Teaching African Enslavement: A Pluralistic Approach

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REGULAR INCIDENTS of police brutality towards African Americans, who continue to experience high poverty and incarceration rates, illustrate that the tragic and divisive effects of racism are still present, even 150 years after slavery in the United States was officially ended. In fact, ongoing struggles for racial justice in the United States and elsewhere, not to mention global human trafficking involving an estimated 20.9 million people,[1] demonstrate that it may be more important than ever to teach middle school and high school students the history of the slave trade, and to do so with sensitivity, depth, and courage. In my experience, students yearn to know more about how the trade worked, why it happened, and who was involved, so as to better understand the issues of race that still haunt us. During a lesson on Thoreau and social justice, an African American middle school student named Jonathan raised several questions:[2]

> **Jonathan**: Why did they pick black people [to be slaves]?
>
> **Ms. C**: Interesting, I am just reading a book on this. [She explains colonial labor and the rise of African slavery.]
>
> **Jonathan**: So Africans sold out other Africans? Say I sell out someone, he went into slavery, could someone from America come and take me?

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> **Ms. C**: Well there was a great deal of ethnic diversity in Africa, so they did not think of themselves as selling each other out…Rather, they sold off people they captured in wars.
>
> **Jonathan**: Whoever lost [the wars], that's where they got them?
>
> **Ms. C**: Yes.
>
> **Jonathan**: So it wasn't just walking along?
>
> **Ms. C**: Sometimes that too.

Jonathan's questions provide a framework for a more complex discussion of the slave trade, its historical time, and its resonance today: Why did they pick black people? Who are "they"—that is, who, if anyone, made this choice? Was it intentional? Were there other "races" that might have been selected or chosen instead? Why have black people come to be associated with enslavement? In this paper, I will outline a "pluralistic" approach to teaching the slave trade that helps students and teachers answer these questions and learn more about the "slave times" that have shaped our world.[3] Moving away from "damage-centered"[4] teaching that focuses primarily on the victimization of Africans, this approach situates the African slave trade within a historical context that included the enslavement of whites, blacks, Native Americans, and others. While the African slave trade became an especially terrible form of human trafficking in its time, students learn that black people were not the only victims of slavery and, therefore, by implication were somehow weak and deserving of their fate. A pluralistic history also acknowledges multiplicities *within* groups, such as social class, that shatter neatly color-coded categories of oppressed and oppressor. This pluralistic orientation offers a way to overcome the curricular and teaching barriers, expanded upon below, that prevent a deep and thoughtful engagement with the history of the slave trade in schools.

How is the African Slave Trade Taught?

Despite increasing inclusion of multicultural content, the organization of history curricula and perspectives of textbooks work against a coherent, nuanced presentation of slavery and the African slave trade. Since American history is usually separated from world history in schools, students may learn about the trans-Atlantic slave trade among Africans and Europeans in one grade, then study the

"American" part of the narrative in another grade or class. This means that, for American history students, slavery starts on the auction blocks or on the slave ships, completely disconnected from the international milieu that led to Africans' arrival in the United States.[5] Moreover, in global history classes, textbooks are still organized around a Western Civilization chronology.[6] As Michael Marino explains, the "world's history reads as the legacy of actions taken by Western nations" so that "Africa only becomes important when it interacts with Europeans and only appears…during the time of the slave trade and during the Era of Imperialism."[7] In both world and American history classes, then, the complex history of slavery often becomes a simple tale of exploitation, and black students experience embarrassment and shame over the "portrayal of their group as helpless victims."[8]

Beyond textbooks and course structures, social studies teachers with little exposure to African history may feel unprepared. I was one of those teachers—and I write this essay in part to provide guidance to teachers who feel ill-equipped to teach about this aspect of history. In addition, many teachers struggle with how to teach such a sensitive topic. In one study, white pre-service teachers moved by images of lynching in southern American states were nevertheless fearful of using the images in their classrooms. While the participants expressed no such qualms about Holocaust images, the "cultural proximity of the acts (morally, historically, and geographical) to the lives of the pre-service teachers and their prospective students" raised concerns among participants about conflicts with community values.[9]

To "break the dominance of the Western Civ chronology and monopoly on time"[10] and to diminish the guilt and shame associated with this past, I argue that the trans-Atlantic slave trade must be contextualized within a history of class exploitation and enslavement of diverse peoples. To illustrate how this might be done, in the following sections, I will raise four questions inspired by middle school student Jonathan, and describe how historians have answered these questions. Their responses explain the local and international conditions under which trading occurred, who was involved in the trade, and who was most likely to be captured and enslaved. In each section, I briefly outline a teaching strategy designed to help middle and high school students formulate answers to enduring questions about slavery and the slave trade.[11] Through case studies, scavenger hunt, role-play, illustrated timeline, and creative writing, students

become aware of the multiple forms of slavery and the importance of class, as well as race, in determining whether or not a person would have been enslaved. Each of the five lessons can be taught without the others, though they are designed to build on each other.

Why Did They Pick Black People?

In the early 1500s, the Spanish initiated the trans-Atlantic slave trade by bringing captives from Africa across the Atlantic to labor in their colonies in the Caribbean. Arabs had already been trading for African slaves for about 800 years prior to that time. Later, colonization of the Americas in the early sixteenth century "catapulted the [trans-Atlantic] trade to heights that completely dwarfed all trade in humans ever recorded in history, especially during the plantation revolution in the Americas, between 1650-1850."[12] In the early years of American colonization, whites and Native Americans were also being enslaved or exploited for their labors. At least initially, then, it was not clear what "race" would be forced to do hard labor in the Americas, as European and American (and other) elites were willing to abuse whatever class of people they were capable of oppressing.[13] So, what happened? Why did Africa become the largest source of labor used to work the plantations and mines in the so-called New World?

Since black people have come to be equated with slavery, at least in the Americas, many people advocate using the term "enslaved person" rather than the word "slave" to underscore that this condition should describe people, not define them. However, during the same period as the trans-Atlantic trade, white European Christians also lived in fear of being captured and enslaved at the hands of Muslim pirates (to a smaller extent, Muslims were enslaved by Europeans). Indeed, Robert Davis says, the "experience of so many tens of thousands of white slaves [from] every country between the United States and Russia, and the stories told by those lucky enough to be ransomed or to escape made sure that slavery in early modern Europe was not conceived in such color-conscious terms as many modern observers would have it."[14]

In North America, Europeans were using Native Americans as slaves prior to the arrival of Africans. Like Africans, Native Americans practiced their own forms of slavery before Europeans

appeared. Then, with the arrival of colonists desperate for workers, Native Americans became slavers to avoid enslavement themselves, but they also engaged in this trade to obtain foreign goods, secure alliances, and enact revenge against others.[15] Unlike Africans who arrived on American shores as captured slaves, Native American slavery was outlawed in many colonies as they were considered free peoples who had prior rights to the land.[16] However, these laws were difficult to enforce, and colonists found ways to evade them. For example, enslavement was justified if a Native American was captured in a "just war" (as presumably Africans had been), because slavery was considered "a merciful alternative to execution."[17] Native Americans were also bound into slavery by being reclassified as Africans or subject to "judicial enslavement" after being taken to court and sentenced to long servitude.[18] Some Native Americans became slaveholders of Africans. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Chickasaw and Choctaw in the southern United States began purchasing and using black slave labor. Due to pressures to assimilate and settle down on the land, "growing numbers of southern Indians regarded material wealth, including slaves and the products of their labor, as the foundation of political and social power." Moreover, these Native Americans "developed their own ideas about racial hierarchy that did not stem merely from inherited predilections or unthinking imitation."[19]

