularly and mysteriously began to gush blood. The book was a prop he had filled full of berry juice before the service. This was a showy way to dramatize his message that Quaker slaveholders are no better than blood-thirsty, godless mercenaries.

Each of Lay's self-righteous new stunts was met with fury, exasperation, and scorn. Yet while he won few converts by such exploits, Lay obviously succeeded in turning discussion of the morality of slave-keeping into a topic for public debate.

The third tactic Lay used was to write. He penned and published more than 200 pamphlets in his lifetime, decrying all manner of sins, including capital punishment and incarceration.

In pamphlets like 1737's *All Slave-Keepers*, he denounced slaveholding Quakers. Distributing these writings for free, he marshaled scriptural, humanitarian, and economic arguments against slavery. While these claims were not new—the Germantown Protestors had said much the same in 1688—Lay was angrier, more self-righteous, and obviously scarred by what he had seen and done in Barbados.


ALL
SLAVE-KEEPERS
That keep the Innocent in Bondage,
APOSTATES
Pretending to lay Claim to the Pure
Written for a General Service, by
BENJAMIN LAY.
PHILADELPHIA:
Printed for the AUTHOR. 1737.

Unfortunately, Lay's growing mental health problems finally got the best of him. His writings became increasingly incoherent, and he died—isolated, confused, and despairing—in 1759.

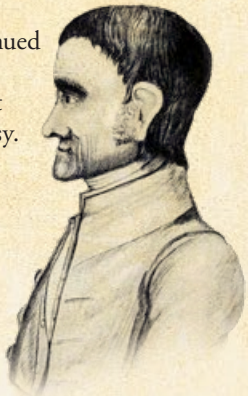
The Shopkeeper's Soft Words

Born in 1720, John Woolman, a Quaker shopkeeper, was almost 18 when Benjamin Lay published *All Slave-Keepers*. Woolman had grown up in southwestern New Jersey, close to the Pennsylvania line, and undoubtedly heard and read of Lay's beliefs and exploits.

Leaving his parents' farm when he turned 21, Woolman went into retail, first as a shop assistant in a bakery and later in a store of his own. His rapid material success quickly made him uneasy about maintaining a relationship with God.

Those fears solidified in 1742 when a Quaker business associate asked his help writing out a receipt for the sale of a black woman. There had been no slaves in Woolman's household growing up, and the naked commodification of personhood manifested in a bill of sale gave him pause. He wrote it out, but his regret quickly got the better of him. Within months, he gave up the store. He embraced his Quaker faith tighter than ever and by age 23 had become a traveling Quaker preacher.

Over the next three decades, Woolman spread the Quaker Peace Testimony from New England to the Carolinas. Along the way, he stayed in the homes of leading Quakers, many of whom were slaveholders or slavery dependent. Accepting their hospitality made Woolman increasingly uncomfortable, so to ease his conscience, he made a point to inform his hosts of his own growing antislavery convictions.



Woolman also continued to examine his own behavior. He found it riddled with hypocrisy. For instance, he now realized that he had grown up wearing clothes made from textiles sold by merchants who also sold rum, a byproduct of sugar cultivation.


CONSIDERATIONS
ON KEEPING
NEGROES;
PART SECOND.
PHILADELPHIA:

In 1746, he poured out his disappointments in ink, drafting an essay later published under the title *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*. Its argument—made gently, indirectly, in hopes of not giving offence—was that good people can do bad things.

Importantly, he published his pamphlet with the blessing of the Pennsylvania Quaker Yearly Meeting, an indication of his text's soft-edged mode of argumentation and of the Quaker church's growing willingness to tolerate debate on this subject. While Benjamin Lay had enjoyed playing the role of voice in the wilderness during the 1730s, senior Quaker leaders had in fact discussed the slavery question regularly during those years.

Woolman's pamphlet was published in 1754. The same year, the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting issued its strongest antislavery language to date. Four years later, it passed a resolution directing local meetings to effectively excommunicate any Friends who continued to trade or purchase slaves.

For his part, John Woolman spent his remaining days trying to rid his own life of any residual stain. His income had come to derive largely from legal work, and in 1753, he began refusing to write wills that bequeathed slave property from one generation to another, and he succeeded in convincing at least two of his clients to manumit their slaves upon their deaths.

The Schoolteacher's Vicarious Travels

Anthony Benezet was a French immigrant to Pennsylvania. He was 18 when he arrived in 1731, and he took up a series of jobs as a schoolteacher, first in Germantown and then later in Philadelphia. There, in 1750, Benezet set up an evening tutoring program for the city's free black children in his home.

On the basis of his conviction that black Philadelphians were capable of full education and improvement, Benezet became a vigorous antislavery campaigner, committed to the promise of racial equality. Much of his campaign was conducted in print, and Benezet should be credited with pioneering the use of third-party eyewitness testimony to illuminate what life was really like in slavery.

Before the American Revolution, he authored and published three pamphlets of note, each with a particular audience in mind. For instance, 1759's *Observations on the Inslaving, Importing, and Purchasing of Negroes* was addressed to fellow Quakers and implored those among them who still owned slaves to avoid excommunication and comply with the Yearly Meeting's recent resolution.

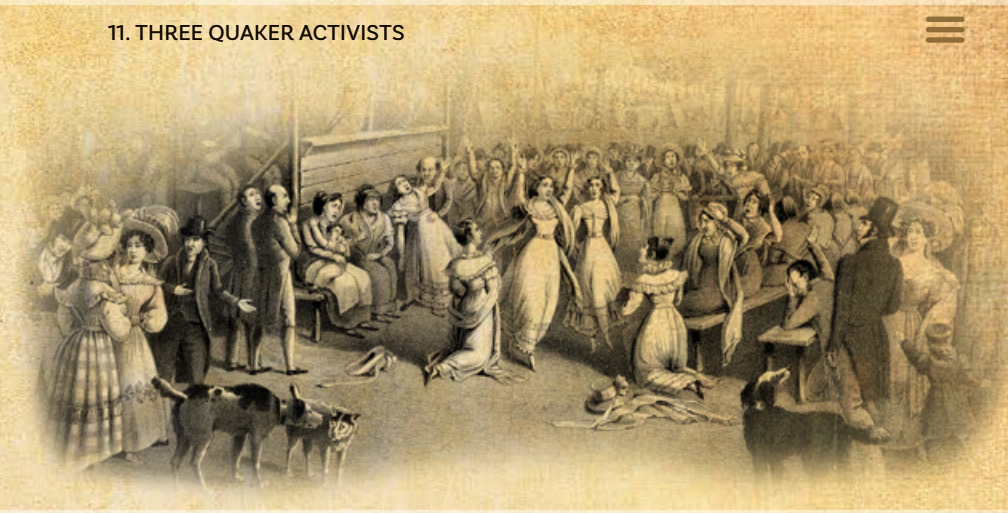
To stir them to action, he included excerpts from accounts by explorers and merchants who had actually visited West Africa and who had witnessed first-hand the damage and destruction done to that continent by the slave trade.

Three years later, 1762's *Short Account of That Part of Africa, Inhabited by the Negroes* put similar sources front and center, though this time paired with long quotations from Enlightenment philosophers, all of whom denounced slaveholding as a violation of natural human rights. His readership this time extended not only to local Quakers, but to slaveholders of all Christian denominations throughout the colony.

The year 1771 saw the publication of *Some Historical Account of Guinea*, a 200-page piece aimed squarely at people in power in England, where an emerging antislavery campaign was already taking shape. It laid out more devastating descriptions of the African slave trade.

Benezet's ambition to kindle a transatlantic antislavery movement was interrupted by the outbreak of the American Revolution, an event that forced him to concentrate all future efforts on his side of the Atlantic. Thus, when the First Continental Congress began meeting in Philadelphia, Benezet went to each colony's delegates to try to convince them to stop accepting ships from Africa filled with slaves. Strikingly, the delegates complied, using their congressional authority to ban any further slave imports for the duration of the war.

Despite his early achievement, Benezet would fall out of favor with the Continental Congress as the war ground on. Benezet focused his energies elsewhere, gathering a group of 10 prominent Philadelphians, most of them Quakers, at the Rising Sun Tavern on Second Street on April 14, 1775. At Benezet's urging, they bound themselves together as the founding members of a group they called the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage.



Their self-appointed charge was to intervene on behalf of local slaves whose masters had reneged on manumission promises and on behalf of free black Philadelphians who had been kidnapped by unscrupulous slave traders and sold into slavery further south. This was laborious legal work, but the society quickly began to win many of the cases it took on, establishing itself as the first organized antislavery society in the new nation.

Meanwhile, the war was finally tipping in favor of the patriots. As it did so, Benezet returned to print and resumed his congressional campaign. His 1778 pamphlet *Observations on Slavery* invoked the recent Declaration of Independence to highlight the hypocrisy of slaveholding.

In 1779 and 1780, Benezet doggedly harassed Pennsylvania's state legislators, extracting from them a law designed to gradually abolish slavery in that state over a long period of time. Three years later, in 1783, he returned to the Continental Congress, this time to present them with an anti–slave trade petition signed by 535 Quakers. The delegates greeted him respectfully and allowed the petition to be read aloud, but Southern delegates, almost all of them slaveholders, blocked consideration of the petition's recommendations, the first in a long series of national congressional obstructions to the cause of antislavery in America.

Anthony Benezet died a year later, aged 71. Hundreds of free black Philadelphians attended his funeral, many of them in tears.

Lecture 12

SLAVERY IN THE WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

By the eve of the American Revolution, slavery was a fact of life for hundreds of thousands of African Americans. As war broke out in 1775, there were 75,000 black slaves wading in rice paddies in South Carolina, 187,000 black slaves working the tobacco and wheat fields of Virginia, and tens of thousands more working as craftsmen, dockworkers, and domestic servants in port cities from Savannah and Charleston in the South to Philadelphia, New York, Newport, and Boston in the North.

Over eight years of war, both the Continental Army and the British Army would appeal to black Americans for manpower and for logistical support. This lecture, which draws on the scholarship of Alan Taylor and Gerald Horne, looks at how free and enslaved people of color seized the unique opportunities provided by this war.

Militiamen

In April 1775, when Paul Revere and William Dawes alerted the people of Lexington and Concord that the British were on the march out from Boston, several legally free African Americans turned out to fight as patriot militiamen. Over the next few months, black militiamen also took part in the siege of Boston and the battle at Bunker Hill.*

That was the militia. The larger question was whether black men would be allowed to join the full-time Continental Army. When that professional army was set up in summer 1775, General Washington was initially hesitant to include black soldiers. However, when he saw the scale of reinforcements that the British were bringing in to occupy the city of Boston after their early and surprising defeat at Lexington and Concord, Washington reluctantly changed his mind and allowed a few free black men—not slaves—from the various New England colonies into the ranks of his army.

It was never terribly common for black slaves to serve in the Continental Army. In fact, even as initial enthusiasm for the war among white patriots began to subside, and as General Washington grew more desperate for manpower, proposals to arm slaves were usually shouted down.

Arming slaves was a step too far for many patriots, so during the early years of the war, the only slaves who served in the Continental Army tended to do so in noncombat roles. One man who saw this kind of action was Prince Whipple. As the slave of a white New Hampshire officer, Whipple did basic work for the officer corps. He was one of the oarsmen caught in a blinding snowstorm on Christmas night in 1776—that is, the night George Washington crossed the Delaware River in an attempt to prevent New Jersey from falling under British control. That moment became the subject of one of the most famous history paintings in the world.

* Over the course of the eight-year Revolutionary War, the New England states enlisted more black militiamen than any other region of the new nation.

A year later, by the winter of 1777, white recruitment had become more difficult. By then, a string of recent defeats to the British had crippled patriot morale, and the Continental Army was beginning to starve for fresh recruits. It was at this moment that Washington decided to try to form new regiments of armed black slaves to fill that growing manpower gap.

Northern states with small black populations found it easier to arm slaves than did Southern states, so it was to Rhode Island that Washington turned first, asking slaveowners there to let their slaves form the first black regiment of the Continental Army. His invitation was apparently very well received. Roughly one of every four able-bodied male slaves in Rhode Island obtained consent to enlist. In return for the military services of their slaves, Rhode Island slave owners were promised about £120 each, a figure that is equivalent to about $24,000 today.

By war's end in 1783, roughly 5,000 African Americans had served in the Continental Army in some capacity, usually in noncombat roles but sometimes on the front lines. In addition, 1,000 more African Americans served in the patriot forces at sea. Together, these 6,000 men accounted for about 3 percent of total patriot mobilization of 200,000 during the eight-year war.

British Efforts

The British, too, tried to enlist black slaves as soldiers. In fact, they started to do so long before Washington formed the Rhode Island regiment. In Virginia in November 1775, Lord Dunmore, the commander of the British Army there, famously promised lifelong freedom to any enslaved Virginian man brave enough to desert his patriot master and come fight with the British.

Southern planters tried every possible tactic to stop their valuable slaves from making a dash for the British lines. In Virginia and South Carolina, they diverted military resources to expand the watch and organize slave patrols, among other efforts. The Virginia Committee of Safety even passed a menacing resolution threatening the wives and children of any male slaves in the colony who joined the British forces.

Many enslaved people decided that a chance of freedom was worth the risk. One of these men was a New Jersey slave named Titus. He fled his master the day after word of Dunmore's promise reached him. Two years later, in the summer of 1778, he was fighting alongside white loyalists at the Battle of Monmouth. Throughout 1778 and 1779, he launched a series of surprise raids against wealthy, slaveholding patriots across northern New Jersey.

Tye was hardly the only black farmhand to take up Governor Dunmore on his offer. Within the first month after the Proclamation in November 1775, more than 300 black men had joined the British Army in return for the promise of freedom after the war.

Dunmore was not the only British commander to try to turn American slaves against their patriot masters. Known as the Philipsburg Proclamation, General Henry Clinton's 1779 declaration was not just limited to men willing to fight, as Dunmore's had been, but promised postwar freedom to black men, women, and children who deserted the rebellion's side.

Such a broad promise caught a large amount of attention, and thousands of black men, women, and children began to tag along with the British Army. When Lord Dunmore's forces got close to Mount Vernon, George Washington's plantation, in 1781, 17 of the general's slaves ran away to join the British.

In all, more than 5,000 Virginia slaves fled slavery during the war, perhaps 25,000 across all 13 colonies. Many ended up working in support functions for the British Army.

A Promise to Keep

Very few deserting slaves saw active duty as British soldiers. The sad truth was that the British Army wanted black men mostly for their muscle. When a British captain discovered the fortifications across the Stono River in South Carolina to be little more than a few heaps of sand, he ordered the 30 black men under his authority to find axes and shovels and repair the works. During the British siege of Charleston in 1780, officers used black men in place of horses to drag heavy pieces of ammunition into position.

The few able-bodied black men who did serve in combat roles in the British Army did not see much action. The Ethiopian Regiment—as Dunmore called them—were quickly defeated, along with many white British regiments, at the Battle of Great Bridge in Norfolk, Virginia, just a month after Dunmore's famous promise. As a result of that defeat, all of Dunmore's troops were forced to retreat to British ships waiting in the Chesapeake Bay.

Onboard ship, their second-class status quickly became apparent. When a smallpox epidemic broke out aboard this naval convoy, Dunmore forced his African American soldiers to offload onto an isolated island in the bay and then sailed off without them. Later, when a patriot force took this island, they found many of the black soldiers stranded there dying of starvation and a putrid fever.

The British were soon in retreat, but it took years for them to surrender. In the meantime, thousands of black refugees flooded into New York City, which the British were able to hold onto for most of the war. Because of the shortage of white workers in the city, black refugees found plenty of employment in various departments.

Throughout the war, black artisans in New York City worked on rebuilding projects and in the naval yards, black teamsters hauled provisions and collected firewood, and black nurses and orderlies staffed the hospitals. Those were just a few of the duties handled by black workers.

By 1783, it was finally clear that the British cause in America had failed. In occupied New York City, the British Army prepared to evacuate. In direct contravention of the terms of the Treaty of Paris, British commanders took many of their black allies with them.

In the face of bitter opposition from George Washington, the Continental Congress, and the patriot governors of various Southern slave states, British commanders attempted to fulfill their promises of freedom to runaway slaves.

Over the course of six months in 1783, more than 3,000 former slaves were evacuated onto British ships leaving New York City and transported to parts of the British Empire where they would be legally free. This evacuation was the most significant act of emancipation in early American history prior to the Civil War.

Conclusion

For every black refugee who made it to London, to Canada, or perhaps to Sierra Leone, there were hundreds upon hundreds of slaves who remained in bondage in America, both in the North and in the South. In fact, more blacks were born into slavery during the eight-year war than ever fled to join the British. Roughly a third of the Virginia slaves who had deserted patriot masters and fled to the safety of the British lines had died in that attempt, typically from disease.

While another third did make it out to begin new lives elsewhere, the final third was recaptured and re-enslaved when the British departed. Several of the founding fathers actually had some of their slaves returned to them. James Madison was magnanimous, deciding to free his former slave Billey, but most patriot planters returned them to drudge work. For his part, Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, sold away the five former slaves he recovered after the British evacuation to punish their disloyalty and intimidate his other plantation workers.

Lecture 13

TAKING SLAVERY TO COURT

By the end of his life, Anthony Benezet, the French-born Pennsylvania schoolteacher, had succeeded in lobbying legislators in Pennsylvania to abolish slaveholding in that state gradually. As discussed in this lecture—which draws on the scholarship of Eva Wolf, Ira Berlin, and George Van Cleve—the success of that lobbying effort was somewhat complicated. The controversy over the gradual abolition scheme would trigger a vibrant debate about the place of slaveholding in the new United States.

Background

Over time, six other Northern states in which the economic impact of owning slaves was quite modest would move in the same direction as Pennsylvania. This was either as a consequence of legislative action, as in New York and New Jersey, or as a result of a series of judicial decisions forced by freedom suits brought by enslaved people themselves, as in Massachusetts. By 1820, one in eight American slaves was at liberty as a result of these transformations.

Only in the Southern states, where slavery was far more deeply entrenched, did abolition schemes falter and flat-out fail. Even there, however, enslaved people can be found taking matters into their own hands, striking deals with their individual masters to set off a wave of single and family-sized manumissions that brought freedom to several thousand African Americans.

Pennsylvania's Status

To understand what happened in Pennsylvania, it is essential to understand its electoral politics after the American Revolution. During the war years, Philadelphia itself had been a hotbed of radicalism. It was Tom Paine's adopted hometown and the site of the Continental Congress. In the midst of the war, these uncompromising patriots adopted an extremely egalitarian state constitution.

To limit the influence of elites, the 1776 Pennsylvania State Constitution—drafted by a radical Irish immigrant named George Bryan and by Benjamin Franklin—established a one-chamber, unicameral legislature. It also allowed every taxpaying male resident of the state to vote, and it set up annual elections so politicians wouldn't grow too comfortable or complacent.

The 1776 Pennsylvania State Constitution also allowed anyone to run for office, whether they owned taxable property or not. It replaced the colonial royal governor with the Supreme Executive Council, and it insisted that proposed laws had to be circulated among the people before they could be finalized and enacted.

It was in this context that activists like Anthony Benezet set about lobbying Pennsylvania leaders to end slavery in this newly constituted and highly egalitarian state. It made sense, they argued, to begin this work right away.

An Abolition Act

Within the Pennsylvania state government, antislavery forces were led by Bryan, the Irish-born architect of the new state constitution. Having been elected vice president of the State's Supreme Executive Council in 1778, Bryan now proposed a bill that would win the votes of Pennsylvanian slaveholders by abolishing slavery only gradually.

The final text of Pennsylvania's act emancipated all children of enslaved black women in the state born after March 1, 1780. But it required these children to serve in the manner of indentured servants until they reached the age of 28. In effect, then, not a single black Pennsylvanian would be truly freed by this legislation until January 1, 1808.

Unfortunately, the law did not allocate any funds to actually enforce this legal change to the status of the children of the state's slaves. To bring this gradualist vision into being, the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage had to step in. Most people referred to this group as the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, or PAS, and it had been founded by Anthony Benezet in 1775.

In the decades after 1780, PAS members brought lawsuit after lawsuit against Pennsylvania slaveholders who violated the new law by neglecting to register the black laborers in their households as bona fide slaves, or by kidnapping free black adolescents and enslaving them, or by trying to sell any black children in their households to slaveholders out of state for a quick profit.

Other States

Soon enough, legislators in other Northern states were debating how to make something similar to Pennsylvania's approach work in their jurisdictions to make the problem of slavery go away. Between 1780 and 1804, four other states adopted similarly gradualist legislation.

Following Pennsylvania's lead, each one implemented some form of compensation for slaveholders, usually by compelling slaves and their children to provide reparations through years of unpaid labor as servants to their former slave-masters. These gradual abolition laws were written in such a way as to make slaves pay the costs of their own liberation.

By contrast, the protections these new laws provided for black people were relatively meager. After passing gradual abolition laws, it took, on average, 10 years for these legislatures to adopt new restrictions on kidnapping free blacks or on removing slaves out of state.

Bett, Walker, and the Freedom Suits

In one or two Northern states where wealthy conservatives held much greater power than they did in Pennsylvania, even gradual abolition proved to be a legislative nonstarter. One example was Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Constitution, adopted in 1780, was almost the complete opposite of the one Benjamin Franklin had established for Pennsylvania.

The lead author of the Massachusetts Constitution was John Adams, an elite lawyer who had frequently decried the most radical, egalitarian aspects of the recent revolution. Adams's plan for Massachusetts was unrestrainedly conservative and attempted to enshrine respect for persons in authority at the very center of government.* This was despite some boilerplate language in the constitution reading, "All men are born free and equal."

Consequently, the legislators elected to positions of power under these terms tended to be wealthy merchants with strong interests in preserving the status quo, and they flat out refused to endorse any antislavery legislation whatsoever. It fell to ordinary black people to try to enlist the judicial system—not the legislative system used in Pennsylvania—in their struggle to bring slavery to its knees.

* Among other measures, the original Massachusetts Constitution decreed that candidates for governor must possess at least £1,000 of personal wealth.

Among these individuals was an enslaved mother and widow known for most of her life as Mum Bett. Her master, Colonel John Ashley, was a landowner and merchant who had served in the Continental Army. In 1781, a violent brawl broke out in Colonel Ashley's kitchen when his wife and Mum Bett's enslaved sister got into a bitter argument.

Mrs. Ashley swung a heated kitchen fire shovel at Mum Bett's sister during the dispute, but Mum Bett intercepted the blow to protect her. The impact of the hot shovel left Mum Bett scarred and furious, and she stalked from the house, refusing to return to a household where such violence was permitted. When Colonel Ashley appealed to the local sheriff to help him recover his runaway human property, Mum Bett enlisted a local white lawyer named Theodore Sedgwick to help her sue for her freedom.

Sedgwick was a fierce advocate for abolition. In fact, Sedgwick took the case in hopes of winning a precedent-setting ruling that would challenge the very constitutionality of slavery in Massachusetts. At the hearing in the late summer of 1781, he succeeded in persuading an all-white jury that that boilerplate language in the first article of the state constitution made no exception to the principle that all men and women are both free and equal. In fact, the court ordered Colonel Ashley to pay Mum Bett 30 shillings in damages and granted her freedom. Thereafter, she took to calling herself Elizabeth Freeman.

As Sedgwick had hoped, the Mum Bett case set a precedent. Two years later, in 1783, a runaway slave named Quock Walker appealed to the Massachusetts Supreme Court to argue that he, too, should be free because of that language in the preamble to the 1780 state constitution. In its decision, the court upheld the jury's verdict in Elizabeth Freeman's case of two years earlier.

By upholding that earlier decision, the Quock Walker verdict amounted to a pronouncement that all slaves in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts were legally free. However, it took some time for every Massachusetts slave to claim that freedom.

Because slavery had been abolished by the judicial decree of an activist court rather than by legislative act, the burden was on individual slaveholders to release their slaves rather than on the state government to force them to do so. In other words, enslaved men and women had to face their masters and assert their freedom; if the master refused, the slave could challenge him in court, where his rights of ownership would no longer be protected. Additionally, the decisions in the Mum Bett and Quock Walker cases were not widely reported at the time.

Despite these obstacles, slavery crumbled quickly, and by 1790, not one citizen surveyed in the Massachusetts census admitted to owning human property. There is some anecdotal evidence indicating that a scattering of people did still live as slaves in Massachusetts in the late 1780s and 1790s, but it is nonetheless clear that slavery was collapsing there.

Negotiated Freedoms

In the Southern states, it was a different story. Legislators watched in horror as slavery collapsed in the North. However, plenty of Southern political leaders—including Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and George Washington—were obviously uncomfortable about the glaring contradiction inherent in slaveholding in a country founded on the assertion of the natural rights of the oppressed. Refusing to countenance gradual abolition, many individual slaveholders turned instead to more modest, less threatening, private acts of manumission.

In Virginia, lawmakers under pressure from Quaker slaveholders in that state who were eager to exercise their freedom of conscience passed a 1782 act that repealed the state's six-decade-old requirement that private acts of manumission had to be individually and explicitly approved by the legislature. Lawmakers in Delaware and Maryland did much the same in 1790.

