

Social Science Docket

Published by the New York and New Jersey
State Councils for the Social Studies

Table of Contents Volume 5 Number 2 Summer-Fall, 2005

New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance

The “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance” curriculum guide was developed as part of the “Gateway to the City” project, a recipient of a Department of Education Teaching American History grant. The project was a collaboration between the New York City Department of Education, the Brooklyn Historical Society and Hofstra University. The curriculum guide is designed to support the New York State human rights curriculum, state learning standards, and document-based instruction in history. A limited number of copies of the 268-page curriculum guide are available from Alan Singer, Department of Curriculum and Teaching, 128 Hagedorn Hall, 119 Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY 11549. The full guide with additional documents is available at http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/alan_j_singer.

<i>Introduction - New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance</i>	2
<i>Whom do we choose to commemorate?</i>	11
<i>What was life like for Africans in the New Amsterdam colony?</i>	12
<i>What was life like for enslaved Africans during the colonial era?</i>	16
<i>How did slavery develop into a formal institution in the British colony of New York?</i>	19
<i>What was life like for enslaved Africans at Lloyd Manor on Long Island?</i>	25
<i>What is the New York City African Burial Ground Memorial?</i>	29
<i>What was life like for enslaved Africans in the Hudson Valley during the colonial era?</i>	31
<i>How did African Americans in New York resist slavery in the colonial era?</i>	35
<i>How did the British Colony of New York seek to control enslaved Africans?</i>	39
<i>The New York City Slave Conspiracy Trial (1741): Who were the guilty parties?</i>	42
<i>Where did New York’s “Founders” stand on the abolition of slavery?</i>	45
<i>What was life like for African Americans in upstate New York?</i>	47
<i>What were race relations like in Brooklyn (Kings County)?</i>	51
<i>Why did New Yorkers debate voting rights for African Americans?</i>	56
<i>What role did White New Yorkers play in the battle over slavery as the nation approached Civil War?</i>	58
<i>Why did the Fugitive Slave Law spur resistance to slavery in New York State?</i>	61
<i>Frederick Douglass: Should African Americans celebrate the Fourth of July?</i>	68
<i>What was New York State’s role on the Underground Railroad?</i>	71
<i>John Brown: Martyr or Religious Fanatic? Freedom fighter or traitor and terrorist?</i>	75
<i>What was New York City’s role in the illegal 19th century trans-Atlantic Slave Trade?</i>	76
<i>How did New York City’s economic and political elite respond to the threat of Southern Secession?</i>	80

Introduction - New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance

by Alan Singer, Hofstra University

In opinion essays in *The New York Times*, Brent Staples (Staples, 2000: IV, 18:1) and Eric Foner (Foner, 2000) challenged historians and teachers to rethink the way we think about and teach about slavery in the United States, especially slavery and the Northern states. According to Foner, “(o)n the eve of the Civil War, the economic value of slaves in the United States was \$3 billion in 1860 currency [approximately \$60 billion today], more than the combined value of all the factories, railroads and banks in the country. Much of the North’s economic prosperity derived from what Abraham Lincoln, in his second inaugural address, called ‘the bondman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil.’”

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

The “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance” curriculum guide opens with an examination of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and then follows the history of New York State from the original Dutch settlement at the beginning of the seventeenth century through the end of the American Civil War. It focuses on the position and contributions of people of African ancestry in New York during this period and on the roles played by the citizens of New York in both maintaining and challenging the slave system. The curriculum guide is designed to be part of the New York State human rights curriculum, to help students achieve New York State social studies standards, and to facilitate document-based instruction that prepares students to be historians, social scientists and critical thinkers. Major document collections consulted include Aptheker, 1973; Donnan, 1969; Katz, 1995; and O’Callaghan, 1856. It is organized chronologically and modeled on the state’s Great Irish Famine curriculum guide (<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyssa/gif/curriculum.html>). While the opening sections focus on the downstate area, other regions of the state are included as European settlers spread north and west. The entire “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance” curriculum guide with additional primary source documents is available at http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/alan_j_singer.

Historical Background

The voyage of Christopher Columbus from Spain to the Caribbean in 1492 set in motion forces that transformed the world. As the nations of Western Europe competed for trade and colonies, they used the labor of enslaved Africans, the indigenous population of the Western Hemisphere and indentured Europeans, the resources and land of the Americas, and trade with East Asia, to amass a level and concentration of wealth previously unknown in the world. The investment of this wealth in building the physical infrastructure of European nations, in military might, in new world plantations, in creating commercial and banking networks, and later in new technologies and industries, was an essential element in the nascent industrial revolution in Great Britain and eventually led to European global domination (Williams, 1944; Blackburn, 1997: 572-573).

A major factor in the global transformation was the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, which was dominated in different periods by Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands,

England and North Americans from the United States. Between 1600 and the 1860s, the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade provided an estimated eleven million enslaved African workers who produced valuable cash crops, principally sugar, but also tobacco, indigo, rice and later cotton, on new world plantations. This vast forced migration changed the demographic and cultural patterns of the world and provided the profits that financed industrial capitalism. For background on the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade see Blackburn, 1997; Braudel, 1982; Klein, 1999; Thomas, 1997; Walvin, 1999; and Williams, 1944.

For most of their first 200 years of history (1624-1824), the territories that would become New York City and New York State were lightly populated and on the margins of these changes. While enslaved Africans were a major portion of the population (between one-fifth and one-third in some counties) and workforce in the “downstate” area (Long Island, New York City and the Hudson River Valley), the growth of the slave system in New York was restricted by the

failure to develop a major commercial cash crop for export. For background on Africans in New York see Gellman & Quigley, 2003; Hodges, 1999; Katz, 1997; McManus, 1966.

Gradually during this era, the New York region (both city and state) grew in importance. The population of what would be New York State increased from 19,000 people in 1700, to 200,000 in 1780, and to over 1.3 million in 1820. By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, New York City was a major economic, political and social leader in the new North American nation, the United States of America, and in the global system previously dominated by Western European countries. Even though a gradual emancipation act was passed in 1799 and New Yorkers celebrated the end of slavery in the state in 1827, the port of New York continued as the financial center of the illegal trans-Atlantic Slave Trade up until the 1860s (Foner, P., 1941).

