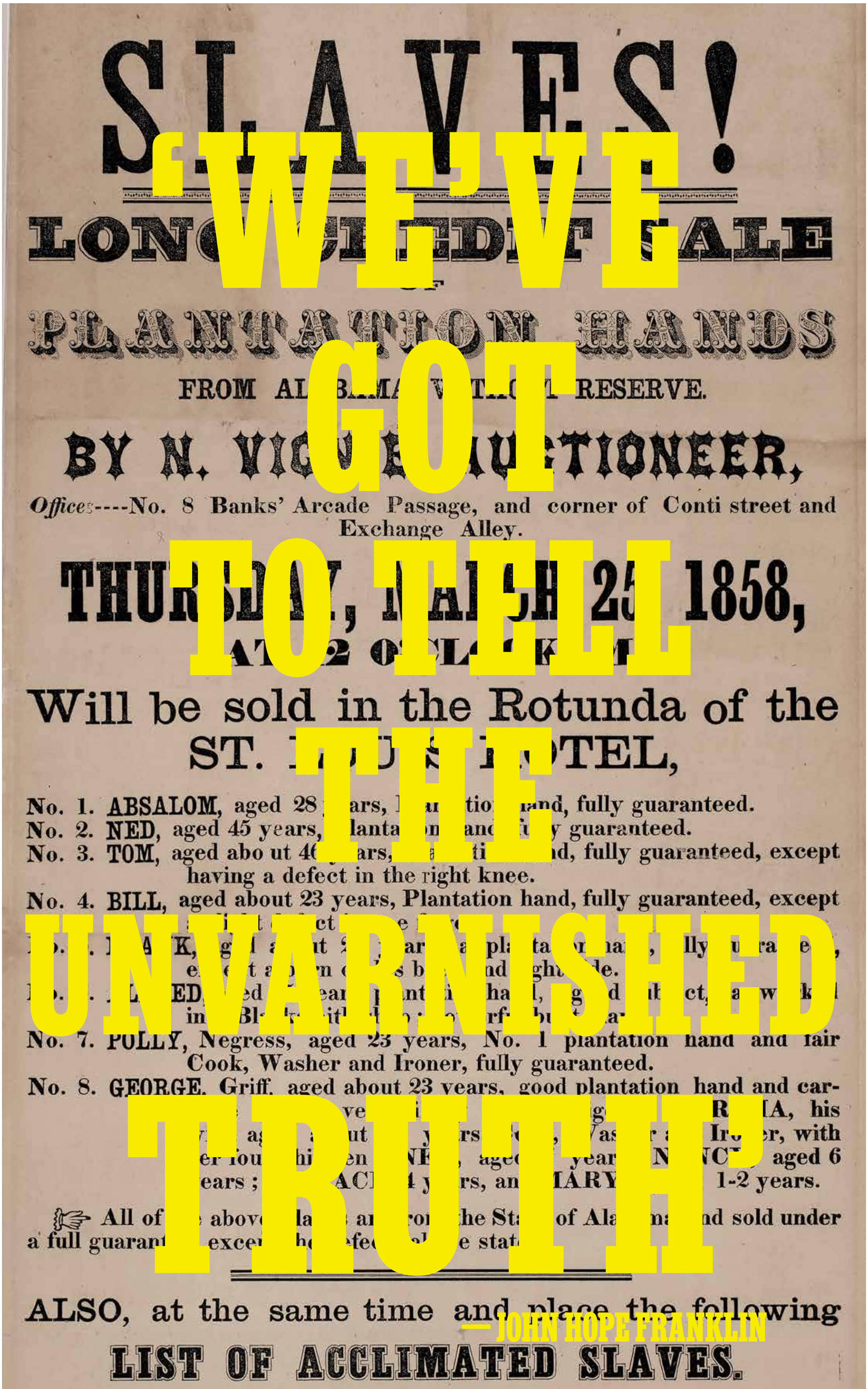
SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 2019

The New York Times Magazine

The 1619 Project

'WE'VE GOT TO TELL THE UNVARNISHED TRUTH'



— JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AFTER ENSLAVED AFRICANS WERE FIRST BROUGHT TO VIRGINIA, MOST AMERICANS STILL DON'T KNOW THE FULL STORY OF SLAVERY.

Reading Guide: Quotes, Key Terms, and Questions

August 13, 2019 | All Grades
By Pulitzer Center Education

The 1619 Project from *The New York Times Magazine* is inaugurated with a special issue that examines the modern-day legacy of slavery through over 30 essays and creative works.

Lesson Outline

Resource overview with links to the following:

- PDF copy of *The 1619 Project*, a full issue of *The New York Times Magazine*
- PDF copy of the supplementary broadsheet from the *Times* newspaper
- Reading Guide for *The 1619 Project* Essays
- Reading Guide for *The 1619 Project* Creative Works

Warm-up questions that introduce themes from the project.

Discussion questions to process the content and structure of writing and visuals from *The 1619 Project*.

Links to activities and a lesson plan that can be used to further students' engagement with the issue.

Resource Overview:

The 1619 Project, a special issue of *The New York Times Magazine*, marks the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans to Jamestown, Virginia with a series of essays, images, stories, and poems that challenge readers to reframe their understanding of U.S. history by considering 1619 as the start of this nation's story. Through over 30 visual and written pieces from historians, journalists, playwrights, poets, authors, and artists, the issue examines the following questions:

1. **How do societal structures developed to support the enslavement of black people, and the anti-black racism that was cultivated in the U.S. to justify slavery, influence many aspects of modern laws, policies, systems, and culture?**

2. **How have resistance, innovation, and advocacy by black Americans over the course of American history contributed to the nation's wealth and the strengthening of its democracy?**

This guide offers reflection questions that can be used to support students' engagement with *The 1619 Project*, as well as downloadable PDFs that highlight the following for each piece:

- A quote that captures a central theme
- Key names/dates/terms
- Guiding questions to consider while reading

Reading Guide for The 1619 Project Essays.pdf
Reading Guide for The 1619 Project Creative Works.pdf
Full issue of The 1619 Project.pdf
Supplementary broadsheet from the Times newspaper.pdf

Questions to Consider Before Exploring *The 1619 Project*:

1. How did you first learn about the history of slavery in the U.S.? What did you learn, and how was that information presented?
2. What do you see as the lasting legacy of slavery in the U.S.?
3. What do you know about the contributions of black Americans to U.S. society, and where does that information come from?
4. Referring to the text of the Declaration of Independence, answer the following questions:
    - What are the values stated in the Declaration of Independence?
    - In what ways can you see those values working in contemporary American life? In what ways can you see them failing?
    - How has the interpretation of those values changed over time? Who is responsible for creating those changes?

Questions to Consider After Exploring *The 1619 Project*:

Connecting to content:

1. What lines/images/moments stuck out to you, and why?
2. What surprised you? What do you want to know more about?
3. How do the authors connect mechanisms established to support slavery with modern day practices in law, politics, business, culture and other aspects of American society?
4. How do the stories presented in *The 1619 Project* compare to the stories you grew up hearing about the origins of slavery and its modern day impacts?
5. How does the origin story of the U.S. change if we mark the beginning of U.S. history in 1619 instead of 1776?
6. What is national memory? How do we create it? How can we change it?

Connecting to structure:

1. What emotions do you feel when reading the pieces? What language most stuck out to you from the project, and why?
2. How do the authors integrate research, primary source documents, testimonials from experts and personal narratives into their pieces?
3. How do the pieces in *The 1619 Project* connect to each other? Where do you see parallels and reflections?
4. Why do you think the work by the writers and artists featured in this issue were included in *The New York Times Magazine*, a national news publication?
5. What is the role of journalism in shaping national memory?

Extension Activities and Lesson Plans:

For more ideas on how to support students' explorations of this issue, click on the links below:

- Lesson Plan: Exploring "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones
- Activities to Extend Student Engagement with *The 1619 Project*

Educator Notes:

The questions and guides above can be used by students on their own, in small groups, or with their entire class. For more ways to connect *The 1619 Project* to your classes, click here.

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2
Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3
Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8
Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9
Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

The New York Times Magazine

August 18, 2019

In August of 1619, a ship appeared on this horizon, near Point Comfort, a coastal port in the British colony of Virginia. It carried more than 20 enslaved Africans, who were sold to the colonists. America was not yet America, but this was the moment it began. No aspect of the country that would be formed here has been untouched by the 250 years of slavery that followed. On the 400th anniversary of this fateful moment, it is finally time to tell our story truthfully.

The 1619 Project

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The New York Times

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16

It is not a year that most Americans know as a notable date in our country's history. Those who do are at most a tiny fraction of those who can tell you that 1776 is the year of our nation's birth. What if, however, we were to tell you that this fact, which is taught in our schools and unanimously celebrated every Fourth of July, is wrong, and that the country's true birth date, the moment that its defining contradictions first came into the world, was in late August of 1619? Though the exact date has been lost to history (it has come to be observed on Aug. 20), that was when a ship arrived at Point Comfort in the British colony of Virginia, bearing a cargo of 20 to 30 enslaved Africans. Their arrival inaugurated a barbaric system of chattel slavery that would last for the next 250 years. This is sometimes referred to as the country's original sin, but it is more than that: It is the country's very origin.

Out of slavery — and the anti-black racism it required — grew nearly everything that has truly made America exceptional: its economic might, its industrial power, its electoral system, diet and popular music, the inequities of its public health and education, its astonishing penchant for violence, its income inequality, the example it sets for the world as a land of freedom and equality, its slang, its legal system and the endemic racial fears and hatreds that continue to plague it to this day. The seeds of all that were planted long before our official birth date, in 1776, when the men known as our founders formally declared independence from Britain.

The goal of The 1619 Project, a major initiative from The New York Times that this issue of the magazine inaugurates, is to reframe American history by considering what it would mean to

1619.

regard 1619 as our nation's birth year. Doing so requires us to place the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are as a country.

Perhaps you need some persuading. The issue contains essays on different aspects of contemporary American life, from mass incarceration to rush-hour traffic, that have their roots in slavery and its aftermath. Each essay takes up a modern phenomenon, familiar to all, and reveals its history. The first, by the staff writer Nikole Hannah-Jones (from whose mind this project sprang), provides the intellectual framework for the project and can be read as an introduction.

Alongside the essays, you will find 17 literary works that bring to life key moments in African-American history. These works are all original compositions by contemporary black writers who were asked to choose events on a timeline of the past 400 years. The poetry and fiction they created is arranged chronologically throughout the issue, and each work is introduced by the history to which the author is responding.

A word of warning: There is gruesome material in these pages, material that readers will find disturbing. That is, unfortunately, as it must be. American history cannot be told truthfully without a clear vision of how inhuman and immoral the treatment of black Americans has been. By acknowledging this shameful history, by trying hard to understand its powerful influence on the present, perhaps we can prepare ourselves for a more just future.

That is the hope of this project.

400 Years: A Literary Timeline

The 1619 Project Continues

Beyond this issue, you'll also find a special section in today's newspaper on the history of slavery, made in partnership with the Smithsonian, and an article in the Sports section considering the legacy of slavery in professional sports; on Aug. 20, "The Daily" begins a multipart 1619 audio series; and starting this week, in partnership with the Pulitzer Center, The Times is introducing a curriculum and educational outreach effort to bring this material to students (for information, see the inside back cover). Look for more #1619project updates in the weeks ahead.

Behind the Cover

We commissioned the photographer Dannielle Bowman to photograph the water off the coast of Hampton, Va., at the site where the first enslaved Africans were recorded being brought to Britain's North American colonies. So many of our national narratives feature the arrival of ships to the New World (Christopher Columbus, Plymouth Rock), and yet this arrival, of these "twenty and odd Negroes" in 1619, has generally been left out of our founding myths. Rarely is the disembarking of these people treated with grandeur. We wanted to change that. Photograph by Dannielle Bowman for The New York Times.

Changing Lives, One Grant at a Time

Business leader and philanthropist Robert F. Smith inspired the world with his 2019 commencement pledge to pay off the student debt for nearly 400 graduates at Morehouse College in Atlanta. Smith's pledge was a personal one, on behalf of his family, which has been part of the American fabric for eight generations. The gift also focused a public spotlight on Fund II Foundation, a private charitable organization founded in 2014 to grant to public charities the assets of a reserve established when Smith's Vista Equity Partners raised its first private equity fund in 2000.

Fund II Foundation, which Smith leads as President and Founding Director, has awarded nearly $250 million in grants in nine disciplines: education, social justice, environment, digitization, career readiness, health, music and arts appreciation, cultural preservation and veterans' affairs. Its grantees include non-profits that train veterans and young adults for technology careers, promote youth environmental service and teach young people how to preserve historic and culturally significant landmarks. Through grants and signature in-house programs, Fund II has touched more than 1.2 million people nationwide.

Cradle to Greatness

The foundation's signature philosophy, Cradle to Greatness, offers a framework to measure the success of grantees, determine those in need of additional help and accelerate access to that help. This enables Fund II to go deeper, investing in overlooked and underestimated communities, considering many pathways to success, from birth to a career, and even promoting business ownership.

"Our Cradle to Greatness framework rekindles hope and prosperity in communities often besieged by neglect and violence," says Smith. "What we want our kids to know in every domain of their lives — on this earth, in the home, on the job, at school, everywhere they turn — is that they are worthy."

InternX

The Fund II team learned quickly that mentorships, scholarships and internships opened the widest doors to prosperity. To that end, Fund II created internX, a platform to connect students studying science, technology, engineering or math with companies searching for STEM talent. internX disproves the notion that qualified black and brown tech interns don't exist, while helping interns learn skills, find mentors and gather the experience crucial for developing careers and building wealth.

PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY FUND II FOUNDATION

1.2 million
The number of people in the U.S. touched by Fund II grants and programs

$241 million
The amount of grants awarded by Fund II

$89.81 million
The amount Fund II has awarded in grants on education and scholarships

$39.5 million
The amount Fund II has spent on cultural preservation

$24 million
The amount Fund II has awarded in music & arts appreciation grants

$16.52 million
The amount Fund II has spent on career readiness

This is not only the right thing to do but also smart, says Linda Wilson, the executive director of Fund II Foundation. A recent national economics poll determined that black and brown Americans hold a combined buying power of $2.8 trillion, and of those spenders, half in each group are under 35. “They are the future and the most untapped talent force of our nation,” says Ivana Jackson, the internX program manager.

Started in 2018, internX has a goal of placing 1,000 interns this year and 10,000 in 2020. But Fund II’s commitment to young people of color doesn’t stop with STEM careers; its attention to music, art and environmental education is every bit as strong. “Music and art provide balance to young people,” Wilson says, “instilling a sense of peace while increasing aptitude.”

Restoration Retreat

In 2018, Fund II developed yet another signature program, one that allows young people to commune with nature, while also “providing much needed respite to heal and inspire,” Wilson says. For its inaugural event, Restoration Retreat hosted 35 boys of color from tough circumstances on a retreat to the Colorado Rocky Mountains. They received life-skills coaching, financial literacy and entrepreneurial training, as well as instruction in mentorship, yoga and meditation. They also pursued outdoor adventures like archery, fly fishing, hiking and horseback riding.

This year’s event included a separate retreat for girls. They each received a savings account of $250 through a savings and gift-giving platform, which offers family financial literacy training.

Programs like Restoration Retreat create inspiring scenes that Fund II leaders intend to replicate nationwide: children of color participating and excelling in careers, stewardship and life. “We at Fund II are committed to ensuring African Americans prosper through scientific, political, cultural and social capital. We are proud of our grantees and collaborators because their work pays tribute to our ancestors who are often left out of the American narrative,” Smith said.

Nikole Hannah-Jones, Page 14

Wesley Morris, 60

Khalil Gibran Muhammad, 70

Trymaine Lee, 82

Dannielle Bowman, 98

Linda Villarosa, 58

Jeneen Interlandi, 44

Jamelle Bouie, 50

Nikole Hannah-Jones, Page 14
is a staff writer for the magazine. A 2017 MacArthur fellow, she has won a National Magazine Award, a Peabody Award and a George Polk Award.

Jeneen Interlandi, Page 44
is a member of The Times's editorial board and a staff writer for the magazine. Her last article for the magazine was about teaching in the age of school shootings.

Trymaine Lee, Page 82
is a Pulitzer Prize- and Emmy Award-winning journalist and a correspondent for MSNBC. He covers social-justice issues and the role of race in politics and law enforcement.

Wesley Morris, Page 60
is a staff writer for the magazine, a critic at large for The New York Times and a co-host of the podcast "Still Processing." He was awarded the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for criticism.

Lynn Nottage, Page 84
is a playwright and screenwriter. She has received two Pulitzer Prizes and a MacArthur fellowship, and she is currently an associate professor at Columbia School of the Arts.

Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Page 70
is a Suzanne Young Murray professor at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University and author of "The Condemnation of Blackness."

Dannielle Bowman, Page 98
is a visual artist working with photography. She is an artist in residence at Baxter Street Camera Club of New York, where she will have a solo show in January.

Linda Villarosa, Page 58
directs the journalism program at the City College of New York and is a contributing writer for the magazine. Her feature on black infant and maternal mortality was a finalist for a National Magazine Award.

With creative works from:

Barry Jenkins
Jacqueline Woodson
Jesmyn Ward
Rita Dove
Reginald Dwayne Betts
Yusef Komunyakaa
Camille T. Dungy
Yaa Gyasi
Eve L. Ewing
Darryl Pinckney
Kiese Laymon
Clint Smith
ZZ Packer

Bryan Stevenson, 80

Djeneba duayom, 86

Adam Pendleton, 14

Tyehimba Jess, 58

Joshua Bennett, 79

Kevin M. Kruse, 48

Jamelle Bouie, Page 50
is a Washington-based New York Times opinion columnist and a political analyst for CBS News. He covers campaigns, elections, national affairs and culture.

Bryan Stevenson, Page 80
is the executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative and the author of ''Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption.''

Djeneba Aduayom, Page 86
is a photographer in Los Angeles known for her portraiture inspired by her career as a dancer.

Adam Pendleton, Page 14
is an artist known for conceptually rigorous and formally inventive paintings, collages, videos and installations that address history and contemporary culture.

Tyehimba Jess, Page 58
is a poet from Detroit who teaches at the College of Staten Island. He is the author of two books of poetry, ''Leadbelly'' and ''Olio,'' for which he received the 2017 Pulitzer Prize.

Joshua Bennett, Page 79
is an assistant professor of English and creative writing at Dartmouth College and the author of ''The Sobbing School.'' His poetry book ''Owed'' will be published in 2020.

Kevin M. Kruse, Page 48
is a professor of history at Princeton University and the author of ''White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism.''

Contributors' bios continue on Page 95.

Special thanks:

To bring The 1619 Project to non-Times subscribers, we have printed hundreds of thousands of additional copies of this issue, as well as of today's special newspaper section, for distribution at libraries, schools and museums. This would not have been possible without the generous support of donors: Wilson Chandler, John Legend on behalf of the Show Me Campaign, Ekpe Udoh, Gabrielle Union, Fund II Foundation and the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

Photographs by Kathy Ryan

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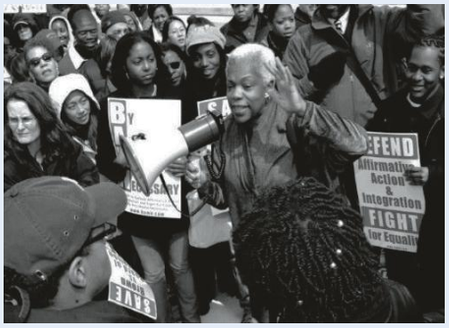

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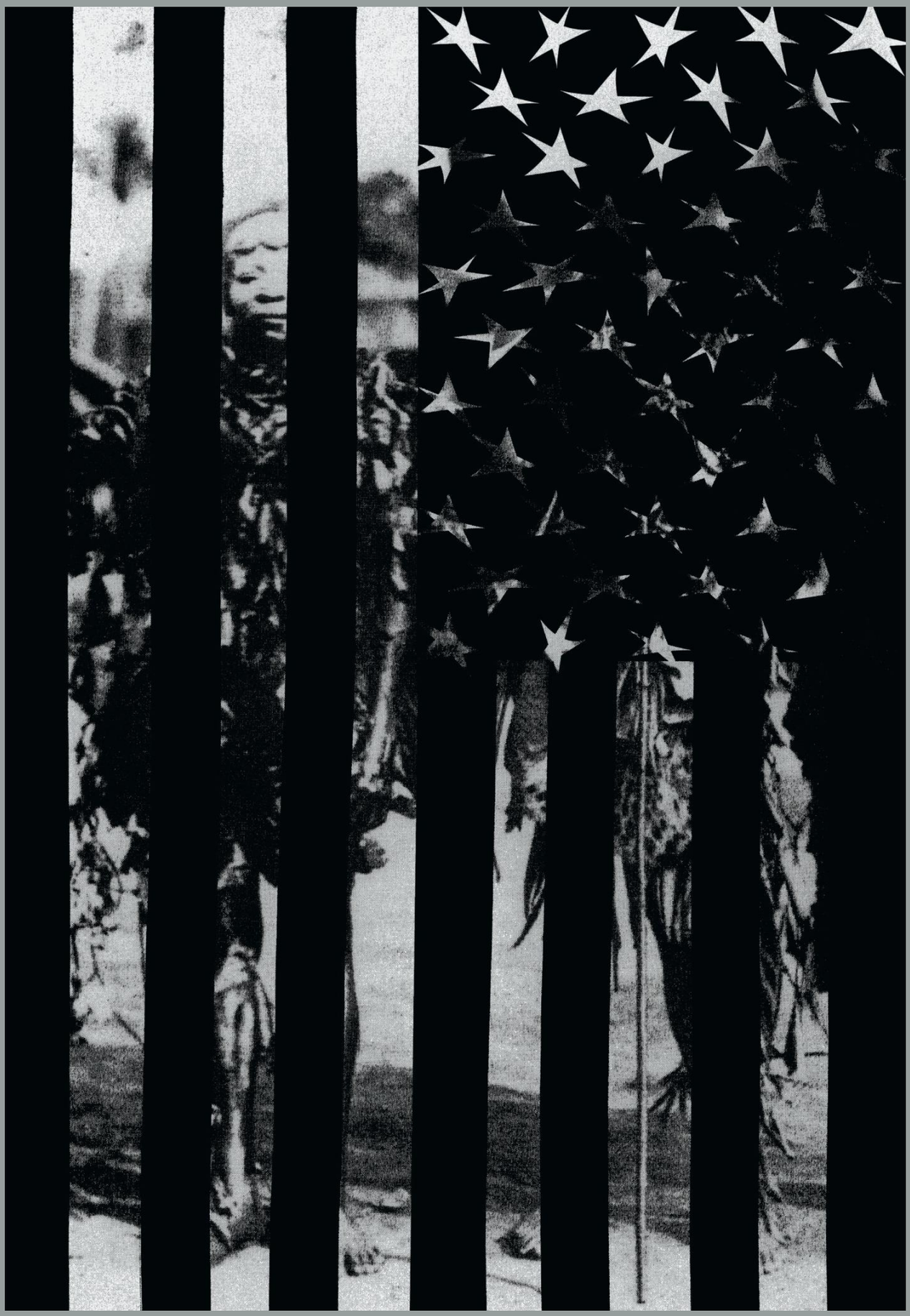
Our founding ideals of liberty and equality were false when they were written. Black Americans fought to make them true. Without this struggle, America would have no democracy at all.

By Nikole Hannah-Jones

Artwork by Adam Pendleton



My dad always flew an American flag in our front yard. The blue paint on our two-story house was perennially chipping; the fence, or the rail by the stairs, or the front door, existed in a perpetual state of disrepair, but that flag always flew pristine. Our corner lot, which had been redlined by the federal government, was along the river that divided the black side from the white side of our Iowa town. At the edge of our lawn, high on an aluminum pole, soared the flag, which my dad would replace as soon as it showed the slightest tatter.

My dad was born into a family of sharecroppers on a white plantation in Greenwood, Miss., where black people bent over cotton from can't-see-in-the-morning to can't-see-at-night, just as their enslaved ancestors had done not long before. The Mississippi of my dad's youth was an apartheid state that subjugated its near-majority black population through breathtaking acts of violence. White residents in Mississippi lynched more black people than those in any other state in the country, and the white people in my dad's home county lynched more black residents than those in any other county in Mississippi, often for such "crimes" as entering a room occupied by white women, bumping into a white girl or trying to start a sharecroppers union. My dad's mother, like all the black people in Greenwood, could not vote, use the public library or find work other than toiling in the cotton fields or toiling in white people's houses. So in the 1940s, she packed up her few belongings and her three small children and joined the flood of black Southerners fleeing North. She got off the Illinois Central Railroad in Waterloo, Iowa, only to have her hopes of the mythical Promised Land shattered when she learned that Jim Crow did not end at the Mason-Dixon line.

Grandmama, as we called her, found a house in a segregated black neighborhood on the city's east side and then found the work that was considered black women's work no matter where black women lived — cleaning white people's houses. Dad, too, struggled to find promise in this land. In 1962, at age 17, he signed up for the Army. Like many young men, he joined in hopes of escaping poverty. But he went into the military for another reason as well, a reason common to black men: Dad hoped that if he served his country, his country might finally treat him as an American.

The Army did not end up being his way out. He was passed over for opportunities, his ambition stunted. He would be discharged under murky circumstances and then labor in a series of service jobs for the rest of his life. Like all the black men and women in my family, he believed in hard work, but like all the black men and women in my family, no matter how hard he worked, he never got ahead.

So when I was young, that flag outside our home never made sense to me. How could this black man, having seen firsthand the way his country abused black Americans, how it refused to treat us as full citizens, proudly fly its banner? I didn't understand his patriotism. It deeply embarrassed me.

I had been taught, in school, through cultural osmosis, that the flag wasn't really ours, that our history as a people began with enslavement and that we had contributed little to this great nation. It seemed that the closest thing black Americans could have to cultural pride was to be found in our vague connection to Africa, a place we had never been. That my dad felt so much honor in being an American felt like a marker of his degradation, his acceptance of our subordination.

Like most young people, I thought I understood so much, when in fact I understood so little. My father knew exactly what he was doing when he raised that flag. He knew that our people's contributions to building the richest and most powerful nation in the world were indelible, that the United States simply would not exist without us.

In August 1619, just 12 years after the English settled Jamestown, Va., one year before the Puritans landed at Plymouth Rock and some 157 years before the English colonists even decided they wanted to form their own country, the Jamestown colonists bought 20 to 30 enslaved Africans from English pirates. The pirates had stolen them from a Portuguese slave ship that had forcibly taken them from what is now the country of Angola. Those men and women who came ashore on that August day were the beginning of American slavery. They were among the 12.5 million Africans who would be kidnapped from their homes and brought in chains across the Atlantic Ocean in the largest forced migration in human history until the Second World War. Almost two million did not survive the grueling journey, known as the Middle Passage.

Before the abolishment of the international slave trade, 400,000 enslaved Africans would be sold into America. Those individuals and their descendants transformed the lands to which they'd been brought into some of the most successful colonies in the British Empire. Through back-breaking labor, they cleared the land across the Southeast. They taught the colonists to grow rice. They grew and picked the cotton that at the height of slavery was the nation's most valuable commodity, accounting for half of all American exports and 66 percent of the world's supply. They built the plantations of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, sprawling properties that today attract thousands of visitors from across the globe captivated by the history of the world's greatest democracy. They laid the foundations of the White House and the Capitol, even placing with their unfree hands the Statue of Freedom atop the Capitol dome. They lugged the heavy wooden tracks of the railroads that crisscrossed the South and that helped take the cotton they picked to the Northern textile mills, fueling the Industrial Revolution. They built vast fortunes for white people North and South — at one time, the second-richest man in the nation was a Rhode Island "slave trader." Profits from black people's stolen labor helped the young nation pay off its war debts and financed some of our most prestigious universities. It was the relentless buying, selling, insuring and financing of their bodies and the products of their labor that made Wall Street a thriving banking, insurance and trading sector and New York City the financial capital of the world.

But it would be historically inaccurate to reduce the contributions of black people to the vast material wealth created by our bondage. Black Americans have also been, and continue to be, foundational to the idea of American freedom. More than any other group in this country's history, we have served, generation after generation, in an overlooked but vital role: It is we who have been the perfecters of this democracy.

The United States is a nation founded on both an ideal and a lie. Our Declaration of Independence, signed on July 4, 1776, proclaims that "all men are created equal" and "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." But the white men who drafted those words did not believe them to be true for the hundreds of thousands of black people in their midst. "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" did not apply to fully one-fifth of the country. Yet despite being violently denied the freedom and justice promised to all, black Americans believed fervently in the American creed. Through centuries of black resistance and protest, we have helped the country live up to its founding ideals. And not only for ourselves — black rights struggles paved the way for every other rights struggle, including women's and gay rights, immigrant and disability rights.

Without the idealistic, strenuous and patriotic efforts of black Americans, our democracy today would most likely look very different — it might not be a democracy at all.

The very first person to die for this country in the American Revolution was a black man who himself was not free. Crispus Attucks was a fugitive from slavery, yet he gave his life for a new nation in which his own people would not enjoy the liberties laid out in the Declaration for another century. In every war this nation has waged since that first one, black Americans have fought — today we are the most likely of all racial groups to serve in the United States military.

My father, one of those many black Americans who answered the call, knew what it would take me years to understand: that the year 1619 is as important to the American

An 1872 portrait of African-Americans serving in Congress (from left): Hiram Revels, the first black man elected to the Senate; Benjamin S. Turner; Robert C. De Large; Josiah T. Walls; Jefferson H. Long; Joseph H. Rainy; and R. Brown Elliot.

Currier & Ives, via the Library of Congress

story as 1776. That black Americans, as much as those men cast in alabaster in the nation's capital, are this nation's true "founding fathers." And that no people has a greater claim to that flag than us.

In June 1776, Thomas Jefferson sat at his portable writing desk in a rented room in Philadelphia and penned these words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." For the last 243 years, this fierce assertion of the fundamental and natural rights of humankind to freedom and self-governance has defined our global reputation as a land of liberty. As Jefferson composed his inspiring words, however, a teenage boy who would enjoy none of those rights and liberties waited nearby to serve at his master's beck and call. His name was Robert Hemings, and he was the half brother of Jefferson's wife, born to Martha Jefferson's father and a woman he owned. It was common for white enslavers to keep their half-black children in slavery. Jefferson had chosen Hemings, from among about 130 enslaved people that worked on the forced-labor camp he called Monticello, to accompany him to Philadelphia and ensure his every comfort as he drafted the text making the case for a new democratic republic based on the individual rights of men.

At the time, one-fifth of the population within the 13 colonies struggled under a brutal system of slavery unlike anything that had existed in the world before. Chattel slavery was not conditional but racial. It was heritable and permanent, not temporary, meaning generations of black people were born into it and passed their enslaved status onto their children. Enslaved people were not recognized as human beings but as property that could be mortgaged, traded, bought, sold, used as collateral, given as a gift and disposed of violently. Jefferson's fellow white colonists knew that black people were human beings, but they created a network of laws and customs, astounding for both their precision and cruelty, that ensured that enslaved people would never be treated as such. As the abolitionist William Goodell wrote in 1853, "If any thing founded on falsehood might be called a science, we might add the system of American slavery to the list of the strict sciences."

Enslaved people could not legally marry. They were barred from learning to read and restricted from meeting privately in groups. They had no claim to their own children, who could be bought, sold and traded away from them on auction blocks alongside furniture and cattle or behind storefronts that advertised "Negroes for Sale." Enslavers and the courts did not honor kinship ties to mothers, siblings, cousins. In most courts, they had no legal standing. Enslavers could rape or murder their

A postcard showing the scene at the murder of Allen Brooks, an African-American laborer who was accused of attempted rape. He was dragged through the streets around the Dallas County Courthouse and lynched on March 3, 1910. Postcards of lynchings were not uncommon in the early 20th century.

property without legal consequence. Enslaved people could own nothing, will nothing and inherit nothing. They were legally tortured, including by those working for Jefferson himself. They could be worked to death, and often were, in order to produce the highest profits for the white people who owned them.

Yet in making the argument against Britain's tyranny, one of the colonists' favorite rhetorical devices was to claim that *they* were the slaves — to Britain. For this duplicity, they faced burning criticism both at home and abroad. As Samuel Johnson, an English writer and Tory opposed to American independence, quipped, "How is it that we hear the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of Negroes?"

Conveniently left out of our founding mythology is the fact that one of the primary reasons the colonists decided to declare their independence from Britain was because they wanted to protect the institution of slavery. By 1776, Britain had grown deeply conflicted over its role in the barbaric institution that had reshaped the Western Hemisphere. In London, there were growing calls to abolish the slave trade. This would have upended the economy of the colonies, in both the North and the South. The wealth and prominence that allowed Jefferson, at just 33, and the other founding fathers to believe they could successfully break off from one of the mightiest empires in the world came from the dizzying profits generated by chattel slavery. In other words, we may never have revolted against Britain if the founders had not understood that slavery empowered them to do so; nor if they had not believed that independence was required in order to ensure that slavery would continue. It is not incidental that 10 of this nation's first 12 presidents were enslavers, and some might argue that this nation was founded not as a democracy but as a slavocracy.

Jefferson and the other founders were keenly aware of this hypocrisy. And so in Jefferson's original draft of the Declaration of Independence, he tried to argue that it wasn't the colonists' fault. Instead, he blamed the king of England for forcing the institution of slavery on the unwilling colonists and called the trafficking in human beings a crime. Yet neither Jefferson nor most of the founders intended to abolish slavery, and in the end, they struck the passage.

There is no mention of slavery in the final Declaration of Independence. Similarly, 11 years later, when it came time to draft the Constitution, the framers carefully constructed a document that preserved and protected slavery without ever using the word. In the texts in which they were making the case for freedom to the world, they did not want to explicitly enshrine their hypocrisy, so they sought to hide it. The Constitution contains 84 clauses. Six deal directly with the enslaved and their enslavement, as the historian David Waldstreicher has written, and five more hold implications for slavery. The Constitution protected the "property" of those who enslaved black people, prohibited the federal government from intervening to end the importation of enslaved Africans for a term of 20 years, allowed Congress to mobilize the militia to put down insurrections by the enslaved and forced states that had outlawed slavery to turn over enslaved people

who had run away seeking refuge. Like many others, the writer and abolitionist Samuel Byron called out the deceit, saying of the Constitution, "The words are dark and ambiguous; such as no plain man of common sense would have used, [and] are evidently chosen to conceal from Europe, that in this enlightened country, the practice of slavery has its advocates among men in the highest stations."

With independence, the founding fathers could no longer blame slavery on Britain. The sin became this nation's own, and so, too, the need to cleanse it. The shameful paradox of continuing chattel slavery in a nation founded on individual freedom, scholars today assert, led to a hardening of the racial caste system. This ideology, reinforced not just by laws but by racist science and literature, maintained that black people were subhuman, a belief that allowed white Americans to live with their betrayal. By the early 1800s, according to the legal historians Leland B. Ware, Robert J. Cottrol and Raymond T. Diamond, white Americans, whether they engaged in slavery or not, "had a considerable psychological as well as economic investment in the doctrine of black inferiority." While liberty was the inalienable right of the people who would be considered white, enslavement and subjugation became the natural station of people who had any discernible drop of "black" blood.

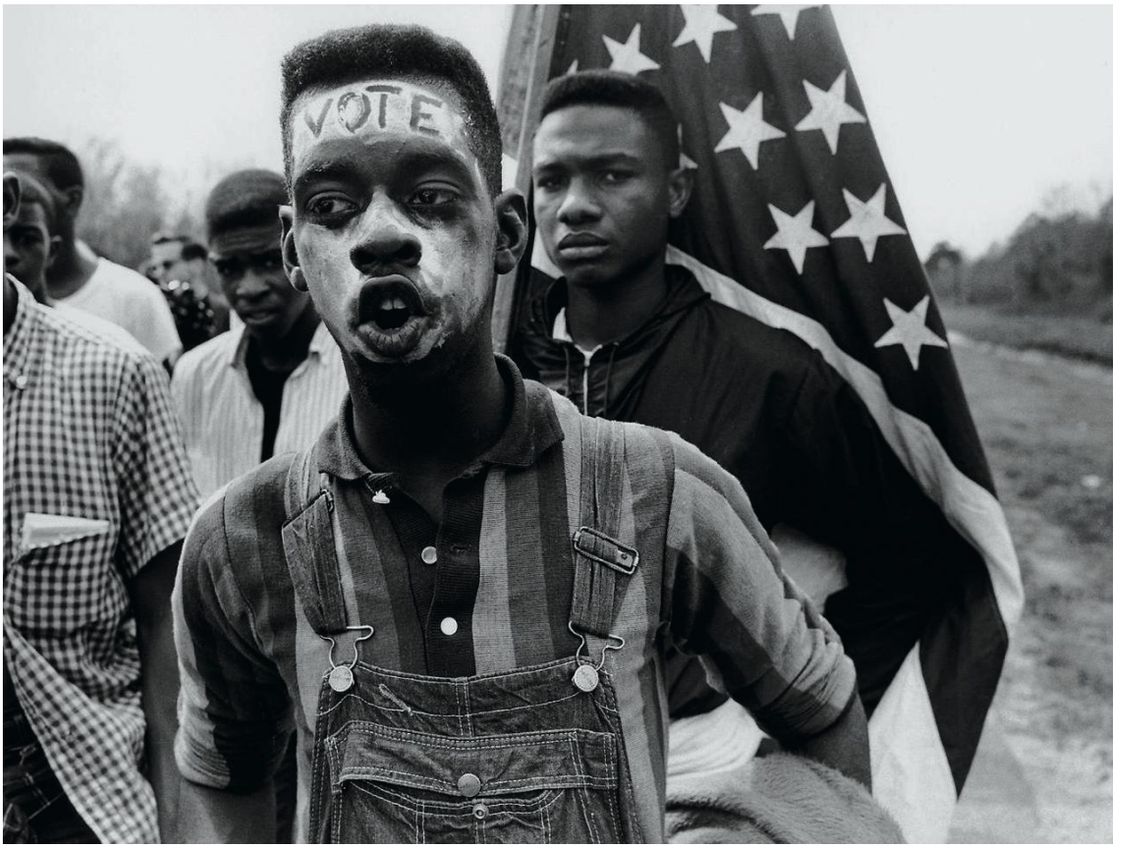
The Supreme Court enshrined this thinking in the law in its 1857 Dred Scott decision, ruling that black people, whether enslaved or free, came from a "slave" race. This made them inferior to white people and, therefore, incompatible with American democracy. Democracy was for citizens, and the "Negro race," the court ruled, was "a separate class of persons," which the founders had "not regarded as a portion of the people or citizens of the Government" and had "no rights which a white man was bound to respect." This belief, that black people were not merely enslaved but were a slave race, became the root of the endemic racism that we still cannot purge from this nation to this day. If black people could not ever be citizens, if they were a caste apart from all other humans, then they did not require the rights bestowed by the Constitution, and the "we" in the "We the People" was not a lie.

Isaac Woodard and his mother in South Carolina in 1946. In February that year, Woodard, a decorated Army veteran, was severely beaten by the police, leaving him blind.

Left: From the DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas. Right: From Special Collections and Archives/Georgia State University Library.

On Aug. 14, 1862, a mere five years after the nation's highest courts declared that no black person could be an American citizen, President Abraham Lincoln called a group of five esteemed free black men to the White House for a meeting. It was one of the few times that black people had ever been invited to the White House as guests. The Civil War had been raging for more than a year, and black abolitionists, who had been increasingly pressuring Lincoln to end slavery, must have felt a sense of great anticipation and pride.

The war was not going well for Lincoln. Britain was contemplating whether to intervene on the Confederacy's behalf, and Lincoln, unable to draw enough new white



A demonstrator at the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, led by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to fight for black suffrage.

volunteers for the war, was forced to reconsider his opposition to allowing black Americans to fight for their own liberation. The president was weighing a proclamation that threatened to emancipate all enslaved people in the states that had seceded from the Union if the states did not end the rebellion. The proclamation would also allow the formerly enslaved to join the Union army and fight against their former "masters." But Lincoln worried about what the consequences of this radical step would be. Like many white Americans, he opposed slavery as a cruel system at odds with American ideals, but he also opposed black equality. He believed that free black people were a "troublesome presence" incompatible with a democracy intended only for white people. "Free them, and make them politically and socially our equals?" he had said four years earlier. "My own feelings will not admit of this; and if mine would, we well know that those of the great mass of white people will not."

That August day, as the men arrived at the White House, they were greeted by the towering Lincoln and a man named James Mitchell, who eight days before had been given the title of a newly created position called the commissioner of emigration. This was to be his first assignment. After exchanging a few niceties, Lincoln got right to it. He informed his guests that he had gotten Congress to appropriate funds to ship black people, once freed, to another country.

"Why should they leave this country? This is, perhaps, the first question for proper consideration," Lincoln told them. "You and we are different races. … Your race suffer very greatly, many of them, by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence. In a word, we suffer on each side."

You can imagine the heavy silence in that room, as the weight of what the president said momentarily stole the breath of these five black men. It was 243 years to the month since the first of their ancestors had arrived on these shores, before Lincoln's family, long before most of the white people insisting that this was not their country. The Union had not entered the war to end slavery but to keep the South from splitting off, yet black men had signed up to fight. Enslaved people were fleeing their forced-labor camps, which we like to call plantations, trying to join the effort, serving as spies, sabotaging confederates, taking up arms for his cause as well as their own. And now Lincoln was blaming them for the war. "Although many men engaged on either side do not care for you one way or the other … without the institution of slavery and the colored race as a basis, the war could not have an existence," the president told them. "It is better for us both, therefore, to be separated."

As Lincoln closed the remarks, Edward Thomas, the delegation's chairman, informed the president, perhaps curtly, that they would consult on his proposition. "Take your full time," Lincoln said. "No hurry at all."

Nearly three years after that White House meeting, Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox. By summer, the Civil War was over, and four million black Americans were suddenly free. Contrary to Lincoln's view, most were not inclined to leave, agreeing with the sentiment of a resolution against black colonization put forward at a convention of black leaders in New York some decades before: "This is our home, and this our country. Beneath its sod lie the bones of our fathers. … Here we were born, and here we will die."

That the formerly enslaved did not take up Lincoln's offer to abandon these lands is an astounding testament to their belief in this nation's founding ideals. As W.E.B. Du Bois wrote, "Few men ever worshiped Freedom with half such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries." Black Americans had long called for universal equality and believed, as the abolitionist Martin Delany said, "that God has made of one blood all the nations that dwell on the face of the earth." Liberated by war, then, they did not seek vengeance on their oppressors as Lincoln and so many other white Americans feared. They did the opposite. During this nation's brief period of Reconstruction, from 1865 to 1877, formerly enslaved people zealously engaged with the democratic process. With federal troops tempering widespread white violence, black Southerners started branches of the Equal Rights League — one of the nation's first human rights organizations — to fight discrimination and organize voters; they headed in droves to the polls, where they placed other formerly enslaved people into seats that their enslavers had once held. The South, for the first time in the history of this country, began to resemble a democracy, with black Americans elected to local, state and federal offices. Some 16 black men served in Congress — including Hiram Revels of Mississippi, who became the first black man elected to the Senate. (Demonstrating just how brief this period would be, Revels, along with Blanche Bruce, would go from being the first black man elected to the last for nearly a hundred years, until

Photograph by Bruce Davidson/Magnum Photos

Edward Brooke of Massachusetts took office in 1967.) More than 600 black men served in Southern state legislatures and hundreds more in local positions.

These black officials joined with white Republicans, some of whom came down from the North, to write the most egalitarian state constitutions the South had ever seen. They helped pass more equitable tax legislation and laws that prohibited discrimination in public transportation, accommodation and housing. Perhaps their biggest achievement was the establishment of that most democratic of American institutions: the public school. Public education effectively did not exist in the South before Reconstruction. The white elite sent their children to private schools, while poor white children went without an education. But newly freed black people, who had been prohibited from learning to read and write during slavery, were desperate for an education. So black legislators successfully pushed for a universal, state-funded system of schools — not just for their own children but for white children, too. Black legislators also helped pass the first compulsory education laws in the region. Southern children, black and white, were now required to attend schools like their Northern counterparts. Just five years into Reconstruction, every Southern state had enshrined the right to a public education for all children into its constitution. In some states, like Louisiana and South Carolina, small numbers of black and white children, briefly, attended schools together.

Led by black activists and a Republican Party pushed left by the blatant recalcitrance of white Southerners, the years directly after slavery saw the greatest expansion of human and civil rights this nation would ever see. In 1865, Congress passed the 13th Amendment, making the United States one of the last nations in the Americas to outlaw slavery. The following year, black Americans, exerting their new political power, pushed white legislators to pass the Civil Rights Act, the nation's first such law and one of the most expansive pieces of civil rights legislation Congress has ever passed. It codified black American citizenship for the first time, prohibited housing discrimination and gave all Americans the right to buy and inherit property, make and enforce contracts and seek redress from courts. In 1868, Congress ratified the 14th Amendment, ensuring citizenship to any person born in the United States. Today, thanks to this amendment, every child born here to a European, Asian, African, Latin American or Middle Eastern immigrant gains automatic citizenship. The 14th Amendment also, for the first time, constitutionally guaranteed equal protection under the law. Ever since, nearly all other marginalized groups have used the 14th Amendment in their fights for equality (including the recent successful arguments before the Supreme Court on behalf of same-sex marriage). Finally, in 1870, Congress passed the 15th Amendment, guaranteeing the most critical aspect of democracy and citizenship — the right to vote — to all men regardless of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

For this fleeting moment known as Reconstruction, the majority in Congress seemed to embrace the idea that out of the ashes of the Civil War, we could create the multiracial democracy that black Americans envisioned even if our founding fathers did not.

But it would not last.

Anti-black racism runs in the very DNA of this country, as does the belief, so well articulated by Lincoln, that black people are the obstacle to national unity. The many gains of Reconstruction were met with fierce white resistance throughout the South, including unthinkable violence against the formerly enslaved, wide-scale voter suppression, electoral fraud and even, in some extreme cases, the overthrow of democratically elected biracial governments. Faced with this unrest, the federal government decided that black people were the cause of the problem and that for unity's sake, it would leave the white South to its own devices. In 1877, President Rutherford B. Hayes, in order to secure a compromise with Southern Democrats that would grant him the presidency in a contested election, agreed to pull federal troops from the South. With the troops gone, white Southerners quickly went about eradicating the gains of Reconstruction. The systemic white suppression of black life was so severe that this period between the 1880s and the 1920 and '30s became known as the Great Nadir, or the second slavery. Democracy would not return to the South for nearly a century.

White Southerners of all economic classes, on the other hand, thanks in significant part to the progressive policies and laws black people had championed, experienced substantial improvement in their lives even as they forced black people back into a quasi slavery. As Waters McIntosh, who had been enslaved in South Carolina, lamented, "It was the poor white man who was freed by the war, not the Negroes."

Georgia pines flew past the windows of the Greyhound bus carrying Isaac Woodard home to Winnsboro, S.C. After serving four years in the Army in World War II, where Woodard had earned a battle star, he was given an honorable discharge earlier that day at Camp Gordon and was headed home to meet his wife. When the bus stopped at a small drugstore an hour outside Atlanta, Woodard got into a brief argument with the white driver after asking if he could use the restroom. About half an hour later, the driver stopped again and told Woodard to get off the bus. Crisp in his uniform, Woodard stepped from the stairs and saw the police waiting for him. Before he could speak, one of the officers struck him in his head with a billy club, beating him so badly that he fell unconscious. The blows to Woodard's head were so severe that when he woke in a jail cell the next day, he could not see. The beating occurred just 4½ hours after his military discharge. At 26, Woodard would never see again.

There was nothing unusual about Woodard's horrific maiming. It was part of a wave of systemic violence deployed against black Americans after Reconstruction, in both the North and the South. As the egalitarian spirit of post-Civil War America evaporated under the desire for national reunification, black Americans, simply by existing, served as a problematic reminder of this nation's failings. White America dealt with this inconvenience by constructing a savagely enforced system of racial apartheid that excluded black people almost entirely from mainstream American life — a system so grotesque that Nazi Germany would later take inspiration from it for its own racist policies.

Despite the guarantees of equality in the 14th Amendment, the Supreme Court's landmark Plessy v. Ferguson decision in 1896 declared that the racial segregation of black Americans was constitutional. With the blessing of the nation's highest court and no federal will to vindicate black rights, starting in the late 1800s, Southern states passed a series of laws and codes meant to make slavery's racial caste system permanent by denying black people political power, social equality and basic dignity. They passed literacy tests to keep black people from voting and created all-white primaries for elections. Black people were prohibited from serving on juries or testifying in court against a white person. South Carolina prohibited white and black textile workers from using the same doors. Oklahoma forced phone companies to segregate phone booths. Memphis had separate parking spaces for black and white drivers. Baltimore passed an ordinance outlawing black people from moving onto a block more than half white and white people from moving onto a block more than half black. Georgia made it illegal for black and white people to be buried next to one another in the same cemetery. Alabama barred black people from using public libraries that their own tax dollars were paying for. Black people were expected to jump off the sidewalk to let white people pass and call all white people by an honorific, though they received none no matter how old they were. In the North, white politicians implemented policies that segregated black people into slum neighborhoods and into inferior all-black schools, operated whites-only public pools

and held white and "colored" days at the country fair, and white businesses regularly denied black people service, placing "Whites Only" signs in their windows. States like California joined Southern states in barring black people from marrying white people, while local school boards in Illinois and New Jersey mandated segregated schools for black and white children.

This caste system was maintained through wanton racial terrorism. And black veterans like Woodard, especially those with the audacity to wear their uniform, had since the Civil War been the target of a particular violence. This intensified during the two world wars because white people understood that once black men had gone abroad and experienced life outside the suffocating racial oppression of America, they were unlikely to quietly return to their subjugation at home. As Senator James K. Vardaman of Mississippi said on the Senate floor during World War I, black servicemen returning to the South would "inevitably lead to disaster." Giving a black man "military airs" and sending him to defend the flag would bring him "to the conclusion that his political rights must be respected."