There was also an economic rationale for this loosening of restrictions on individual acts of manumission. By the 1780s, the profitability of tobacco was in steep decline, and planters in these three Upper South states were beginning to embrace wheat as a substitute. The latter was far less labor-intensive than tobacco, requiring fewer man-hours to cultivate and smaller labor forces.

Regardless of the motivations behind these legal changes, enslaved people correctly understood that they could now take advantage of a new path to freedom. Immediately, they set to work. They implored their masters to free them, sometimes even threatening to run away if they did not get their way, or to sabotage tools and machinery, or to organize slowdowns that would cripple productivity.

Most tried more positive negotiation tactics, pledging to work industriously for a certain number of years—the average was nine—in return for the promise of future freedom on an agreed-upon date. Judging by the language that slave owners used in the legal agreements that resulted, these promises of good conduct were immensely powerful.

In these tense bargaining sessions, enslaved people time and again proved themselves to be skilled negotiators, often invoking the lines of the Declaration of Independence or the words of the Christian Bible to try to prick the consciences of their masters. Certainly, such pleas seemed to have resonated with some slaveholders. In 1802, for instance, a Maryland mistress manumitted her slaves because, she wrote, slavery contradicted the "inalienable Rights of mankind."

Slaveholders, too, found several benefits in manumission. In addition to reducing labor costs, slaveholders found that they could also embrace the promise of manumission as a labor management strategy. By dangling the prospect of future freedom before their slaves' eyes, masters could extract guarantees from their workers that they would remain diligent, loyal, and productive for years at a time.

Between 1782 and 1806, about 10,000 Virginia slaves gained their liberty by manumission, either by buying their own freedom, by completing a previously agreed term of particularly industrious service, or upon the death of their masters. Many of these bargains were struck on behalf of family members, with husbands earning their own freedom first before agreeing a price and a future date at which they might buy the liberty of their wives or children. Freeing a family, then, could take decades and required long years of work, underconsumption, saving, and borrowing.

As a result of this gentle wave of manumissions, the free black population in these Southern slave states slowly began to swell, growing by about 40 percent over the 20 years between 1790 to 1810.

Ironically, the larger and more visible that free black population became, the more reluctant Southern slaveholders became to continue to manumit their slaves. Unwilling to live among large numbers of free black people, public attitudes toward manumission began to harden, and in 1806, the Virginia legislature reversed course, reimposing restrictions on the practice.

They also set about squeezing the freedoms of those free black families now living among them. New laws required that freedpeople carry copies of their manumission documents wherever they went. Those discovered without them could be immediately re-enslaved, as could any freed individual who failed to pay their taxes. They also decreed that newly manumitted people leave the state within a year. These laws served their intended purpose, catalyzing many manumitted former slaves to join a growing exodus of free black families from the Upper South into Pennsylvania.

Lecture 14

CHARLES PINCKNEY'S COUNTERREVOLUTION

Following the American Revolution, the counterrevolution to minimize further slave resistance and shore up the security of Southern slave societies would be decisive and far-reaching. According to George Van Cleve, David Waldstreicher, and Paul Finkelman, the three scholars whose work informs this lecture, it found its greatest expression in the final text of the 1787 United States Constitution.

While the Constitution's authors never actually used the word *slave*, the document nevertheless created a representation system that gave political protections to slave owners through the three-fifths clause, that guaranteed the preservation of the international slave trade for at least 20 more years, and that created the legal mechanism by which slavery would expand into new territories and states over the next 50 years.

The Three-Fifths Clause

When delegates met in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787 to design a new federal government for the United States, the many Southern slaveholders among them fought tooth and nail to expand central government protection for their right to own slaves.

No individual worked harder to press this agenda than South Carolina's Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, a veteran of the Revolutionary War and the latest in a dynasty of slaveholding rice planters. General Pinckney quickly determined that the single most effective way to advance proslavery interests in any newly constituted central government was to secure federal recognition of slaves as a form of property and capital, and to fill the three proposed branches of this new government with as many supporters of the slaveholding power as possible. The Constitution's now-infamous three-fifths clause fulfilled both of these objectives.

Drafted to determine how many representatives to the legislative branch each state could send to sit in the Congress's new lower chamber, Article 1, Section 2 proposed to allocate "according to [each state's] respective [Population], which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons."

There are two important factors to note here. First, Native Americans, it says, are not to be counted. Free white and black people are to be counted, and so, too, are "all other Persons"—meaning slaves—though only at a ratio of three to five. These state-by-state population totals are then to be divided by 30,000 to determine how many delegates to the House of Representatives each state will send.

Second, black people were not being given three-fifths of a vote—or any vote, for that matter. Their presence was simply being acknowledged as an important source of their owner's power and wealth.

Southern slaveholding states received about 14 extra congressmen than did Northern states where slavery was crumbling, all as a direct result of the three-fifths clause. Under these conditions, proslavery legislation would be easier to pass in such a Congress, and antislavery legislation would never see the light of day.

The same three-fifths clause also heavily influenced the proslavery character of the other two branches of government. For example, the three-fifths clause provided Southern states with at least 12 supplementary votes in the Electoral College in the election of 1800, ensuring Thomas Jefferson's eight-vote victory over John Adams in that contest.

Additionally, the Constitution gives the president the power to appoint judges to the Supreme Court. With proslavery Southerners in the White House for the 48 of the first 60 years the Constitution was in operation, 16 of the first 26 Supreme Court judges were Southerners. Fifteen of the 16 were appointed by Southern presidents, namely Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and Jackson.

Other Clauses

The three-fifths clause was not the end of matters. General Pinckney and other Southern delegates worked to ensure that at least five other Constitutional clauses protected their interests in human property. Article 1, Section 9, Clause 1 is the most brazen: It prevents any federal action to regulate or abolish the international slave trade before 1808. It was Pinckney who got the date of non-interference moved from 1800—the date written in an earlier draft—to 1808. Article 5—which describes the cumbersome process by which any part of the Constitution can be amended—protects that previous clause from amendment at least until 1808.

General Pinckney and other ambitious slaveholding delegates also succeeded in inserting language that would give Congress the power to spread slavery into new territories or into new states like West Virginia, which might one day be carved out of larger states like Virginia.

The new-territories clause worked with the three-fifths clause and the protection-of-the-slave-trade clause. The latter facilitated the legal importation of no less than 171,000 slaves into the country between 1791 and 1808, many of whom ended up in the new slave states of Kentucky and Tennessee created by Congress in 1792 and 1796.

That influx, even when diluted by three-fifths, gave slaveholding states six new seats in the House of Representatives and four new Senate seats: two for Kentucky and two more for Tennessee.

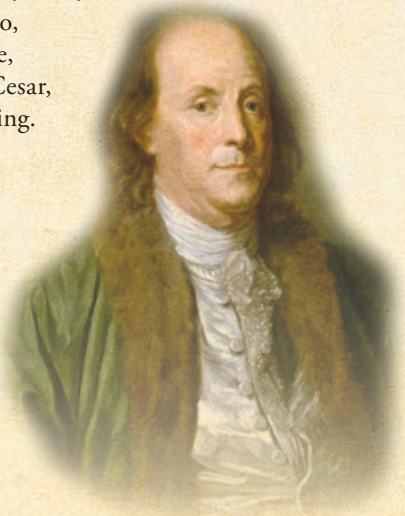
Pinckney also won support for two clauses in the new Constitution that dealt directly with controlling restless slaves. Article 4, Section 2, Clause 3 is known as the fugitive slave clause, and it compelled Northern state governments to round up and return at their own expense any Southern slaves who fled to Northern states seeking refuge. Meanwhile, Article 1, Section 8, Clause 15 was explicitly designed to ensure that slave revolts could never succeed and would, from now on, be met with overwhelming military force.

Criticism and Benjamin Franklin

Several Northern delegates voiced outrage about these proslavery clauses during the convention. One outspoken critic of Pinckney's power-grab was Pennsylvania's Gouverneur Morris. During debate about the three-fifths clause, he said in part:

> Upon what principle is it that the slaves shall be computed in the representation? Are they men? Then make them citizens and let them vote. Are they property? Why then is no other property included?

Other members of the Pennsylvania delegation nodded their agreement. Among them was Benjamin Franklin, the presiding president of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS). Franklin had a complicated relationship to slavery and antislavery. He had been a slaveholder himself for much of his life—the legal owner of men and women named Jemima, Peter, Othello, George, Bob, Cesar, and King.



He never manumitted any of them, preferring to rid himself of them by waiting for them to die or run away. Additionally, as the printer of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* newspaper, he had made great profits from the hundreds of ads placed in that paper by masters seeking the return of their runaway slaves. Franklin had even sometimes held captured fugitive slaves at his print shop as they waited for their irate, legal owners to arrive and collect them.

On other occasions, Franklin had acted as an intermediary for buyers or sellers of slaves who did not wish to be identified, pocketing a commission for his trouble each time. Additionally, during the tense years before the Revolutionary War, Franklin had moved to London to work as a lobbyist to the British Parliament for the interests of slave colonies like Georgia.

For most of his life, then, Franklin had happily ignored the gradual rise of antislavery activism in Pennsylvania, his adopted home state. Only in his old age did Franklin have something of a change of heart, reluctantly accepting a 1787 invitation to serve as president of the PAS.

The historian David Waldstreicher has argued that Franklin's contributions to the PAS as its president were actually minimal, cautious, and largely passive: Franklin would add his name and signature to PAS petitions, but that was about it. Still, PAS members were grateful for his presence at the Constitutional Convention and used him as a messenger to pass along their petitions demanding an end to the international slave trade to the delegates.

Those petitions were never taken up. The majority of Northern delegates were too worried that Southerners might vote against the Constitution and break the United States in two, leaving Northern manufacturers with a greatly reduced market for their products. As a result, most delegates from New York and New England were eager to compromise.

They accepted Pinckney's terms in return for several things they desperately wanted. The most significant of these was the passage of the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, which guaranteed that five new Midwestern states—Ohio, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan—would eventually be admitted to the Union as free states. Beyond the negotiating chamber, many Northern voters were disgusted by the compromises their representatives in Philadelphia were making in their name.

Conclusion

The Constitution is not entirely lacking in antislavery provisions. Its workmanlike preamble announces its purpose to secure "the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity"—an important acknowledgement that liberty is the goal and right of all citizens. The Bill of Rights, a list of 10 amendments added to the Constitution in 1791 as a result of the rancorous debate during ratification, does recognize freedom of speech, of the press, of religion, of assembly, and of petition. Each of these freedoms would come to serve as major channels for antislavery action and expression in years to come.

The Constitution also protected speechmakers on the Senate and House floors from criminal or civil sanctions, thus creating a safe space in Washington in which antislavery ideas could—at least theoretically—be discussed without recrimination. The Bill of Rights also guarantees many rights to anyone accused of federal crimes, thereby placing some limits on the ways that the country's legal system could debase enslaved people.

Perhaps most significantly—and in ways not entirely foreseen by the framers—the Constitution's Commerce Clause allowed federal regulators to oversee any trade or traffic across state lines, a power that antislavery activists would later plead with Congress to use to prohibit the internal slave trade.

It would take several decades for antislavery activists to gain the political clout to try to bend any of these tools to the business of antislavery. In the meantime, it seemed for all the world as if General Pinckney and the Southern caucus had received the best of this dirty deal.

Empowered, protected, and legitimated by this new federal Constitution, planters throughout South Carolina and the rest of the Lower South now invested in slavery as never before. Despite a wave of slave-driven manumissions in Virginia, Delaware, and Maryland, and a rash of gradual abolition schemes unfolding further north, the enslaved population of the United States increased by more than 50 percent over the next 20 years.

At the same time, violence on plantations rose dramatically as masters set about reestablishing their authority over enslaved people who had grown in confidence and ambition during the war years. This was how slavery spread in the Revolutionary Generations.

Lecture 15

THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION

On January 1, 1804, a group of black generals met to declare the former slave colony of Saint-Domingue a free and independent new nation. Most of these generals had been slaves during this Caribbean outpost's long history as a very profitable French sugar colony. Thirteen years earlier, in 1791, they had thrown off their fetters and embraced the cause of revolution. Now they were founders of a new country they christened Haiti, the first independent black republic in the Western Hemisphere.

The Haitian Revolution, which tore across this French colony just 700 miles southeast of Florida between 1791 and 1804, was the most significant challenge to slaveholders so far seen in modern world history.* Building on the scholarship of Laurent Dubois and Ashli White, this lecture examines the Haitian Revolution in detail.

* The Haitian Revolution was the single largest slave revolt in the history of the world, and it was the only one that had so far succeeded.

Fire in the Cane (1492–1792)

Christopher Columbus had landed on this Caribbean island in 1492, naming it La Isla Española, or, in English, Hispaniola. Over the course of more than 40 years, the Spanish Empire exterminated the island's tenacious native people, the Taíno, and established a profit-making sugar colony there, using imported African slaves as the main source of labor. In 1697, the French—victorious in battle against the Spanish elsewhere in the Caribbean—secured rights to occupy the western half of the island, taking over Spanish sugar plantations there and dividing the island in two.

By then, Saint-Domingue, as the western colony was now to be known, already possessed a black majority. By 1790, 90 percent of the people in the colony were enslaved Africans. The remaining 10 percent of inhabitants were almost equally divided among white residents and a vocal community of disenfranchised free people of color who typically worked as artisans, overseers, or domestics.

Saint-Domingue's white minority were French citizens, and when the French Revolution began in Paris in 1789, it set off a debate about the status of slaves and of people of color more generally throughout French-controlled lands. The revolutionaries in Paris had adopted liberty, equality, and fraternity as their creed. Their radical new French government, known as the National Assembly, adopted a declaration, modeled on the American version of 1776, that declared that "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights." Rich white planters in Saint-Domingue understood these Parisians' talk of universal rights as an obvious threat to their continuing ability to exclude free people of color from shared governance.

The slaves themselves soon learned of the radical leveling going on in France. In August of 1791, they determined to revolt. It seems they were influenced to do so by the sadly mistaken belief that Paris was sending French troops across the sea to help them liberate themselves.

Soon plantations were in flames, burned to ashes, as rebel slaves rampaged everywhere. They killed whites, torched every physical manifestation of their owners' power, and set the fields of sugar cane ablaze. Masters and overseers fought back, but still the insurgency spread. Many whites chose to retreat to the town of Le Cap's fortified perimeter for safety, only to then find themselves surrounded by the rebels.

The success of the insurgency thus far built on two factors. First, the rhetorical power of the French Revolution focused the rebels on the goal of universal emancipation.** Second, the insurgents benefited from impressive local leadership, particularly by those African-born migrants who had had military training as young men. They seized weapons at every possible opportunity, including a cannon that they soon learned how to use.

The rebels' numbers grew from 2,000 in August of 1791 to perhaps as many as 80,000 by the end of September. African-born men with military training were in the vanguard, but this growing insurgency also included huge numbers of island-born former slaves, including women and even children.

** When white soldiers captured and executed one slave rebel, they found his pockets were stuffed with radical political pamphlets printed in France.

Reactions (1792–1801)

To try to find a way to preserve this hugely valuable sugar colony's loyalties to France, the French National Assembly passed legislation in 1792 that granted full and equal citizenship rights to free people of color throughout the French Empire. It also sent commissioners to Saint-Domingue empowered to dissolve its whites-only assemblies and set up new, racially integrated ones. However, the language of this new law explicitly excluded recently emancipated slaves from French citizenship and did not abolish slavery. Thus, while designed to win the favor of the colony's small free black population, it did nothing to quell the slave revolt itself.

In the meantime, in 1793, Britain and Spain declared war against revolutionary France. Eager to dispossess France of its valuable Caribbean colonies, Britain sent aid to Saint-Domingue's isolated white master class, trying to build debts of obligation that could be called in later. In response, French leaders in Paris reluctantly reached out to slave rebels, offering freedom and equal citizenship rights to any insurgents who would fight for France against the colony's white masters and their British allies.

When Britain landed ground troops in Saint-Domingue, French leaders desperate to secure further commitments from the colony's black paramilitaries did agree to formally abolish slavery throughout the French Empire, elevating every person of color to the status of full citizen. The war between empires and the dogged determination of the slave rebels had forced France's hand.

Among Saint-Domingue's black paramilitary, no single individual was held in higher regard than a man named Toussaint L'Ouverture. Born into slavery just outside Le Cap around 1743, Toussaint had gained his legal freedom before the revolution. In the wake of the French government's decision to abolish slavery, Toussaint embraced France's war objectives and set about attacking the combined forces of Great Britain and the island's white slave masters.

After units under his command successfully expelled the British, Toussaint set about the task of rebuilding the colony's cash crop economy. Refusing to re-enslave the tens of thousands of black soldiers who had fought for him and for France in recent months, Toussaint nonetheless tried to promote reconciliation, directing them back to their former plantations to work for wages for those white masters who had not fled during the long years of fighting. Toussaint encountered huge resistance to this plan, including armed revolts by black individuals.

Ever alert to the possibility that the French government would double-cross him, Toussaint also negotiated a secret peace treaty with London, even while France and Britain were still at war. This was done so that his colony's exports could still find a market if trade with France was ever in jeopardy. He signed a similar secret trade deal with the United States and began exporting sugar to New Orleans soon thereafter.

In 1801, Toussaint proposed that Saint-Domingue establish its own constitution. The final text, signed in July, pledged continued loyalty to France and its empire. However, it made clear that "All men within [that empire] are born, live, and die free and French" and that all residents of Saint-Domingue, "no matter their color," were guaranteed equal rights and equal opportunities according to their "virtues and talents." This text borrowed explicitly from French documents endorsed by the empire's new authoritarian ruler, Napoleon Bonaparte, and included language declaring Toussaint to be governor of Saint-Domingue for life.

Fighting the French (1801–1804)

When Toussaint sent a copy of this brazen and wholly unauthorized new constitution to Paris, Napoleon Bonaparte sent an army of tens of thousands of soldiers and sailors back to crush him. Despite their growing distrust of Toussaint and his methods, the colony's black population rallied to his cause, fearing that the arriving French forces meant to return them to slavery.

Toussaint was taken prisoner and shipped to France to face trial, only to die in prison there on April 7, 1803. The war in Haiti raged on without him. Only in November 1803, after 18 months of bitter, atrocity-riddled fighting, did the colony's black inhabitants finally vanquish the French soldiers, 50,000 of whom lay dead.

The rebels' surviving leaders, now headed by a black general named Jean-Jacques Dessalines, declared the colony's independence from France on the first day of the following year, 1804.

Independence had cost this former colony's former slaves almost everything, and 100,000 had died on the long road to that 1804 declaration. The new nation's infrastructure lay in ruins. Hopes for democratic shared governance soon stumbled. They were replaced by authoritarian rule in the person of General Dessalines. Despite Toussaint's earlier maneuvering, most other Western nations refused to recognize this new black republic. After Dessalines's assassination in 1806, this new nation descended back into civil war, this time pitting north against south.

Spreading Revolution

The Haitian Revolution had not unfolded in a vacuum. The United States had played a pivotal role, serving first as a magnet for displaced white slave owners fleeing the colony.

As the fate of Saint-Domingue's slaves hung in the balance, a few American antislavery activists were brave enough to speak up in support of the rebelling slaves. These few activists excepted, most white American citizens recoiled in horror as the slave revolt gathered pace and their state representatives agreed to temporarily halt all imports of slaves from the Caribbean and elsewhere. President Washington's administration was also horrified by the Haitian Revolution and sent provisions and military supplies to the white planters in Saint-Domingue to use to try to suppress the insurgency.

The administration's great fear was that the revolt might spread. Within a month of the first wave of uprisings in 1791, slaves in Jamaica could be heard singing songs about it. News of the Haitian Revolution evidently inspired thousands of New World slaves, including Gabriel Prosser, the 24-year-old slave of Thomas Prosser, a Virginia tobacco and wheat planter.

Gabriel was in jail facing punishment for brawling when he began to plan the armed rebellion that would later bear his name. Gabriel's plan was simple. If he could gather enough supporters, together they would march on Richmond, attack the statehouse, the powder magazine, and the armory, and then hold the city until its white leaders agreed to grant all slaves in Virginia their freedom. Throughout the spring of 1800, Gabriel recruited followers. It was not hard to find enthusiastic volunteers.

By the end of July 1800, Gabriel's army was ready. On the night of August 30, nearly 150 slaves, a few mixed-race men, and even a handful of whites gathered at a mill outside of Norfolk, Virginia.

However, before the rebels could begin their march, the skies opened and a torrential rain poured down, washing away the bridges between them and Richmond. The revolt would have to be postponed at least a day. Gabriel told his supporters to meet again the following day.

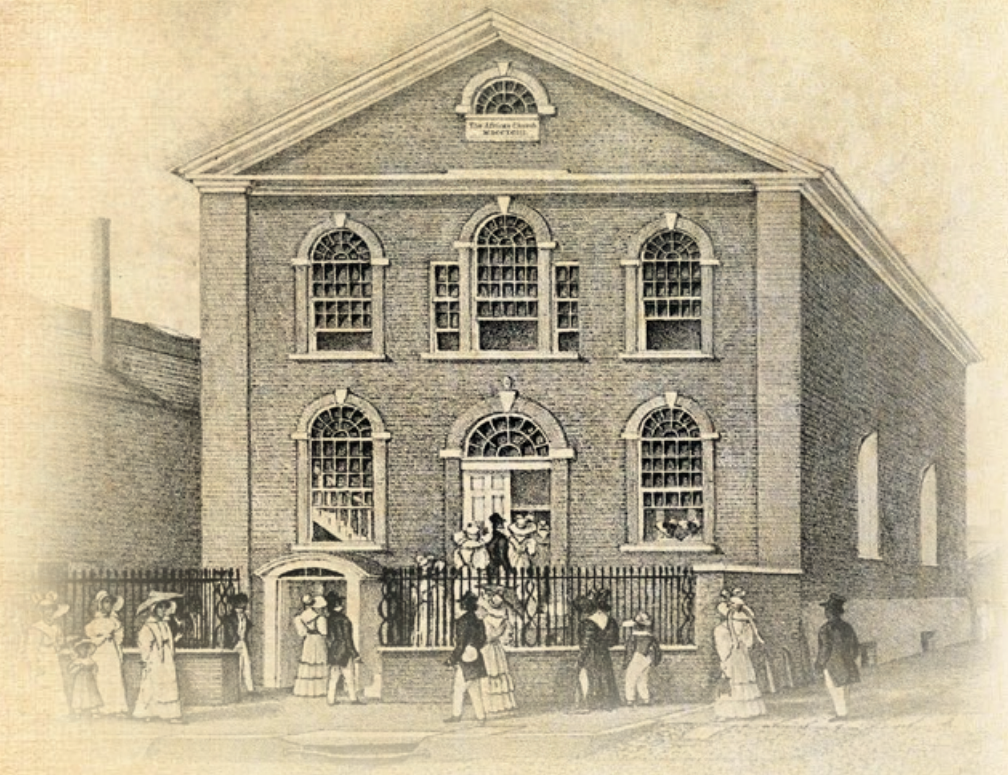
The chaos of the storm and the ease with which the planned revolt had been disrupted was enough to give two of Gabriel's more cautious recruits second thoughts. Believing that a successful revolt now looked unlikely, recruits named Pharaoh and Tom decided to try to save their own necks from certain hanging by revealing the plot to their master. Within hours, the governor had been informed and had called out the militia, setting them on the unsuspecting rebels.

On October 6, Gabriel appeared in court. He was "charged with Conspiracy and Insurrection." On October 10, 1800, Gabriel Prosser was hanged in the center of Richmond, one of 27 would-be rebels to pay for their dream of liberty with their lives.

Conclusion

Four years later, Thomas Jefferson was beginning his second term as president when emissaries from Haiti first asked the United States to recognize their new nation as an independent country. Jefferson flatly denied the request, beginning a tradition of diplomatic refusal and nonengagement with the hemisphere's only other republic that would last until the 1860s.

In France, the success of the slave rebels during the Haitian Revolution sent Napoleon into a tailspin. Their victory forced the French emperor to abandon long-cherished plans to develop territory in Louisiana into farms to supply his Caribbean sugar colonies with food. With Saint-Domingue now in the hands of former slaves, that scheme was dashed, and so Napoleon opted instead to sell the Louisiana Territory to President Jefferson for a pittance in 1803. In one final cruel and ironic twist of fate, the protections for slavery enshrined in the new Constitution ensured that slavery would spread and thrive in that massive region as never before.



Lecture 16

FOUNDING THE FREE BLACK CHURCHES

This lecture focuses its attention on the postwar Northern port cities in which slavery was slowly crumbling. In particular, it focuses on the first 50 years after 1780. The lecture argues that the struggles of black people in places like Philadelphia, New York, and Boston did not come to an abrupt end as Northern slavery faded into history. To do so, the lecture draws on recent work by scholars such as Richard Newman and Paul Polgar.

Down and Out in the City

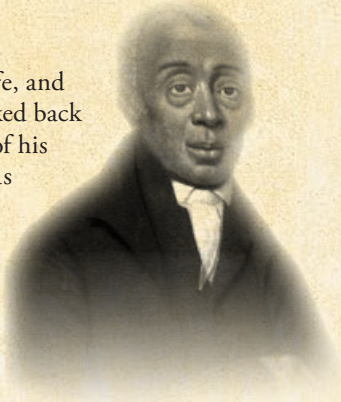
Between 1790 and 1820, gradual abolition schemes in five northern states, including Pennsylvania and New York, worked to greatly increase the number of men, women, and children living in freedom. Judicial activism in Massachusetts and a wave of manumissions in Virginia and Maryland had a similar effect.