Complicity's Deep Roots

New York's complicity with slavery had deep roots and involved prominent individuals. For example, the October 2, 1738 issue of *The New York Weekly Journal* included an advertisement calling for the recapture of a runaway fleeing from his Dutchess County "master." He was described as "a copper colored Negro fellow named Jack, aged about 30 years, speaks nothing but English and reads English." A reward of "forty shillings and all reasonable charges" was to be given to whomever "takes up said run away and secures him" or gives notice of him to John Peter Zenger (Hodges & Brown, 1994, 30). Zenger, whom the history text books honor as an early champion of freedom of the press, financed this commitment to "freedom" through complicity with slavery.

In 18th century colonial New York, several well-known families, including the Van Courtlandts, the Schuylers, the van Hornes, the Phillipps and the Livingstons were involved in the slave trade. It is estimated that between one-quarter and one-third of New York City's approximately four hundred merchants participated. Philip Livingston, second lord of the Livingston manor in Dutchess County, conducted extensive trade with the West Indies, including importing enslaved Africans, and was probably the merchant most involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Besides being a landed aristocrat and a slave trader, Livingston was also a benefactor of Yale

University, a New York City alderman, a representative at the 1754 Colonial Convention at Albany, a delegate to the Continental Congress, and a signer of the United States Declaration of Independence. Numerous places in the Hudson Valley still bear his family name and former family homes and estates are state and national historic sites.

Philip Livingston was one of the delegates from New York to sign the Declaration of Independence. Others, Francis Lewis, William Floyd and Lewis Morris, also enslaved Africans. Robert Livingston, one of Philip's sons and his business partner in the slave trade, served on committees drafting the Declaration of Independence and the first state constitution.

19th Century Sugar and Cotton Merchants

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

The city's merchant, political and religious elites were inextricably tied into the international system of exploitation of unfree labor for profit. Some indirectly profited from the agricultural commodities, especially sugar and cotton, produced by an enslaved work force. During the 1850s, *The New York Times* regularly published updates on the Cuban sugar market for New York City merchants and bankers in reports issued by a special correspondent that were delivered by steam ship. A front page article in *The New York Times* on November 15, 1852 explained the workings of the Cuban sugar industry, which paid investors two and a half times the normal interest rate on loans and which found it more profitable to smuggle in newly enslaved Africans than to allow for the internal reproduction of its work force.

William Havemeyer, elected mayor of New York City in 1845 and 1848 and again in 1872, was a prominent business leader, director of the Merchants' Exchange Bank, president of the Bank of North America, and a major investor in the Pennsylvania Coal Company, the Long Island Railroad and numerous insurance companies. Havemeyer launched

his successful political and business careers from the family's sugar refining business. First based in Manhattan and then in Williamsburg, Brooklyn (where a street still bears the Havemeyer name), it later evolved into the American Sugar Company and Domino Sugar. The raw material that provided the initial profit for all of these ventures, sugar, was imported from the deep south and the Caribbean, especially Cuba, which in 1860 produced over a quarter of the world's sugar supply. In all of these places, sugar was produced by slave labor.



Citibank offices at 111 Wall Street in New York City occupy the same site as Moses Taylor's 19th century office at 55 South Street.

Moses Taylor, a sugar merchant with offices on South Street at the East River seaport, a finance capitalist and an industrialist, as well as a banker, was another leading member of New York City's financial community. He was a member of the Chamber of Commerce and a major stockholder, board member or officer in firms that later merged with or developed into Citibank, Con Edison, Bethlehem Steel and ATT. Taylor earned commissions for brokering the sale of Cuban sugar in the port of New York, as well as additional fees for exchanging currency and negotiating the Custom's House. He supervised the investment of profits by the sugar planters in United States banks, gas companies, railroads, and real estate, purchased and shipped supplies and machinery to

Cuba, operated six of his own boats and numerous chartered vessels in the Cuban trade, repaired and equipped other boats with goods and provisions, provided sugar planters with financing to arrange for land purchases and the acquisition of a labor force, and even supervised the planters' children when they came to New York City as students or to serve as apprentices for mercantile firms.

As a result of his success in the sugar trade, Taylor became a member of the board of the City Bank in 1837, and served as its president from 1855 until his death in 1882. In the nineteenth century, City Bank, a predecessor of today's Citibank, primarily issued short term credits to locally based merchants to facilitate the import-export trade. Taylor's personal resources and role as business agent for the leading exporter of Cuban sugar to the United States proved invaluable to the bank, helping it survive financial panics in 1837 and 1857 that bankrupted many of its competitors.

The financing and operation of the Southern cotton trade and its ties with New York City merchants was detailed in an 1852 report to Congress. Cotton production in the South was a major source of profit and employment for shipping, banking, insurance and textile industries that were based in New York and other Northern cities. According to first annual report of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York in 1859, even when the Europe-bound cotton trade was not shipped through the port of New York, New York City merchants and bankers often financed the exchange. As a result of their financing of the cotton trade, Southern planters owed Northern merchants and bankers an estimated \$200 million dollars at the outbreak of the Civil War.

New York's Merchant Elite

The attitude of New York's merchant elite towards slavery was captured in a passage from the journal of Samuel J. May that describes an incident at a meeting of the American Antislavery Society in May, 1835. According to May's account, "I was sitting upon the platform of the Houston Street Presbyterian Church in New York, when I was surprised to see a gentleman enter and take his seat who, I knew, was a partner in one of the most prominent mercantile houses in the city. He had not been seated long before he beckoned me to meet him at the door. I did so. 'Please walk out with me, sir' said he, 'I have something of great importance to communicate.' When we had reached the sidewalk he said, with considerable emotion and

emphasis, ‘Mr. May, we are not such fools as not to know that slavery is a great evil, a great wrong. But it was consented to by the founders of our Republic. It was provided for in the Constitution of our Union. A great portion of the property of the Southerners is invested under its sanction; and the business of the North, as well as the South, has become adjusted to it. There are millions upon millions of dollars due from Southerners to the merchants and mechanics of this city alone, the payment of which would be jeopardized by any rupture between the North and the South. We cannot afford, sir, to let you and your associates succeed in your endeavor to overthrow slavery. It is not a matter of principle with us. It is a matter of business necessity. We cannot afford to let you succeed. And I have called you out to let you know, and to let your fellow-laborers know, that we do not mean to allow you to succeed. We mean, sir,’ said he, with increased emphasis - ‘we mean, sir, to put you Abolitionists down - by fair means if we can, by foul means if we must’” (Katz, 1995: 172).