Finally, in another blow to America's founding myths as the land of freedom, Don Jordan and Michael Walsh argue that white slavery existed in the early American colonies and that black slavery emerged from this institution:

> The indentured servant system evolved into slavery because of the economic goals of the early colonists: it was not designed so much to help would-be migrants get to America or the Caribbean as to provide a cheap and compliant labor force for the cash-crop industry. Once this was established, to keep the workforce in check, it became necessary to create legal sanctions that included violence and physical restraint. This is what led to slavery: first for whites, then for blacks.[20]

These whites were British convicts (at that time, "loitering" and small debts could lead to criminal charges), Irish Catholics, street people, and kidnapped individuals, as well as poor people who had come in search of opportunity ("free willers"). Once in the Americas, these social outcasts were treated as chattel, often worked to death,

1. Who Enslaved Whom?

Key Understanding: People of diverse racial and ethnic origins have been enslaved, not just black people.

Opening: As a class or individuals, describe or draw pictures of the "typical" slave and slaveholder. Discuss the images (During the time of colonization and the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, who was enslaved? Who were their enslavers?) Develop a list based on students' prior knowledge. Explain that students will learn what kinds of people were enslaved during the same time as the African slave trade (1450-1850), and what kinds of people took slaves.

Background: List and define different forms of slavery (chattel slavery, when "a person is captured, born, or sold into permanent servitude" and treated as property; debt bondage, when a person promises the use of his or her labor, or that of their kin, to obtain a loan; and contract slavery, where an individual signs a contract for employment over a certain period, but finds themselves under the complete control of another and unable to escape the contract).[21]

Case Studies: "Who enslaved whom?" In groups, have students read one of seven case studies (**Appendix A**). In a chart, they should explain whether the case is chattel slavery, debt bondage, or contract slavery. They should also write down who was enslaved and who were their enslavers. On a map, have students attach pictures of each case to their locations in Europe, Africa, the Americas, the Middle East, and Asia. Or, have students draw the forms of slavery on maps showing the trans-Atlantic trade (Sample map at <https://www.neh.gov/news/voyages-the-transatlantic-slave-trade-database>). Each group should present their findings to the class.

Closing Discussion: After this exercise, have students discuss (How would you modify your image of a "typical" slave and slaveholder? Why have black people become associated with slavery?). Explain that the African slave trade became the largest in history. Note Inikori's argument that since most Africans did not live in large, centralized states, they were less able to protect themselves. Also, each slave's experience differed, depending on where they lived, the culture of the slaveholders, their work, and the character of owners. For example, racism made black slavery in the U.S. particularly oppressive.

and denied freedom even after their indentures ended. A Virginia Company official "reported in June 1623 that 'divers [sic] masters in Virginia do much neglect and abuse their servants there with intolerable oppression and hard usage'."[22]

Eventually, the trade in Africans far surpassed these other forms of servitude. To think about why this happened, it is helpful to consider why the trade shifted to Africa and whether or not the trade could have been prevented. In other words, why this huge undertaking in Africa and not elsewhere? Could Africans have stopped this loss of their population? Why were countries in other parts of the world able to prevent widespread enslavement of their citizens? Nigerian economic historian Joseph E. Inikori claims that had more Africans lived in larger political units, the trade might not have reached such heights. Strong governments can protect their citizens from capture and therefore prevent large-scale slave trading. For example, as Rome expanded, they took their slaves from captured territories. But once these regions became part of the Roman Empire, citizens within them were protected from enslavement by others. As Rome fell apart, people in Britain and the Balkans became subject to capture once again. In fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Africa, Inikori notes, "From the Gold Coast (now Ghana) to west-central Africa, political fragmentation was also the norm…Even as late as the seventeenth century, a map of the Gold Coast drawn by the Dutch in December 1629 shows forty-three independent political units."[23] In short, since many Africans lived in small states, they were more likely to be captured by stronger neighbors.

The initial trade with Europeans, focused on products like kola nuts and gold, led to growing prosperity among African elites. But with an intensifying need for labor during the seventeenth century, Europeans shifted their demands to captives—a desire many Africans were willing to meet. Since such trade involved violent theft, not peaceful production, Africans wanted more European firearms and, consequently, sociopolitical stability gave way to increased conflicts and warfare. However, most citizens of larger African states enjoyed protection from capture. For example, between 1670 and 1750, Asante began consolidating its empire and actively participated in the trade while prohibiting the enslavement of their subjects: "the people they [Asante] sold were captives from outside their states, and they had no obligation for their protection."[24]

Nevertheless, why did slave trade focus on Africa rather than Europe? Inikori returns to the strength of the state:

> Instead of the existence of centralized states in western Africa being responsible for the supply of captives for export…it was their absence that facilitated the supply of captives in response to growing European demand. In Europe, on the other hand, the widespread existence of relatively strong centralized states, able to maintain law and order at home and offer blow for blow to external aggressors, raised the political and economic cost of captive exports for all rulers and imposed mutual restraint on European states.

Tragically, since "the vast majority of communities in western Africa did not live in [strong centralized] states," large numbers of people there were subject to theft and capture for the trans-Atlantic trade.[25] Thus, according to Inikori, many Africans lived in societies too small to protect their citizens from enslavement. But what about Africans in larger states? Did they just allow themselves to be pushed around by the Europeans who came to their shores? Were outsiders able to come into Africa and simply "take" people, as the middle school student suggested?

Who Controlled the Slave Trade?

According to historian John Thornton, Africans possessed the military and economic capacity to "determine how trade with Europe developed."[26] While European ships enabled transoceanic trade, these ships were too large and heavy to go into Africa's interior. By contrast, Africans' nimble vessels were well-designed to navigate the African continent's rivers and tributaries as well as easily evade or fend off European ships. Ultimately, Thornton argues, each side had to work with the other, because "The Africans were unable, in most circumstances, to take a European ship by storm, and the Europeans had little success in their seaborne attacks on the mainland." In other words, since most Africans were able to prevent European "raiding and trading," there developed a "peacefully regulated trade" which "allowed Africans to conduct trade with Europeans on their own terms, collecting customs and other duties as they liked."[27] Moreover, before the British began to monopolize this commerce in the eighteenth century, Europeans had to negotiate with diverse African leaders for access to markets, while at the same

time competing with other Europeans.[28] Of course, Africans used these rivalries to their advantage.