Those lives were anything but easy, as showed by Philadelphia's black community. This community was composed largely of migrants who had come to that city with nothing but the shirts on their back. Many were fugitive slaves who had fled there in hopes of blending in and being forgotten. Others had been manumitted by their Virginia or Maryland masters and had come to the metropolis to build families and capital from scratch. The majority of these new arrivals huddled together in small, flimsy dwellings.

Most new female arrivals soon found low-paying, low-skill jobs as domestics in city houses or as laundresses, seamstresses, or cooks. However, their husbands and brothers struggled mightily to find steady, respectable employment. Perhaps one in 15 among them secured work as blacksmiths, tanners, barbers, brickmakers, or nailmakers in the 1810s and 1820s.

Free black men found themselves excluded from many other occupations. They were, for instance, banned from operating the coveted central stalls in Philadelphia's public market and passed over for work on turnpike, canal, and street paving projects. Many free black men eventually cut their losses, leaving Philadelphia after a matter of months to look for farm work further afield or to find employment as seamen. Those who remained struggled to fend off labor competition from ever-growing numbers of poor Irish and German migrants arriving in the city in the 1820s.

Richard Allen



This lecture now turns to the story of a slave named Richard who arrived in the city in 1786. He had been born a slave in Philadelphia in 1760 but had quickly been forced to move away. He, his parents, and his three brothers and sisters had been slaves to Benjamin Chew, the chief justice of Pennsylvania. In 1768, Chew sold him and his family to pay off some debts.

Richard was eight years old at the time. Matters worsened in 1769, when Richard's new master, a man named Stokely Sturgis, broke up Richard's family. He sold Richard's mother and his three siblings off to a neighbor to raise cash, leaving Richard and his father together but now alone.

Perhaps these wrenching disruptions so early in life help explain why Richard came to embrace the comforts of the Christian gospel so lustily as an adult. His conversion to Christianity took place in 1777. He was 17 years old. He heard a traveling Methodist minister preaching a revival sermon near his plantation. The effect the minister's words had on him was immediate and dramatic. Accepting Jesus Christ as his personal savor would change young Richard's life, and he later looked back on the day of his conversion as a rebirth.

To win his freedom, he tried to persuade his master, Stokely Sturgis, that he deserved it. Even while Richard began to devote himself to the Methodist church and its regular meetings, he made sure that his master saw that completing each day's work on the plantation was still his first priority.

In 1780, as the unfolding American Revolution forced slave owners everywhere to wonder just how long their human property would continue to take their orders, these two men struck a bargain. After some negotiation, Sturgis agreed to grant his freedom as soon as Richard could come up with $2,000. This was a large sum, but Richard raised that money in just three years, achieving his independence in August 1783. He adopted the surname Allen to distinguish himself from Sturgis, his now-former master.

Mutual Aid: The Free African Society

Just 23 years old when he earned his freedom, Richard Allen quickly decided to devote his life to the church that had given him so much comfort and confidence. Allen learned to preach, and he hit the road, delivering his evangelical message that any person could embrace Christ and find a place in heaven to many mostly white audiences in Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

Preaching to white audiences brought him little satisfaction, so in 1786, after three years on the preaching circuit, he jumped at an opportunity to return to Philadelphia to take up a position as a regular preacher at St. George's Church. While his duties at St. George's would require him to preach to mixed audiences of black and white Methodist congregations during the daylight hours, he was permitted to preach to all-black congregations at 5:00 am.

Allen soon began to find the work oppressive. He didn't like being told that he could only preach to all-black audiences before dawn, and he didn't respond well when his employers told him to tone down the charismatic preaching style that he'd perfected during his years on the road.

In 1787, Richard Allen and several other black men in the congregation, including Absalom Jones, set out to declare some modest independence from St. George's. They organized together to form a mutual benefit association they called the Free African Society. Members would pay a monthly fee of a shilling—a fairly hefty sum for poor black folks in this war-ravaged city.

In return, the Free African Society would look out for them, stepping in to help them if they became sick, couldn't work, or lost a family member and couldn't afford a proper burial. This was significant because it was an organization founded and funded by free African Americans—surely a sign of things to come. As its operations expanded, the Free African Society would fund all manner of educational, employment, and religious programs designed to lift its members out of poverty and slave-like conditions and into the middle class.

Mutual Aid: Mother Bethel

While the Free African Society existed independent of St. George's Church, Allen himself remained on the church's payroll. As the years wore on, St. George's became a tinderbox of racial tension, and Richard Allen found himself caught in the middle. In 1790, the church's white leadership voted to segregate their church and banish all black churchgoers from the pews on the ground floor up into seats in the balcony during mixed-race services. Richard Allen refused to put up with that sort of treatment and made a show one day of taking a seat in a pew on the ground floor at the front of the congregation.

His employers, the white church fathers, ordered him to the balcony. Allen refused. Instead, he marched out of the front door, taking many other black church members with him.

Within weeks, he had set about building a church of his own—a church he hoped would be the very first church exclusively for African Americans. It opened months later in July 1794 in downtown Philadelphia in a building he'd converted from a blacksmith's shop. He called it Bethel, which in Hebrew means "temple" or "house of God."

Within a year, Allen had built a congregation at least 100 strong. By the time he died, which was 35 years later in 1831, more than 3,000 people a week worshipped at what came to be called Mother Bethel. They came to hear Allen preach against racism and against oppression, and to imbibe a theological message that emphasized virtue, piety, sobriety, cleanliness, humility, and charity.

Mutual Aid: Uplift and Antislavery

A large test for Allen came in 1793 when the city fell prey to a ravaging epidemic of yellow fever. Seizing the opportunity to display their civic-mindedness, Allen marshaled his black friends and neighbors, including his future wife Sarah, to work as medical aids for hundreds of white victims of the fever. They attended to the sick, carried the dead, dug graves, and buried the deceased. This was intimate, humanitarian work that brought many white families into close contact with black medical volunteers.

After the epidemic finally subsided, Allen took to the presses, publishing a series of pamphlets—the first to be copyrighted by an African American—to publicize the good work the free black community had done for their white neighbors during the fever. Likewise, when two free black men murdered a white widow in her home in December 1807, Allen rushed into print again to condemn their brutality and distance the free black community from the actions of these two lone thugs.

Allen was also deeply invested in even more direct antislavery work. The casework undertaken by the white Quaker legal teams funded by the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (PAS) depended in great part on tips and information provided by the city's black community. Richard Allen was an important conduit between these two groups. Typically, he would be contacted by an endangered local black person or their families and would then reach out on their behalf to a PAS lawyer who could take their case.

Backlash and Conclusion

Allen faced crippling opposition at every turn. During the yellow fever epidemic, for instance, one white pamphleteer, an Irish immigrant named Mathew Carey, had accused black nurses of stealing from the white patients they were supposed to be caring for.

Worse still, despite his rising public profile, Allen was targeted by slave catchers who claimed he was a runaway slave, forcing Allen into hiding for a time. Even Mother Bethel came under attack from white elders in the Methodist movement who wanted to rein him in and reassert control

over black Methodists in the city. Allen had to sue to retain control of his own church, eventually winning that lawsuit but at considerable financial cost to himself and his black parishioners.

Allen found such backlash extremely dispiriting and disillusioning. Forced to scale back his grander ambitions, Allen spent his later years trying to preserve the free black institutions he had helped to build in the 1780s and 1790s. He also continued to write and organize against Southern slavery, and in 1827, he was instrumental in setting up the Philadelphia Free Produce Society, an organization designed to encourage urban Americans to boycott foodstuffs produced by the labor of Southern slaves.

By the time Allen died on March 26, 1831, Bethel had become the mother church for a vast network of other black churches, stretching from Brooklyn to Buffalo and from the Allegheny Mountains to the Chesapeake Bay. Inside each black-owned building, free African Americans, many of them former slaves like Richard Allen himself, met for fellowship and for the purposes of education, activism, and political organization. It was inside black churches like Bethel that African Americans began to develop their collective political consciousness and began to demand equality.

Lecture 17

THE SECOND MIDDLE PASSAGE

In the spring of 1807, President Jefferson signed into law legislation known as the Act Prohibiting the Importation of Slaves. It took effect on January 1, 1808, the first day permitted by the 1787 Constitution, and it banned the further importation of slaves into the United States. It was a landmark piece of legislation, the first time in this new country's history in which its national leaders had acted against slavery with the decisive force of the law.

Reasons behind the Law

This new legislation was not the product of a dramatic change of heart among the nation's slaveholding legislators or their slaveholding president. The final passage of this new anti-slave-trade law can best be explained instead by foreign affairs and domestic economics.

The anxiety spread by the recent Haitian Revolution had propelled American slaveholders to voluntarily reduce their dependence on imports of slaves from the Caribbean. Fearful of importing dangerous ideas about independence and armed revolt, slaveholders in places like South Carolina were already learning to do without quite as many imported slaves. Likewise, Britain was outlawing much of the international slave trade at precisely the same time, passing sweeping legislation to ban all such trading within the vast British Empire.

Additionally, by the early 1800s, the United States already had all the slaves it needed, especially in the Upper South. By the 1780s, the profitability of tobacco was in steep decline in Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. Planters in these three slave states were beginning to embrace wheat as a substitute. The latter required smaller labor forces. To reduce the number of workers under their care, these planters set about relaxing the rules limiting manumission and freeing small numbers of their labor force.

A New Trade

While some aspiring slaveholders did find the new law to be an inconvenience, most established planters regarded it as a clear signal of federal support for the creation of a new domestic slave trade. This trade could redistribute enslaved persons from slave labor camps in surplus in the Chesapeake to new slave labor camps along the Mississippi Valley and the Gulf Coast. It was the rise of this domestic slave trade that ensured the spread of slavery in this country between the Revolution and the Civil War.

Inseparable from slaveholding, the domestic slave trade provided the key to securing slavery's future in the 19th century: its expansion into new territories. The history of 19th-century American slavery can best be understood as the history of interstate slave sales.

Between Two Prices

The aggressive expansionist policies of a succession of security-minded presidential administrations from Jefferson to Jackson created a new mass market for black labor in the Deep South. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the acquisition of Florida in 1819, and the systematic ethnic cleansing of several Native American nations cleared the way for surveyors, soldiers, and nearly 250,000 white settlers to advance into these vast new possessions. They carved out five new slave states by 1820: Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

These migrants had come to make their fortune planting cotton. The mechanization of spinning and weaving and the invention of the cotton gin in 1793 had turned the short staple variety into an economically feasible and highly profitable cash crop. Settlers there quickly decided that cotton-picking was slave work and set about looking for a steady source of slave labor. Market forces did the rest. Between 1790 and 1859, at least 1 million enslaved men, women, and children were traded in interstate sales.

Most of these sales were brokered by professional slave traders who had learned to exploit considerable price differentials. For instance, slaves purchased in the Chesapeake could usually fetch about $200 more when resold down in Natchez or New Orleans.

Broken Hearts

The result of such sales was always the same: divided families. Indeed, as the trade's earliest critics well understood, the domestic slave trade mounted a frontal assault on the black family. The historian Michael Tadman estimates that the interstate trade destroyed 25 percent of first marriages and 50 percent of black nuclear families, and that one out of every two enslaved children lost one or both parents to local or long-distance trafficking.

This trade was ubiquitous. At one point or another, every highway, waterway, and railroad carried trafficked slaves southward in a network of tiny capillaries that together contributed to one of the largest forced migrations in world history. This was a second Middle Passage, and it was more than twice the size of the first.

Common Highways

Before the spread of the railroads in the 1840s, traders typically transported slaves by river, sea, or overland trail. Those with active trading profiles in the western states typically sent their slaves downstream on flatboats or, later, on steamers. Their commerce soon turned the Ohio River, the Missouri River, and the Mississippi River into busy highways for the traffic. This commerce also spurred the development of Wheeling, Louisville, St. Louis, Memphis, and Natchez into important staging centers. Another routing sent slaves by sea, packed aboard brigs built expressly for this trade, as they shuttled between Chesapeake port cities and Gulf Coast hubs.

Transportation overland was vastly more common. The traders usually embarked in late summer to allow the slaves to gradually acclimatize to the heat of the Deep South. They arrived in the so-called Cotton Kingdom around the turn of the year, in time for the spring trading season. It took about eight weeks to make the journey in good weather, and it was cheaper, though slower, than sending slaves by sea.

This monumental flow of human labor and human capital transformed the Deep South's economy. Slave traders' efforts ensured that the Upper South was soon flooded with $10.8 million of new liquidity per year.

This had the effect of filling planters' coffers and supporting the livelihoods and consumer spending habits of a small army of auxiliary personnel, including jailers, tailors, blacksmiths, provisioners, ship crews and shipping agents, doctors, lawyers, and insurance brokers.

Fighting the Domestic Slave Trade

Northern opposition to this traffic in people emerged only slowly, first coalescing around abductions of legally free blacks into the domestic slave trade at the turn of the century. As one 1803 exposé explained, enslavers often targeted free black street children. When preying on a free black adult, kidnappers often masqueraded as slave catchers, ripping up their victim's freedom papers or conjuring fake ownership documents so that they could then haul their captive before a judge on suspicion of being a fugitive slave.

Free black communities in cities like Philadelphia and Baltimore fought back hard against these predators, forming private vigilance committees and forging alliances with local Quaker activists and fledgling antislavery organizations. Together, they took to naming and shaming suspected kidnappers in newspapers, decrying the complicity of certain law enforcement officials, and bemoaning the ineffectiveness of anti-kidnapping legislation.

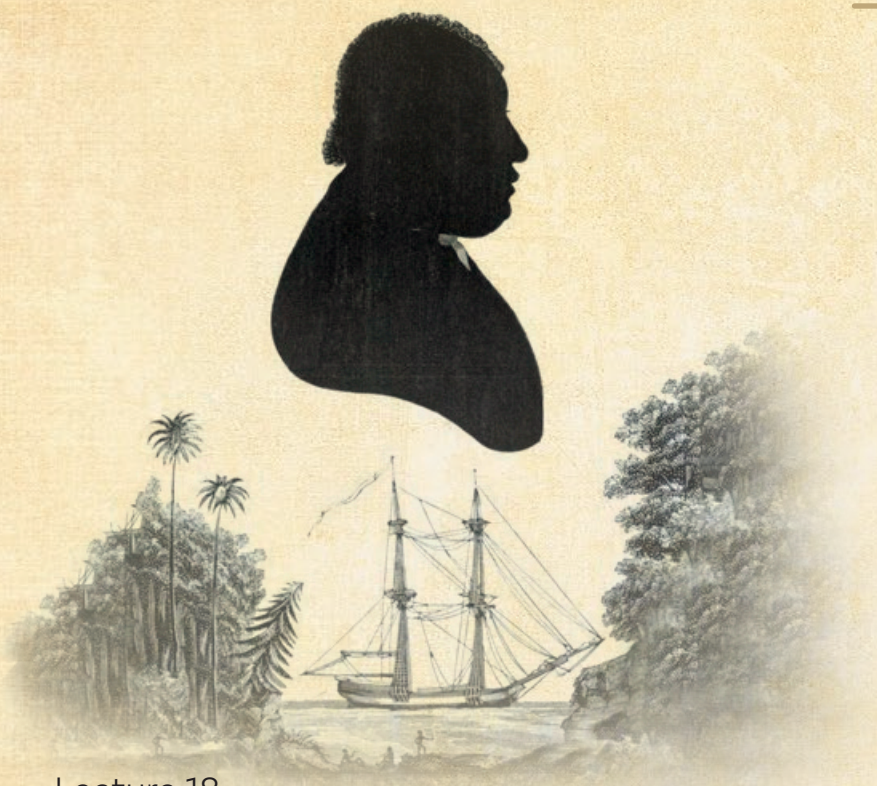
By 1820, such activism had succeeded in shaming legislators in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and several other border states to ratchet up fines and prison sentences for the handful of kidnappers of free blacks that authorities were able to arrest and convict. More significantly, this nascent anti-kidnapping campaign served to shine a spotlight on the rest of the domestic slave trade, bringing descriptions of its distressing evils to the attention of a large and growing Northern audience.

As organized antislavery radicalized in the 1810s and 1820s, activists including Jesse Torrey in Philadelphia, Benjamin Lundy in Baltimore, and Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm in New York began to call into question the business practices of every slave dealer, sending a string of petitions and memorials to state governments demanding action. The activist efforts of a white man named William Lloyd Garrison in the early 1830s brought a fresh burst of energy and imagination to this growing abolitionist movement.

Garrisonians such as Lydia Maria Child and Theodore Dwight Weld launched one blistering attack after another on the slave trade, filling newspapers, narratives, pamphlets, and reports with vivid catalogs of its most visible horrors. Their objective, the historian Steven Deyle writes, "was to get every northerner to think of the whip, rampant sexual improprieties, and especially the auction block and slave trade whenever they thought of the South."

Turning their attention to Congress, abolitionists demanded that it regulate or abolish this traffic. In response, Southern state governments moved to evade such congressional regulation by passing a series of high-profile bills designed to preserve local authority to regulate the trade and thereby obviate the need for action at the national level. By 1830, slave-trading regulations of one form or another were on the books in every Southern state. These well-publicized new laws were purposefully toothless. Enforcement and funding of new registration and certification requirements was minimal, fines went uncollected, and the loopholes were left intentionally large.

Such laws, then, held little terror for traders and did little to curtail the flows of slaves through the South. However, they served their purpose ably, blunting abolitionists' attempts to subject the trade to federal regulation for several decades.



Lecture 18

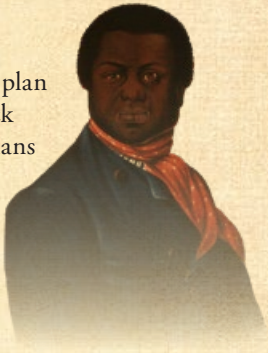
“OUR NATIVE COUNTRY”: OPPOSING COLONIZATION

This lecture examines the colonization movement, which was a movement to send black people from America to Africa that sprang to life in the late 1810s and which stirred great interest and controversy through the 1820s and beyond. At the root of the debate about black emigration to Africa were pointed questions: Where is home? Were second-, third-, and fourth-generation black people African, or were they American? Where did they belong? The lecture draws on the scholarship of Beverly Tomek, Eric Burin, and Nicholas Guyatt.

Proposing a Settlement

Colonization schemes have a long history and have been popular among both white and black writers and activists. As far back as 1773, on the eve of the American Revolution, four enslaved Massachusetts men composed a petition to a colonial court seeking their freedom but also requesting funds, they wrote, "to transport ourselves to some part of the coast of Africa, where we propose a settlement." Fourteen years later, no less than 75 free black men repeated this exercise, again asking the Massachusetts General Court to assist in relocating them to Africa.

Similar schemes proliferated in the years after the American Revolution. None of these requests for American governmental support were ever granted, and so in 1810, one free black entrepreneur from New England took matters into his own hands. Paul Cuffee was a wealthy, black Quaker who had made his money captaining a fleet of merchant ships back and forth across the Atlantic.



Cuffee hatched a plan to encourage black American Christians to emigrate to and settle Africa.* Between 1810 and 1815, he made several successful voyages to Sierra Leone, transporting several dozen willing black Americans to new lives there. Further voyages became diplomatically impossible when a war between Britain and the United States—the War of 1812—kicked off.

Paul Cuffee died in 1817, by which time his emigration ideas had become a topic of much discussion in certain circles. Richard Allen, a free black Philadelphia preacher, took a strong interest. He befriended Cuffee and sketched plans to send a cohort of Philadelphia's struggling free black community to Haiti, the autonomous black republic formed after a violent slave revolt and independence movement.

* Before beginning his voyages to and from Africa, Cuffee was disillusioned by the fact that he was subject to considerable taxation while barred from voting or holding office in Massachusetts. He was also distressed by the damage the international slave trade was inflicting on African societies.

Cuffee's efforts also caught the attention of a white Presbyterian minister from New Jersey named Robert Finley. Finley had toured South Carolina in 1814 and had grown disturbed by the ragged, wretched condition of the free black men and women he had met in Charleston. Returning home to New Jersey, Finley determined to devise a way to relieve the suffering of these legally free but obviously benighted individuals. His solution was the American Colonization Society (ACS), which he cofounded at a meeting in the Davis Hotel in Washington DC in 1816.

Over the next decade, the ACS would become one of the most popular and celebrated reform movements in the United States. It attracted high-profile members and donors such as William Lloyd Garrison, Daniel Webster, Andrew Jackson, and Henry Clay, and it raised funds to purchase land on the West Africa coast that the ACS christened Liberia, meaning "land of liberty."

The Great Antislavery Experiment

In a barrage of pamphlets, journals, and newspaper editorials, boosters for this new society explained that colonization was a bold new response to the reality of contemporary racism in America. Colonizationists were clear-eyed in their assessment of white Americans' deep-rooted prejudices against black people, concluding that even the most virtuous and well-mannered free blacks were never likely to achieve equal rights and protections in this profoundly troubled country.

Importantly, ACS promotional literature did not blame black people for this sad state of affairs. On the contrary, rather than portraying African Americans as innately, naturally inferior to whites and deserving of their scorn, ACS publicists actually espoused a sociological rather than biological understanding of their degradation. They argued that it was white racism and the consequent foreclosing of almost every opportunity for education, uplift, and self-improvement that had consigned African Americans to a second-class status within the nation's borders. By the standards of the time, this was a startlingly progressive and enlightened set of claims.

Indeed, ACS members went so far as to argue that if black folk could escape daily discrimination—that is, if the races could be separated—then they could finally explore their full potential.

Africa, then, would be the ACS's laboratory, a place to see what virtuous Christian black settlers might accomplish when given a chance to control their own destiny and live free of white interference. In Africa, unlike the United States, each black emigrant would become, in the words of one white ACS official, "a member of a community in which he is not only free, but equal. There, he stands up to be a man."

To men like ACS founder Reverend Robert Finley, colonization was also an evangelical campaign to proselytize and convert Africa's natives to Protestant Christianity. ACS officials thus poured considerable time, money, and resources into education and Sunday school programs aimed at instilling Protestant values such as piety, frugality, industry, and sobriety among would-be black emigrants in cities such as Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. In addition, boosters for colonization also marketed emigration as a powerful strategy in the escalating fight against slavery in America.

Certain types of claims informed a large amount of ACS fundraising. For example, in one 1829 speech in Philadelphia, Francis Scott Key, an ACS leader, told a group of donors that he knew of 600 slaves waiting eagerly for the society to raise the money necessary for their passage to Africa. Without guarantees that they would leave these shores, Key declared, their masters would not release them.

Between 1820 and 1860, the ACS and its state affiliates funded the emigration of 6,000 recently manumitted slaves to Liberia. Buoyed by the arrival of these former slaves and by the arrival of 4,000 more free black Americans, the Liberia colony soon achieved maturity. Its driven and passionate leaders, including well-educated black intellectuals such as John Russwurm and talented former slaves such as Lott Cary, succeeded in establishing basic healthcare infrastructure and in setting up several schools along with West Africa's first black newspaper, the *Liberia Herald*.

Their achievements impressed ACS officials back in America, who granted Liberia its independence in 1847. The following year, the Liberian government, led by President Joseph Jenkins Roberts, ratified the country's first constitution, a document modeled explicitly on the Constitution of the United States of America.

Support from Slaveholders

Liberia is part of the story, but it is not the full picture. The other side of the story is how the colonization movement was seen through the eyes of its opponents. Proposals to expel Africans from America have long been associated with the conviction that black individuals are inherently inferior to whites. Thomas Jefferson made precisely this claim in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, a treatise he published in 1785, and he supported colonization as a means to avoid race war.

Other Upper South slaveholders saw in colonization a means for America's white population to avoid exposure to the perceived lasciviousness, insobriety, and laziness of free black men and women who had been hopelessly degraded by years spent as slaves. While the ACS was conceived by a well-intentioned New Jersey minister, the majority of its other early officers were actually conservative slaveholders from border states like Virginia.

Such men obviously had no desire to abolish slavery. The ACS's constitution was noticeably silent on the subject of abolition.

While its promotional literature claimed that colonization would spur a surge of manumissions, in practice, slave owners used the society as a convenient means to exile only their most troublesome and unprofitable laborers, effectively strengthening the system of slavery and forcibly and irreversibly dividing black families.

Responses to the ACS

Most free blacks found the ACS to be an overtly racist organization that did not have their best interests at heart. In January 1817, nearly 3,000 free black people living in Philadelphia met in Richard Allen's Mother Bethel church to discuss colonization. While Allen and several other prominent black leaders spoke in favor of the ACS, the vast majority of attendees voted to refuse to have anything to do with it.

Over the next 15 years, other black activists expanded on these themes. In 1827, two black New Yorkers, John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish, set up the nation's first black newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, in part to give voice to criticism of the ACS. In one stinging editorial, Russwurm wrote, "Never shall we consent to emigrate from America." Two years later, a black Bostonian named David Walker would say much the same in the pages of his controversial 1829 *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*.