Many white Americans saw black men in the uniforms of America's armed services not as patriotic but as exhibiting a dangerous pride. Hundreds of black veterans were beaten, maimed, shot and lynched. We like to call those who lived during World War II the Greatest Generation, but that allows us to ignore the fact that many of this generation fought for democracy abroad while brutally suppressing democracy for millions of American citizens. During the height of racial terror in this country, black Americans were not merely killed but castrated, burned alive and

Chained Migration: How Slavery Made Its Way West

By Tiya Miles

Slavery leapt out of the East and into the interior lands of the Old Southwest in the 1820s and 1830s. Cotton began to soar as the most lucrative product in the global marketplace just as the slaveholding societies of the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic were reaching limits in soil fertility. To land speculators, planters, ambitious settlers and Northern investors, the fertile lands to the west now looked irresistible.

The Native American nations that possessed the bulk of those lands stood in the way of this imagined progress. President Andrew Jackson, an enslaver from Tennessee famous for brutal "Indian" fighting in Georgia and Florida, swooped in on the side of fellow enslavers, championing the Indian Removal Act of 1830. When Congress passed the bill by a breathtakingly slim margin, Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws and Seminoles in the South as well as Potawatomis, Wyandots, Odawas, Delawares, Shawnees and Senecas in the Midwest were relocated to an uncharted space designated as Indian Territory (including present-day Oklahoma and Kansas). "Removal," as the historian Claudio Saunt argues in a forthcoming book on the topic, was far too quiet a word to capture the violation of this mass "expulsion" of 80,000 people.

As new lands in the Old Southwest were pried open, white enslavers back east realized that their most profitable export was no longer tobacco or rice. A complex interstate slave trade became an industry of its own. This extractive system, together with enslavers moving west with human property, resulted in the relocation of approximately one million enslaved black people to a new region. The entrenched practice of buying, selling, owning, renting and mortgaging humans stretched into the American West along with the white settler-colonial population that now occupied former indigenous lands.

Slaveholding settlers who had pushed into Texas from the American South wanted to extend cotton agriculture and increase the numbers of white arrivals. "It was slavery that seemed to represent the soft underbelly of the Texas unrest," the historian Steven Hahn asserts in "A Nation Without Borders." Armed conflict between American-identified enslavers and a Mexican state that outlawed slavery in 1829 was among the causes of the Mexican-American War, which won for the United States much of the Southwest and California.

Texas became the West's cotton slavery stronghold, with enslaved black people making up 30 percent of the state's population in 1860. "Indian Territory" also held a large population of enslaved black people. Mormons, too, kept scores of enslaved laborers in Utah. The small number of black people who arrived in California, New Mexico and Oregon before midcentury usually came as property. Even as most Western states banned slavery in their new constitutions, individual enslavers held onto their property-in-people until the Civil War.

Enslaved men who had served in the Union Army were among the first wave of African-Americans to move west of their own free will. They served as soldiers, and together with wives and children they formed pocket communities in Montana, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. It is a painful paradox that the work of black soldiers centered on what the historian Quintard Taylor has called "settler protection" in his classic 1998 study of African-Americans in the West, "In Search of the Racial Frontier." Even while bearing slavery's scars, black men found themselves carrying out orders to secure white residents of Western towns, track down "outlaws" (many of whom were people of color), police the federally imposed boundaries of Indian reservations and quell labor strikes. "This small group of black men," Taylor observes, "paid a dear price in their bid to earn the respect of the nation."

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Ieshia Evans being detained by law enforcement officers at a Black Lives Matter protest in 2016 outside the headquarters of the Baton Rouge Police Department.

Photograph by Jonathan Bachman/Reuters

dismembered with their body parts displayed in storefronts. This violence was meant to terrify and control black people, but perhaps just as important, it served as a psychological balm for white supremacy: You would not treat human beings this way. The extremity of the violence was a symptom of the psychological mechanism necessary to absolve white Americans of their country's original sin. To answer the question of how they could prize liberty abroad while simultaneously denying liberty to an entire race back home, white Americans resorted to the same racist ideology that Jefferson and the framers had used at the nation's founding.

This ideology — that black people belonged to an inferior, subhuman race — did not simply disappear once slavery ended. If the formerly enslaved and their descendants became educated, if we thrived in the jobs white people did, if we excelled in the sciences and arts, then the entire justification for how this nation allowed slavery would collapse. Free black people posed a danger to the country's idea of itself as exceptional; we held up the mirror in which the nation preferred not to peer. And so the inhumanity visited on black people by every generation of white America justified the inhumanity of the past.

Just as white Americans feared, World War II ignited what became black Americans' second sustained effort to make democracy real. As the editorial board of the black newspaper The Pittsburgh Courier wrote, "We wage a two-pronged attack against our enslavers at home and those abroad who will enslave us." Woodard's blinding is largely seen as one of the catalysts for the decades-long rebellion we have come to call the civil rights movement. But it is useful to pause and remember that this was the second mass movement for black civil rights, the first being Reconstruction. As the centennial of slavery's end neared, black people were still seeking the rights they had fought for and won after the Civil War: the right to be treated equally by public institutions, which was guaranteed in 1866 with the Civil Rights Act; the right to be treated as full citizens before the law, which was guaranteed in 1868 by the 14th Amendment; and the right to vote, which was guaranteed in 1870 by the 15th Amendment. In response to black demands for these rights, white Americans strung them from trees, beat them and dumped their bodies in muddy rivers, assassinated them in their front yards, firebombed them on buses, mauled them with dogs, peeled back their skin with fire hoses and murdered their children with explosives set off inside a church.

For the most part, black Americans fought back alone. Yet we never fought only for ourselves. The bloody freedom struggles of the civil rights movement laid the foundation for every other modern rights struggle. This nation's white founders set up a decidedly

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Come, come, whoever you are. Wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving. It doesn't matter. Ours is not a caravan of despair. Come, even if you have broken your vows a thousand times. Come, yet again, come, come.

- Rumi

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undemocratic Constitution that excluded women, Native Americans and black people, and did not provide the vote or equality for most Americans. But the laws born out of black resistance guarantee the franchise for all and ban discrimination based not just on race but on gender, nationality, religion and ability. It was the civil rights movement that led to the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which upended the racist immigration quota system intended to keep this country white. Because of black Americans, black and brown immigrants from across the globe are able to come to the United States and live in a country in which legal discrimination is no longer allowed. It is a truly American irony that some Asian-Americans, among the groups able to immigrate to the United States because of the black civil rights struggle, are now suing universities to end programs designed to help the descendants of the enslaved.

No one cherishes freedom more than those who have not had it. And to this day, black Americans, more than any other group, embrace the democratic ideals of a common good. We are the most likely to support programs like universal health care and a higher minimum wage, and to oppose programs that harm the most vulnerable. For instance, black Americans suffer the most from violent crime, yet we are the most opposed to capital punishment. Our unemployment rate is nearly twice that of white Americans, yet we are still the most likely of all groups to say this nation should take in refugees.

The truth is that as much democracy as this nation has today, it has been borne on the backs of black resistance. Our founding fathers may not have actually believed in the ideals they espoused, but black people did. As one scholar, Joe R. Feagin, put it, "Enslaved African-Americans have been among the foremost freedom-fighters this country has produced." For generations, we have believed in this country with a faith it did not deserve. Black people have seen the worst of America, yet, somehow, we still believe in its best.

They say our people were born on the water.

When it occurred, no one can say for certain. Perhaps it was in the second week, or the third, but surely by the fourth, when they had not seen their land or any land for so many days that they lost count. It was after fear had turned to despair, and despair to resignation, and resignation to an abiding understanding. The teal eternity of the Atlantic Ocean had severed them so completely from what had once been their home that it was as if nothing had ever existed before, as if everything and everyone they cherished had simply vanished from the earth. They were no longer Mbundu or Akan or Fulani. These men and women from many different nations, all shackled together in the suffocating hull of the ship, they were one people now.

Just a few months earlier, they had families, and farms, and lives and dreams. They were free. They had names, of course, but their enslavers did not bother to record them. They had been made black by those people who believed that they were white, and where they were heading, black equaled "slave," and slavery in America required turning human beings into property by stripping them of every element that made them individuals. This process was called seasoning, in which people stolen from western and central Africa were forced, often through torture, to stop speaking their native tongues and practicing their native religions.

But as the sociologist Glenn Bracey wrote, "Out of the ashes of white denigration, we gave birth to ourselves." For as much as white people tried to pretend, black people were not chattel. And so the process of seasoning, instead of erasing identity, served an opposite purpose: In the void, we forged a new culture all our own.

Today, our very manner of speaking recalls the Creole languages that enslaved people innovated in order to communicate both with Africans speaking various dialects and the English-speaking people who enslaved them. Our style of dress, the extra flair, stems back to the desires of enslaved people — shorn of all individuality — to exert their own identity. Enslaved people would wear their hat in a jaunty manner or knot their head scarves intricately. Today's avant-garde nature of black hairstyles and fashion displays a vibrant reflection of enslaved people's determination to feel fully human through self-expression. The improvisational quality of black art and music comes from a culture that because of constant disruption could not cling to convention. Black naming practices, so often impugned by mainstream society, are themselves an act of resistance. Our last names belong to the white people who once owned us. That is why the insistence of many black Americans, particularly those most marginalized, to give our children names that we create, that are neither European nor from Africa, a place we have never been, is an act of self-determination. When the world listens to quintessential American music, it is our voice they hear. The sorrow songs we sang in the fields to soothe our physical pain and find hope in a freedom we did not expect to know until we died became American gospel. Amid the devastating violence and poverty of the Mississippi Delta, we birthed jazz and blues. And it was in the deeply impoverished and segregated neighborhoods where white Americans forced the descendants of the enslaved to live that teenagers too poor to buy instruments used old records to create a new music known as hip-hop.

Our speech and fashion and the drum of our music echoes Africa but is not African. Out of our unique isolation, both from our native cultures and from white America, we forged this nation's most significant original culture. In turn, "mainstream" society has coveted our style, our slang and our song, seeking to appropriate the one truly American culture as its own. As Langston Hughes wrote in 1926, "They'll see how beautiful I am/And be ashamed —/I, too, am America."

For centuries, white Americans have been trying to solve the "Negro problem." They have dedicated thousands of pages to this endeavor. It is common, still, to point to rates of black poverty, out-of-wedlock births, crime and college attendance, as if these conditions in a country built on a racial caste system are not utterly predictable. But crucially, you cannot view those statistics while ignoring another: that black people were enslaved here longer than we have been free.

At 43, I am part of the first generation of black Americans in the history of the United States to be born into a society in which black people had full rights of citizenship. Black people suffered under slavery for 250 years; we have been legally "free" for just 50. Yet in that briefest of spans, despite continuing to face rampant discrimination, and despite there never having been a genuine effort to redress the wrongs of slavery and the century of racial apartheid that followed, black Americans have made astounding progress, not only for ourselves but also for all Americans.

What if America understood, finally, in this 400th year, that we have never been the problem but the solution?

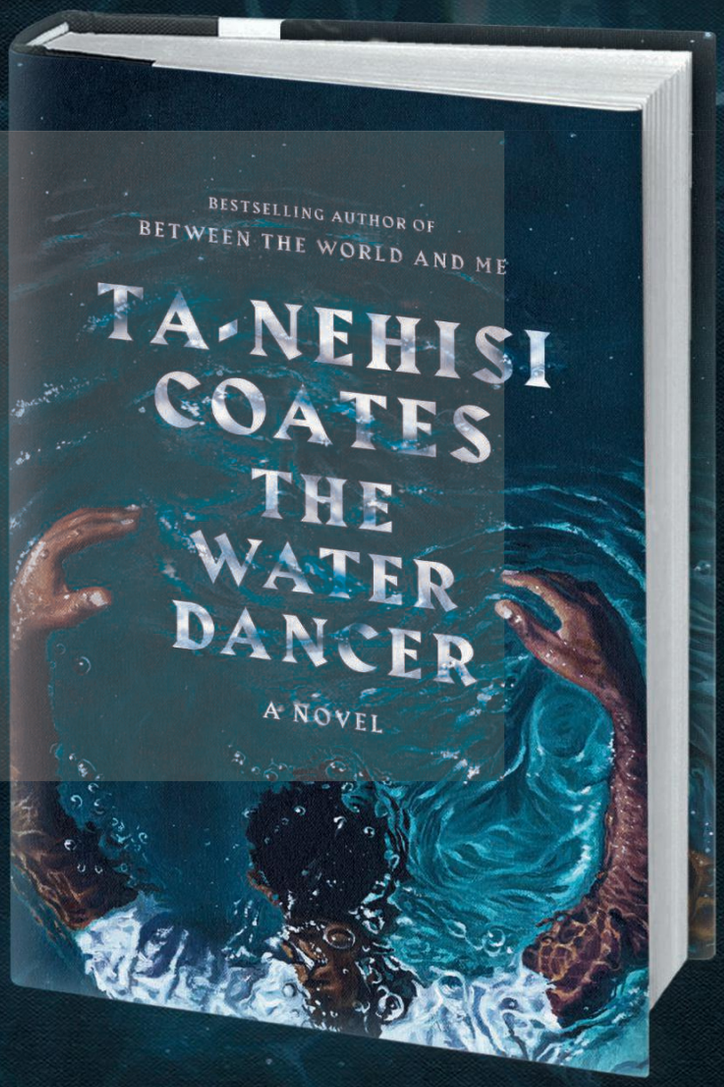
When I was a child — I must have been in fifth or sixth grade — a teacher gave our class an assignment intended to celebrate the diversity of the great American melting pot. She instructed each of us to write a short report on our ancestral land and then draw that nation's flag. As she turned to write the assignment on the board, the other black girl in class locked eyes with me. Slavery had erased any connection we had to an African country, and even if we tried to claim the whole continent, there was no "African" flag. It was hard enough being one of two black kids in the class, and this assignment would just be another reminder of the distance between the white kids and us. In the end, I walked over to the globe near my teacher's desk, picked a random African country and claimed it as my own.

I wish, now, that I could go back to the younger me and tell her that her people's ancestry started here, on these lands, and to boldly, proudly, draw the stars and those stripes of the American flag.

We were told once, by virtue of our bondage, that we could never be American. But it was by virtue of our bondage that we became the most American of all. ◆

RANDOM HOUSE IS PROUD TO PUBLISH

authors who challenge us to understand our past so we can all strive for a better future.



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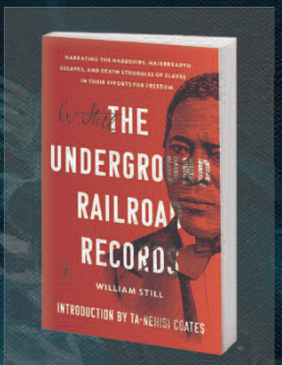
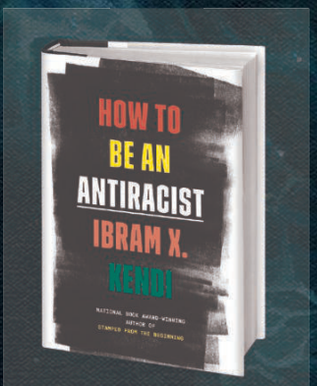
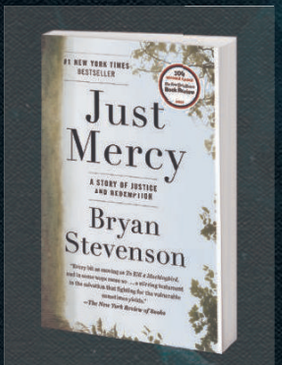


True stories of resilience compiled by an Underground Railroad conductor.



A bracingly original approach to understanding and uprooting racism, from National Book Award winning author Ibram X. Kendi.



From 1619 Project contributor and MacArthur genius Bryan Stevenson, a journey into America's broken criminal justice system.

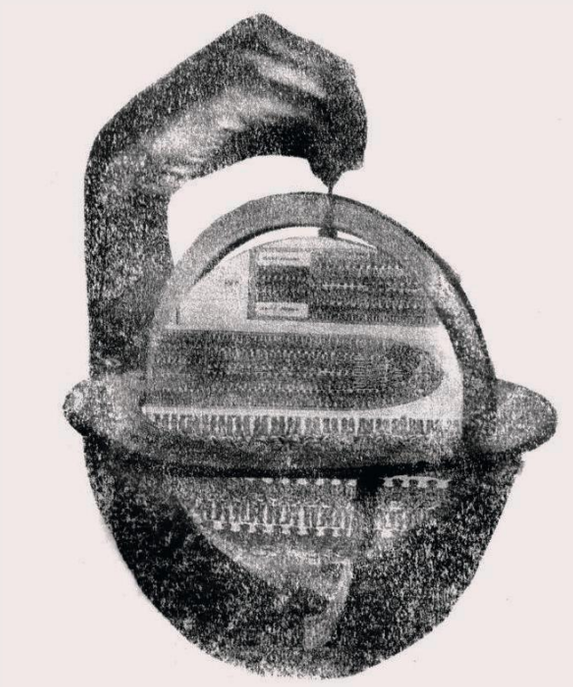
ONE WORLD | Penguin Random House

Available in print, ebook, and audio formats, wherever books are sold.

PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE, CHANGING THE WORLD, ONE BOOK AT A TIME.

Featured in chronological order throughout this issue are 17 literary works that bring to life consequential moments in African-American history. All are original compositions by contemporary black writers who were asked to create brief explorations of important events or people.

● August 1619: A ship arrives in Point Comfort, Va., carrying more than 20 enslaved Africans, the first on record to be brought to the English colony of Virginia. They are among the 12.5 million Africans forced into the trans-Atlantic slave trade, their journey to the New World today known as the Middle Passage.



Over the course of 350 years,
36,000 slave ships crossed the Atlantic
Ocean. I walk over to the globe & move

my finger back & forth between
the fragile continents. I try to keep
count how many times I drag

my hand across the bristled
hemispheres, but grow weary of chasing
a history that swallowed me.

For every hundred people who were
captured & enslaved, forty died before they
ever reached the New World.

I pull my index finger from Angola
to Brazil & feel the bodies jumping from
the ship.

I drag my thumb from Ghana
to Jamaica & feel the weight of dysentery
make an anvil of my touch.

I slide my ring finger from Senegal
to South Carolina & feel the ocean
separate a million families.

The soft hum of history spins
on its tilted axis. A cavalcade of ghost ships
wash their hands of all they carried.

By Clint Smith

Diagram: Getty Images

Photo illustrations by Jon Key

● March 5, 1770: Crispus Attucks, a fugitive from slavery who works as dockworker, becomes the first American to die for the cause of independence after being shot in a clash with British troops.

African & Natick blood-born
known along paths up & down
Boston Harbor, escaped slave,

harpooner & rope maker,
he never dreamt a pursuit of happiness
or destiny, yet rallied

beside patriots who hurled a fury
of snowballs, craggy dirt-frozen
chunks of ice, & oyster shells

at the stout flank of redcoats,
as the 29th Regiment of Foot
aimed muskets, waiting for *fire*!

How often had he walked, gazing
down at gray timbers of the wharf,
as if to find a lost copper coin?

Wind deviled cold air as he stood
leaning on his hardwood stick,
& then two lead bullets

tore his chest, blood reddening snow
on King Street, March 5, 1770,
first to fall on captain's command.

Five colonists lay for calling hours
in Faneuil Hall before sharing a grave
at the Granary Burying Ground.

They had laid a foundering stone
for the Minutemen at Lexington
& Concord, first to defy & die,

& an echo of the future rose over
the courtroom as John Adams
defended the Brits, calling the dead

a "motley rabble of saucy boys,
negroes & mulattoes, Irish
teagues & outlandish jacktars,"

who made soldiers fear for their lives,
& at day's end only two would pay
with the branding of their thumbs.

By Yusef Komunyakaa

Boston Massacre: National Archives. Attucks: Getty Images.

In order to understand the brutality of American capitalism, you have to start on the plantation.

By Matthew Desmond

Photograph by Lyle Ashton Harris


NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE
YOU BRING IT TO LIFE.
WE BRING IT TO MARKET.

A couple of years before he was convicted of securities fraud, Martin Shkreli was the chief executive of a pharmaceutical company that acquired the rights to Daraprim, a lifesaving antiparasitic drug. Previously the drug cost $13.50 a pill, but in Shkreli's hands, the price quickly increased by a factor of 56, to $750 a pill. At a health care conference, Shkreli told the audience that he should have raised the price even higher. "No one wants to say it, no one's proud of it," he explained. "But this is a capitalist society, a capitalist system and capitalist rules."

This is a capitalist society. It's a fatalistic mantra that seems to get repeated to anyone who questions why America can't be more fair or equal. But around the world, there are many types of capitalist societies, ranging from liberating to exploitative, protective to abusive, democratic to unregulated. When Americans declare that "we live in a capitalist society" — as a real estate mogul told The Miami Herald last year when explaining his feelings about small-business owners being evicted from their Little Haiti storefronts — what they're often defending is our nation's peculiarly brutal economy. "Low-road capitalism," the University of Wisconsin-Madison sociologist Joel Rogers has called it. In a capitalist society that goes low, wages are depressed as businesses compete over the price, not the quality, of goods; so-called unskilled workers are typically incentivized through punishments, not promotions; inequality reigns and poverty spreads. In the United States, the richest 1 percent of Americans own 40 percent of the country's wealth, while a larger share of working-age people (18-65) live in poverty than in any other nation belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (O.E.C.D.).

Or consider worker rights in different capitalist nations. In Iceland, 90 percent of wage and salaried workers belong to trade unions authorized to fight for living wages and fair working conditions. Thirty-four percent of Italian workers are unionized, as are 26 percent of Canadian workers. Only 10 percent of American wage and salaried workers carry union cards. The O.E.C.D. scores nations along a number of indicators, such as how countries regulate temporary work arrangements. Scores run from 5 ("very strict") to 1 ("very loose"). Brazil scores 4.1 and Thailand, 3.7, signaling toothy regulations on temp work. Further down the list are Norway (3.4), India (2.5) and Japan (1.3). The United States scored 0.3, tied for second to last place with Malaysia. How easy is it to fire workers? Countries like Indonesia (4.1) and Portugal (3) have strong rules about severance pay and reasons for dismissal. Those rules relax somewhat in places like Denmark (2.1) and Mexico (1.9). They virtually disappear in the United States, ranked dead last out of 71 nations with a score of 0.5.

Those searching for reasons the American economy is uniquely severe and unbridled have found answers in many places (religion, politics, culture). But recently, historians have pointed persuasively to the gnatty fields of Georgia and Alabama, to the cotton houses and slave auction blocks, as the birthplace of America's low-road approach to capitalism.

Slavery was undeniably a font of phenomenal wealth. By the eve of the Civil War, the Mississippi Valley was home to more millionaires per capita than anywhere else in the United States. Cotton grown and picked by enslaved workers was the nation's most valuable export. The combined value of enslaved people exceeded that of all the railroads and factories in the nation. New Orleans boasted a denser concentration of banking capital than New York City. What made the cotton economy boom in the United States, and not in all the other far-flung parts of the world with climates and soil suitable to the crop, was our nation's unflinching willingness to use violence on nonwhite people and to exert its will on seemingly endless supplies of land and labor. Given the choice between modernity and barbarism, prosperity and poverty, lawfulness and cruelty, democracy and totalitarianism, America chose all of the above.

Nearly two average American lifetimes (79 years) have passed

Mortgaging the Future: The North-South rift led to a piecemeal system of bank regulation — with dangerous consequences.

By Mehrsa Baradaran

At the start of the Civil War, only states could charter banks. It wasn't until the National Currency Act of 1863 and the National Bank Act of 1864 passed at the height of the Civil War that banks operated in this country on a national scale, with federal oversight. And even then, it was only law in the North. The Union passed the bills so it could establish a national currency in order to finance the war. The legislation also created the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (O.C.C.), the first federal bank regulator. After the war, states were allowed to keep issuing bank charters of their own. This byzantine infrastructure remains to this day and is known as the dual banking system. Among all nations in the world, only the United States has such a fragmentary, overlapping and inefficient system — a direct relic of the conflict between federal and state power over maintenance of the slave-based economy of the South.

Both state regulators and the O.C.C., one of the largest federal regulators, are funded by fees from the banks they regulate. Moreover, banks are effectively able to choose regulators — either federal or state ones, depending on their charter. They can even change regulators if they become unsatisfied with the one they've chosen. Consumer-protection laws, interest-rate caps and basic-soundness regulations have often been rendered ineffectual in the process — and deregulation of this sort tends to lead to crisis.

In the mid-2000s, when subprime lenders started appearing in certain low-income neighborhoods, many of them majority black and Latino, several state banking regulators took note. In Michigan, the state insurance regulator tried to enforce its consumer-protection laws on Wachovia Mortgage, a subsidiary of Wachovia Bank. In response, Wachovia's national regulator, the O.C.C., stepped in, claiming that banks with a national charter did not have to comply with state law. The Supreme Court agreed with the O.C.C., and Wachovia continued to engage in risky subprime activity.

Eventually loans like those blew up the banking system and the investments of many Americans — especially the most vulnerable. Black communities lost 53 percent of their wealth because of the crisis, a loss that a former congressman, Brad Miller, said "has almost been an extinction event."

Photography by J.H. Aylsworth, via the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

Above: Women and children in a cotton field in the 1860s. Opening pages: The New York Stock Exchange, July 2019

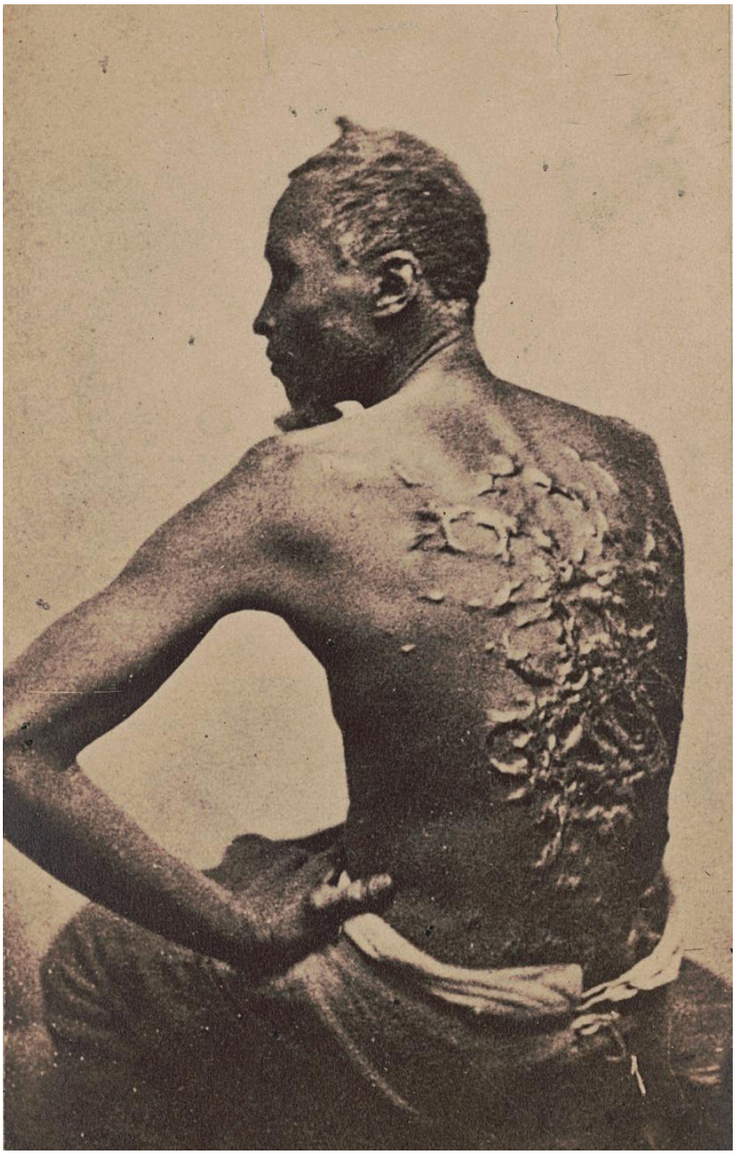
since the end of slavery, only two. It is not surprising that we can still feel the looming presence of this institution, which helped turn a poor, fledgling nation into a financial colossus. The surprising bit has to do with the many eerily specific ways slavery can still be felt in our economic life. "American slavery is necessarily imprinted on the DNA of American capitalism," write the historians Sven Beckert and Seth Rockman. The task now, they argue, is "cataloging the dominant and recessive traits" that have been passed down to us, tracing the unsettling and often unrecognized lines of descent by which America's national sin is now being visited upon the third and fourth generations.

They picked in long rows, bent bodies shuffling through cotton fields white in bloom. Men, women and children picked, using both hands to hurry the work. Some picked in Negro cloth, their raw product returning to them by way of New England mills. Some picked completely naked. Young children ran water across the humped rows, while overseers peered down from horses. Enslaved workers placed each cotton boll into a sack slung around their necks. Their haul would be weighed after the sunlight stalked away from the fields and, as the freedman Charles Ball recalled, you couldn't "distinguish the weeds from the cotton plants." If the haul came up light, enslaved workers were often whipped. "A short day's work was always punished," Ball wrote.

Cotton was to the 19th century what oil was to the 20th: among the world's most widely traded commodities. Cotton is everywhere, in our clothes, hospitals, soap. Before the industrialization of cotton, people wore expensive clothes made of wool or linen and dressed their beds in furs or straw. Whoever mastered cotton could make a killing. But cotton needed land. A field could only tolerate a few straight years of the crop before its soil became depleted. Planters watched as acres that had initially produced 1,000 pounds of cotton yielded only 400 a few seasons later. The thirst for new farmland grew even more intense after the invention of the cotton gin in the early 1790s. Before the gin, enslaved workers grew more cotton than they could clean. The gin broke the bottleneck, making it possible to clean as much cotton as you could grow.

The United States solved its land shortage by expropriating millions of acres from Native Americans, often with military force, acquiring Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Florida. It then sold that land on the cheap — just $1.25 an acre in the early 1830s ($38 in today's dollars) — to white settlers. Naturally, the first to cash in were the land speculators. Companies operating in Mississippi flipped land, selling it soon after purchase, commonly for double the price.

Enslaved workers felled trees by ax, burned the underbrush and leveled the earth for planting. "Whole forests were literally dragged out by the roots," John Parker, an enslaved worker, remembered. A lush, twisted mass of vegetation was replaced by a single crop. An origin of American money exerting its will on the earth, spoiling the environment for profit, is found in the cotton plantation. Floods became bigger and more common. The lack



A photograph taken at a medical examination of a man known as Gordon, who escaped from Mississippi and made his way to a Union Army encampment in Baton Rouge, La., in 1863.

Photograph by McPherson & Oliver, via the Library of Congress

of biodiversity exhausted the soil and, to quote the historian Walter Johnson, "rendered one of the richest agricultural regions of the earth dependent on upriver trade for food."

As slave labor camps spread throughout the South, production surged. By 1831, the country was delivering nearly half the world's raw cotton crop, with 350 million pounds picked that year. Just four years later, it harvested 500 million pounds. Southern white elites grew rich, as did their counterparts in the North, who erected textile mills to form, in the words of the Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner, an "unhallowed alliance between the lords of the lash and the lords of the loom." The large-scale cultivation of cotton hastened the invention of the factory, an institution that propelled the Industrial Revolution and changed the course of history. In 1810, there were 87,000 cotton spindles in America. Fifty years later, there were five million. Slavery, wrote one of its defenders in De Bow's Review, a widely read agricultural magazine, was the "nursing mother of the prosperity of the North." Cotton planters, millers and consumers were fashioning a new economy, one that was global in scope and required the movement of capital, labor and products across long distances. In other words, they were fashioning a capitalist economy. "The beating heart of this new system," Beckert writes, "was slavery."

Perhaps you're reading this at work, maybe at a multinational corporation that runs like a soft-purring engine. You report to someone, and someone reports to you. Everything is tracked, recorded and analyzed, via vertical reporting systems, double-entry record-keeping and precise quantification. Data seems to hold sway over every operation. It feels like a cutting-edge approach to management, but many of these techniques that we now take for granted were developed by and for large plantations.

When an accountant depreciates an asset to save on taxes or when a midlevel manager spends an afternoon filling in rows and columns on an Excel spreadsheet, they are repeating business procedures whose roots twist back to slave-labor camps. And yet, despite this, "slavery plays almost no role in histories of management," notes the historian Caitlin Rosenthal in her book "Accounting for Slavery." Since the 1977 publication of Alfred Chandler's classic study, "The Visible Hand," historians have tended to connect the development of modern business practices to the 19th-century railroad industry, viewing plantation slavery as precapitalistic, even primitive. It's a more comforting origin story, one that protects the idea that America's economic ascendancy developed not because of, but in spite of, millions of black people toiling on plantations. But management techniques used by 19th-century corporations were implemented during the previous century by plantation owners.

Planters aggressively expanded their operations to capitalize on economies of scale inherent to cotton growing, buying more enslaved workers, investing in large gins and presses and experimenting with different seed varieties. To do so, they developed complicated workplace hierarchies that combined a central office, made up of owners and lawyers in charge of capital allocation and long-term strategy, with several divisional units, responsible for different operations. Rosenthal writes of one plantation where the owner supervised a top lawyer, who supervised another lawyer, who supervised an overseer, who supervised three bookkeepers, who supervised 16 enslaved head drivers and specialists (like bricklayers), who supervised hundreds of enslaved workers. Everyone was accountable to someone else, and plantations pumped out not just cotton bales but volumes of data about how each bale was produced. This organizational form was very advanced for its time, displaying a level of hierarchal complexity equaled only by large government structures, like that of the British Royal Navy.

Like today's titans of industry, planters understood that their profits climbed when they extracted maximum effort out of each worker. So they paid close attention to inputs and outputs by developing precise systems of record-keeping. Meticulous bookkeepers and overseers were just as important to the productivity of a slave-labor camp as field hands. Plantation entrepreneurs developed spreadsheets, like Thomas Affleck's "Plantation Record and Account Book," which ran into eight editions circulated until the Civil War. Affleck's book was a one-stop-shop accounting manual, complete with rows and columns that tracked per-worker productivity. This book "was really at the cutting edge of the informational technologies available to businesses during this period," Rosenthal told me. "I have never found anything remotely as complex as Affleck's book for free labor." Enslavers used the book to determine end-of-the-year balances, tallying expenses and revenues and noting the causes of their biggest gains and losses. They quantified capital costs on their land, tools and enslaved workforces, applying Affleck's recommended interest rate. Perhaps most remarkable, they also developed ways to calculate depreciation, a breakthrough in modern management procedures, by assessing the

market value of enslaved workers over their life spans. Values generally peaked between the prime ages of 20 and 40 but were individually adjusted up or down based on sex, strength and temperament: people reduced to data points.

This level of data analysis also allowed planters to anticipate rebellion. Tools were accounted for on a regular basis to make sure a large number of axes or other potential weapons didn't suddenly go missing. "Never allow any slave to lock or unlock any door," advised a Virginia enslaver in 1847. In this way, new bookkeeping techniques developed to maximize returns also helped to ensure that violence flowed in one direction, allowing a minority of whites to control a much larger group of enslaved black people. American planters never forgot what happened in Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) in 1791, when enslaved workers took up arms and revolted. In fact, many white enslavers overthrown during the Haitian Revolution relocated to the United States and started over.

Overseers recorded each enslaved worker's yield. Accountings took place not only after nightfall, when cotton baskets were weighed, but throughout the workday. In the words of a North Carolina planter, enslaved workers were to be "followed up from day break until dark." Having hands line-pick in rows sometimes longer than five football fields allowed overseers to spot anyone lagging behind. The uniform layout of the land had a logic; a logic designed to dominate. Faster workers were placed at the head of the line, which encouraged those who followed to match the captain's pace. When enslaved workers grew ill or old, or became pregnant, they were assigned to lighter tasks. One enslaver established a "sucklers gang" for nursing mothers, as well as a "measles gang," which at once quarantined those struck by the virus and ensured that they did their part to contribute to the productivity machine. Bodies and tasks were aligned with rigorous exactitude. In trade magazines, owners swapped advice about the minutiae of planting, including slave diets and clothing as well as the kind of tone a master should use. In 1846, one Alabama planter advised his fellow enslavers to always give orders "in a mild tone, and try to leave the impression on the mind of the negro that what you say is the result of reflection." The devil (and his profits) were in the details.

The uncompromising pursuit of measurement and scientific accounting displayed in slave plantations predates industrialism. Northern factories would not begin adopting these techniques until decades after the Emancipation Proclamation. As the large slave-labor camps grew increasingly efficient, enslaved black people became America's first modern workers, their productivity increasing at an astonishing pace. During the 60 years leading up to the Civil War, the daily amount of cotton picked per enslaved worker increased 2.3 percent a year. That means that in 1862, the average enslaved fieldworker picked not 25 percent or 50 percent as much but 400 percent as much cotton than his or her counterpart did in 1801.

Today modern technology has facilitated unremitting workplace supervision, particularly in the service sector. Companies have developed software that records workers' keystrokes and mouse clicks, along with randomly capturing screenshots multiple times a day. Modern-day workers are subjected to a wide variety of surveillance strategies, from drug tests and closed-circuit video monitoring to tracking apps and even devices that sense heat and motion. A 2006 survey found that more than a third of companies with work forces of 1,000 or more had staff members who read through employees' outbound emails. The technology that accompanies this workplace supervision can make it feel futuristic. But it's only the technology that's new. The core impulse behind that technology pervaded plantations, which sought innermost control over the bodies of their enslaved work force.

The cotton plantation was America's first big business, and the nation's first corporate Big Brother was the overseer. And behind every cold calculation, every rational

Good as Gold: In Lincoln's wartime "greenbacks," a preview of the 20th-century rise of fiat currency.

By Mehrsa Baradaran

The Constitution is riddled with compromises made between the North and South over the issue of slavery — the Electoral College, the three-fifths clause — but paper currency was too contentious an issue for the framers, so it was left out entirely. Thomas Jefferson, like many Southerners, believed that a national currency would make the federal government too powerful and would also favor the Northern trade-based economy over the plantation economy. So, for much of its first century, the United States was without a national bank or a uniform currency, leaving its economy prone to crisis, bank runs and instability.

At the height of the war, Lincoln understood that he could not feed the troops without more money, so he issued a national currency, backed by the full faith and credit of the United States Treasury — but not by gold. (These bills were known derisively as "greenbacks," a word that has lived on.) The South had a patchwork currency that was backed by the holdings of private banks — the same banks that helped finance the entire Southern economy, from the plantations to the people enslaved on them. Some Confederate bills even had depictions of enslaved people on their backs.

In a sense, the war over slavery was also a war over the future of the economy and the essentiality of value. By issuing fiat currency, Lincoln bet the future on the elasticity of value. This was the United States' first formal experiment with fiat money, and it was a resounding success. The currency was accepted by national and international creditors — such as private creditors from London, Amsterdam and Paris — and funded the feeding and provisioning of Union troops. In turn, the success of the Union Army fortified the new currency. Lincoln assured critics that the move would be temporary, but leaders who followed him eventually made it permanent — first Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression and then, formally, Richard Nixon in 1971.

Fabric of Modernity: How Southern cotton became the cornerstone of a new global commodities trade.

By Mehrsa Baradaran

Cotton produced under slavery created a worldwide market that brought together the Old World and the New: the industrial textile mills of the Northern states and England, on the one hand, and the cotton plantations of the American South on the other. Textile mills in industrial centers like Lancashire, England, purchased a majority of cotton exports, which created worldwide trade hubs in London and New York where merchants could trade in, invest in, insure and speculate on the cotton-commodity market. Though trade in other commodities existed, it was cotton (and the earlier trade in slave-produced sugar from the Caribbean) that accelerated worldwide commercial markets in the 19th century, creating demand for innovative contracts, novel financial products and modern forms of insurance and credit.

Like all agricultural goods, cotton is prone to fluctuations in quality depending on crop type, location and environmental conditions. Treating it as a commodity led to unique problems: How would damages be calculated if the wrong crop was sent? How would you assure that there was no misunderstanding between two parties on time of delivery? Legal concepts we still have to this day, like "mutual mistake" (the notion that contracts can be voided if both parties relied on a mistaken assumption), were developed to deal with these issues. Textile merchants needed to purchase cotton in advance of their own production, which meant that farmers needed a way to sell goods they had not yet grown; this led to the invention of futures contracts and, arguably, the commodities markets still in use today.

From the first decades of the 1800s, during the height of the trans-Atlantic cotton trade, the sheer size of the market and the escalating number of disputes between counterparties was such that courts and lawyers began to articulate and codify the common-law standards regarding contracts. This allowed investors and traders to mitigate their risk through contractual arrangement, which smoothed the flow of goods and money. Today law students still study some of these pivotal cases as they learn doctrines like forseeability, mutual mistake and damages.

fine-tuning of the system, violence lurked. Plantation owners used a combination of incentives and punishments to squeeze as much as possible out of enslaved workers. Some beaten workers passed out from the pain and woke up vomiting. Some "danced" or "trembled" with every hit. An 1829 first-person account from Alabama recorded an overseer's shoving the faces of women he thought had picked too slow into their cotton baskets and opening up their backs. To the historian Edward Baptist, before the Civil War, Americans "lived in an economy whose bottom gear was torture."

There is some comfort, I think, in attributing the sheer brutality of slavery to dumb racism. We imagine pain being inflicted somewhat at random, doled out by the stereotypical white overseer, free but poor. But a good many overseers weren't allowed to whip at will. Punishments were authorized by the higher-ups. It was not so much the rage of the poor white Southerner but the greed of the rich white planter that drove the lash. The violence was neither arbitrary nor gratuitous. It was rational, capitalistic, all part of the plantation's design. "Each individual having a stated number of pounds of cotton to pick," a formerly enslaved worker, Henry Watson, wrote in 1848, "the deficit of which was made up by as many lashes being applied to the poor slave's back." Because overseers closely monitored enslaved workers' picking abilities, they assigned each worker a unique quota. Falling short of that quota could get you beaten, but overshooting your target could bring misery the next day, because the master might respond by raising your picking rate.

Profits from heightened productivity were harnessed through the anguish of the enslaved. This was why the fastest cotton pickers were often whipped the most. It was why punishments rose and fell with global market fluctuations. Speaking of cotton in 1854, the fugitive slave John Brown remembered, "When the price rises in the English market, the poor slaves immediately feel the effects, for they are harder driven, and the whip is kept more constantly going." Unrestrained capitalism holds no monopoly on violence, but in making possible the pursuit of near limitless personal fortunes, often at someone else's expense, it does put a cash value on our moral commitments.

Slavery did supplement white workers with what W. E. B. Du Bois called a "public and psychological wage," which allowed them to roam freely and feel a sense of entitlement. But this, too, served the interests of money. Slavery pulled down all workers' wages. Both in the cities and countryside, employers had access to a large and flexible labor pool made up of enslaved and free people. Just as in today's gig economy, day laborers during slavery's reign often lived under conditions of scarcity and uncertainty, and jobs meant to be worked for a few months were worked for lifetimes. Labor power had little chance when the bosses could choose between buying people, renting them, contracting indentured servants, taking on apprentices or hiring children and prisoners.

This not only created a starkly uneven playing field, dividing workers from themselves; it also made "all nonslavery appear as freedom," as the economic historian Stanley Engerman has written. Witnessing the horrors of slavery drilled into poor white workers that things could be worse. So they generally accepted their lot, and American freedom became broadly defined as the opposite of bondage. It was a freedom that understood what it was against but not what it was for; a malnourished and mean kind of freedom that kept you out of chains but did not provide bread or shelter. It was a freedom far too easily pleased.

In recent decades, America has experienced the financialization of its economy. In 1980, Congress repealed regulations that had been in place since the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act, allowing banks to merge and charge their customers higher interest rates. Since then, increasingly profits have accrued not by trading and producing goods and services but through financial instruments. Between 1980 and 2008, more

African-Americans preparing cotton for the gin at a plantation on Port Royal Island, S.C., in the 1860s.

Photograph by Timothy H. O'Sullivan, via the Library of Congress

than $6.6 trillion was transferred to financial firms. After witnessing the successes and excesses of Wall Street, even nonfinancial companies began finding ways to make money from financial products and activities. Ever wonder why every major retail store, hotel chain and airline wants to sell you a credit card? This financial turn has trickled down into our everyday lives: It's there in our pensions, home mortgages, lines of credit and college-savings portfolios. Americans with some means now act like "enterprising subjects," in the words of the political scientist Robert Aitken.

As it's usually narrated, the story of the ascendancy of American finance tends to begin in 1980, with the gutting of Glass-Steagall, or in 1944 with Bretton Woods, or perhaps in the reckless speculation of the 1920s. But in reality, the story begins during slavery.

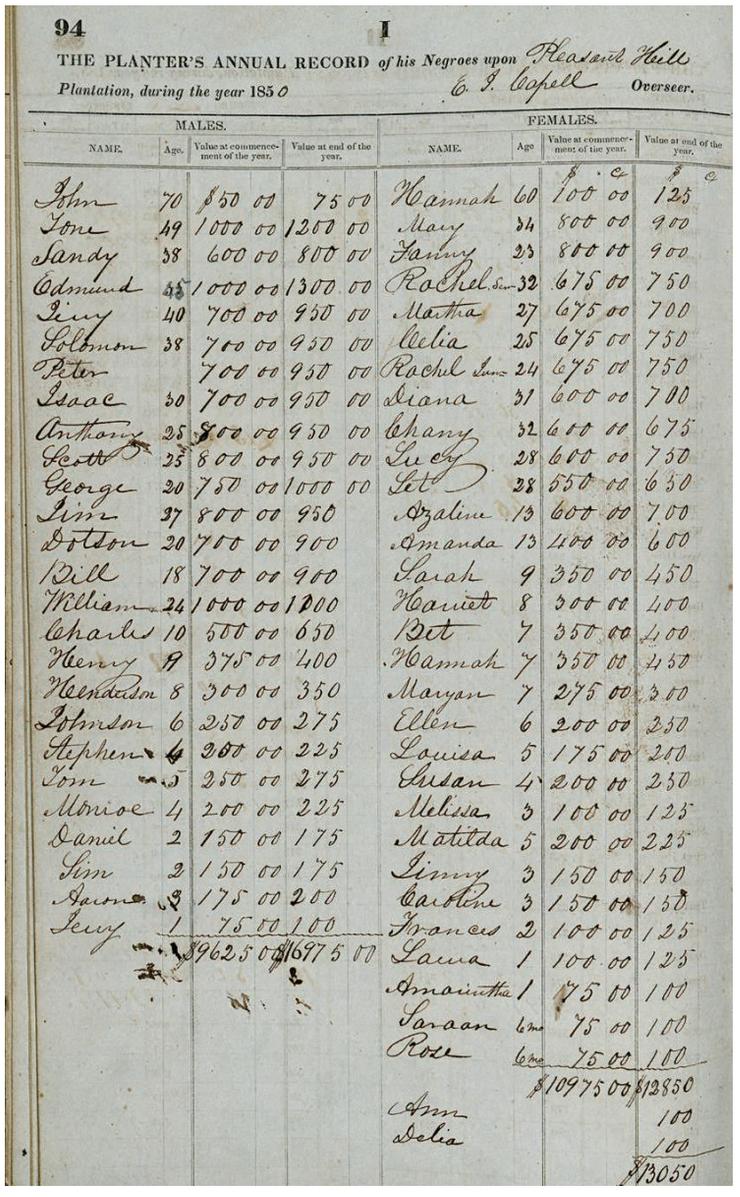
Consider, for example, one of the most popular mainstream financial instruments: the mortgage. Enslaved people were used as collateral for mortgages centuries before the home mortgage became the defining characteristic of middle America. In colonial times, when land was not worth much and banks didn't exist, most lending was based on human property. In the early 1700s, slaves were the dominant collateral in South Carolina. Many Americans were first exposed to the concept of a mortgage by trafficking in enslaved people, not real estate, and "the extension of mortgages to slave property helped fuel the development of American (and global) capitalism," the historian Joshua Rothman told me.

Or consider a Wall Street financial instrument as modern-sounding as collateralized debt obligations (C.D.O.s), those ticking time bombs backed by inflated home prices in the 2000s. C.D.O.s were the grandchildren of mortgage-backed securities based on the inflated value of enslaved people sold in the 1820s and 1830s. Each product created massive fortunes for the few before blowing up the economy.

Enslavers were not the first ones to securitize assets and debts in America. The land companies that thrived during the late 1700s relied on this technique, for instance. But enslavers did make use of securities to such an enormous degree for their time, exposing stakeholders throughout the Western world to enough risk to compromise the world economy, that the historian Edward Baptist told me that this can be viewed as "a new moment in international capitalism, where you are seeing the development of a globalized financial market." The novel thing about the 2008 foreclosure crisis was not the concept of foreclosing on a homeowner but foreclosing on millions of them. Similarly, what was new about securitizing enslaved people in the first half of the 19th century was not the concept of securitization itself but the crazed level of rash speculation on cotton that selling slave debt promoted.

As America's cotton sector expanded, the value of enslaved workers soared. Between 1804 and 1860, the average price of men ages 21 to 38 sold in New Orleans grew to $1,200 from roughly $450. Because they couldn't expand their cotton empires without more enslaved workers, ambitious planters needed to find a way to raise enough capital to purchase more hands. Enter the banks. The Second Bank of the United States, chartered in 1816, began investing heavily in cotton. In the early 1830s, the slaveholding Southwestern states took almost half the bank's business. Around the same time, state-chartered banks began multiplying to such a degree that one historian called it an "orgy of bank-creation."

When seeking loans, planters used enslaved people as collateral. Thomas Jefferson mortgaged 150 of his enslaved workers to build Monticello. People could be sold much more easily than land, and in multiple Southern states, more than eight in 10 mortgage-secured loans used enslaved people as full or partial collateral. As the historian Bonnie Martin has written, "slave owners worked their slaves financially, as well as physically from colonial days until emancipation" by mortgaging people to buy more people. Access to credit grew faster than Mississippi kudzu, leading one 1836 observer to remark that in cotton country "money, or what



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THE PLANTER'S ANNUAL RECORD of his Negroes upon Pleasant Hill Plantation, during the year 1850 E. J. Capell Overseer.