19th Century Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Some of New York City’s merchants and bankers profited directly by financing and participating in the illegal Atlantic Slave trade. They were generally able to avoid arrest and prosecution under laws defining slave trading as piracy (punishable by death) through a legal technicality that limited the jurisdiction of American courts to United States citizens. Between 1837 and 1860, 74 cases were tried but there were few convictions and punishment tended to be minimal. In 1856, a New York City deputy-marshal declared that the business of out-fitting slavers had never been pursued “with greater energy than at the present. . . It is seldom that one or more vessels cannot be designated at the wharves, respecting which there is evidence that she is either in or has been concerned in the traffic [to Cuba].” The men who smuggled enslaved Africans referred to themselves as “blackbirders” and their illegal human cargo as “black ivory.” The British counsel claimed that out of 170 known slave trading expeditions for the Cuba slave market between 1859 and 1862, 74 were believed to have sailed from New York City.

In memoirs published in 1864, Captain James Smith, a convicted slave trader, claimed that in 1859 eighty-five ships capable of carrying between thirty and sixty thousand enslaved Africans were outfitted in the port of New York to serve the slave markets of

Cuba. Smith described New York as “the chief port in the world for the Slave Trade. It is the greatest place in the universe for it. Neither in Cuba nor in the Brazils is it carried on so extensively. Ships that convey Slaves to the West Indies and South America are fitted out in New York. . . . New York is our headquarters. . . I can go down to South Street, and go into a number of houses that help fit out ships for the business.” The trade was so profitable that on one voyage, a ship that “cost \$13,000 to fit her out completely,” delivered a human cargo worth “\$220,000” to Cuba (Katz, 1995: 30-31).



The restaurant on South and Fulton Streets in New York City where slave traders met .

Political Support for the Slave System

The leading booster of New York City’s economic ties with the slave South was probably Fernando Wood. As a Congressman in the 1840s, Wood was a strong supporter of slavery and the South and he continued his support when he became Mayor of New York City in the 1850s. On January 8, 1861, *The New York Times* published the transcript of Mayor Wood’s annual report to the city’s Common Council. In this message, Wood spoke about the city’s options as the United States federal union appeared to be dissolving. He called on the city to declare its own independence to better facilitate continued trade with the slave South.

Wood’s sentiments were supported by the *New York Herald* and the *Journal of Commerce*. The

Herald published a statement by department store magnet Alexander Stewart charging that “the refusal at Washington to concede costs us millions daily.” The *Journal of Commerce* warned President-elect Lincoln that “[t]here are a million and a half mouths to be fed daily in this city and its dependencies; and they will not consent to be starved by any man’s policies.” Towards the end of the war, Wood returned to Congress where he continued to champion the Southern cause and opposed the “anti-Slavery Amendment,” the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, as a violation of private property rights.

Other leading individuals and institutions bear responsibility for New York’s complicity with slavery and the slave trade. Samuel F. B. Morse, a well-known artist and inventor, founder and the first president of the National Academy of Design, and professor at New York University, was twice a candidate for mayor of New York City as an active opponent of immigration to the United States. Morse was also a defender of slavery and wrote that it was a positive good that should be extended throughout the country. His career is commemorated by a statue in New York City’s Central Park. Another Central Park statue honors Dr. J. Marion Sims, founder of the Woman’s Hospital of the State of New York, who developed a procedure to assist women injured during childbirth by experimenting, without anesthesia, on enslaved African American women.

A leading New York apologist for slavery was Roman Catholic Archbishop John Hughes. In 1853 and 1854, Hughes traveled in Cuba and the American South where he was a guest on a number of plantations and witnessed the slave system first hand. In May, 1854, Hughes delivered a sermon at old St. Patrick’s Cathedral (in what is now Soho), where he discussed his experiences. Hughes cited passages from the Gospel according John to justify slavery, comparing the slave master to the father of a family. Hughes claimed to recognize that “slavery is an evil,” but declared it was “not an absolute and unmitigated evil” because it brought Africans to Christianity. In his column in the *Metropolitan Record*, he wrote: “We of course believe that no genuine Christian – no decent man – would be engaged in this kind of business: still, we cannot discover the crime, even of the slaver, in snatching them from the butcheries of their native land.”

Other New Yorkers actively fought against full citizenship rights for African Americans even after

they were emancipated. At an 1821 New York State Constitutional Convention, John Ross of Genesee County, Erastus Root of Delaware County, Samuel Young of Saratoga County and Chief Justice of the New York State Supreme Court Ambrose Spencer, representing Albany, supported a resolution that free African Americans, already barred from serving in the militia, be denied the right to vote (Gellman & Quigley, 2003: 105-110, 114-117, 125-126, 131-134). In 1834, riots broke out in New York City and pro-abolitionist churches and businesses and African American institutions, including the African school house on Orange Street, were damaged. The *Journal of Commerce*, founded by Samuel F.B. Morse, condemned the rioters, but blamed the riots on the “incendiarism” and “indiscrete zeal” of the abolitionist. Even movements identified with the struggle to prevent the extension of slavery into new western territories, such as the “Barnburner” Democrats of upstate New York, often espoused racist ideas.

Civil War Era Draft Riots

One of the most disturbing events in the history of the United States and New York State was the Civil War Draft Riot in New York City in 1863. The Draft Riot was the largest urban upheaval of the nineteenth century in the United States. For four days, White mobs roamed through Manhattan in defiance of the police and a small garrison of federal troops. More than one hundred people, mostly African Americans, were killed during the riot and an estimated twelve hundred people were injured (Katz, 87-96).

The Draft Riot was in response to an unpopular military conscription law passed by Congress and signed by President Abraham Lincoln in May, 1863. The new law allowed the affluent to avoid military service by providing substitutes or by paying \$300. Many of the first draftees in New York were slated to be Irish immigrants who were too poor to pay this tax.