In response to Thornton, Anne C. Bailey says that the "very fact that there was no widespread enslavement of Europeans" means that this trade could never be equal.[29] Bailey acknowledges that, like Europeans, Africans actively traded other black people in the pursuit of profit. For example, an African took the name of a deceased Brazilian trader, Geraldo de Lima, and became well known along the West African coastline for his wealth and power.[30] Some Africans who had been taken as captives returned from enslavement to participate in the slave trade on the African coast, despite presumably having firsthand experience with slavery's brutalities in the Americas.[31] In addition, kings of larger states were able to exercise some control over the slave trade, as when "the *oba* [leader of Benin] put a total embargo on male slaves, which continued well into the seventeenth century."[32] However, Bailey argues, since most communities in Africa were much smaller than Benin or Asante, they were not in a position to exercise such power over the slave trade. Moreover, toward the end of the trade after abolishment, there was "a shift from organized structures and mutual agreements in the eighteenth century to disorder and chaos in the nineteenth"—as evidenced in stories of kidnapping in African accounts and American slave narratives.[33]

Nevertheless, Davis notes, for the most part, the trans-Atlantic trade was more orderly than the "pre-modern enterprise" of slave raiding that was occurring around the same time (from about 1530-1780) in the Mediterranean. Unlike the "almost industrial efficiency [of the Atlantic trade] that would eventually make possible the transshipment of millions of captives from one continent to another," Barbary corsairs, with the "benign and neglectful tolerance of the sultans in Constantinople," engaged in an "Islamic gold rush aimed at the poorly defended shores and shipping of the Christian world."[34] In the Mediterranean, these slavers, many of whom were "renegades" (Christians who had embraced Islam), became skilled at seizing European and American merchant ships or peasants and fishermen along the coastlines of Italy, Greece, France, and Spain, going as far north as England and Iceland.[35] Goods and people were hauled off to markets in Algiers, Tunis, and other cities in North Africa and the Balkans—with a share of the slaves and profits going into

2. Who Was in Control?

Key Understanding: The slave trade could not have happened without cooperation between Africans and Europeans/Americans. For the most part, Africans provided Europeans and Americans with captives to be sent into slavery.

Opening: Who should be held responsible for enslaving Africans? After students name those at fault, explain the concept of reparations. Ask students if they think there should be reparations given to the victims. If so, who should pay?

Background: In an illustrated mini-lecture, explain that the trade could not have happened without cooperation between Africans and Europeans/Americans. Africans captured and sold other Africans to Europeans and Americans, who then transported them to work as slaves in the Americas. At times, whites engaged in kidnapping along the coastlines. Compare this trade to the raiding occurring in Europe and North Africa. Explain that students will decide who had control of the African slave trade as they discover clues in a scavenger hunt.

Scavenger Hunt: "Who was in control?" Cut up "clues" (**Appendix B**) into strips. Students in pairs or groups read each clue and decide which side (or sides) held the advantage. Students place the clues on a continuum with Africans on one end, both sides in the middle, and Europeans/Americans on the other end. After placing the clues on the continuum, students write an explanation of who was in control, citing at least two clues to support their claim.

Closing Discussion: Who was in control? Can we characterize this as an equal partnership? What other clues do we need to make this claim? Who should be held responsible for paying reparations? Why did Africans let this happen? Why did Europeans and Americans (and Arabs) let this happen?

the hands of local rulers. While white captives had a better chance than Africans of being bought out of slavery, this slavery was driven by religious revenge as well as greed, and slaves were humiliated, beaten, kept in chains, and, if they were put to the galleys, often worked to death.

A comparison with Barbary corsairs in the Mediterranean shows that the trans-Atlantic trade was a more regulated form of slave

trafficking—and that white people also experienced enslavement at the hands of North Africans. Students also learn that while Africans were caught and sold into slavery, those who captured them were generally other Africans who sought wealth from selling humans to Europeans. In other words, "Africa" was not one huge nation interacting with the Europeans. This understanding helps answer our student's question about whether or not Africans "sold out" their own people: while most African groups practiced forms of domestic slavery, leaders of slave-trading states did not tend to trade their own citizens, unless it was to eliminate rivals or punish social outcasts.[36] Instead, slave traders captured enemy groups for sale overseas. It is therefore misleading to say that Africans sold out their "brothers and sisters" simply because people did not see those outside their community as fellow Africans, let alone as siblings.

Did Africans "Sell Out" Other Africans?

Before and during the slave trading era from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, the people of Africa lived in large and small states, practiced African Traditional Religions (ATR) as well as Christianity and Islam, dwelled in urban and rural areas, worked in various trades, developed class systems, and spoke a multitude of African and other languages. The continent is 11.6 million square miles, about three times the size of the United States, and composed of fifty-four nations. Today, Africa's population of 1.1 billion constitutes 16% of the world's people, who speak over 2,000 indigenous and foreign languages. In short, Africans were and still are incredibly diverse. At the time of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, people's identities were connected to kin or ethnic groups, not to an overarching conception of being part of one big African family. Senegalese historian Sylviane Diouf discusses the problems with the notion that "brothers sold out brothers" during the slave trade:

> Africans did not constitute one population but many whose interests and needs could be vastly divergent…Although it seems acceptable that the French and the English, or the English and the Irish, fought one another for dozens of generations and did not see themselves as being part of the same people—not even the same race—such a notion is still difficult to grasp for many when it comes to peoples in Africa.[37]

3. Did Africans Sell Out Other Africans?

Key Understanding: At the time of the slave trade, the diverse peoples living in Africa did not see themselves as Africans and one people. The trauma of the slave ships and slavery in the Americas forced them to identify themselves as Africans.

Opening: Show a three-minute clip of Henry Louis Gates' interview with an Asante chief (from *Wonders of the African World*, Episode 3: The Slave Kingdoms, 22:30-25:30). Based on what you know, is it fair for Gates to accuse the chief of selling out his own people? Display these quotes:

> Senegalese historian Sylviane Diouf: "Nowhere in the Africans' testimonies is there any indication that they felt betrayed by people 'the color of their own skin.' Their perspective was based on their worldview that recognized ethnic, political, and religious differences but not the modern concepts of a black race or Africanness."

> A Dahomey chief told a British governor during the slave trade era, "Are we to blame if we send our criminals to foreign lands? I was told you do the same."

Would these two agree or disagree with Gates? What about their backgrounds explain the differences in their perspectives? Where do you stand on the issue? Provide facts, images, and maps about Africa's size and diversity (Africa is 11.6 million square miles, about three times the size of the United States, with fifty-four nations. The population of 1.1 billion speaks over 2,000 indigenous and foreign languages). Given this incredible diversity, is it fair to say that Africans sold out their brothers and sisters?

Illustrated Timeline: "Did Africans sell out other Africans?" For homework or in class, have students read Chapter Two (or excerpts) of the narrative of Olaudah Equiano. As they read, they should highlight all the times where he encounters other African and white groups who are new to him.[49] Have students create an illustrated timeline of his life. Using the timeline and the story, they should explain whether they believe that Africans sold out other Africans.

Closing Discussion: Explain that, at the time of the Atlantic slave trade, people did not see themselves as part of one big African family. Instead, they identified as members of their own families and ethnic groups. On the slave ships, they often spoke so many

different languages it was difficult to communicate with each other, as Equiano experienced. But today, many black people in the U.S. identify themselves as African Americans. What caused this change from diversity to unity? When did Africans become Africans? Were they forced to become Africans? Share the quotes below and ask students what these authors say about the questions of when and how Africans became Africans. At what other times in history did people willingly or unwillingly become united into one identity?