MALES. NAME.	Age.	Value at commencement of the year.	Value at end of the year.	FEMALES. NAME.	Age	Value at commencement of the year.	Value at end of the year.
		$ c.	$ c.			$ c.	$ c.
John	70	850 00	75 00	Hannah	60	100 00	125
Tone	49	1000 00	1200 00	Mary	34	800 00	900
Sandy	38	600 00	800 00	Fanny	23	800 00	900
Edmund	45	1000 00	1300 00	Rachel Senr.	32	675 00	750
Jerry	40	700 00	950 00	Martha	27	675 00	700
Solomon	38	700 00	950 00	Celia	25	675 00	750
Peter		700 00	950 00	Rachel Junr.	24	675 00	750
Isaac	30	700 00	950 00	Diana	31	600 00	700
Anthony	25	800 00	950 00	Chany	32	600 00	675
Scott	25	800 00	950 00	Lucy	28	600 00	750
George	20	750 00	1000 00	Set	28	550 00	650
Jim	27	800 00	950	Azaline	13	600 00	700
Dotson	20	700 00	900	Amanda	13	400 00	600
Bill	18	700 00	900	Sarah	9	350 00	450
William	24	1000 00	1200	Harriet	8	300 00	400
Charles	10	500 00	650	Bet	7	350 00	400
Henry	9	375 00	400	Hannah	7	350 00	450
Henderson	8	300 00	350	Maryan	7	275 00	300
Johnson	6	250 00	275	Ellen	6	200 00	250
Stephen	4	200 00	225	Louisa	5	175 00	200
Tom	5	250 00	275	Susan	4	200 00	250
Monroe	4	200 00	225	Melissa	3	100 00	125
Daniel	2	150 00	175	Matilda	5	200 00	225
Jim	2	150 00	175	Jinny	3	150 00	150
Jacob	3	175 00	200	Caroline	3	150 00	150
Jerry	1	75 00	100	Frances	2	100 00	125
		$9625 00	$11975 00	Laura	1	100 00	125
				Amanitta	1	75 00	100
				Saraan	6 mo	75 00	100
				Rose	6 mo	75 00	100
						$10975 00	$12850
				Ann			100
				Delia			100
							$13050

An 1850 inventory of enslaved people from the Pleasant Hill Plantation in Mississippi.

passed for money, was the only cheap thing to be had."

Planters took on immense amounts of debt to finance their operations. Why wouldn't they? The math worked out. A cotton plantation in the first decade of the 19th century could leverage their enslaved workers at 8 percent interest and record a return three times that. So leverage they did, sometimes volunteering the same enslaved workers for multiple mortgages. Banks lent with little restraint. By 1833, Mississippi banks had issued 20 times as much paper money as they had gold in their coffers. In several Southern counties, slave mortgages injected more capital into the economy than sales from the crops harvested by enslaved workers.

Global financial markets got in on the action. When Thomas Jefferson mortgaged his enslaved workers, it was a Dutch firm that put up the money. The Louisiana Purchase, which opened millions of acres to cotton production, was financed by Baring Brothers, the well-heeled British commercial bank. A majority of credit powering the American slave economy came from the London money market. Years after abolishing the African slave trade in 1807, Britain, and much of Europe along with it, was bankrolling slavery in the United States. To raise capital, state-chartered banks pooled debt generated by slave mortgages and repackaged it as bonds promising investors annual interest. During slavery's boom time, banks did swift business in bonds, finding buyers in Hamburg and Amsterdam, in Boston and Philadelphia.

Some historians have claimed that the British abolition of the slave trade was a turning point in modernity, marked by the development of a new kind of moral consciousness when people began considering the suffering of others thousands of miles away. But perhaps all that changed was a growing need to scrub the blood of enslaved workers off American dollars, British pounds and French francs, a need that Western financial markets fast found a way to satisfy through the global trade in bank bonds. Here was a means to profit from slavery without getting your hands dirty. In fact, many investors may not have realized that their money was being used to buy and exploit people, just as many of us who are vested in multinational textile companies today are unaware that our money subsidizes a business that continues to rely on forced labor in countries like Uzbekistan and China and child workers in countries like India and Brazil. Call it irony, coincidence or maybe cause — historians haven't settled the matter — but avenues to profit indirectly from slavery grew in popularity as the institution of slavery itself grew more unpopular. "I think they go together," the historian Calvin Schermerhorn told me. "We care about fellow members of humanity, but what do we do when we want returns on an investment that depends on their bound labor?" he said. "Yes, there is a higher consciousness. But then it comes down to: Where do you get your cotton from?"

Banks issued tens of millions of dollars in loans on the assumption that rising cotton prices would go on forever. Speculation reached a fever pitch in the 1830s, as businessmen, planters and lawyers convinced themselves that they could amass real treasure by joining in a risky game that everyone seemed to be playing. If planters thought themselves invincible, able to bend the laws of finance to their will, it was most likely because they had been granted authority to bend the laws of nature to their will, to do with the land and the people who worked it as they pleased. Du Bois wrote: "The mere fact that a man could be, under the law, the actual master of the mind and body of human beings had to have disastrous effects. It tended to inflate the ego of most planters beyond all reason; they became arrogant, strutting, quarrelsome kinglets." What are the laws of economics to those exercising godlike power over an entire people?

We know how these stories end. The American South rashly overproduced cotton thanks to an abundance of cheap land, labor and credit, consumer demand couldn't keep up with supply, and prices fell. The value of cotton started to drop as early as 1834 before plunging like a bird winged in midflight, setting off the Panic of 1837. Investors and creditors called in their debts, but plantation owners were underwater. Mississippi planters owed the banks in New Orleans $33 million in a year their crops yielded only $10 million in revenue. They couldn't simply liquidate their assets to raise the money. When the price of cotton tumbled, it pulled down the value of enslaved workers and land along with it. People bought for $2,000 were now selling for $60. Today, we would say the planters' debt was "toxic."

Because enslavers couldn't repay their loans, the banks couldn't make interest payments on their bonds. Shouts went up around the Western world, as investors began demanding that states raise taxes to keep their promises. After all, the bonds were backed by taxpayers. But after a swell of populist outrage, states decided not to squeeze the money out of every Southern family, coin by coin. But neither did they foreclose on defaulting plantation owners. If they tried, planters absconded to Texas (an independent republic at the time) with their treasure and enslaved work force. Furious bondholders mounted lawsuits and cashiers committed

From Louisiana And Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

COLOR OF CHANGE

The Daily Lies

WINNING JUSTICE
THE PROSECUTOR PROJECT

VOL. COC...No. 55,727 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 2019

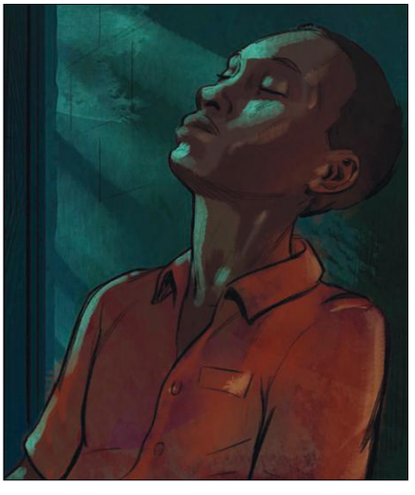
BLACK PEOPLE ARE FREE

CORRECTION: ***IN NEW YORK AND NATIONALLY, BLACK AND BROWN PEOPLE BEAR A DISPROPORTIONATE BURDEN FOR AN UNJUST CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM. THIS IS NOT FREEDOM, BUT YOU CAN FIGHT FOR THE CHANGE WE NEED TO SEE.***

BY COLOR OF CHANGE

CORRUPT PROSECUTORS ARE SELLING OFF THE FREEDOM OF BLACK PEOPLE WITH THE PREDATORY MONEY BAIL SYSTEM, FUELING MASS INCARCERATION.

BLACK AND BROWN IMMIGRANTS ARE BEING RIPPED FROM THEIR FAMILIES.



200K BLACK AND BROWN KIDS ARE CAUGHT UP IN THE ADULT CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM EVERY YEAR.

Color Of Change is fighting for an America that values Black lives.

Through 2020, and beyond, we are building and using our collective power to hold prosecutors accountable to transform the criminal justice system.

Join our fight, make your voice heard and be part of history

JOIN US TO BE PART OF HISTORY.

COLOROFCHANGE.ORG

Illustrated by Simon Ampel

suicide, but the bankrupt states refused to pay their debts. Cotton slavery was too big to fail. The South chose to cut itself out of the global credit market, the hand that had fed cotton expansion, rather than hold planters and their banks accountable for their negligence and avarice.

Even academic historians, who from their very first graduate course are taught to shun presentism and accept history on its own terms, haven't been able to resist drawing parallels between the Panic of 1837 and the 2008 financial crisis. All the ingredients are there: mystifying financial instruments that hide risk while connecting bankers, investors and families around the globe; fantastic profits amassed overnight; the normalization of speculation and breathless risk-taking; stacks of paper money printed on the myth that some institution (cotton, housing) is unshakable; considered and intentional exploitation of black people; and impunity for the profiteers when it all falls apart — the borrowers were bailed out after 1837, the banks after 2008.

During slavery, "Americans built a culture of speculation unique in its abandon," writes the historian Joshua Rothman in his 2012 book, "Flush Times and Fever Dreams." That culture would drive cotton production up to the Civil War, and it has been a defining characteristic of American capitalism ever since. It is the culture of acquiring wealth without work, growing at all costs and abusing the powerless. It is the culture that brought us the Panic of 1837, the stock-market crash of 1929 and the recession of 2008. It is the culture that has produced staggering inequality and undignified working conditions. If today America promotes a particular kind of low-road capitalism — a union-busting capitalism of poverty wages, gig jobs and normalized insecurity; a winner-take-all capitalism of stunning disparities not only permitting but awarding financial rule-bending; a racist capitalism that ignores the fact that slavery didn't just deny black freedom but built white fortunes, originating the black-white wealth gap that annually grows wider — one reason is that American capitalism was founded on the lowest road there is. ◆

Municipal Bonds: How Slavery Built Wall Street

By Tiya Miles

While "Main Street" might be anywhere and everywhere, as the historian Joshua Freeman points out, "Wall Street" has only ever been one specific place on the map. New York has been a principal center of American commerce dating back to the colonial period — a centrality founded on the labor extracted from thousands of indigenous American and African slaves.

Desperate for hands to build towns, work wharves, tend farms and keep households, colonists across the American Northeast — Puritans in Massachusetts Bay, Dutch settlers in New Netherland and Quakers in Pennsylvania — availed themselves of slave labor. Native Americans captured in colonial wars in New England were forced to work, and African people were imported in greater and greater numbers. New York City soon surpassed other slaving towns of the Northeast in scale as well as impact.

Founded by the Dutch as New Amsterdam in 1625, what would become the City of New York first imported 11 African men in 1626. The Dutch West India Company owned these men and their families, directing their labors to common enterprises like land clearing and road construction. After the English Duke of York acquired authority over the colony and changed its name, slavery grew harsher and more comprehensive. As the historian Leslie Harris has written, 40 percent of New York households held enslaved people in the early 1700s.

New Amsterdam's and New York's enslaved put in place much of the local infrastructure, including Broad Way and the Bowery roads, Governors Island, and the first municipal buildings and churches. The unfree population in New York was not small, and their experience of exploitation was not brief. In 1991, construction workers uncovered an extensive 18th-century African burial ground in Lower Manhattan, the final resting place of approximately 20,000 people.

And New York City's investment in slavery expanded in the 19th century. In 1799 the state of New York passed the first of a series of laws that would gradually abolish slavery over the coming decades, but the investors and financiers of the state's primary metropolis doubled down on the business of slavery. New Yorkers invested heavily in the growth of Southern plantations, catching the wave of the first cotton boom. Southern planters who wanted to buy more land and black people borrowed funds from New York bankers and protected the value of bought bodies with policies from New York insurance companies. New York factories produced the agricultural tools forced into Southern slaves' hands and the rough fabric called "Negro Cloth" worn on their backs. Ships originating in New York docked in the port of New Orleans to service the trade in domestic and (by then, illegal) international slaves. As the historian David Quigley has demonstrated, New York City's phenomenal economic consolidation came as a result of its dominance in the Southern cotton trade, facilitated by the construction of the Erie Canal. It was in this moment — the early decades of the 1800s — that New York City gained its status as a financial behemoth through shipping raw cotton to Europe and bankrolling the boom industry that slavery made.

In 1711, New York City officials decreed that "all Negro and Indian slaves that are let out to hire ... be hired at the Market house at the Wall Street Slip." It is uncanny, but perhaps predictable, that the original wall for which Wall Street is named was built by the enslaved at a site that served as the city's first organized slave auction. The capital profits and financial wagers of Manhattan, the United States and the world still flow through this place where black and red people were traded and where the wealth of a region was built on slavery.

Thank You

"I want to take this moment to celebrate and salute you all for the work that you do in the community. From the day that we connected, each of you has inspired me to become a better person and to push my efforts in the community forward.
Thank you."

Keep Flourishing and God Bless,
Ekpe Udoh

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HELLA BLACK

● Late 1773: A publishing house in London releases “Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral,” by Phillis Wheatley, a 20-year-old enslaved woman in Boston, making her the first African-American to publish a book of poetry.

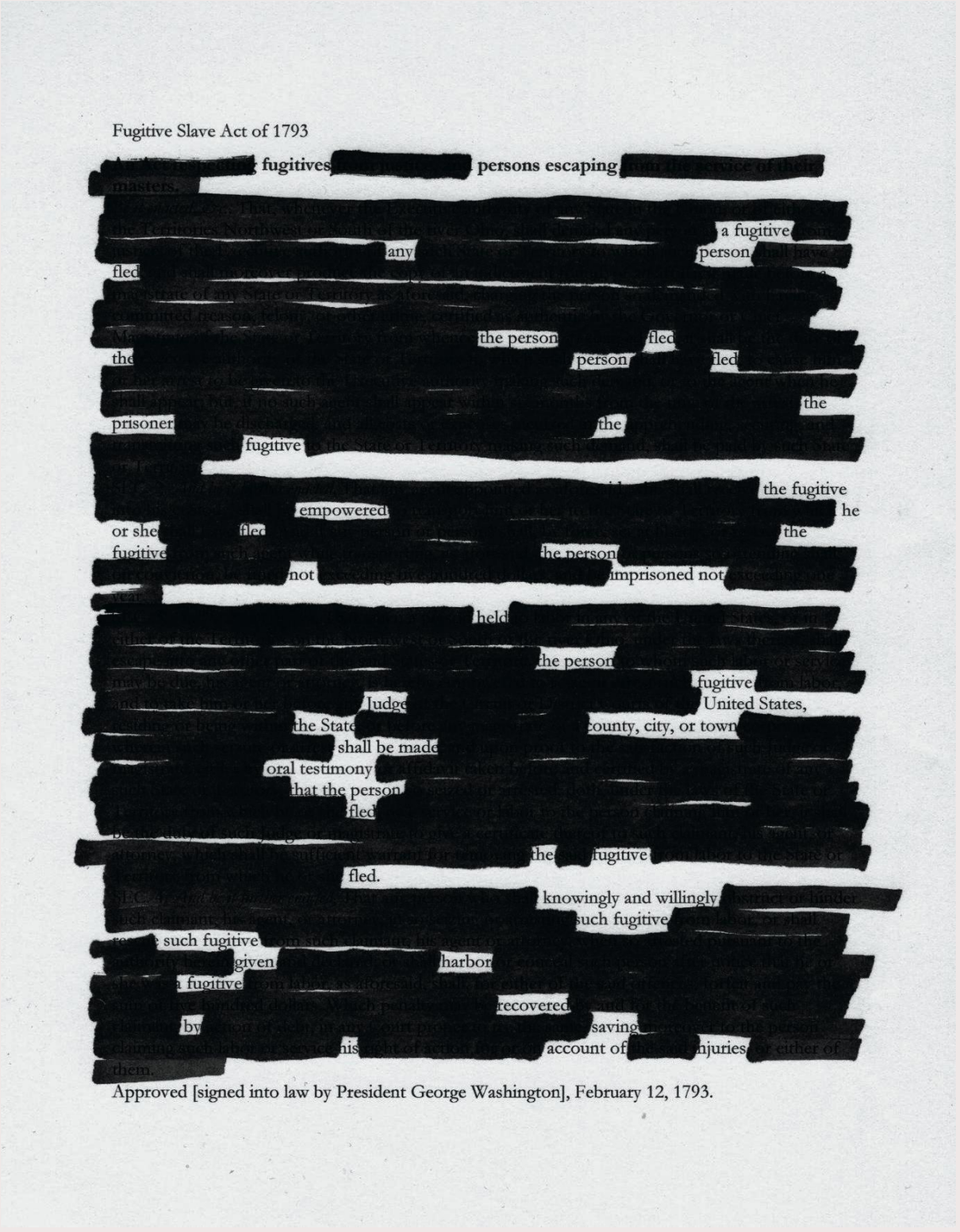
Pretend I wrote this at your grave.
Pretend the grave is marked. Pretend we know where it is.
Copp’s Hill, say. I have been there and you might be.
Foremother, your name is the boat that brought you.
Pretend I see it in the stone, with a gruesome cherub.
Children come with thin paper and charcoal to touch you.
Pretend it drizzles and a man in an ugly plastic poncho
circles the Mathers, all but sniffing the air warily.
We don’t need to pretend for this part.
There is a plaque in the grass for Increase, and Cotton.
And Samuel, dead at 78, final son, who was there
on the day when they came looking for proof.
Eighteen of them watched you and they signed to say:
the Poems specified in the following Page, were (as we verily believe)
written by Phillis, a young Negro Girl, who was but a few Years since,
brought an uncultivated Barbarian from Africa
and the abolitionists cheered at the blow to Kant
the Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling
and the enlightened ones bellowed at the strike against Hume
no ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences

Pretend I was there with you, Phillis, when you asked in a letter to no one:
How many iambs to be a real human girl?
Which turn of phrase evidences a righteous heart?
If I know of Ovid may I keep my children?

Pretend that on your grave there is a date
and it is so long before my heroes came along to call you a coon
for the praises you sang of your captors
who took you on discount because they assumed you would die
that it never ever hurt your feelings.
Or pretend you did not love America.
Phillis, I would like to think that after you were released unto the world,
when they jailed your husband for his debts
and you lay in the maid’s quarters at night,
a free and poor woman with your last living boy,
that you thought of the Metamorphoses,
making the sign of Arachne in the tangle of your fingers.
And here, after all, lay the proof:
The man in the plastic runs a thumb over stone. The gray is slick and tough.
Phillis Wheatley: thirty-one. Had misery enough.

By Eve L. Ewing

● Feb. 12, 1793: George Washington signs into law the first Fugitive Slave Act, which requires United States citizens to return runaway enslaved people to the state from which they came.



Fugitive Slave Act of 1793

[redacted] fugitives [redacted] persons escaping [redacted]
masters.

[redacted] a fugitive [redacted]
[redacted] any [redacted] person [redacted]
fled [redacted]

[redacted] the person [redacted] fled [redacted]
the [redacted] person [redacted] fled [redacted]

[redacted] the
prisoner [redacted] the [redacted]
[redacted] fugitive [redacted]

[redacted] the fugitive
[redacted] empowered [redacted] he
or she [redacted] fled [redacted] the
fugitive [redacted] the person [redacted]
[redacted] not [redacted] imprisoned not [redacted]

[redacted] held [redacted]

[redacted] the person [redacted]
[redacted] fugitive [redacted]
[redacted] Judge [redacted] United States,
[redacted] the State [redacted] county, city, or town [redacted]
[redacted] shall be made [redacted]
[redacted] oral testimony [redacted]
[redacted] that the person [redacted]
[redacted] fled [redacted]

[redacted] the [redacted] fugitive [redacted]
[redacted] fled.
[redacted] knowingly and willingly [redacted]
[redacted] such fugitive [redacted]
[redacted] such fugitive [redacted]
[redacted] given [redacted] harbor [redacted]
[redacted] fugitive [redacted]
[redacted] recovered [redacted]
[redacted] by [redacted] saving [redacted]
[redacted] account of [redacted] injuries [redacted] either of
them.

Approved [signed into law by President George Washington], February 12, 1793.

By Reginald Dwayne Betts

Why doesn't the United States have universal health care? The answer begins with policies enacted after the Civil War.

By Jeneen Interlandi

The smallpox virus hopscotched across the post-Civil War South, invading the makeshift camps where many thousands of newly freed African-Americans had taken refuge but leaving surrounding white communities comparatively unscathed. This pattern of affliction was no mystery: In the late 1860s, doctors had yet to discover viruses, but they knew that poor nutrition made people more susceptible to illness and that poor sanitation contributed to the spread of disease. They also knew that quarantine and vaccination could stop an outbreak in its tracks; they had used those very tools to prevent a smallpox outbreak from ravaging the Union Army.

Smallpox was not the only health disparity facing the newly emancipated, who at the close of the Civil War faced a considerably higher mortality rate than that of whites. Despite their urgent pleas for assistance, white leaders were deeply ambivalent about intervening. They worried about black epidemics spilling into their own communities and wanted the formerly enslaved to be healthy enough to return to plantation work. But they also feared that free and healthy African-Americans would upend the racial hierarchy, the historian Jim Downs writes in his 2012 book, "Sick From Freedom."

Federal policy, he notes, reflected white ambivalence at every turn. Congress established the medical division of the Freedmen's Bureau — the nation's first federal health care program — to address the health crisis, but officials deployed just 120 or so doctors across the war-torn South, then ignored those doctors' pleas for personnel and equipment. They erected more than 40 hospitals but prematurely shuttered most of them.

White legislators argued that free assistance of any kind would breed dependence and that when it came to black infirmity, hard labor was a better salve than white medicine. As the death toll rose, they developed a new theory: Blacks were so ill suited to freedom that the entire race was going extinct. "No charitable black scheme can wash out the color of the Negro, change his inferior nature or save him from his inevitable fate," an Ohio congressman said.

One of the most eloquent rejoinders to the theory of black extinction came from Rebecca Lee Crumpler, the nation's first black female doctor. Crumpler was born free and trained and practiced in Boston. At the close of the war, she joined the Freedmen's Bureau and worked in the freed people's communities of Virginia. In 1883, she published one of the first treatises on the burden of disease in black communities. "They seem to forget there is a *cause* for every ailment," she wrote. "And that it may be in their power to remove it."

In the decades following Reconstruction, the former slave states came to wield enormous congressional power through a voting bloc that was uniformly segregationist and overwhelmingly Democratic. That bloc preserved the nation's racial stratification by securing local control of federal programs under a mantra of "states' rights" and, in some cases, by adding qualifications directly to federal laws with discriminatory intent.

As the Columbia University historian Ira Katznelson and others have documented, it was largely at the behest of Southern Democrats that farm and domestic workers — more than half the nation's black work force at the time — were excluded from New Deal policies, including the Social Security and Wagner Acts of 1935 (the Wagner Act ensured the right of workers to collective bargaining), and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which set a minimum wage and established the eight-hour workday. The same voting bloc ensured states controlled crucial programs like Aid to Dependent Children and the 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act, better known as the G.I. Bill, allowing state leaders to effectively exclude black people.

In 1945, when President Truman called on Congress to expand the nation's hospital system as part of a larger health care plan, Southern Democrats obtained key concessions that shaped the American medical landscape for decades to come. The Hill-Burton Act provided federal grants for hospital construction to communities in need, giving funding priority to rural areas (many of them in the South). But it also ensured that states controlled the disbursement of funds and could segregate resulting facilities.

Professional societies like the American Medical Association barred black doctors; medical schools excluded black students, and most hospitals and health clinics segregated black patients. Federal health care policy was designed, both implicitly and explicitly, to exclude black Americans. As a result, they faced an array of inequities — including statistically shorter, sicker lives than their white counterparts. What's more, access to good medical care was predicated on a system of employer-based insurance that was inherently difficult for black Americans to get. "They were denied most of the jobs that offered coverage," says David Barton Smith, an emeritus historian of health care policy at Temple University. "And even when some of them got health insurance, as the Pullman porters did, they couldn't make use of white facilities."

In the shadows of this exclusion, black communities created their own health systems. Lay black women began a national community health care movement that included fund-raising for black health facilities; campaigns to educate black communities about nutrition, sanitation and disease prevention; and programs like National Negro Health Week that drew national attention to racial health disparities. Black doctors and nurses — most of them trained at one of two black medical colleges, Meharry and Howard — established their own professional organizations and began a concerted war against medical apartheid. By the 1950s, they were pushing for a federal health care system for all citizens.

That fight put the National Medical Association (the leading black medical society) into direct conflict with the A.M.A., which was opposed to any nationalized health plan. In the late 1930s and the 1940s, the group helped defeat two such proposals with a vitriolic campaign that informs present-day debates: They called the idea socialist and un-American and warned of government intervention in the doctor-patient relationship. The group used the same arguments in the mid-'60s, when proponents of national health insurance introduced Medicare. This time, the N.M.A. developed a countermessage: Health care was a basic human right.

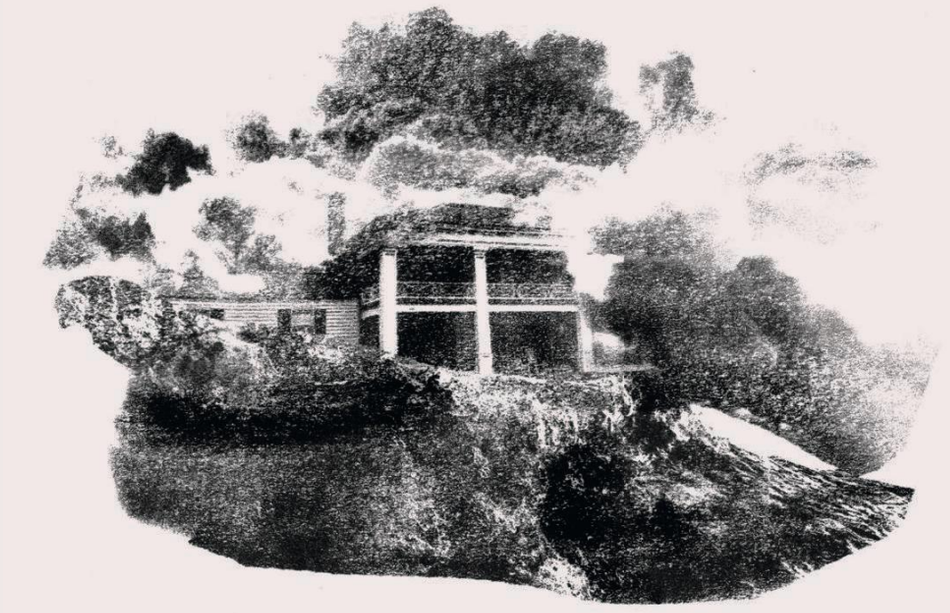
Medicare and Medicaid were part of a broader plan that finally brought the legal segregation of hospitals to an end: The 1964 Civil Rights Act outlawed segregation for any entity receiving federal funds, and the new health care programs soon placed every hospital in the country in that category. But they still excluded millions of Americans. Those who did not fit into specific age, employment or income groups had little to no access to health care.

In 2010, the Affordable Care Act brought health insurance to nearly 20 million previously uninsured adults. The biggest beneficiaries of this boon were people of color, many of whom obtained coverage through the law's Medicaid expansion. That coverage contributed to a measurable decrease in some racial health disparities, but the success was neither as enduring nor as widespread as it might have been. Several states, most of them in the former Confederacy, refused to participate in Medicaid expansion. And several are still trying to make access to the program contingent on onerous new work requirements. The results of both policies have been unequivocal. States that expanded Medicaid saw a drop in disease-related deaths, according to the National Bureau of Economic Research. But in Arkansas, the first state to implement work requirements, nearly 20,000 people were forced off the insurance plan.

One hundred and fifty years after the freed people of the South first petitioned the government for basic medical care, the United States remains the only high-income country in the world where such care is not guaranteed to every citizen. In the United States, racial health disparities have proved as foundational as democracy itself. "There has never been any period in American history where the health of blacks was equal to that of whites," Evelynn Hammonds, a historian of science at Harvard University, says. "Disparity is built into the system." Medicare, Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act have helped shrink those disparities. But no federal health policy yet has eradicated them. ◆

Photograph by D'Angelo Lovell Williams

● *A*ug. 30, 1800: Gabriel Prosser, a 24-year-old literate blacksmith, organizes one of the most extensively planned slave rebellions, with the intention of forming an independent black state in Virginia. After other enslaved people share details of his plot, Gabriel's Rebellion is thwarted. He is later tried, found guilty and hanged.



As he approached the Brook Swamp beneath the city of Richmond, Va., Gabriel ~~Prosser~~ looked to the sky. Up above, the clouds coalesced into an impenetrable black, bringing on darkness and a storm the ferocity of which the region had scarcely seen. He may have cried and he may have prayed but the thing Gabriel did not do was turn back. He was expecting fire on this night and would make no concessions for the coming rain.

And he was not alone. A hundred men; 500 men; *a thousand men* had gathered from all over the state on this 30th day of August 1800. Black men, African men — men from the fields and men from the house, men from the church and the smithy — men who could be called many things but after this night would not be called slaves gathered in the flooding basin armed with scythes, swords, bayonets and smuggled guns.

One of the men tested the rising water, citing the Gospel of John: "For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." But the water would not abate. As the night wore on and the storm persisted, Gabriel was overcome by a dawning truth: The Gospel would not save him. His army could not pass.

Gov. James Monroe was expecting them. Having returned from his appointment to France and built his sweeping Highland plantation on the periphery of Charlottesville, Monroe wrote to his mentor Thomas Jefferson seeking advice on his "fears of a negro insurrection." When the Negroes Tom and Pharoah of the Sheppard plantation betrayed Gabriel's plot on a Saturday morning, Monroe was not surprised. By virtue of the privilege bestowed upon him as his birthright, he was expecting them.

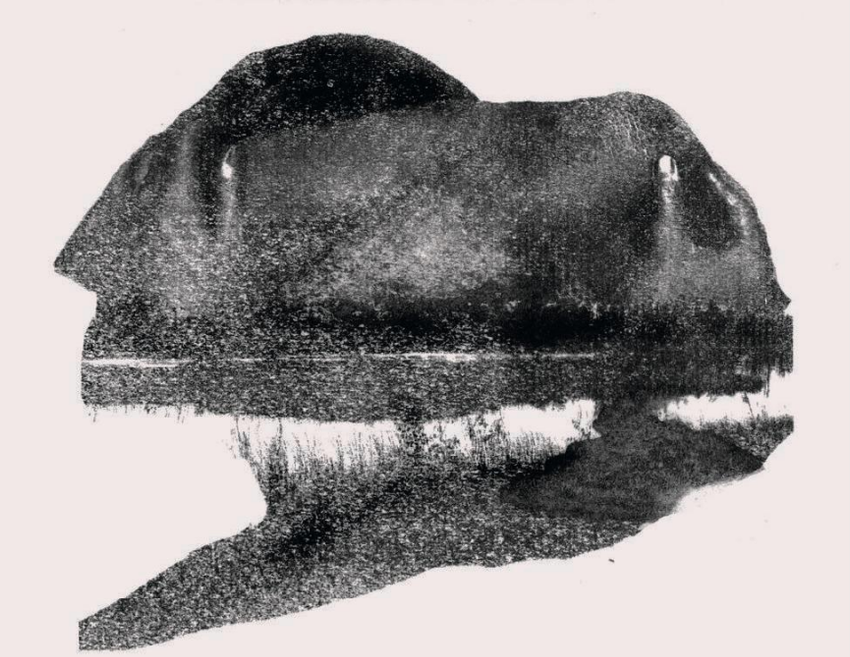
Gabriel ~~Prosser~~ was executed Oct. 10, 1800. Eighteen hundred; the year Denmark ~~Vesey~~ bought his freedom, the year of John Brown's and Nat ~~Turner~~'s births. As he awaited the gallows near the foot of the James River, Gabriel could see all that was not to be — the first wave of men tasked to set fire to the city perimeter, the second to fell a city weakened by the diversion; the governor's mansion, James Monroe brought to heel and served a lash for every man, woman and child enslaved on his Highland plantation; the Quakers, Methodists, Frenchmen and poor whites who would take up with his army and create a more perfect union from which they would spread the infection of freedom — Gabriel saw it all.

He even saw Tom and Pharoah, manumitted by the government of Virginia, a thousand dollars to their master as recompense; a thousand dollars for the sabotage of Gabriel's thousand men. He did not see the other 25 men in his party executed. Instead, he saw Monroe in an audience he wanted no part of and paid little notice to. For Gabriel ~~Prosser~~ the blacksmith, leader of men and accepting no master's name, had stepped into the troubled water. To the very last, he was whole. He was free.

By Barry Jenkins

House: Sergey Golub via Wikimedia. Landscape, right: Peter Traub via Wikimedia.

● Jan. 1, 1808: The Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves goes into effect, banning the importation of enslaved people from abroad. But more than one million enslaved people who can be bought and sold are already in the country, and the breaking up of black families continues.



The whisper run through the quarters like a river swelling to flood. We passed the story to each other in the night in our pallets, in the day over the well, in the fields as we pulled at the fallow earth. *They ain't stealing us from over the water no more.* We dreamed of those we was stolen from: our mothers who oiled and braided our hair to our scalps, our fathers who cut our first staffs, our sisters and brothers who we pinched for tattling on us, and we felt a cool light wind move through us for one breath. Felt like ease to imagine they remained, had not been stolen, would never be.

That be a foolish thing. We thought this later when the first Georgia Man come and roped us. Grabbed a girl on her way for morning water. Snatched a boy running to the stables. A woman after she left her babies blinking awake in their sack blankets. A man sharpening a hoe. They always came before dawn for us chosen to be sold south.

We didn't understand what it would be like, couldn't think beyond the panic, the prying, the crying, the begging and the screaming, the endless screaming from the mouth and beyond. Sounding through the whole body, breaking the heart with its volume. A blood keen. But the ones that owned and sold us was deaf to it. Was unfeeling of the tugging the children did on their fathers' arms or the glance of a sister's palm over her sold sister's face for the last time. But we was all feeling, all seeing, all hearing, all smelling: We felt it for the terrible dying it was. Knowed we was walking out of one life and into another. An afterlife in a burning place.

The farther we marched, the hotter it got. Our skin grew around the rope. Our muscles melted to nothing. Our fat to bone. The land rolled to a flat bog, and in the middle of it, a city called New Orleans. When we shuffled into that town of the dead, they put us in pens. Fattened us. Tried to disguise our limps, oiled the pallor of sickness out of our skins, raped us to assess our soft parts, then told us lies about ourselves to make us into easier sells. Was told to answer yes when they asked us if we were master seamstresses, blacksmiths or lady's maids. Was told to disavow the wives we thought we heard calling our names when we first woke in the morning, the husbands we imagined lying with us, chest to back, while the night's torches burned, the children whose eyelashes we thought we could still feel on our cheeks when the rain turned to a fine mist while we stood in lines outside the pens waiting for our next hell to take legs and seek us out.

Trade our past lives for new deaths.

By Jesmyn Ward

Photo illustrations by Jon Key

A traffic jam in tlanta would seem to have nothing to do with slavery. *B*ut look closer. ...

By Kevin M. Kruse

Atlanta has some of the worst traffic in the United States. Drivers there average two hours each week mired in gridlock, hung up at countless spots, from the constantly clogged Georgia 400 to a complicated cluster of overpasses at Tom Moreland Interchange, better known as "Spaghetti Junction." The Downtown Connector — a 12-to-14-lane megahighway that in theory connects the city's north to its south — regularly has three-mile-long traffic jams that last four hours or more. Commuters might assume they're stuck there because some city planner made a mistake, but the heavy congestion actually stems from a great success. In Atlanta, as in dozens of cities across America, daily congestion is a direct consequence of a century-long effort to segregate the races.

For much of the nation's history, the campaign to keep African-Americans "in their place" socially and politically manifested itself in an effort to keep them quite literally in one place or another. Before the Civil War, white masters kept enslaved African-Americans close at hand to coerce their labor and guard against revolts. But with the abolition of slavery, the spatial relationship was reversed. Once they had no need to keep constant watch over African-Americans, whites wanted them out of sight. Civic planners pushed them into ghettos, and the segregation we know today became the rule.

At first the rule was overt, as Southern cities like Baltimore and Louisville enacted laws that mandated residential racial segregation. Such laws were eventually invalidated by the Supreme Court, but later measures achieved the same effect by more subtle means. During the New Deal, federal agencies like the Home Owners' Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration encouraged redlining practices that explicitly marked minority neighborhoods as risky investments and therefore discouraged bank loans, mortgages and insurance there. Other policies simply targeted black communities for isolation and demolition. The postwar programs for urban renewal, for instance, destroyed black neighborhoods and displaced their residents with such regularity that African-Americans came to believe, in James Baldwin's memorable phrase, that "urban renewal means Negro removal."

This intertwined history of infrastructure and racial inequality extended into the 1950s and 1960s with the creation of the Interstate highway system. The federal government shouldered nine-tenths of the cost of the new Interstate highways, but local officials often had a say in selecting the path. As in most American cities in the decades after the Second World War, the new highways in Atlanta — local expressways at first, then Interstates — were steered along routes that bulldozed "blighted" neighborhoods that housed its poorest residents, almost always racial minorities. This was a common practice not just in Southern cities like Jacksonville, Miami, Nashville, New Orleans, Richmond and Tampa, but in countless metropolises across the country, including Chicago, Cincinnati, Denver, Detroit, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Syracuse and Washington.

While Interstates were regularly used to destroy black neighborhoods, they were also used to keep black and white neighborhoods apart. Today, major roads and highways serve as stark dividing lines between black and white sections in cities like Buffalo, Hartford, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh and St. Louis. In Atlanta, the intent to segregate was crystal clear. Interstate 20, the east-west corridor that connects with I-75 and I-85 in Atlanta's center, was deliberately plotted along a winding route in the late 1950s to serve, in the words of Mayor Bill Hartsfield, as "the boundary between the white and Negro communities" on the west side of town. Black neighborhoods, he hoped, would be hemmed in on one side of the new expressway, while white neighborhoods on the other side of it would be protected. Racial residential patterns have long since changed, of course, but the awkward path of I-20 remains in place.

By razing impoverished areas downtown and segregating the races in the western section, Atlanta's leaders hoped to keep downtown and its surroundings a desirable locale for middle-class whites. Articulating a civic vision of racial peace and economic progress, Hartsfield bragged that Atlanta was the "City Too Busy to Hate." But the so-called urban renewal and the new Interstates only helped speed white flight from Atlanta. Over the 1960s, roughly 60,000 whites left the city, with many of them relocating in the suburbs along the northern rim. When another 100,000 whites left the city in the 1970s, it became a local joke that Atlanta had become "The City Too Busy Moving to Hate."

As the new suburbs ballooned in size, traffic along the poorly placed highways became worse and worse. The obvious solution was mass transit — buses, light rail and trains that would more efficiently link the suburbs and the city — but that, too, faced opposition, largely for racial reasons. The white suburbanites had purposefully left the problems of the central city behind and worried that mass transit would bring them back.

Accordingly, suburbanites waged a sustained campaign against the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) from its inception. Residents of the nearly all-white Cobb County resoundingly rejected the system in a 1965 vote. In 1971, Gwinnett and Clayton Counties, which were then also overwhelmingly white, followed suit, voting down a proposal to join MARTA by nearly 4-1 margins, and keeping MARTA out became the default position of many local politicians. (Emmett Burton, a Cobb County commissioner, won praise for promising to "stock the Chattahoochee with piranha" if that were needed to keep MARTA away.) David Chesnut, the white chairman of MARTA, insisted in 1987 that suburban opposition to mass transit had been "90 percent a racial issue." Because of that resistance, MARTA became a city-only service that did little to relieve commuter traffic. By the mid-1980s, white racists were joking that MARTA, with its heavily black ridership, stood for "Moving Africans Rapidly Through Atlanta."

Even as the suburbs became more racially diverse, they remained opposed to MARTA. After Gwinnett voted the system down again in 1990, a former Republican legislator later marveled at the arguments given by opponents. "They will come up with 12 different ways of saying they are not racist in public," he told a reporter. "But you get them alone, behind a closed door, and you see this old blatant racism that we have had here for quite some time."

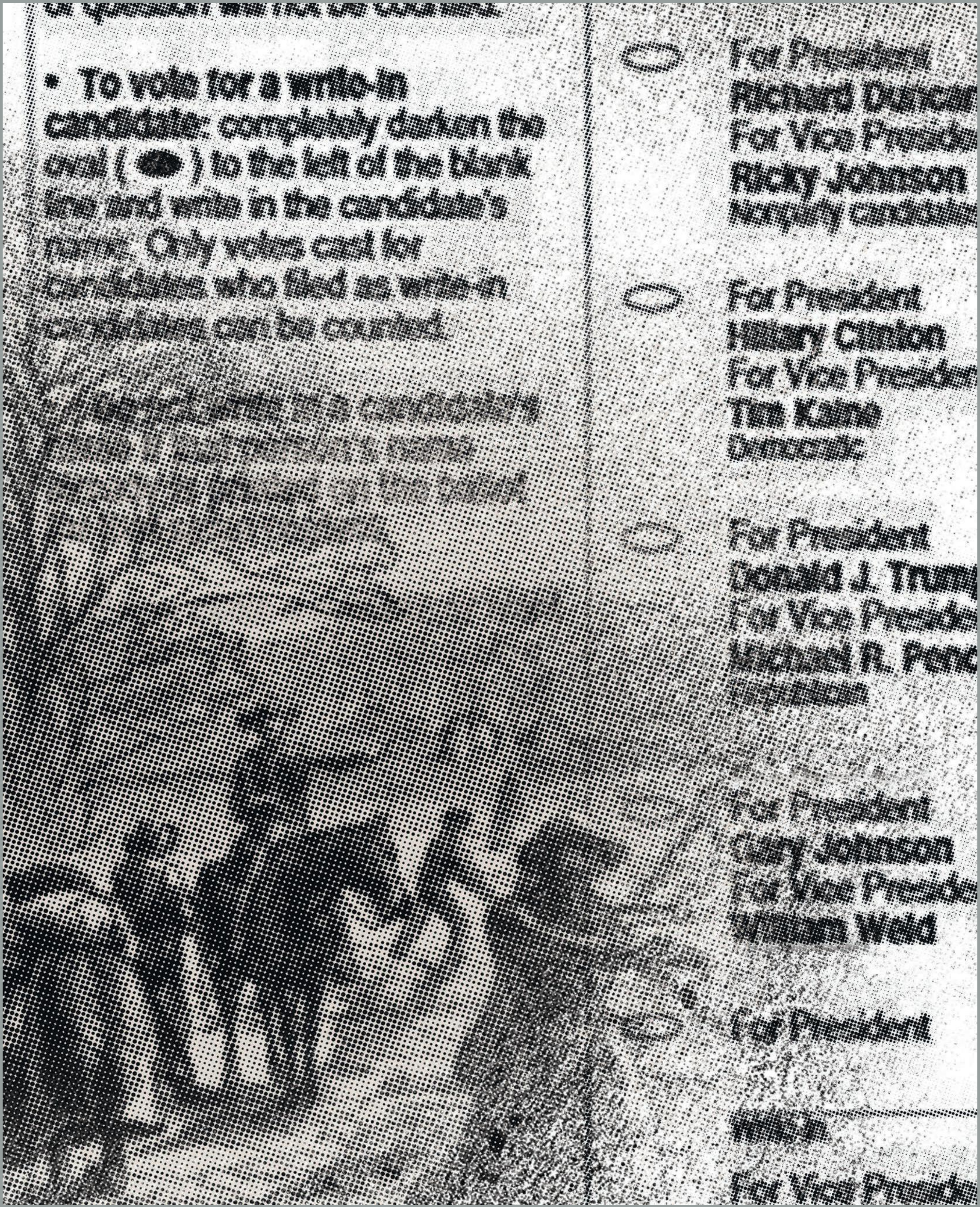
Earlier this year, Gwinnett County voted MARTA down for a third time. Proponents had hoped that changes in the county's racial composition, which was becoming less white, might make a difference. But the March initiative still failed by an eight-point margin. Officials discovered that some nonwhite suburbanites shared the isolationist instincts of earlier white suburbanites. One white property manager in her late 50s told a reporter that she voted against mass transit because it was used by poorer residents and immigrants, whom she called "illegals." "Why should we pay for it?" she asked. "Why subsidize people who can't manage their money and save up a dime to buy a car?"

In the end, Atlanta's traffic is at a standstill because its attitude about transit is at a standstill, too. Fifty years after its Interstates were set down with an eye to segregation and its rapid-transit system was stunted by white flight, the city is still stalled in the past. ◆

Photograph by Humza Deas

American democracy has never shed an undemocratic assumption present at its founding: that some people are inherently entitled to more power than others.

By Jamelle Bouie



• To vote for a write-in candidate: completely darken the oval (⬬) to the left of the blank line and write in the candidate's name. Only votes cast for candidates who filed as write-in candidates can be counted.

For President
Richard Duncan
For Vice Presid
Ricky Johnson
Nonparty candidat

For President
Hillary Clinton
For Vice Presiden
Tim Kaine
Democratic

For President
Donald J. Trump
For Vice Presid
Michael R. Penc
Republican

For President
Gary Johnson
For Vice Presid
William Weld

For President

For Vice Presid

If you want to understand American politics in 2019 and the strain of reactionary extremism that has taken over the Republican Party, a good place to start is 2011: the year after a backlash to Barack Obama's presidency swept Tea Party insurgents into Congress, flipping control of the House.

It was clear, at the start of that year, that Congress would have to lift the debt ceiling — the limit on bonds and other debt instruments the government issues when it doesn't have the revenues to fulfill spending obligations. These votes were often opportunities for grandstanding and occasionally brinkmanship by politicians from both parties. But it was understood that, when push came to shove, Congress would lift the limit and the government would pay its obligations.

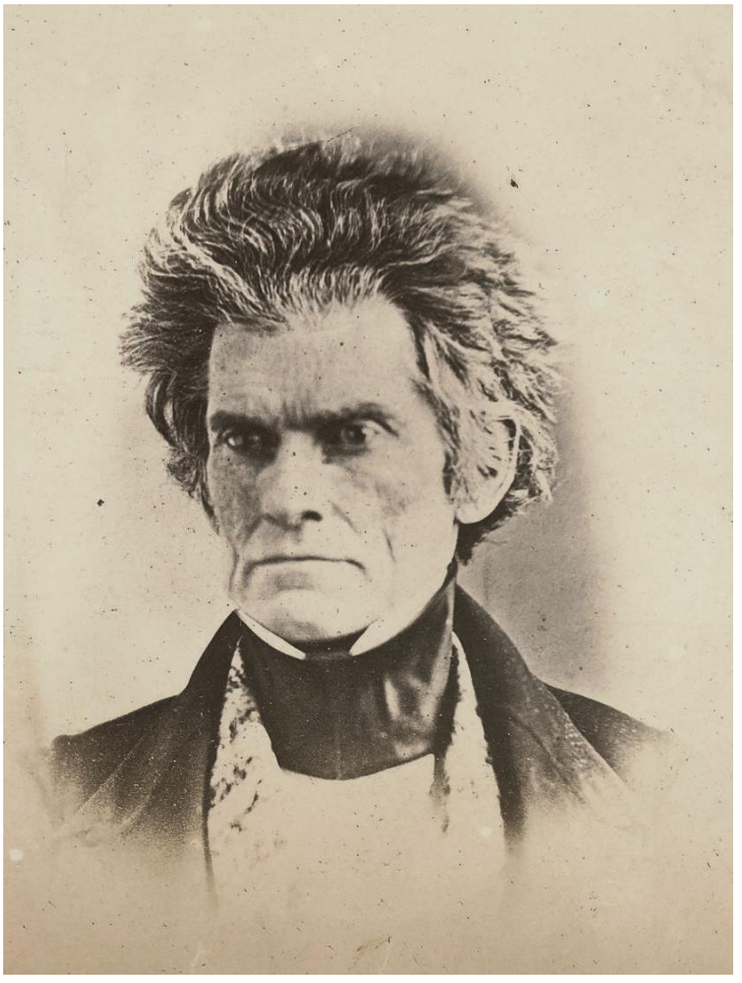
2011 was different. Congressional Republicans, led by the new Tea Party conservatives, wanted to repeal the Affordable Care Act and make other sharp cuts to the social safety net. But Democrats controlled the Senate and the White House. So House Republicans decided to take a hostage. "I'm asking you to look at a potential increase in the debt limit as a leverage moment when the White House and President Obama will have to deal with us," said the incoming majority leader, Eric Cantor, at a closed-door retreat days before the session began, according to The Washington Post. Either the White House would agree to harsh austerity measures or Republicans would force the United States to default on its debt obligations, precipitating an economic crisis just as the country, and the world, was beginning to recover from the Great Recession.

The debt-limit standoff was a case study of a fundamental change within the Republican Party after Obama took office in 2009. Republicans would either win total victory or they would wreck the system itself. The Senate Republican leader, Mitch McConnell, used a variety of procedural tactics to effectively nullify the president's ability to nominate federal judges and fill vacancies in the executive branch. In the minority, he used the filibuster to an unprecedented degree. In the majority, after Republicans won the Senate in the 2010 midterm elections, he led an extraordinary blockade of the Supreme Court, stopping the Senate from even considering the president's nominee for the bench.

Where did this destructive, sectarian style of partisan politics come from? Conventional wisdom traces its roots to the "Gingrich Revolution" of the 1990s, whose architect pioneered a hardball, insurgent style of political combat, undermining norms and dismantling congressional institutions for the sake of power. This is true enough, but the Republican Party of the Obama years didn't just recycle its Gingrich-era excesses; it also pursued a policy of total opposition, not just blocking Obama but also casting him as fundamentally illegitimate and un-American. He may have been elected by a majority of the voting public, but that majority didn't count. It didn't represent the "real" America.