The following year, on July 4, 1830, a black preacher from New York named Peter Williams extended these arguments. He informed ACS officials that the free black community's claims to American citizenship were so robust as to be superior to those of most arriving white immigrants from Ireland and Germany.

A few months later, a group of African Americans in Columbia, Pennsylvania, went further still, describing the ACS as "a vicious, nefarious, and peace-disturbing combination." In nearby Lewistown, Pennsylvania, a similar meeting concluded that colonizationists were "wolves in sheep's clothing."

The ACS did succeed in shipping 6,000 recently manumitted African Americans to Liberia along with almost 4,000 other free blacks from Upper South states like Virginia. However, the organization struggled to make headway in Northern states.

Between 1820 and 1833, only 5 percent of black emigrants were from the large free black communities in Northern cities.

Those African Americans who made the journey to Liberia soon discovered that it was not the post-racial paradise described in ACS promotional literature. On the contrary, the colony in these early years was a death trap. Malaria, tuberculosis, pleurisy, influenza, pneumonia, and other diseases claimed the lives of 29 percent of black newcomers during the 1820s. Those who survived found that they lacked the agricultural tools, animals, and knowledge of the land and local crops to succeed as farmers. Even the homeland security of the new colony was in flux: The territory was also occupied by 16 African tribes who engaged the Liberians in a ceaseless string of conflicts over land and resources.

Between 1820 and 1843, 22 percent of migrants quit the Liberia colony. All told, between 1820 and 1860, the ACS succeeded in removing fewer than 1 percent of the black population of the United States to Liberia, most of whom either died prematurely soon after arrival there or fled the colony soon thereafter. Seen in that light, the decision by the ACS board to grant independence to Liberia in 1847 seems more like the severing of ties and the cutting of losses than the christening of a new member of the family of nations.

Conclusion

From one perspective, colonization appears as an enlightened attempt to actually do something to improve the lives of all those tarred by racism and discrimination in the United States. From the other perspective, the ACS appears to be a cynical, calculated exercise in ethnic cleansing, deportation, and social engineering designed to perpetuate slaveholders’ security for generations to come.


THE LIBERATOR.

Colonizationist ideas remained popular among conservatives until the Civil War. Despite lingering enthusiasm in certain quarters, a new generation of abolitionists emerged in direct opposition to the ACS. One was William Lloyd Garrison, a Boston editor who had joined the ACS in honest hopes of advancing the antislavery cause. In 1831, Garrison abandoned the ACS and set up a new antislavery newspaper, *The Liberator,* in which he demanded immediate universal emancipation and took the ACS to task for playing on racial prejudice.

Lecture 19

DAVID WALKER, NAT TURNER, AND BLACK IMMEDIATISM

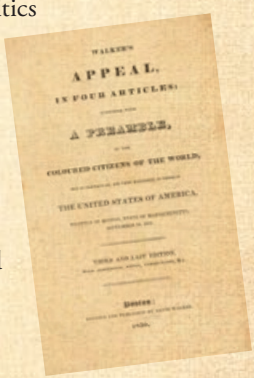
Free black communities in the big Northern cities began organizing against slavery by the 1780s. Over the next 50 years, they authored and disseminated a barrage of appeals and petitions directed to white state legislators and their constituents that decried slavery, the slave trade, and the abduction of free blacks into coffles to be sold.

David Walker

A famous 1829 pamphlet called *An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* falls squarely within this rising tradition of free black agitprop. Its author was David Walker, who had been born in Wilmington, North Carolina, a slave state, in 1796 or 1797. His father had been enslaved, but his mother was free, a legal status that she passed on to her son. Walker grew up free and literate, and as a young man, he embraced Methodism, one of several evangelical Christian faiths that made great gains in the United States in the decades after the American Revolution.

He eventually moved to Boston. In 1827, he signed up to be a local sales agent for a new African American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, and soon became a member of the Massachusetts General Colored Association, a mutual aid society modeled on Richard Allen's Free African Society. Walker also became an active member of the Prince Hall Freemasons, a free black community association, and he joined a free black evangelical congregation whose pastor, Samuel Snowden, was known for delivering fiery antislavery sermons.

Walker's 1829 pamphlet was the product of his Southern past, surrounded by slavery, and of his Northern present, immersed in the antislavery politics of Boston's free black community. Published in Boston but intended for wide circulation among both the white and black population, Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* controversially took aim at three big targets.


WALKER'S
APPEAL,
IN FOUR ARTICLES;
A PREAMBLE,
COLOURED CITIZENS OF THE WORLD,
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The first was the recently deceased former president Thomas Jefferson. Walker offers something vastly more subtle than Jefferson's appraisal that slaves' debasement is the product of nature or destiny. In contrast, Walker argues that their so-called inferiority is the result of sociohistorical factors, structural inequality, and deep-seated racism.

Walker's second target was colonization, the political and social movement that had begun to dominate discussion of race and slavery in the 1810s and 1820s. Walker denounces colonization schemes as fallacious fantasies that promulgate a return to Africa for men and women who had never set foot on that continent. In so doing, colonizationists seemed to imply that the United States is, by rights, a white nation.

Walker disagreed, arguing that black folk had helped to build this country, thereby earning a claim to equal citizenship within its borders. Using a conciliatory tone, he envisions a racially integrated society.

Walker's third target was the institution of slavery itself. When pleading for immediate universal abolition, he implores readers to "open [their] hearts to understand and believe the truth" about the degradation of the American slave.

Armed Resistance

Importantly, Walker's *Appeal* matches pleas for sympathy and fellow feeling with passages that seem to encourage, if not incite, armed resistance among the nation's slaves. Advocating slave revolt as the path to freedom of last resort, Walker employs language that is both apocalyptic and prophetic, that promises bloody retribution for all those white Americans who fail to renounce slavery.

The anger in Walker's words, especially his ambivalent embrace of armed rebellion, stirred controversy immediately. The past three decades had witnessed more American slave revolts than in any prior period; as a result, slaveholders south of Pennsylvania were living in terror of the next insurrection.

Significantly, Walker intended that his words would reach their slaves, many of whom could read. Southern authorities were terrified of what might happen if Southern slaves obtained Walker's *Appeal* and thus launched a large-scale effort to try to confiscate every copy they could find.

Police at the port of Savannah in Georgia seized 60 copies of it there in December 1829, as did authorities in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Louisiana. Free black sailors and longshoremen seem to have acted as conduits for its distribution, though when arrested, they each denied knowing what Walker's pamphlet actually said.

Southern attempts to persuade the mayor of Boston to arrest Walker were rebuffed on the grounds that Walker had broken no Massachusetts law, so Southern legislators rushed to pass their own. In Georgia, a new law required ships docking at its ports to quarantine all arriving black sailors and passengers. It also required "that means be adopted to prevent such persons of colour from coming into this State or from communicating with the coloured people of this State." The same act targeted the literacy of enslaved persons in the state.

Private citizens went further. Vigilance committees offered rewards for anyone caught circulating Walker's work in the South, while one group of Georgians promised a bounty of $1,000 to whomever might assassinate the *Appeal*'s Boston author. When Walker died suddenly in August of 1830 at the age of about 33, many people suspected he had been poisoned. Historians, though, have generally concluded that he died of consumption, a pulmonary ailment that was sweeping Boston that year and that also claimed the life of Walker's daughter.

The Revolt of Nat Turner

A year later, in 1831, a man named Nat Turner led the largest and bloodiest slave insurgency in US history in rural Virginia. While there is absolutely no evidence that Nat Turner or any of his black allies and co-conspirators ever read Walker's *Appeal*, they nonetheless incarnated the existential threat to Southern slavery that Walker had prophesized in 1829.

Turner had grown up on small tobacco and corn-growing farms in Southampton County, a Virginia locale close to the North Carolina line. The county was heavily forested and swampy. It was 60 percent enslaved and 40 percent white. Nat's first owner, Benjamin Turner, was a Methodist who had encouraged Nat to learn to read and to study the Bible.

After being sold to a new master, Nat began to experience prophetic visions, which he interpreted as a call to wage war against slavery. A solar eclipse in February 1831 was a final signal. After a few months of hesitation, Turner called a meeting of his trusted friends—Hark, Henry, Nelson, Sam, Jack, and Will—to plan a total war inspired by Old Testament warriors such as Moses and Joshua. He thought of that meeting, which took place on the evening of August 21, as their Last Supper.

At 2:00 the following morning, August 22, Turner climbed through the window of his master's house, went to the front door, and let in his six companions, each armed with axes. The seven intruders then bludgeoned Joseph Travis, his wife, and their 12-year-old son to death. After leaving the house, they remembered a baby in a cradle and came back to kill the infant, too.

Over the next seven hours, they surged from farm to farm, killing almost all the whites they found at each house and beckoning the family's slaves to join them in insurrection. By 9:00 am, their war party numbered around 40 people. The alarm had been raised almost immediately, and some homes were deserted by the time Turner approached. A small militia on horseback engaged the rebels around noon. Shots were exchanged and while no one was killed, the encounter shook the slave rebels' resolve.

Some fled. Turner set out for Jerusalem, the tiny village of 175 that served as the county seat, but he then changed direction, taking shelter for the night in the slave quarters of a deserted farm.

The next morning, August 23, he and his remaining comrades attacked another small plantation, but this time, they were repulsed by the farm's slaves. Hark was captured in this fracas, and at least one other rebel was killed. The militia then returned, capturing and killing several others, and scattering those who escape in all directions.

Now alone, Nat took refuge somewhere in the vicinity of his dead owner's farm. Turner holed up there for the next two months and was not apprehended until October 30.

Turner at Trial

While they had not raped or tortured anyone, Turner and his men had killed 57 white people over a matter of hours, including 46 women and children. With Turner finally in custody in the county jail, justice came swiftly. He lingered there for just five days before his trial, during which time he was interviewed by a slaveholding lawyer named Thomas R. Gray, who later published an account of this prisoner's life under the title *The Confessions of Nat Turner*.

On November 5, Turner was tried in the county court and quickly sentenced to be executed. At noon on November 11, Nat Turner was led to the gallows. His last words were "I'm ready."

Nervous Terror

Nat Turner's war against slavery terrified Southern slaveholders like nothing before it or since. Writing to a friend in Ohio, one elite Virginian reported that "These insurrections have alarmed my wife so as really to endanger her health, and I have not slept without anxiety in three months."

Planters feared contagion and imitation most of all. During the insurgency itself, Virginia officials had mustered nearly 3,000 troops to rush to the isolated county to suppress no more than 80 slaves. Even though most did not arrive in time to be put to use, this disproportionate response spoke volumes.

The militia forces went to work with brutality. For example, one group cut off the head of Henry, one of Turner's lieutenants, and paraded it around like a trophy. A cavalry company decapitated more than a dozen other suspected rebels and placed their heads on poles on main roads throughout the county. In all, white militia and vigilante groups killed at least 120 black people they suspected of involvement in the rebellion, many more than likely were. While the trials of captured suspects were not always foregone conclusions—13 trials ended in not guilty verdicts—the governor of Virginia spent no less than $124,785 compensating slaveholders for the loss of labor of suspected slave rebels that he allowed to be put to death or transported out of state.

In the 19 weeks that followed the August 1831 revolt, 240 newspaper articles appeared in states from

Maine to Mississippi describing and condemning Turner's violence. In Louisiana, which had imported tens of thousands of Virginia slaves over the years, legislators passed new laws that banned the importation of enslaved people who had ever lived anywhere near Southampton County.

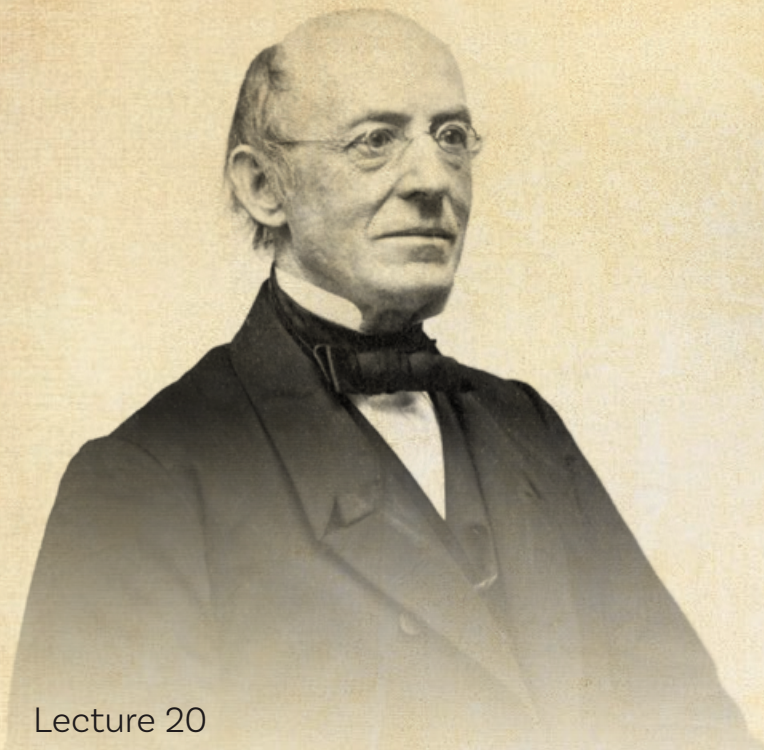
The Virginia legislature gathered in a special session for two weeks in January 1832 to debate the future of slavery in the state in the wake of the rebellion. During the debate, lawmakers briefly entertained a petition from the state's Quaker Yearly Meeting to abolish slavery immediately and universally, though it was brushed aside in favor of discussion of several schemes for gradual abolition, one of which was proposed by Thomas Jefferson's grandson. These, too, were ultimately voted down on the grounds that they violated slaveholders' property rights.

In the end, the legislators publicly recommitted themselves to supporting slavery in the state. Significantly, lawmakers also used the occasion to authorize a string of new laws further limiting the privileges of the state's enslaved and free black populations.

Walker, Turner, and the Rise of Garrisonian Antislavery

David Walker and Nat Turner transformed the debate about slavery in America. Their words and deeds terrorized Southern slaveholders as never before, spreading panic and nervous terror across the South and forcing legislators there to articulate just how far they would go to protect slavery.

Walker's *Appeal* in particular signaled that activists in the North were ready to reach into the bowels of Southern slavery to try to turn the hearts and minds of slaveholders (or even enslaved people themselves) toward the cause of immediate and universal emancipation. This impulse foreshadowed the American Anti-Slavery Society's divisive campaign to send polemical mail directly to Southern religious and civic leaders six years later, in 1835. That organization was founded in 1833 by Arthur Tappan and William Lloyd Garrison, two devout white Christians who hoped to create a moral majority committed to the cause of immediate abolition.

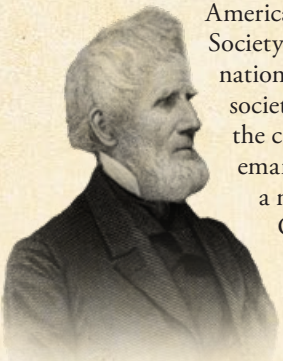


Lecture 20

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON'S "THOUSAND WITNESSES"

Few people were more deeply influenced by David Walker and Nat Turner than a white man named William Lloyd Garrison. The son of Canadian immigrants to Massachusetts, Garrison became involved in the cause of antislavery in Boston in 1825. Reading David Walker's *Appeal*, which was published in 1829, changed Garrison's life, validating his own growing skepticism about colonization and filling him with apocalyptic nightmares that a country-wide slave revolt and race war might soon ignite if drastic action to end American slavery was not taken immediately. Nat Turner's bloody insurrection in Virginia in August 1831 only confirmed Garrison's worst fears. He wrote strongly in favor of emancipation in the wake of Turner's revolt.

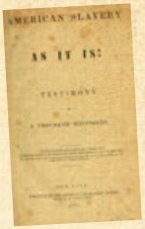
Humanitarian Realism



In 1833, Garrison partnered with the Manhattan silk importer Arthur Tappan to found the American Anti-Slavery Society (or AASS), a national abolition society dedicated to the cause of immediate emancipation. Within a matter of months, Garrison had put his partner's considerable wealth to work to launch a massive print campaign designed to flood the North and the South with material that challenged slaveholders' moral authority.

The scale of this campaign was entirely unprecedented. Within a few years, they had put upward of 100 antislavery papers—including Garrison's newspaper, the *Liberator*—into circulation. Most they gave away for free or sold to subscribers at deeply discounted rates to encourage broad readerships. Beyond newspapers, the AASS and its fast-growing network of regional affiliates assembled songbooks, hymnals, poetry collections, pamphlets, posters, and even embroidered handkerchiefs, candy wrappers, pincushions, and printed envelopes decorated with visual images of supplicant slaves to do the work of moral suasion.

Garrisonians, most of whom were evangelical Christians or Quakers, were relentless proselytizers. Finding a political outlet for their religious impulse to spread the gospel everywhere, these activists implored their audiences and their readers to join in the work of growing the antislavery movement. Thus, many of the books pumped out by AASS printers came emblazoned with the words "Read and Circulate" on the top right-hand corner of their cover pages.



By 1837, the AASS was mailing more than 1 million pieces of antislavery literature around the country each year in hopes of changing the hearts and minds of middle-class men and women not yet committed to immediate abolition. Additionally, Garrison spent the 1830s encouraging his growing throng of supporters to embrace the use of witness testimony that could put American slavery on trial.

To rebut proslavery depictions of well-cared-for black laborers who did not feel pain, grief, or sorrow, the AASS poured its resources into doggedly detailing the bitter truth of slavery for detached and disinterested readers. In fact, Theodore Dwight Weld's 1839 work *American Slavery as It Is*, a catalog of cruelty that sold more than 100,000 copies in its first year, promised readers the "testimony of a thousand witnesses."

The overwhelming theme of this extraordinary flood of ink was the agony of being a slave. Garrison and his disciples perfected a style of writing and reporting best described as humanitarian realism. Depictions of the instruments of physical cruelty, graphic illustrations of their use, and distressing explanations of the emotional and spiritual scars borne by suffering black slaves came to dominate these accounts.

Violent Depictions

Many of these portrayals of human suffering featured prominent descriptions of Southern slaves' suicides. During the 1830s, the image of a slave lying dead by his or her own hand was one of the popular motifs in Garrisonian antislavery writing. In a single issue of New York's *American Anti-Slavery Reporter,* for instance, the editors published no less than four different accounts of men and women committing suicide after becoming ensnared in the domestic slave trade.

Garrisonians wrung equal pathos from the suicides of thwarted runaways, framing each failed fugitive slave's self-destruction as a sign of their inevitable inability to escape the slave system.

Among these frustrated fugitives, none was more pathetically rendered by Garrisonian writers than Paul, a Congolese man found hiding in a Carolina swamp having fled his master. According

to Charles Ball, himself a fugitive from slavery, the man he discovered in that swamp one day was walking wounded, having been badly beaten.

Captured and transported to the Americas five years earlier, Paul had had to leave his aged mother and his wife and four children in Africa. Ever since, he had been at the mercy of a drunk and violent owner. This master had formed a particular dislike for Paul, forcing him to flee to the swamp, where Paul had lived on a diet of frogs and tortoises for almost a month. He was still wearing the iron collar with dangling bells in which his owner had encased him as punishment for previous escapes.

Paul's thoughts had long since turned to suicide. Charles Ball implored Paul to "bear his misfortunes as well as he could" and promised to come again the following Sunday with tools to release him from his collar. When Ball returned, the ravens and buzzards were circling ominously. He soon discovered why: "The lifeless, and putrid body of the unhappy Paul, hung suspended by a cord, made of twisted hickory bark, passed in the form of a halter round the neck, and firmly bound to a limb of the tree."

Stories like Paul's saturated abolitionist writing throughout the 1830s. Intended to appall and affront respectable readers' delicate sensibilities while simultaneously playing on the Old Testament story of the suffering servant (Isaiah 53), the endless recycling of so many reports of slaves compelled to suicide served as a potent shorthand for all the sins of slavery and came to define the Garrisonian moral suasion campaign.

The Little Circle Widens

The appearance of narratives written by survivors of slavery like Charles Ball in the 1830s also contributed to the sort of evidentiary journalism to which Garrisonians were now committed. Frederick Douglass, another survivor of slavery who wrote multiple autobiographies, later explained on a visit to London that "Slavery is one of those monsters of darkness to whom the light of truth is death."

While each new ex-slave narrative described different people, places, and experiences, their use as political propaganda ensured that certain common elements recurred in many of them. According to the scholar James Olney, these conventions included the presence of an engraved and signed portrait of the ex-slave author, a title with the phrase "Written by Himself," and a handful of testimonials or prefaces from white abolitionist lawyers or ministers condescendingly vouching for the fact that the black author wasn't lying about any of this.

Women occupied marginal yet simultaneously important positions in Garrison's immediatist campaign. While black women were excluded from formal participation in antislavery organizations, white women were tasked with gathering hundreds of thousands of signatures for antislavery petitions. The effect of such local lobbying could be powerful.

With great fanfare, abolitionists sent these signed petitions to state legislatures and to Congress. State capitals and Congress were soon deluged with the petitions. In May 1836, the House of Representatives passed a new rule refusing to read or discuss all petitions and memorials sent to them on the subject of slavery.

This gag rule—one of several pushed through by proslavery Congressmen—ensured that immediatism could not be debated in Congress. However, the gag rule also backfired. Portrayed by abolitionist newspaper editors as an attack on free speech and the right to petition, both guaranteed by the Bill of Rights, the gag rule served to forge a link in the public imagination between the cause of abolition and the cause of American civil liberties.

Despised Martyrs

Garrisonian abolitionists were widely despised throughout the 1830s. Outcasts from mainstream society, immediatists angered Southern slaveholders and more moderate antislavery activists in the North, namely gradualists and colonizationists. Garrison's American Anti-Slavery Society, for instance, often found itself at odds with the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, which still remained committed to more modest goals.

Anyone who embraced Garrison's crusade for immediate abolition faced ostracism from their family and friends and could easily become the target of mob violence. Before David Walker's mysterious death in 1830, Walker had received threats against his life. Throughout the following decade, leading immediatists were also frequently the targets of bounties placed on them by Southern proslavery groups.

In Petersburg, Virginia, a white man named Robinson was whipped by one mob for endorsing emancipation. In Louisiana, two white men were lynched for distributing abolitionist literature in 1835.

In Nashville, a white man named Amos Dresser was tarred and feathered for the same offense, as was Aaron Kitchell in Georgia in 1836.

Even the Northern states provided little sanctuary. In the cities like Boston, Philadelphia, Utica, and Cincinnati, where Garrison's outreach operations were concentrated, anti-abolition mobs frequently broke up their meetings, assaulted immediatist leaders, and damaged or destroyed their printing presses.

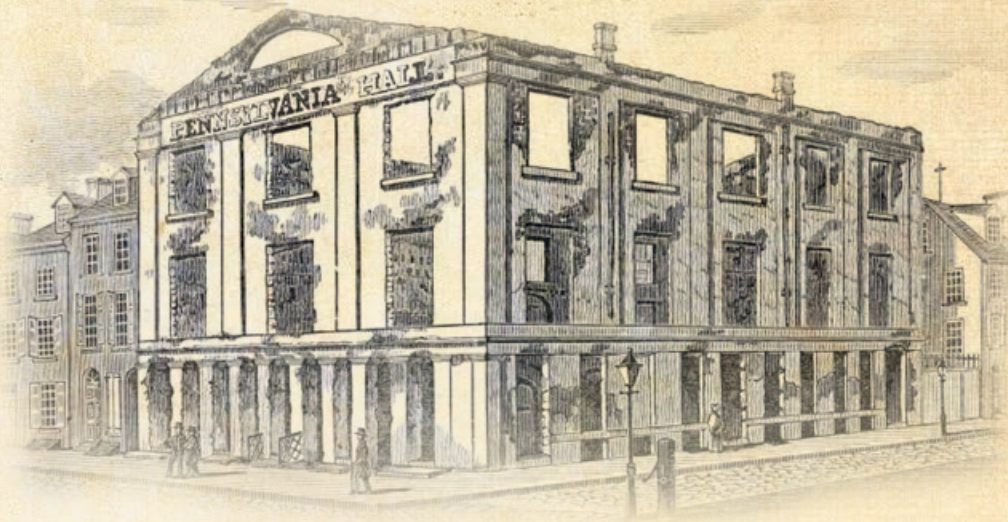
In the year of 1835 alone, immediatists endured 37 separate mob attacks, including one in which Garrison himself was kidnapped in the midst of a speech to the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society. He was tied up and led through the streets before anti-abolition rioters gleefully turned him over to authorities, who then charged Garrison with disturbing the peace and confined him to jail for the night.

Two years later, in Alton, Illinois, an anti-abolition mob gave the Garrisonians their first martyr. Elijah Lovejoy, an immediatist newspaper editor out there, was killed in a firefight with an anti-abolition mob that had attacked his printing press.

The death of Lovejoy sent ripples across the country, generating great sympathy for Garrisonian activists.

Something similar happened a year later, in 1838. This time, the occasion was the opening, in Philadelphia, of Pennsylvania Hall. The hall was a new, privately funded set of meeting rooms devoted to freedom of speech and the cause of antislavery. The money had been raised largely by members of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society.