> Marcus Rediker: "Amid the brutal imprisonment, terror, and premature death, captive Africans managed a creative, life-affirming response: they fashioned new languages, new cultural practices, new bonds, and a nascent community among themselves."
>
> Michael Gomez: "[In the Americas], those of African descent had to relate to each other not only [because of] their shared condition, but also in response to the perception of their condition by those outside of it."

In other words, we cannot assess people's past actions based on contemporary understandings: "Nowhere in the Africans' testimonies is there any indication that they felt betrayed by people 'the color of their own skin.' Their perspective was based on their worldview that recognized ethnic, political, and religious differences but not the modern concepts of a black race or Africanness."[38] To this list of differences we can add status and class, since within-group individuals who were accused of crimes or who had been "pawned" (sent to serve another family to whom their relatives were indebted) were more vulnerable to enslavement in the Americas.

Participants in the slave trade made distinctions among Africans: some ship captains "always chained certain groups of Africans (Fante, Ibibio) but not others (Chamba, Angola), who were considered unlikely to rise up."[39] West African Muslims were noted for their agricultural skills and so were sought by rice and indigo plantation owners in South Carolina and Georgia.[40] Yet out of this diversity, the concept of an African identity began to develop. The violent dispossession of people from the continent of Africa, combined with increasingly virulent racist ideologies that swept all Africans into one inferior black "race," broke down former allegiances to kin and ethnicity, replacing them with new identities

4. Could the Slave Trade Have Been Prevented?

Key Understanding: Africans used multiple strategies to try to prevent capture by slave traders.

Opening: Display a map of Africa showing the areas where European and Arab slave trading occurred. If you lived in these parts, what are some things you and your ethnic group could have done to avoid becoming enslaved?

Images of Survival Strategies: "Could the slave trade have been prevented?" Explain to students that Africans used multiple ways to prevent their enslavement by Africans, Europeans, and Muslims. Provide each group with a brief description of one of the strategies **(Appendix C)**. In groups, students will create a poster illustrating the strategy or a "tableau" that reflects the strategy in a still-life pose.[56] After each group presents their poster/tableau, have classmates discuss what they see and how the strategy protected that group.[57]

Closing Discussion: Which strategy was most effective? Were these efforts successful at stopping the trade? Could the trade have been prevented? If so, how? Explain that while large states were able to protect their own people, smaller states could not. Some people opposed the trans-Atlantic slave trade from the beginning, yet it continued for 400 years. Why did it last so long? What finally brought it to an end? What other forms of oppression continue today, despite efforts to end the exploitation?

as black people entrapped in a terrible system of oppression. People from African states became "Africans" on the slave ships: "Amid the brutal imprisonment, terror, and premature death, [captive Africans] managed a creative, life-affirming response: they fashioned new languages, new cultural practices, new bonds, and a nascent community among themselves."[41] In the Americas, "Those of African descent had to relate to each other not only according to the logic of their shared condition, but also in response to the perception of their condition by those outside of it."[42] Then, African American leaders and abolitionists began using "the idea of Africa" to formulate a unifying, pan-Africanist identity.[43]

Nevertheless, while empowering and uniting people, concepts like African or African American also work to flatten diversity and

conflicts within communities.[44] Enslaved Africans experienced their lives in many different ways, depending on when and where they lived.[45] For example, since Muslims came from societies with high levels of education, they were often given less onerous work or used as slave drivers.[46] Ira Berlin argues that, in contrast to the "charter" or first generation of slaves in the American colonies, the succeeding "plantation" generation "worked harder and died earlier," while "family life was truncated," and they were much less likely to escape slavery, as large slave owners managed to enact increasingly repressive laws to control slaves.[47] In a comparison of life on two estates, Richard S. Dunn found that enslaved persons on a sugar plantation in Jamaica had a much higher death rate, along with a lower birth rate, than those on an estate in Virginia.[48]

By tackling the question of "selling out" other Africans, students learn that Africans were incredibly diverse people and did not begin to see themselves as Africans until they were forced to live and work together on slave ships and in the Americas. Even then, distinctions among Africans sometimes inhibited efforts to unify them. This leads us back to middle school student Jonathan's questions about how things actually worked on the ground in Africa: Was someone whose tribe "lost" in battle or who was "just walking around" subject to capture? As Inikori and other historians note, citizens of larger states or higher classes were more likely to be protected from enslavement. Did people from lower ranks or living in small states have any chance of avoiding enslavement?

Who was Likely to be Captured?
Was Anyone Able to Avoid Capture?

While past events are often so neatly explained that they appear inevitable, history might have taken other courses given different conditions.[50] We therefore have to be careful about imposing contemporary understandings on the past: the rise and intensity of the trans-Atlantic trade was not pre-planned by Europeans who sought to target only black people. As Diouf emphasizes, while the "destruction brought by the Atlantic slave trade was unprecedented… its uniqueness should not hide the fact that some people's reactions to it (their participation in particular) were not exclusive to the continent [of Africa]." As already noted, Europeans engaged in

5. Who Was Most Likely to Become Captured?

Key Understanding: In the past and present, wealthy and higher-status people are better able to avoid slavery and exploitation than poorer people.

Opening: Using any criteria they choose, have students list five to six people from most to least important (e.g., president, wealthy business owner, religious leader, farmer, janitor, doctor, factory worker). Ask for their rankings and why students ranked them in certain orders. If you were a slave raider, which one would you kidnap? Why? How is the value of a life determined? Who is making these determinations? Why are some people considered to be more 'valuable' than others?

Background: Using the Jigsaw method,[61] assign students to six to eight expert groups. Have them read one story of slavery or freedom (**Appendix D**) and be prepared to give a brief summary of the story to peers. Next, one "expert" from each group joins a new group and each expert shares their story. While listening to the stories, students decide: Who or what kinds of people were most able to get out of slavery? Who was not? The stories will illustrate that, generally, the poorest and least powerful individuals were most vulnerable to becoming and remaining enslaved.

Pairs Writing: <u>"Who was most likely to become captured?"</u> Assign pairs a story to write about. Writing as if they were the captive, students write a letter to their family or a series of diary entries explaining their fate.[62] After students finish writing, ask volunteers to share their letters. Emphasize that, even though people of all classes were enslaved, people of higher status and class had the means to get out of slavery. How did this exercise change your image of the 'typical' slave?