Obama's election reignited a fight about democratic legitimacy — about who can claim the country as their own, and who has the right to act as a citizen — that is as old as American democracy itself. And the reactionary position in this conflict, which seeks to narrow the scope of participation and arrest the power of majorities beyond the limits of the Constitution, has its own peculiar history: not just in the ideological battles of the founding but also in the institution that defined the early American republic as much as any other.

The plantations that dotted the landscape of the antebellum South produced the commodities that fueled the nation's early growth. Enslaved people working in glorified labor camps picked cotton, grew indigo, harvested resin from trees for turpentine and generated additional capital in the form of their children, bought, sold and securitized on the open market. But plantations didn't just produce goods; they produced ideas too. Enslaved laborers developed an understanding of the society in which they lived. The people who enslaved them, likewise, constructed elaborate sets of beliefs, customs and ideologies meant to justify their positions in this economic and social hierarchy. Those ideas permeated the entire South, taking deepest root in places where slavery was most entrenched.



John C. Calhoun, perhaps the most prominent political theorist of the slaveholding South and an influence on modern right-wing thinking.

South Carolina was a paradigmatic slave state. Although the majority of enslavers resided in the "low country," with its large rice and cotton plantations, nearly the entire state participated in plantation agriculture and the slave economy. By 1820 most South Carolinians were enslaved Africans. By midcentury, the historian Manisha Sinha notes in "The Counterrevolution of Slavery," it was the first Southern state where a majority of the white population held slaves.

Not surprisingly, enslavers dominated the state's political class. "Carolinian rice aristocrats and the cotton planters from the hinterland," Sinha writes, "formed an intersectional ruling class, bound together by kinship, economic, political and cultural ties." The government they built was the most undemocratic in the Union. The slave-rich districts of the coasts enjoyed nearly as much representation in the Legislature as more populous regions in the interior of the state. Statewide office was restricted to wealthy property owners. To even qualify for the governorship, you needed a large, debt-free estate. Rich enslavers were essentially the only people who could participate in the highest levels of government. To the extent that there were popular elections, they were for the lowest levels of government, because the State Legislature tended to decide most high-level offices.

But immense power at home could not compensate for declining power in national politics. The growth of the free Northwest threatened Southern dominance in Congress. And the

Left: From the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Right: From Bettmann/Getty Images.

Southern college students at the Southern Democratic Convention in 1948, the year that segregationists began to break with the national Democratic Party over civil rights.

slaveholding planter class would witness the rise of an organized movement to stop the expansion of slavery and curb the power enslavers held over key institutions like the Senate and the Supreme Court.

Out of this atmosphere of fear and insecurity came a number of thinkers and politicians who set their minds to protecting South Carolina and the rest of the slaveholding South from a hostile North. Arguably the most prominent and accomplished of these planter-politicians was John C. Calhoun. Vice president under John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, secretary of state under John Tyler and eventually a United States senator representing the state, Calhoun was a deep believer in the system of slavery — which he called a "positive good" that "forms the most solid and durable foundation on which to rear free and stable institutions"— and a committed advocate for the slave-owning planter class. He was an astute politician, but he made his most important mark as a theoretician of reaction: a man who, realizing that democracy could not protect slavery in perpetuity, set out to limit democracy.

Calhoun popularized the concept of "nullification": the theory that any state subject to federal law was entitled to invalidate it. He first advanced the idea in an anonymous letter, written when he was vice president, protesting the Tariff of 1828, which sought to protect Northern industry and agriculture from foreign competitors. Calhoun condemned it as an unconstitutional piece of regional favoritism.

The South may have been part of the pro-Andrew Jackson majorities in Congress, but that wasn't enough for Calhoun, who wanted absolute security for the region and its economic interests. Demographic and political change doomed it to be a "permanent minority": "Our geographical position, our industry, pursuits and institutions are all peculiar." Against a domineering North, he argued, "representation affords not the slightest protection."

"It is, indeed, high time for the people of the South to be roused to a sense of impending calamities — on an early and full knowledge of which their safety depends," Calhoun wrote in an 1831 report to the South Carolina Legislature. "It is time that they should see and feel that … they are in a permanent and hopeless minority on the great and vital connected questions."

His solution lay in the states. To Calhoun, there was no "union" per se. Instead, the United States was simply a compact among sovereigns with distinct, and often competing, sectional interests. This compact could only survive if all sides had equal say on the meaning of the Constitution and the shape and structure of the law. Individual states, Calhoun thought, should be able to veto federal laws if they thought the federal government was favoring one state or section over another. The union could only act with the assent of the entire whole — what Calhoun called "the concurrent majority" — as opposed to the Madisonian idea of rule by numerical majority, albeit mediated by compromise and consensus.

Calhoun initially lost the tariff fight, which pitted him against an obstinate Andrew Jackson, but he did not give up on nullification. He expanded on the theory at the end of his life, proposing an alternative system of government that gave political minorities a final say over majority action. In this "concurrent government," each "interest or portion of the community" has an equal say in approving the actions of the state. Full agreement would be necessary to "put the government in motion." Only through this, Calhoun argued, would the "different interests, orders, classes, or portions, into which the community may be divided, can be protected."

The government Calhoun envisioned would protect "liberty": not the liberty of the citizen but the liberty of the master, the liberty of those who claimed a right to property and a position at the top of a racial and economic hierarchy. This liberty, Calhoun stated, was "a reward to be earned, not a blessing to be gratuitously lavished on all alike — a reward reserved for the intelligent, the patriotic, the virtuous and deserving — and not a boon to be bestowed on a people too ignorant, degraded and vicious, to be capable either of appreciating or of enjoying it." It is striking how much this echoes contemporary arguments against the expansion of democracy. In 2012, for example, a Tea Party congressional candidate from Florida said that voting is a "privilege" and seemed to endorse property requirements for participation.

Calhoun died in 1850. Ten years later, following the idea of nullification to its conclusion, the South seceded from the Union after Abraham Lincoln won the White House without a single Southern state. War came a few months later, and four years of fighting destroyed the system of slavery Calhoun fought to protect. But parts of his legacy survived. His deep suspicion of majoritarian democracy — his view that government must protect interests, defined by their unique geographic and economic characteristics, more than people — would inform the sectional politics of the South in the 20th century, where solid blocs of Southern lawmakers worked collectively to stifle any attempt to regulate the region.

Despite insurgencies at home — the Populist Party, for example, swept through Georgia and North Carolina in the 1890s — reactionary white leaders were able to maintain an iron grip on federal offices until the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And even then, the last generation of segregationist senators held on through the 1960s into the early 2000s. United, like their predecessors, by geography and their stake in Jim Crow segregation, they were a powerful force in national politics, a bloc that vetoed

anything that touched their regional prerogatives.

Anti-lynching laws and some pro-labor legislation died at the hands of lawmakers from the "Solid South" who took advantage of Senate rules like the filibuster to effectively enact Calhoun's idea of a concurrent majority against legislation that threatened the Southern racial status quo; the spirit of nullification lived on. When Northern liberal Democrats added a civil rights plank to the party platform at the 1948 presidential convention, in an effort to break the Southern conservatives' hold on the party, 35 delegates from Mississippi and Alabama walked out in protest: the prologue to the "Dixiecrat Revolt" that began the conservative migration into the eventual embrace of the Republican Party.

Calhoun's idea that states could veto the federal government would return as well following the decision in Brown v. Board of Education, as segregationists announced "massive resistance" to federal desegregation mandates and sympathizers defended white Southern actions with ideas and arguments that cribbed from Calhoun and recapitulated enslaver ideology for modern American politics. "The central question that emerges," the National Review founding editor William F. Buckley Jr. wrote in 1957, amid congressional debate over the first Civil Rights Act, "is whether the white community in the South is entitled to take such measures as are necessary to prevail, politically and culturally, in areas which it does not predominate numerically? The sobering answer is *yes* — the white community is so entitled because, for the time being, it is the advanced race." He continued: "It is more important for any community, anywhere in the world, to affirm and live by civilized standards, than to bow to the demands of the numerical majority."

It is a strikingly blunt defense of Jim Crow and affirmation of white supremacy from the father of the conservative movement. Conservatives drove the groundswell that made Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, an opponent of the Civil Rights Act, the 1964 Republican Party nominee for president. He lost in a landslide but won the Deep South (except for Florida), where the white people of the region — among the most conservative in the country, a direct legacy of slavery and the society it built — flocked to the candidate who stood against the constitutional demands of the black-freedom movement. Goldwater may have insisted that there are "some rights that are clearly protected by valid laws and are therefore 'civil rights,'" but he also declared that "states' rights" were "disappearing under the piling sands of absolutism" and called Brown v. Board an "unconstitutional trespass into the legislative sphere of government." "I therefore support all efforts by the States, excluding violence, of course," Goldwater wrote in "The Conscience of a Conservative," "to preserve their rightful powers over education."

Later, when key civil rights questions had been settled by law, Buckley would essentially renounce these views, praising the movement and criticizing race-baiting demagogues like George C. Wallace. Still, his initial impulse — to give political minorities a veto not just over policy but over democracy itself — reflected a tendency that would express itself again and again in the conservative politics he ushered into the mainstream, emerging when political, cultural and demographic change threatened a narrow, exclusionary vision of American democracy. Writing in the 1980s and '90s, Samuel Francis — a polemicist who would eventually migrate to the very far right of American conservatism — identified this dynamic in the context of David Duke's campaign for governor of Louisiana:

"Reagan conservatism, in its innermost meaning, had little to do with supply-side economics and spreading democracy. It had to do with the awakening of a people who face political, cultural and economic dispossession, who are slowly beginning to glimpse the fact of dispossession and what dispossession will mean for them and their descendants, and who also are starting to think about reversing the processes and powers responsible for their dispossession."

There is a homegrown ideology of reaction in the United States, inextricably tied to our system of slavery. And while the racial content of that ideology has attenuated over time, the basic framework remains: fear of rival political majorities; of demographic "replacement"; of a government that threatens privilege and hierarchy.

The past 10 years of Republican extremism is emblematic. The Tea Party billed itself as a reaction to debt and spending, but a close look shows it was actually a reaction to an ascendant majority of black people, Latinos, Asian-Americans and liberal white people. In their survey-based study of the movement, the political scientists Christopher S. Parker and Matt A. Barreto show that Tea Party Republicans were motivated "by the fear and anxiety associated with the perception that 'real' Americans are losing their country."

The scholars Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson came to a similar conclusion in their contemporaneous study of the movement, based on an ethnographic study of Tea Party activists across the country. "Tea Party resistance to giving more to categories of people deemed undeserving is more than just an argument about taxes and spending," they note in "The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism"; "it is a heartfelt cry about where they fear 'their country' may be headed." And Tea Party adherents' "worries about racial and ethnic minorities and overly entitled young people," they write, "signal a larger fear about generational social change in America."

To stop this change and its political consequences, right-wing conservatives have embarked on a project to nullify opponents and restrict the scope of democracy. Mitch McConnell's hyper-obstructionist rule in the Senate is the most high-profile example of this strategy, but it's far from the most egregious.

In 2012, North Carolina Republicans won legislative and executive power for the first time in more than a century. They used it to gerrymander the electoral map and impose new restrictions on voting, specifically aimed at the state's African-American voters. One such restriction, a strict voter-identification law, was designed to target black North Carolinians with "almost surgical precision," according to the federal judges who struck the law down. When, in 2016, Democrats overcame these obstacles to take back the governor's mansion, the Republican-controlled Legislature tried to strip power from the office, to prevent Democrats from reversing their efforts to rig the game.

A similar thing happened in Wisconsin. Under Scott Walker, the governor at the time, Wisconsin Republicans gave themselves a structural advantage in the State Legislature through aggressive gerrymandering. After the Democratic candidate toppled Walker in the 2018 governor's race, the Republican majority in the Legislature rapidly moved to limit the new governor's power and weaken other statewide offices won by Democrats. They restricted the governor's ability to run public-benefit programs and set rules on the implementation of state laws. And they robbed the governor and the attorney general of the power to continue, or end, legal action against the Affordable Care Act.

Michigan Republicans took an almost identical course of action after Democrats in that state managed to win executive office, using their gerrymandered legislative majority to weaken the new Democratic governor and attorney general. One proposed bill, for example, would have shifted oversight of campaign-finance law from the secretary of state to a six-person commission with members nominated by the state Republican and Democratic parties, a move designed to produce deadlock and keep elected Democrats from reversing previous decisions.

The Republican rationale for tilting the field in their permanent favor or, failing that, nullifying the results and limiting Democrats' power as much as possible, has a familiar ring to it. "Citizens from every corner of Wisconsin deserve a strong legislative branch that stands on equal footing with an incoming administration that is based almost solely in Madison," one Wisconsin Republican said following the party's lame-duck power grab. The speaker of the State Assembly, Robin Vos, made his point more explicit. "If you took

Eric Cantor, a Virginia Republican who was then the House majority leader, speaks to reporters in April 2011 during the lead-up to a standoff with President Obama over raising the debt ceiling.

Photograph by Jonathan Ernst/Getty Images

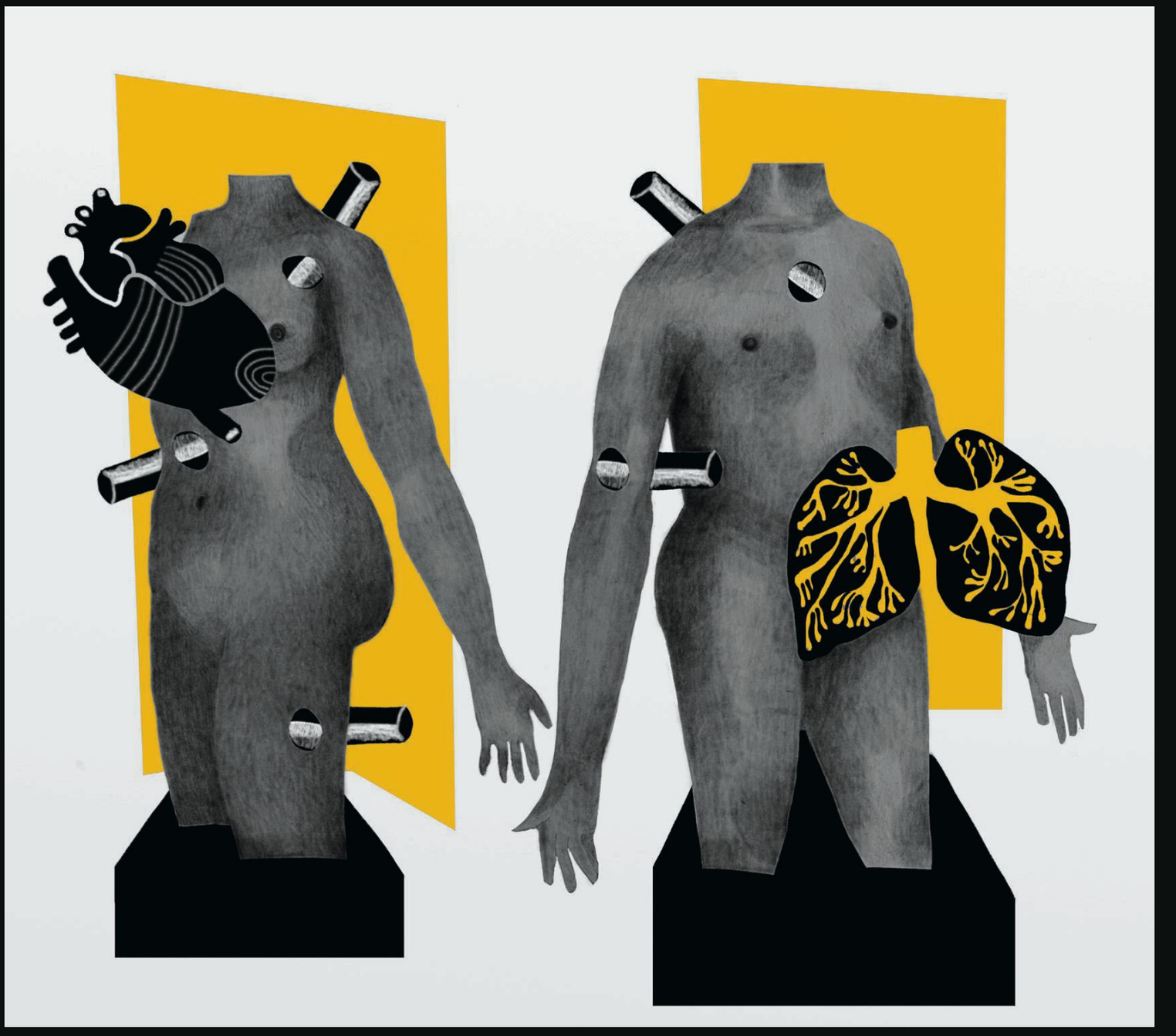
Madison and Milwaukee out of the state election formula, we would have a clear majority — we would have all five constitutional officers, and we would probably have many more seats in the Legislature." The argument is straightforward: Some voters, *their* voters, count. Others — the liberals, black people and other people of color who live in cities — don't.

Senate Republicans played with similar ideas just before the 2016 election, openly announcing their plans to block Hillary Clinton from nominating anyone to the Supreme Court, should she become president. "I promise you that we will be united against any Supreme Court nominee that Hillary Clinton, if she were president, would put up," declared Senator John McCain of Arizona just weeks before voting. And President Trump, of course, has repeatedly and falsely denounced Clinton's popular-vote victory as illegitimate, the product of fraud and illegal voting. "In addition to winning the Electoral College in a landslide," he declared on Twitter weeks after the election, "I won the popular vote if you deduct the millions of people who voted illegally."

The larger implication is clear enough: A majority made up of liberals and people of color isn't a real majority. And the solution is clear, too: to write those people out of the polity, to use every available tool to weaken their influence on American politics. The recent attempt to place a citizenship question on the census was an important part of this effort. By asking for this information, the administration would suppress the number of immigrant respondents, worsening their representation in the House and the Electoral College, reweighting power to the white, rural areas that back the president and the Republican Party.

You could make the case that none of this has anything to do with slavery and slaveholder ideology. You could argue that it has nothing to do with race at all, that it's simply an aggressive effort to secure conservative victories. But the tenor of an argument, the shape and nature of an opposition movement — these things matter. The goals may be colorblind, but the methods of action — the attacks on the legitimacy of nonwhite political actors, the casting of rival political majorities as unrepresentative, the drive to nullify democratically elected governing coalitions — are clearly downstream of a style of extreme political combat that came to fruition in the defense of human bondage. ◆

*M*yths about physical racial differences were used to justify slavery — and are still believed by doctors today.



By Linda Villarosa

The excruciatingly painful medical experiments went on until his body was disfigured by a network of scars. John Brown, an enslaved man on a Baldwin County, Ga., plantation in the 1820s and '30s, was lent to a physician, Dr. Thomas Hamilton, who was obsessed with proving that physiological differences between black and white people existed. Hamilton used Brown to try to determine how deep black skin went, believing it was thicker than white skin. Brown, who eventually escaped to England, recorded his experiences in an autobiography, published in 1855 as "Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Now in England." In Brown's words, Hamilton applied "blisters to my hands, legs and feet, which bear the scars to this day. He continued until he drew up the dark skin from between the upper and the under one. He used to blister me at intervals of about two weeks." This went on for nine months, Brown wrote, until "the Doctor's experiments had so reduced me that I was useless in the field."

Hamilton was a courtly Southern gentleman, a respected physician and a trustee of the Medical Academy of Georgia. And like many other doctors of the era in the South, he was also a wealthy plantation owner who tried to use science to prove that differences between black people and white people went beyond culture and were more than skin deep, insisting that black bodies were composed and functioned differently than white bodies. They believed that black people had large sex organs and small skulls — which translated to promiscuity and a lack of intelligence — and higher tolerance for heat, as well as immunity to some illnesses and susceptibility to others. These fallacies, presented as fact and legitimized in medical journals, bolstered society's view that enslaved people were fit for little outside forced labor and provided support for racist ideology and discriminatory public policies.

Over the centuries, the two most persistent physiological myths — that black people were impervious to pain and had weak lungs that could be strengthened through hard work — wormed their way into scientific consensus, and they remain rooted in modern-day medical education and practice. In the 1787 manual "A Treatise on Tropical Diseases; and on The Climate of the West-Indies," a British doctor, Benjamin Moseley, claimed that black people could bear surgical operations much more than white people, noting that "what would be the cause of insupportable pain to a white man, a Negro would almost disregard." To drive home his point, he added, "I have amputated the legs of many Negroes who have held the upper part of the limb themselves."

These misconceptions about pain tolerance, seized upon by pro-slavery advocates, also allowed the physician J. Marion Sims — long celebrated as the father of modern gynecology — to use black women as subjects in experiments that would be unconscionable today, practicing painful operations (at a time before anesthesia was in use) on enslaved women in Montgomery, Ala., between 1845 and 1849. In his autobiography, "The Story of My Life," Sims described the agony the women suffered as he cut their genitals again and again in an attempt to perfect a surgical technique to repair vesico-vaginal fistula, which can be an extreme complication of childbirth.

Thomas Jefferson, in "Notes on the State of Virginia," published around the same time as Moseley's treatise, listed what he proposed were "the real distinctions which nature has made," including a lack of lung capacity. In the years that followed, physicians and scientists embraced Jefferson's unproven theories, none more aggressively than Samuel Cartwright, a physician and professor of "diseases of the Negro" at the University of Louisiana, now Tulane University. His widely circulated paper, "Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," published in the May 1851 issue of The New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal, cataloged supposed physical differences between whites and blacks, including the claim that black people had lower lung capacity. Cartwright, conveniently, saw forced labor as a way to "vitalize" the blood and correct the problem. Most outrageous, Cartwright maintained that enslaved people were prone to a "disease of the mind" called drapetomania, which caused them to run away from their enslavers. Willfully ignoring the inhumane conditions that drove desperate men and women to attempt escape, he insisted, without irony, that enslaved people contracted this ailment when their enslavers treated them as equals, and he prescribed "whipping the devil out of them" as a preventive measure.

Today Cartwright's 1851 paper reads like satire, Hamilton's supposedly scientific experiments appear simply sadistic and, last year, a statue commemorating Sims in New York's Central Park was removed after prolonged protest that included women wearing blood-splattered gowns in memory of Anarcha, Betsey, Lucy and the other enslaved women he brutalized. And yet, more than 150 years after the end of slavery, fallacies of black immunity to pain and weakened lung function continue to show up in modern-day medical education and philosophy.

Even Cartwright's footprint remains embedded in current medical practice. To validate his theory about lung inferiority in African-Americans, he became one of the first doctors in the United States to measure pulmonary function with an instrument called a spirometer. Using a device he designed himself, Cartwright calculated that "the deficiency in the Negro may be safely estimated at 20 percent." Today most commercially available spirometers, used around the world to diagnose and monitor respiratory illness, have a "race correction" built into the software, which controls for the assumption that blacks have less lung capacity than whites. In her 2014 book, "Breathing Race Into the Machine: The Surprising Career of the Spirometer from Plantation to Genetics," Lundy Braun, a Brown University professor of medical science and Africana studies, notes that "race correction" is still taught to medical students and described in textbooks as scientific fact and standard practice.

Recent data also shows that present-day doctors fail to sufficiently treat the pain of black adults and children for many medical issues. A 2013 review of studies examining racial disparities in pain management published in The American Medical Association Journal of Ethics found that black and Hispanic people — from children with appendicitis to elders in hospice care — received inadequate pain management compared with white counterparts.

A 2016 survey of 222 white medical students and residents published in The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences showed that half of them endorsed at least one myth about physiological differences between black people and white people, including that black people's nerve endings are less sensitive than white people's. When asked to imagine how much pain white or black patients experienced in hypothetical situations, the medical students and residents insisted that black people felt less pain. This made the providers less likely to recommend appropriate treatment. A majority of these doctors to be also still believed the lie that Thomas Hamilton tortured John Brown to prove nearly two centuries ago: that black skin is thicker than white skin.

This disconnect allows scientists, doctors and other medical providers — and those training to fill their positions in the future — to ignore their own complicity in health care inequality and gloss over the internalized racism and both conscious and unconscious bias that drive them to go against their very oath to do no harm.

The centuries-old belief in racial differences in physiology has continued to mask the brutal effects of discrimination and structural inequities, instead placing blame on individuals and their communities for statistically poor health outcomes. Rather than conceptualizing race as a risk factor that predicts disease or disability because of a fixed susceptibility conceived on shaky grounds centuries ago, we would do better to understand race as a proxy for bias, disadvantage and ill treatment. The poor health outcomes of black people, the targets of discrimination over hundreds of years and numerous generations, may be a harbinger for the future health of an increasingly diverse and unequal America. ◆

Illustration by Diana Ejaita

● July 27, 1816: American troops attack Negro Fort, a stockade in Spanish Florida established by the British and left to the Black Seminoles, a Native American nation of Creek refugees, free black people and fugitives from slavery. Nearly all the soldiers, women and children in the fort are killed.

Cypress: Ron Clausen via Wikimedia

They weren't headed north to freedom —
They fled away from the North Star,
turned their back on the Mason-Dixon line,
put their feet to freedom by fleeing
further south to Florida.
Ran to where 'gator and viper roamed
free in the mosquito swarm of Suwannee.
They slipped out deep after sunset,
shadow to shadow, shoulder to shoulder,
stealthing southward, stealing themselves,
steeling their souls to run steel
through any slave catcher who'd dare
try stealing them back north.
They billeted in swamp mud,
saw grass and cypress —
they waded through waves
of water lily and duckweed.
They thinned themselves in thickets
and thorn bush hiding their young
from thieves of black skin marauding
under moonlight and cloud cover.
Many once knew another shore
an ocean away, whose language,
songs, stories were outlawed
on plantation ground. In swampland,
they raised flags of their native tongues
above whisper smoke
into billowing bonfires
of chant, drum and chatter.
They remembered themselves
with their own words
bleeding into English,
bonding into Spanish,
singing in Creek and Creole.
With their sweat
forging farms in
unforgiving heat,
never forgetting scars
of the lash, fighting
battle after battle
for generations.
Creeks called them *Seminole*
when they bonded with renegade Creeks.
Spaniards called them *cimarrones*,
runaways — escapees from Carolina
plantation death-prisons.
English simply called them *maroons*,
flattening the Spanish to make them
seem alone, abandoned, adrift —
but they were bonded,
side by side,
Black and Red,
in a blood red hue —
maroon.
Sovereignty soldiers,
Black refugees,
self-abolitionists, fighting
through America's history,
marooned in a land
they made their own,
acre after acre,
plot after plot,
war after war,
life after life.
They fought only
for America to let them be
marooned — left alone —
in their own unchained,
singing,
worthy
blood.

By Tyehimba Jess

Photo illustration by Jon Key

Jan. 1, 1863: President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing enslaved African-Americans in rebelling states. The text is read aloud at thousands of gatherings, including at a Union Army encampment in Port Royal, S.C.

Imagine the scene I cannot write. The Colonel steps onto the platform, reciting to himself: I'll tell you how the sun rose, a ribbon at a time. It is New Year's Day. The president has signed the historic war measure.

The Colonel was not alone in his feeling that after the disgrace of Bull Run, the Union needed to take Port Royal Island, and after the slaughter at Fredericksburg, Port Royal needs this convocation. White women in bonnets and white men in vests crowd the platform. The Colonel studies the First South Carolina Volunteers arrayed before him. It is the first black unit. The men of his regiment adore campfires, spelling books and tobacco, but none of them drink. Most have freed themselves. Take a ride on a federal gunboat and join the Cause. Everywhere, the Colonel sees black women in their Sunday kerchiefs. God's blessings are on dress parade.

The Colonel hands the Emancipation Proclamation to a penitent white man who used to be called Master over in Beaufort. The Colonel said Oof when he first got his copy. The orderly's breathing told him that he, too, had read the Proclamation, had felt power naked, actual armed-rebellion naked, suppressing said rebellion naked, shall be free naked, maintain freedom of said persons naked.

The prayer is over. The former master of cotton is no orator, but the Colonel is where power and freedom are forging God's naked sword. He marvels at the Lord's invention, the sheer darkness of his men. Is it not glorious to be handsome.

The Colonel receives regimental colors and the Union flag from a New Yorker who will not cease addressing him. Ten cows revolve on spits, and the New Yorker will not be still. The Colonel fights to remain in this sacred place where every heart desires the same thing. Beyond the live oaks, another steamer arrives on the blue water.

Seated nearby are the camp's brilliant surgeon and its most beautiful schoolteacher, the Colonel's friends from home, Boston. The Surgeon reads his wife's letters to the Schoolteacher. It is not that she is a black woman and he a white man. A free black woman whose family is richer than either of theirs, the Colonel did not say. The Surgeon's beard is shining, and the Schoolteacher's head is uncovered.

The New Yorker will not yield the flag. The Colonel's wife is an invalid, and the Surgeon's wife is plain. The Schoolteacher is an unfair quadroon beauty, the Colonel has told his friend. She and the Surgeon love to talk of their love for horses, moonlight and the Cause.

The Colonel has the flag in the silence. He slowly waves the flag, thinking this is the first time it may hold true meaning for them. An elderly black voice begins, *My country, 'tis of thee*. A few black women add their voices. Suddenly, many. The Colonel quiets the white people so that only black people are singing.

The Schoolteacher continues to sing, and so does the Surgeon. *Let freedom ring*. This is war, the Colonel smiles.

By Darryl Pinckney

● July 30, 1866: During a constitutional convention called for by abolitionist leaders, in response to the Louisiana Legislature's refusal to give black men the vote, armed white people attack a crowd. More than 35 people die, mostly black men.

The bodies all around began to cook and swell in the heat: fingers the size of pickles, forearms rising like loaves until as big and gamy as hams festering in the noontime sun. When the Secesh police began their rounds, Lazarus got to crouching, then creeping, until — at last — he had to lie down among the dead, coffining himself between two fallen neighbors, readying himself for the shot to the head.

Just hours earlier, all of colored New Orleans in their finest had come out: veterans from the Louisiana Native Guards had amassed at the procession's front, joined by one or more bands that began to blaze and bray their trumpets and trombones once struck up by some hidden concertmaster. Seamstresses, maids, cooks, bricklayers and longshoremen: They'd all come out at the behest of Roudanez, owner of the black folks' paper, as well as Dostie, the radical Republican dentist Democrats declared a race traitor and nigger lover. The white Republicans could not get votes over the Confederate Democrats without colored men, nor could the colored man get the vote without the whites who fought against the Confederate Redeemer cause.

"Thirty-seven niggers dead," Lazarus had heard someone say while he played possum. "And that fella Dostie."

Such a pus and rot he'd never smelled before. Needling choruses of gallinippers hiving above yards of bursting flesh. Rodents hurrying forth with their ratchet scratching at wounds. Midges inspecting tonsils on display. Then there was the nearly silent sound of worms at work, underworld missionaries unsewing men from their souls.

It wasn't until 3 o'clock that the military finally came and gave orders as to what should be done; the wounded were to go to the Freedmen's Hospital, which had once been Marine Hospital. The dead were to lie out in the hundred-degree heat until another wagon became available, and there was to be martial law for the rest of the night, lasting who knew until when.

The ride to the Freedmen's Hospital killed a few who weren't yet dead. A jolting ride over cobblestones, banquettes, undone roads, bricks from the riot left in the middle of the street, while the whole hospital was filled with big moans, the smell of grease and camphor, wet wool and kerosene.

They rolled him onto a flat cot, then put yet another man on top of him and jostled them both through a dark corridor. The blood from the man on top of him seeped into Lazarus's eyes, ran in thin tickling trickles into his ears, clumped in thick waxy clots in his nose, his hair.

It scared him to death to be so in the dark, and try as he might to push the dead man off him, he could not. They carried him into a room, a place that was even more foul-smelling than the stench of bodies swelling in the sun. When his cot passed the threshold, the men who'd been carrying it dropped it, sending the dead man falling to the floor, only the sound didn't sound like Lazarus expected it to, but more like a clank and clatter, as though the heavy doors of an armoire or chifforobe had been banged shut. The men who'd been holding the cot retched, one, then the other.

By ZZ Packer

For centuries, black music, forged in bondage, has been the sound of complete artistic freedom. No wonder everybody is always stealing it.

By Wesley Morris

Photo illustration by Michael Paul Britto

I've got a friend who's an incurable Pandora guy,

and one Saturday while we were making dinner, he found a station called Yacht Rock. "A tongue-in-cheek name for the breezy sounds of late '70s/early '80s soft rock" is Pandora's definition, accompanied by an exhortation to "put on your Dockers, pull up a deck chair and relax." With a single exception, the passengers aboard the yacht were all dudes. With two exceptions, they were all white. But as the hours passed and dozens of songs accrued, the sound gravitated toward a familiar quality that I couldn't give language to but could practically taste: an earnest Christian yearning that would reach, for a moment, into Baptist rawness, into a known warmth. I had to laugh — not because as a category Yacht Rock is absurd, but because what I tasted in that absurdity was black.

I started putting each track under investigation. Which artists would saunter up to the racial border? And which could do their sauntering without violating it? I could hear degrees of blackness in the choir-loft certitude of Doobie Brothers-era Michael McDonald on "What a Fool Believes"; in the rubber-band soul of Steely Dan's "Do It Again"; in the malt-liquor misery of Ace's "How Long" and the toy-boat wistfulness of Little River Band's "Reminiscing."

Then Kenny Loggins's "This Is It" arrived and took things far beyond the line. "This Is It" was a hit in 1979 and has the requisite smoothness to keep the yacht rocking. But Loggins delivers the lyrics in a desperate stage whisper, like someone determined to make the kind of love that doesn't wake the baby. What bowls you over is the intensity of his yearning — teary in the verses, snarling during the chorus. He sounds as if he's baring it all yet begging to wring himself out even more.

Playing black-music detective that day, I laughed out of bafflement and embarrassment and exhilaration. It's the conflation of pride and chagrin I've always felt anytime a white person inhabits blackness with gusto. It's: *You have to hand it to her.* It's: *Go, white boy. Go, white boy. Go.* But it's also: *Here we go again.* The problem is rich. If blackness can draw all of this ornate literariness out of Steely Dan and all this psychotic origami out of Eminem; if it can make Teena Marie sing everything — "Square Biz," "Revolution," "Portuguese Love," "Lovergirl" — like she knows her way around a pack of Newports; if it can turn the chorus of Carly Simon's "You Belong to Me" into a gospel hymn; if it can animate the swagger in the sardonic vulnerabilities of Amy Winehouse; if it can surface as unexpectedly as it does in the angelic angst of a singer as seemingly green as Ben Platt; if it's the reason Nu Shooz's "I Can't Wait" remains the whitest jam at the blackest parties, then it's proof of how deeply it matters to the music of being alive in America, alive *to* America.

It's proof, too, that American music has been fated to thrive in an elaborate tangle almost from the beginning. Americans have made a political investment in a myth of racial separateness, the idea that art forms can be either "white" or "black" in character when aspects of many are at least both. The purity that separation struggles to maintain? This country's music is an advertisement for 400 years of the opposite: centuries of "amalgamation" and "miscegenation" as they long ago called it, of all manner of interracial collaboration conducted with dismaying ranges of consent.

"White," "Western," "classical" music is the overarching basis for lots of American pop songs. Chromatic-chord harmony, clean timbre of voice and instrument: These are the ingredients for some of the hugely singable harmonies of the Beatles, the Eagles, Simon and Fleetwood Mac, something choral, "pure," largely ungrained. Black music is a completely different story. It brims with call and response, layers of syncopation and this rougher element called "noise," unique sounds that arise from the particular hue and timbre of an instrument — Little Richard's woos and knuckled keyboard zooms. The dusky heat of Miles Davis's trumpeting. Patti LaBelle's emotional police siren. DMX's scorched-earth bark. The visceral stank of Etta James, Aretha Franklin, live-in-concert Whitney Houston and Prince on electric guitar.

But there's something even more fundamental, too. My friend Delvyn Case, a musician who teaches at Wheaton College, explained in an email that improvisation is one of the most crucial elements in what we think of as black music: "The raising of individual creativity/expression to the highest place within the aesthetic world of a song." Without improvisation, a listener is seduced into the composition of the song itself and not the distorting or deviating elements that noise creates. Particular to black American music is the architecture to create a means by which singers and musicians can be completely free, free in the only way that would have been possible on a plantation: through art, through music — music no one "composed" (because enslaved people were denied literacy), music born of feeling, of play, of exhaustion, of hope.

What you're hearing in black music is a miracle of sound, an experience that can really happen only once — not just melisma, glissandi, the rasp of a sax, breakbeats or sampling but the mood or inspiration from which those moments arise. The attempt to rerecord it seems, if you think about it, like a fool's errand. You're not capturing the arrangement of notes, per se. You're catching the spirit.

And the spirit travels from host to host, racially indiscriminate about where it settles, selective only about who can withstand being possessed by it. The rockin' backwoods blues so bewitched Elvis Presley that he believed he'd been called by blackness. Chuck Berry sculpted rock 'n' roll with uproarious guitar riffs and lascivious winks at whiteness. Mick Jagger and Robert Plant and Steve Winwood and Janis Joplin and the Beatles jumped, jived and wailed the black blues. Tina Turner wrested it all back, tripling the octane in some of *their* songs. Since the 1830s, the historian Ann Douglas writes in "Terrible Honesty," her history of popular culture in the 1920s, "American entertainment, whatever the state of American society, has always been integrated, if only by theft and parody." What we've been dealing with ever since is more than a catchall word like "appropriation" can approximate.

Opening pages: Source photograph of Beyoncé: Kevin Mazur/Getty Images. Holiday: Paul Hoeffler/Redferns, via Getty Images. Turner: Gai Terrell/Redferns, via Getty Images. Richards: Chris Walter/WireImage, via Getty Images. Lamar: Bennett Raglin/Getty Images. Above left: From The New York Public Library. Above right: Shutterstock.

The blackface performer Thomas Dartmouth Rice (T. D. Rice), who pioneered the "Jim Crow" character, in a portrait from the mid-1800s.

Sheet music of "Jim Crow Jubilee: A Collection of Negro Melodies," published in 1847.

The truth is more bounteous and more spiritual than that, more confused. That confusion is the DNA of the American sound.

It's in the wink-wink costume funk of Beck's "Midnite Vultures" from 1999, an album whose kicky nonsense deprecations circle back to the popular culture of 150 years earlier. It's in the dead-serious, nostalgic dance-floor schmaltz of Bruno Mars. It's in what we once called "blue-eyed soul," a term I've never known what to do with, because its most convincing practitioners — the Bee-Gees, Michael McDonald, Hall & Oates, Simply Red, George Michael, Taylor Dayne, Lisa Stansfield, Adele — never winked at black people, so black people rarely batted an eyelash. Flaws and all, these are homeowners as opposed to renters. No matter what, though, a kind of gentrification tends to set in, underscoring that black people have often been rendered unnecessary to attempt blackness. Take Billboard's Top 10 songs of 2013: It's mostly nonblack artists strongly identified with black music, for real and for kicks: Robin Thicke, Miley Cyrus, Justin Timberlake, Macklemore and Ryan Lewis, the dude who made "The Harlem Shake."

Sometimes all the inexorable mixing leaves me longing for something with roots that no one can rip all the way out. This is to say that when we're talking about black music, we're talking about horns, drums, keyboards and guitars doing the unthinkable together. We're also talking about what the borrowers and collaborators don't want to or can't lift — centuries of weight, of atrocity we've never sufficiently worked through, the blackness you know is beyond theft because it's too real, too rich, too heavy to steal.

Blackness was on the move before my ancestors were legally free to be. It was on the move before my ancestors even knew what they had. It was on the move because white people were moving it. And the white person most frequently identified as its prime mover is Thomas Dartmouth Rice, a New Yorker who performed as T. D. Rice and, in acclaim, was lusted after as "Daddy" Rice, "the negro *par excellence*." Rice was a minstrel, which by the 1830s, when his stardom was at its most refulgent, meant he painted his face with burned cork to approximate those of the enslaved black people he was imitating.

In 1830, Rice was a nobody actor in his early 20s, touring with a theater company in Cincinnati (or Louisville; historians don't know for sure), when, the story goes, he saw a decrepit, possibly disfigured old black man singing while grooming a horse on the property of a white man whose last name was Crow. On went the light bulb. Rice took in the tune and the movements but failed, it seems, to take down the old man's name. So in his song based on the horse groomer, he renamed him: "Weel about and turn about jus so/Ebery time I weel about, I jump Jim Crow." And just like that, Rice had invented the fellow who would become the mascot for two centuries of legalized racism.

That night, Rice made himself up to look like the old black man — or something like him, because Rice's get-up most likely concocted skin blacker than any actual black person's and a gibberish dialect meant to imply black speech. Rice had turned the old man's melody and hobbled movements into a song-and-dance routine that no white audience had ever experienced

Ma Rainey, an early blues singer who performed in black minstrel shows, with her band.

before. What they saw caused a permanent sensation. He reportedly won 20 encores.

Rice repeated the act again, night after night, for audiences so profoundly rocked that he was frequently mobbed *during* performances. Across the Ohio River, not an arduous distance from all that adulation, was Boone County, Ky., whose population would have been largely enslaved Africans. As they were being worked, sometimes to death, white people, desperate with anticipation, were paying to see them depicted at play.

Other performers came and conquered, particularly the Virginia Minstrels, who exploded in 1843, burned brightly then burned out after only months. In their wake, P.T. Barnum made a habit of booking other troupes for his American Museum; when he was short on performers, he blacked up himself. By the 1840s, minstrel acts were taking over concert halls, doing wildly clamored-for residencies in Boston, New York and Philadelphia.

A blackface minstrel would sing, dance, play music, give speeches and cut up for white audiences, almost exclusively in the North, at least initially. Blackface was used for mock operas and political monologues (they called them stump speeches), skits, gender parodies and dances. Before the minstrel show gave it a reliable home, blackface was the entertainment between acts of conventional plays. Its stars were the Elvis, the Beatles, the 'NSync of the 19th century. The performers were beloved and so, especially, were their songs.

During minstrelsy's heyday, white songwriters like Stephen Foster wrote the tunes that minstrels sang, tunes we continue to sing. Edwin Pearce Christy's group the Christy Minstrels formed a band — banjo, fiddle, bone castanets, tambourine — that would lay the groundwork for American popular music, from bluegrass to Motown. Some of these instruments had come from Africa; on a plantation, the banjo's body would have been a desiccated gourd. In "Doo-Dah!" his book on Foster's work and life, Ken Emerson writes that the fiddle and banjo were paired for the melody, while the bones "chattered" and the tambourine "thumped and jingled a beat that is still heard 'round the world."

But the sounds made with these instruments could be only *imagined* as black, because the first wave of minstrels were Northerners who'd never been meaningfully South. They played Irish melodies and used Western choral harmonies, not the proto-gospel call-and-response music that would make life on a plantation that much more bearable. Black artists *were* on the scene, like the pioneer bandleader Frank Johnson and the borderline-mythical Old Corn Meal, who started as a street vendor and wound up the first black man to perform, as himself, on a white New Orleans stage. His stuff was copied by George Nichols, who took up blackface after a start in plain-old clowning. Yet as often as not, blackface minstrelsy tethered black people and black life to white musical structures, like the polka, which was having a moment in 1848. The mixing was already well underway: Europe plus slavery plus the circus, times harmony, comedy and drama, equals Americana.

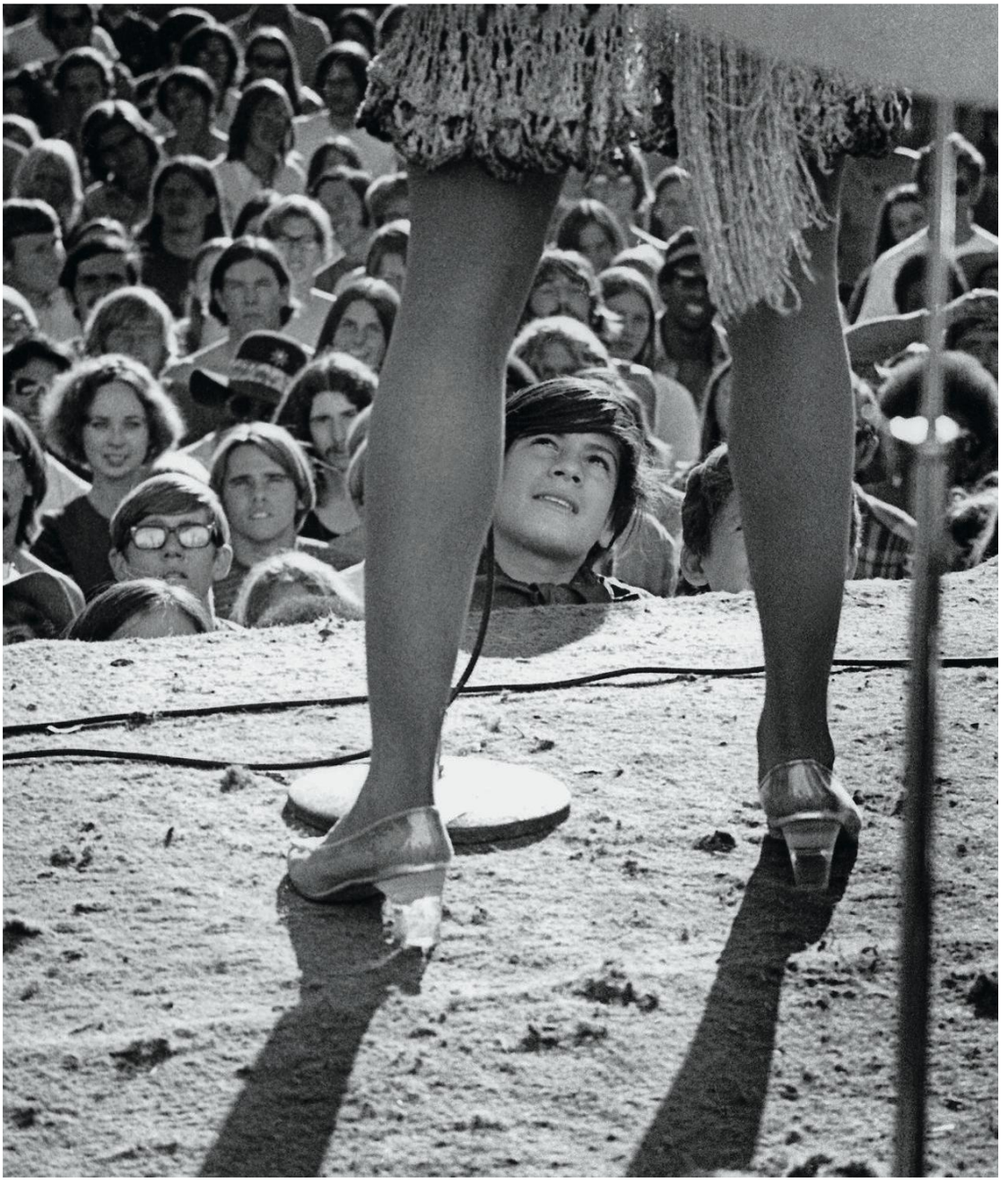
And the muses for so many of the songs were enslaved Americans, people the songwriters had never met, whose enslavement they rarely opposed and instead sentimentalized. Foster's minstrel-show staple "Old Uncle Ned," for instance, warmly if disrespectfully eulogizes the enslaved the way you might a salaried worker or an uncle:

Den lay down de shubble and de hoe,
Hang up de fiddle and de bow:
No more hard work for poor Old Ned —
He's gone whar de good Niggas go,
No more hard work for poor Old Ned —
He's gone whar de good Niggas go.

Such an affectionate showcase for poor old (enslaved, soon-to-be-dead) Uncle Ned was as essential as "air," in the white critic Bayard Taylor's 1850 assessment; songs like this were the "true expressions of the more popular side of the national character," a force that follows "the American in all its emigrations, colonizations and conquests, as certainly as the Fourth of July and Thanksgiving Day." He's not wrong. Minstrelsy's peak stretched from the 1840s to the 1870s, years when the country was as its most violently and legislatively ambivalent about slavery and Negroes; years that included the Civil War and Reconstruction, the ferocious rhetorical ascent of Frederick Douglass, John Brown's botched instigation of a black insurrection at Harpers Ferry and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

Minstrelsy's ascent also coincided with the publication, in 1852, of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," a polarizing landmark that minstrels adapted for the stage, arguing for and, in simply remaining faithful to Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, against slavery. These adaptations, known as U.T.C.s, took over the art form until the end of the Civil War. Perhaps minstrelsy's popularity could be (generously) read as the urge to escape a reckoning. But a good time predicated upon the presentation of other humans as stupid, docile, dangerous with lust and enamored of their bondage? It was an escape into slavery's fun house.

What blackface minstrelsy gave the country during this period was an entertainment of skill, ribaldry and polemics. But it also lent racism a stage upon which existential fear could become jubilation, contempt could become fantasy. Paradoxically, its dehumanizing bent let white audiences feel more human. They could experience loathing as desire, contempt as adoration, repulsion as lust. They could weep for overworked Uncle Ned as surely as they could ignore his lashed back or his body as it swung from a tree.



Tina Turner performing at a festival in Lake Amador, Calif., on Oct. 4, 1969.

Left: Redferns via Getty Images. Right: Robert Altman/Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images.

But where did this leave a black performer? If blackface was the country's cultural juggernaut, who would pay Negroes money to perform as themselves? When they were hired, it was only in a pinch. Once, P. T. Barnum needed a replacement for John Diamond, his star white minstrel. In a New York City dance hall, Barnum found a boy, who, it was reported at the time, could outdo Diamond (and Diamond was *good*). The boy, of course, was genuinely black. And his being actually black would have rendered him an outrageous blight on a white consumer's narrow presumptions. As Thomas Low Nichols would write in his 1864 compendium, "Forty Years of American Life," "There was not an audience in America that would not have resented, in a very energetic fashion, the insult of being asked to look at the dancing of a real negro." So Barnum "greased the little 'nigger's' face and rubbed it over with a new blacking of burned cork, painted his thick lips vermilion, put on a woolly wig over his tight curled locks and brought him out as 'the champion nigger-dancer of

the world.'" This child might have been William Henry Lane, whose stage name was Juba. And, as Juba, Lane was persuasive enough that Barnum could pass him off as a white person in blackface. He ceased being a real black boy in order to become Barnum's minstrel Pinocchio.