Within days of Pennsylvania Hall's grand opening, anti-abolition arsonists besieged this great building, apparently angered by seeing black and white women leaving the building arm in arm.



An official investigation eventually placed the blame for the arson not on the arsonists but instead on the abolitionists for offending "the nicer feelings of the public." The Northern press, however, took a different view, arguing that anti-abolitionists had again gone too far, a view apparently shared by the many new signers of Garrisonian antislavery petitions in the months thereafter.

Violence against immediatists reached a high tide between 1835 and 1837, the years in which their presses were most active and their message most coherent.

Violence against these Garrisonians only began to decline after 1837, as Arthur Tappan's private fortune—which had supported almost everything Garrison and his disciples had done since 1833—was greatly reduced in the stock market panic of 1837. Garrison's grand coalition of local and national antislavery societies began to fray by the end of the decade, as some members began to voice their dissatisfaction that their unprecedented campaign had not yet succeeded in freeing a single slave.

Lecture 21

SURVIVING KING COTTON

This lecture places the trafficked victims of the Second Middle Passage front and center. It argues that their opposition to their separation from their families and to their sale to the South was multifaceted and unrelenting. Their unceasing dissent and dissimulation allowed them to shape their sales, rebuild shattered families and communities, and repeatedly subvert their owners' aspirations of achieving absolute mastery.

Surviving Sale in the Upper South

Every forced migration began with a slave owner's decision to divide a black family and sell an individual away. Those individuals and their families did everything they could to stop that from happening in the first place.

The lobbying began as soon as an enslaved person discovered that he or she was targeted for transportation and sale out of state. For example, one middle-aged slave woman persuaded her master not to sell her son to a long-distance slave trader but instead sell him to a nearby neighbor so that the boy could remain close to his mother as he grew up.

Many enslaved workers simply collapsed in tears, throwing themselves on the mercy of their masters and mistresses. They wept loudly and plaintively to try to keep their families intact. Sometimes this worked, but many other times it didn't, as the consciences of Chesapeake slaveholders succumbed to the power of the profit motive and the pressures of their pocketbooks. Thus, when their own sales seemed imminent and irreversible, many enslaved men and women simply took to their heels and ran.

Begging, running, and hiding were not the only tools at enslaved people's disposal. Some fought like tigers when their time to depart came. Some threatened suicide. Others tried to cut off their hands and fingers. Lewis Clark, a survivor of slavery, remembered a black mother who killed her child to prevent their family from being torn apart by their master.

Surviving the Second Middle Passage

Sellers and buyers were keenly aware of the desperate, violent reactions these sales often provoked among their slaves. They often schemed in secret, executing their sales and dividing enslaved families with as little notice and forewarning as possible. For the same reason, slave traders knew to bolt the men they bought to iron fetters and to run iron links through padlocks and force their human convoys to march in lockstep southward, carrying their own heavy chains.

Traders were sometimes outwitted or overpowered on the long grinding journey to the Cotton Kingdom. For example, in 1841, a vessel named the *Creole* was making its way from Norfolk, Virginia, to New Orleans. Five different trading firms were ferrying the 135 slaves on board to market and sale in Louisiana. At 9:00 one evening, a crewman heard a suspicious noise in the hold and went down to investigate. In the darkness down there, an African American named Madison Washington attacked him and fought his way up onto the deck.

Somewhere else on the ship, an enslaved man then fired a pistol into the air, a signal for other slaves to try to rush the deck. Eighteen made it up from the hold where they were set on by the crew and by the traders, who were all armed with guns and knives. The slaves overpowered them all, killing one of the traders, cutting his throat, and then tossing him overboard.

The rebels confined everyone else in the hold, locking the white crew down there.

Madison Washington then set sail for the Bahamas, a nearby British island chain where slavery had recently been outlawed and where he had heard that runaway slaves might be granted freedom. When the *Creole* arrived there a few days later, that is exactly what happened.

The story of the *Creole* rebels is in many ways an exceptional story. Most other violent revolts along the Second Middle Passage ended quite differently. For most slaves, such opportunities never came in the first place. Traders and keepers did everything they could to prevent and deter this sort of thing, forbidding whispers between trafficked persons, chaining slaves to trees and wagons at night, and setting watchmen to stay up all hours and sound the alarm if ever an uprising or escape seemed to be in the offing.

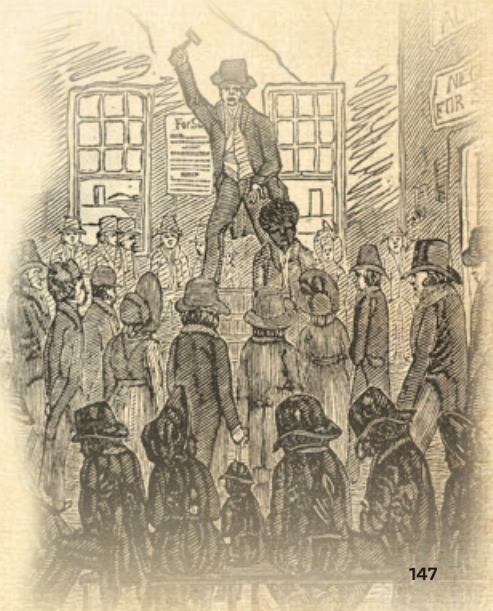
Instead, most slaves looked for ways to survive the Second Middle Passage rather than escape from it. They would cling tightly to any possessions or family mementoes they had been able to grab before being hustled away.

Surviving Sale in the Lower South

The majority of trafficked slaves were destined for sale to cotton or sugar planters in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and the other new slave states carved out of the Louisiana Purchase. Most enslaved people did not regard their sale to new masters with stoic detachment. On the contrary, they had strong feelings about who should buy them and why. Enslaved people on auction blocks and in showrooms often succeeded in shaping aspects of these transactions, sometimes managing to influence who bought them and who did not.

Enslaved people spent their lives learning how to subtly influence white people. The moment of sale was the perfect time to put those skills to use. Because they knew what most buyers were looking for, they knew how to bend potential buyers' perceptions of them to serve their own purposes. Their future quality of life likely depended on deterring the interest of the harshest potential buyer and attracting the interest of the mildest.

Survivors of slavery like Solomon Northup and Josiah Henson recalled anxiously scanning the faces of would-be buyers for clues as to their temperaments—their capacity for violence and cruelty. Other survivors recalled being asked questions by buyers about their skills, their origins, their scars, and their health, and thinking that how they replied would determine whether or not they would be bought and by whom.



There were limits. If the trader thought a slave of his was discouraging a sale, the slave could expect an immediate beating. Conversely, a slave who exaggerated his or her aptitudes would pay a price later on when the new master discovered the bait and switch.

Those few enslaved people who had arrived in showrooms or on auction blocks with their immediate families somehow still intact were perhaps the most likely to try to shape the terms of these sales. Risking a whipping from the trader for speaking so candidly, an enslaved man named Henry responded to a question from a would-be buyer by telling her that "he did not desire to be sold without his wife." Effectively, then, Henry threatened to run away from this buyer if she did not purchase him and his wife together.

Surviving the Concentration Camp

Antebellum plantations can be properly described as species of concentration camps: They were designed to forcibly extract labor from an oppressed minority population. Survival in such environments was a daily challenge, especially in the Deep South, where white overseers resorted to the lash more freely than anywhere else. Some new black arrivals responded to these new environments with overt and familiar strategies of slave resistance: running away, armed revolt, and suicide.

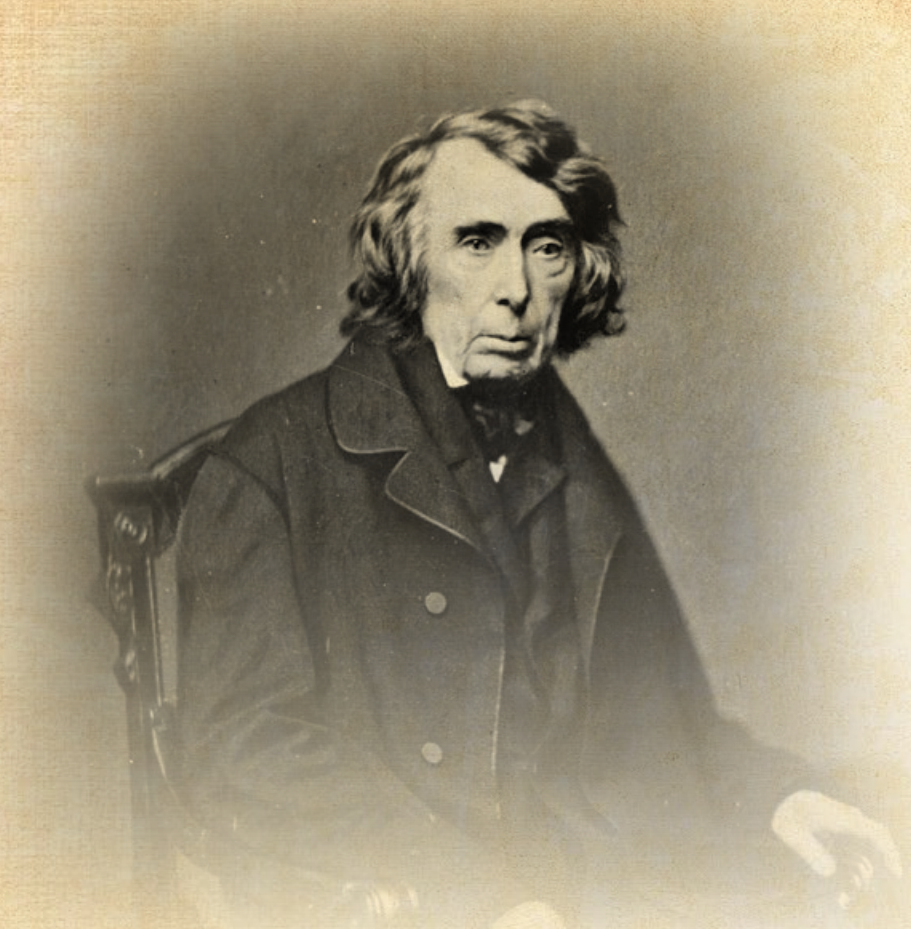
The majority of forced migrants to the Cotton Kingdom found quieter ways to endure. Some enslaved people took to drink to numb their bodies and souls. Others let their own sense of self evaporate completely, giving themselves over to the work. For example, one new arrival told her fellow slaves that she was no longer Sophia but Sophia Nobody. Other men and women simply tried to forget the life and families they'd left behind before the Second Middle Passage.

Many more black transplants tried to make the best of their changed circumstances. They built new families, friendships, and communities out of the strangers they now lived among. They also prayed together, flocking to any Christian congregation that would have them. Making music together was also a major part of this decades-long community-building effort. For instance, some enslaved people played fiddles. Others bashed out rhythms on tin cans.

These men and women also struck dozens of modest blows against the institution of slavery itself. They covered for each other. They lied to their masters, snuck food to those who had fled to the woods, stole supplies and tools, and set fires, burning down sheds and ruining harvests. Domestics played dumb, acted slow, and made deliberate mistakes. Out in the fields, enslaved men and women worked as slowly as they could get away with.

Many enslaved workers would pretend to be sick, physically impaired, and otherwise unable to work. Very occasionally, enslaved workers even turned on their tormenters. Cooks slipped poison into their dishes, while out in the field, workers attacked their overseers or owners with axes and clubs, beating them to death before taking to their heels and fleeing the scene.

None of these tactics succeeded in stopping slavery in its tracks. However, it was no small thing to negotiate to be sold with family members rather than apart from them, to be sold to humane masters rather than to the most brutal, and to carve out space for family, friendship, and faith. In these ways, African Americans refused to accept their allotted role as labor machines. This confounded their owners' dreams of complete and total mastery and gave Northern abolitionists the courage to continue working to help them help themselves.



Lecture 22

ROGER TANEY: NATIONALIZING SLAVERY

Roger Taney was the chief justice of the Supreme Court of the United States during two infamous cases—*Prigg v. Pennsylvania* in 1842 and *Dred Scott v. Sandford* in 1857—that drastically expanded the rights of slaveholders and cleared the way for the spread of slavery into every corner of the Union. In doing so, Chief Justice Taney earned the contempt of Abraham Lincoln's Republican Party.

Taney's Early Days

In his youth, Taney had enjoyed the very opposite reputation, impressing antislavery activists with his progressive, enlightened views. Born in Calvert County, Maryland, in 1777, Taney grew up on his family's tobacco plantation. Turning his back on that life, Taney enrolled in Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and had taken as his mentor the college's antislavery president, Charles Nisbet.

After graduation in 1795, Taney moved to Frederick, Maryland, to set up a law practice. Over the next two decades, Taney manumitted 11 of his slaves, keeping on the two oldest, whom he believed were too frail to look after themselves. Taney also joined Maryland's anti-kidnapping society in this period and set about arguing pro bono cases on behalf of imperiled free blacks. Then, in 1818, Taney and his brother-in-law, Francis Scott Key, involved themselves in the colonizationist movement.

While hardly a radical, Taney's antipathy toward slavery by this time in his life was both obvious and visceral. When he briefly put aside his law practice to serve in Maryland's senate between 1816 and 1821, Taney voted against admitting Missouri to the union as a slave state, and, in a speech to a jury during a trial in 1819, the young lawyer described slaveholding as "a blot on our national character."

This was the Roger Taney who went to Washington in 1831 to pursue a career in the federal government. However, that Roger Taney became the man that antebellum Southern slaveholders would come to regard as their guardian angel.

Slaveholders in Power

Between 1820 and 1850, slaveholders secured an unprecedented hold over the federal government. Ever since ratification, the Constitution's three-fifths clause had been doing its insidious work by bolstering Southern slaveholders' numbers in the House of Representatives. The workings of the Electoral College ensured that that advantage carried over to the presidency and to the Supreme Court, while the settlement of new slave states in the Deep South in the three decades after 1790 ensured that the Senate, too, was soon dominated by slaveholders.

All told, in the 62 years between 1789 and 1850, slaveholders occupied the White House for 50 years, the office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives for 41 years, and the chairmanship of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee for 42 years. Additionally, as the historian Leonard Richards points out, "18 out of 31 Supreme Court justices were slaveholders" during these critical decades. Included in that statistic is Roger Taney, who owned at least two slaves for many years after his arrival in Washington in 1831.

Taney's Transformation

Taney's first job in the federal government was in the executive branch, serving as acting secretary of war in the administration of Andrew Jackson. This young lawyer took to government work quickly, and Jackson subsequently promoted him to attorney general of the United States, the country's top legal officer.

In 1836, President Jackson—a Southern plantation owner himself—appointed Taney as the new chief justice of the Supreme Court. In Taney, Jackson found a loyal ally. Despite the modest antislavery activism that had characterized Taney's career prior to 1820, in the 15 years since that time, Taney had become ever more conservative. As his Maryland law practice had grown during the 1820s, he had taken on wealthier clients, and that had put him in the position of having to defend slave owners and even some slave traders in Maryland's courts, something for which he seemed to have some talent.

These performances had been noticed by members of Andrew Jackson's Democratic Party—a party committed to preserving and expanding slaveholders' rights. Taney's subsequent embrace of Jackson and the Democrats in the election of 1828 was thus strategic, a shrewd professional decision designed to elevate him to the national stage.

Prigg v. Pennsylvania, 1842

In 1842, the Taney court was asked to decide *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*. This was a case about a woman named Margaret Morgan, the daughter of two Maryland slaves who were the legal property of a man named John Ashmore.

In the years before Margaret's birth, Ashmore had allowed her enslaved parents to live as free people, and when Margaret was born, Ashmore had made no claim on her as his slave. In fact, when he died in 1824, Ashmore had not listed Margaret or her parents among his possessions. However, he had not ever bothered to formally emancipate them—and therein lay the problem.

In 1837, Margaret was married and living in Pennsylvania with children of her own. That year, Ashmore's widow claimed Margaret Morgan and her children as her legal property and sent a slave catcher named Edward Prigg to retrieve them. Prigg executed arrest warrants and seized Morgan and her children, hustling them across the Pennsylvania line and back into slavery in Maryland.

Legal officials in Pennsylvania quickly charged Edward Prigg with interstate kidnapping and with violating an 1826 personal liberty law that required slave catchers to file paperwork with state officials any time they intended to move a suspected fugitive out of Pennsylvania. Legal officials in Maryland refused to deliver Prigg for trial in Pennsylvania, and so the case ended up before the Supreme Court in 1842.

At stake was the legal status of Margaret Morgan and her children and whether or not state personal liberty laws like Pennsylvania's trumped the fugitive slave clause in the original 1787 Constitution.

The court's 6–3 verdict siding with Edward Prigg came down on March 1, 1842. In it, the majority of the justices declared Pennsylvania's 1826 personal liberty law unconstitutional and declared that slaveholders could legally seize fugitives anywhere in the United States and compel them to return to their home state with them. Slave catchers like Edward Prigg thus did not require a warrant and could not be thwarted by any state law or state official.

The court's decision, which consigned Margaret Morgan and her children to lives as slaves in Maryland, infuriated Northern abolitionists. It caused some, like William Lloyd Garrison, to wash their hands of the Constitution entirely, declaring it to be an incurably proslavery covenant.

In the wake of the Taney court's verdict in the case involving Prigg, many Northern states reluctantly dismantled their own anti-kidnapping and personal liberty laws to comply with the ruling.


KIDNAPPING AGAIN!!
A MAN WAS STOLEN LAST NIGHT BY THE
Fugitive Slave Bill COMMISSIONER!
HE WILL HAVE HIS
MOCK TRIAL
ON SATURDAY, MAY 27, AT 9 O'CLOCK,
SHALL BOSTON STEAL ANOTHER MAN!

A few, like the state of New York, refused to do so, citing various technical loopholes. Southern congressmen were furious at such defiance. In 1850, they pushed through a new Fugitive Slave Act designed to compel compliance, remove exceptions, and also try to destroy the burgeoning Underground Railroad.

The final text of their 1850 act explicitly empowered slaveholders, slave catchers, and bounty hunters to seize Northern free blacks suspected of being fugitive slaves. It also forced every Northern person to become slave catchers' reluctant accomplices. It denied suspected fugitives a jury trial, habeas corpus, the right to speak in their own defense, and the right to appeal.

The new law also set up federal commissions in Northern cities to arbitrate each suspected fugitive's case. Appointees to these commissions were paid $5 for each captive brought before them whom they determined was legally free but earned $10 if they found these men and women to be fugitive slaves.

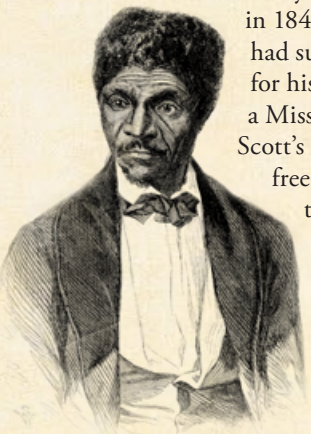
This nakedly proslavery piece of legislation emerged from Congress as part of a much larger set of bills known as the Compromise of 1850. Designed to avoid civil war, this bundle of laws allowed the admission of California to the Union as a free state and allowed the abolition of slave trading within the District of Columbia, two major advances for antislavery activists.

But in return for these important concessions, Southern slave owners secured that all-encompassing law regarding fugitive slaves along with promise that the vast New Mexico and Utah territories captured during the recent war with Mexico would be admitted into the Union as slave states.

Dred Scott v. Sandford, 1857

In 1857, a second slavery case came before the Taney court. This time the question at hand was the status of slavery in the northwestern territories: the vast swathes of unorganized land north of Missouri and west of Illinois that had not yet been recognized as states.

The case turned on the legal status of a man named Dred Scott.



Eleven years earlier, in 1846, Dred Scott had sued his master for his freedom in a Missouri court. Scott's claim to freedom rested on the fact that his master, an army surgeon named John Emerson, had previously taken Scott from Virginia to live with him as he shuttled between various army bases on free soil in Illinois and in the Wisconsin Territory. Living on free soil during those years, Dred Scott argued in court, had dissolved his status as a slave and also dissolved the slave status of his wife, Harriet, and his two daughters, Eliza and Lizzie.

The Scotts appeared to have the law on their side, and after four years of judicial delays, they won their case in the Missouri state courts handily. However, members of Emerson's family, including a man named John Sandford, protested that verdict to the vigorously proslavery members of the Missouri Supreme Court. In 1852, they reversed the lower court's verdict, citing as their rationale their simple unwillingness to do anything that might aid the cause of antislavery.

Despairing, Dred Scott now used a technicality to get the case retried in the federal court system, where it eventually came before Roger Taney and the Supreme Court in Washington. A moderate antislavery lawyer named Montgomery Blair agreed to argue Scott's case pro bono, while John Sandford was represented by Henry Geyer, a former United States senator from Missouri and a close personal friend of Chief Justice Roger Taney.

The case would turn on two constitutional questions: First, did African Americans have the right to sue in federal court? Second, had an earlier ban on slavery in the Wisconsin Territory been constitutional?

The Supreme Court's verdict came down in 1857. In a 7–2 decision, Taney and several other slaveholding Southern Democrats on the court ruled against Dred Scott on both counts. Writing for the majority, Taney ruled that blacks, even if free, were not and could never be citizens of the United States, and they thus had no standing in federal courts.

In the same ruling, he declared that Congress did not have the authority to prohibit slavery in any federal territories. This meant that the 1820 Missouri Compromise, which had done just that in the Wisconsin Territory, was unconstitutional and thus invalid. To justify that position, Taney asserted that the clause in the Constitution that explicitly granted Congress the power to regulate the territories only applied to the handful of territories that had been in existence when the Constitution was written in 1787. Most legal scholars have since pointed out the absurdity of this characterization of the Constitution, which was written as a set of guidelines to govern the growth of a new country in a rapidly changing world.

Conclusion

Taney's verdict returned Dred, Harriet, Eliza, and Lizzie Scott to slavery, though in an act of mercy, some of Scott's sympathetic white friends now quickly set about raising funds to purchase this family and emancipate them. It was the constitutional implications of the court's ruling that proved most controversial.

Had the Civil War not intervened four years later, slavery would likely have spread into all existing federal territories—from Wisconsin to Utah to Oregon to New Mexico—as a result of the Dred Scott decision. For that reason, Democrats, including Illinois senator Stephen A. Douglas and the new president James Buchanan, cheered Taney's ruling.

By contrast, members of the new Republican Party—which had formed three years earlier in 1854 in direct opposition to the spread of slavery into places like Wisconsin—were incensed by Taney's decision, as were black activists who condemned it in print as a "foul and infamous lie."

During the 1858 mid-term elections and the presidential election that followed in 1860, Republicans succeeded in turning Taney into a political punching bag. Abraham Lincoln, who was inspired to run for Illinois Senate in 1858 by the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* decision and who ran for president on the Republican ticket in 1860, accused Taney of conspiring to nationalize slavery.

Lincoln's landslide election victory in 1860 sparked South Carolina's secession from the Union and then five long, bloody years of Civil War in which tens of thousands of slaves did rise up and take arms against their Southern masters.

Additionally, the secession of 11 Southern states also served to provide congressional Republicans with a temporary majority large enough to pass a series of laws that together undid the work of the Taney court. On June 19, 1862, President Lincoln signed legislation ending slavery in all federal territories, ignoring Taney's ruling in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* completely. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 extended that ban to the states in rebellion, while the Fourteenth Amendment, finally adopted during Reconstruction in 1868, conferred the full rights of citizenship to all men and women born in this country. This was a final rebuke to Roger Taney, now deceased.

Lecture 23

FREDERICK DOUGLASS AND AGGRESSIVE ABOLITION

The 1836 publication of Charles Ball's affecting and wide-ranging autobiography marked the climax of organized moral suasion. After the financial crash of 1837 wiped out much of most Garrisonian abolition societies' assets, their operations came to a temporary halt. The pause paralyzed the Garrisonian movement, giving rise to second-guessing within the leadership as to whether their vast investment in humanitarian realism was paying off.

By some measures, the Garrisonian campaign had been an unprecedented success. More than 1,000 local antislavery associations were now up and running, including several dozen devoted to female activists. Newspapers such as the *Liberator* and the *Emancipator* were selling well in New England and New York, as were ex-slave narratives like Charles Ball's. However, for all their shrill urgency and strategic savvy, Garrisonian abolitionists still remained marginalized.

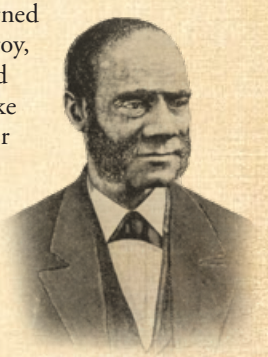
The Schism of 1840

In 1840, bitter divisions within the American Anti-Slavery Society led William Lloyd Garrison's national antislavery society to split in two. Most of its leaders walked away and instead set up a new political party eventually known as the Liberty Party to try to fight slavery by winning seats in Congress and, perhaps one day, in the White House. Garrison, along with a minority of his followers, soldiered on, refusing to have anything to do with Congress or to put their trust in a political system that they had long regarded as constitutionally proslavery and thus fundamentally corrupt.