Closing Discussion: Today, rug makers in India, charcoal producers in Brazil, and domestic servants of wealthy people in London, Paris, and New York are exploited as contract and debt slaves. Some chattel slavery also exists in northern and central Africa and some Arab countries. According to Kevin Bales, in fact, there are more slaves now than at the time of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This "new" slavery differs from the past in that most are not owned, but rather they are completely controlled, through violence or the threat of violence. Because there are so many poor, desperate people in the world, today's slaves are "disposable people"—used to make huge

> profits and the cheap products that support our lifestyles, then tossed aside when they can no longer work.[63] Who benefits from this? Who is most harmed by this? Why does slavery continue? Is it fair that some lives are considered to be more valuable than others? How can we assure that all lives are valued equally?

their own slave trade: "England's—and to a lesser extent France's—deportation and sale into indentured servitude of her own abducted indigent children, prisoners of war, prostitutes, and convicts is a case in point." If African states had been able to shelter their citizens from enslavement, American and European elites might have focused their attention on extracting more slave labor from indentured servants and Native Americans: "the idea that the British poor should be enslaved was passionately defended by distinguished intellectuals up to the mid-1700s. Aware of these parallels, a king in Dahomey remarked to a British governor, 'Are we to blame if we send our criminals to foreign lands? I was told you do the same.'"[51]

Africans developed numerous strategies to save their communities or kin from enslavement. These included "defensive" measures such as situating villages in the middle of a lake or atop mountains, building walls and tunnels, and growing poisonous or thorny plants, all meant to repel invasion by kidnappers. Protective strategies included "redeeming" relatives who had been captured. This meant that a person had to find their relative or friend, a difficult task for those living far from coastlines. If they were lucky enough to locate the captive before the ship sailed, the redeemer had to provide the trader with people or goods that exceeded that person's value in order to free the captive. Recognizing that families of means had the resources to liberate their relatives, traders extracted a higher value for elites, as when "an eighteen-year-old Futa Jallon princess was redeemed for ten slaves" and a wealthy man redeemed himself for twenty-two of his own domestic slaves.[52]

Other efforts to disrupt the trade involved raids on European vessels, attacks on market areas, and slave and shipboard revolts. Taken together, these strategies:

> [D]id not stop the slave trade but certainly reduced it. Slave traders had to go further inland to look for captives, whose offensive, defensive, and protective mechanisms resulted in more time spent

> to locate them; more casualties among the raiders; extra time en route to the coast, with greater risks for escape, injury, and death; and additional costly measures to ensure control over the barracoons and the ships.[53]

But while "there is little doubt that millions were spared" by these measures, "in some cases, it means that slave dealers turned their attention to more vulnerable peoples and areas."[54] In the end, the "overwhelming majority of those enslaved were commoners—agriculturalists of one kind or another, though a few were nomadic pastoralists and hunter-gatherers. From the larger societies came artisans, domestic slaves, and waged workers."[55] So while this history is about race and the growing use of racist ideologies to justify and perpetuate an inhumane traffic, it also involves class and privilege—wealthy and higher-status Africans (and Europeans and Americans) were less likely to become or remain enslaved than those of lesser means.

With the dismantling of slavery, Europeans started colonizing African states in order to gain control over their resources to fuel the industrial revolution. In the Gold Coast colony (now Ghana), the British tried to eliminate domestic forms of slavery, but this proved difficult. For many Africans, it was people—not land—that represented wealth, so "big men" gathered slaves to enhance their status. These slaves might come from outside their ethnic group or from among the lower classes, as when a family pawned a child to obtain a loan. According to Trevor Getz:

> [S]lavery, for African slaves, normatively represented not the denial of "liberty" but exclusion from "belonging." The very act of enslavement embodied either forcible separation from the kin group or semi-voluntary sale by the victim's family, and slaves were often also separated from their kin by geography and social status.[58]

Because these "kinless individuals had few rights and little security," Getz explains that remaining enslaved was sometimes a better option than freedom, as "attachment to their masters' lineage at least enabled them *to* belong to a kin group, and local institutions of assimilation held out the potential for an eventual position *in* a family."[59] Nevertheless, there was resistance to slavery among Africans, and enslaved persons went to colonial courts to argue for their freedom.[60] Today, slavery persists in many parts of the world,

including among children working in the cocoa harvesting and fishing industries in West Africa.

Conclusion

The complexities of the slave trade era challenge us to think about our teaching: Why do middle- and high-school students learn so little about white slavery in the Mediterranean or enslavement of Native Americans occurring alongside the trans-Atlantic trade? Why do we avoid discussion of class and its role in determining who would (and who will continue to) be enslaved? Trapped within a "master narrative of European imperialism," Davis states, "it has never served anyone's purpose to know or even guess" at the extent of white Christian slavery.[64] And according to James Loewen, class is one of the "three great taboos" in textbook publishing (the other two being sex and religion); its existence is an affront to American egalitarianism, while it is also dangerous in its potential for creating bridges across racial and ethnic groups.[65]

The questions and answers presented here disrupt the story of European dominance of the slave trade and simplistic dichotomies of black/victims and white/victimizers—conceptions that cause shame for black people and guilt for white people. In a pluralistic approach, students learn about the diverse people and classes of people who traded in slaves, as well as those who became enslaved. I do not want to minimize the terror and racism experienced by Africans taken into slavery during this era. Indeed, says Davis, "the decimation inflicted on sub-Saharan Africa and on black Africans in the Americas hugely outweighed, in its scope if not in all its specific horrors, that which was imposed on white slaves in Barbary."[66] But by acknowledging other forms of slavery existing at that time, we topple the stigmatization of Africans as the only victims of slavery.

People of means, historically and today, persist in seeking the most easily exploited sources of labor. They break unions, outsource jobs to countries with weak labor laws, and enslave people so as to continue to make high profits selling cheap products and services. At least in the U.S., this work is facilitated by institutional racism that prevents white workers from seeing how their interests are aligned with those of other ethnicities. In a pluralistic orientation to the slave trade, history and its actors are revealed as more complex and

paradoxical—Africans and Native Americans were slavers as well as slaves, Europeans and Americans were chained and beaten—defying the neat categories that divide us and challenging the assumption of white supremacy. This approach asks young people to learn about how power, race, and class work in the past and the present so that they can better understand the inequities and abuses around them. A pluralistic history moves beyond guilt and shame, toward action and justice, by showing students "that the divisions between black and white have prevented blacks and whites from getting together to bring about the social change that would benefit them all."[67]

Notes

I would like to thank my high school and college students for raising important questions about the ways they were taught the history of slavery; *The History Teacher* editor Jane Dabel for her encouragement and prompt responses to questions; the external reviewers for their useful comments; and friends, family, and colleagues who provided assistance in the research and writing process: Dolores Byrnes, Julie Gorlewski, Lou Roper, Rennie Scott-Childress, and Laura Teachout. I am also grateful for the careful and inspiring work of the historians of slavery and the slave trade who spoke at the 2015 American Historical Association conference.

1. "Human Trafficking is a Problem 365 Days a Year," Polaris Project, <https://www.polarisproject.org/take-action/365-days>.
2. I have changed the student's name. This observation took place while conducting research on discussion in schools, published as Laura J. Dull and Sonia E. Murrow, "Is Dialogic Questioning Possible in Social Studies?" *Theory and Research in Social Education* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2008): 391-412.
3. Diana B. Turk, Laura J. Dull, Robert Cohen, and Michael R. Stoll, *Teaching Recent Global History* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 27.
4. I borrow this description from Eve Tuck, who raises powerful questions about the perspectives driving research in disenfranchised communities, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities," *Harvard Educational Review* 79, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 409, <http://pages.ucsd.edu/~rfrank/class_web/ES-114A/Week%204/TuckHEdR79-3.pdf>.
5. For more on the problems with treating the United States as disconnected from world history, see the Marilyn Young interview in Diana B. Turk, Laura J. Dull, Robert Cohen, and Michael R. Stoll, *Teaching Recent Global History* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 217-224.