After the Civil War, black performers had taken up minstrelsy, too, corking themselves, for both white and black audiences — with a straight face or a wink, depending on who was looking. Black troupes invented important new dances with blue-ribbon names (the buck-and-wing, the Virginia essence, the stop-time). But these were unhappy innovations. Custom obligated black performers to fulfill an audience's expectations, expectations that white performers had established. A black minstrel was impersonating the impersonation of himself. Think, for a moment, about the talent required to pull *that* off. According to Henry T. Sampson's book, "Blacks in Blackface," there were no sets or effects, so the black blackface minstrel show was "a developer of ability because the artist was placed on his own." How's that for being twice as good? Yet that no-frills excellence could curdle into an entirely other, utterly degrading double consciousness, one that predates, predicts and probably informs W. E. B. DuBois's more self-consciously dignified rendering.

American popular culture was doomed to cycles not only of questioned ownership, challenged authenticity, dubious propriety and legitimate cultural self-preservation but also to the prison of black respectability, which, with brutal irony, could itself entail a kind of appropriation. It meant comportment in a manner that seemed less black and more white. It meant the appearance of refinement and polish. It meant the cognitive dissonance of, say, Nat King Cole's being very black and sounding — to white America, anyway, with his frictionless baritone and diction as crisp as a hospital corner — suitably white. He was perfect for radio, yet when he got a TV show of his own, it was abruptly canceled, his brown skin being too much for even the black and white of a 1955 television set. There was, perhaps, not a white audience in America, particularly in the South, that would not have resented, in a very energetic fashion, the insult of being asked to look at the majestic *singing* of a real Negro.

The modern conundrum of the black performer's seeming respectable, among black people, began, in part, as a problem of white blackface minstrels' disrespectful blackness. Frederick Douglass wrote that they were "the filthy scum of white society." It's that scum that's given us pause over everybody from Bert Williams and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson to Flavor Flav and Kanye West. *Is their blackness an act? Is the act under white control?* Just this year, Harold E. Doley Jr., an affluent black Republican in his 70s, was quoted in The Times lamenting West and his alignment with Donald Trump as a "bad and embarrassing minstrel show" that "served to only drive black people away from the G.O.P."

But it's from that scum that a robust, post-minstrel black American theater sprung as a new, black audience hungered for actual, uncorked black people. Without that scum, I'm not sure we get an event as shatteringly epochal as the reign of Motown Records. Motown was a full-scale integration of Western, classical orchestral ideas (strings, horns, woodwinds) with the instincts of both the black church (rhythm sections, gospel harmonies, hand claps) and juke joint Saturday nights (rhythm sections, guitars, vigor). Pure yet "noisy." Black men in Armani. Black women in ball gowns. Stables of black writers, producers and musicians. Backup singers solving social equations with geometric choreography. And just in time for the hegemony of the American teenager.

Even now it feels like an assault on the music made a hundred years before it. Motown specialized in love songs. But its stars, those songs and their performance of them were declarations of war on the insults of the past and present. The scratchy piccolo at the start of a Four Tops hit was, in its way, a raised fist. Respectability wasn't a problem with Motown; respectability was its point. How radically optimistic a feat of antiminstrelsy, for it's as glamorous a blackness as this country has ever mass-produced and devoured.

The proliferation of black music across the planet — the proliferation, in so many senses, of being black — constitutes a magnificent joke on American racism. It also confirms the attraction that someone like Rice had to that black man grooming the horse. But something about that desire warps and perverts its source, lampoons and cheapens it even in adoration. Loving black culture has never meant loving black people, too. Loving black culture risks loving the life out of it.

And yet doesn't that attraction make sense? This is the music of a people who have survived, who not only won't stop but also can't be stopped. Music by a people whose major innovations — jazz, funk, hip-hop — have been about progress, about the future, about getting as far away from nostalgia as time will allow, music that's thought deeply about the allure of outer space and robotics, music whose promise and possibility, whose rawness, humor and carnality call out to everybody — to other black people, to kids in working class England and middle-class Indonesia. If freedom's ringing, who on Earth wouldn't also want to rock the bell?

In 1845, J. K. Kennard, a critic for the newspaper The Knickerbocker, hyperventilated about the blackening of America. Except he was talking about blackface minstrels doing the blackening. Nonetheless, Kennard could see things for what they were:

> "Who are our true rulers? The negro poets, to be sure! Do they not set the fashion, and give laws to the public taste? Let one of them, in the swamps of Carolina, compose a new song, and it no sooner reaches the ear of a white *amateur*, than it is written down, amended, (that is, almost spoilt,) printed, and then put upon a course of rapid dissemination, to cease only with the utmost bounds of Anglo-Saxondom, perhaps of the world."

What a panicked clairvoyant! The fear of black culture — or "black culture" — was more than a fear of black people themselves. It was an anxiety over white obsolescence. Kennard's anxiety over black influence sounds as ambivalent as Lorde's, when, all the way from her native New Zealand, she tsk-ed rap culture's extravagance on "Royals," her hit from 2013, while recognizing, both in the song's hip-hop production and its appetite for a particular sort of blackness, that maybe she's too far gone:

> Every song's like gold teeth, Grey Goose, trippin' in the bathroom
> Bloodstains, ball gowns, trashin' the hotel room
> We don't care, we're driving Cadillacs in our dreams
> But everybody's like Cristal, Maybach, diamonds on your timepiece
> Jet planes, islands, tigers on a gold leash
> We don't care, we aren't caught up in your love affair

Beneath Kennard's warnings must have lurked an awareness that his white brethren had already fallen under this spell of blackness, that nothing would stop its spread to teenage girls in 21st-century Auckland, that the men who "infest our promenades and our concert halls like a colony of beetles" (as a contemporary of Kennard's put it) weren't black people at all but white people just like him — beetles and, eventually, Beatles. Our first most original art form arose from our original sin, and some white people have always been worried that the primacy of black music would be a kind of karmic punishment for that sin. The work has been to free this country from paranoia's bondage, to truly embrace the amplitude of integration. I don't know how we're doing.

Last spring, "Old Town Road," a silly, drowsy ditty by the Atlanta songwriter Lil Nas X, was essentially banished from country radio. Lil Nas sounds black, as does the trap beat he's droning over. But there's definitely a twang to him that goes with the opening bars of faint banjo and Lil Nas's lil' cowboy

Photography by Frazer Harrison/Getty Images

Lil Nas X, left, and Billy Ray Cyrus perform in Indio, Calif., in 2019.

fantasy. The song snowballed into a phenomenon. All kinds of people — cops, soldiers, dozens of dapper black promgoers — posted dances to it on YouTube and TikTok. Then a crazy thing happened. It charted — not just on Billboard's Hot 100 singles chart, either. In April, it showed up on both its Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart and its Hot Country Songs chart. A first. And, for now at least, a last.

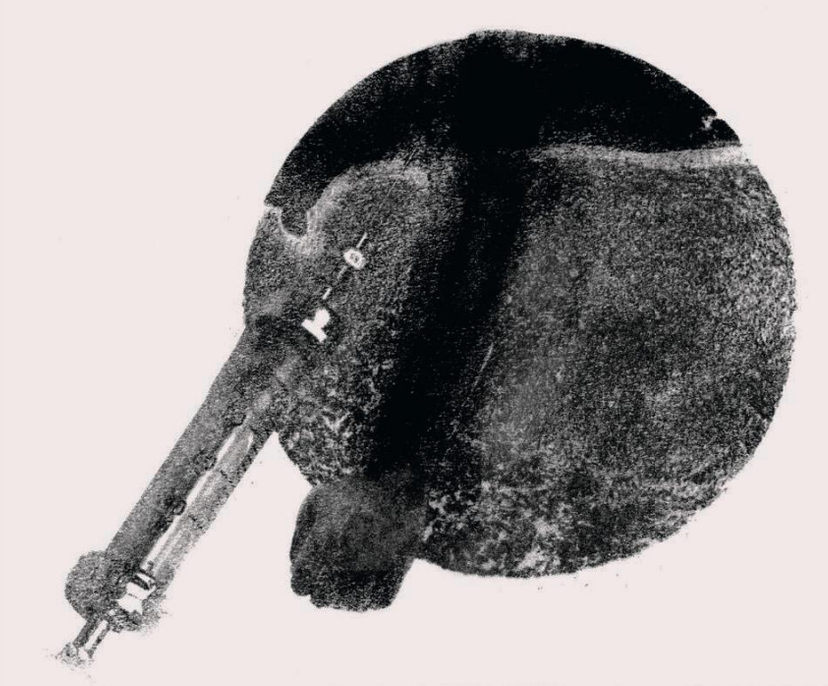
The gatekeepers of country radio refused to play the song; they didn't explain why. Then, Billboard determined that the song failed to "embrace enough elements of today's country music to chart in its current version." This doesn't warrant translation, but let's be thorough, anyway: *The song is too black for certain white people.*

But by that point it had already captured the nation's imagination and tapped into the confused thrill of integrated culture. A black kid hadn't really merged white music with black, he'd just taken up the American birthright of cultural synthesis. The mixing feels historical. Here, for instance, in the song's sample of a Nine Inch Nails track is a banjo, the musical spine of the minstrel era. Perhaps Lil Nas was *too* American. Other country artists of the genre seemed to sense this. White singers recorded pretty tributes in support, and one, Billy Ray Cyrus, performed his on a remix with Lil Nas X himself.

The newer version lays Cyrus's casual grit alongside Lil Nas's lackadaisical wonder. It's been No. 1 on Billboard's all-genre Hot 100 singles chart since April, setting a record. And the bottomless glee over the whole thing makes me laugh, too — not in a surprised, yacht-rock way but as proof of what a fine mess this place is. One person's sign of progress remains another's symbol of encroachment. *Screw the history. Get off my land.*

Four hundred years ago, more than 20 kidnapped Africans arrived in Virginia. They were put to work and put through hell. Twenty became millions, and some of those people found — somehow — deliverance in the power of music. Lil Nas X has descended from those millions and appears to be a believer in deliverance. The verses of his song flirt with Western kitsch, what young black internetters branded, with adorable idiosyncrasy and a deep sense of history, the "yee-haw agenda." But once the song reaches its chorus ("I'm gonna take my horse to the Old Town Road, and ride til I can't no more"), I don't hear a kid in an outfit. I hear a cry of ancestry. He's a westward-bound refugee; he's an Exoduster. And Cyrus is down for the ride. Musically, they both know: This land is their land. ◆

● 1932: The United States Public Health Service begins the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male, with 600 subjects, approximately two-thirds of whom have syphilis. The subjects are told only that they are being treated for "bad blood." Approximately 100 die from the disease. It is later revealed that for research purposes, the men were denied drugs that could have saved them.



Upon closer inspection, the leaf her 2-year-old was attempting to put in his mouth in the middle of the playground on that lovely fall day was in fact a used tampon. She snatched it from him and Purelled both of their hands before rushing them back to their apartment on Dean. She put him in the bath and scrubbed, and by the time her husband found them, they were both crying.

"We have to leave New York," she said after he put the baby to bed. "Let's move back home."

"There are tampons in Alabama," he said, and then, "What's the worst that could happen?"

It was the question they'd played out since graduate school, when her hypochondria had been all-consuming. Back then, leaning into her fears, describing them, had given her some comfort, but then they had Booker and suddenly the worst looked so much worse.

"He could get an S.T.D., and then we'd be the black parents at the hospital with a baby with an S.T.D., and the pediatrician would call social services, and they would take him away, and we'd end up in jail."

"O.K.," he said slowly. "That would be bad, but it's statistically very, very unlikely. Would it make you feel better if we called the doctor?"

She shook her head. Her husband only used the word "statistically" when he wanted to avoid using the words "you're crazy." She knew that the doctor would just tell her to trust him, but she also knew that when the worst happens in this country, it often happens to them.

She comes by her hypochondria and iatrophobia honestly. When she was growing up in Alabama, people still talked about their grandfathers, fathers and brothers who had died of bad blood. That was the catchall term for syphilis, anemia and just about anything that ailed you. The 600 men who were enrolled in the Tuskegee Study were told they'd get free medical care. Instead, from 1932 to 1972, researchers watched as the men developed lesions on their mouths and genitals. Watched as their lymph nodes swelled, as their hair fell out. Watched as the disease moved into its final stage, leaving the men blind and demented, leaving them to die. All this when they knew a simple penicillin shot would cure them. All this because they wanted to see what would happen. For years afterward, her grandmother refused to go to the hospital. Even at 89, perpetually hunched over in the throes of an endless cough, she'd repeat, "Anything but the doctor." Bad blood begets bad blood.

She's more trusting than her grandmother, but she still has her moments. Like many women, she was nervous about giving birth. All the more so because she was doing it in New York City, where black women are 12 times as likely to die in childbirth as white women. And in that very statistic, the indelible impression of Tuskegee. The lingering, niggling feeling that she is never fully safe in a country where doctors and researchers had no qualms about watching dozens of black men die — slowly, brutally — simply because they could. When she held Booker in her arms for the first time and saw her grandmother's nose on his perfect face, love and fear rose up in her. "What's the worst that could happen?" her husband asks, and she can't speak it — the worst. Instead, she tries to turn off the little voice in her head, the one that wants to know: How exactly do you cure bad blood?

By Yaa Gyasi

Syringe: Science Museum, London, via Wellcome Collection

Photo illustration by Jon Key

● Feb. 12, 1946: Isaac Woodard, a decorated 26-year-old Army sergeant, is severely beaten by white police officers while taking a bus to meet his wife. He is still wearing his uniform. Accused of drinking with other soldiers on the bus, Woodard is arrested on a charge of drunk and disorderly conduct and denied medical assistance. The attack leaves him permanently blind.

Keep an eye on the restrooms. They've always come for us through them. 'Cuz who doesn't ever have to use one? Straight peeps and trans peeps, black peeps and white peeps, we all have to go sometime. And back in the day, if the Colored Only signs didn't work or weren't enough, or still had black folks having the audacity to put on a uniform and go fight in a war — let's call this one World War II — they found other ways to come for us.

Feb. 12, 1946, 17 years to the day before I was born — and when I was born, know those Colored Only signs were still up all over the South — a South I would live in until I was 7 years old — Sgt. Isaac Woodard, in full uniform, boarded a bus in Georgia, heading home to his wife in Winnsboro, S.C. Ninety-eight miles away from the town in which I was raised, Sergeant Woodard asked the driver if there was time to use the restroom. This was near Augusta, S.C., where the driver said, "Hell no." And then there was an argument. And the driver conceding with a "Go ahead then, but hurry back."

Keep an eye on the history of black veterans in America. On the thousands that were attacked, assaulted, killed. Because they were black. Because they were in uniform. Because they had the audacity to believe that leaving this country to fight for it would indeed make it a better place for them to return to.

Keep an eye on a white Southern bus driver conceding to a black man. At a later stop, Sergeant Woodard was ordered off the bus by the local chief of police, Lynwood Shull, and another officer. Lynwood beat him blind. Two months later, Woodard's family moved him from the V.A. hospital in Columbia, S.C., to New York City. At trial, Shull admitted to blinding Woodard. After 30 minutes of deliberation, an all-white jury acquitted him.

Keep an eye on the long, bleak legacy of police brutality against black men. It happened in America. It happened when many of us were living. It happened again and again. And as Woodard himself said, "Negro veterans that fought in this war … don't realize that the real battle has just begun in America."

It happened on a Greyhound bus. To a man who was just trying to get himself home.

By Jacqueline Woodson

The sugar that saturates the American diet has a barbaric history as the ‘white gold’ that fueled slavery.

By Khalil Gibran Muhammad
Photograph by Brian Ulrich


mentos
ALTOIDS
Trident
Orbit
Extra
HERSHEY'S
KitKat
m&m's
Milky Way
TAKE 5
3 Musketeers
Twix
Mounds
Almond Joy
Baby Ruth
Caramello
Zero
mr.Goodbar
NOW-LATER
SweeTARTS
Skittles
Starburst
Mamba
SOUR PUNCH
PAYDAY
Rolo

Domino Sugar's Chalmette Refinery in Arabi, La.,

sits on the edge of the mighty Mississippi River, about five miles east by way of the river's bend from the French Quarter, and less than a mile down from the Lower Ninth Ward, where Hurricane Katrina and the failed levees destroyed so many black lives. It is North America's largest sugar refinery, making nearly two billion pounds of sugar and sugar products annually. Those ubiquitous four-pound yellow paper bags emblazoned with the company logo are produced here at a rate of 120 bags a minute, 24 hours a day, seven days a week during operating season.

The United States makes about nine million tons of sugar annually, ranking it sixth in global production. The United States sugar industry receives as much as $4 billion in annual subsidies in the form of price supports, guaranteed crop loans, tariffs and regulated imports of foreign sugar, which by some estimates is about half the price per pound of domestic sugar. Louisiana's sugar-cane industry is by itself worth $3 billion, generating an estimated 16,400 jobs.

A vast majority of that domestic sugar stays in this country, with an additional two to three million tons imported each year. Americans consume as much as 77.1 pounds of sugar and related sweeteners per person per year, according to United States Department of Agriculture data. That's nearly twice the limit the department recommends, based on a 2,000-calorie diet.

Sugar has been linked in the United States to diabetes, obesity and cancer. If it is killing all of us, it is killing black people faster. Over the last 30 years, the rate of Americans who are obese or overweight grew 27 percent among all adults, to 71 percent from 56 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control, with African-Americans overrepresented in the national figures. During the same period, diabetes rates overall nearly tripled. Among black non-Hispanic women, they are nearly double those of white non-Hispanic women, and one and a half times higher for black men than white men.

None of this — the extraordinary mass commodification of sugar, its economic might and outsize impact on the American diet and health — was in any way foreordained, or even predictable, when Christopher Columbus made his second voyage across the Atlantic Ocean in 1493, bringing sugar-cane stalks with him from the Spanish Canary Islands. In Europe at that time, refined sugar was a luxury product, the back-breaking toil and dangerous labor required in its manufacture an insuperable barrier to production in anything approaching bulk. It seems reasonable to imagine that it might have remained so if it weren't for the establishment of an enormous market in enslaved laborers who had no way to opt out of the treacherous work.

For thousands of years, cane was a heavy and unwieldy crop that had to be cut by hand and immediately ground to release the juice inside, lest it spoil within a day or two. Even before harvest time, rows had to be dug, stalks planted and plentiful wood chopped as fuel for boiling the liquid and reducing it to crystals and molasses. From the earliest traces of cane domestication on the Pacific island of New Guinea 10,000 years ago to its island-hopping advance to ancient India in 350 B.C., sugar was locally consumed and very labor-intensive. It remained little more than an exotic spice, medicinal glaze or sweetener for elite palates.

It was the introduction of sugar slavery in the New World that changed everything. "The true Age of Sugar had begun — and it was doing more to reshape the world than any ruler, empire or war had ever done," Marc Aronson and Marina Budhos write in their 2010 book, "Sugar Changed the World." Over the four centuries that followed Columbus's arrival, on the mainlands of Central and South America in Mexico, Guyana and Brazil as well as on the sugar islands of the West Indies — Cuba, Barbados and Jamaica, among others — countless indigenous lives were destroyed and nearly 11 million Africans were enslaved, just counting those who survived the Middle Passage.

"White gold" drove trade in goods and people, fueled the wealth of European nations and, for the British in particular, shored up the financing of their North American colonies. "There was direct trade among the colonies and between the colonies and Europe, but much of the Atlantic trade was triangular: enslaved people from Africa; sugar from the West Indies and Brazil; money and manufactures from Europe," writes the Harvard historian Walter Johnson in his 1999 book, "Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market." "People were traded along the bottom of the triangle; profits would stick at the top."

Before French Jesuit priests planted the first cane stalk near Baronne Street in New Orleans in 1751, sugar was already a huge moneymaker in British New York. By the 1720s, one of every two ships in the city's port was either arriving from or heading to the Caribbean, importing sugar and enslaved people and exporting flour, meat and shipbuilding supplies. The trade was so lucrative that Wall Street's most impressive buildings were Trinity Church at one end, facing the Hudson River, and the five-story sugar warehouses on the other, close to the East River and near the busy slave market. New York's enslaved population reached 20 percent, prompting the New York General Assembly in 1730 to issue a consolidated slave code, making it "unlawful for above three slaves" to meet on their own, and authorizing "each town" to employ "a common whipper for their slaves."

In 1795, Étienne de Boré, a New Orleans sugar planter, granulated the first sugar crystals in the Louisiana Territory. With the advent of sugar processing locally, sugar plantations exploded up and down both banks of the Mississippi River. All of this was possible because of the abundantly rich alluvial soil, combined with the technical mastery of seasoned French and Spanish planters from around the cane-growing basin of the Gulf and the Caribbean — and because of the toil of thousands of enslaved people. More French planters and their enslaved expert sugar workers poured into Louisiana as Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines led a successful revolution to secure Haiti's independence from France.

Within five decades, Louisiana planters were producing a quarter of the world's cane-sugar supply. During her antebellum reign, Queen Sugar bested King Cotton locally, making Louisiana the second-richest state in per capita wealth. According

Photograph from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library

Children on a Louisiana sugar cane plantation around 1885.

to the historian Richard Follett, the state ranked third in banking capital behind New York and Massachusetts in 1840. The value of enslaved people alone represented tens of millions of dollars in capital that financed investments, loans and businesses. Much of that investment funneled back into the sugar mills, the "most industrialized sector of Southern agriculture," Follett writes in his 2005 book, "Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World 1820-1860." No other agricultural region came close to the amount of capital investment in farming by the eve of the Civil War. In 1853, Representative Miles Taylor of Louisiana bragged that his state's success was "without parallel in the United States, or indeed in the world in any branch of industry."

The enslaved population soared, quadrupling over a 20-year period to 125,000 souls in the mid-19th century. New Orleans became the Walmart of people-selling. The number of enslaved labor crews doubled on sugar plantations. And in every sugar parish, black people outnumbered whites. These were some of the most skilled laborers, doing some of the most dangerous agricultural and industrial work in the United States.

In the mill, alongside adults, children toiled like factory workers with assembly-line precision and discipline under the constant threat of boiling hot kettles, open furnaces and grinding rollers. "All along the endless carrier are ranged slave children, whose business it is to place the cane upon it, when it is conveyed through the shed into the main building," wrote Solomon Northup in "Twelve Years a Slave," his 1853 memoir of being kidnapped and forced into slavery on Louisiana plantations.

To achieve the highest efficiency, as in the round-the-clock Domino refinery today, sugar houses operated night and day. "On cane plantations in sugar time, there is no distinction as to the days of the week," Northup wrote. Fatigue might mean losing an arm to the grinding rollers or being flayed for failing to keep up. Resistance was often met with sadistic cruelty.

A formerly enslaved black woman named Mrs. Webb described a torture chamber used by her owner, Valsin Marmillion. "One of his cruelties was to place a disobedient slave, standing in a box, in which there were nails placed in such a manner that the poor creature was unable to move," she told a W.P.A. interviewer in 1940. "He was powerless even to chase the flies, or sometimes ants crawling on some parts of his body."

Louisiana led the nation in destroying the lives of black people in the name of economic efficiency. The historian Michael Tadman found that Louisiana sugar parishes had a pattern of "deaths exceeding births." Backbreaking labor and "inadequate net nutrition meant that slaves working on sugar plantations were, compared with other working-age slaves in the United States, far less able to resist the common and life-threatening diseases of dirt and poverty," wrote Tadman in a 2000 study published in the American Historical Review. Life expectancy was less like that on a cotton plantation and closer to that of a Jamaican cane field, where the most overworked and abused could drop dead after seven years.

Most of these stories of brutality, torture and premature death have never been told in classroom textbooks or historical museums. They have been refined and whitewashed in the mills and factories of Southern folklore: the romantic South, the Lost Cause, the popular "moonlight and magnolias" plantation tours so important to Louisiana's agritourism today.

When I arrived at the Whitney Plantation Museum on a hot day in June, I mentioned to Ashley Rogers, 36, the museum's executive director, that I had passed the Nelson

Men working among thousands of barrels of sugar in New Orleans in 1902.

Coleman Correctional Center about 15 miles back along the way. "You passed a dump and a prison on your way to a plantation," she said. "These are not coincidences."

The Whitney, which opened five years ago as the only sugar-slavery museum in the nation, rests squarely in a geography of human detritus. The museum tells of the everyday struggles and resistance of black people who didn't lose their dignity even when they lost everything else. It sits on the west bank of the Mississippi at the northern edge of the St. John the Baptist Parish, home to dozens of once-thriving sugar plantations; Marmillion's plantation and torture box were just a few miles down from Whitney.

The museum also sits across the river from the site of the German Coast uprising in 1811, one of the largest revolts of enslaved people in United States history. As many as 500 sugar rebels joined a liberation army heading toward New Orleans, only to be cut down by federal troops and local militia; no record of their actual plans survives. About a hundred were killed in battle or executed later, many with their heads severed and placed on pikes throughout the region. Based on historians' estimates, the execution tally was nearly twice as high as the number in Nat Turner's more famous 1831 rebellion. The revolt has been virtually redacted from the historical record. But not at Whitney. And yet tourists, Rogers said, sometimes admit to her, a white woman, that they are warned by hotel concierges and tour operators that Whitney is the one misrepresenting the past. "You are meant to empathize with the owners as their guests," Rogers told me in her office. In Louisiana's plantation tourism, she said, "the currency has been the distortion of the past."

The landscape bears witness and corroborates Whitney's version of history. Although the Coleman jail opened in 2001 and is named for an African-American sheriff's deputy who died in the line of duty, Rogers connects it to a longer history of coerced labor, land theft and racial control after slavery. Sugar cane grows on farms all around the jail, but at the nearby Louisiana State Penitentiary, or Angola, prisoners grow it. Angola is the largest maximum-security prison by land

Left: Underwood & Underwood, via the Library of Congress. Right: From Sheridan Libraries/Levy/Gado/Getty Images.

mass in the nation. It opened in its current location in 1901 and took the name of one of the plantations that had occupied the land. Even today, incarcerated men harvest Angola's cane, which is turned into syrup and sold on-site.

From slavery to freedom, many black Louisianans found that the crushing work of sugar cane remained mostly the same. Even with Reconstruction delivering civil rights for the first time, white planters continued to dominate landownership. Freedmen and freedwomen had little choice but to live in somebody's old slave quarters. As new wage earners, they negotiated the best terms they could, signed labor contracts for up to a year and moved frequently from one plantation to another in search of a life whose daily rhythms beat differently than before. And yet, even compared with sharecropping on cotton plantations, Rogers said, "sugar plantations did a better job preserving racial hierarchy." As a rule, the historian John C. Rodrigue writes, "plantation labor overshadowed black people's lives in the sugar region until well into the 20th century."

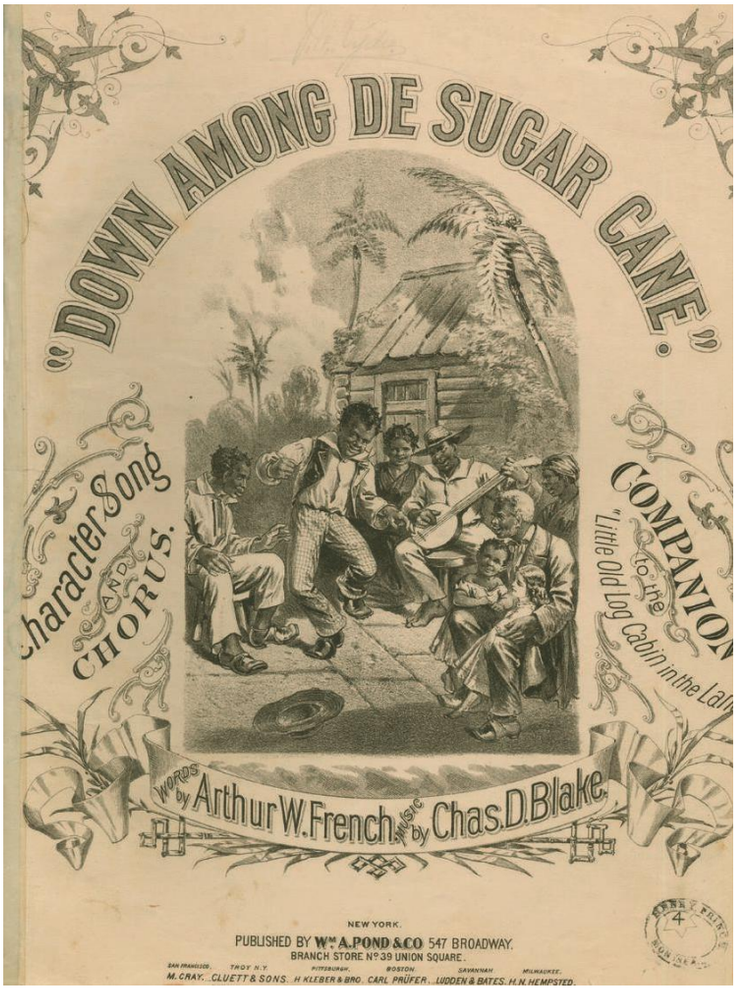
Sometimes black cane workers resisted collectively by striking during planting and harvesting time — threatening to ruin the crop. Wages and working conditions occasionally improved. But other times workers met swift and violent reprisals. After a major labor insurgency in 1887, led by the Knights of Labor, a national union, at least 30 black people — some estimated hundreds — were killed in their homes and on the streets of Thibodaux, La. "I think this will settle the question of who is to rule, the nigger or the white man, for the next 50 years," a local white planter's widow, Mary Pugh, wrote, rejoicing, to her son.

Many African-Americans aspired to own or rent their own sugar-cane farms in the late 19th century, but faced deliberate efforts to limit black farm and land owning. The historian Rebecca Scott found that although "black farmers were occasionally able to buy plots of cane land from bankrupt estates, or otherwise establish themselves as suppliers, the trend was for planters to seek to establish relations with white tenants or sharecroppers who could provide cane for the mill."

By World War II, many black people began to move not simply from one plantation to another, but from a cane field to a car factory in the North. By then, harvesting machines had begun to take over some, but not all, of the work. With fewer and fewer black workers in the industry, and after efforts in the late 1800s to recruit Chinese, Italian, Irish and German immigrant workers had already failed, labor recruiters in Louisiana and Florida sought workers in other states.

In 1942, the Department of Justice began a major investigation into the recruiting practices of one of the largest sugar producers in the nation, the United States Sugar Corporation, a South Florida company. Black men unfamiliar with the brutal nature of the work were promised seasonal sugar jobs at high wages, only to be forced into debt peonage, immediately accruing the cost of their transportation, lodging and equipment — all for $1.80 a day. One man testified that the conditions were so bad, "It wasn't no freedom; it was worse than the pen." Federal investigators agreed. When workers tried to escape, the F.B.I. found, they were captured on the highway or "shot at while trying to hitch rides on the sugar trains." The company was indicted by a federal grand jury in Tampa for "carrying out a conspiracy to commit slavery," wrote Alec Wilkinson, in his 1989 book, "Big Sugar: Seasons in the Cane Fields of Florida." (The indictment was ultimately quashed on procedural grounds.) A congressional investigation in the 1980s found that sugar companies had systematically tried to exploit seasonal West Indian workers to maintain absolute control over them with the constant threat of immediately sending them back to where they came from.

At the Whitney plantation, which operated continuously from 1752 to 1975, its museum staff of 12 is nearly all African-American women. A third of them have immediate relatives who either worked there or were born there in the 1960s and '70s. These black women show tourists the same slave cabins and the same cane fields their own relatives knew all too well.



Sheet music to an 1875 song romanticizing the painful, exhausted death of an enslaved sugar-plantation worker.

Farm laborers, mill workers and refinery employees make up the 16,400 jobs of Louisiana's sugar-cane industry. But it is the owners of the 11 mills and 391 commercial farms who have the most influence and greatest share of the wealth. And the number of black sugar-cane farmers in Louisiana is most likely in the single digits, based on estimates from people who work in the industry. They are the exceedingly rare exceptions to a system designed to codify black loss.

And yet two of these black farmers, Charles Guidry and Eddie Lewis III, have been featured in a number of prominent news items and marketing materials out of proportion to their representation and economic footprint in the industry. Lewis and Guidry have appeared in separate online videos. The American Sugar Cane League has highlighted the same pair separately in its online newsletter, Sugar News.

Lewis has no illusions about why the marketing focuses on him, he told me; sugar cane is a lucrative business, and to keep it that way, the industry has to work with the government. "You need a few minorities in there, because these mills survive off having minorities involved with the mill to get these huge government loans," he said. A former financial adviser at Morgan Stanley, Lewis, 36, chose to leave a successful career in finance to take his rightful place as a fifth-generation farmer. "My family was farming in the late 1800s" near the same land, he says, that his enslaved ancestors once worked. Much of the 3,000 acres he now farms comes from

Pecan Pioneer: The Enslaved Man Who Cultivated the South's Favorite Nut

By Tiya Miles

Pecans are the nut of choice when it comes to satisfying America's sweet tooth, with the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday season being the pecan's most popular time, when the nut graces the rich pie named for it. Southerners claim the pecan along with the cornbread and collard greens that distinguish the regional table, and the South looms large in our imaginations as this nut's mother country.

The presence of pecan pralines in every Southern gift shop from South Carolina to Texas, and our view of the nut as regional fare, masks a crucial chapter in the story of the pecan: It was an enslaved man who made the wide cultivation of this nut possible.

Pecan trees are native to the middle southwestern region of the Mississippi River Valley and the Gulf Coast of Texas and Mexico. While the trees can live for a hundred years or more, they do not produce nuts in the first years of life, and the kinds of nuts they produce are wildly variable in size, shape, flavor and ease of shell removal. Indigenous people worked around this variability, harvesting the nuts for hundreds and probably thousands of years, camping near the groves in season, trading the nuts in a network that stretched across the continent, and lending the food the name we have come to know it by: *paccan*.

Once white Southerners became fans of the nut, they set about trying to standardize its fruit by engineering the perfect pecan tree. Planters tried to cultivate pecan trees for a commercial market beginning at least as early as the 1820s, when a well-known planter from South Carolina named Abner Landrum published detailed descriptions of his attempt in the American Farmer periodical. In the mid-1840s, a planter in Louisiana sent cuttings of a much-prized pecan tree over to his neighbor J. T. Roman, the owner of Oak Alley Plantation. Roman did what many enslavers were accustomed to in that period: He turned the impossible work over to an enslaved person with vast capabilities, a man whose name we know only as Antoine. Antoine undertook the delicate task of grafting the pecan cuttings onto the limbs of different tree species on the plantation grounds. Many specimens thrived, and Antoine fashioned still more trees, selecting for nuts with favorable qualities. It was Antoine who successfully created what would become the country's first commercially viable pecan varietal.

Decades later, a new owner of Oak Alley, Hubert Bonzano, exhibited nuts from Antoine's trees at the Centennial Exposition of 1876, the World's Fair held in Philadelphia and a major showcase for American innovation. As the horticulturalist Lenny Wells has recorded, the exhibited nuts received a commendation from the Yale botanist William H. Brewer, who praised them for their "remarkably large size, tenderness of shell and very special excellence." Coined "the Centennial," Antoine's pecan varietal was then seized upon for commercial production (other varieties have since become the standard).

Was Antoine aware of his creation's triumph? No one knows. As the historian James McWilliams writes in "The Pecan: A History of America's Native Nut" (2013): "History leaves no record as to the former slave gardener's location — or whether he was even alive — when the nuts from the tree he grafted were praised by the nation's leading agricultural experts." The tree never bore the name of the man who had handcrafted it and developed a full-scale orchard on the Oak Alley Plantation before he slipped into the shadow of history.

relationships with white landowners his father, Eddie Lewis Jr., and his grandfather before him, built and maintained.

Lewis is the minority adviser for the federal Farm Service Agency (F.S.A.) in St. Martin and Lafayette Parish, and also participates in lobbying federal legislators. He says he does it because the stakes are so high. If things don't change, Lewis told me, "I'm probably one of two or three that's going to be farming in the next 10 to 15 years. They're trying to basically extinct us." As control of the industry consolidates in fewer and fewer hands, Lewis believes black sugar-cane farmers will no longer exist, part of a long-term trend nationally, where the total proportion of all African-American farmers has plummeted since the early 1900s, to less than 2 percent from more than 14 percent, with 90 percent of black farmers' land lost amid decades of racist actions by government agencies, banks and real estate developers.

"There's still a few good white men around here," Lewis told me. "It's not to say it's all bad. But this is definitely a community where you still have to say, 'Yes sir,' 'Yes, ma'am,' and accept 'boy' and different things like that."

One of the biggest players in that community is M. A. Patout and Son, the largest sugar-cane mill company in Louisiana. Founded in 1825, Patout has been known to boast that it is "the oldest complete family-owned and operated manufacturer of raw sugar in the United States." It owns three of the 11 remaining sugar-cane mills in Louisiana, processing roughly a third of the cane in the state.

The company is being sued by a former fourth-generation black farmer. As first reported in The Guardian, Wenceslaus Provost Jr. claims the company breached a harvesting contract in an effort to deliberately sabotage his business. Provost, who goes by the first name June, and his wife, Angie, who is also a farmer, lost their home to foreclosure in 2018, after defaulting on F.S.A.-guaranteed crop loans. June Provost has also filed a federal lawsuit against First Guaranty Bank and a bank senior vice president for

Photograph by Hugo V. Sass, via the Museum of The City of New York

The Rhinelander Sugar House, a sugar refinery and warehouse on the site of what is now the headquarters of the New York Police Department, in the late 1800s. When it was built in 1763, the building was one of the largest in the colony.

claims related to lending discrimination, as well as for mail and wire fraud in reporting false information to federal loan officials. The suit names a whistle-blower, a federal loan officer, who, in April 2015, "informed Mr. Provost that he had been systematically discriminated against by First Guaranty Bank," the lawsuit reads.

(In court filings, M.A. Patout and Son denied that it breached the contract. Representatives for the company did not respond to requests for comment. In court filings, First Guaranty Bank and the senior vice president also denied Provost's claims. Their representatives did not respond to requests for comment.)

Lewis is himself a litigant in a separate petition against white landowners. He claims they "unilaterally, arbitrarily and without just cause terminated" a seven-year-old agreement to operate his sugar-cane farm on their land, causing him to lose the value of the crop still growing there. Lewis is seeking damages of more than $200,000, based on an independent appraisal he obtained, court records show. The landowners did not respond to requests for comment.

But the new lessee, Ryan Doré, a white farmer, did confirm with me that he is now leasing the land and has offered to pay Lewis what a county agent assessed as the crop's worth, about $50,000. Doré does not dispute the amount of Lewis's sugar cane on the 86.16 acres. What he disputes is Lewis's ability to make the same crop as profitable as he would. Doré, who credits M.A. Patout and Son for getting him started in sugar-cane farming, also told me he is farming some of the land June Provost had farmed.

Lewis and the Provosts say they believe Doré is using his position as an elected F.S.A. committee member to gain an unfair advantage over black farmers with white landowners. "He's privileged with a lot of information," Lewis said.

Doré denied he is abusing his F.S.A. position and countered that "the Lewis boy" is trying to "make this a black-white deal." Doré insisted that "both those guys simply lost their acreage for one reason and one reason only: They are horrible farmers."

It's impossible to listen to the stories that Lewis and the Provosts tell and not hear echoes of the policies and practices that have been used since Reconstruction to maintain the racial caste system that sugar slavery helped create. The crop, land and farm theft that they claim harks back to the New Deal era, when Southern F.S.A. committees denied black farmers government funding.

"June and I hope to create a dent in these oppressive tactics for future generations," Angie Provost told me on the same day this spring that a congressional subcommittee held hearings on reparations. "To this day we are harassed, retaliated against and denied the true DNA of our past." ◆

● Sept. 15, 1963: A group of Ku Klux Klansmen bomb the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., a center of the civil rights movement. Four young girls are killed, and at least 14 people are injured. Years later, three of the four conspirators are brought to trial and convicted; the fourth dies before he is tried.

This morning's already good — summer's
cooling, Addie chattering like a magpie —
but today we are leading the congregation.
Ain't *that* a fine thing! All in white *like angels*,
they'll be sighing when we appear at the pulpit
and proclaim "Open your hymnals —"
Addie, what's the page number again?
Never mind, it'll be posted. I think. I hope.
Hold still, Carole, or else this sash will never
sit right! There. Now you do mine.
Almost eleven. I'm ready. My, don't we look —
what's that word the Reverend used in
last Sunday's sermon? Oh, I got it: *ethereal*.

By Rita Dove

My daughter's three months old. A nightmare
rocks me awake, and then fourteen words: *Brevity*.

As in four girls; Sunday dresses: bone, ash, bone, ash, bone.
The end. 1963, but still burning. My darkening girl

lies beside me, her tiny chest barely registering breath.
Had they lived beyond that morning, all the other explosions

shattering Birmingham — even some who called it home
called it Bombingham — three of the girls would be 70,

the other 67. Somebody's babies. The sentences I rescue
from that nightmare, I make a poem. Four names,

grayscaled at the bottom of the page:
Addie Mae Collins. Cynthia Wesley. Carole Robertson. Denise McNair.

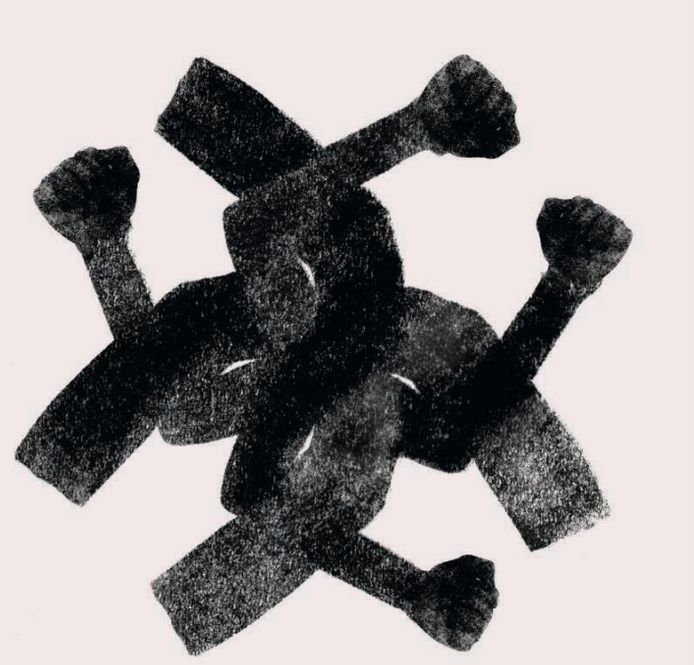
Revision is a struggle toward truth. In my book I won't keep, *The end*.
For such terrible brevity — dear black girls! sweet babies — there's been no end.

By Camille T. Dungy

Bow: Shutterstock

Photo illustrations by Jon Key

● October 15, 1966: In response to police brutality against African-Americans, the Merritt College students Huey Newton and Bobby Seale create the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. The organization, declared an enemy of the government by J. Edgar Hoover's F.B.I., holds that ending the economic exploitation of black people is central to achieving racial equity.



With a line from Tavia Nyong'o

Anything that wants to be can be a panther. The black lion
or ocelot, the black cheetah or cornrowed uptown girl sprinting
up her neighborhood block just like one, in dogged pursuit
of the future world. In this frame, I imagine Huey and Bobby
as boys in the sense of gender and genre alike, an unbroken
line reading: *my life is an armor for the other*. Before black berets
or free breakfasts, then, there is friendship. Before gun laws
shifting in the wake of organized strength, leather jackets
shimmering like gypsum in the Northern California twilight —
or else magazine covers running the world over, compelling
everyday ordinary people across the spectrum of context
or color to sing *who wants to be a panther ought to be he can be it*
— there is love. The panther is a virtual animal. The panther
strikes only when it has been assailed. The panther is a human
vision, interminable refusal, our common call to adore ourselves
as what we are and live and die on terms we fashioned from the earth
like this. Our precious metal metonym. Our style of fire and stone.

By Joshua Bennett

Slavery gave America a fear of black people and a taste for violent punishment. Both still define our criminal-justice system.

Credit by Name Surname

By Bryan Stevenson

Several years ago, my law office was fighting for the release of a black man who had been condemned, at the age of 16, to die in prison. Matthew was one of 62 Louisiana children sentenced to life imprisonment without parole for nonhomicide offenses. But a case I'd argued at the Supreme Court was part of a 2010 ruling that banned such sentences for juveniles, making our clients eligible for release.

Some had been in prison for nearly 50 years. Almost all had been sent to Angola, a penitentiary considered one of America's most violent and abusive. Angola is immense, larger than Manhattan, covering land once occupied by slave plantations. Our clients there worked in fields under the supervision of horse-riding, shotgun-toting guards who forced them to pick crops, including cotton. Their disciplinary records show that if they refused to pick cotton — or failed to pick it fast enough — they could be punished with time in "the hole," where food was restricted and inmates were sometimes tear-gassed. Still, some black prisoners, including Matthew, considered the despair of the hole preferable to the unbearable degradation of being forced to pick cotton on a plantation at the end of the 20th century. I was fearful that such clients would be denied parole based on their disciplinary records. Some were.

The United States has the highest rate of incarceration of any nation on Earth: We represent 4 percent of the planet's population but 22 percent of its imprisoned. In the early 1970s, our prisons held fewer than 300,000 people; since then, that number has grown to more than 2.2 million, with 4.5 million more on probation or parole. Because of mandatory sentencing and "three strikes" laws, I've found myself representing clients sentenced to life without parole for stealing a bicycle or for simple possession of marijuana. And central to understanding this practice of mass incarceration and excessive punishment is the legacy of slavery.

It took only a few decades after the arrival of enslaved Africans in Virginia before white settlers demanded a new world defined by racial caste. The 1664 General Assembly of Maryland decreed that all Negroes within the province "shall serve *durante vita,*" hard labor for life. This enslavement would be sustained by the threat of brutal punishment. By 1729, Maryland law authorized punishments of enslaved people including "to have the right hand cut off … the head severed from the body, the body divided into four quarters, and head and quarters set up in the most public places of the county."

Soon American slavery matured into a perverse regime that denied the humanity of black people while still criminalizing their actions. As the Supreme Court of Alabama explained in 1861, enslaved black people were "capable of committing crimes," and in that capacity were "regarded as persons" — but in most every other sense they were "incapable of performing civil acts" and considered "things, not persons."

The 13th Amendment is credited with ending slavery, but it stopped short of that: It made an exception for those convicted of crimes. After emancipation, black people, once seen as less than fully human "slaves," were seen as less than fully human "criminals." The provisional governor of South Carolina declared in 1865 that they had to be "restrained from theft, idleness, vagrancy and crime." Laws governing slavery were replaced with Black Codes governing free black people — making the criminal-justice system central to new strategies of racial control.

These strategies intensified whenever black people asserted their independence or achieved any measure of success. During Reconstruction, the emergence of black elected officials and entrepreneurs was countered by convict leasing, a scheme in which white policymakers invented offenses used to target black people: vagrancy, loitering, being a group of black people out after dark, seeking employment without a note from a former enslaver. The imprisoned were then "leased" to businesses and farms, where they labored under brutal conditions. An 1887 report in Mississippi found that six months after 204 prisoners were leased to a white man named McDonald, dozens were dead or dying, the prison hospital filled with men whose bodies bore "marks of the most inhuman and brutal treatment … so poor and emaciated that their bones almost come through the skin."

Anything that challenged the racial hierarchy could be seen as a crime, punished either by the law or by the lynchings that stretched from Mississippi to Minnesota. In 1916, Anthony Crawford was lynched in South Carolina for being successful enough to refuse a low price for his cotton. In 1933, Elizabeth Lawrence was lynched near Birmingham for daring to chastise white children who were throwing rocks at her.

It's not just that this history fostered a view of black people as presumptively criminal. It also cultivated a tolerance for employing any level of brutality in response. In 1904, in Mississippi, a black man was accused of shooting a white landowner who had attacked him. A white mob captured him and the woman with him, cut off their ears and fingers, drilled corkscrews into their flesh and then burned them alive — while hundreds of white spectators enjoyed deviled eggs and lemonade. The landowner's brother, Woods Eastland, presided over the violence; he was later elected district attorney of Scott County, Miss., a position that allowed his son James Eastland, an avowed white supremacist, to serve six terms as a United States senator, becoming president pro tempore from 1972 to 1978.

This appetite for harsh punishment has echoed across the decades. Late in the 20th century, amid protests over civil rights and inequality, a new politics of fear and anger would emerge. Nixon's war on drugs, mandatory minimum sentences, three-strikes laws, children tried as adults, "broken windows" policing — these policies were not as expressly racialized as the Black Codes, but their implementation has been essentially the same. It is black and brown people who are disproportionately targeted, stopped, suspected, incarcerated and shot by the police.

Hundreds of years after the arrival of enslaved Africans, a presumption of danger and criminality still follows black people everywhere. New language has emerged for the noncrimes that have replaced the Black Codes: driving while black, sleeping while black, sitting in a coffee shop while black. All reflect incidents in which African-Americans were mistreated, assaulted or arrested for conduct that would be ignored if they were white. In schools, black kids are suspended and expelled at rates that vastly exceed the punishment of white children for the same behavior.

Inside courtrooms, the problem gets worse. Racial disparities in sentencing are found in almost every crime category. Children as young as 13, almost all black, are sentenced to life imprisonment for nonhomicide offenses. Black defendants are 22 times more likely to receive the death penalty for crimes whose victims are white, rather than black — a type of bias the Supreme Court has declared "inevitable."

The smog created by our history of racial injustice is suffocating and toxic. We are too practiced in ignoring the victimization of any black people tagged as criminal; like Woods Eastland's crowd, too many Americans are willing spectators to horrifying acts, as long as we're assured they're in the interest of maintaining order.

This cannot be the end of the story. In 2018, the Equal Justice Initiative, a nonprofit I direct, opened a museum in Montgomery, Ala., dedicated to the legacy of slavery and a memorial honoring thousands of black lynching victims. We must acknowledge the 400 years of injustice that haunt us. I'm encouraged: Half a million people have visited. But I'm also worried, because we are at one of those critical moments in American history when we will either double down on romanticizing our past or accept that there is something better waiting for us.