Meanwhile, a new group of antislavery activists were taking the stage who would reshape the way American readers understood slavery and slave resistance. The schism of 1840 had coincided with the arrival in the North of several talented and vocal fugitives, such as Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, and William Wells Brown. Another factor was the political maturity of free-born black activists like Joshua Bowen Smith and Martin Delany. These men were among the activists most dissatisfied by the slow pace of progress achieved by nonviolent moral suasion.

These iconoclasts struck out in their own direction, turning their backs on the continuing fight for the hearts and minds of white, Northern readers. Instead, this new generation of free black leaders took their inspiration from recent slave revolts like the one on the *Creole* in 1841.

Beginning in the early 1840s, these black activists set about trying to reach out to Southern slaves to urge them to assert their manhood and free themselves from bondage. In doing so, the activists broke with the national antislavery movement's commitment to pacifism and instead began openly encouraging slaves to seize their freedom or die in the attempt.



For example, Henry Highland Garnet, a fugitive turned preacher settled in Troy, New York, challenged Southern slaves to take responsibility for their own emancipation and fight for their freedom, "even to death." Flight, insurrection, and suicide were, to Garnet, equal potent testimonies to slaves' capacity to sacrifice everything in the pursuit of freedom.

Douglass, Black Activists, and Suicide After 1840

Frederick Douglass had been born into slavery in Maryland in 1818. He spent 20 years in chains before escaping to New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 1838 and later becoming a committed and outspoken antislavery activist.

When Douglass's first autobiography appeared in 1845, readers found that it was full of masculine heroics that placed the slave's challenge to the master's economic and paternalistic authority at the heart of an egocentric narrative. Each of Douglass's three autobiographies are full of scenes in which he and other male slaves put their lives on the line to protest their subjection and strike out on their own.

Douglass loaded his famous account of his fight with an overseer named Covey with bravado, and he also signaled his obvious approval when a fellow rebel slave committed an indirect form of suicide rather than be recaptured. In the minds of Douglass, Garnet, and a growing number of other radical black abolitionists, slave suicide had acquired a heroic dimension. Suicide was not a surrender to slavery's cruelties but a triumphant rejection of them—a devastating assertion of self-mastery.

Over time, more and more other black leaders began to speak of suicide as a robust and existential defense against the tyranny of slavery.

For instance, at an emergency meeting in a Boston church two weeks after passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Joshua Bowen Smith, a free-born black activist, told the anxious ex-slaves gathered there that if he was ever in their situation and a slave catcher came calling for him, he would not let himself be taken alive. After quoting Patrick Henry, Bowen Smith advised every black man present to arm himself with a revolver and prepare to defend his liberty by dying for it. Three weeks later, the men gathered at a meeting in Philadelphia made an almost identical promise to themselves.

Many of these men seemed to have kept their promises. On December 5, two months after Bowen Smith's address to Boston's fugitives, two slave catchers arrived in that city and knocked on the door of Lewis Hayden, demanding to know if he was sheltering William Craft. Hayden and Craft were runaway slaves, and both had barricaded themselves inside hoping that this day would never come.

Hayden appeared at the threshold carrying a lighted torch and yelled to the slave catchers in the street that he had rigged the house with gunpowder and would blow everyone up rather than surrender. The slave catchers slunk away, vowing to return.

Nine months later, another black man handed down a similarly self-destructive threat when several federal marshals who laid siege to a group of runaway slaves holed up at a farmhouse in Christiana, just west of Philadelphia. When the marshals threatened to burn down the building to flush out their prey, William Parker, the self-appointed spokesman of the fugitives huddled inside, yelled back: "You can burn us, but you can't take us; before I give up, you will see my ashes scattered on the earth." While the arrival of an armed posse of local free blacks and their ensuing firefight with the marshals made Parker's promise moot, the sequence of events at Christiana in September 1851 demonstrates that reactions to the Fugitive Slave Act served to invest black suicide with a defiant, revolutionary aura it had never really had before.

Garrison, White Activists, and Suicide After 1840

There were, at first, very few antebellum white activists willing to embrace the idea that the suicides of enslaved people could echo the patriotic struggles of the nation's founders. Only slowly, as proslavery interests in Congress achieved a string of legislative victories in the 1840s and 1850s, did one white abolitionist after another begin to entertain that possibility.

Ironically, the most famous pacifist in America, William Lloyd Garrison, was one of the first. Dismayed by the Supreme Court's proslavery verdict in *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* in 1842, Garrison briefly experimented with endorsing violent resistance to slavery for a few months after the course decision came down.

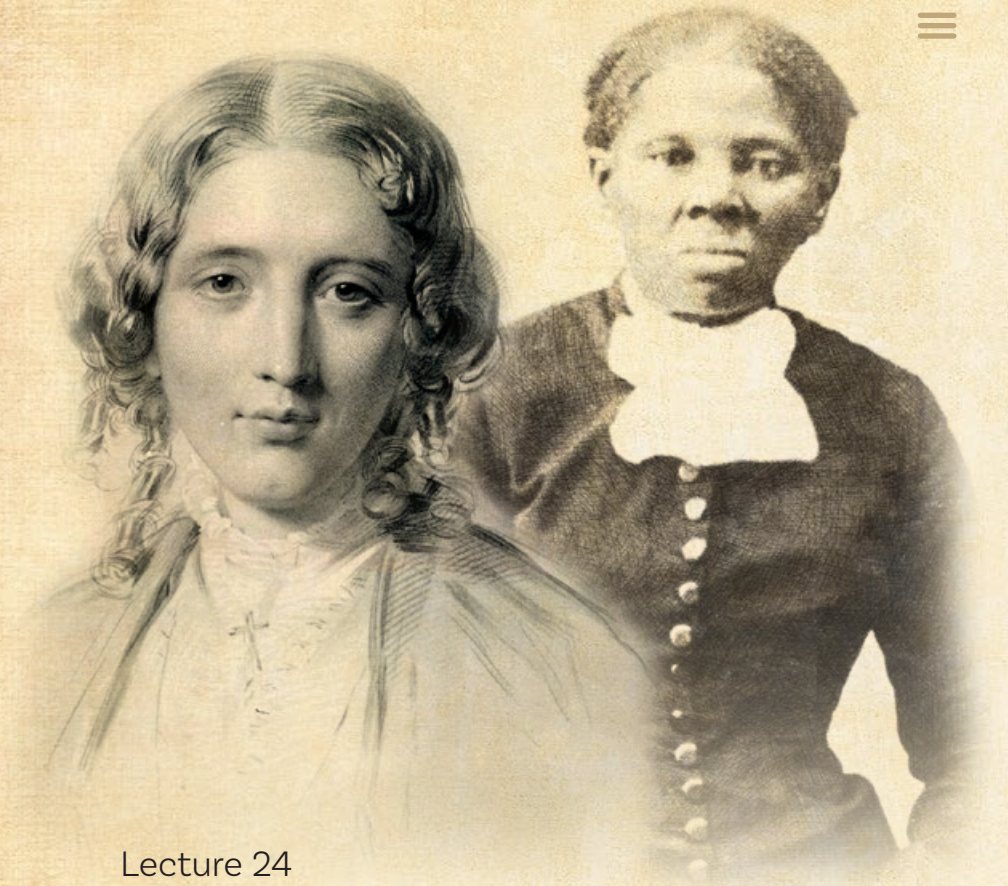
During that brief period, Garrison opened the pages of *The Liberator* to pieces that valorized violent martyrdom by slaves. For example, in November 1843, *The Liberator* featured a news story called "Liberty or Death" that described the suicide of a black mechanic from Georgia who had been promised manumission on the death of his owner only to have been cheated and sold instead.

The Liberator and its sister paper, the *Emancipator*, kept up a steady stream of similar pieces for the rest of the decade.

By the time Garrison ended *The Liberator*'s flirtation with righteous violence in 1851, plenty of other white activists had begun to see slave suicide from Frederick Douglass's perspective. Proslavery interests in Congress saw enormous victories: The Compromise of 1850 paved the way for the expansion of slavery into the Utah and New Mexico territories. The same year saw the brazen passage of the Fugitive Slave Act. The ratification of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 repealed a 34-year-old ban on slavery in places like Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana.

In the face of that onslaught, even the most committed white pacifists had begun to embrace violent slave resistance as a necessary last resort. Several prominent members of the recently disbanded Liberty Party now came around to Douglass and Garnet's way of thinking about the necessity for slave violence.

Turning Patrick Henry's revolutionary rhetoric—exemplified by the slogan "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death"—into a plan of action, several white activists now began smuggling pistols, knives, and pocket compasses into Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia in hopes of encouraging enslaved people to rise up in armed revolt, escape to safety in the North, or summon the courage to die in the attempt. By the mid-1850s, many Northern abolitionists, both black and white, had reached the reluctant yet radical realization that the only way to stop the spread of slavery was by encouraging the nation's 4 million slaves to rise up and bathe the Southern states in blood.



Lecture 24

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE AND HARRIET TUBMAN

The first part of this lecture examines the blockbuster novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to better understand the ways in which its author, Harriet Beecher Stowe, advanced the fight against slavery. The second part turns to another woman named Harriet—Harriet Tubman—to explore the more immediate and equally decisive steps taken by enslaved people and their black and white allies to build an antislavery escape network that stretched from the bowels of the slave South all the way into British Canada.

The Education of Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Beecher Stowe was born in New England in 1811 and visited the slave states briefly, only once. She grew up in a house full of debating siblings, encouraged by their famous preacher father, Lyman Beecher, to believe in the transforming power of language and the art of gentle persuasion. After a rigorous formal education, Harriet became a teacher in her sister's new female academy, a profession in which she quickly evidenced a remarkable talent for moral instruction.

In 1832, Lyman Beecher uprooted his family from Connecticut and resettled them in Cincinnati, Ohio, where the famous Lane Theological Seminary had offered him its top job. After her marriage to Calvin Stowe, one of this seminary's professors, Harriet left teaching and began to pursue writing.

Cincinnati sat on the northern side of the Kentucky-Ohio border, the dividing line between slavery and freedom. For economic reasons, most of its residents were proslavery, and its few outspoken abolitionists suffered regular threats and savage beatings. At first, Stowe wanted nothing to do with them and disparaged local Garrisonians. The unceasing attacks on them soon changed her mind, and she eventually sent a letter to a local paper decrying their persecution as an un-American assault on their right to freedom of speech.

Two other developments pitched her further toward the antislavery movement during her years in Cincinnati. The first was her growing contact with African Americans. During the 1840s, she took to reading memoirs by survivors of slavery such as Frederick Douglass, Henry Bibb, and Josiah Henson and found herself profoundly moved by their torment-laden accounts of life under the lash.

The second catalyst was the Fugitive Slave Act, pushed through by proslavery lawmakers in Washington in 1850. Its sweeping federal powers and perverse incentives made the Beecher family furious.

Background on *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Uncle Tom's Cabin is Stowe's response to the moral dilemmas produced by the Fugitive Slave Act. She wrote it in 1851, first as a series of standalone chapters in a moderate antislavery magazine. Stowe published the full novel a year later in 1852. Its sweeping plot examines the repercussions of two slave sales on a Kentucky plantation.

The first is of Eliza's son Harry. When she learns that her son is to be snatched from her, Eliza takes to her heels, carrying Harry in her arms and heading first for Ohio and then for Canada to reunite with her husband, George, a slave on another plantation who had already fled.

The second slave sale is of Tom, a big, gentlehearted man who is separated from his wife and children and sold to the South to clear a debt. Tom ends up in the custody of Augustine St. Clare, a relatively benign slaveholder whose six-year-old daughter, Evangeline, takes a shine to Tom and teaches him to read the Bible. Eva eventually passes away from tuberculosis.

When Augustine St. Clare is killed in a barroom brawl, Tom is sold again, this time to Simon Legree, a cruel Vermont-born slave master who eventually beats Tom to death on his Louisiana plantation. Even though early editions were quite expensive, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* found readers right away, selling 10,000 copies in its first week and 300,000 by the end of 1852.

Uncle Tom's Cabin doesn't read like an abolitionist polemic. Instead, it imitates and blends several popular literary genres to create a piece of mass-market fiction that, by antebellum standards, was immensely engaging and enjoyable. People read it because they related to its characters and wanted to find out what happened to them. It appealed to people who liked adventure stories, sentimental fiction, and religious reading.

Beneath all of this, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* does its real work. The novel's message is simple and unmistakable: Slavery is evil, a sin against God that debases everyone whom it touches, black or white. The only white character in this novel left untainted by slavery's stain is Eva, who dies before slaveholding can ruin her. Stowe fills Eva's heart with care for the oppressed and turns her into poor Tom's best, truest friend. Through Eva, Stowe preaches a gospel of love that stands in stark contrast to antebellum proslavery Christianity.

As a piece of mass-market fiction, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was entirely singular in recognizing the humanity and spirituality of black people. Many modern readers have scorned Stowe's portrayals of African American characters as patronizing and ill-informed. Certainly, the stereotyping of black characters as either obedient, cunning, or childlike seems to modern readers downright racist. In 1852, though, Stowe stood alone in her willingness to place black characters at the center of her plot and to imagine their thoughts and feelings in subtle and sophisticated ways.

Stowe was not, however, a militant radical in the vein of Douglass or John Brown. She indulges in ethnic nationalism and a fantasy about post-emancipation colonization in which freed blacks voluntarily emigrate overseas.

Additionally, the novel does not seriously question white political and social dominance. Indeed, Stowe longs for an end to slavery not to benefit the slaves themselves but in great part to advance the cause of white salvation.

Stowe, ever the evangelical, had hoped to persuade millions of slaveholding readers to "feel right," repent, and divest. But in the South, the novel did the opposite, spurring a surge of reactionary proslavery feeling and giving rise to a raft of rebuttals.

Stowe's biographer, David S. Reynolds, argues that the novel seemed to spur resistance to the Fugitive Slave Act in Northern cities like Boston. As evidence, he points to the fact that when a runaway named Anthony Burns was seized in that city by slave catchers in 1854, nearly 50,000 Bostonians, white and black, turned out in protest.

Most other scholars avoid such examples altogether and simply assert that the novel intensified public sentiment against slavery across the North and somehow sped the rise of Lincoln and the Republican Party. However, the book's sales eventually slumped, and the book crashed out of print. It remained there until 1862.

Harriet Tubman

One of the many aspects of the slave experience so skillfully dramatized by Harriet Beecher Stowe was the Underground Railroad. This was a very loose and disorganized network of black and white Americans willing to lend a hand to fugitives as they tried to escape slavery and cross into freedom in the Northern states or British Canada.

The railroad's most famous conductor was Harriet Tubman. Her exploits have become the stuff of legend, endlessly retold in children's books and elsewhere.

Harriet Tubman was not her birth name. She was born Araminta Ross on a plantation on Maryland's Eastern Shore around 1822, and she was the fifth of nine children.

In 1844, she married a free black man named John Tubman, changing her first name to Harriet in honor of her mother at the same time. Five years later, at about the age of 27, she ran away. She had long lived in fear of being sold and had begun to pray for her owner's death. She had also begun to have vivid dreams in which she was running toward a beautiful field of flowers in which white ladies held out their arms to welcome her.

Harriet struck out for the North in the middle of the night in September 1849; her husband, afraid of the consequences, chose to stay behind. She eventually reached Philadelphia.

In that city, she found work as a cook and domestic servant and began saving money to fund a journey back to Maryland to persuade her remaining family there to return with her. Over the next 10 years, she made 11 such journeys into the slave states, directly assisting approximately 70 enslaved people to claim freedom in Pennsylvania, New York, or Ontario, Canada. She gave advice and instruction to 50 more.*

Avoiding Danger

As a fugitive slave herself, the risk to Tubman's security on each journey southward was enormous. As her missions drew attention, slaveholders posted bounties of up to $12,000 for her arrest and capture. To evade them, Tubman worked doggedly to minimize risk. She timed missions to coincide with the Christmas holiday, when slaves were usually granted greater freedom of movement and when winter nights were longer.

For the same reason, she tried to time escapes to leave on Saturday mornings so that runaway slave ads did not appear until Tuesday's paper. She rarely went onto the plantations themselves, preferring to use coded messages to arrange rendezvous in isolated churchyards 8–10 miles away. Traveling by night, Tubman's group would follow the North Star, turning south when necessary to avoid suspicion.

* Tubman came to regard her work as a holy crusade. Those she helped called her Moses.

Tubman did not act alone. In the North, she built networks of trusted allies that included Frederick Douglass, whose Rochester, New York, home she frequently used as a safehouse on the way to the Canadian border. She exploited this same network for fundraising purposes, giving mesmerizing speeches at antislavery meetings throughout the 1850s.

Unlike Harriet Beecher Stowe, then, Tubman was a true antislavery radical, comfortable with the use of violence and committed to a millennialist vision of racial equality after slavery. She and the white activist John Brown had formed a close friendship by the end of the decade, and she put herself forward as a scout and spy during the Civil War.

Conclusion

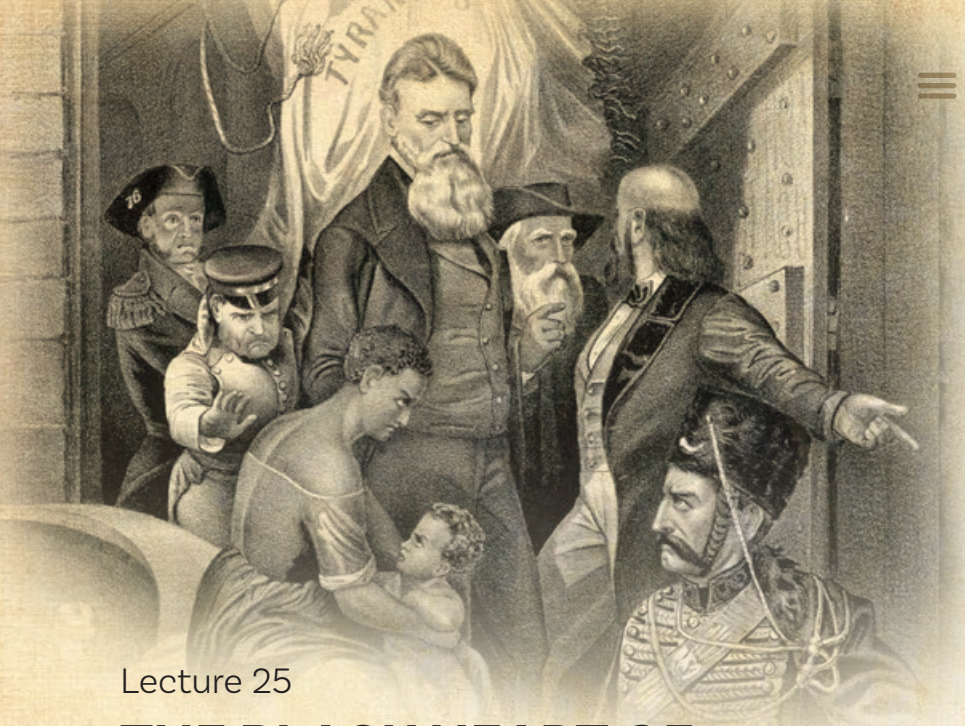
The Underground Railroad was vast and diffuse, composed of hundreds if not thousands of operatives working in loose cooperation. And it had been up and running for decades, long before Tubman stepped onto the stage in the early 1850s. Ever since Northern states had begun to abolish slavery within their borders in the years after the American Revolution, white and black residents in places like Philadelphia in the northeast and Cincinnati in the northwest had rendered aid to fugitives from the South.

While most activists, black and white, offered assistance to fugitives who had already arrived in the free states, the movement depended, too, on the black seamen and white ship captains who could be trusted or bribed to conceal stowaways they brought out of the South. Additionally, it depended on white Yankees who would venture South disguised as itinerant peddlers, preachers, or lecturers to press money, maps, and weapons into the hands of would-be fugitives. It also depended on the few Northern activists who apparently clubbed together to buy farms in several slave states that they then operated as clandestine safe houses. Free blacks living year-round in the slave states also put their lives on the line, using their literacy skills to write out fake passes and free papers, as did ex-slaves who returned to the South to aid fugitives.

While Tubman was lucky in that regard, another black activist, the ex-slave Louis Talbert, was recaptured in Kentucky as he searched for his enslaved sister. He was bound, re-enslaved, and put on public display as a deterrent to others like him before being sold to a master in the Deep South.

Slaveholders tried to convince themselves that were it not for the agents and conductors of the Underground Railroad, their slaves would be docile and content to remain as they were. The truth was quite different. In fact, many fugitives knew nothing of the Underground Railroad before they set out. Others had heard the phrase but assumed that it referred to a group of marauding slave traders best avoided. In fact, the Underground Railroad existed to support decisions taken by the slaves themselves.

The thousands of fugitives who struck out for freedom in the years before and after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 were not helpless victims waiting to be saved or rescued. Rather, they were emancipators of themselves who seized on valuable aid and support provided by black and white allies alike.



Lecture 25

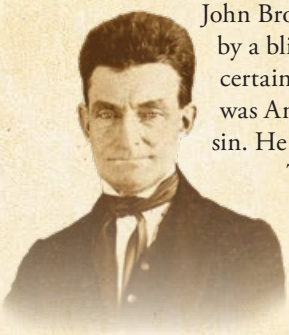
THE BLACK HEART OF JOHN BROWN

"Men, get on your arms; we will proceed to the Ferry," ordered John Brown on the night of October 16, 1859. The Ferry was Harpers Ferry in Virginia, a tiny settlement in the Blue Ridge mountains, 60 miles from Washington DC. Harpers Ferry was home to the federal arsenal: the single largest arsenal of rifles, sidearms, and gunpowder anywhere in the United States.

Over the next eight hours, Brown and his small phalanx of 16 white men and five black men captured the arsenal. The plan, in short, was to stir the largest slave revolt in the history of the New World—a revolt that could destroy American slavery before American slavery destroyed the nation. It went wrong almost immediately.

The failure of this raid raises questions: Why is John Brown's failed raid on Harpers Ferry so famous? Who was he? Why does he matter? What did John Brown achieve in death that he so palpably failed to achieve in life?

Background on Brown



John Brown was guided by a blinding moral certainty that slavery was America's original sin. He was born in Torrington, Connecticut, in 1800, but grew up out west in the Ohio territory. His mother died when he was eight, a scar that he carried with him for life. His father, a rancher, channeled his own grief into his strict Calvinist faith, and he raised young John in that same austere religious tradition.

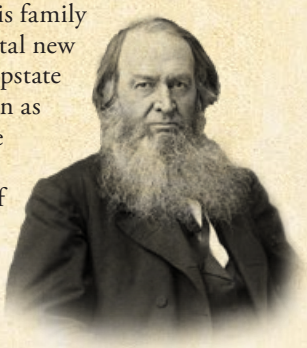
As a boy, Brown was witness to the horrors of slavery. After driving some cattle to an army base one day in 1812, John Brown saw a landlord beat a slave boy savagely with an iron shovel for apparently no reason. The boy was Brown's age, and the incident instilled in him a hatred of slavery that would grow for the rest of his life.

Turning to his faith for guidance, Brown tried to train to be a minister, enrolling in divinity school at age 16. He didn't graduate, and by 17, he was setting up his own business as a tanner in Ohio.

He married a woman named Dianthe Lusk when he was 20. They had seven children before her death 12 years later. Brown mourned her for a year, then married another woman, named Mary Day, with whom he had 13 more children in quick succession. Of his 20 offspring, 11 would survive beyond infancy.

John Brown was a stern Old Testament–style father, but he was not much of a provider for his own family. Eventually, Brown embraced millennialism, the prophetic belief that a Second Coming was at hand and that Christ's dominion on earth would begin just as soon as the great sins of market capitalism could be washed away. Opposition to slavery was a bedrock belief of most early 19th-century millennialists, and Brown was no exception. When he learned that an Illinois antislavery printer named Elijah Lovejoy had been murdered by a proslavery mob in 1837, Brown apparently had an epiphany. Sitting at the back of an antislavery meeting called to discuss Lovejoy's death, Brown now stood, raised his right hand, and announced to those assembled that "Here, before God, in the presence of these witnesses, from this time, I consecrate my life to the destruction of slavery."

Over the next decade, Brown sought to make contact and friendship with as many African Americans as he could, slave or free. Frederick Douglass, describing Brown in 1847, noted that "though a white gentleman, [John Brown] is in sympathy a black man, and as deeply interested in our cause, as though his own soul had been pierced with the iron of slavery." Indeed, when Brown published his first anonymous antislavery essay the following year, he wrote with such righteousness and outrage that readers assumed he must be black himself.



A few months later, in 1849, John Brown moved his family to an experimental new community in upstate New York known as Timbuctoo. The settlement was the brainchild of Gerrit Smith, a hugely wealthy abolitionist who had recently donated 120,000 acres of land there to free black families willing to come, settle, and farm.

John Brown from 1854–1858

The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 gave John Brown's growing radicalism a new and explicitly political focus. The act was the latest salvo in the ongoing battle to establish the legality of slavery in federal territories, this time in Kansas and Nebraska, the territories to the immediate north and northwest of Missouri. The 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act formally and finally repealed an earlier ban on slavery in those two territories and decreed that their admission into the Union as slave states or as free states would be determined based on the outcome of a vote to be taken by the free white people who actually resided there.