6. Michael P. Marino, "High School World History Textbooks: An Analysis of Content Focus and Chronological Approaches," *The History Teacher* 44, no. 3 (May 2011): 440-441.

7. Ibid., 436.

8. Beverly Daniel Tatum, *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" And Other Conversations about Race* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 41.

9. Paul G. Fitchett, Lisa Merriweather, and Heather Coffey, "'It's not a pretty picture': How Pre-Service History Teachers Make Meaning of America's Racialized Past through Lynching Imagery," *The History Teacher* 48, no. 2 (February 2015): 262.

10. Marino, "High School World History Textbooks," 442.

11. Though targeted at secondary students, these lessons could be modified for use in elementary classrooms or for introductory college courses.

12. Joseph E. Inikori, "The Struggle Against the Transatlantic Slave Trade: The Role of the State," in *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, ed. Sylviane A. Diouf (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003): 170-171. Emory University's Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database provides tables and timelines that starkly illustrate these numbers: <http://slavevoyages.org/assessment/estimates>.

13. Race is a political and cultural conception that has had different meanings across time and place. For histories of race, see George M. Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Michael Keevak, *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

14. Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 191; Citing Linda Colley's *Captives: The Story of Britain's Pursuit of Empire and How Its Soldiers and Civilians Were Held Captive by the Dream of Global Supremacy, 1600-1850* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), Alan Gallay notes, "In the mid-seventeenth century, more English were held as slaves in Africa than Africans were kept as slaves in English colonies." Gallay, "Introduction: Indian Slavery in Historical Context," in *Indian Slavery in Colonial America*, ed. Alan Gallay (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 11.

15. Gallay, "Introduction: Indian Slavery in Historical Context," 23.

16. According to Gallay, there were practical reasons for such laws as well, as among Carolina's proprietors who wished to prevent war with Indians. "South Carolina's Entrance into the Indian Slave Trade," in *Indian Slavery in Colonial America*, ed. Alan Gallay (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 116-117.

17. Margaret Ellen Newell, "Indian Slavery in Colonial New England," in *Indian Slavery in Colonial America*, ed. Alan Gallay (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 38.

18. Ibid., 51.

19. Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 32. Enslaved Africans in the Choctaw and Chickasaw nation in Oklahoma were not freed until 1866. Unlike in other states, the U.S. government actually distributed land to the freedpeople there as part of a post-Civil War treaty. In a sad irony, this land distribution was done in conjunction with efforts to seize Indian lands. See Krauthamer's Chapter Four, "The Treaty of 1866: Emancipation and the Conflicts over Black People's Citizenship Rights and Indian Nations' Sovereignty."

20. Don Jordan and Michael Walsh, *White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 15; also see Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), 15.

21. Kevin Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 27-28. I am using definitions provided by Bales, but there is debate among scholars about the meaning of slavery. For example, James L. Watson distinguishes between "open" and "closed" slave systems. In open systems, the status of slaves might change, as when an African becomes part of the master's kinship group. Slaves in closed systems remain a slave permanently outside the master's kin group. Watson, "Introduction," *Asian and African Systems of Slavery* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980). Also see the course site by the University of Western Ontario's John Gehman for more discussion at <https://instruct.uwo.ca/anthro/211/slavery.htm>.

22. Jordan and Walsh, *White Cargo*, 105.

23. Inikori, "The Struggle Against the Transatlantic Slave Trade," 179.

24. Ibid., 189.

25. Bales, 192. As noted previously, slave raiding did occur in Europe. Italy was among the "most thoroughly ravaged areas" by Barbary pirates, largely because it was "politically fragmented, the coasts for the most part were poorly guarded and without sufficient fortifications, their territorial defenses weak and dispersed." Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, 140.

26. John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1650* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998): Front matter.

27. Ibid., 38-39.

28. Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 77-78.

29. Anne C. Bailey, *African Voices of the Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2005), 58.

30. Ibid., 76-78.

31. Ibid., 9; James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 102.

32. Bailey, *African Voices*, 63.

33. Ibid., 27-28; National Humanities Center, *Capture: Selections from the Narratives of Former Slaves*, 2009, <https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/freedom/text6/capturenarratives.pdf>.

34. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, 30.

35. America's first post-Revolutionary war was fought against the Barbary corsairs, memorialized in the line, "…to the shores of Tripoli," in the "Marines' Hymn."

36. Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 75; also see Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving "Port," 1727-1892* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), 149.

37. Sylviane A. Diouf, "Introduction," in *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, ed. Sylviane A. Diouf (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), xiii.

38. Ibid., xiv.

39. Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 267.

40. Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 69.

41. Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 8.

42. Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks*, 6.

43. John Parker and Richard Rathbone, *Africa: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7; see also Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*.

44. Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy*: *Myth and Reality* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996).

45. For more on this topic, Alan Singer writes about how we teach about slavery in the Americas, "Rethinking How We Teach About Slavery," *Huffington Post* (21 September 2015), <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-singer/rethinking-how-we-teach-a_b_8170108.html>.

46. Gomez, *Exchanging our Country Marks*, 85.

47. Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004), 53.

48. Richard S. Dunn, *A Tale of Two Plantations: Slave Life in Jamaica and Virginia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

49. Olaudah Equiano was born in Benin and kidnapped by the Aro people. He then went through a series of African slave masters before being forced onto a slave ship bound for Barbados. PBS offers the chapter from Equiano's biography detailing these events at <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1h320t.html>.

50. Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "What Does it Mean to Think Historically?" *Perspectives on History* 45, no. 1 (January 2007), <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/january-2007/what-does-it-mean-to-think-historically>.

51. Diouf, "Introduction," xv-xvi.

52. Diouf, "The Last Resort: Redeeming Family and Friends," in *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*, ed. Sylviane A. Diouf (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), 89. Likewise, Barbary pirates were particularly

happy to capture clerics and the upper class, knowing that the church or families of these individuals would be willing, and able, to pay a high ransom for their redemption.

53. Diouf, "Introduction," xvi.

54. Ibid.

55. Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 101.

56. The process drama strategy of tableau is described in Rachel Mattson, "Theater of the Assessed: Drama-Based Pedagogies in the History Classroom," *Radical History Review* 102 (Fall 2008): 99-110.

57. Teachers might hold a "gallery walk" to display the posters; Facing History and Ourselves provides teaching strategies for a gallery walk at <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/gallery-walk>.

58. Trevor R. Getz, *Slavery and Reform in West Africa: Toward Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century Senegal and the Gold Coast* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004), 185-186.

59. Ibid., 186-187.

60. Kwabena O. Akurang-Parry, "'We Shall Rejoice to See the Day When Slavery Shall Cease to Exist': The 'Gold Coast Times,' the African Intelligentsia, and Abolition in the Gold Coast," *History in Africa* 31 (2004): 19-42; Trevor R. Getz and Liz Clarke, *Abina and the Important Men: A Graphic History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Sandra E. Greene, *West African Narratives of Slavery: Texts from Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Ghana* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011).

61. The strategy is explained in detail at <https://www.jigsaw.org>.

62. This and other creative writing ideas are described in Bert Bower and Jim Lobdell, *History Alive! America's Past* (Palo Alto, CA: Teachers' Curriculum Institute, 1999) and Tricia Davis, "How I Learned to Stop Worrying about the Test and to Love Teaching Students to Write Well," in *Teaching History with Big Ideas: A Case of Ambitious Teachers*, ed. S. G. Grant and Jill M. Gradwell (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010).