New York City was ripe for an explosion when the draft lottery began on Saturday, July 11. Blacks and White immigrant workers were often pitted against each other in competition for low paying jobs. “Copperhead” newspapers and politicians, including former Mayor Fernando Wood and Governor Horatio Seymour, contributed to the tension in the city by stirring up anti-war sentiment. The last straw was the release of the casualty lists from the Battle of Gettysburg that same weekend.

On Monday, July 13, a mass protest against the draft in New York City was transformed into a riot that attacked government buildings and the pro-war press, and eventually turned on the city's African American population. From newspaper accounts, it appears that the rioters, most of whom were probably Irish immigrants, turned on the City's Black population after police had opened fire on protesters killing and wounding many people. Rioters destroyed the city's orphanage for Black children, attacked and lynched African Americans caught on the streets, and threatened employers who hired Black workers.

Hundreds of African American refugees from the rioting escaped to Weeksville and other largely Black settlements in Brooklyn. On the fourth day of the riot, federal troops from the Union army at Gettysburg arrived in the city and finally restored peace.

Campaign for Abolition and Citizenship Rights

At the same time that some prominent New Yorkers were deeply enmeshed in the slave system, others, both Blacks and Whites, challenged and tried to overturn it. In the 1770s, Gouverneur Morris helped draft the first New York State constitution and proposed a motion, which was defeated, to abolish slavery in New York. Morris later represented Pennsylvania at the Federal Constitutional Convention, where he opposed constitutional protection for slavery, the slave trade and the three-fifths compromise.

Soon after the Revolutionary War, the New York Manumission Society, under the leadership of John Jay and Alexander Hamilton, helped purchase freedom for enslaved Africans and in 1787 it established an African Free School to provide instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic. The Society also organized boycotts of merchants and newspapers that supported slavery and won a series of unlawful enslavement cases, defending the freedom of Black New Yorkers who were threatened with being sent to the south as slaves.

Aaron Burr, a leading Jeffersonian Republican in New York, was a unyielding opponent of slavery who argued that Whites and Blacks were created equal and that women and men should have the same political rights. In 1785, Burr introduced an unsuccessful bill in the state legislature to immediately end slavery in New York. Despite this failure, he campaigned for the next fourteen years against New York's slave-owning landlords and farmers, and artisans who feared job competition from freed Blacks. Ultimately, Burr was a major anti-slavery ally of Governor Jay when the New

York legislature agreed to gradual emancipation in 1799. Thomas Emmet, who arrived in the United States from Ireland in 1804, practiced law and became Attorney General of New York State. In one of his first cases, he was hired by the Society of Friends to defend several "runaway slaves" from a neighboring state who were captured in New York.

In the decades leading up to the Civil War, many New Yorkers played prominent roles in the broad alliance that coalesced into the American abolitionist movement. Lewis and Arthur Tappan, New York City merchants, were founders and officers of the American Anti-Slavery Society. At their urging, New York's leading abolitionists formed a committee to aid in the defense of the Africans on the *Amistad*. Lewis Tappan was largely responsible for their sympathetic portrayal as dignified human beings in the press. The first annual convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society was held in New York City in 1834. By 1837, there were 274 local anti-slavery societies across the state.

In the 1840s and 1850s, New Yorkers opposed slavery, especially its extension into the western territories, as members of the major political parties and of minor, specifically anti-slavery, parties. Within the New York State Democratic party, a "Barnburner" faction under the leadership of former President Martin Van Buren, attempted to challenge the hold of pro-slavery Southern Democrats on the national political party. New York State Governor (1839-1843) and United States Senator (1843-1861) William H. Seward, a Whig, was one of the most outspoken anti-slavery politicians of the period. An opponent of the Fugitive Slave Act, he defended runaway slaves in court and helped the Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman by hiding fugitive slaves in his Auburn, New York home. Chester Arthur, who later became President of the United States (1881-1885), was a leading New York opponent of slavery and racial discrimination. As a lawyer, Arthur helped secure a court decision that enslaved Africans brought into New York while in transit between slave states were free. He also successfully fought to desegregate New York City street cars. William Seward and Chester Arthur, founding members of the Republican Party, were both graduates of Union College in Schenectady, which was a hotbed for abolitionist activity.

In April, 1840, anti-slavery forces from around the country gathered in Albany where they formed the Liberty Party and nominated candidates for president and vice-president of the United States. A major force

in this group was Gerrit Smith of Utica, a philanthropist, social reformer and later a Congressman. Smith used his family's fortune to establish communities for formerly enslaved Africans, including one in North Elba, New York. He was also a financial supporter of John Brown's campaign against the extension of slavery into Kansas and was implicated in Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry. In 1848, members of the Liberty, Democratic and Whig parties held a convention in Buffalo where they founded the Free Soil Party, a precursor of the Republican Party, that demanded that the new western territories be reserved for "free soil," "free labor" and "free men."

Segments of the New York press also played an active role in the battle to end slavery in the United States. Leading abolitionist newspapers included the *North Star*, published by Frederick Douglass in Rochester, and the *Albany Evening Journal*, edited by Thurlow Weed. William Cullen Bryant, a poet, editor of the *New York Evening Post*, and a founder of the Republican Party, was a staunch defender of the free speech rights of abolitionists and his poem, "The African Chief," attacked the inhumanity of slavery and the slave trade. Horace Greeley, the founder and an editor of the *New York Tribune*, took a strong moral position favoring the abolition of slavery. In an open letter to President Lincoln, Greeley complained about the Union army's unwillingness to free slaves in captured territory and criticized Lincoln for failing to make slavery the dominant issue of the war, compromising moral principles for political motives.

Among the state's anti-slavery religious leaders was the Reverend Henry Highland Garnet, an African American who was himself a former slave. In an 1843 speech at an abolitionist conference in Buffalo, New York, Garnet called upon slaves in the South to rise up in revolt.

"Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and the hour. Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. You cannot be more oppressed than you have been, you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. Rather die freemen than live to be slaves. Remember that you are four millions!" (Aptheker, 1973:226-233).

Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, the brother of author Harriet Beecher Stowe, was a leading opponent of slavery. Beecher raised money in his Brooklyn church to purchase the freedom of slaves in symbolic protests against the institution. In a sermon delivered in

January, 1861, in the midst of the nation's secession crisis, Beecher declared that "(w)e who dwell in the North are not without responsibility for this sin. . . . When our Constitution was adopted; . . . All the institutions were prepared for liberty, and all the public men were on the side of liberty." However, because of the "delinquency of the North," the nation's commitment to liberty was "sacrificed." He calls the North's failure to preserve liberty "an astounding sin! It is an unparalleled guilt!"



Building on Main Street in downtown Rochester where Frederick Douglass printed *The North Star*.

Erie Canal, "Burned Over" District and UGRR

Because of commerce and the availability of work on the Erie Canal, Buffalo (10), Albany (13), Rochester (18), Troy (24), Syracuse (30) and Utica (35) were each counted amongst the largest urban areas in the United States at the time of the Civil War. Many of the leading opponents of slavery in New York State and the United States lived in these upstate cities and in smaller towns on the canal system, which was a major route on the Underground Railroad's "freedom trail" to Canada. In addition, in the 1830s, the "burned-over" district, stretching between Troy and Buffalo, was the center of an evangelical religious revival that was strongly committed to social reform and opposition to slavery.

Besides people already mentioned in this essay, anti-slavery activists from this region of New York included William W. Brown, a free African American,

who organized the African American population of Buffalo to resist slave catchers; the Reverend Thomas James, an escaped slave who settled in Rochester; Jermain Loguen, station master of the local underground railroad depot in Syracuse; Sojourner Truth (Hurley and Kingston) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Johnstown and Seneca Falls), who were also leading advocates of women's rights; and Solomon Northup, whose memoir recounted his experience as a free African American from Saratoga Springs who was kidnapped and sold into slavery in the South. Harriet Tubman (Auburn) and John Brown (North Elba) were also proud to call upstate New York their home.

Curriculum Goals and Themes

Among the goals of this document-based curriculum guide is to engage students as historians as they sift through primary source materials on the history of New York State's involvement with slavery and the slave trade and struggles for their abolition. It is designed to help students begin to understand the complexity of United States and New York State history. The ten major themes from New York State history imbedded in the curriculum guide include:

1. Slavery, until its abolition in New York State in the beginning of the 19th century, the trans-Atlantic slave trade even after it was declared illegal in 1808, the financing of slave plantations in the South and the Caribbean, the shipping of slave-produced products, and the manufacture of goods using the commodities of slavery were integral to the prosperity of New Netherland, the British colony of New York and New York State.
2. Many New Yorkers implicated in the slave system were politically influential and economically powerful and shaped the policies of the state and nation. A number of prominent individuals and the founders of the state and national governments were participants in and profited from the slave system.
3. In order to preserve the union and protect their own profits from products produced by enslaved workers, many New York and national leaders who opposed the expansion of slavery into the West were willing to compromise with Southern slave owners and to support the slave system in the South even after the outbreak of the Civil War.
4. Despite the Declaration of Independence's promise of human equality, there were ideological inconsistencies in the early nation. Many leading New Yorkers, including some White opponents of slavery, believed in the racial inferiority of African Americans, opposed full political rights for African Americans and endorsed their recolonization in Africa. Some of the most radical abolitionists in New York who accepted Black equality were unwilling to support equal rights for women. Significantly, Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony were major allies in the struggles for rights for both African Americans and women.
5. The slave system and racism contributed to an endemic fear of uprisings by New York's African population during the colonial era. Rumors of potential rebellion led to "witch hunts." Africans who fought for their freedom in the colonial era were summarily tried, tortured and executed. Suspects were tortured until they confessed to "crimes" and implicated others. Minor infractions of the slave code were severely punished. On a number of occasions violent mobs attacked African Americans and White abolitionists.
6. At the same time, New York State offered a safe haven to many Africans who escaped from slavery and a place where free African Americans could organize politically with White allies to end the slave system and achieve full citizenship. New Yorkers, both Black and White, were active participants and national leaders in political campaigns to end slavery and to resist the oppression of Black people.
7. African Americans in New York resisted slavery through active and passive means. They resisted slavery by running away to freedom, organizing their own cultural and religious institutions, building families and communities, openly or surreptitiously disobeying slaveowners, and through open revolt.
8. Resistance to slavery was often violent. Enslaved Africans in New York openly rebelled against slavery during the colonial era. Many supported the British against forces fighting for American independence in an effort to achieve their own emancipation. Leading New York abolitionists, both Black and White, violated the law and physically prevented the recapture of runaway slaves. Some New York abolitionists were supporters of John Brown's military campaigns against

the slave system and were implicated in his armed assault on a federal weapon's arsenal in 1859.

9. The histories of many parts of New York were influenced by slavery and the slave trade and the struggles to end them. Because of the pattern of settlement in the 17th and 18th centuries, slavery in New York State was concentrated on Long Island, in New York City and its surrounds, and in the Hudson River Valley up through Albany. In the 19th century, the port of New York functioned as a major international center for financing the slave trade and the trade in goods produced by slave labor.

10. New York was a major center for abolitionist and anti-abolitionist movements and publications. Because of their proximity to Canada, work opportunities, and religious and other social movements, regions of New

York State and cities located along the route of the Erie Canal played major roles on the underground railroad and in anti-slavery agitation during the 19th century. Toward the middle of the 19th century, the availability of land in the North country made it a safe haven for free Blacks and escaped slaves who sought a place where they could build families and communities.

Note: Many of the primary source documents used in this collection come from an era when spelling and grammar were less standardized and people, in general, were less literate. Other documents use the British version for spelling certain words. Except for some of the oldest documents, we have kept the original spelling to provide students with a sense of the language from that era. Teachers, however, may prefer to edit some of these documents.