The act's most immediate effect, then, was to turn Kansas and Nebraska into battlegrounds in the national fight over slavery, as slaveholders and so-called Free Soilers alike rushed to establish residency in each territory in hopes of influencing the result of the votes. This was not a peaceful migration. On the contrary, mobs from both sides launched bloody guerilla attacks on each other in hopes of discouraging further settlement. The worst fighting took place in eastern Kansas, or "Bleeding Kansas," as the papers called it.

The first members of the Brown family to arrive there were three of John's sons: Jason, Frederick, and John Jr. They found themselves outgunned by proslavery forces and pleaded to their father and other Free Soilers for reinforcements. By the time Brown himself arrived in Kansas in 1856, one antislavery leader had been hacked to death by border ruffians, and soon after his arrival, proslavery emigrants burned an antislavery headquarters there to the ground.

John Brown determined to trade an eye for an eye and launched a retaliatory strike. Brown led four of his sons and another man to Pottawatomie Creek in the dead of night on May 24, 1856. Together they dragged five proslavery men from their houses and hacked them to death with broadswords in front of their wives. The event became known as the Pottawatomie Massacre.

He left Kansas soon after but returned there in December 1858 to launch a raid into Missouri to liberate a slave who had written to him for help. To rescue the man, Brown and a crew of about 18 men attacked three farmhouses, killing one slave owner and liberating 11 enslaved people at gunpoint. The governor of Missouri later put a price on Brown's head, but by then, he was long gone.

Virginia: 1859

At some point in 1857 or 1858, Brown began to hatch the plan for which he is remembered today: the raid on Harpers Ferry in Virginia. For manpower, he turned to the small band of white friends he had fought alongside in Kansas and the black neighbors among whom he had lived in Timbuctoo.

For funds, supplies, and weapons, he turned to a cadre of rich radical abolitionists from New England and New York who came to be known as the Secret Six. He also sought out the blessings of leading free black abolitionists such as Harriet Tubman, who helped him plan the assault itself; Lewis Hayden, who sent him $600 and a box of guns; and Frederick Douglass, who refused to join the war party but who helped him draft a provisional constitution with which Brown might govern any areas he liberated from slavery during or after the raid.

On October 16, Brown gave the order to move on Harpers Ferry. By midnight, they had taken the armory and made hostages of its guards. But now Brown paused. He hadn't thought through the next vital steps. He had assumed that news of the raid would spread like wildfire among enslaved people on surrounding plantations, but he had no practical mechanism to alert them. Brown waited for black reinforcements that never came. If enslaved people did hear about the raid that night, as many historians suspect, they stayed home.

In the meantime, Brown's men took more prisoners, 40 in all. When a train bound for Baltimore came through the town at 1:25 am, Brown's men shot its baggage handler, a free black man named Heyward Shepherd, as he tried to flee. Passengers onboard heard the gunfire and panicked, forcing Brown to quickly decide whether to halt the train and take everyone on it hostage or send it packing.

Fatefully, he chose to send the train on its way, and at the next stop, the train's conductor wired his manager in Baltimore to sound the alarm. "They say they have come to free the slaves and intend to do it at all hazards," the telegram read. "You had better notify the Secretary of War at once."

All-points bulletins now directed all soldiers to Harpers Ferry immediately. By dawn, Brown, his comrades, and their hostages were holed up in the armory, completely surrounded. The next day, the secretary of war himself gave the order to Robert E. Lee's company of 500 Virginia marines to storm the building. In the firefight, 10 of Brown's men fell, including two of his sons, Oliver and Watson.

There were just 12 survivors. Five escaped, including one of Brown's sons, Owen. Robert E. Lee captured the rest, including Brown himself, and marched them off to the jail in Charles Town, just five miles west.

There, they were to be tried for murder, insurrection, and treason. The trial, less than two weeks later, would last just three days. On November 2, a jury of white Virginians took just 45 minutes to deliberate, returning guilty verdicts across the board. A judge sentenced John Brown to be hanged exactly a month later, on December 2, 1859.

The End of Brown's Life

For the four weeks before his scheduled execution, Brown gave interviews to dozens of visitors to his cell and wrote more than 100 letters to newspapers, friends, and family. His goal, as he wrote to his wife, Mary, was "to make the utmost possible out of my defeat." He wanted to seize a victory for the cause of abolition from the debacle of his failed raid. Brown defended his choices and actions at length, filling the press with his side of the story.

When December 2 came, Brown was escorted to a scaffold in a field outside Charles Town by 3,000 state troops, each on high alert in case of jail break, escape, or rescue. After his death, investigators found in Brown's hideout near Harpers Ferry a cache of maps of counties and states across the South. On them were x's marking locations to which authorities guessed Brown had sent accomplices to launch copycat attacks.

News of this discovery sent the South into a frenzy of fear and paranoia, and a wave of vigilante violence against Northern transplants followed quickly.

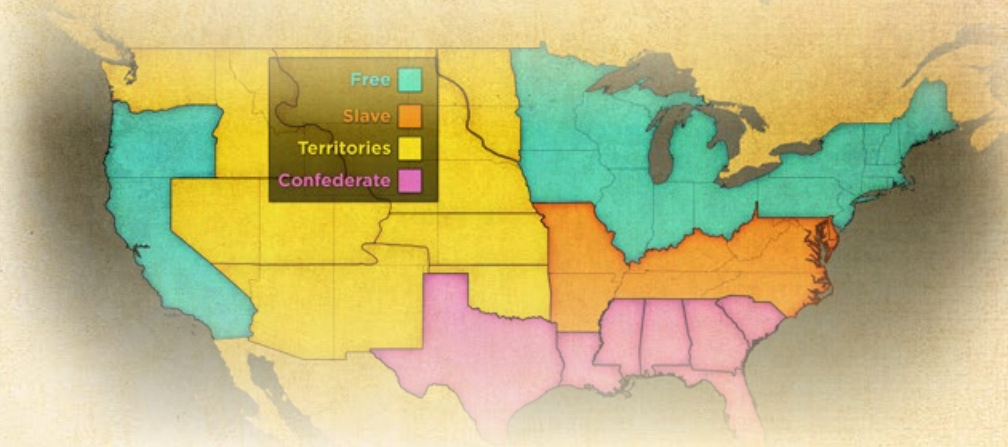
The longer this panic continued, the louder many Southerners called for secession from the union. The next April, the Democratic Party—long the face of slaveholding Southerners in Congress—met for its annual convention. At the meeting, those in favor of preserving the Union, like Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois, were shouted down by Democratic secessionists who soon abandoned the convention and set up their own political party immediately afterward.

Brown's Legacy

In the meantime, John Brown's body, rigid and inert, had been delivered back to his wife in upstate New York. Mary Brown buried it there, close to the Vermont border. Despite its remote site, Brown's grave quickly became a mecca for antislavery pilgrims, especially for African Americans eager to pay their respects.

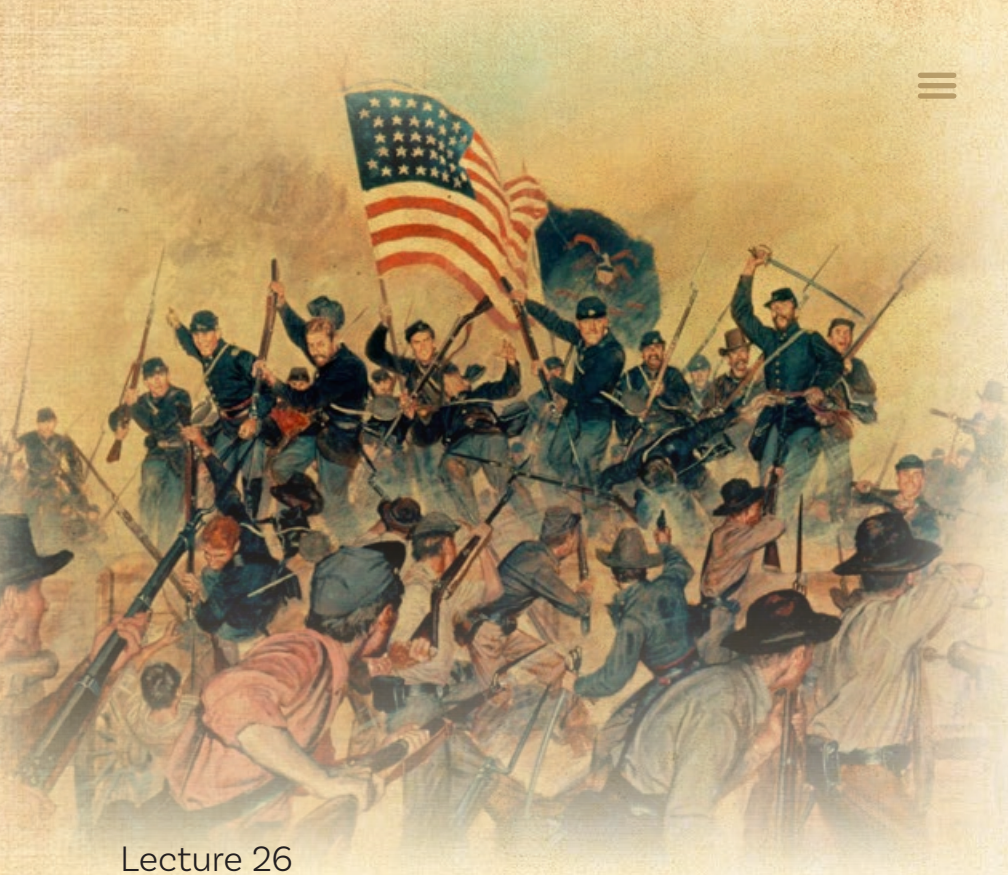
Frederick Douglass, who had kept Brown at arm's length during his life, now told lecture audiences that "I could live for the slave; John Brown could die for him." Most of the leading members of the Republican Party, which had been founded in 1854 in response to the Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, embraced Brown's legacy far more cautiously. With an election to fight in the fall of 1860, they refused to condone Brown's actions publicly, even if they quietly applauded his moral opposition to slavery.

The fallout of Brown's raid also shook up the contest for the Republican presidential nomination. Two committed abolitionists, William H. Seward and Salmon P. Chase, had been the early frontrunners, but their reputation for radicalism now quickly became an electoral liability, vaulting a relatively unknown challenger from Kentucky-by-way-of-Illinois to the front of the pack. This was Abraham Lincoln, who now carved out a position as a mainstream moderate and seized the Republican party's presidential nomination.



In the election, Lincoln carried all the Northern states, the populations and electoral votes of which had swelled mightily since 1845 as waves of immigrants from Europe had arrived there seeking work. The other three candidates fought over the South. While only 40 percent of voters cast ballots for Lincoln that day, it was more than enough.

The day after Lincoln's great victory, South Carolina announced formal plans to secede. By the time Lincoln was inaugurated in March 1861, South Carolina had been joined by Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. In his first inaugural address to the nation, Lincoln reluctantly pledged not to touch slavery in those places where it already existed. These seven seceding states ignored his olive branch.



Lecture 26

THE SLAVES' EXPERIENCE OF THE CIVIL WAR

Abraham Lincoln was elected in 1860 on a platform of stopping the spread of slavery into free territories in the northwest, not attacking slavery where it already existed. The tension between enslaved people's expectations that the end of slavery was now finally at hand and Lincoln's charge to simply preserve the country would play out over the next four years. Lincoln's famous January 1, 1863, Emancipation Proclamation, heralding the destruction of slavery in Confederate territory, would not have happened had enslaved people not already collectively decided to turn the Civil War into the largest slave revolt in world history.

Noninterference

Although Lincoln was far less radical than many other Republicans in Congress and outside of it, to Southerners, he was the devil incarnate. By the time Lincoln was inaugurated in March 1861, seven Deep South states had seceded, and in due time, four more would join with them to form the Confederate States of America. In its founding documents, this new nation denounced the damage caused to the slave system by generations of fugitive slaves who had fled to free soil in the North prior to secession and blamed Northern activists for encouraging them. These newly minted Confederate leaders now formally and explicitly guaranteed in perpetuity the rights of the many slaveholders among them.

In Lincoln's mind, the Civil War was simply a necessary response to Southern secession. He was also painfully aware that if he ever hinted that the Union might one day abolish slavery, the four slave states that had not seceded from the Union—Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri—might reconsider their loyalties.

For this reason, in the spring of 1861, Unionists in Congress proposed an amendment to the United States Constitution that pledged never to interfere with slavery in those places where it already existed. In July, they adopted language promising that the Union war effort "is not waged … for any purpose … of overthrowing or interfering with the rights or established institutions of [Confederate] States."

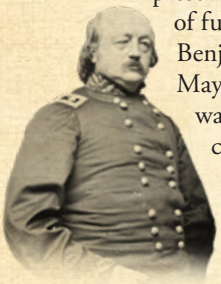
Fugitives, Refugees, Contrabands, 1861–1862

Enslaved people forced the Union Army to rethink this policy of noninterference, and they did so by seizing freedom before Lincoln ever decided to confer it to them. From the very beginning of the crisis, free blacks had been calling the conflict the freedom war. Once it began, whenever Union soldiers traveled within range of a plantation, enslaved people downed tools and rushed toward them to seek protection.

At first, Union military commanders issued orders trying to prevent the entry of these fugitive slaves into their camps, but keeping them out required Union commanders to devote time, money, and scarce manpower.

One by one, Union commanders began turning a blind eye to new arrivals, letting fugitive African Americans enter their camps and letting their army sergeants put them to work as servants, informants, scouts, and guides.

The first Union field commander to embrace the possibilities presented by the arrival of fugitive slaves was Benjamin Butler. In May 1861, Butler, who was stationed at a Union camp in Fort Monroe, Virginia, wrote to superiors to make the case that these black refugees could actually advance the Union's war aims by effectively reducing the economic power of the Confederacy.



Lincoln's secretary of war agreed and within weeks issued general orders that "slaves from states in rebellion … shall not be returned to the rebellious owners but kept and put at work." In August, Congress endorsed the same idea. Congress passed the Confiscation Act, which made it Union policy to grant asylum to black runaways from Confederate masters. Congress had really had no other choice: As General Ambrose Burnside reported from coastal North Carolina in March 1862, the slaves had forced the Union's hand.

Washington DC Fights Slavery

Because Washington DC, the Union capital, sat close to the front lines, it became a magnet for fugitive slaves during the war. To prevent them from falling victim to slave catchers or kidnappers there, Republicans in Congress succeeded in abolishing the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. They also enacted the immediate abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, turning the city's streets into free soil for the first time in its history. As a result, 3,000 people gained their freedom overnight.

However, the DC emancipation act wasn't quite as bold as one might expect. It actually paid DC's slave owners $300 per person to secure the liberty of these 3,000 souls. The law also appropriated $100,000 to fund the deportation and resettlement of any among them who might wish to start new lives in Africa or Haiti.

Under growing pressure from Northern antislavery activists who had formed clubs called emancipation leagues to press the case for black freedom, Congressional Republicans now sent the president a flurry of antislavery bills, each one less conservative than the last. In June of 1862, Congress outlawed slavery in all US territories.

And Congress wasn't finished. In July, it sent the president the text of the Second Confiscation Act, which for the first time made clear that contraband blacks were to be recognized as "forever free of their servitude, and not [ever] again [to be] held as slaves." In other words, Congress emancipated them. The same month, Lincoln also signed the Militia Act, the first of several pieces of Union legislation to try to encourage these emancipated contrabands to serve as volunteer soldiers in the Union Army.

The Emancipation Proclamation

On July 22, 1862, five days after signing the Second Confiscation Act, Lincoln presented his cabinet with a draft of what became known as the Emancipation Proclamation. The timing was suggestive, indicating that Lincoln now believed that victory was within the Union's reach and that the border states were thus no longer at risk of seceding. In this first draft, Lincoln boldly asserted that the war powers clause of the Constitution allowed him to circumvent the Fifth Amendment and strip disloyal rebels of their property in slaves to save the Union.

On September 22, in the wake of a morale-boosting Union victory at the Battle of Antietam, Lincoln made his plan public, issuing a warning to Confederate soldiers that if they did not lay down their arms by the end of the year, he would declare slavery to be abolished in all rebel states. The Confederates rejected Lincoln's ultimatum.

On January 1, 1863, the president kept his word and signed the Emancipation Proclamation into law. Its final text committed the Union army to "recognize and maintain" the freedom of all survivors of Confederate slavery while again encouraging emancipated slaves to enroll as volunteers in Lincoln's army.

While it had incredibly important long-term consequences, the Emancipation Proclamation freed very few American slaves right away. For instance, the Emancipation Proclamation did not apply to any of the 400,000 slaves living in Union territory in the border states of Maryland, Delaware, Missouri, and Kentucky. Nor did it apply to areas of the Confederacy already under Union control, like Tennessee or New Orleans.

Still, uncompensated emancipation had finally become a Union war aim. From that point on, all new territory taken by the Union Army would become free soil. Every Union victory would now be a victory for emancipation. And because it was framed as a war measure, the proclamation made no mention of postwar colonization.

Dismantling Slavery from Within

The destruction of slavery within the Confederate states would now seem to depend on the advances made by the Union Army. At Vicksburg in Mississippi on July 4, 1863, a Union victory succeeded in dividing the Confederacy in two and turned over control of the entire Mississippi River to the Union Navy. More Union advancements followed. Eventually, Union troops occupied Charleston. Then they captured Richmond, the Confederate capital. On April 9, 1865, General Lee surrendered to General Grant on the steps of a courthouse in a sleepy Virginia town called Appomattox.

Slavery in the Confederate states had been disintegrating ever since the war began, the subject of an onslaught of attacks mounted by the enslaved themselves. Over four long years, 400,000 slaves would abandon their Confederate masters and strike out for Union camps. For every black man or woman who made it to Union lines during the war, seven more remained behind, too far from sanctuary to make a run for it. However, they were not passive bystanders in this unfolding drama. On the contrary, they prayed for freedom nightly and did all they could every day to turn the Civil War into a freedom war.

They helped others escape to Union lines. They offered their services as spies to Union agents. Most importantly, perhaps, enslaved people turned on their Confederate masters. They sabotaged cotton production—the key to the Confederacy's economic viability.

Daily mutinies undermined the Confederate war effort, forcing the Southern war machine to exempt thousands of white men from military service to set them to work trying to suppress domestic insurrections. In effect, enslaved people's resistance forced the Confederates to fight on two battle fronts simultaneously.

In a great many parts of the Confederacy, then, black folk destroyed slavery before the Union Army could. Here was a slave insurrection unlike anything seen on the mainland ever before. It was the first successful revolt to destroy race slavery since the fires of Saint-Domingue burned in the 1790s.

Lecture 27

US COLORED TROOPS: THOSE WHO SERVED

Night was falling when a 25-year-old colonel called to attention the several hundred Union soldiers under his command. It was July 18, 1863, and the members of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment were making final preparations for an evening strike against Fort Wagner, a Confederate stronghold on Morris Island, a peninsula just south of Charleston, South Carolina. The colonel was Robert Gould Shaw, a young, white, and relatively inexperienced commanding officer whose parents were prominent and wealthy abolitionists back in Boston. The troops before him were all freeborn black men, among them two sons of Frederick Douglass.

Fort Wagner was the only thing standing between the Union Army and a direct assault on Charleston, one of the largest cities in the Confederacy. At 7:45 pm, Shaw ordered the 54th to advance. Confederates opened fire from the fort, and the landmines did their deadly work. Many black soldiers fell dead or dying, and Shaw died during the advance after being shot in the heart.

Shaw's surviving soldiers pressed ahead, somehow breaching the fort's defenses and making it inside. There they fought the Confederates hand to hand, only to be quickly beaten back by the far larger and more heavily armed Confederate force. Retreating back to the sand hills, the 54th ceded the field to four white Union regiments, who repeated the assault but with no more success. After three hours of combat, Union commanders cut their losses. The 54th had been beaten and almost broken, but when word of the bravery of Shaw and his men reached the Northern news media, it helped to dispel lingering doubts about black soldiers' ability to withstand the pressures of the modern battlefield.

Fort Wagner's Impact

Sergeant William Carney, a former slave turned black soldier, was wounded four times while keeping aloft the 54th's regimental flag during the assault on Fort Wagner. He later received the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for valor. The 54th had formed just four months earlier in March 1863 after Secretary of War Edwin Stanton had authorized the governors of three New England states, including Massachusetts, to set up the very first black regiments in the Union Army.

Recruiters had since scoured the country for suitable recruits, and when the 54th first mustered that March, there were more than 500 men in the ranks from more than 28 states, Washington DC, and Canada. Stanton refused to allow these new black units to be commanded by commissioned black officers, so he instead appointed a slate of white officers.

By May of 1863, recruitment of black men into the ranks of the Union Army was in full swing. Stanton now authorized every state to raise their own black regiments modeled on the 54th and also set up the Bureau of Colored Troops as a means to try to systematize and expand the recruitment of slaves from the Union-occupied South into the army. In April 1865, when this grinding war came to its final, bitter conclusion, black troops comprised roughly 10 percent of the entire Union army, having formed themselves into 133 infantry regiments, 7 cavalry regiments, and 22 batteries of artillery.

In all, about 179,000 black men took up arms against the Confederacy. Of these, almost 20 percent came from the free Northern states, and almost 25 percent came from the slaveholding border states within the Union, such as Missouri and Maryland. The rest were recruited in Confederate territory.*

* In some parts of the North, a higher proportion of men from the black community served in the Union Army than the proportion of men drawn from the white community.

The Freedom War

Beginning in the fall of 1862, Union commanders like General Benjamin Butler let it be known that runaway slaves would be welcomed behind their lines. These local announcements slowly transformed the North's strategic objectives, turning a war to preserve the Union into a war for the liberation of America's slaves. For the rest of this conflict, black enlistment and slave emancipation would advance together, becoming increasingly inseparable.

Once in Union uniform, Southern ex-slaves searched for opportunities to prove their worth to Abraham Lincoln's army, and many seemed to itch to settle scores with their former Confederate masters. In March 1864, for example, several teams of black soldiers on furlough raided plantations near St. Louis, Missouri, in a coordinated effort to try to liberate their families.

However, direct attacks on the persons of Confederate slaveholders were surprisingly rare. An exception occurred in May 1864, a few days after black Union soldiers had liberated several female slaves on a plantation near the James River in Virginia. The women bore the scars of having been frequently beaten by their master, William Clopton. According to the recollection of a black sergeant in the regiment, "the commanding officer determined to let the women have their revenge," which involved undressing the man and striking him.

Across this vast theater of war, emancipation took many forms. Black soldiers not only liberated slaves on individual plantations: They also informed former slaves of the rights now guaranteed to them as freedpeople, tutoring them on the details of ever-changing federal policy. Within their own ranks, slaves-turned-soldiers seized opportunities to educate themselves. One black regiment raised $700 in just four months to buy school supplies and pay for teachers to instruct them in reading.

As many of these former slaves saw it, soldiering was a means to exhibit dignity and to articulate a claim for equal respect and treatment under the law. Wearing the famous blue uniform mattered greatly.

Resistance

Emancipation and black enlistment had met resistance, prejudice, and skepticism every step of the way. An Irish American newspaper, the *Boston Pilot,* had predicted that "One Southern regiment of white men would put 20 regiments of [black soldiers] to flight in half an hour." Black soldiers experienced the same prejudice within the Union Army. Bigotry extended to many white officers, including those, like Shaw, who took reluctant command of new black regiments.

Such racism was evidently institutionalized. The War Department, for example, paid black soldiers just $10 per month (minus $3 for the cost of the uniform), while white privates received $13 per month with no charge for the same clothing. And while soldiers all wore identical uniforms, black troops were initially handed inferior or antiquated weapons that lacked the safety features and accuracy of those given to white soldiers. Likewise, black troops frequently found themselves confined to fatigue duty—that is, noncombat roles such as guarding equipment or patrolling the camps. Such inequities angered these men.

Many complained to their superiors about ill treatment, sometimes writing directly to the president. In June 1864, Congress did agree to legislate equal pay for colored troops. Likewise, some white commanders took to enforcing stiff punishments for white soldiers who refused to serve alongside black soldiers. Others readily court-martialed white soldiers who committed race hate crimes.

William Yokum, for instance, was sentenced to five years of hard labor after being caught kidnapping and attempting to sell a black soldier into slavery in Kentucky in 1863. As the war ground on, fewer such incidents occurred.

Women's Roles in the War

While war in America is traditionally regarded as men's work, black women were not absent from this story. In January 1864, free black women won permission to serve as cooks and nurses in Union hospitals. Before that official recognition came through, black women had supported their fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons in arms by organizing fund-raisers in towns and cities across the Northern states.

They had formed women's auxiliaries to gather donations of money, food, and clothing for black soldiers on the front line. They also stitched regimental flags, like the one Sergeant Carney carried into battle at Fort Wagner with the 54th.

Harriet Tubman also played a part in the war. About 39 years old when the war broke out in 1861, Tubman spent the war first as a seamstress and laundress for Union troops and later as a spy and military scout behind Confederate lines. In South Carolina, she led a band of 10 other scouts and river pilots who together recruited slaves for a new black Union regiment, and she personally interrogated these new enlistees for information about local conditions and about weaknesses in Confederate defenses.