63. Bales, "Introduction."

64. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, 192.

65. James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything your American History Textbook got Wrong* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 27.

66. Ibid., 192.

67. Howard Zinn, "Why Students Should Study History: An Interview with Howard Zinn," interview by Barbara Miner (1994), 13; teaching activity available from the Zinn Education Project's Teaching A People's History at <https://zinnedproject.org/materials/why-students-should-study-history/>.

Appendix A

Who Enslaved Whom During the Atlantic Slave Trade Era, 1450-1850?

Cases are drawn from descriptions in the paper. Teachers are urged to provide images for each form of slavery using Internet search engines.

Case #1: Around the same time as the Atlantic slave trade (1500-1800), many white Christians lived in fear of being captured and enslaved at the hands of Muslim corsairs (pirates). In the Mediterranean, Barbary pirates seized European and American merchant ships. They also traveled along the European coastlines, capturing peasants and fishermen in Italy, Greece, France, and Spain, going as far north as England and Iceland. Goods and people were hauled off to markets in Algiers, Tunis, and other cities in North Africa and the Balkans—with a share of the slaves and profits going into the hands of local rulers. This slavery was driven by religious revenge as well as greed, and slaves were humiliated, beaten, kept in chains, and, if they were put to the galleys, often worked to death.

Case #2: In the early days of the colonization of North America, Europeans used Native Americans as slaves. Native Americans obtained slaves in wars and sold some of these slaves to colonists so as to avoid enslavement themselves, but also to obtain foreign goods, secure alliances, and enact revenge against others. Although enslavement of Native Americans was outlawed in many colonies as they were considered free peoples with prior rights to the land, colonists found ways to avoid these laws. For example, enslavement was permitted if a Native American was captured in a "just war" because slavery was considered a kinder alternative to execution. Native Americans were also bound into slavery by being reclassified as Africans or taken to court and sentenced to long servitude.

Case #3: Beginning in the late eighteenth century, people in the Chickasaw and Choctaw nations in the southern United States began purchasing and using black slave labor. Due to pressures to assimilate and settle down on the land, according to historian Barbara Krauthamer, "growing numbers of southern Indians regarded material wealth, including slaves and the products of their labor, as the foundation of political and social power." African slaves traveled with their Native American masters to Oklahoma during the Trail of Tears exodus.

Case #4: According to historians Don Jordan and Michael Walsh, indentured servitude was equivalent to white slavery: “The indentured servant system was not designed so much to help migrants get to America or the Caribbean as to provide a cheap and compliant labor force for the cash-crop industry.” As the workers began resisting, “it became necessary to create legal sanctions that included violence and physical restraint” to control them. These white slaves were British convicts (“loitering” and small debts could lead to criminal charges), Irish Catholics, street people, and kidnapped individuals, as well as poor people who had come in search of opportunity (“free willers”). Once in the Americas, these whites were treated as chattel, often worked to death, and denied freedom even after their indentures ended.

Case #5: In the early 1500s, the Spanish initiated the trans-Atlantic slave trade by bringing captives from Africa across the Atlantic to labor in their colonies in the Caribbean. Later, as historian Joseph Inikori explains, colonization of the Americas in the early sixteenth century “catapulted the [trans-Atlantic] trade to heights that completely dwarfed all trade in humans ever recorded in history, especially during the plantation revolution in the Americas, between 1650-1850.” Since most people living in western Africa lived in small, weak states, they were vulnerable to capture by neighbors who lived in stronger states and profited from the trans-Atlantic trade with Europeans.

Case #6: For many Africans, people rather than land represented wealth and power, so rich Africans gathered slaves to enhance their status. These slaves came from the lower classes, as when a family “pawned” their child to pay off their debts (provided the debtor with labor in return for a loan) or a criminal was enslaved. These slaves might also come from outside their ethnic group, as captives from wars. While some slaves became a valued part of their master’s families, others resisted their situation. When the Europeans colonized Africa and outlawed slavery, many African slaves went to colonial courts to try to secure their freedom.

Case #7: The Arab slave trade lasted longer than the trans-Atlantic trade, from 700-1900, and Africans were sent to slavery across the Sahara Desert, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean to Europe and the Middle East and as far away as India and China. While most captives sent to the Americas were males destined for agricultural labor, captives in the Arab trade were mostly female used for domestic service and as concubines. The Qur’an does not forbid slavery, but it promises rewards to those who free their slaves and prohibits the separation of a young child from a mother, so this slavery was generally less brutal than that in the Americas.

Appendix B

Who Was in Control?

"Clues" are from John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1650* (1998) and Anne C. Bailey, *African Voices of the Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame* (2005).

1. Europeans' large ships could not travel into the interior of Africa. Therefore, they could only seize people on the coasts, negotiating with local leaders and middlemen for access to other slaves.
2. Africans could not easily take possession of European ships, so were unable to drive them away.
3. West Africans did not buy or enslave Europeans.
4. Africans had smaller boats that could navigate the rivers and go beyond the coast of Africa, where they found slaves to bring to the Europeans.
5. Some African individuals and African nations, like Asante, became rich and powerful from engaging in this trade.
6. Kings of larger African states protected their own citizens from the trade, as when the leader of Benin put a ban on the sale of male slaves.
7. Europeans provided their African allies with guns, which increased the level of warfare in Africa and enabled the capture of more slaves.
8. Europeans could not travel into the African interior due to life threatening diseases.
9. Most Africans lived in small states or communities, so were not able to protect themselves from more powerful African and white Christian nations.
10. European demands drove the trade in Africa: at first they asked for gold. During the plantation era, they wanted slaves, and, finally, they sought cotton, cocoa, wood, diamonds, and other raw materials to fuel the industrial revolution in Europe.

Appendix C

Could the Enslavement of Africans have been Prevented?

Cases are from *Fighting the Slave Trade* (editor, Sylviane A. Diouf): redemption, Chapter 6; geographical isolation and architectural innovation, Chapter 2; fortresses, Chapter 5; agricultural practices, Chapter 3; natural barriers, Chapter 4; armed resistance, Chapter 8; shipboard revolts, Chapters 9 and 12.

1. Redemption: Redemption is when a person provides one or more persons to a slave trader in order to free their captured friend or family member. In Africa, this meant that a person had to find the captive, a difficult task for those living far from coastlines. If they were lucky enough to locate their relatives before the slave ship sailed, the redeemer had to provide the trader with people or goods that exceeded that person's value in order to free the captive. Recognizing that families of means had more resources to liberate their relatives, traders extracted a higher value for elites.

2. Geographical Isolation: Sudanese Muslims of the Bornu Empire, Kingdom of Barirmi, and the Fulani emirates crossed the Sahara in search of slaves during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. To escape them, Africans in the Lake Chad region moved up into mountains, watching over the lowlands for raiders. When the attackers arrived, people threw "a shower of rocks" to repel them. In a last resort to evade capture, Africans sought shelter in caves and caverns, or tunnels they had dug.