I recently went to New Orleans to celebrate the release of several of our Angola clients, including Matthew — men who survived the fields and the hole. I realized how important it is to stay hopeful: Hopelessness is the enemy of justice. There were moments of joy that night. But there was also heaviness; we all seemed keenly aware that we were not truly free from the burden of living in a nation that continues to deny and doubt this legacy, and how much work remains to be done. ◆

Photograph by Spencer Lowell

A vast wealth gap, driven by segregation, redlining, evictions and exclusion, separates white and black *A*merica.

By Trymaine Lee

Elmore Bolling, whose brothers called him Buddy, was a kind of one-man economy in Lowndesboro, Ala. He leased a plantation, where he had a general store with a gas station out front and a catering business; he grew cotton, corn and sugar cane. He also owned a small fleet of trucks that ran livestock and made deliveries between Lowndesboro and Montgomery. At his peak, Bolling employed as many as 40 people, all of them black like him.

One December day in 1947, a group of white men showed up along a stretch of Highway 80 just yards from Bolling's home and store, where he lived with his wife, Bertha Mae, and their seven young children. The men confronted him on a section of road he had helped lay and shot him seven times — six times with a pistol and once with a shotgun blast to the back. His family rushed from the store to find him lying dead in a ditch.

The shooters didn't even cover their faces; they didn't need to. Everyone knew who had done it and why. "He was too successful to be a Negro," someone who knew Bolling told a newspaper at the time. When Bolling was killed, his family estimates he had as much as $40,000 in the bank and more than $5,000 in assets, about $500,000 in today's dollars. But within months of his murder nearly all of it would be gone. White creditors and people posing as creditors took the money the family got from the sale of their trucks and cattle. They even staked claims on what was left of the family's savings. The jobs that he provided were gone, too. Almost overnight the Bollings went from prosperity to poverty. Bertha Mae found work at a dry cleaner. The older children dropped out of school to help support the family. Within two years, the Bollings fled Lowndes County, fearing for their lives.

The period that followed the Civil War was one of economic terror and wealth-stripping that has left black people at lasting economic disadvantage. White Americans have seven times the wealth of black Americans on average. Though black people make up nearly 13 percent of the United States population, they hold less than 3 percent of the nation's total wealth. The median family wealth for white people is $171,000, compared with just $17,600 for black people. It is worse on the margins. According to the Economic Policy Institute, 19 percent of black households have zero or negative net worth. Just 9 percent of white families are that poor.

Today's racial wealth gap is perhaps the most glaring legacy of American slavery and the violent economic dispossession that followed. The fate suffered by Elmore Bolling and his family was not unique to them, or to Jim Crow Alabama. It was part of a much broader social and political campaign. When legal slavery ended in 1865, there was great hope for formerly enslaved people. Between 1865 and 1870, the Reconstruction Amendments established birthright citizenship — making all black people citizens and granting them equal protection under the law — and gave black men the right to vote. There was also the promise of compensation. In January 1865, Gen. William Sherman issued an order reallocating hundreds of thousands of acres of white-owned land along the coasts of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina for settlement by black families in 40-acre plots. Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau to oversee the transition from slavery to freedom, and the Freedman's Savings Bank was formed to help four million formerly enslaved people gain financial freedom.

When Lincoln was assassinated, Vice President Andrew Johnson effectively rescinded Sherman's order by pardoning white plantation owners and returning to them the land on which 40,000 or so black families had settled. "This is a country for white men, and by God, as long as I am President, it shall be a government for white men," Johnson declared in 1866. The Freedmen's Bureau, always meant to be temporary, was dismantled in 1872. More than 60,000 black people deposited more than $1 million into the Freedman's Savings Bank, but its all-white trustees began issuing speculative loans to white investors and corporations, and when it failed in 1874, many black depositors lost much of their savings.

"The origins of the racial wealth gap start with the failure to provide the formerly enslaved with the land grants of 40 acres," says William A. Darity Jr., a professor of public policy and African-American studies at Duke University. Any financial progress that black people made was regarded as an affront to white supremacy. After a decade of black gains under Reconstruction, a much longer period of racial violence would wipe nearly all of it away.

To assuage Southern white people, the federal government pulled out the Union troops who were stationed in the South to keep order. During this period of so-called Redemption, lawmakers throughout the South enacted Black Codes and Jim Crow laws that stripped black people of many of their freedoms and property. Other white people, often aided by law enforcement, waged a campaign of violence against black people that would rob them of an incalculable amount of wealth.

Armed white people stormed prosperous majority-black Wilmington, N.C., in 1898 to murder dozens of black people, force 2,000 others off their property and overthrow the city government. In the Red Summer of 1919, at least 240 black people were murdered across the country. And in 1921, in one of the bloodiest racial attacks in United States history, Greenwood, a prosperous black neighborhood in Tulsa, Okla., was burned and looted. It is estimated that as many as 300 black people were murdered and 10,000 were rendered homeless. Thirty-five square blocks were destroyed. No one was ever convicted in any of these acts of racist violence.

"You have limited opportunity to accumulate wealth, and then you have a process where that wealth is destroyed or taken away," Darity says. "And all of that is prior to the effects of restrictive covenants — redlining, the discriminatory application of the G.I. Bill and other federal programs."

The post-Reconstruction plundering of black wealth was not just a product of spontaneous violence, but etched in law and public policy. Through the first half of the 20th century, the federal government actively excluded black people from government wealth-building programs. In the 1930s, President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal helped build a solid middle class through sweeping social programs, including Social Security and the minimum wage. But a majority of black people at the time were agricultural laborers or domestic workers, occupations that were ineligible for these benefits. The establishment of the Home Owners Loan Corporation in 1933 helped save the collapsing housing market, but it largely excluded black neighborhoods from government-insured loans. Those neighborhoods were deemed "hazardous" and colored in with red on maps, a practice that came to be known as "redlining."

The G.I. Bill is often hailed as one of Roosevelt's most enduring legacies. It helped usher millions of working-class veterans through college and into new homes and the middle class. But it discriminatorily benefited white people. While the bill didn't explicitly exclude black veterans, the way it was administered often did. The bill gave veterans access to mortgages with no down payments, but the Veterans Administration adopted the same racially restrictive policies as the Federal Housing Administration, which guaranteed bank loans only to developers who wouldn't sell to black people. "The major way in which people have an opportunity to accumulate wealth is contingent on the wealth positions of their parents and their grandparents," Darity says. "To the extent that blacks have the capacity to accumulate wealth, we have not had the ability to transfer the same kinds of resources across generations."

Seventy years later, the effects of Bolling's murder are still felt by his children and their children. "There was no inheritance, nothing for my father to pass down, because it was all taken away," says Josephine Bolling McCall, the only one of Bolling's children to get a college degree. Of the seven siblings, those with more education fared best; the men struggled most, primarily working as low-paid laborers. Of Elmore and Bertha Mae's 25 grandchildren, only six graduated from college; of those, two are McCall's children. The rest are unemployed or underemployed. They have never known anything like the prosperity of their grandparents. ◆

Photograph by Zora J Murff

Sept. 16, 1979: During the 1970s, hip-hop evolves as an art form in the South Bronx. Often performed at street parties, the phenomenon goes mainstream with Sugarhill Gang's 'Rapper's Delight.'

Was it the loud distorted bass of a speaker rattling my windowpanes, beckoning me from my bedroom to a late-afternoon party in the schoolyard at P.S. 38? Or maybe it was the exuberance of teenagers streaming down my block toward what promised to be *the* end-of-the-summer jam.

Following the laughter, I found myself at one of those pop-up parties where everything felt improvised. The turntable was powered by jumper cables winding from the lamppost to the sound system, and the sparkling concrete was an unlikely dance floor. The schoolyard was so packed with hot, sweaty black and brown bodies that I had to scale the chain-link fence just to get a glimpse of the D.J. spinning the vinyl and the silky-smooth M.C. straining to punch his voice above a crowd hungry for his homespun rhymes. Everybody was dancing with a furious urgency, driven on by the spontaneous bursts of inspiration that tumbled from the M.C.'s lyrical tongue. Plucking records from a stack of milk crates, the D.J. worked overtime to keep his twin turntables pumping a continuous groove, deconstructing and repurposing the disco beats to meet our youthful energy. Scratching and mixing, his hands created syncopated rhythms that hit our ears like musical bombs.

Said
Hey! Ho!
Hey! Ho!

The M.C. led us through a call-and-response like a master conductor. His words, a provocation to be loud and unapologetically ourselves. How could we know that the braggadocio of this young black M.C. was the beginning of a revolution?

Rumors were flying that the Crazy Homicides, a Puerto Rican street gang, were going to battle the Tomahawks. The danger added an edge of excitement, but the music brokered the peace — no one dared interrupt the reverie. Hard rocks, B-boys and B-girls in coordinated outfits wore the names of their crews proudly splashed across their T-shirts, the lettering rendered in thick graffiti markers or colorful iron-on decals. Jockeying for space, they formed spontaneous dance circles to show off their intricate moves. Popping and rocking, their bodies contorted in impossible and beautiful shapes that at once paid tribute to their African ancestors and the rebellious desire to be seen and heard in a city that had overlooked the majesty of their presence.

Then a dancer lost in the moment bumped the D.J.'s folding table, sending the needle screeching across the vinyl. An argument ensued — tempers that had been simmering throughout the evening threatened to bubble over. But the D.J. didn't lose a beat, offering a funky fresh musical salve to ease the tension.

Rock it out, y'all
Don't stop, y'all
Said hip hop
Dance 'til ya drop, y'all

Just as the M.C. resurrected the party, the power to the street lamp was shut off, and darkness brought a close to the festivities. Someone used a wrench to turn on the fire hydrant, and we all ran through the water to cool down our overheated bodies — the ritual cleansing marking an official ending to the party, but not the movement.

By Lynn Nottage

● July 17, 1984: The Rev. Jesse Jackson gives a hist in San Francisco, where he describes the need for r minister who was the most prominent black can d lose the Democratic nomination to Walter Mon d

Jackson: Paul Sequeira/Getty Images; Getty Images

My older sister, Rae, makes me write 500 words every night before I go to bed. Tonight, I want to write five million because of this speech by Jesse Jackson, a black man with big, beautiful eyeballs.

While we were working on the Barnett house tonight, Rae kept saying that Jesse's speech was going to do for us what Ronald Reagan's speech did for white folks at the Neshoba County Fair four years ago. Ronald Reagan came to the fair and said some words about "states' rights." Those words made a lot of white folks at the fair happier than Christmas Eve. Those words made Rae, Mama, Granny and our whole church so scared we had to leave. When we got in the van, Rae told me that Ronald Reagan came to Mississippi to offer white folks an all-you-can-eat buffet of black suffering.

I asked Rae if white folks left full. She sucked her teeth.

Dafinas, who worked on the house with us this summer, stayed to watch the speech, too. He's from Oaxaca, Mexico, and his grandmother was just stolen by police and sent back to Oaxaca. I don't know if Rae and Dafinas go together, but they look at each other's hands like they do.

All of us watched Jesse Jackson say the names of people I never heard of at school. He talked about Goodman, Chaney and Schwerner. He talked about Fannie Lou Hamer, Martin King and Rabbi Abraham Heschel. He talked about Hispanic-Americans, Arab-Americans, African-Americans. He talked about lesbian and gay Americans having something called equal protection under the law. He talked about powerful coalitions made of rainbows.

Photo illustration by Jon Key

ni storic speech at the Moscone Center
o r a 'rainbow coalition.' Jackson, a Baptist
n didate for president at the time, would
n dale.

When we walked out of the Barnett house, a house we were building, in a white neighborhood where none of us would ever be allowed to live, I watched Dafinas and Rae hug for eight seconds.

On the way home, I asked Rae why she seemed so sad. "Rainbows, they're pretty, but they ain't real," she said. "Only thing real down here is suffering. And work. And love."

I told Rae that I liked her more than apple Now and Laters. But if believing in rainbows makes us love better, then rainbows can be just as real as work. And love. And if we really believed, we might be able to bring Dafinas's granny back. And one day, instead of building houses for white folks, in neighborhoods we could never even visit if we weren't working there, we could maybe build beautiful houses with gardens where all our grannies could sit on porches, and safely tell lies that sound true.

"I never seen a black-and-brown rainbow," Rae said, "but I'll always believe in us."

"I'll be sad when you go to college," I told her. "But mostly, I'll be fine, because I can't stop believing that rainbows are real. And the land and the black and brown folks under those rainbows, we will one day be free."

y Kiese Laymon

● August 2005: After Hurricane Katrina, 30,000 evacuees, most of them black, take refuge in the Louisiana Superdome. The chaotic, desperate scene that unfolded there would become a symbol of the city's rampant racial inequality.

A helicopter hovers overhead like a black cloud of smoke,
its blades dismembering the pewter sky. Men in uniform
stand outside with guns nested under their arms & the hot,

wet air of August licking their weary faces. Two women
push a homemade raft through warm, brown water that rises
up & hugs their chests. There is an old man inside the raft

who was once a stranger to them, when such a word meant
something other than please help me. Inside, children are running
across the emerald turf jumping through rings of light that

spill from the sky onto the field. Their small bodies sprinting
between the archipelago of sprawled cots. There is a mother
who sits high in the seats of the stadium rocking her baby

back & forth, her voice cocooning the child in a shell of song.
Before desperation descended under the rounded roof, before
the stench swept across the air like a heavy fog, before the

lights went out & the buses arrived, before the cameras came
inside & showed the failure of an indifferent nation, there were
families inside though there were some who failed to call them

families. There were children inside though there were some who
gave them a more callous name. There were people inside though
there were some who only saw a parade of disembodied shadows.

By Clint Smith

Their ancestors were enslaved by law. Today, they are graduates of the nation's pre-eminent historically black law school.

Photographs by Djeneba Aduayom

Introduction by Nikole Hannah Jones

Captions by Wadzanai Mhute

In the history of the United States, black Americans were the only group for whom it was ever illegal to learn to read or write. And so when emancipation finally came, schools and colleges were some of the first institutions that the freed people clamored to build. Black Americans believed that education meant liber ation, and just eight months after the Civil War, the first historically black college opened in the South.

Howard University is among the most venerable of these institu tions. Chartered in Washington in 1867, the school has educated some of the nation s most notable black Americans, including Toni Morri son, Andrew Young, Zora Neale Hur ston and Paul Laurence Dunbar. But where Howard has had perhaps the most indelible impact on black lives and on the country has been its law school. Leading up to the civil rights movement, Howard was virtually the only law school in the South that served black students. It became an incubator for those who would use the law to challenge racial apartheid in the North and the South and help make the country more fair and democratic. Many of the archi tects of campaigns for black equality either taught at or graduated from Howard, including Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Thurgood Marshall.

The school continues that legacy today, producing more black lawyers than perhaps any other institution. In May, it graduated its 148th class, and the four newly minted lawyers featured here were among the grad uates. All of them descended from people enslaved in this country. We asked Kenyatta D. Berry, a genealo gist who specializes in tracing black Americans roots back to slavery, to research their families and tell each of them, and us, something about one of those enslaved ancestors.

What Berry could and could not find reveals its own story about the occluded heritage of black Ameri cans. Because enslaved people were treated as chattel, they are rarely found in government birth and death records but instead must be traced through the property ledgers of the people who owned them. Berry often has to work backward through documents, locating ancestors in the 1870 census, when they were counted as people for the first time, or through the records of the Freed men s Bureau. Because 95 percent of enslaved people were illiterate at the end of the Civil War, the chances of finding old letters or diaries or family trees stuffed in Bibles are exceedingly low. And so for these graduates, like many black Amer icans, the holes in their family his tories can outnumber the answers.

Still, more than any written record, today s nearly 44 million black Americans are themselves the testimony of the resiliency of those who were enslaved, of their deter mination to fight and survive so that future generations would have the opportunities that they never would. The story of black America is one of tragedy and triumph. These grad uates represent nothing less than their ancestors wildest dreams.

Elijah Porter, 26

(Previous page, with his father, Elijah)

Hometown: Atlanta
Post law school plans: He has been hired as a corporate associate at a law firm in Mountain View, Calif., where he aims to be- come a partner in five years.

Elijah Porter's ancestor Moses Turner was born in April 1839 in Georgia. At the time of the 1870 census, he and his wife, Sarah, had five children between 6 months and 9 years. The family lived on 265 acres valued at $750 ($14,665 in today s dollars). Turner was an employer, and the farm produced cotton, sweet potatoes, molasses, butter and Indian corn.

By 1910 the Turners had no mortgage and were living with three daughters who worked as laborers on their farm. Turner died in 1917 and did not leave a will; his wife was the administrator of his estate.

The way the story is always told is that we were slaves, we got free and now here we are and we didn t make any positive contributions to America, Porter said. So when I am reading about Moses Turner, not only is he a landowner but he is contributing to the American economy, he knows agriculture, he is married and has children. I was really in shock because I always wanted to know my history. Porter also found some irony in the story of Turner s death. The interesting thing was he died without a will, he said. "The story of me becoming an attorney was already written before I knew about it.

Septembra LeSane, 29

(Above, with her grandmother Leola, left, and her mother, Debra, middle)

Hometown: Pompano Beach, Fla.
Post law school plans: To start a practice focusing on environmental civil rights and entertainment law.

Septembra LeSane s maternal great great grandmother Georgia Wilcox was born after the Civil War, in 1885, to Sandy Wilcox, who was born into slavery around 1854, in Wilcox County, Ga. (Sandy married Artimisha Roundtree in 1873, but Roundtree is not listed in any available documents as Georgia's

mother.) Georgia s paternal grandfather, Silas Wilcox, was born enslaved in 1822 in Georgia. In 1867 Wilcox took an oath of allegiance to the United States in order to register to vote in Pulaski County, Ga. According to the 1880 Agricultural Census Schedule, Silas was a sharecropper.

It gave me chills, LeSane said. Chills to know that slavery was not that long ago, to feel the connection. My grandmother knew her grandmother, and her grandmother was the daughter of slaves.

LeSane is one of seven children. She said her family used to return to Georgia for vacations when she was younger and they walked through cotton fields. She remembers the vastness of the land and thinking of her ancestors working in the hot sun on the same land. Learning more about Georgia Wilcox and her other ancestors, she said, brought those images back to me. It showed me what they endured; they never wavered, they endured, so we wouldn t experience any of that. As a sixth generation descendant of slavery, I am essentially a part of the first generation of descendants to carry the torch that was lit by my ancestors into true freedom.

Ky'Eisha Penn, 28
(With her mother, Teresa, right)

Hometown: Miami and Augusta, Ga.
Post law school plans: To be a civil rights lawyer; she begins a fellowship at the A.C.L.U. in New Jersey in September.

Ky Eisha Penn s ancestors on her mother's side include Phillip Officer, who was born into slavery on Oct. 18, 1837, in Tennessee. His unusual surname apparently connects him to a nearby landowner: The 1850 U.S. Census Agricultural Schedule indicates that James C. Officer had 19 slaves, one of them a boy whose age matched Phillip s.

By the time of the 1870 census, Phillip Officer was working as a farm laborer, probably a sharecropper, which would explain why census records indicate he was living in the household of a woman named Sarah Turney. Within a decade, Officer was married to a woman named Emeline (her maiden name and origins are unknown) with two sons and had become a landowner himself. According to the 1880 Agricultural Schedule, he owned 66 acres, and his farm was worth $400 ($10,045 in today s dollars); his livestock and machinery were valued at $200 ($5,022). By 1900, Officer owned his farm outright.

My mom and I were dissecting this history, and we were wowed by it, Penn said. 'He was a slave, but when he died he owned land. Her ancestor s story resonated with her, she said, as a person who was raised by a single mother with limited resources and who has just graduated with a dual degree in law from Howard and a master s in African American history from Florida A.& M. 'I wanted to be challenged by the history, molded by the history and then become a part of it,'' she said. I wanted so much more for my life and for my children in the future, to work hard and set a legacy. My ancestors were doing that, they were not born in the right circumstances but made something by the time they died.

Yasiman Montgomery, 24

(Between her father, Alfred, and her mother, Cecily)

Hometown: Washington, D.C.
Post law school plans: She will work as a litigator in New York, after which she intends to return to Washington to work in the federal government.

Charles McDuffie Wilder, Yasiman Montgomery's ancestor on her father s side, was born around 1835 in Sumter, S.C., and is absent from public records for the first several decades of his life.

By 1866, Wilder was a member of the South Carolina General Assembly, where he represented Richland County throughout Reconstruction. He was also appointed a deputy marshal the U.S. marshal for South Carolina, J.P.M. Epping, said he could not find a white man who could take the oath who had honesty and capacity enough for the position.

In 1869, Wilder was named postmaster for Columbia, S.C., a presidential appointment that required confirmation by the State Senate, becoming the first known freedman to receive such an appointment. Coverage in The Columbia Daily Phoenix included this paragraph: Charles M. Wilder, the newly appointed postmaster at Columbia, is an intelligent colored man, fully competent to discharge the duties of the office to which he has been appointed, and is highly esteemed, as a colored man, by the whole community. The only objection made against him by opponents of the present Federal and State Governments is, that he is a negro. He held the job for 16 years, under four presidents. During this span Wilder was also a member of the Columbia City Council and attended the National Republican Conventions as a delegate.

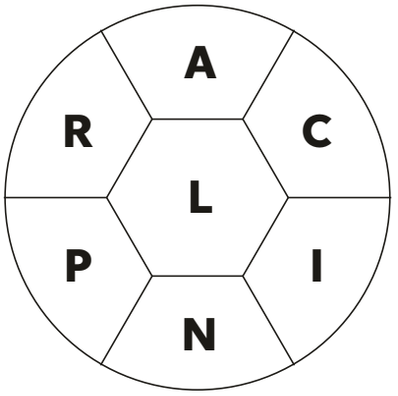
Montgomery grew up in Washington and knew of Wilder, who, she said, a lot of people in the area trace their history back to. Reading about it makes me feel more purposeful, she said, because I am attached to that legacy.'' She credits her parents, Alfred and Cecily, for instilling in her an appreciation for her heritage. ''They were older and grew up in segregation,'' she said. They took me to look at archives together; they wanted me to learn my history. I have a lot of pride in being black and that s because I know my heritage. It s important to start the conversation before slavery. We didn t just pop up in America, we were part of a culture.

SPELLING BEE

By Frank Longo

How many common words of 5 or more letters can you spell using the letters in the hive? Every answer must use the center letter at least once. Letters may be reused in a word. At least one word will use all 7 letters. Proper names and hyphenated words are not allowed. Score 1 point for each answer, and 3 points for a word that uses all 7 letters.

Rating: 7 = good; 12 = excellent; 17 = genius



Our list of words, worth 20 points, appears with last week's answers.

CRAZY EIGHTS

By Patrick Berry

Fill letters in the empty squares in the middle of each grid to complete four 8-letter words reading across and four 8-letter words reading down.

#1.

		A	C	P	B		
		P	H	L	A		
M	A					H	I
T	R					L	E
K	I					L	L
J	E					D	Y
		T	E	C	A		
		S	A	K	T		

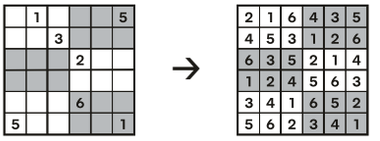
#2.

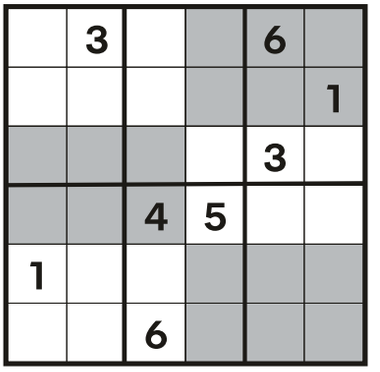
		F	V	B	M		
		E	I	R	O		
D	I					A	L
T	U					A	T
E	C					I	C
E	Y					T	H
		S	T	L	N		
		S	E	I	E		

SIXY SUDOKU

By Peter Ritmeester

Insert the digits 1 to 6 just once in each a) row, b) column, c) bold outlined area and d) white or gray rectangle.

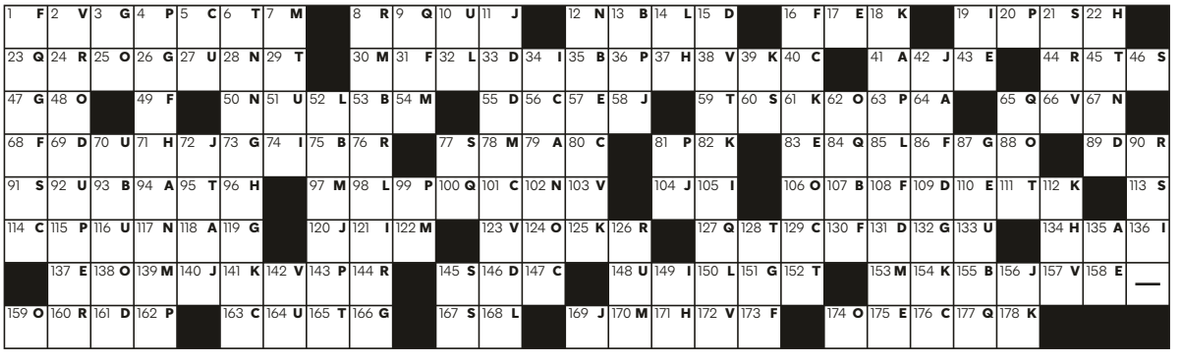




ACROSTIC

By Emily Cox & Henry Rathvon

Guess the words defined below and write them over their numbered dashes. Then transfer each letter to the correspondingly numbered square in the pattern. Black squares indicate word endings. The filled pattern will contain a quotation reading from left to right. The first letters of the guessed words will form an acrostic giving the author's name and the title of the work.



A. Up-and-down diversion

64 118 94 79 41 135

B. Built-in low-end digital protection

93 13 155 107 53 35 75

C. BBC soap opera since 1985

5 56 40 80 101 129 147 176 114 163

D. Activity seen on Jupiter's moon Io

161 69 109 89 131 146 33 15 55

E. Pleasing pop tunes (2 wds.)

175 17 83 137 110 57 43 158

F. Playing card, geometrically

68 130 16 1 49 31 108 86 173

G. Like hypoallergenic products, often

3 151 166 47 87 73 132 26 119

H. Gear of use to clowns and fruit pickers

96 134 37 171 71 22

I. Home of Elysian Fields, site of the first organized baseball games (1846)

121 136 34 149 19 74 105

J. Ratchet up, escalate

104 156 120 11 42 140 72 169 58

K. What Boreas personifies (2 wds.)

39 125 18 141 178 154 61 82 112

L. One with a hat in the ring; aspirant

32 98 14 52 168 150 85

M. Northernmost member of the Big 12 Conference (2 wds.)

30 78 97 139 7 153 170 54 122

N. New York's official gemstone

50 28 102 117 67 12

O. Civilian sector in wartime (2 wds.)

48 124 25 106 159 88 138 62 174

P. News delivery

99 20 4 81 143 36 115 63 162

Q. "Crocodile Dundee" setting

84 9 177 127 65 23 100

R. One backing the British Crown in the American Revolution

44 90 76 24 126 160 144 8

S. Welcome call for a restive crew (2 wds.)

77 145 46 113 91 60 167 21

T. Handed over in good faith

6 111 59 95 45 29 165 128 152

U. Update in terms of interior design

51 164 148 70 27 10 116 92 133

V. Subject best avoided (2 wds.)

172 38 66 142 103 123 2 157

Contributors

(Continued from Page 11)

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is a contributing writer for the magazine whose essay about the time he served in prison won a National Magazine Award. He is the author of a coming collection of poetry, "Felon."

Matthew Desmond *(Page 30)*
is a professor of sociology at Princeton University and a contributing writer for the magazine. He last wrote a feature about the benefits of a living wage.

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Camille T. Dungy *(Page 78)*
is the author of four books of poetry, including "Trophic Cascade," and the memoir-in-essays "Guidebook to Relative Strangers." Dungy is currently a professor at Colorado State University and a 2019 Guggenheim fellow.

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was born in Ghana, raised in Huntsville, Ala., and lives in Brooklyn. Her first novel, "Homegoing," won the PEN/Hemingway Award and the National Book Critics Circle's John Leonard Prize.

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is an artist who works in photography, collage and performance. He currently has works in two group exhibitions at the Guggenheim in New York.

Barry Jenkins *(Page 46)*
was born and raised in Miami. He is a director and writer known for his adaptation of James Baldwin's "If Beale Street Could Talk" and "Moonlight," which won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

Yusef Komunyakaa *(Page 29)*
is a poet whose books include "The Emperor of Water Clocks" and "Neon Vernacular," for which he received the Pulitzer Prize. He teaches at N.Y.U.

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Jesmyn Ward *(Page 47)*
is the author of "Sing, Unburied, Sing," which won a National Book Award. She was a 2017 MacArthur fellow.

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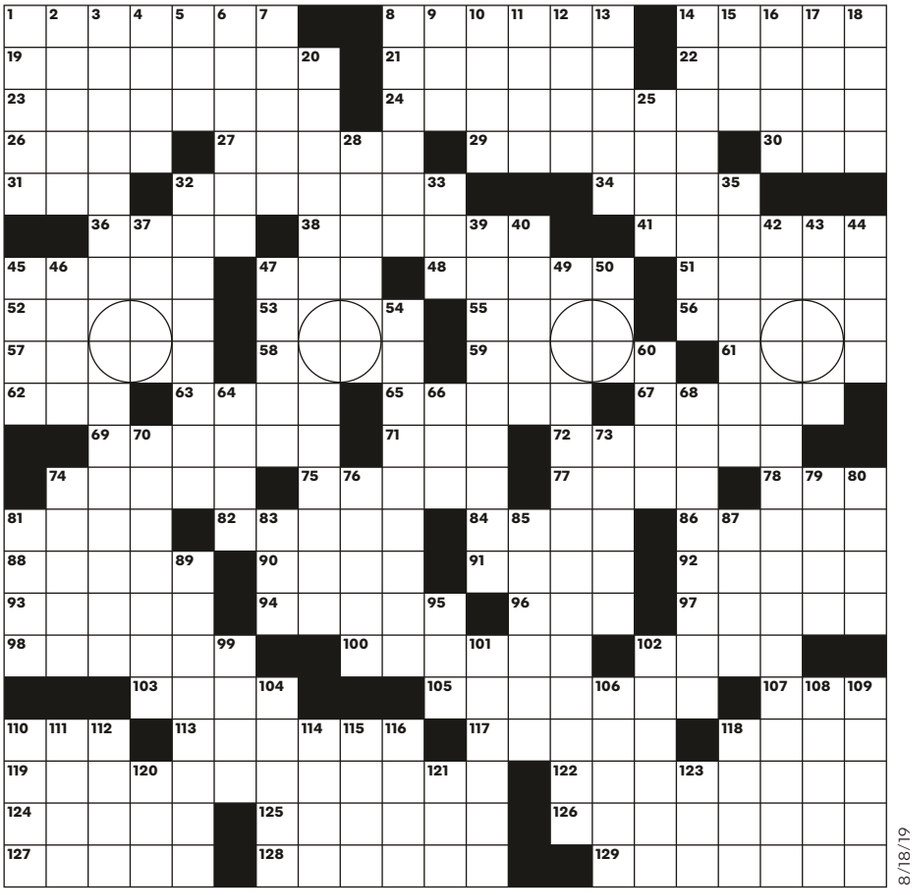
REVOLUTIONARY

By David Steinberg

David Steinberg sold his first crossword to The Times in 2011, when he was 14 and just finishing the eighth grade. A prolific contributor since then, he has had 94 crosswords in the paper altogether. A 2019 graduate of Stanford University, studying psychology and computer science, David recently moved to Kansas City, Mo., to edit crosswords for Andrews McMeel Universal syndicate. — W.S.



8/18/19

ACROSS

1 Passes along, as a present
8 What 13-Down means in poker
14 Book in a mosque
19 Antarctic mass
21 Major British tabloid
22 Yogurt-container words
23 Celebratory Native American feast
24 Drives around awhile … as suggested by this puzzle's visual elements?
26 If's counterpart, in programming
27 "S.N.L." alum Cheri
29 Military-alert system
30 Sow's home
31 Small criticism
32 Baa-dly needing a haircut?
34 "Today" co-host Hoda
36 Challenges for infielders
38 "De-e-e-eluxe!"
41 Cherry brandy
45 Certain rideshares
47 Deposit box?
48 Morning hour
51 Many a Stan Lee film role
52 Capital NE of Casablanca
53 Idris of "The Dark Tower"
55 Ones or tens place
56 0 0 0
57 Wafer brand
58 Hockey-shot sound
59 Shots in the dark
61 Beginning of the Joint Army/Navy Phonetic Alphabet
62 Camera type, for short
63 Very funny person
65 Extremely cold
67 River through Pakistan
69 Sea creatures that may employ camouflage when hunting
71 Blood-type system
72 Ones generating buzz in the music world?
74 Play at full volume
75 Super __ (game series)
77 Help with a job
78 Wrath
81 Eco-friendly car introduced in 2011
82 Something the nose knows
84 __ Pictures
86 First name on the Supreme Court
88 Quits a program
90 Dennis the Menace, e.g.
91 Burnt barbecue bits
92 Shooting stars, some think
93 Kind of salami
94 Pool components
96 Type units
97 Like going all in, maybe
98 Diamond pattern
100 Slowly, musically
102 Some are liberal
103 Meyers of late-night
105 Producer of brown eggs
107 Black __
110 Arborist's tool
113 Laid, as a claim
117 "Spider-Man" director
118 Hit hard
119 1965 No. 1 Byrds hit … as suggested by this puzzle's visual elements?
122 Australia's smallest state
124 Upstate New York city
125 Topic of Article I, Section 3 of the Constitution
126 Up-and-coming
127 Wrinkle treatment
128 Shaman, for one
129 Newspaper sections that often fall out

DOWN

1 Age
2 Romaine concern
3 Kicks things off
4 Land in the water
5 Mortgage org.
6 Mountains just south of Yellowstone
7 The Quakers and others
8 Celebrity socialite
9 Comedian Margaret
10 Mind
11 "__ quam videri," state motto of North Carolina
12 Strike on the head
13 See 8-Across
14 Home of the Marine Corps University
15 __ Constitution
16 Individual curls, say
17 Slightly
18 It contains M.S.G.: Abbr.
20 1973 play featuring a sign with a burned-out "E"
25 Part of a king's guard
28 It charges to do some cleaning
32 Arrogant newcomers
33 Rebellion leader Turner
35 Swagger
37 Freud's first stage
39 Plays hard after working hard
40 Baker with the 1986 hit "Sweet Love"
42 Baker or dry cleaner, maybe
43 They multiply by dividing
44 Garden item that sounds like the plural of another garden item
45 Dispensers at banquets
46 Help (out)
47 Author of "The Lion, the Bear and the Fox"
49 Full of empty talk
50 Royals' org.
54 Teleported, in the Harry Potter books
60 Drop-down menu in online shopping
64 I as in Icarus
66 Something you might take a bow for in the theater?
68 Unapologetic
70 Squeaky mice, e.g.
73 Chasm
74 Jabber?
76 Whirlpool subsidiary since 2006
79 Place to lace up
80 "It's a snap!"
81 Summer Triangle star
83 The Notorious __
85 Six Nations tribe
87 Leave off, as the last word of a
89 Line just above a total, say
95 Squid's ink holder
99 Latin rebuke
101 Accumulate
102 Up
104 Like a zero-star review
106 Savory taste
108 Coat that's hard to take off
109 Sports page fodder
110 Paycheck go-with
111 A plane might be flown on it
112 Judicial order
114 Pad site
115 __ Rosso (Sicilian wine)
116 Kind of citizenship
118 Kind of tea
120 Cpl. or sgt.
121 Fwy., e.g.
123 Virginia Woolf's "__ Dalloway"

Puzzles Online Today's puzzle and more than 9,000 past puzzles: nytimes.com/crosswords ($39.95 a year). For the daily puzzle commentary: nytimes.com/wordplay.

Answers to puzzles of 8.11.19

BIRD PLAY

P	O	S	T				C	H	A	R	S		T	S	A		A	K	A	
E	U	L	E	R		T	A	I	W	A	N		H	I	L	A	R	Y	S	K
S	C	E	N	E		O	R	G	A	N	A		A	M	E	S	I	O	W	A
T	H	E	P	L	O	T	T	H	I	C	K	E	N	S		E	A	T	A	T
		P	I	A	N	O			T	H	E	Y			S	A	L	O	N	
O	P	E	N	T	O		S	P	E	D		E	S	S	O					
F	A	R	S	I		V	E	R	D	I		S	C	O	F	F		B	I	O
T	A	C		N	E	A	L	E		P	O	P	U	L	A	R	K	I	D	S
E	V	A	N	G	E	L	I	Z	E		R	O	B		S	I	E	G	E	L
N	O	R	A		L	E	G		M	A	O	T	A	I		A	N	D	S	O
			P	S	S	T		G	E	R	M	S		P	O	R	N			
V	E	S	P	A		S	H	O	R	T	E		O	H	M		E	T	D	S
E	X	C	I	T	E		E	L	I		O	F	F	O	N	A	L	A	R	K
S	P	R	E	A	D	E	A	G	L	E		R	U	N	I	T		K	O	I
T	O	Y		N	E	W	T	O		S	P	O	S	E		E	M	E	N	D
					N	E	S	T		C	A	G	E		D	A	I	S	E	S
	P	L	E	B	S				H	E	A	L			S	A	L	S	A	
P	R	O	B	E		H	E	A	D	L	E	S	S	C	H	I	C	K	E	N
C	O	C	O	A	M	I	X		G	A	T	E	A	U		V	A	N	D	Y
S	W	A	N	D	I	V	E		A	T	T	E	N	D		E	L	E	N	A
	S	L	Y		R	E	C		R	E	E	D	S				L	E	A	D

KENKEN

2	1	3	4	5
4	2	1	5	3
5	4	2	3	1
3	5	4	1	2
1	3	5	2	4

3	7	6	4	2	5	1
2	5	7	6	3	1	4
7	4	5	2	1	3	6
1	3	4	7	5	6	2
5	1	2	3	6	4	7
4	6	3	1	7	2	5
6	2	1	5	4	7	3

TRIGRAM TWO-STEP

Group A: 1. PLA 2. CRE 3. CON 4. CAR 5. APP
6. ENT 7. DES 8. PIL 9. MAS 10. RUM 11. SIL 12. SUP
13. RES 14. DAM 15. TAR
Group B: 1. STO 2. TOR 3. SEE 4. BAL 5. CHE
6. MAR 7. COR 8. MAN 9. CHA 10. ENC 11. BUR 12. POR
13. SHO 14. ANT 15. PAR
Combined: 1. Pistol 2. Proust 3. Macron 4. Lambda
5. Sappho 6. Brunet 7. Padres 8. "Carmen" 9. Sesame
10. Cancer 11. Chisel 12. Poplar 13. Arches 14. Truman
15. Carrot

LOSS LEADERS

1. Mongoose (AMONG + LOOSE) 2. Boutique (ABOUT + PIQUE)
3. Inedible (FINED + BIBLE) 4. Orphanage (MORPH + MANAGE)
5. Tom Sawyer (ATOMS + LAWYER) 6. Equestrian (REQUEST + BRIAN)
7. Weatherman (SWEAT + SHERMAN) 8. Avalanches (NAVAL + RANCHES)
9. Paint roller (SPAIN + STROLLER)
10. Exasperation (TEXAS + OPERATION)

SIXY SUDOKU

1	6	2	4	3	5
4	5	3	1	2	6
2	3	6	5	4	1
5	1	4	2	6	3
6	2	1	3	5	4
3	4	5	6	1	2

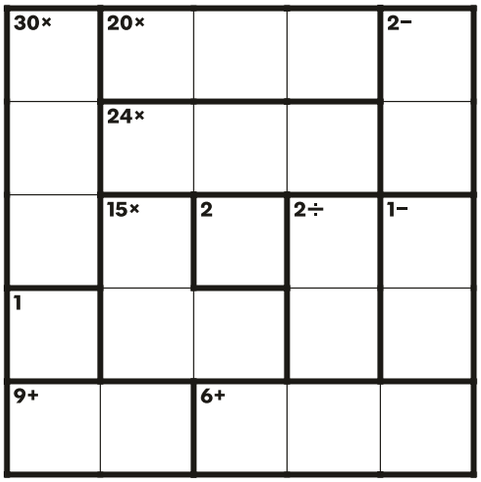
Answers to puzzle on Page 94

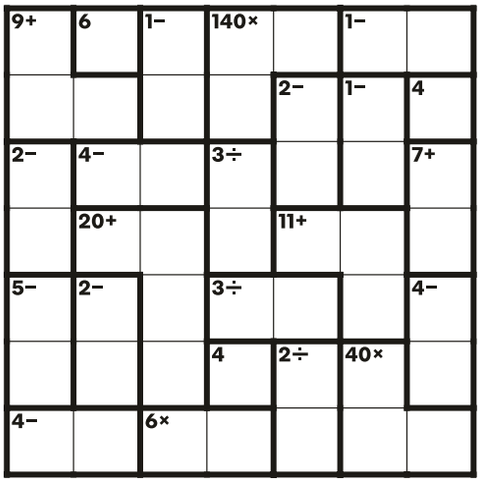
SPELLING BEE

Principal (3 points). Also: Alpaca, appall, canal, carnal, carpal, cilia, clinic, clinical, clinician, cranial, lanai, lilac, papal, pillar, plain, racial, rallcar. If you found other legitimate dictionary words in the beehive, feel free to include them in your score.

KENKEN

Fill the grid with digits so as not to repeat a digit in any row or column, and so that the digits within each heavily outlined box will produce the target number shown, by using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division, as indicated in the box. A 5x5 grid will use the digits 1–5. A 7x7 grid will use 1–7.





Shadow of the Past

This spot is the site of the largest auc tion of enslaved people in American history an 1859 event the enslaved called the Weeping Time, in which 436 people were brought to the hammer to pay off the bad invest ments and gambling debts of Pierce M. Butler, the absentee owner of the Butler Island plantation. The auction was held at a playground of the local elite: the Ten Broeck Race Course, then on the outskirts of Savannah, Ga. It netted Butler the phenomenal sum of $303,850.

A photograph cannot show you enslaved families herded into sheds that normally held horses. It cannot show you a man named Jeffrey, recorded in one contem porary writer s account begging in vain for his purchaser to also buy his love, Dorcas, Chattel No. 278: Please buy Dorcas, Mas'r. We re be good sarvants to you long as we live. We re be married right soon, young Mas r, and de chillun will be healthy and strong, Mas r, and dey ll be good sarvants too. A photo can't capture the contribution those 436 people made to the economy of their country, or the gifts and talents they lent it. (As part of the Gullah Geechee community, they were among those who gave the world a song of peace, Kumbaya.) What you do see are two tracks, intersecting but going in differ ent directions, toward different outcomes a fitting metaphor, perhaps, for black and white life in America.

In 2008, the Georgia Historical Society and the City of Savannah erected a commemorative marker near this land, but no marker can cap ture the scars carried by those sep arated on the auction block. Today the site is home to a large regional plywood and lumber distributor. It also contains the Otis J. Brock III Elementary School, whose students are almost all black. This March, the school was the site of a moving com memoration of the 160th anniversary of the Weeping Time. *Anne C. Bailey*

Photograph by Dannielle Bowman

The New York Times

The 1619 Project In Schools

Teachers: Looking for ways to use this issue in your classroom? You can find curriculums, guides and activities for students developed by the Pulitzer Center at **pulitzercenter.org/1619**. And it's all free!

Resources include a lesson plan that introduces the issue, summaries of the articles, an index of historical terms used, suggested activities that engage students creatively and intellectually and opportunities to connect with New York Times journalists featured in this issue.

This curriculum supports students and teachers in using The 1619 Project to challenge historical narratives, redefine national memory and build a better world.

Pulitzer Center

“Let us use history to inspire us to push a country forward, to help us believe that all things are possible and to demand a country lives up to its stated ideals.”

Lonnie G. Bunch III
14th Secretary of the Smithsonian

Smithsonian

www.si.edu

Evaluating and Reshaping Timelines in The 1619 Project: New York Times for Kids Edition

September 10, 2019 | All Grades
By Meerabelle Jesuthasan

Daguerreotype of Rhoda Phillips, circa 1850. Photograph by Erica Deeman for The New York Times. From the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Lesson Outline

Introducing the Lesson:
Introducing "Why You Should Know About the Year 1619."

Warm-up Exercise: Creating a timeline of U.S. history and evaluating the events selected.

Analyzing the Timeline: Comparing *The New York Times*' U.S. history timeline with the class-generated timeline.

Analyzing the Column: Reading and discussion questions for "How I Became A Historian"

Analyzing the Column: Reading and discussion questions for "4 Myths About Slavery"

Extension Activities:

1. Constructing a new timeline of U.S. history

2. Writing a short story about an overlooked event in U.S. history

3. Comparing multiple sources on a historical event and presenting an analysis

4. Evaluating historical sources and their educational value

Introducing the Lesson:

The following lesson plan guides students in exploring a special *1619 Project* section of *The New York Times for Kids*, "Why You Should Know About the Year 1619." The section includes…

- A timeline starting with the year 1619 that presents standout facts and dates related to slavery. The timeline aims to visualize underrepresented facts about the history and legacy of slavery.
- A column addressing common myths about slavery.
- A column explaining the career of a historian.

The lesson plan is designed to help students engage with the timeline and come up with their own connections between slavery and the larger narrative of U.S. history, while also encouraging them to think about the ways in which history is framed in their own education. Thematically, this lesson explores how history is written by engaging students in the following questions:

- Who gets to write history, and how does that story determine what we know about the world?
- What research goes into creating a historical narrative?
- What can historians do when they are lacking written sources?

Warm-up:

1. If you were to make a timeline of the history of the United States, what are some of the important dates, people, and events that you would include? Create this timeline as a class.

2. As a class, discuss how the events were selected. Consider…

- Which three events on the timeline do you think are most important, and why?
- Are there any events on the timeline you do not think should be included? If so, why?
- What events did the class choose not to include?
- What role did slavery play in the timeline you and your classmates created?
- How did you learn about the history of slavery in the U.S.? What did you learn, and how was that information presented?

3. *The 1619 Project* aims to challenge our understanding of U.S. history by proposing 1619, rather than 1776, as the nation's founding year. That year, the first enslaved Africans were brought to the state of Virginia. In Nikole Hannah-Jones' essay "The Idea of America," cited in the introduction to "Why You Should Know About the Year 1619," Hannah-Jones writes: "The story of 1619 is not a black story, and it's not a white story; it's truly an American story." What do you think is meant by this quote?

Analyzing the Timeline:

1. Fill out this graphic organizer as you read through the timeline from "Why You Should Know About the Year 1619."

2. In her introduction to "Why You Should Know About the Year 1619," journalist Lovia Gyarkye writes:

> "This year marks the 400th anniversary of when the first enslaved Africans were brought to what is now the state of Virginia. Most of us are familiar with how slavery worked in this country. We learn that enslaved men, women and children were kidnapped from their homes in Africa, locked into heavy iron chains and crammed onto ships for a dangerous journey. They had no idea where they were going and often died on the way — from heat, starvation, thirst and violence. They were brought to the colonies and were sold and forced to work on the land and in the homes of white people for the rest of their lives, though resistance and rebellion were common. And they eventually fought for and won their freedom — sacrificing their lives to escape bondage. But this is only part of the story."

Use the quote above and the details from the timeline to answer the following questions in a class discussion:

- What information from the timeline surprised you?
- How does the information from the timeline connect to what you have already learned about slavery and its lasting legacy?
- How does the information from the timeline reflect the lasting impacts of slavery? Where else do you see evidence of the modern-day impacts of slavery?

Analyzing the Column: "How I Became A Historian"

After reading the column "How I Became a Historian," write your responses to the following questions on a separate piece of paper. Be prepared to share your responses with the class.

1. How did Annette Gordon-Reed decide to become a historian?
2. In her interview with Elise Craig, the historian Annette Gordon-Reed describes her experience reading a biography of President Thomas Jefferson that was written from the point of view of a fictionalized enslaved boy who is not very bright.
    - How can fiction help us understand history?
    - How do you think a point of view might affect the story told? Is it possible for a story to be written without a point of view?
3. Gordon-Reed describes the reading she does in order to confirm that Jefferson had children with an enslaved woman on his plantation, Sally Hemings. Notice that these sources are mostly created by white enslavers.
    - How does this make writing history about slavery more difficult?
    - Are there other sources that you could use to get a different point of view about how enslaved people were treated, or about what the U.S. was like during slavery?

Analyzing the Column: "4 Myths About Slavery"

Read through the myths about slavery, written by Erica L. Green and respond to the following questions on your own, or in small groups:

1. How do you think the myths described in column came about?
2. What do you think history professor Hasan Kwame Jeffries means by "a sanitized version of history"?
3. Which of the myths described by Green are ones you have heard before? Discuss how you would go about correcting the misinformation, whether in person, through a letter, or in some other way.

Extension Activities:

1. Timeline Construction

For this activity, refer back to the events in the timeline that you created as a class. Work on this exercise individually.

1. Create your own timeline of U.S. history that combines the events you chose as a class and the events or figures that stand out to you from *The New York Times* timeline.

2. Reflect back on the events you chose to include in your U.S. history timeline as a class during the warm-up activity. Did you learn anything new about these events by reading *The New York Times* timeline?

3. With a partner, discuss: Why do you think the timeline presented in *The New York Times* was structured in this way? What story does the timeline tell by presenting information in this order, and in this way?

2. Creative Writing

1. Choose one of the events from the timeline and imagine how you might write a short story about it. Consider the following as you plan your story:

- Who would be the main characters?
- What kind of research would you need to do to make sure the story is both accurate and creative?

2. Write a brief scene or moment from this short story, supported by research from *The 1619 Project* or other external sources.

Note: For inspiration, students may wish to explore the creative works in *The 1619 Project* magazine.