Selected References (Full references are available on-line):

- Aptheker, H., ed. (1973). *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, v. 1. Secaucus, NJ: Citadel.
- Blackburn, R. (1997). *The Making of New York Slavery*. New York: Verso.
- Braudel, F. (1982). *Civilization and Capitalism 15th-18th Century*, v. III, *The Perspective of the World*. NY: Harper & Row.
- Donnan, E., ed. (1969). *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave trade to America*, v. III. New York: Octagon Books.
- Foner, E. (2000, July 13). "Slavery's Fellow Travelers," *The New York Times*.
- Foner, P. (1941). *Business and Slavery, The New York Merchants and the Irrepressible Conflict*. NY: Russell and Russell.
- Gellman, D. & Quigley, D., eds. (2003). *Jim Crow New York*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hodges, G. and Brown, A., ed. (1994). *"Pretends to be Free": Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey*. New York: Garland Publishers.
- Katz, W. (1995). *Eyewitness, A Living Documentary of the African American Contribution to American History*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Katz, W. (1997). *Black Legacy, A history of New York's African Americans*. New York: Atheneum.
- Klein, H. (1999). *The Atlantic Slave Trade*. NY: Cambridge University Press.
- McManus, E. (1966). *A History of Negro Slavery in New York*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- New York State Education Department (2001). *New York State Great Irish Famine Curriculum Guide*. Albany, NY: New York State Education Department.
- O'Callaghan, E., ed. (1856). *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York; Procured in Holland, England and France*. Albany, NY: Weeds, Parsons.
- Staples, B. (2000, January 9). "History Lessons From the Slaves of New York," *The New York Times*.
- Thomas, H. (1997). *The Slave Trade, 1440-1870*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Walvin, J. (1999). *The Slave Trade*. Phoenix Mill, UK: Sutton.
- Williams, E. (1944). *Capitalism and Slavery*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

AIM: Whom do we choose to commemorate?

Source: www.centralpark2000.com/database/morse.html

A number of well known figures in United States, including Presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, owned enslaved African Americans.

1. In your opinion., should Americans honor “heroes” who were slave holders, promoted racist ideas or profited from the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade?
2. Examine the statements about Samuel F. B. Morse and Dr. James Marion Sims. Both men are honored by statues in New York City’s Central Park. In your opinion, should these statues remain? Explain.

Samuel F. B. Morse [Statue unveiled 1871]

Born. Charlestown, MA, 1791 • died. New York, 1872

A statue of Samuel Morse, an American painter and inventor, is located at the entrance of Inventor’s Gate on the east side of Central Park near 72nd Street. Morse is shown standing next to his best known invention and holding a strip of Morse Code. Morse was a founder and first President of the National Academy of Design established in 1825. Its office is just outside the park.

Did you know that in his journal, Morse wrote:
“Slavery . . . is not sin. It is a social condition ordained from the beginning of the world for the wisest purposes, benevolent and disciplinary, by Divine Wisdom”?

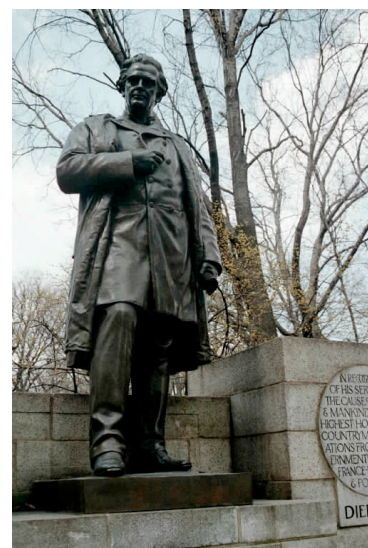


Dr. James Marion Sims [Statue unveiled 1892]

born. Lancaster Co., SC, 1813 • died. New York, 1883

On the outside wall of Central Park near 103rd street is a statue of Dr. James Marion Sims. Because he developed new surgical procedures and surgical instruments, Dr. Sims is honored as a pioneer and founder of modern medicine and gynecology. His work as a doctor helped to save the lives of women with childbirth problems, including enslaved African women. In 1853, Dr. Sims moved to New York City and established the Woman’s Hospital of the State of New York. He later established the Cancer Hospital, which is now known as the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

Did you know that between 1845 and 1849, Dr. Sims performed experimental gynecological operations on countless enslaved African women in the American south including over 34 experimental operations on a single woman without the benefit of anesthesia or any type of antiseptic? Many of the women he experimented on lost their lives to infection.



AIM: What was life like for Africans in the New Amsterdam colony?

Lesson developed by Douglas Cioffi, Kellenberg Memorial High School, Uniondale, NY

BACKGROUND: In 1625, the Dutch West India Company established the village of New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island. The first people of African ancestry in the colony were eleven men who arrived in 1626. They had Portuguese names and were probably captured from either Portuguese or Spanish ships. These men worked for the company and were assigned to clear land, plant and harvest crops, build houses, roads, bridges and fortifications. Two years later, three enslaved Angola women were brought into the colony. At the time, New Amsterdam was little more than a muddy village with thirty wooden houses and a population of less than two hundred people. During Dutch colonial rule enslaved Africans fortified a wall along a path that would later be known as Wall Street, constructed a road to Harlem on the northern end of Manhattan Island, helped build Fort Orange in what is now Albany, and worked on farms in the Hudson River Valley. They were so important to the economic development of the Dutch colony that officials passed a series of laws in 1640, 1648 and 1658 to prevent escape and in 1646, the Dutch West India Company promised to provide “as many Negroes” to the colonists as they were “willing to purchase at a fair price.” A 1642 Dutch print with the heading “Nieu Amsterdam” shows two large European settlers (a man and a woman) in the foreground, with Africans behind and below, doing the physical labor needed to make the colony economically successful. Note: While the advertisement for a slave sale actually comes from the British colonial period it is illustrative of the time.

MOTIVATION: Brainstorm prior student knowledge about slavery in the New World.

ACTIVITIES: Students will use the documents in this “History-Mystery” to discover what life was like for Africans in the New Amsterdam colony.

KEY QUESTIONS: What was the role of the Dutch colonial government in regulating slavery? What rights, if any, were there for Africans in the New Amsterdam colony?

SUMMARY QUESTION: Based on your research, how were Africans treated in the Dutch New Amsterdam colony?

HOMEWORK: Using the information gathered from the history mystery, students create an encyclopedia entry on the African American Experience in the Dutch New Amsterdam Colony.