In June of 1863, Tubman also became the only woman to lead men into combat during the Civil War. The occasion was a raid of Confederate rice plantations nestled along the alligator-infested banks of the Combahee River outside of Charleston. Having helped two white Union generals plan this expedition, Tubman led three gunboats carrying two black regiments on a tortuous 25-mile trip up this river.

Along the way, Tubman directed the soldiers to destroy bridges and railroad supply routes used by the Confederates. It was dawn when they arrived at the first plantation. Union pilots blew the gunboats' whistles to attract attention, and as soon as the plantations' slaves realized the troops now disembarking were Union, they flung their tools to the ground and streamed toward the boats, ignoring their overseer's threats. The same thing happened at several other plantations upstream. By the end of the day, Tubman and her crews had liberated almost 800 people.

Conclusion

Tubman's valor should be measured alongside that of the 179,000 black men who served with her in the Union Army. All told, these forces, known as the United States Colored Troops (USCT), saw action in 449 separate military engagements, including Fort Wagner. When properly armed and equipped, they demonstrated the same appetite for the fight and the same fortitude and courage as white soldiers. They also gained valuable experience of the world beyond the plantation and seized opportunities for literacy at every turn.

They embraced their transformation from slaves into liberators. By 1865, black soldiers had vocally begun to demand the full privileges of citizenship by pointing to their service in this war—and the ultimate sacrifices made by 68,000 of their fallen comrades—as fundamental proof of their merit.

In the rapidly changing racial climate of the mid-1860s, it seemed to many black men in uniform that equality might well be finally within reach. When Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address in March 1865, he selected four USCT companies to form part of his honor guard, a symbolic recognition of their critical role in securing Union victory. But Lincoln was assassinated just one month later, and the USCT was called back into service once more, this time to lead the funeral procession that escorted the slain body of the president from the White House to the Capitol.

Lecture 28

FIGHTING SLAVERY AFTER EMANCIPATION

Union victory in the Civil War brought legalized slavery in the United States to an end. The Thirteenth Amendment, ratified on December 6, 1865, outlawed slavery in America and gave Congress the power to enforce its extermination. Now legally emancipated, the South's 3.5 million freedpeople stepped into an uncertain future in which the meaning of their new status had still to be resolved.

Communities of Struggle

Uncertain about whether they were truly free, some freedpeople wrote to the president to ask him directly if it was true. Others sought out Union Army or local government officials to put the same question to them.

For freedpeople, every subsequent day was a new opportunity to seize as much freedom as they could. For many freedpeople, this meant seeking out and reuniting with family members from whom they had been forcibly separated by slavery. Ex-slaves set out in all directions. One man walked 600 miles over two months from a plantation in Georgia in search of his wife and children in North Carolina. Most ex-slaves never found their relatives. The chasms created by time and distance were too great to overcome.

Freedpeople had much greater success securing access to education, which many among them viewed as the surest path to claiming equality with white Americans. African Americans of all ages flocked to new schools being set up across the South, two of which were supported by fundraising conducted by Harriet Tubman. Freedpeople of every age also took every opportunity they could to educate themselves.

It was not long before former slaves began to petition for full political rights. As Frederick Douglass put it soon after General Lee's surrender at Appomattox, "Slavery is not abolished until the black man has the ballot." Douglass and other vocal black activists argued that anything less than full access to the ballot box on election days would be a betrayal of all that the United States claimed to stand for.

The Freedmen's Bureau

The new federal agency set up by Congress to help millions of ex-slaves make the transition to life in a free society was known as the Freedmen's Bureau. It was faced with a massive and daunting task. Bureau agents were supposed to establish schools; provide food, housing, and aid to the poor and aged; settle disputes between whites and blacks; and secure for former slaves equal treatment under the law.

The Bureau was underfunded from the very beginning. It was only given enough money to hire 1,000 agents to cover the entire South.

Still, those 1,000 agents were able to point to some remarkable achievements in the five years from 1865 to 1870 that the Freedmen's Bureau survived.

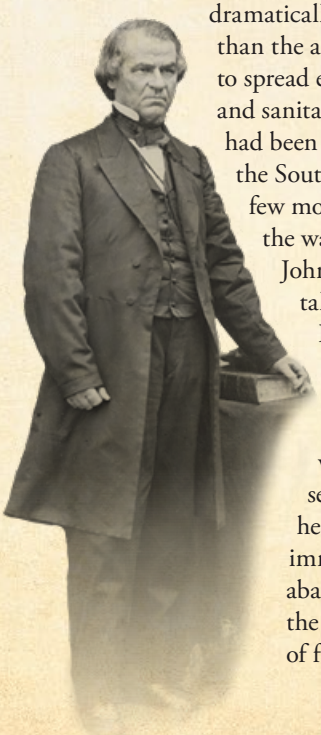
By 1870, the Bureau had helped establish more than 4,000 black schools, serving more than 250,000 pupils in the South. Bureau agents had also assumed control of the military hospitals that had been established during the war so that black individuals could receive medical care, and it had expanded the hospital system across the Reconstruction South.

However, when it came to give freedpeople the 40 acres of land they had been promised during the war, the Freedmen's Bureau was prevented from acting. The problem was political. In the late spring of 1865, President Andrew Johnson—the Tennessee politician who had succeeded Abraham Lincoln after his assassination—prevented all the Confederate land seized by the federal government during the war from being divided up among ex-slaves by ordering that the land be returned to its former white owners.

Because most freedpeople did not receive any land from the federal government, the vast majority of rural freedpeople remained poor and without property during Reconstruction. As a result, most freedpeople had no alternative but to work on white-owned plantations, often for their former owners. They were being paid, but with hardly the fair wages that the Freedmen's Bureau had been created to ensure that they received.

The most common type of work that freedpeople performed was known as sharecropping. The system allowed each black family to rent a part of a plantation, so long as they shared any crops or profits they produced with their white landowners at the end of the year. Unlike slavery, black sharecroppers now worked without direct white supervision. However, sharecropping prevented these black laborers from owning the land they worked on, and it required them to turn over 50 percent of all their output to the landowner. The system seemed to many freedpeople like only the smallest of steps forward, and many soon found themselves trapped in a cycle of debt and dependence from which they could not escape.

Presidential Reconstruction



President Johnson's plan for reconstructing the Union was dramatically different than the ad hoc efforts to spread education and sanitation that had been going on in the South in the first few months after the war. President Johnson began to take charge of Reconstruction efforts in May 1865, when Congress was not in session, and he almost immediately abandoned the interests of freedpeople. He reached out instead to the white elites who had formed the backbone of the Confederacy during the war. The first thing Johnson did was to offer a pardon to nearly all white Southerners who agreed to take an oath of future allegiance to the United States. Johnson also appointed provisional governors in the Confederate states and ordered them to form state conventions loyal to the Union. Only whites were allowed to vote in the elections to create Johnson's new Southern state governments. White voters used those elections to elect ex-leaders of the Confederacy and other proslavery elites to power.

The Black Codes aroused the most opposition to Johnson's Presidential Reconstruction policy.

The Black Codes were a series of laws passed by Confederate-led state legislatures that tried to roll back the freedoms that African Americans had seized at emancipation. Like the slave codes they were so obviously based on, these Black Codes denied freedpeople the right to testify against whites, to serve on juries or in state militias, to acquire property, and to own firearms or buy alcohol. It also denied them access to certain occupations and denied them the right to vote. And in some Confederate states, the new Black Codes forced black people to sign annual labor contracts and allowed judges to assign black children to work for their former owners without the consent of their parents. Many freedpeople, then, soon found themselves in conditions not far removed from slavery.

Radical Reconstruction

As 1866 began, Northern Republicans grew more and more radical in their opposition to Johnson's Presidential Reconstruction program. Northern Radical Republicans now began calling for the dissolution of Johnson's loyal state governments in former Confederate states, demanding that all Confederate leaders be banished from public office and insisting that black men in these Southern states be guaranteed the right to vote.

Republicans in Congress poured this list of grievances into a piece of legislation known as the Civil Rights Bill. This bill was radical because it set out to define all persons born in the United States as citizens, and it spelled out the rights they should be allowed to enjoy without regard to race. Likewise, the Civil Rights Bill proposed making the Black Codes illegal and proposed that no state could deprive any citizen of the right to make contracts, bring lawsuits, or protect his private property. The only thing the Civil Rights Bill did not do was guarantee freedpeople the right to vote.

Furious at this rebellious attack on his leadership, Andrew Johnson vetoed the Civil Rights Bill. In April 1866, Republicans in both the Senate and the House gathered enough votes to override the president's veto, making the Civil Rights Bill the first major law in American history to be passed in spite of a presidential veto.

Flushed with success, Republicans in Congress now went further and approved the passage of a permanent amendment to the Constitution of the United States. This Fourteenth Amendment wrote into the Constitution many of the provisions of the Civil Rights Bill.

In March 1867, Republicans forced another new act through Congress. This Reconstruction Act, as it was called, temporarily divided the South into five military districts, scrapped the Confederate-led state governments that Johnson had formed, and set up elections to create new state governments. The Reconstruction Act gave freedmen the right to vote for who should represent them in these new state governments.

With Radical Republicans in Congress now firmly in charge of Reconstruction efforts, President Johnson was increasingly sidelined. After a failed attempt to impeach him, the Republicans on Capitol Hill replaced him with their handpicked candidate for president: Ulysses S. Grant, who won the presidential election in 1868. Seizing on the momentum of Grant's victory, in 1869, Congressional Republicans hammered through the Fifteenth Amendment. This amendment prohibited the federal and state governments from denying any citizen the right to vote because of race. The passage of the Fifteenth Amendment marked the high-water mark of Radical Reconstruction.

Throughout the South, freedpeople rushed to exercise their precious new right as citizens, and the vast majority of eligible African Americans registered to vote. In the elections that followed, freedpeople voted people of color into many public offices. In fact, while most of the higher offices in Southern legislatures were still occupied by whites, about 2,000 African Americans held elected public offices during this phase of Reconstruction. Southerners elected 14 African Americans to the House of Representatives, and two African Americans served in the US Senate during Reconstruction, both representing Mississippi.

Conclusion

With each success that freedpeople achieved during Reconstruction, the tide of opposition against them from white former Confederates living in the Deep South grew. Even if Reconstruction was steaming ahead in the halls of Congress in Washington, in the Deep South, Democratic Party politicians and ex-leaders of the Confederacy bitterly opposed its every advance. Southern Democrats denounced the new biracial state governments that Radical Reconstruction had put in place, attacking them as corrupt and inefficient examples of black supremacy. The rising taxes needed to pay for schools and other new public facilities pushed many ordinary white Southerners into sympathy with these Democrats.

The most basic reason for opposition to Reconstruction was the persistence of racism. Returning Confederate soldiers, especially, seethed with contempt for the freedpeople all around them and could not accept the idea of former slaves voting, holding office, and enjoying equality before the law.

Former masters felt existentially threatened by the revolutionary changes unfolding around them and did their level best to undermine and overthrow Radical Reconstruction.

Using violence as their main tactic to achieve this political objective, Northern Democrats and their white Southern allies set up secret societies like the Ku Klux Klan to prevent freedmen from voting. To intimidate freedpeople and their supporters, the Klan assassinated local leaders of the Republican Party, it murdered and lynched dozens of freedpeople, and it whipped hundreds more.

As a direct result of Klan violence in the South, Northern politicians' commitment to Reconstruction began to waiver and wane during the 1870s. Another factor was that many Northerners were becoming uncomfortable about how authoritarian the federal government had become. The Democrats swept into power in the House of Representatives in the elections of 1874. Two years later, Democrats came within a whisker of capturing the White House. The election was so close that Republicans and Democrats had to negotiate.

In the end, the Republicans brokered a canny compromise that allowed their candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes, to secure the presidency. But in return, Republicans had to agree to recognize Democratic control of the entire South and to avoid further intervention in Southern affairs. This bargain was known as the Compromise of 1877, and it signaled the end of government intervention to engineer Reconstruction in the Deep South.

Lecture 29

SLAVERY BY ANOTHER NAME

The Thirteenth Amendment, ratified by the states in 1865, outlawed race slavery in America. Ever since, African Americans have been fighting for equal protection and representation and have achieved an enormous amount in a relatively short period of time. Their critical service as soldiers during World War II, for instance, spurred the integration of the United States Military in 1948 and set the stage for the civil rights movement a decade later.

That movement spawned numerous accomplishments, such as the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Without those accomplishments, Barack Obama, America's first black president, could not have been elected in 2008 and reelected in 2012.

The Other Part of the Story

The aforementioned trajectory is hopeful and optimistic. Unfortunately, that narrative is a partial truth at best, and it obscures as much as it illuminates. It skips over the 90 years after Reconstruction that actually gave rise to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

After the Compromise of 1877, federal intervention in Southern society largely ceased. Left to their own devices, Southern white supremacists resumed their campaign of racial violence against freed black people. To make matters worse, in 1883, the Supreme Court struck down some of the civil rights legislation passed during the heyday of Radical Reconstruction, thereby legitimating racial segregation on private premises.

New Jim Crow laws passed by Southern state legislators went further, enacting restrictions on black voting by imposing literacy tests and poll taxes. For the next 70 years—until *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954—legalized racial segregation was the norm across the states of the old Confederacy.

Over that time, Southern white supremacists succeeded in using all sorts of means to confine Southern blacks to labor systems eerily similar to slavery, including sharecropping. After the end of Reconstruction, the Democrat legislatures in states such as Alabama and Mississippi passed a series of laws designed to round up freedpeople and confine them to long prison terms for minor offenses such as stealing a pig, gambling, changing employers without permission, or selling cotton after sunset.

Once incarcerated, the state could lease out black prisoners as convict labor to raise cotton, mine coal, cut lumber, make bricks, pour steel, build railroads, and undertake other backbreaking work projects. These black men and women worked under threat of discipline with the lash. They died by the score, and they were buried in unmarked graves even as their cheap, almost no-cost labor shored up the bottom lines of some major American companies, including US Steel, founded by Andrew Carnegie, the world's richest man.

Observing the profits to be made from captive convict labor, in 1900, the state of Mississippi set up its own plantation inside a new state prison, to be known as Parchman Farm. It followed the routines of an antebellum slave plantation and succeeded in turning a huge profit for the state. Parchman was not shut down until 1972, when an independent-minded Southern judge finally determined that this convict labor camp was an affront to "modern standards of decency."

It was these horrors—alongside the daily humiliations of widespread racial discrimination—that spurred African Americans to organize, petition, and protest. It was their resistance to being treated like slaves in a country that had long since declared slavery unconstitutional that ushered in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

The New Jim Crow

Passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the martyrdom of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 did not secure racial justice. On the contrary, the escalating mass incarceration of black men in the nation's prisons over the last 50 years now exists as a vehicle of social control on a scale that exceeds that of 19th-century slavery. More black men are currently under custodial control in prisons, on probation, or on parole than were held as slaves in 1850 at the height of the plantation system.

All of this is recent history, the result of a backlash against advances made by African Americans during the civil rights movement. Beginning with Barry Goldwater's tough-on-crime presidential campaign in 1964 and the shift to focusing on street crime and drug law enforcement that accompanied President Ronald Reagan's election, America's half-century-old war on drugs has swept more and more black people into prison.

The 1980s and 1990s saw presidents and congressional leaders of both parties sponsor and push through legislation authorizing mandatory minimum sentences for the distribution of crack cocaine, three-strikes laws mandating life sentences for three-time offenders, and ever-harsher punishments for first-time breakers of drug laws, even those charged with simple possession but with no intent to sell. The same elected officials have eviscerated Fourth Amendment protections on search and seizure, and they have authorized huge amounts of spending to expand state and local police forces and to build hundreds of new prisons.*

* Since 1980, the US prison population has exploded, rising from 300,000 to more than 2,000,000 people behind bars.

The most striking feature of this new era of mass incarceration is racial. As the scholar Michelle Alexander has explained, "No other country in the world imprisons so many of its racial or ethnic minorities." In Washington DC, for example, three out of every four young black men serve time in prison, usually for petty drug offenses. The picture is similar in every major US city. In Chicago, for instance, young black men are more likely to go to prison than to college, and across America, there are vastly more black men in state prison systems than are enrolled in state public universities.

Mass incarceration is not identical to race slavery. However, like slavery and like Jim Crow, mass incarceration today is an engine of inequality. Even though it is veiled by the cloak of colorblindness, it is nonetheless a system of legalized racial control, discrimination, and disenfranchisement.

Conclusion

Critics have charged that the same racial thinking lies behind many other disturbing statistics about criminal justice in modern America. Young black men, for instance, are today 21 times more likely to be shot and killed by police in this country than young white men, a fact that gained widespread notoriety following the slaying of unarmed black teenagers like Michael Brown in Missouri and Tamir Rice in Ohio.

On April 12, 2015, 25-year-old Freddie Gray was arrested by Baltimore police for the mere possession of a switchblade. He was loaded into a van and then driven around for 45 minutes until he emerged with 80 percent of his spinal cord severed, his neck snapped, and his voice box crushed.

Freddie Gray was arrested and assaulted on the 150th anniversary of Robert E. Lee's surrender to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox. The official end to the Civil War ushered in formal equality, but that was all it did. Ever since, black freedom has been elusive and contingent, subject to racial control and racial terrorism.

It does not have to be this way forever. We can overcome collective denial that this is happening and about who this is happening to. We can get over our aversion to helping people that our justice system has labeled as criminals. We can push back against the lobbyists for all the private, for-profit prisons the country has built, and we can reject the insidious arguments that prisons are too valuable as employers to ever be shuttered and closed.

We can educate ourselves about the issues and overcome the old lie that black people behind bars chose their fate. We can end the war on drugs. We can ban the check box on hiring applications that asks if applicants have a criminal record. We can allow convicted felons to vote and roll back mandatory sentencing and three-strikes laws. We can eradicate racial profiling and put more money into public schools and public housing than we put into detention and custody.

Doing all of this will accomplish a truly radical reconstruction of these United States, finally affirming black humanity. Back during the antislavery fight, British activists built their campaign around a simple slogan: "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?" In the 1960s, American civil rights leaders carried signs that read: "I Am a Man." As of this course's release, the fight goes on. The words are different, but the message of dignity and respect for all is resoundingly the same: "Black Lives Matter."

Lecture 30

FIGHTING MODERN SLAVERY

If the history of the early 21st century in America tells us anything, it is that racism is hardly dead and buried. For all the progress we've made, racism is as vibrant as it ever was. Sadly, so is slavery. It is illegal now, but it remains widespread and hidden in plain sight throughout this country. Around the world, there are 20–40 million slaves, more so now than were ever transported from Africa on European ships destined for the Americas. Even within the United States, there are tens of thousands of slaves, perhaps as many as 100,000. Some of them are African, Afro-Caribbean, or African American, but many more of them are illegal or legal immigrants from China, Vietnam, Russia, India, Mexico, and Guatemala.

Every day, their labor lines the pockets of traffickers and slaveholders, making millions for criminals who prey on vulnerable, poor, and desperate immigrants who came here seeking a better life.

Life 1: Maria

This lecture begins with a look at three lives, the first being that of Maria. She was 12 years old when an American woman named Sandra Bearden came to her parents' home in Vera Cruz, in Mexico. Bearden was from Laredo, Texas, where she lived in a comfortable middle-class house with her husband and her four-year-old son. She was looking for a maid and offered to pay for Maria's room, board, and education in America in return for some light housework and childcare. Bearden was Mexican by birth herself, and Maria's parents felt they could trust her.

Maria's nightmare began when she arrived in Laredo. To squeeze every last drop of labor from her, Bearden battered the girl with a broom, bottle, or whatever was to hand. She sprayed pepper spray in her eyes, made her eat dog feces, and chained her to a pole in the backyard. On one occasion, she rammed a garden tool into this young girl's vagina. Maria's torture only ceased when a neighbor doing work on his roof happened to catch sight of a small girl tied to a pole in the high-walled yard of the house next door. He called 911.

As Bearden's treatment of Maria makes abundantly clear, domestic slavery is a crime of intimate power. Unlike race slavery, it operates on the small scale. People are trafficked or sold in ones or twos. Most domestic slaves come to America on legitimate work visas that tie them to their owners and prevent them from finding legal work with anyone else. Bearden was a US citizen, but a great many owners of domestic slaves are foreign diplomats working at embassies or at the World Bank in Washington DC or at the United Nations in New York.

Life 2: Alejandro

Next, consider Alejandro. An orphan living on the streets in Guatemala, Alejandro was 17 years old when a trafficker loaned him some money to come to America to get a good job and an education. But once he crossed the border, Alejandro's patron turned on him, imprisoning him in a room with 20 other trafficked workers guarded by people with guns. Alejandro was told that he had to work picking produce to pay off his new debt. He was beaten and threatened, and his captors took him to

different fields. Only after some weeks did he find the courage and opportunity to defy his captors. He ran for a homeless shelter, where he showed his scars and told his story.

Enslaved farmworkers are typically homeless or orphaned men and boys from Central America who work in geographic isolation. They are monitored by gang members with guns, and they find themselves enmeshed in a cycle of debt and dependency from which they cannot escape.

In fact, as traffickers know all too well, farmworkers are not covered by the major labor laws in America. Thanks to the political power of Southern Congressmen in the 1930s, the legislation that protects other types of workers and establishes minimum pay, health, and safety conditions exempts the people who pick fruits and vegetables on the massive agro-businesses that now occupy most of the arable land in Florida and California.

Life 3: Min

Finally, meet Min. Min was in her late 30s when she arrived in New York City from the Fujian province in China. She arrived with a ninth-grade education, a history of spousal abuse at the hands of her former husband, a large loan from her cousins to buy her plane ticket, and a son back in China whose school fees she needed to pay.

In New York, a tenant at her group house showed her a Mandarin-language job ad, promising $5,000 a month and training to be a certified masseuse. On her first day on the job, her first client screamed at her, beat her, and made it clear he wanted sex, not a massage. Min did as he directed, staying quiet and still until it was over. She went back to the group house feeling stupid, violated, and ashamed. But she needed to make money and believed she could not return to China without it. She went back to the parlor the next week and the weeks that followed, worried each day that her family would find out exactly how she had earned the modest remittances she finally began sending home.

Min's story is actually a composite based on dozens of reports by survivors, service providers, and law enforcement officials compiled by Polaris, a nongovernmental organization (NGO). Women like Min can remain trapped for years.

There are more than 9,000 illicit massage businesses operating in the US today. These engage thousands of women in commercial sex, most of them immigrants who speak little or no English. The majority are from China, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam. Most are mothers struggling to support children back home.

Like Min, they come here voluntarily, chasing decent wages and financial stability. They answer ads on social media for massage therapists and discover too late that that is code for sex slavery. Once on the premises, they are told they will be deported by immigration, that their families will be hurt, or that they will be arrested for prostitution if they ever try to walk away or raise an alarm.

Fighting Modern Slavery

Traffickers flatter and lie to people like Min, Maria, and Alejandro, tempting them to come across the border in pursuit of good jobs and good pay that they can send back home to their struggling families. Once they are across that border, everything changes. Traffickers seize passports and papers, lock up their captives, starve them, beat them, and confuse and disorient them. If they try to resist or run, they are beaten and starved some more. They have no friends or family to help, and they might not understand English. They are at the mercy of the people they now fear the most. Once women and men like Maria, Alejandro, and Min are set to work, these slaves disappear from view among a much larger population of people who live in tough circumstances or in poverty.

Slavery is a particular species of hardship, one characterized by a loss of free will and by violence. Free the Slaves, another NGO, uses three criteria to determine whether or not someone is a slave in modern America. The first is the "complete control of one person by another, through the use of violence—both physical and psychological." The second is doing "hard labor for little or no pay." The third is "economic exploitation—making a profit for the slaveholder."

If you're not sure if someone you see in dire straits is a slave and these three criteria don't come to mind immediately, just ask yourself a single question: Can this person walk away? Slaves cannot do so readily, and despite numerous laws against trafficking and slaveholding, the atrocities committed against them go largely unpunished. In 2018, Polaris identified 23,000 victims and 5,859 suspected traffickers and enslavers. The Department of Justice managed to convict just 526 of the people suspected of owning or dealing in slaves, a little less than 1 in 10.

The reasons for this are many. One reason is that much modern slavery takes place out of public view: on sprawling produce farms in Florida and California or in massage parlors and walk-ups where johns have a vested interest in keeping quiet about what they see or suspect.

Another reason is that enslaved people are typically too brutalized, traumatized, paranoid, and intimidated to speak up or run away. For the rest of us, the problem is apathy. We know, but we choose not to know. We don't ask the right questions, we mind our own business, and we don't interfere. We tell ourselves someone else will fix this: Someone else will take actions like calling 911, lobbying Congress, retraining police forces and social workers, and donating time and money to antislavery NGOs.

Yet we are living through a golden age of slavery, around the world and in the United States. Slavery has no public defenders. In polling, we condemn trafficking and slavery as illegal and immoral, and yet they thrive. How, then, can we make fighting slavery America's national cause once again? What can any of us—slave or free—do to turn the public's attention to the business of eliminating trafficking and slavery here in the land of the free?

There are lessons to be drawn from the people introduced in this course. In their own centuries, they advanced the cause against race slavery. First, they did so gradually, and then they did so dramatically in the 1860s. Americans have done this once. Is it naïve to believe that Americans can do it again?

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