3. Research and Presentation

From the timeline, which event are you most curious to learn more about? Select one historical event and use multiple sources to research how this event is described using different texts. Create a presentation using a poster, PowerPoint, or monologue that addresses the following:

- What did you learn about the event? What led to this event, what happened, and what was the lasting impact of the event?
- What similarities and differences did you notice in the way that this event was described in different sources?

4. Analyzing Historical Sources

Select a historical resource about slavery from your library or online (such as a book, article, website, or movie).

1. Fill out this graphic organizer to analyze how this resource teaches the issue of slavery.

2. If you were writing a history book, what three facts from *The New York Times* timeline would you choose to include? Brainstorm how you might present the information.

3. As a class, discuss:

- In an educational setting, are there productive ways to use sources that perpetuate myths about slavery?
- What can these sources tell us about U.S. history?

4. Compare your analysis of different resources with that of other students. As a class, decide which ones you would recommend using for a class syllabus on slavery.

Educator Notes:

For more ways to connect *The 1619 Project* to your classes, click here.

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2
Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7
Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

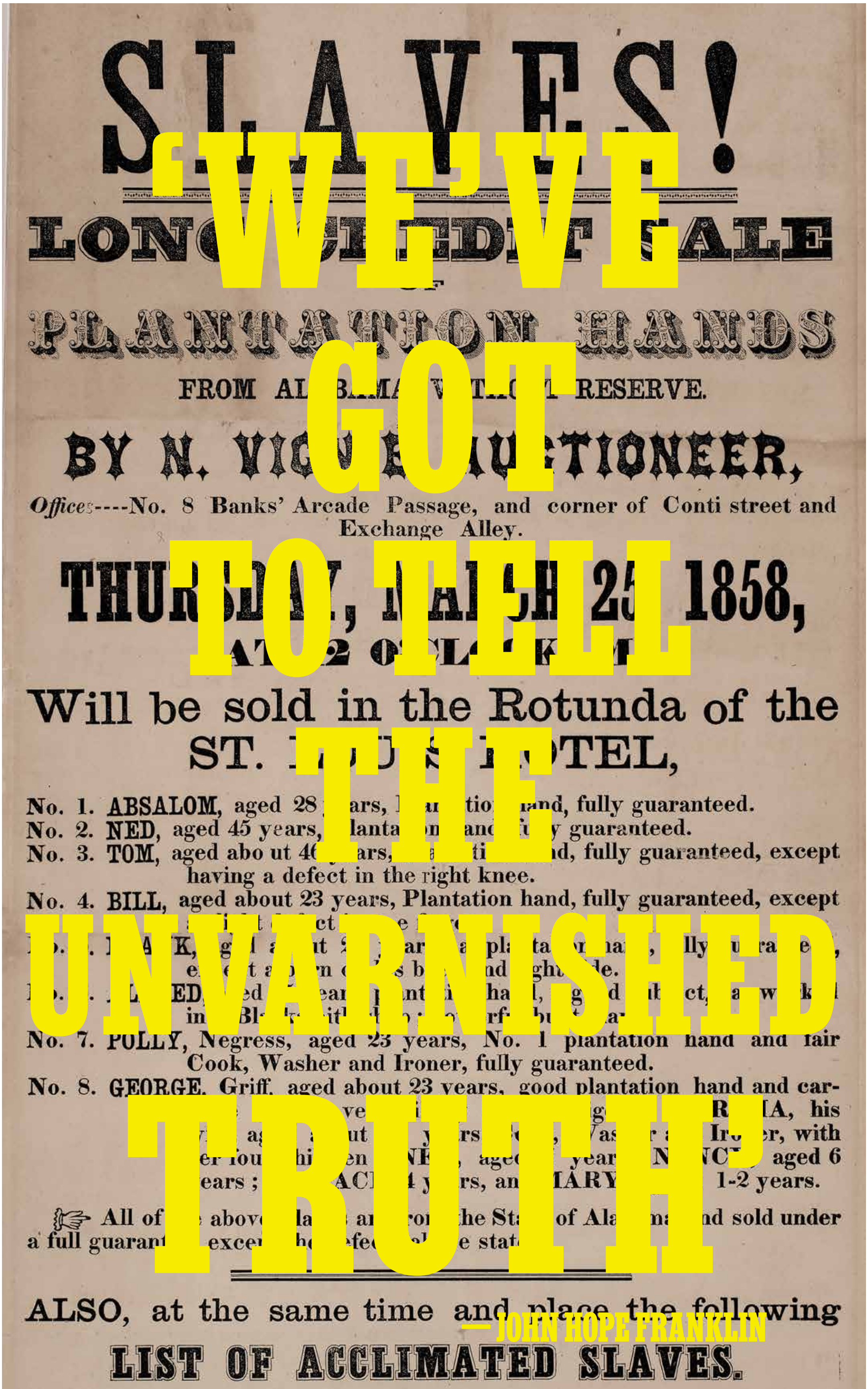
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 2019

The New York Times Magazine

The 1619 Project

'WE'VE GOT TO TELL THE UNVARNISHED TRUTH'



— JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS AFTER ENSLAVED AFRICANS WERE FIRST BROUGHT TO VIRGINIA, MOST AMERICANS STILL DON'T KNOW THE FULL STORY OF SLAVERY.

‘We are committing educational malpractice.’

ON THE COVER

This broadside, or public notice, was used to advertise a slave auction at the St. Louis Hotel in New Orleans on March 25, 1858. Eighteen people were for sale, including a family of six whose youngest child was 1.

FEATURING OBJECTS FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE SMITHSONIAN’S NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE.

NYT MAGAZINE LABS Editorial Director: **CAITLIN ROPER.** Art Director: **DEB BISHOP.** Editors: **MOLLY BENNET, CLAIRE GUTIERREZ.** Photo Editor: **JESSICA DIMSON.** Designers: **NAJEEBAH AL-GHADBAN, LETICIA SARMENTO.** Copy Editor: **DANIEL FROMSON.** Research Editors: **CYNTHIA COTTS, MADDY CROWELL, LU FONG, RUDY LEE.** Photo Research: **JESSICA TANG.** Curatorial Assistant: **AYLA AMON.** Production Editor: **HILARY SHANAHAN.**

The goal of The 1619 Project is to reframe American history, making explicit how slavery is the foundation on which this country is built. For generations we have not been adequately taught this history. Our hope is to paint a fuller picture of the institution that shaped our nation.

Why Can't We Teach This?

By Nikita Stewart

In the preface to "The Geographical Reader for the Dixie Children," Marinda Branson Moore, a teacher who founded a girls' school in North Carolina, noted that she wanted to teach children about the world without it going over their heads. "The author of this little work, having found most of the juvenile books too complex for young minds, has for some time intended making an effort to simplify the science of Geography," she wrote. "If she shall succeed in bringing this beautiful and useful study within the grasp of little folks, and making it both interesting and pleasant, her purpose will be fully accomplished." The book was published in 1863, the same year as the Emancipation Proclamation and in the midst of the Civil War. Teachers could review the lessons with suggested questions in the back of the book. Part of Lesson IX's suggestions read:

Q. Which race is the most civilized?
A. The Caucasian.

Q. Is the African savage in this country?
A. No; they are docile and religious here.

Q. How are they in Africa where they first come from?
A. They are very ignorant, cruel and wretched.

More than a century and a half later, textbooks no longer publish such overt racist lies, but the United States still struggles to teach children about slavery.

Unlike math and reading, states are not required to meet academic content standards for teaching social studies and United States history. That means that there is no consensus on the curriculum around slavery, no uniform recommendation to explain an institution that was debated in the crafting of the Constitution and that has influenced nearly every aspect of American society since.

Think about what it would mean for our education system to properly teach students — young children and teenagers — about enslavement, what they would have to learn about our country. It's ugly. For generations, we've been unwilling to do it. Elementary-school teachers, worried about disturbing children, tell students about the "good" people, like the abolitionists and the black people who escaped to freedom, but leave out the details of *why* they were protesting or what they were fleeing. Middle-school and high-school teachers stick to lesson plans from outdated textbooks that promote long-held, errant views. That means students graduate with a poor understanding of how slavery shaped our country, and they are unable to recognize the powerful and lasting effects it has had.

In 2017, the Southern Poverty Law Center, a nonprofit organization that researches and monitors hate groups, pored over 12 popular U.S. history books and surveyed more than 1,700 social-studies teachers and 1,000 high-school seniors to understand how American slavery is taught and what is learned. The findings were disturbing: There was widespread slavery illiteracy among students. More than a third thought the Emancipation Proclamation formally ended slavery. (It was actually the 13th Amendment.) Nearly 60 percent of teachers did not believe their textbook's coverage of slavery was adequate. A panel made up of the center's staff, an independent education researcher with a background in middle- and high-school education and a history professor with expertise in the history of slavery looked at how the books depicted enslavement, evaluating them with a 30-point rubric. On average, the textbooks received a failing grade of 46 percent.

Maureen Costello, director of Teaching Tolerance, a program at the Southern Poverty Law Center that promotes diversity education, said the rubric used to analyze the textbooks was about seeing how the history of enslavement was integrated throughout a book and exactly what those contents were. In most teachings, she said, slavery is treated like a dot on a timeline. "The best textbooks maybe have 20 pages, and that's in an 800-page textbook," Costello told me. "At its best, slavery is taught because we have to explain the Civil War. We tend to teach it like a Southern problem and a backward economic institution. The North is industrialized; the South was locked in a backward agricultural system." About 92 percent of students did not know that slavery was the war's central cause, according to the survey.

So how did we get here? How have we been able to fail students for so long? Almost immediately after the Civil War, white Southerners and their sympathizers adopted an ideology called "the lost cause," an outlook that softened the brutality of enslavement and justified its immorality. One proponent of the ideology was Edward A. Pollard, whose book "The Lost Cause" transformed many Confederate generals and soldiers into heroes and argued that slavery was proper, because black people were inferior. The "lost cause" theory buried the truth that some 750,000 people died in a war because large numbers of white people wanted to maintain slavery. Over time, the theory became so ingrained in our collective thinking that even today people believe that the Civil War was about the South's asserting its rights against the North, not about slavery.

About 80 percent of this country's 3.7 million teachers are white, and white educators, some of whom grew up learning that the Civil War was about states' rights, generally have a hand in the selection of textbooks, which can vary from state to state and from school district to school district. "These decisions are being made by people who learned about slavery in a different way at a different time," Costello told me.

The law center's study focused on high-school students, but the miseducation of children generally begins much earlier. Teachers bungle history as soon as children are learning to read. Because teachers and parents are often so afraid to frighten children, they awkwardly spin the history of this country. They focus on a handful of heroes like Harriet Tubman, whose is picture is tacked to bulletin boards during Black History Month and Women's History Month. Elementary-school students learn about our nation's founders but do not learn that many of them owned slaves.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries is an associate professor of history at the Ohio State University and chair of the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Hard History advisory board, which guided the 2017 survey. He is an expert on how slavery is taught and has watched the dynamics play out in his own household. He recalled how his 8-year-old daughter had a homework assignment that listed "fun facts" about George Washington, and it noted his love of rabbits. Jeffries corrected the assignment. "He loved rabbits and owned rabbits," Jeffries said. "He owned people, too," he told his daughter. The assignment said he lost his teeth and had to have dentures. "Yes, he had teeth made from slaves." Jeffries and teachers in upper grades I talked to around the country say they spend the beginning of their presentations on slavery explaining to students that what they learned in elementary school was not the full story and possibly not even true. "We are committing educational malpractice," Jeffries told me. A report published last year by the Brookings Institution's Brown Center on Eduction Policy, a research institute focused on K-12 issues in American public schools, examined social-studies teachers and found that there is limited testing accountability. Social studies is "largely absent from federal education law and policy," the report found, which arguably makes it a "second-tier academic" subject. More than half the high-school seniors surveyed reported that debate in the classroom — a proven practice of good teaching — was infrequent.

I was lucky; my Advanced Placement United States history teacher regularly engaged my nearly all-white class in debate, and there was a clear focus on learning about slavery beyond Tubman, Phillis Wheatley and Frederick Douglass, the people I saw hanging on the bulletin board during Black History Month. We used "The American Pageant," a textbook first published in 1956 and now in its 17th edition. It's a book that, although not failing, was still found to be lacking by the Southern Poverty Law Center's survey. It graded books based on how they treated 10 different key concepts, such as establishing that slavery was the central cause of the Civil War or explaining that the country's founding documents are filled with protections for slavery. A modern edition of the book I used received a 60 percent mark, barely adequate.

Nap McQueen, the author's great-grandfather, photographed in Texas around 1936.

Thomas A. Bailey, a professor of history at Stanford University, was the textbook's original author. Bailey was influenced by what is known as the Dunning School, a school of thought arguing that the period of Reconstruction was detrimental to white Southerners and that black people were incapable of participating in democracy. This theory, along with the older "lost cause" ideology, helped to reinforce Jim Crow laws. In the 1970s, David M. Kennedy, a colleague of Bailey's at Stanford, was brought in to revise the book. "It was clear that the textbook needed to be updated in alignment with current scholarship," Kennedy said. Now he and a third co-author, Lizabeth Cohen, revisit three or four topics whenever they work on a new edition. He pointed to their efforts to show the impact of slavery on modern anti-black racism.

And yet Costello points at troubling language that continues to appear in the book. Thomas Jefferson's relationship with Sally Hemings, who was enslaved by him, is described as "intimacy" and an "affair." Another passage, from the 15th edition, states: "White masters all too frequently would force their attentions on female slaves, fathering a sizable mulatto population, most of which remained enchained." Costello noted that "it's really a rather delicate way of describing rape." This section has since been edited, but the 15th edition remains in print. It's a reminder that although textbooks like "The American Pageant" are evolving, it's a slow process, and in the interim, misinformation about slavery persists.

Tiferet Ani, a social-studies specialist for the public-school system in Montgomery County, Md., is in charge of shaping the curriculum for her colleagues. She recommends using textbooks lightly and teaching students to challenge them. Ani, like so many teachers around the country, has been influenced by the law center's report. "The textbook is not an authoritative document," she told me. She and other teachers rely more on primary sources. Montgomery County is just outside Washington, so Ani can take her students to the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Many black children learn the fuller history at home, listening to the stories passed down to us or reflecting on what was never shared. Earlier this year, while looking up some information about my grandmother, I stumbled upon her father, my great-grandfather Nap McQueen. There he was in a black-and-white photo, looking straight into the camera, in a long-sleeve shirt, slacks and a hat. He was enslaved as a boy, and he was one of more than 2,300 formerly enslaved people interviewed for the Federal Writers' Project's Slave Narratives. He was vivid in his recollection — how he was born in Tennessee and taken to Texas by wagon. His enslaver, he said, "was a good massa," in part because he allowed McQueen to go fishing and hunting on the weekends, and his enslaver wouldn't draw blood during whippings. His enslaver treated his property so well, he said, that they were the envy of enslaved people on other plantations.

Nap McQueen's words disappointed me. I was embarrassed. My great-grandfather had echoed the "lost cause" ideology.

He talked about how his enslaver lined up all the enslaved people and announced that they were free. They could leave, his enslaver said, or they could stay, and he would give them some land. My family stayed, making a life in Woodville, Tex.

But then my great-grandfather shifted his attention to telling a story about a monkey owned by an enslaver on another plantation. The monkey, which was allowed to roam freely throughout the plantation, imitated everything humans did. It was annoying. Once, the monkey was used to play a prank on an enslaved man who thought the monkey, dressed in a white tablecloth, was a ghost. The man could not kill the monkey because it was "de massa's pet," but knowing that the monkey copied everything, the man shaved in front of it. The monkey picked up the razor "and cut he own throat and killed hisself," McQueen said. That's exactly what the man wanted, my great-grandfather said. "He feel satisfy dat de monkey done dead and he have he revengence."

It's a crazy story, seemingly so off the subject and so out of character for a man who obviously tried to present himself as a good, law-abiding Negro, the kind of man who would not steal the cotton he picked on your behalf. Why tell a story about the gratification of killing something the enslaver loved? My great-grandfather's words are my primary source. A whipping without blood is still a whipping. And I believe my great-grandfather shared the story of the monkey because he admired the other man for finding a way to get a little bit of justice. He wanted listeners to understand the horror of the institution, even if he was too afraid to condemn it outright. For me, it's a reminder of what our schools fail to do: bring this history alive, using stories like these to help us understand the evil our nation was founded on. ◆

Photograph from the Library of Congress. Cover: The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

The 1619 Project

Sometime in 1619, a Portuguese slave ship, the São João Bautista, traveled across the Atlantic Ocean with a hull filled with human cargo: captive Africans from Angola, in southwestern

Curated by Mary Elliott

All text by Mary Elliott and Jazmine Hughes

Africa. The men, women and children, most likely from the kingdoms of Ndongo and Kongo, endured the horrific journey, bound for a life of enslavement in Mexico. Almost half the captives had died by the time the ship was seized by two English pirate ships; the remaining Africans were taken to Point Comfort, a port near Jamestown, the capital of the British colony of Virginia, which the Virginia Company of London had established 12 years earlier. The colonist John Rolfe wrote to Sir Edwin Sandys, of the Virginia Company, that in August 1619, a "Dutch man of war" arrived in the colony and "brought not anything but 20 and odd Negroes, which the governor and cape merchant bought for victuals." The Africans were most likely put to work in the tobacco fields that had recently been established in the area.

Forced labor was not uncommon — Africans and Europeans had been trading goods and people across the Mediterranean for centuries — but enslavement had not been based on race. The trans-Atlantic slave trade, which began as early as the 15th century, introduced a system of slavery that was commercialized, racialized and inherited. Enslaved people were seen not as people at all but as commodities to be bought, sold and exploited. Though people of African descent — free and enslaved — were present in North America as early as the 1500s, the sale of the "20 and odd" African people set the course for what would become slavery in the United States.

MARY ELLIOTT is curator of American slavery at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, where she co-curated the "Slavery and Freedom" exhibition. JAZMINE HUGHES is a writer and editor at The New York Times Magazine.

No. 1 / Slavery, Power and the Human Cost

1455 - 1775

In the 15th century, the Roman Catholic Church divided the world in half, granting Portugal a monopoly on trade in West Africa and Spain the right to colonize the New World in its quest for land and gold. Pope Nicholas V buoyed Portuguese efforts and issued the Romanus Pontifex of 1455, which affirmed Portugal's exclusive rights to territories it claimed along the West African coast and the trade from those areas. It granted the right to invade, plunder and "reduce their persons to perpetual slavery." Queen Isabella invested in Christopher Columbus's exploration to increase her wealth and ultimately rejected the enslavement of Native Americans, claiming that they were Spanish subjects. Spain established an *asiento*, or contract, that authorized the direct shipment of captive Africans for trade as human commodities in the Spanish colonies in the Americas. Eventually other European nation-states — the Netherlands, France, Denmark and England — seeking similar economic and geopolitical power joined in the trade, exchanging goods and people with leaders along the West African coast, who ran self-sustaining societies known for their mineral-rich land and wealth in gold and other trade goods. They competed to secure the *asiento* and colonize the New World. With these efforts, a new form of slavery came into being. It was endorsed by the European nation-states and based on race, and it resulted in the largest forced migration in the world: Some 12.5 million men, women and children of African descent were forced into the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The sale of their bodies and the product of their labor brought the Atlantic world into being, including colonial North America. In the colonies, status began to be defined by race and class, and whether by custom, case law or statute, freedom was limited to maintain the enterprise of slavery and ensure power.

Hand-colored lithograph by Achille Devéria, 1830s.

Queen Njinga

IN 1624, after her brother's death, Ana Njinga gained control of the kingdom of Ndongo, in present-day Angola. At the time, the Portuguese were trying to colonize Ndongo and nearby territory in part to acquire more people for its slave trade, and after two years as ruler, Njinga was forced to flee in the face of Portuguese attack. Eventually, however, she conquered a nearby kingdom called Matamba. Njinga continued to fight fiercely against Portuguese forces in the region for many years, and she later provided shelter for runaway slaves. By the time of Njinga's death in 1663, she had made peace with Portugal, and Matamba traded with it on equal economic footing. In 2002, a statue of Njinga was unveiled in Luanda, the capital of Angola, where she is held up as an emblem of resistance and courage.

"Sea Captains Carousing in Surinam," painted by John Greenwood, circa 1752-58.

Cultivating Wealth and Power

THE SLAVE TRADE provided political power, social standing and wealth for the church, European nation-states, New World colonies and individuals. This portrait by John Greenwood connects slavery and privilege through the image of a group of Rhode Island sea captains and merchants drinking at a tavern in the Dutch colony of Surinam, a hub of trade. These men made money by trading the commodities produced by slavery globally — among the North American colonies, the Caribbean and South America — allowing them to secure political positions and determine the fate of the nation. The men depicted here include the future governors Nicholas Cooke and Joseph Wanton; Esek Hopkins, a future commander in chief of the Continental Navy; and Stephen Hopkins, who would eventually become one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

> 'All children borne in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother.' — Virginia law enacted in 1662

Race Encoded Into Law

THE USE of enslaved laborers was affirmed — and its continual growth was promoted — through the creation of a Virginia law in 1662 that decreed that the status of the child followed the status of the mother, which meant that enslaved women gave birth to generations of children of African descent who were now seen as commodities. This natural increase allowed the colonies — and then the United States — to become a slave nation. The law also secured wealth for European colonists and generations of their descendants, even as free black people could be legally prohibited from bequeathing their wealth to their children. At the same time, racial and class hierarchies were being coded into law: In the 1640s, John Punch, a black servant, escaped bondage with two white indentured servants. Once caught, his companions received additional years of servitude, while Punch was determined enslaved for life. In the wake of Bacon's Rebellion, in which free and enslaved black people aligned themselves with poor white people and yeoman white farmers against the government, more stringent laws were enacted that defined status based on race and class. Black people in America were being enslaved for life, while the protections of whiteness were formalized.

Continual Resistance

ENSLAVED Africans had known freedom before they arrived in America, and they fought to regain it from the moment they were taken from their homes, rebelling on plantation sites and in urban centers. In September 1739, a group of enslaved Africans in the South Carolina colony, led by an enslaved man called Jemmy, gathered outside Charleston, where they killed two storekeepers and seized weapons and ammunition. "Calling out Liberty," according to Gen. James Oglethorpe, the rebels "marched on with Colours displayed, and two Drums beating" along the Stono River, entreating other members of the enslaved community to join them. Their goal was Spanish Florida, where they were promised freedom if they fought as the first line of defense against British attack. This effort, called the Stono Rebellion, was the largest slave uprising in the mainland British colonies. Between 60 and 100 black people participated in the rebellion; about 40 black people and 20 white people were killed, and other freedom fighters were captured and questioned. White lawmakers in South Carolina, afraid of additional rebellions, put a 10-year moratorium on the importation of enslaved Africans and passed the Negro Act of 1740, which criminalized assembly, education and moving abroad among the enslaved. The Stono Rebellion was only one of many rebellions that occurred over the 246 years of slavery in the United States.

"Sea Captains": Saint Louis Art Museum. Njinga: National Portrait Gallery, London.

Left: An iron ballast block used to counterbalance the weight of enslaved persons aboard the São José Paquete Africa slave ship, which left Mozambique in 1794 and sank near what is now Cape Town, South Africa.

Right: A child's iron shackles, before 1860.

Means Of Control

"THE IRON entered into our souls," lamented a formerly enslaved man named Caesar, as he remembered the shackles he had to wear during his forced passage from his home in Africa to the New World. Used as restraints around the arms and legs, the coarse metal cut into captive Africans' skin for the many months they spent at sea. Children made up about 26 percent of the captives. Because governments determined by the ton how many people could be fitted onto a slave ship, enslavers considered children especially advantageous: They could fill the boat's small spaces, allowing more human capital in the cargo hold. Africans were crammed into ships with no knowledge of where they were going or if they would be released. This forced migration is known as the Middle Passage. As Olaudah Equiano, the formerly enslaved author, remembered, "I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me." Overheating, thirst, starvation and violence were common aboard slave ships, and roughly 15 percent of each ship's enslaved population died before they ever reached land. Suicide attempts were so common that many captains placed netting around their ships to prevent loss of human cargo and therefore profit; working-class white crew members, too, committed suicide or ran away at port to escape the brutality. Enslaved people did not meekly accept their fate. Approximately one out of 10 slave ships experienced resistance, ranging from individual defiance (like refusing to eat or jumping overboard) to full-blown mutiny.

Photographs by Erica Deeman

Objects from the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture

Low Country basket, 19th century.

Memory and Place-Making

ENSLAVED BLACK people came from regions and ethnic groups throughout Africa. Though they came empty-handed, they carried with them memories of loved ones and communities, moral values, intellectual insight, artistic talents and cultural practices, religious beliefs and skills. In their new environment, they relied on these memories to create new practices infused with old ones. In the Low Country region of the Carolinas and Georgia, planters specifically requested skilled enslaved people from a region stretching from Senegal to Liberia, who were familiar with the conditions ideal for growing rice. Charleston quickly became the busiest port for people shipped from West Africa. The coiled or woven baskets used to separate rice grains from husks during harvest were a form of artistry and technology brought from Africa to the colonies. Although the baskets were utilitarian, they also served as a source of artistic pride and a way to stay connected to the culture and memory of the homeland.

Photographs by Erica Deeman for The New York Times. Objects from the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

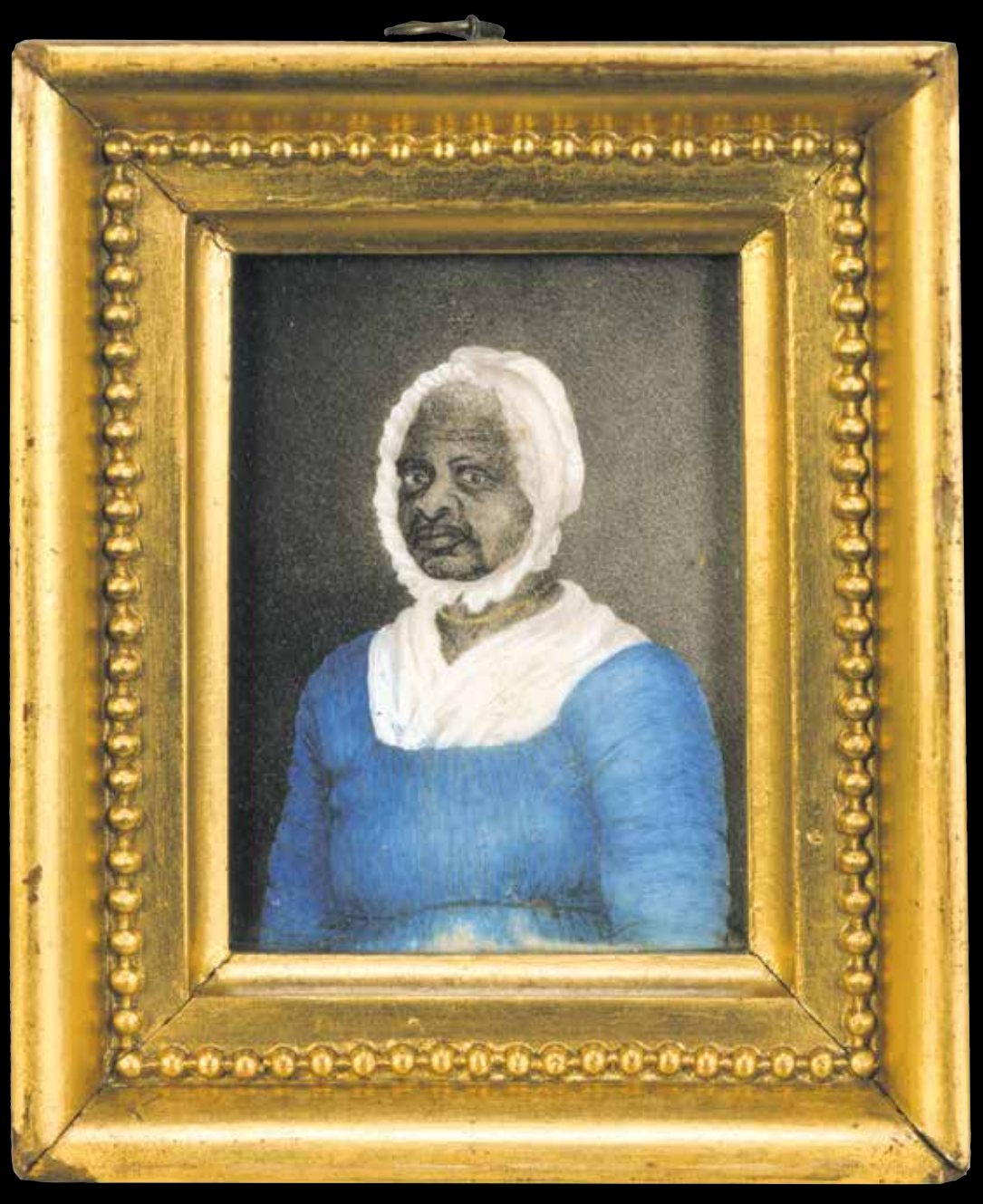
Sugar cane cutter, metal and wood, 19th century.

A Deadly Commodity

BEFORE COTTON dominated American agriculture, sugar drove the slave trade throughout the Caribbean and Spanish Americas. Sugar cane was a brutal crop that required constant work six days a week, and it maimed, burned and killed those involved in its cultivation. The life span of an enslaved person on a sugar plantation could be as little as seven years. Unfazed, plantation owners worked their enslaved laborers to death and prepared for this high "turnover" by ensuring that new enslaved people arrived on a regular basis to replace the dying. The British poet William Cowper captured this ethos when he wrote, "I pity them greatly, but I must be mum, for how could we do without sugar or rum?" The sweetening of coffee and tea took precedence over human life and set the tone for slavery in the Americas.

‘If one minute’s freedom had been offered to me, and I had been told I must die at the end of that minute, I would have taken it.’

— Mum Bett



From the Massachusetts Historical Society

No. 2 / The Limits of Freedom

1776 - 1808

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." So begins the Declaration of Independence, the document that eventually led to the creation of the United States. But the words point to the paradox the nation was built on: Even as the colonists fought for freedom from the British, they maintained slavery and avoided the issue in the Constitution. Enslaved people, however, seized any opportunity to secure their freedom. Some fought for it through military service in the Revolutionary War, whether serving for the British or the patriots. Others benefited from gradual emancipation enacted in states like Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey. In New York, for example, children born after July 4, 1799, were legally free when they turned 25, if they were women, or 28, if they were men — the law was meant to compensate slaveholders by keeping people enslaved during some of their most productive years.

Yet the demand for a growing enslaved population to cultivate cotton in the Deep South was unyielding. In 1808, Congress implemented the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves, which terminated the country's legal involvement in the international slave trade but put new emphasis on the domestic slave trade, which relied on buying and selling enslaved black people already in the country, often separating them from their loved ones. (In addition, the international trade continued illegally.) The ensuing forced migration of over a million African-Americans to the South guaranteed political power to the slaveholding class: The Three-Fifths Clause that the planter elite had secured in the Constitution held that three-fifths of the enslaved population was counted in determining a state's population and thus its congressional representation. The economic and political power grab reinforced the brutal system of slavery.

Bottom left: A miniature portrait of Mum Bett by Susan Anne Livingston Ridley Sedgwick, 1811.

She Sued For Her Freedom

IN THE WAKE of the Revolutionary War, African-Americans took their cause to statehouses and courthouses, where they vigorously fought for their freedom and the abolition of slavery. Elizabeth Freeman, better known as Mum Bett, an enslaved woman in Massachusetts whose husband died fighting during the Revolutionary War, was one such visionary. The new Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 stated that "All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential and unalienable rights; among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties." Arguing that slavery violated this sentiment, Bett sued for her freedom and won. After the ruling, Bett changed her name to Elizabeth Freeman to signify her new status. Her precedent-setting case helped to effectively bring an end to slavery in Massachusetts.

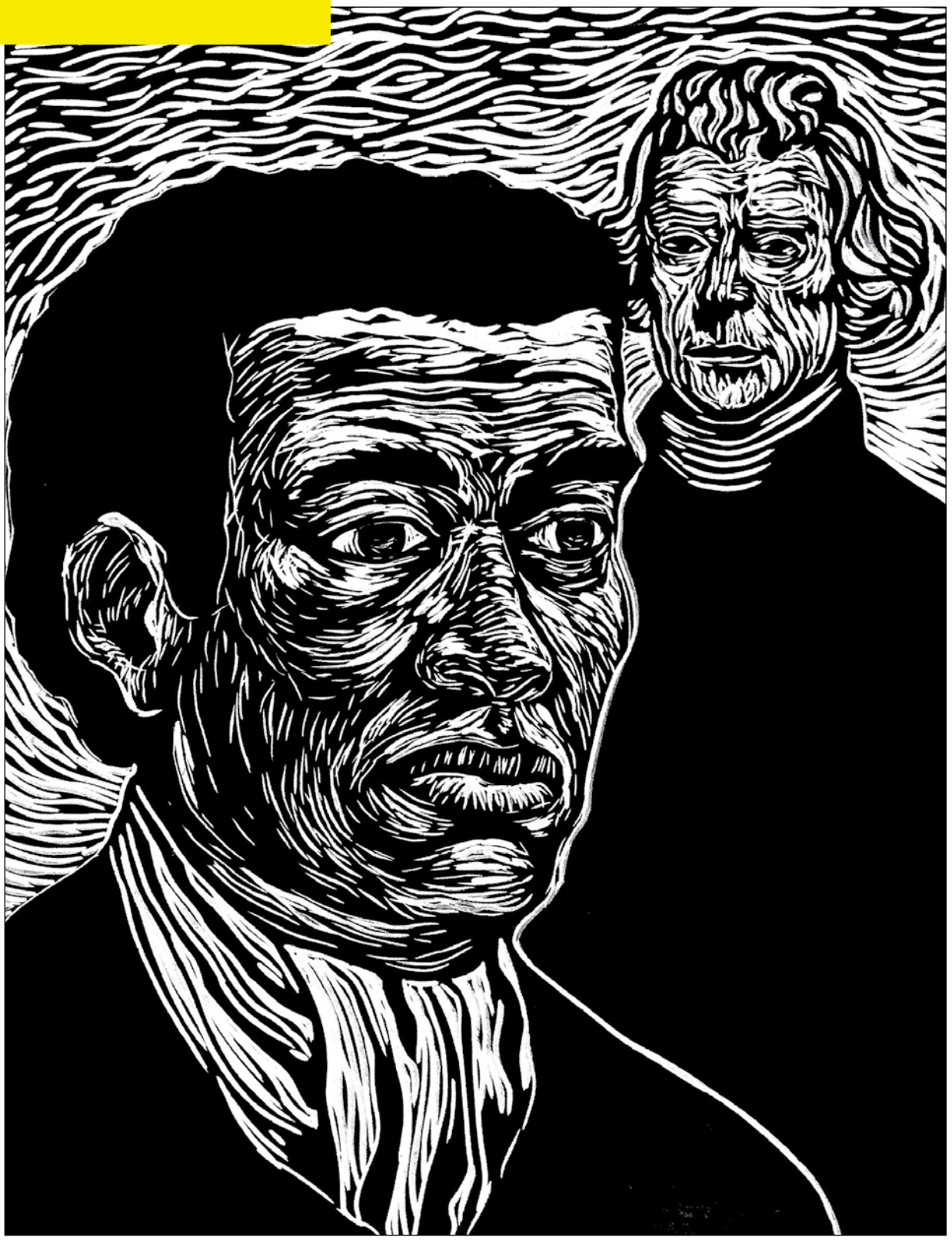
Describing The Depravity of Slavery

"BENEVOLENT men have voluntarily stepped forward to obviate the consequences of this injustice and barbarity," proclaimed the Rev. Peter Williams Jr. in a historic speech about the end of the nation's involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. "They have striven assiduously to restore our natural rights; to guaranty them from fresh innovations; to furnish us with necessary information; and to stop the source from whence our evils have flowed." A free black man who founded St. Philip's African Church in Manhattan, Williams spoke in front of a white and black audience on Jan. 1, 1808 — the day the United States ban on the international slave trade went into effect. The law, of course, did not end slavery, and it was often violated. Williams forced the audience to confront slavery's ugliness as he continued, "Its baneful footsteps are marked with blood; its infectious breath spreads war and desolation; and its train is composed of the complicated miseries of cruel and unceasing bondage." His oration further defined a black view of freedom that had been building since the foundation of the country, as when the formerly enslaved poet Phillis Wheatley noted in 1774, "for in every human Breast, God has implanted a Principle, which we call love of Freedom; it is impatient of Oppression, and pants for Deliverance."

1916 poster for the Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia, with its founder, Richard Allen, at center.

God Wouldn't Want Segregated Sanctuaries

BLACK PEOPLE, both free and enslaved, relied on their faith to hold onto their humanity under the most inhumane circumstances. In 1787, the Rev. Richard Allen and other black congregants walked out of services at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia to protest its segregated congregations. Allen, an abolitionist who was born enslaved, had moved to Philadelphia after purchasing his freedom. There he joined St. George's, where he initially preached to integrated congregations. It quickly became clear that integration went only so far: He was directed to preach a separate service designated for black parishioners. Dismayed that black people were still treated as inferiors in what was meant to be a holy space, Allen founded the African Methodist Episcopal denomination and started the Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church. For communities of free people of color, churches like Allen's were places not only of sanctuary but also of education, organizing and civic engagement, providing resources to navigate a racist society in a slave nation. Allen and his successors connected the community, pursued social justice and helped guide black congregants as they transitioned to freedom. The African Methodist Episcopal Church grew rapidly; today at least 7,000 A.M.E. congregations exist around the world, including Allen's original church.



Benjamin Banneker and Thomas Jefferson.

A Powerful Letter

AFTER THE Revolutionary War, Thomas Jefferson and other politicians — both slaveholding and not — wrote the documents that defined the new nation. In the initial draft of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson condemned King George III of Britain for engaging in the slave trade and ignoring pleas to end it, and for calling upon the enslaved to rise up and fight on behalf of the British against the colonists. This language was excised from the final document, however, and all references to slavery were removed, in stunning contrast to the document's opening statement on the equality of men. Jefferson was a lifelong enslaver. He inherited enslaved black people; he fathered enslaved black children; and he relied on enslaved black people for his livelihood and comfort. He openly speculated that black people were inferior to white people and continually advocated for their removal from the country. In 1791, Benjamin Banneker, a free black mathematician, scientist, astronomer and surveyor, argued against this mind-set when he wrote to President Jefferson, urging him to correct his "narrow prejudices" and to "eradicate that train of absurd and false ideas and opinions, which so generally prevails with respect to us." Banneker also condemned Jefferson's slaveholding in his letter and included a manuscript of his almanac, which would be printed the following year. Jefferson was unconvinced of the intelligence of African-Americans, and in his swift reply only noted that he welcomed "such proofs as you exhibit" of black people with "talents equal to those of the other colors of men."

Wood-engraving illustration of a cotton gin, Harper's Weekly, 1869.

The Destructive Impact of The Cotton Gin

THE NATIONAL dialogue surrounding slavery and freedom continued as the demand for enslaved laborers increased. In 1794, Eli Whitney patented the cotton gin, which made it possible to clean cotton faster and get products to the market more quickly. Cotton was king, as the saying went, and the country became a global economic force. But the land for cultivating it was eventually exhausted, and the nation would have to expand to keep up with consumer demand. In 1803, Thomas Jefferson struck a deal with Napoleon Bonaparte, the Louisiana Purchase: In exchange for $15 million, the United States gained almost 830,000 square miles of land, doubling the size of the country and expanding America's empire of slavery and cotton. Soon after this deal, the United States abolished the international slave trade, creating a labor shortage. Under these circumstances, the domestic slave trade increased as an estimated one million enslaved people were sent to the Deep South to work in cotton, sugar and rice fields.

Illustration by Jamaal Barber. A.M.E. poster: The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. Cotton gin: Library of Congress.

No. 3 / A Slave Nation Fights for Freedom

1809 - 1865

As demand for cotton grew and the nation expanded, slavery became more systemic, codified and regulated — as did the lives of all enslaved people. The sale of enslaved people and the products of their labor secured the nation's position as a global economic and political powerhouse, but they faced increasingly inhumane conditions. They were hired out to increase their worth, sold to pay off debts and bequeathed to the next generation. Slavery affected everyone, from textile workers, bankers and ship builders in the North; to the elite planter class, working-class slave catchers and slave dealers in the South; to the yeoman farmers and poor white people who could not compete against free labor. Additionally, in the 1830s, President Andrew Jackson implemented his plan for Indian removal, ripping another group of people from their ancestral lands in the name of wealth. As slavery spread across the country, opposition — both moral and economic — gained momentum. Interracial abolition efforts grew in force as enslaved people, free black people and some white citizens fought for the end of slavery and a more inclusive definition of freedom. The nation was in transition, and it came to a head after Abraham Lincoln was elected president; a month later, in December 1860, South Carolina seceded from the Union, citing "an increasing hostility on the part of the nonslaveholding states to the institution of slavery" as a cause. Five years later, the Civil War had ended, and 246 years after the "20 and odd Negroes" were sold in Virginia, the 13th Amendment ensured that the country would never again be defined as a slave nation.

By Black People, for Black People

ON MARCH 16, 1827, the same year that slavery was abolished in New York, Peter Williams Jr. co-founded Freedom's Journal, the first newspaper owned and operated by African-Americans. A weekly New York paper, it was edited by John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish, who wrote in their first editorial, "We wish to plead our own cause. Too long have others spoken for us. Too long has the publick been deceived by misrepresentations." Russwurm and Cornish wanted the paper to strengthen relations among newly freed black people living in the North and counter racist and hostile representations of African-Americans in other papers. At its peak, the paper circulated in 11 states and internationally. Although it folded in 1829, Freedom's Journal served as inspiration for other black newspapers, and by the start of the Civil War, there were at least two dozen black-owned papers in the country. The renowned abolitionist and scholar Frederick Douglass used his newspapers to call for and to secure social justice.

"Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and the hour. . . . Let your motto be resistance!"

— Henry Highland Garnet, 1843

Right: Daguerreotype of Rhoda Phillips, circa 1850.

A Woman Bequeathed

RHODA PHILLIPS'S name was officially written down for the first time in 1832, in the record of her sale. She was purchased when she was around 1 year old, along with her mother, Milley, and her sister Martha, for $550. The enslaver Thomas Gleaves eventually acquired Rhoda. He bequeathed her to his family in his will, where she is listed as valued at $200. She remained enslaved by them until the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Afterward, Rhoda is believed to have married a man and had eight children with him. When she died, the Gleaves family ran an obituary in The Nashville Banner that showed the family still could not see the inhumanity of slavery. "Aunt Rhody," the obituary said, "was raised by Mr. Gleaves and has lived with the family all her life. She was one of the old-time darkies that are responsible for the making of so many of their young masters." In this daguerreotype of Rhoda, she is about 19, and in contrast to the practice at the time, Rhoda appears alone in the frame. Typically, enslaved people were shown holding white children or in the background of a family photo, the emphasis placed on their servitude. Rhoda's story highlights one of the perversities of slavery: To the Gleaves, Rhoda was a family member even as they owned her.

Generations Of Enslavement

ON MARCH 7, 1854, Sally and her three daughters, Sylvia, Charlotte and Elizabeth, were sold for $1,200. Sally was able to remain with her children, at least for a short time, but most enslaved women had to endure their children being forcibly taken from them. Their ability to bear children — their "increase" — was one of the reasons they were so highly valued. Laws throughout the country ensured that a child born to an enslaved woman was also the property of the enslaver to do with as he saw fit, whether to make the child work or to sell the child for profit. Many enslaved women were also regularly raped, and there were no laws to protect them; white men could do what they wanted without reproach, including selling the offspring — their offspring — that resulted from these assaults. Many white women also served as enslavers; there was no alliance of sisterhood among slave mistresses and the black mothers and daughters they claimed as property.

Photograph by Erica Deeman for The New York Times. From the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Liberation Theology

IN 1831, Nat Turner, along with about 70 enslaved and free black people, led a revolt in Southampton County, Va., that shook the nation. Turner, a preacher who had frequent, powerful visions, planned his uprising for months, putting it into effect following a solar eclipse, which he interpreted as a sign from God. He and his recruits freed enslaved people and killed white men, women and children, sparing only a number of poor white people. They killed nearly 60 people over two days, before being overtaken by the state militia. Turner went into hiding, but he was found and hanged a few months later. It was one of the deadliest revolts during slavery, a powerful act of resistance that left enslavers scared — both for their lives and for the loss of their "property." The Virginia resident Eleanor Weaver reflected on the events, stating in a letter to family members: "We hope our government will take some steps to put down Negro preaching. It is those large assemblies of Negroes causes the mischief." More stringent laws went into effect that controlled the lives of black people, free or enslaved, limiting their ability to read, write or move about.

The Slave Patrols

IN 1846, Col. Henry W. Adams, of the 168th Regiment, Virginia Militia, started a slave patrol in Pittsylvania County, Va., that would "visit all Negro quarters and other places suspected of entertaining unlawful assemblies of slaves . . . as aforesaid, unlawfully assembled, orany others strolling from one plantation to another, without a pass from his or her master or mistress or overseer, and take them before the next justice of the peace, who if he shall see cause, is hereby required to order every such slave . . . aforesaid to receive any number of lashes, not exceeding 20 on his or her back." Slave patrols throughout the nation were created by white people who were fearful of rebellion and were seeking to protect their human property. While overseers were employed on plantation sites as a means of control, slave patrols — which patrolled plantations, streets, woods and public areas — were thought to serve the larger community. While slave patrols tried to enforce laws that limited the movement of the enslaved community, black people still found ways around them.

Growing National Tension

IN 1850, Congress passed a new Fugitive Slave Act, which required that all citizens aid in the capturing of fugitive enslaved black people. Lack of compliance was considered breaking the law. The previous act, from 1793, enabled enslavers to pursue runaway enslaved persons, but it was difficult to enforce. The 1850 act — which created a legal obligation for Americans, regardless of their moral views on slavery, to support and enforce the institution — divided the nation and undergirded the path to the Civil War. Black people could not testify on their own behalf, so if a white person incorrectly challenged the status of a free black person, the person was unable to act in his or her own defense and could be enslaved. In 1857, Dred Scott, who was enslaved, went to court to claim his freedom after his enslaver transported him into a free state and territory. The Supreme Court determined his fate when Chief Justice Roger B. Taney stated that no black person, free or enslaved, could petition the court because they were not "citizens within the meaning of the Constitution." By statute and interpretation of the law, black people in America were dehumanized and commodifiedin order to maintain the economic and political power supported by slavery.

Carte de visite silver gelatin portrait of Sgt. Jacob Johns.

Enlisting in a Moral Fight

IT IS UNCLEAR whether Jacob Johns was enslaved, recently freed or a free man when he enlisted in the Union Army as a sergeant in the 19th United States Colored Troops Infantry, Company B. His unit fought in 11 battles, and 293 of its men were killed or died of disease, including Johns. When the war began in 1861, enslaved African-Americans seized their opportunity for freedom by crossing the Union Army lines in droves. The Confederate states tried to reclaim their human "property" but were denied by the Union, which cleverly declared the formerly enslaved community as contraband of war — captured enemy property. President Abraham Lincoln initially would not let black men join the military, anxious about how the public would receive integrated efforts. But as casualties increased and manpower thinned, Congress passed the Second Confiscation and Militia Act in 1862, allowing Lincoln to "employ as many persons of African descent" as he needed, and thousands enlisted in the United States Colored Troops. Jacobs was one of nearly 180,000 black soldiers who served in the U.S.C.T. during the Civil War, a group that made up nearly one-tenth of all soldiers, fighting for the cause of freedom.

Joseph Trammell's freedom papers, 1852.

Always on Your Person

A FREE BLACK man living in Loudoun County, Va., Joseph Trammell created this small metal tin to protect his certificate of freedom — proof that he was not enslaved. During slavery, freedom was tenuous for free black people: It could be challenged at any moment by any white person, and without proof of their status they could be placed into the slave trade. Trammell, under Virginia law, had to register his freedom every few years with the county court. But even for free black people, laws were still in place that limited their liberty — in many areas in the North and the South, they could not own firearms, testify in court or read and write — and in the free state of Ohio, at least two race riots occurred before 1865.

One Family's Ledger

SLAVEHOLDING families kept meticulous records of their business transactions: buying, selling and trading people. A record of the Rouzee family's taxable property includes five horses, 497 acres of land and 28 enslaved people. Records show the family enterprise including the purchase and sale of African-Americans, investment in provisions to maintain the enslaved community and efforts to capture an enslaved man who ran toward freedom. From one century to the next, the family profited from enslaved people, their wealth passing from generation to generation. As enslaved families were torn apart, white people — from the elite planter class to individuals invested in one enslaved person — were building capital, a legacy that continues today.

The Emancipation Proclamation in pamphlet form, published by John Murray Forbes, 1862.

Freedom Begins

ON SEPT. 22, 1862, Abraham Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, stating that if the Confederacy did not end its rebellion by Jan. 1, 1863, "all persons held as slaves" in the states that had seceded would be free. The Confederacy did not comply, and the proclamation went into effect. But the Emancipation Proclamation freed only those enslaved in the rebelling states, approximately 3.5 million people. It did not apply to half a million enslaved people in slaveholding states that weren't part of the Confederacy — Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Delaware and what would become West Virginia — or to those people in parts of the Confederacy that were already under Northern control. They remained enslaved until Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox in April 1865. The freedom promised by the proclamation — and the official legal end of slavery — did not occur until the ratification of the 13th Amendment on Dec. 6, 1865. Only then was the tyranny of slavery truly over. Nevertheless, the Emancipation Proclamation was deeply meaningful to the community of formerly enslaved African-Americans and their allies. Annual emancipation celebrations were established, including Juneteenth; across the country, African-American gathering spots were named Emancipation Park; and the words of the proclamation were read aloud as a reminder that African-Americans, enslaved and free, collectively fought for freedom for all and changed an entire nation.