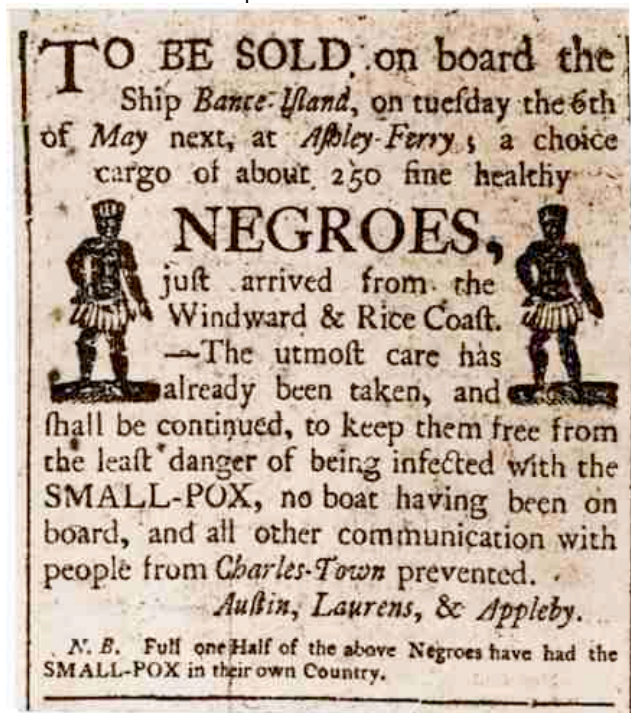
APPLICATION: Was the way slavery was practiced in the Dutch New Amsterdam colony similar to or different from slavery in other places throughout the world?

In addition to the essay “New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance,” the first section of the on-line version of the curriculum guide contains discussions on teaching about slavery and New York State social studies standards; additional bibliographical information and a list of web resources; lesson ideas for projects and the use of “history-mysteries” to prepare elementary school students for document-based essays; a directory of Underground Railroad sites in New York State; suggestions for using literature for teaching about slavery in elementary, middle and high school classrooms. It also includes document-based lessons on the Triangle Trade, Middle Passage, and conditions in the U.S. south, and a document-based debate and DBQ on the issue of reparations.

History-Mystery: What was life like for Africans in the New Amsterdam colony?

A. Slave Sale Advertisement (1669)

Source: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/newyork/laic/episode1/topic3/e1_t3_s2-ls.html



1. How many enslaved Africans arrived on this ship?
2. What added value to the shipment?

B. Slave Auction (1655)

Source: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/newyork/laic/episode1/topic3/e1_t3_s2-ls.html



1. Describe what is happening in the picture.
2. How do you think the African felt? Why?

C. Slavery at Philipsburg Manor

Source: www.hudsonvalley.org/web/phil-main.html

In 1624, the Dutch West India Company (DWIC) began settling the colony of New Netherland which eventually included the areas now known as New York and New Jersey as well as parts of Delaware and Connecticut. The Dutch acquired land from Native Americans through purchase as well as through confiscation. This colony was set up as a business. Its main goal was profit for the DWIC from trading beaver pelts and other goods from America with Europe. In 1625, the Dutch brought the first group of eleven enslaved male Africans to New Amsterdam (Manhattan Island) to build and support the infrastructure (e.g. roads, houses, forts) of the new colony. The Dutch were already involved in the slave trade, so their use of slave labor to develop this new enterprise was not unexpected.

Despite these efforts, the population of the colony did not grow fast enough to support a trading post. The DWIC decided to bring more enslaved Africans to New Netherland. By the 1660s, the DWIC, rather than any individual, was the largest slaveholder in New Amsterdam.

Peter Stuyvesant, Director General of New Netherland from 1647 to 1664, was hired by the DWIC to bring order to the loosely structured colony. Under Stuyvesant's direction, enslaved Africans labored as caulkers making boats watertight, blacksmiths, bricklayers and masons. In some cases, enslaved Africans were given "half-freedom." When their labor was not needed by the company, they were free. However, they were bound to provide labor upon demand and their children were not born free.

Living alongside enslaved Africans in the New Netherland colony were free men and women of African descent -- individuals who had purchased or otherwise gained their freedom. Free Blacks owned land, married in

the Dutch Reformed Church, and passed along inheritances to their children. Though few in number, free Blacks formed a critical part of the community.

Questions

1. What European country first settled in the Hudson River valley?
2. Why were the first enslaved Africans brought to Manhattan?
3. What is meant by “half-freedom”?

D. 1657-1664. Documenting Slavery and Freedom in Colonial New Amsterdam

Source: Burrows, E. and Wallace, M. (1999). *Gotham, A History of New York City to 1898*. NY: Oxford, 55-56.

Towards the end of Dutch control over New Amsterdam (New York), most Africans in the colony continued to be owned and work for the Dutch West Indies Company. The governor of the colony, Peter Stuyvesant and company officials in the Netherlands corresponded about the need for additional labor and the importing of more enslaved Africans. Because of the labor shortages, Africans gained access to skilled trades. Other Africans worked as field labor or as domestic servants. Stuyvesant, who owned forty slaves, was the largest private slave owner. Many enslaved Africans lived and worked on small farms across the East River in Brooklyn. During this period, the practice of offering Africans limited or half-freedom continued.

Questions

1. Who was the governor of New Amsterdam?
2. What role did he play in bringing slavery to New Amsterdam?

E. Director Stuyvesant to the Directors at Amsterdam (1664) (Edited)

Source: Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*.

This day arrived here your Honors' Vessel, the Musch [Sparrow], with forty head of slaves, sent to us by Vice Director Beck to procure provisions and all sorts of timber work, fix ox carts and a new mill. The negroes and negresses have all arrived safely and in health, but were, on an average, quite old, and as the skipper alleges, rejected by the Spaniards. . . . They would have brought more, had they not been so old. Five of the negro women, who were, in our opinion, unsalable, have been kept back and remain unsold. In like manner, six negroes also, to help to cut the required timber and to perform some other necessary work for the honorable company.