3. Architectural Innovations: The Musgu people live in Central Africa. At the time of the Muslim slave trade, the straw and wood roofs of their houses made them an easy target for the armies of Bornu and Bagirmi (from the Sudan in Northern Africa), who burned homes in pursuit of slaves. The Musgu designed a new structure out of clay and other materials to prevent burning. These homes featured an opening at the top where citizens could watch over the landscape and alert neighbors to the approach of enemies. The dome-shaped houses also blended into the landscape, making them harder to locate.

4. Fortresses: In West Africa, people built walls to defend their villages or their compounds. Capture by raiders was made more difficult by building extremely low entry ways, narrow alleys, and few points of entry to the interior. Walls were made of mud, stone, and shea butter and were strong enough to resist African armies. However, as agricultural fields were

located outside the walls, inhabitants were vulnerable to capture once they left the fortified areas.

5. Shifting Agricultural Practices: To resist Muslim slave raiders in the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries, people in north-central Africa changed their growing practices. They stopped growing sorghum and millet, which required large cleared plots that signaled the presence of nearby villages. Instead, the Africans returned to hunting and gathering. They also began cultivating root crops of manioc that could be grown with little effort on small plots. Hidden below the ground, this source of food was also easier to protect from raiders.

6. Natural Barriers: In the Senegambia region, groups hid their villages in the middle of forests or right next to forested areas. They also planted poisonous plants or thick shrubs around their communities to provide a barrier to the advance of slavers. Tall trees were used as watchtowers to keep an eye out for attackers. In the Bight of Benin, refugees from slave raiding created communities within the lakes and marshes, using canoes to travel from village to village. Their watery setting helped keep away slavers, who were poor swimmers or lacked skills in using canoes, so were more easily repelled by the inhabitants of the lake communities.

7. Armed Resistance: In Igboland (modern-day Nigeria), young boys were trained in using guns, machetes, and other deadly arms to defend their villages. Patrols guarded the communities and defenders shot at slavers through holes in the walls surrounding their villages. In the late nineteenth century, a British military officer described his experiences in Ngwa: "Although the people appeared to be very friendly and peacefully disposed, not a man apparently moved a step without carrying a naked sword in one hand and a rifle at full lock in the other. Even the boys walked out armed with bows and pointed arrows." To increase their strength, some groups allied with neighbors.

8. Attacks on Ships: Onboard slave revolts occurred on about one out of every ten ships. For example, in 1750, a Fula tribesman led a shipboard rebellion among 100 captives. The group succeeded in escaping the ship and, with the assistance of a local chief, formed a free community in the mountains of Sierra Leone. In 1789, slaves on an American brig attacked the captain with an axe to gain their freedom. Not all revolts succeeded. After a chief named Tamba executed African middlemen who had come to take slaves from his village, he was caught and placed onto a ship. He organized a revolt, but was caught and murdered.

Appendix D

Who was Most Likely to Become Captured?

African stories are from Diouf, *Fighting the Slave Trade*, Chapter 6. Christian slave stories are from Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*. Select three to four stories from each category below.

Stories of Elites

Wealthy Africans could get out of slavery through redemption—that is, providing slavers with other people in exchange for their freedom. In one extreme case, a rich old man named Nankedabar secured his freedom by selling twenty-two of his domestic servants. According to testimony, "the rest [of his servants] were so terrified they all ran away from him, and are now living among the mountains of Sierra Leone."

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In an ironic twist, the son of prominent Muslims in Senegal, Job ben Solomon, was captured on his way home from a trip to sell slaves in 1730. His captor was the same ship captain with whom he had been dealing. Though he sent word to his father to dispatch several slaves to release him, the caravan arrived too late, and Solomon found himself enslaved in Maryland. His knowledge of Arabic and aristocratic origins brought him the attention of abolitionists, who helped him return to Africa four years after he was captured.

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Rich and powerful Africans had the means to secure their release from slavery through redemption. According to a French slave trader, an 18-year-old Futa Jallon (in present-day Guinea) princess was redeemed for ten slaves—that is, her family gave ten other people to slavers in return for her freedom.

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Although political and economic elites could buy their way out of slavery, sometimes they were sent into slavery by rivals. In the mid-1700s, a wealthy slave dealer from the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) and eight of his servants were sent into slavery by a rival family with whom the dealer had quarreled. Europeans also punished leaders they disliked. On the Gold Coast, a brother of the Komenda king was sent into slavery because he would not release his servants to fight for the Dutch.

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Upon entering a ship, Barbary pirates kept a sharp eye out for the most nobly dressed passengers. Christian merchants were highly valued, as

their firms would pay for their release. The corsairs could also gain a large ransom for European Jews, who appealed to their families and communities for help. To reduce their risk of capture, rich and well-connected passengers avoided speaking about their background, disguised themselves, or threw their jewelry, swords, and other signs of wealth overboard once the pirates arrived. Even if captured, they were usually able to escape slavery by paying a ransom.

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Bishops and senior clerics were coveted by Barbary pirates as the church was willing to pay high ransoms to prevent their top clergy from becoming slaves in Islamic lands. Clerics tried to hide their status from raiders by dressing as poor peasants, but corsairs might force male captives to strip naked so as to uncover any hidden signs of their background. Even if high-ranked clergymen were taken into custody, they were usually able to secure their freedom by appealing to the church to pay their ransom.

Stories of Commoners

In Cameroon, William Thomas had been taken as a pawn by the husband of a woman with whom his brother had had an affair. The husband asked for 100 goats to free Thomas, but the family did not have the means to procure the goats and sent his younger sister as payment instead. The man rejected her, and eventually Thomas was sold and became a slave in Cuba.

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In the course of large raids on villages, slavers would seize as many people as they could. Family members who managed to escape capture could seek to redeem their relatives. But those who were poor faced the terrible dilemma of deciding which family members to redeem (if any), as they could not afford to free them all.

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Outcast people who had already been enslaved in Africa by Africans or who were accused of witchcraft generally could not be ransomed. As they did not have sympathetic family members to release them, they were therefore vulnerable to being sent from slavery in Africa to enslavement in the Americas.

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Common folk in the Barbary slave raids in Europe were the most likely to become enslaved in North Africa. After seizing a village and taking captives, the corsairs would wait in their ship offshore, giving the locals a day or so to collect ransom. Few peasants or their neighbors had the means to pay or lend victims' families the ransom. Those who managed

to borrow money often became impoverished, as they were required to give up their property or fishing boats to get a loan.

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About three-quarters of the Christian slaves in North Africa were from the poorest classes, taken as peasants or sailors. Since they were so cheap to buy, often less than the cost of a horse, their masters had little incentive to treat them well. Thus, the owners worked the slaves as hard as they could, while providing a minimal amount of care.

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Just as working in plantation fields epitomizes the worst form of labor for Africans in the Americas, rowing in the galleys of Turkish ships represented the most brutal work for Christian slaves. Those who were assigned this job were the least skilled, poorest captives—peasants, fishers, and ordinary soldiers or sailors. Nobles or skilled workers, if they were not ransomed, would be assigned to less taxing labor. Life in the galleys was described by a contemporary observer as "a real, living hell for these poor wretches"—chained to the bench, with poor rations and little room to sleep, some rowers were simply worked to their death.