Photograph by Erica Deeman for The New York Times. Objects from the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

‘I shall never forget that memorable night, when in a distant city I waited and watched at a public meeting, with 3,000 others not less anxious than myself, for the word of deliverance which we have heard read today. Nor shall I ever forget the outburst of joy and thanksgiving that rent the air when the lightning brought to us the Emancipation Proclamation.’ — Frederick Douglass

‘The story of the African-American is not only the quintessential American story but it’s really the story that continues to shape who we are today.’ – Lonnie G. Bunch III, *secretary of the Smithsonian Institution*

National

WHY YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

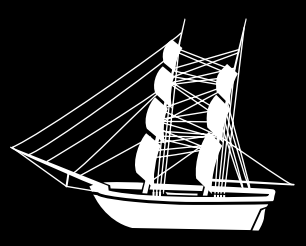
THE YEAR 1619

THIS YEAR marks the 400th anniversary of when the first enslaved Africans were brought to what is now the state of Virginia. Most of us are familiar with how slavery worked in this country. We learn that enslaved men, women and children were kidnapped from their homes in Africa, locked into heavy iron chains and crammed onto ships for a dangerous journey. They had no idea where they were going and often died on the way — from heat, starvation, thirst and violence. They were brought to the colonies and were sold and forced to work on the land and in the homes of white people for the rest of their lives, though resistance and rebellion were common. And they eventually fought for and won their freedom — sacrificing their lives to escape bondage. But this is only part of the story.

There is virtually no part of modern life in this country that has not been affected by slavery — from our legal system to the schools we attend. "The story of 1619 is not a black story, and it's not a white story; it's truly an American story, says Nikole Hannah-Jones, a staff writer for The New York Times Magazine. She proposed that the magazine devote an entire issue to tracing how slavery affects different parts of life in America. Last Sunday, Aug. 18, that special issue and a special broadsheet section appeared in the paper. On this page, The New York Times for Kids joins the effort to acknowledge the importance of the year 1619 in United States history, to explain how slavery has shaped our country and to examine how we talk about slavery today. *Lovia Gyarkye*

SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES THROUGH TIME

1619
THE YEAR THE FIRST **SLAVE SHIP ARRIVED** IN POINT COMFORT, CARRYING MORE THAN 20 ENSLAVED AFRICANS.



5,000
THE ESTIMATED **DISTANCE,** IN MILES, OF **THE MIDDLE PASSAGE,** WHICH DESCRIBES THE SLAVE TRADE ROUTE FROM THE COAST OF AFRICA TO ONE OF THE COLONIES IN THE AMERICAS OR THE CARIBBEAN.

12.5
THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT, IN MILLIONS, **FORCIBLY TRANSPORTED** FROM THEIR HOMELANDS TO **PLANTATIONS** ACROSS THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN FROM THE 16TH CENTURY TO THE 19TH CENTURY.

45
THE ROUGH PERCENTAGE OF THE 55 AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARIES WHO MET IN 1781 TO FINALIZE THE CONSTITUTION WHO ALSO OWNED ENSLAVED PEOPLE.

1781
THE YEAR ELIZABETH FREEMAN, AN ENSLAVED WOMAN IN MASSACHUSETTS BETTER KNOWN AS **MUM BETT,** SUED FOR HER FREEDOM AND WON. IN COURT, SHE ARGUED THAT SLAVERY VIOLATED THE NEW MASSACHUSETTS CONSTITUTION OF 1780, WHICH SAID THAT ALL MEN ARE **BORN FREE AND EQUAL.**

1793
THE YEAR CONGRESS PASSED THE FIRST **FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT,** WHICH MADE IT A CRIME TO HELP AN ENSLAVED PERSON WHO HAD ESCAPED.

68
THE NUMBER OF DAYS FOR WHICH **NAT TURNER** AVOIDED CAPTURE BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES. HE LED ONE OF **THE MOST FAMOUS REBELLIONS** AGAINST SLAVERY, WITH MORE THAN 50 ARMED BLACK MEN, IN 1831 IN VIRGINIA. AFTER HE WAS CAUGHT, HE WAS HANGED.

1836
THE YEAR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ADOPTED A **"GAG RULE"** ON SLAVERY, REFUSING TO DISCUSS GETTING RID OF SLAVERY OR THE RIGHTS OF ENSLAVED PEOPLE.

3
THE ESTIMATED VALUE, IN BILLIONS OF DOLLARS, OF THE 4 MILLION ENSLAVED PERSONS LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1860.

180,000
THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF BLACK **SOLDIERS** WHO SERVED IN THE **UNION ARMY** DURING THE CIVIL WAR, **WHICH STARTED IN 1861** BECAUSE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN STATES COULD NOT AGREE ABOUT ENDING SLAVERY. THE WAR WOULD NOT END **UNTIL 1865.**

$2,500
THE PRICE THAT **TWO 18-YEAR-OLD GIRLS** EACH SOLD FOR IN SAVANNAH, GA., IN 1863.

13
THE **AMENDMENT** THAT **ABOLISHED SLAVERY** IN THE UNITED STATES. IT WAS PASSED BY CONGRESS IN **1865,** TWO YEARS AFTER ABRAHAM LINCOLN ISSUED THE **EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION** — WHICH **DID NOT FREE** ALL ENSLAVED PEOPLE.

12
THE AGE OF **THE GIRL REDOSHI** WHEN SHE WAS BROUGHT TO THE UNITED STATES. SHE IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN **THE LAST SURVIVOR** OF THE SLAVE TRADE. SHE DIED IN 1937.

98
THE PERCENTAGE OF BLACK CHILDREN IN THE SOUTH WHO STILL ATTENDED **SEGREGATED SCHOOLS** IN 1964. THIS WAS 10 YEARS AFTER THE SUPREME COURT UNANIMOUSLY RULED IN THE CASE KNOWN AS **BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION** THAT RACIAL SEGREGATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS **VIOLATED THE CONSTITUTION.**

2013
THE YEAR **MISSISSIPPI** OFFICIALLY **ABOLISHED SLAVERY** BY RATIFYING THE 13TH AMENDMENT.

4 MYTHS ABOUT SLAVERY

BY ERICA L. GREEN

EVEN THOUGH it has been more than 150 years since slavery ended in the United States, we Americans have a difficult time discussing the pain and shame of slavery. In few places is this more true than in the nation s classrooms. Depending on where you live, what textbooks your school districts buy and what lesson plans your teachers use, you might graduate from school with an understanding of this part of American history that is vastly different from someone else s — and vastly different from what actually happened. Historians and researchers who study how slavery is taught in school have found that important facts and context are often ignored, downplayed or misrepresented to perpetuate more comforting myths about slavery. "We don't want to inflict shame upon black children, and we don't want to shame white children, says Hasan Kwame Jeffries, a history professor at Ohio State University. "So, what we have been teaching is a very sanitized version of what slavery was." Here are four common myths and misunderstandings about slavery that are taught in schools throughout the United States.

1

STATES' RIGHTS LED TO THE CIVIL WAR. Many states in the South have had school curriculums that emphasize "states' rights" (the right of states to follow their own rules rather than those of the federal government) as the main cause of the Civil War. But the right that the South fought to protect — to declare that black people were legally property — is rarely clearly identified as the chief cause of the conflict.
THE REALITY: Southern states sought to leave the United States to preserve slavery, which they saw as vital to their economy.

2

ENSLAVED PEOPLE WERE 'WORKERS.' One of the largest textbook publishers in the country was criticized in recent years for a passage in one of its old "World Geography" textbooks. It said the African slave trade brought millions of "workers from Africa to the Southern United States to work on agricultural plantations.
THE REALITY: Enslaved people were not "workers, which implies paid, voluntary labor. Enslaved people were forced to work without pay, considered property by law.

3

SLAVERY ONLY EXISTED IN THE SOUTH. When schools teach the history of slavery, they often focus on the Civil War, which can lead to the misunderstanding that slavery only existed in Southern states.
THE REALITY: Slavery existed in every colony, although Northern states abolished slavery by the early 1800s, before the Civil War began. Slavery was not abolished in New York until 1827.

4

SLAVERY WASN'T THAT BAD. Until last year, some students at a school in Texas used a textbook that stated some enslaved people weren't "terribly unhappy" with their conditions, because some had "kind and generous owners who didn't beat or kill them.
THE REALITY: Slavery was a violent, painful way of life, whose very basis was racism and oppression through mental and physical brutality. Enslaved people suffered a variety of abuses, from savage beatings to the threat of being sold or separated from their families. Leaving the violence and degradation out of school lessons partly shields kids' innocence, but it also preserves the legacies of our celebrated heroes who were enslavers. For example, some textbooks depict George Washington as a "kind and generous" owner because he eventually freed his enslaved people, but that didn't happen until after he and his wife died. And even enslaved people who worked on President Washington s plantation, Mount Vernon — including his personal assistant — tried to escape. ◆

HOW I BECAME A

HISTORIAN

BY ANNETTE GORDON REED

WHEN I WAS a little girl, there was a court decision in 1954 that mandated that schools be integrated — that there couldn't be separate white schools and black schools. My school in Conroe, Tex., had been avoiding acting on the decision for more than a decade. My parents sent me to first grade at the white school. I was there for a year by myself, until there was a court ruling, and then everyone was mixed together. Lawyers as heroic figures were in the back of my mind all that time.

When I went to college, I majored in history. I was thinking I would become a lawyer and write on the side. After I went to Harvard Law School, I worked for a big law firm, and then for the Board of Correction in New York, which oversees Rikers Island jails. Then my urge to write seriously came back. So I decided to become a professor, first at New York Law School, then teaching history at Rutgers-Newark.

Then I wrote a book, and it changed my life. When I was in third grade, I read a child's biography of President Thomas Jefferson, told through the eyes of a fictionalized enslaved boy. He was depicted as lazy and trifling, while Jefferson was intelligent. I remember wondering why you had to tell the story this way. As an adult, I wrote my first book about how historians had weighed the evidence that Jefferson had had children with Sally Hemings, an enslaved woman on one of his plantations. (Enslaved people had no legal right to refuse relationships with their enslavers.) I read what Hemings s son Madison Hemings said about being Jefferson s son, and another enslaved person s account that confirmed it. I checked timelines. I read the private diary of a friend of Jefferson s. I came to the conclusion that the story about them was most likely true. A year after my book was published, DNA evidence corroborated what I found.

Now my day job is as a professor of law and history at Harvard University. In any given semester, I might teach criminal procedure — when police can stop you in a car, or come and search your house — or a history class about law and politics in the 1790s. In my spare time, I write. Right now, I'm doing a second volume of the Hemings family story. I feel like a kid who grew up in Little League and made it to the Yankees. *As told to Elise Craig*

Spot Illustrations: Natasha Tibbott. Gordon-Reed: Illustration by Kyle Hilton; source photo: Stephanie Mitchell.

Activities to Extend Student Engagement

August 13, 2019 | All Grades
By Pulitzer Center Education

Students at Washington Global Public Charter School. Image by Eslah Attar. United States, 2017.

Lesson Outline

Activities Index:

The 1619 Project is more than a magazine issue. It's a national conversation that demands analysis, reflection, and insight from students. The following standards-aligned activities draw from concepts in the essays, creative texts, photographs, and illustrations to engage students in creative and challenging ways. For the full text of *The 1619 Project* as well as reading guides for the essays and creative works, visit our this resource.

1. Alternate Timelines: Reevaluating U.S. History

In his Editor's Note, Jake Silverstein writes, "The goal of *The 1619 Project*, a major initiative from *The New York Times* that this issue of the magazine inaugurates, is to reframe U.S. history by considering what it would mean to regard 1619 as our nation's birth year. Doing so requires us to place the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are as a country."

Step 1. Individually or in pairs, select one article from *The 1619 Project* that interests you. Make sure that you and your classmates are all exploring different texts. While you read the article, write down any important historical events it mentions and their dates.

Step 2. Choose three important events from the list you made while reading. On a single sheet of paper, compile the following for each event:

- The date
- A concise statement of the event (i.e. "The 13th Amendment was signed into law.")
- 1–3 quotes from the article you read that explain the event's importance
- A photograph that visualizes the event or its impact

Step 3. Come together as a class to create a new timeline of U.S. history. Your timeline should start with the year 1619; work with your classmates to order the rest of the events you compiled. Display your timeline along the wall and read your classmates' additions.

Step 4. Discuss and share. First, discuss the following with your class:

- How does *The 1619 Project* contribute to and change the history you have been taught?
- What new information did you learn from your reading and your class timeline?
- What surprised you?

Finally, display your timeline in a public place at your school. If possible, organize a school-wide event to discuss these questions together.

2. Constructing Your Family History: Oral or Imagined History

In Nikole Hannah-Jones' "The Idea of America," she describes having to point out the flag of the country of her ancestors during an in-class assignment. She writes, "Slavery had erased any connection we had to an African country, and even if we tried to claim the whole continent, there was no 'African' flag."

Many black Americans face obstacles in tracing genealogy because of the violent uprooting and dehumanizing record-keeping associated with slavery. *The 1619 Project* traces how our national history was formed, but what about your personal history? How might you trace—and in some cases, imagine—your family history?

Option 1: Oral History

Begin your investigation through oral history: Talk to family members, such as parents, grandparents, and cousins, to find out as much as you can about your family history, going back as many generations as possible. Create a visual presentation to share this with your class, answering the following questions to the fullest extent possible:

- What is your family's history of movement and migration? What other countries, cities, and towns did your ancestors live in?
- Who were important members of your family in past generations?

After comparing your classmates' presentations, discuss: How might the process of constructing your family history be different from that of your classmates, and why?

Option 2: Imagined Ancestry

An ancestor can be a person from whom you biologically descend, but they can also be a person "from whom mental, artistic, spiritual, etc., descent is claimed." From whom do you claim descent? Create a family tree poster, but instead of populating it with your blood relatives, populate it with your inspirations. Who are your intellectual, artistic, or spiritual parents, siblings, cousins, grandparents? Be creative; include at least 10 people in your imagined family tree, and explain why you are claiming them.

3. Create a Quote Museum: Critical Reading and Visual Art

The 1619 Project uses a mix of historical research, personal reflection, analysis, and creative writing to challenge dominant narratives about U.S. history. This activity asks students to read selections from the issue critically and highlight ideas they want to share with their community, then present those ideas in creative ways.

Step 1. Choose one article and one creative piece (poem or story). Click here for an index of options. While you read, identify quotes from both pieces that challenge and/or inspire you; write these down.

Step 2. Select quotes that you want to display for your class and/or school. Consider how you want to present them visually; you can design a typeface, create visual art that interprets the quote, or choose a photograph that illustrates what you want readers to consider when they see the quote.

Step 3. Post your creatively presented quotes alongside those of your classmates in a public place in your school or community to create a curated gallery that offers others a glimpse into *The 1619 Project*.

4. Infographic Design: Visualizing Contemporary Linkages to Slavery

The 1619 Project challenges readers to identify connections between modern day society and the mechanisms that supported and maintained slavery in the U.S. Many of the authors support their claims with data, including statistics and demographics. How could you visualize this information to make it easy for audiences to understand and share widely?

Create an infographic that visualizes racial inequity in the U.S. and its links to slavery. In addition to data, you can include quotes from the reporting, photography, and/or graphics. Click here for examples of infographics designed to engage students in different literary concepts. Need help finding an essay to explore? Select one from the following list:

- "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones (pages 14–26)
- "Traffic" by Kevin M. Kruse (pages 48–49)
- Sidebars by Mehrsa Baradaran in "Capitalism" by Matthew Desmond (pages 35–36)
- "Mass Incarceration" by Bryan Stevenson (pages 80–81)
- "Sugar" by Khalil Gibran Muhammad (pages 70–77)

5. Mapping Your Community's Connections to Slavery

Step 1. For context on how U.S. geography was shaped by the institution of slavery, read "Chained Migration: How Slavery Made Its Way West" by Tiya Miles (page 22) and/or "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones (pages 14–26).

Step 2. Research your own state or community in order to answer the following questions:

- To whom did your state or community's land belong before it was colonized by the U.S., or what would become the U.S.?
- Why did the U.S. want to own this land?
- What industries were developed on this land after the U.S. acquired it? Whose labor fueled those industries?
- How is your community shaped by the institution of slavery today?

Step 3. Choose a creative format in which to present your research findings. You might **develop a presentation** including discussion questions and deliver it to your class or school; **write an essay** modeled on the essay(s) you read in step 1; **create a poster** incorporating primary source documents to show your research; or **conduct a photography/visual art project** in which you show your community's historical and present-day connections to slavery.

6. Analyze, Connect, Write: Bringing *The 1619 Project* Home

These writing activities ask students to analyze an article in *The 1619 Project*, extrapolate a theme from that article, and apply it to a deeper dive into racial justice in their own communities.

Suggested articles for these activities:

- "A Broken Health Care System" by Jeneen Interlandi (pages 44–45)
- "Traffic" by Kevin M. Kruse (pages 48–49)
- "Mass Incarceration" by Bryan Stevenson (pages 80–81)
- "The Wealth Gap" by Trymaine Lee (pages 82–83)
- "Sugar" by Khalil Gibran Muhammad (pages 70–77)
- "Medical Inequality" by Linda Villarosa (page 56–57)

Option 1: Write a News Pitch

In *The 1619 Project*, contributors analyze how contemporary social, political, and economic structures have been influenced by slavery, sometimes in unintuitive ways. Select an article from the issue about a topic that interests you (see suggestions above). Read the article, then develop a pitch for a news story about how this topic intersects with race in your community.

Your pitch must include: a statement of your topic; 1–3 quotes from a story in *The 1619 Project* highlighting how racist policies and racial inequities connect to this topic on a national scale; an explanation of how these racial inequities connect to this topic in your own community; 5–7 people you will interview for your story; the media you will use to present the story (photo, video, text, etc.); and an argument for why this story needs to be published.

Option 2: Write and Op-ed

In *The 1619 Project*, contributors analyze how contemporary social, political, and economic structures have been influenced by slavery, sometimes in unintuitive ways. Select an article from the issue about a topic that interests you (some suggestions follow). Read the article, then write an op-ed that answers the following questions:

- How can you see the racial inequity described in the article you read in your own community?
- What do you think should be done to address this inequity?

7. Reframing History Through Creative Writing

Step 1. Read "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones and consider this statement from the essay: "Black Americans have been, and continue to be, foundational to the idea of American freedom. More than any other group in this country's history, we have served, generation after generation, in an overlooked but vital role: It is we who have been the perfecters of this democracy."

How does Hannah-Jones explore this theme throughout her essay? What key figures do she, and other contributors to *The 1619 Project*, identify as "perfecting" U.S. democracy? Create a list of these figures, then consider: Who else should be added to this list of key figures in U.S. history?

Step 2. Examine the creative works in *The 1619 Project*. Each poem and short story is a creative interpretation of a historical figure or event that either doesn't get the attention it deserves, or is often misinterpreted. After reading through these creative works, discuss: Which poems and stories stood out to you, and why? What new information did you learn by reading these works? How is it different to write about history in a poem or short story as opposed to in an article? Why do you think the authors chose to use creative writing to approach their topics?

Step 3. Use your own creative writing to reshape history. Using the creative works from *The 1619 Project* as models, write a poem or short story that highlights the story of one figure from the list you created in step 1.

8. Highlighting Black American Innovators: Research, Visuals, and Presentations

“Pecan Pioneer” by Tiya Miles (page 76), “Popular American Music” by Wesley Morris (pages 60–67), and several other articles in *The 1619 Project* emphasize invaluable contributions by black Americans to U.S. society. After reading these pieces, consider: Which innovations were new to you? What other contributions by black Americans should be taught in schools?

Conduct a research project that investigates an innovation by a black American. You could research innovators in music, science, technology, or any other arena. Select a person who contributed to a field you are passionate about! Create a visual that presents what you learned, and then work with your class to create a public presentation about black American innovators throughout history.

9. Erasure Poetry: Highlighting Inequities, Envisioning Liberation

As part of the creative works in *The 1619 Project*, poet Reginald Dwayne Betts created an erasure of the first Fugitive Slave Act, signed into law by George Washington in 1793. Erasure poems can be a way of reclaiming and reshaping historical documents; they can lay bare the real purpose of the document or transform it into something wholly new. How will you highlight inequity—or envision liberation—through your erasure poem?

Step 1. Choose a historical document that interests you. Read the document itself, and read the corresponding article in *The 1619 Project* to get more context. Here are some suggestions:

- Declaration of Independence / “The Idea of America” by Nikole Hannah-Jones (pages 14–26)
- 13th Amendment / “Mass Incarceration” by Bryan Stevenson (pages 80–81)
- Affordable Care Act / “A Broken Health Care System” by Jeneen Interlandi (pages 44–45)
- GI Bill / “The Wealth Gap” by Trymaine Lee (pages 82–83)
- “Who Are Our National Poets?”, a racist music review written by J.K. Kennard in 1845 / “American Popular Music” by Wesley Morris (pages 60–67)

Step 2. Create an erasure of your chosen document. Show analysis through your erasure. What is your perspective on this document and its connections to slavery?

August 18, 2019

● Feb. 12, 1793: George Washington signs into law the first Fugitive Slave Act, which requires United States citizens to return runaway enslaved people to the state from which they came.

Fugitive Slave Act of 1793

fugitives persons escaping

Approved [signed into law by President George Washington], February 12, 1793.

By Reginald Dwayne Betts

Erasure poem by Reginald Dwayne Betts in *The 1619 Project*, page 43.

10. Questioning History: What Do You Know About Slavery, and Why?

In "Why Can't We Teach This?", Nikita Stewart writes, "[T]he United States still struggles to teach children about slavery. Unlike math and reading, states are not required to meet academic content standards for teaching social studies and United States history. That means that there is no consensus on the curriculum around slavery, no uniform recommendation to explain an institution that was debated in the crafting of the Constitution and that has influenced nearly every aspect of American society since."

What do you know about slavery, and where does that information come from? Choose an educational resource to explore, such as a textbook, an assigned film, your school library, or a local museum. While you explore your chosen resource, use the following table to analyze it.

Questioning History.pdf

Did you encounter historical inaccuracies, antiquated language, glaring omissions, or other instances of "educational malpractice" (Jeffries qtd. in Stewart 3) in the resource(s) you explored? Pulitzer Center and The New York Times want to know, and might even publish

your examples! Send the relevant passage/photo/video/etc., along with the title of the resource and your name, to education@pulitzercenter.org.

Looking for other activities that you can use to engage your students? Or would you like to share an activity you created with other educators who are using The 1619 Project in their classes? Visit our call for contributors to share you *1619* curricula and explore lessons by other educators.

Educator Notes:

Common Core Standards

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2
Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3
Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8
Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9
Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Comprehension and Collaboration:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Lesson Plan: Exploring "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones

August 13, 2019 | All Grades

By Pulitzer Center Education

Lesson Outline

Warm-up: Reevaluating the Declaration of Independence.

Introductory Reading and Discussion: Exploring an excerpt from Nikole Hannah-Jones' "The Idea of America" and discussing the themes of *The 1619 Project*.

In-depth Reading and Discussion: Reading Hannah-Jones' full essay (lesson includes graphic organizers) and discussing its content and structure.

Further Exploration: Continuing your exploration of *The 1619 Project*:

- Index and Guiding Questions
- Activities to Extend Engagement with *The 1619 Project*
- Call for Contributions: Share Your *1619* Curricula

Lesson Overview:

"The truth is that as much democracy as this nation has today, it has been born on the backs of black resistance...Black people have seen the worst of America, yet, somehow, we still believe in its best." —Nikole Hannah-Jones

The 1619 Project, inaugurated with a special issue of *The New York Times Magazine*, challenges us to reframe U.S. history by marking the year when the first enslaved Africans arrived on Virginia soil as its foundational date.

Award-winning investigative journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones provides an expansive essay on why "black Americans, as much as those men cast in alabaster in the nation's capital, are this nation's true 'founding fathers.'" Her essay chronicles a history of policies enacted to profit from and disenfranchise black Americans, and the fight not only to claim black liberation, but also to make liberation possible for all Americans.

This lesson plan is designed to introduce Hannah-Jones' essay, and The 1619 Project as a whole, through discussion questions and guided reading. For extension activities and to delve into the other essays and creative works that compose this special issue, please visit:

- Reading guides and the full *New York Times Magazine* issue text
- Activities to extend student engagement with *The 1619 Project*

Warm-up:

1. The signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 is often presented as the foundational event of U.S. history. Referring to the text of the Declaration of Independence, answer the following questions as a class:

- What are the values stated in the Declaration of Independence?
- In what ways can you see those values working in contemporary U.S. society? In what ways can you see them failing?
- How has the interpretation of those values changed over time? Who is responsible for creating those changes?

Introductory Reading and Discussion:

1. Read this excerpt from Nikole Hannah-Jones' essay to identify her central thesis.

Excerpt from "The Idea of America"

2. As a class, identify Hannah-Jones' central thesis. Then, discuss the reading using one or both of the following sets of questions.

Connecting to Content:

- What do you know about slavery, and where does that information come from?
- What do you know about the contributions of black Americans to U.S. society, and where does that information come from?

- What are the ramifications of slavery in contemporary U.S. life?
- How does the story of the U.S. change if we mark the beginning of U.S. history in 1619 instead of 1776?
- What is national memory? How do we create it? How can we change it?

Connecting to Structure:

- Why do you think Nikole Hannah-Jones and other contributors to this issue chose to publish this work in *The New York Times Magazine*, a national news publication?
- What is journalism's role in shaping national memory?
- Skim over the issue's table of contents (full issue text available here). You will notice that there are analytical essays, poems, fiction, art, photography, and more included in the same issue. How can each of these forms contribute to the conversation on the legacy of slavery in the U.S.? What is the effect of having all of these forms combined in one magazine?

In-depth Reading and Discussion:

Read Nikole Hannah-Jones' essay in full. **While you read,** consider this claim in her essay: "[T]he year 1619 is as foundational to the American story as 1776...black Americans, as much as those men cast in alabaster in the nation's capital, are this nation's true 'founding fathers.'"

Use one of the following graphic organizers to guide your reading:

- Graphic organizer tracking evidence Hannah-Jones' provides for her central thesis
- Graphic organizer tracking new information learned and personal responses to the essay

After you read, discuss the following questions as a class:

1. What examples of hypocrisy in the founding of the U.S. does Hannah-Jones supply? What evidence can you see for how "some might argue that this nation was founded not as a democracy but as a slavocracy"?
2. Why do you think Hannah-Jones consistently refers to what are commonly known as "plantations," such as Monticello, by the term "forced-labor camps" instead? Does any other language she uses to describe places, people, or events surprise or stand out to you?
3. What picture does Hannah-Jones paint of major figures in classical U.S. history, such as Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln? Did you learn new information about them from her essay? If so, why do you think this information wasn't included in other resources from which you have learned about U.S. history?
4. What are some examples of progress pushed forward by black Americans during Reconstruction that Hannah-Jones discusses? How have these efforts benefited all Americans?
5. The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were all signed into law during Reconstruction. What examples of persisting racial inequalities in the years following Reconstruction does Hannah-Jones mention? What institutions and ideologies made this possible?
6. How does Hannah-Jones expand on this quote from sociologist Glenn Bracey: ''Out of the ashes of white denigration, we gave birth to ourselves"?
7. Consider the following quote from "The Idea of America":

"Out of our unique isolation, both from our native cultures and from white America, we forged this nation's most significant original culture. In turn, 'mainstream' society has coveted our style, our slang and our song, seeking to appropriate the one truly American culture as its own."

Why do you think Hannah-Jones places the word "mainstream" in quotation marks?

8. "The Idea of America" is bookended by personal stories; it begins with Hannah-Jones' memory of her father's attachment to the American flag, and ends with a story about a middle school class assignment. Why do you think the author includes personal anecdotes in her essay? Why do you think she writes in first-person throughout? What effect do these choices have on how you experience the essay?
9. Hannah-Jones writes, "How could this black man [Hannah-Jones' father], having seen firsthand the way his country abused black Americans, how it refused to treat us as full citizens, proudly fly its banner?" What answers does her essay provide?
10. Consider the title of this essay: "The Idea of America." What other possible titles can you imagine for this essay? Why do you think Hannah-Jones ultimately chose this title?

Further Exploration:

Continue to explore *The 1619 Project*:

- Reading Guide: Quotes, Key Terms, and Questions
- Activities to Extend Engagement with *The 1619 Project*
- Call for Contributions: Share Your 1619 Curricula

Educator Notes:

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.9
Analyze seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (including The Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address) for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.2
Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Terms and Historical Events Cited in *The 1619 Project* Essays

Below is a partial listing of historical events and terms referenced in the issue. While many essays refer to terms and historical events that can be understood using context clues within the stories, some terms should be previewed with students prior to reading. Click here to access "*The 1619 Project* Reading Guide (Essays)," which includes page numbers, excerpts, and guiding questions for the 18 essays included in the project.

Affirmative Action
- "Undemocratic Democracy" by Jamelle Bouie

The Affordable Care Act
- "Undemocratic Democracy" by Jamelle Bouie
- "A Broken Health Care System" by Jeneen Interlandi

Capitalism
- "Fabric of Modernity" by Mehrsa Baradaran
- "Capitalism" by Matthew Desmond
- "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones
- "Traffic" by Kevin M. Kruse
- "Municipal Bonds" by Tiya Miles

The Civil Rights Act of 1964
- "Undemocratic Democracy" by Jamelle Bouie
- "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones
- "A Broken Health Care System" by Jeneen Interlandi

Cotton Farming
- "Fabric of Modernity" by Mehrsa Baradaran
- "Undemocratic Democracy" by Jamelle Bouie
- "Capitalism" by Matthew Desmond
- "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones
- "The Wealth Gap" by Trymaine Lee
- "Chained Migration" by Tiya Miles
- "Municipal Bonds" by Tiya Miles
- "Sugar" by Khalil Gibran Muhammad
- "Punitive Criminal Justice" by Bryan Stevenson

The Declaration of Independence
- "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones

Fiat Currency
- "Good as Gold" by Mehrsa Baradaran

The Freedmen's Bureau
- "A Broken Health Care System" by Jeneen Interlandi
- "The Wealth Gap" by Trymaine Lee

The GI Bill
- "A Broken Health Care System" by Jeneen Interlandi
- "The Wealth Gap" by Trymaine Lee

The Great Depression
- "Good as Gold" by Mehrsa Baradaran
- "Capitalism" by Matthew Desmond

The Great Recession
- "Undemocratic Democracy" by Jamelle Bouie
- "Capitalism" by Matthew Desmond

Hurricane Katrina
- "Sugar" by Khalil Gibran Muhammad

The Industrial Revolution
- "Capitalism" by Matthew Desmond

Jim Crow Laws
- "Undemocratic Democracy" by Jamelle Bouie
- "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones
- "A Broken Health Care System" by Jeneen Interlandi
- "The Wealth Gap" by Trymaine Lee
- "American Popular Music" by Wesley Morris
- "Why Can't We Teach This?" by Nikita Stewart

The Louisiana Purchase
- "Capitalism" by Matthew Desmond

Lynching
- "Undemocratic Democracy" by Jamelle Bouie
- "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones
- "Punitive Criminal Justice" by Bryan Stevenson

The Mexican-American War
- "Chained Migration" by Tiya Miles

Minstrelsy
- "American Popular Music" by Wesley Morris

The New Deal
- "Undemocratic Democracy" by Jamelle Bouie
- "A Broken Health Care System" by Jeneen Interlandi
- "Traffic" by Kevin M. Kruse
- "The Wealth Gap" by Trymaine Lee
- "Sugar" by Khalil Gibran Muhammad

Reconstruction
- "Capitalism" by Matthew Desmond
- "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones
- "The Wealth Gap" by Trymaine Lee
- "Punitive Criminal Justice" by Bryan Stevenson

Redlining
- "Traffic" by Kevin M. Kruse
- "The Wealth Gap" by Trymaine Lee
- "Sugar" by Khalil Gibran Muhammad

Reparations
- "The Wealth Gap" by Trymaine Lee
- "Sugar" by Khalil Gibran Muhammad

The Revolutionary War
- "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones

Segregation
- "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones
- "A Broken Health Care System" by Jeneen Interlandi
- "Traffic" by Kevin M. Kruse

- “Sugar” by Khalil Gibran Muhammad
- “Punitive Criminal Justice” by Bryan Stevenson
- “Why Can’t We Teach This?” by Nikita Stewart

Wall Street

- “Capitalism” by Matthew Desmond
- “Municipal Bonds” by Tiya Miles

Reading "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones

In Nikole Hannah-Jones' essay, she writes, "[T]he year 1619 is as foundational to the American story as 1776…black Americans, as much as those men cast in alabaster in the nation's capital, are this nation's true 'founding fathers.'"

Use this table to track evidence she provides for this claim by citing examples of racial oppression (on the left) and examples of black resistance (on the right).

How have U.S. laws, policies, and practices oppressed black Americans since the year 1619?	**How have black Americans fought back against oppression and worked to build a better society for all?**

Pulitzer Center

The New York Times Magazine
The 1619 Project

Reading "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones

In her essay, Nikole Hannah-Jones writes, "The United States is a nation founded on both an ideal and a lie…'Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness' did not apply to fully one-fifth of the country. Yet despite being violently denied the freedom and justice promised to all, black Americans believed fervently in the American creed. Through centuries of black resistance and protest, we have helped the country live up to its founding ideals."

"The Idea of America" and *The 1619 Project* as a whole challenge readers to reevaluate what we think we know about slavery, its legacy, and the contributions of black Americans to society.

How can we challenge what we've learned about our country and, by extension, about ourselves? Use this graphic organizer to track new information and ideas you learn about in Hannah-Jones' essay, as well as questions that arise.

Three historical facts that surprise you	1.
	2.
	3.
Three quotes that stand out to you	1.
	2.
	3.
Three questions you have about content in the essay	1.
	2.
	3.

These materials were created to support *The 1619 Project*, published in *The New York Times Magazine* August 2019. You can find this and more educational resources at www.pulitzercenter.org/1619

Reading Guide for *The 1619 Project* Creative Works

The 1619 Project includes 17 creative texts that explore major events in U.S. history. As students explore the pieces, have them consider the following questions:

1) What words and phrases stand out, and why?
2) What emotional reactions do you have, and why?
3) How do the authors use creative writing to address historical events?
4) How do the authors use form and language to communicate a point of view?
5) What new information do you learn about the lasting impact of slavery through the stories and poems featured in *The 1619 Project*?
6) Why do you think *The New York Times* included creative writing in *The 1619 Project*? How do the featured stories and poems connect to other essays, photography, and artwork highlighted in the issue?

Medium | Author | Page	**Historical Event Referenced**
Poem | Clint Smith | 28	The Middle Passage
Poem | Yusef Komunyakaa | 29	Crispus Attucks
Poem | Eve L. Ewing | 42	Phillis Wheatley
Poem | Reginald Dwayne Betts | 43	Fugitive Slave Act of 1793
Fiction | Barry Jenkins | 46	Gabriel's Rebellion
Fiction | Jesmyn Ward | 47	The Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves
Poem | Tyehimba Jess | 58	Black Seminoles
Fiction | Darryl Pinckney | 59	Emancipation Proclamation of 1863
Fiction | ZZ Packer | 59	New Orleans massacre of 1866
Short Fiction | Yaa Gyasi | 68	Tuskegee syphilis experiment
Short Fiction | Jacqueline Woodson | 69	Sgt. Isaac Woodard

Poems | Rita Dove and Camille T. Dungy | 78	16th Street Baptist Church bombing
Poem | Joshua Bennett | 79	The Black Panther Party
Short Dramatic Work | Lynn Nottage | 84	The birth of hip-hop
Short Fiction | Kiese Laymon | 84	Rev. Jesse Jackson's "rainbow coalition" speech
Poem | Clint Smith | 85	Superdome after Hurricane Katrina

Reading Guide for *The 1619 Project* Essays

The index below offers a preview and guiding questions for the 18 essays included in *The 1619 Project* from *The New York Times Magazine*.

1. "The Idea of America" by Nikole Hannah-Jones (pages 14–26)

Excerpt	"Our Declaration of Independence, signed on July 4, 1776, proclaims that 'all men are created equal' and 'endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.' But the white men who drafted those words did not believe them to be true for the hundreds of thousands of black people in their midst. 'Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness' did not apply to fully one-fifth of the country. Yet despite being violently denied the freedom and justice promised to all, black Americans believed fervently in the American creed. Through centuries of black resistance and protest, we have helped the country to live up to its founding ideals…Without the idealistic, strenuous and patriotic efforts of black Americans, our democracy today would most likely look very different — it might not be a democracy at all."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	abolitionist, American Revolution, Civil Rights Act, Crispus Attucks, Declaration of Independence, Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, Jim Crow, Mason-Dixon Line, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.), Reconstruction, W.E.B. Du Bois
Guiding Questions	1. How have laws, policies, and systems developed to enforce the enslavement of black Americans before the Civil War influenced laws, policies, and systems in years since? 2. How has activism by black Americans throughout U.S. history led to policies that benefit all people living in the U.S.?

2. "Chained Migration" by Tiya Miles (page 22)

Excerpt	"Slavery leapt out of the East and into the interior lands of the Old Southwest in the 1820s and 1830s." "As new lands in the Old Southwest were pried open, white enslavers back east realized their most profitable export was no longer tobacco or rice. A complex interstate slave trade became an industry of its own. This extractive system, together with enslavers moving west with human property, resulted in the relocation of approximately one million enslaved black people to a new region. The entrenched practice of buying, selling, owning, renting and mortgaging humans stretched into the American West along with the white settler-colonial population that now occupied former indigenous lands."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	Indian Removal Act of 1830, Mexican-American War, Westward Expansion
Guiding Questions	1. How was the expansion of the U.S. shaped and made possible by slave labor? 2. When did free black Americans begin to travel west, and why?

3. "Capitalism" by Matthew Desmond (pages 30–40)

Excerpt	"In the United States, the richest 1 percent of Americans own 40 percent of the country's wealth, while a larger share of working-age people (18-65) lives in poverty than in any other nation belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (O.E.C.D.)." "Those searching for reasons the American economy is uniquely severe and unbridled have found answers in many places (religion, politics, culture). But recently, historians have pointed persuasively to the gnatty fields of Georgia and Alabama, to the cotton houses and slave auction blocks, as the birthplace of America's low-road approach to capitalism."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	2008 economic crisis, assets, capitalism, Collateralized Debt Obligations (C.D.O.s), cotton gin, credit, creditor, debts, depreciation, Industrial Revolution, investor, labor union, Louisiana Purchase, mortgage, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (O.E.C.D.), Panic of 1837, stock

	market crash of 1929, Wall Street, W.E.B. Du Bois
Guiding Questions	1. How does the author describe capitalism in the U.S.? 2. How did slavery in the U.S. contribute to the development of the global financial industry? 3. What current financial systems reflect practices developed to support industries built on the work of enslaved people?

4. “Mortgaging the Future” by Mehrsa Baradaran (page 32)

Excerpt	“The Union passed the bills so it could establish a national currency in order to finance the war. The legislation also created the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (O.C.C.), the first federal bank regulator. After the war, states were allowed to keep issuing bank charters of their own. This byzantine infrastructure remains to this day, and is known as the dual banking system. Among all nations in the world, only the United States has such a fragmentary, overlapping and inefficient system — a direct relic of the conflict between federal and state power over maintenance of the slave-based economy of the South.”
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	bank charters, dual banking system, federal oversight, National Bank Act, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (O.C.C.)
Guiding Questions	1. How are current banking practices in the U.S. influenced by bank administration and regulation practices developed to fund the Civil War? 2. How are bank regulation practices established after the Civil War connected to the 2008 economic crisis in the U.S.?

5. “Good as Gold” by Mehrsa Baradaran (page 35)

Excerpt	“At the height of the war, Lincoln understood that he could not feed the troops without more money, so he issued a national currency, backed by the full faith and credit of the United States — but not by gold.” “Lincoln assured critics that the move would be temporary, but leaders who followed him eventually made it permanent — first Franklin Roosevelt during

	the Great Depression and then, formally, Richard Nixon in 1971."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	fiat currency
Guiding Questions	1. Why did the U.S. develop its first national currency, and what role did the Civil War play in its creation? 2. How was the value of a national currency in the U.S. determined?

6. "Fabric of Modernity" by Mehrsa Baradaran (page 36)

Excerpt	"From the first decades of the 1800s, during the height of the trans-Atlantic cotton trade, the sheer size of the market and the escalating number of disputes between counterparties was such that courts and lawyers began to articulate and codify the common-law standards regarding contracts...Today law students still study some of these pivotal cases as they learn doctrines like foreseeability, mutual mistake and damages."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	damages, futures contracts, foreseeability, mutual mistake contracts
Guiding Questions	1. How did increased production of cotton in the South through slave labor influence trade and business in the U.S., and around the world? 2. How have the laws and contracts developed before the Civil War to support the cotton industry influenced the financial documents we use today?

7. "Municipal Bonds" by Tiya Miles (page 40)

Excerpt	"As the historian David Quigley has demonstrated, New York City's phenomenal economic consolidation came as a result of its dominance in the Southern cotton trade, facilitated by the construction of the Erie Canal. It was in this moment — the early decades of the 1800s — that New York City gained its status as a financial behemoth through shipping raw cotton to Europe and bankrolling the boom industry that slavery made."

Key Names, Dates, and Terms	capitalism, Dutch West India Company, insurance, profits, Wall Street
Guiding Questions	1. How did enslaved people contribute to the construction of northeastern cities like New York City? 2. How did banks and other financial institutions profit from slavery, even after it was abolished in the North?

8. “A Broken Health Care System” by Jeneen Interlandi (pages 44–45)

Excerpt	“Federal health care policy was designed, both implicitly and explicitly, to exclude black Americans. As a result, they faced an array of inequities—including statistically shorter, sicker lives than their white counterparts.” “One hundred and fifty years after the freed people of the South first petitioned the government for basic medical care, the United States remains the only high-income country in the world where such care is not guaranteed to every citizen. In the United States, racial health disparities have proved as foundational as democracy itself.”
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	Affordable Care Act (A.C.A.), Aid to Dependent Children Act, Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, Freedmen’s Bureau, GI Bill, Jim Crow, New Deal, Pullman porters, Reconstruction, Social Security, Wagner Acts of 1935
Guiding Questions	1. How have healthcare policies, city planning, and other government systems in the U.S. limited who has access to healthcare services? 2. According to the author, what factors help diseases to spread in a community?

9. “Traffic” by Kevin M. Kruse (pages 48–49)

Excerpt	“The postwar programs for urban renewal, for instance, destroyed black neighborhoods and displaced their residents with such regularity that African-Americans came to believe, in James Baldwin’s memorable phrase, that ‘urban renewal means Negro removal.’”

	"In the end, Atlanta's traffic is at a standstill because its attitude about transit is at a standstill, too. Fifty years after its Interstates were set down with an eye to segregation and its rapid-transit system was stunted by white flight, the city is still stalled in the past."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	James Baldwin, New Deal, public transit, redlining practices, segregation laws of the 1890s, urban renewal, white flight
Guiding Questions	1. What policies contributed to neighborhood segregation in the U.S.? 2. How have transportation systems reinforced segregation?

10. "Undemocratic Democracy" by Jamelle Bouie (pages 50–55)

Excerpt	"There is a homegrown ideology of reaction in the United States, inextricably tied to our system of slavery. And while the racial content of that ideology has attenuated over time, the basic framework remains: fear of rival political majorities; of demographic 'replacement'; of a government that threatens privilege and hierarchy."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	Affordable Care Act (A.C.A.), the black belt, concurrent majority, debt limit, fiscal responsibility, nullification, Populist Party
Guiding Questions	1. According to the author, how do 19th century U.S. political movements aimed at maintaining the right to enslave people manifest in contemporary political parties?

11. "Medical Inequality" by Linda Villarosa (pages 56–57)

Excerpt	"The centuries-old belief in racial differences in physiology has continued to mask the brutal effects of discrimination and structural inequities, instead placing blame on individuals and their communities for statistically poor health outcomes. Rather than conceptualizing race as a risk factor that predicts disease or disability because of a fixed susceptibility conceived on shaky grounds centuries ago, we would do better to understand race as a proxy for bias, disadvantage and ill treatment. The poor health outcomes of black people, the targets of discrimination over hundreds of years and numerous generations, may be a harbinger for the future health of an increasingly diverse and unequal

	America."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	anesthesia, gynecology, lung capacity, pulmonary function
Guiding Questions	1. What inaccurate and unfounded assumptions have doctors made throughout history about the bodies of enslaved black people, and how did they attempt to prove those assumptions? 2. How have racist medical practices and attitudes influenced the medical treatment that black Americans have received throughout history, and continue to receive today?

12. "American Popular Music" by Wesley Morris (pages 60–67)

Excerpt	"When we're talking about black music, we're talking about horns, drums, keyboards and guitars doing the unthinkable together. We're also talking about what the borrowers and collaborators don't want to or can't lift — centuries of weight, of atrocity we've never sufficiently worked through, the blackness you know is beyond theft because it's too real, too rich, too heavy to steal."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	appropriation, minstrelsy
Guiding Questions	1. How have popular musical and performance trends throughout history used traditions and styles developed by black Americans? 2. How does the author describe black music and blackness in music?

13. "Sugar" by Khalil Gibran Muhammad (pages 70–77)

Excerpt	"None of this — the extraordinary mass commodification of sugar, its economic might and outsize impact on the American diet and health — was in any way foreordained, or even predictable, when Christopher Columbus made his second voyage across the Atlantic Ocean in 1493, bringing sugar-cane stalks with him from the Spanish Canary Islands. In Europe at that time, refined sugar was a luxury product, the back-breaking toil and dangerous labor required in its manufacture an insuperable barrier to production in anything approaching bulk. It seems reasonable to imagine that it might have remained

	so if it weren't for the establishment of an enormous market in enslaved laborers who had no way to opt out of the treacherous work."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	1730 slave code in New York, Haitian Revolution, Hurricane Katrina, racketeering, taxpayer subsidies, triangle of trade, wire fraud
Guiding Questions	1. How is sugar produced, and why was it cultivated in what became the U.S.? 2. How has sugar production changed, and how have policies continued to limit who has access to the wealth earned from producing sugar?

14. "Pecan Pioneer" by Tiya Miles (page 76)

Excerpt	"The presence of pecan pralines in every Southern gift shop from South Carolina to Texas, and our view of the nut as regional fare, masks a crucial chapter in the story of the pecan: It was an enslaved man who made the wide cultivation of this nut possible."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	commercial production, commercial market, grafting
Guiding Questions	1. How were pecans initially cultivated in the U.S., and how did Antoine's innovation make their commercial production viable? 2. Who are the figures that we learn about when studying innovation in the U.S., and whose stories are missing?

15. "The Wealth Gap" by Trymaine Lee (pages 82–83)

Excerpt	"Today's racial wealth gap is perhaps the most glaring legacy of American slavery and the violent economic dispossession that followed." "The post-Reconstruction plundering of black wealth was not just a product of spontaneous violence, but etched in law and public policy."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	Freedmen's Bureau, GI Bill, Home Owners Loan Corporation, New Deal programs (social security, unemployment, minimum wage, etc.), Reconstruction, redlining, zero and negative wealth

Guiding Questions	1. How does a person accumulate and keep wealth in the U.S.? 2. How have policy and exclusion from government wealth-building programs limited black Americans' opportunities to accumulate wealth?

16. "Mass Incarceration" by Bryan Stevenson (pages 80–81)

Excerpt	"The United States has the highest rate of incarceration of any nation on Earth: We represent 4 percent of the planet's population but 22 percent of its imprisoned. In the early 1970s, our prisons held fewer than 300,000 people; since then, that number has grown to more than 2.2 million, with 4.5 million more on probation or parole. Because of mandatory sentencing and 'three strikes' laws, I've found myself representing clients sentenced to life without parole for stealing a bicycle or for simple possession of marijuana. And central to understanding this practice of mass incarceration and excessive punishment is the legacy of slavery." "It's not just that this history fostered a view of black people as presumptively criminal. It also cultivated a tolerance for employing any level of brutality in response."
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	13th Amendment, Black Codes, capital punishment, Reconstruction, sharecropping
Guiding Questions	1. How have laws been written and enforced in the U.S. over the past 400 years to disproportionality punish black Americans? 2. How does Stevenson argue that the modern day prison system acts as a continuation of slavery?

17. "Hope" by Djeneba Aduayom (photography), Nikole Hannah-Jones (introduction), and Wadzanai Mhute (captions) (pages 86–93)

Excerpt	"Leading up to the civil rights movement, Howard was virtually the only law school in the South that served black students. It became an incubator for those who would use the law to challenge racial apartheid in the North and the South and help make the country more fair and democratic." "The school continues that legacy today, producing more black lawyers than perhaps any other institution. In May, it graduated its 148th class, and the four newly minted lawyers featured here were among the graduates. All of them descended from people enslaved in this country." —Nikole Hannah-Jones As a sixth-generation descendant of slavery, I am essentially a part of the first generation of descendants to carry the torch that was lit by my ancestors into true freedom." —Septembra Lesane, a recent graduate of Howard University School of Law
Key Names, Dates, and Terms	census, estate, Freedmen's Bureau, genealogy, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), property ledgers, will
Guiding Questions	1. What challenges do black Americans face in tracing lineage, and what strategies have been used to address those challenges? 2. What similarities and differences do you notice between the stories of the ancestors of the four Howard University School of Law students? 3. How do the portraits help tell the stories of the people who are profiled?

18. "Shadow of the Past" by Anne C. Bailey (text) and Dannielle Bowman (photograph) (page 98)

Excerpt	"This spot [pictured] is the site of the largest auction of enslaved people in American history… A photo can't capture the contribution those 436 people made to the economy of their country, or the gifts and talents they lent it. (As part of the Gullah Geechee community, they were among those who gave the world a song of peace, 'Kumbaya.') What you do see are two tracks, intersecting but going in different directions, toward different outcomes — a fitting metaphor, perhaps, for black and white life in America."

Key Names, Dates, and Terms	auction, economy, Gullah Geechee community
Guiding Questions	1. How does the author describe the largest auction of enslaved people in American history? 2. How do the text and image connect? Why do you think *The 1619 Project* concludes with this image and text?