Questions

1. Why were some enslaved Africans not sold by the Dutch West India Company?
2. What kind of work did they do?

F. New Amsterdam and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (1629-1655)

Source: Burrows, E. and Wallace, M. (1999). *Gotham, A History of New York City to 1898*. NY: Oxford, 31-33; Hodges, G. (1999). *Root & Branch, African Americans in New York & East Jersey, 1613-1863*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 13-33.

While there are few remaining details, slavery was probably introduced into New Amsterdam soon after its founding by the Dutch West Indies Company in 1624. In either 1625 or 1626, eleven “bondsmen” were brought to the colony, including the Africans Paulo d’Angola, Simon Congo, Anthony Portuguese and John Francisco. Three African women from Angola were taken to New Amsterdam in 1628. In 1635, the Dutch West Indies company hired a special overseer to supervise the work of the “negroes belonging to the company.” Among other tasks, the men repaired the fort on the foot of Manhattan Island and cleared forest land for cultivation. Separate slave quarters were reportedly established along the East River north of the main settlement.

The legal and social status of the enslaved Africans was originally not clearly defined. They followed the same laws as the White population, could own property and testify in court, bear arms in emergencies, attend church and marry. By 1643, the Dutch West Indies Company recognized land claims by Africans in the area on Bowery Road just north of the main settlement. Records survive of 1641 weddings where Anthony van Angola married Catalina van Angola and Lucie d’Angola wed Laurens van Angola.

On the other hand, a 1638 ordinance banned sexual relations between the White population and “heathens, blacks, or other persons” and company policy excluded Africans from skilled trades. In 1644, a group of African

men petitioned the Dutch West Indies Company for emancipation and were granted partial or “half-freedom.” The men and their wives were freed and received leases on land on condition that they pay the company an annual tribute in farm goods and continued to work for the company when their labor was required. Their children, however, remained enslaved. Many of the families in this group settled in farms around the periphery of the main settlement where they could act as a barrier between the European community and potentially hostile native people.

The leadership of the Dutch colony clearly recognized the value of the African population. In 1644, Governor Willem Kieft argued that “Negroes would accomplish more work for their masters and at less expense, than farm servants, who must be bribed to go thither by a great deal of money and promises.” The direct trade in slaves between the New Amsterdam colony and Africa began in 1655 with the arrival of a ship with 300 enslaved Africans. By 1664, the African population of the Dutch colony was about 800 people or ten percent of the total population of the colony. In New Amsterdam, 375 Africans made up about a fourth of the settlement’s total population. A 1664 tax list for New Amsterdam showed that approximately one out of eight citizens of the colony owned enslaved Africans with a number of large plantations, including ones owned by Captain John Lawrence in Hempstead and by Captain Thomas Willet’s in what would become Queens County.

Questions

1. When was slavery introduced into New Amsterdam?
2. How did the legal status of enslaved Africans change?
3. How large was the African population of New Amsterdam?
4. In your opinion, why was slavery crucial to the development of the colony?

G. 1643-1664. Black Landowners in Manhattan’s “Land of the Blacks”

Source: H. Dodson *et al.*, ed. (2000). *The Black New Yorkers*. NY: Wiley, 23.

Landowner	Date Received	Landowner	Date Received
Catalina Anthony (widow of Jochem)	July 13, 1643	Anna D’Angola (widow of Andries)	Feb. 8, 1647
Domingo Anthony	July 13, 1643	Francisco D’Angola	March 25, 1647
Cleyn (Little) Manuel	Dec. 1643	Anthony Congo	March 26, 1647
Manuel Gerrit de Reus	Dec. 1643	Bastiaen Negro	March 26, 1647
Manuel Trumpeter	Dec. 12, 1643	Jan Negro	March 26, 1647
Marycke (widow of Lawrence)	Dec. 12, 1643	Manuel the Spaniard	Jan. 18, 1651
Gracia D’Angola	Dec. 15, 1644	Mathias Anthony	Dec. 1, 1655
Simon Congo	Dec. 15, 1644	Domingo Angola	Dec. 2, 1658
Jan Francisco	Dec. 15, 1644	Claes Negro	Dec. 2, 1658
Pieter San Tomé	Dec. 15, 1644	Assento Angola	Dec. 2, 1658
Manuel Groot (Big Manuel)	Dec. 21, 1644	Francisco Cartagena	Dec. 2, 1658
Cleyn (Little) Anthony	Dec. 30, 1644	Anthony of the Bowery	1658
Paulo D’Angola	Dec. 30, 1644	Anthony the blind negro	1658
Anthony Portuguese	Sept. 5, 1645	Manuel Sanders	1662

Questions

1. What do we learn about these people from their names?
2. In your opinion, why did many receive land on the same day?
3. In your opinion, why is it important to know that Africans in New Amsterdam owned land?

AIM: What was life like for enslaved Africans during the colonial era?

BACKGROUND: In 1625, the Dutch West India Company established the village of New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island. The first people of African ancestry in the colony were eleven men who arrived in 1626. They had Portuguese names and were probably captured from either Portuguese or Spanish ships. These men worked for the company and were assigned to clear land, plant and harvest crops, build houses, roads, bridges and fortifications. A 1642 Dutch print with the heading “Nieu Amsterdam” shows two large European settlers (a man and a woman) in the foreground, with Africans behind and below, doing the physical labor needed to make the colony economically successful. The Dutch New Netherland colony came under British control in 1664. Part of the colony and a major settlement were renamed New York in honor of James II, the Duke of York. James was a major shareholder of the Royal African Company, which held a royal monopoly on the British slave trade. With the British in power, slave trading vessels were granted port privileges and warehouse priorities and a slave market was established on Wall Street near the East River docks. Under British rule, the status of enslaved Africans was codified and their lives became increasingly more regulated.

DO NOW: Look at the four images and describe what you think is happening in each image.

MOTIVATION: Explain rules for the African Burial Ground writing contest. Examine sample student work.

ACTIVITIES:

Write a paragraph describing each image.

Use the image and your paragraphs to write either a story, poem or “rap” about slavery in colonial New Amsterdam and New York.

KEY QUESTIONS:

What roles did enslaved Africans have in building New Amsterdam?

Why were enslaved Africans kept separate from Whites even after death?

SUMMARY QUESTIONS: What do these images tell us about the experience of enslaved Africans in New Amsterdam and New York?

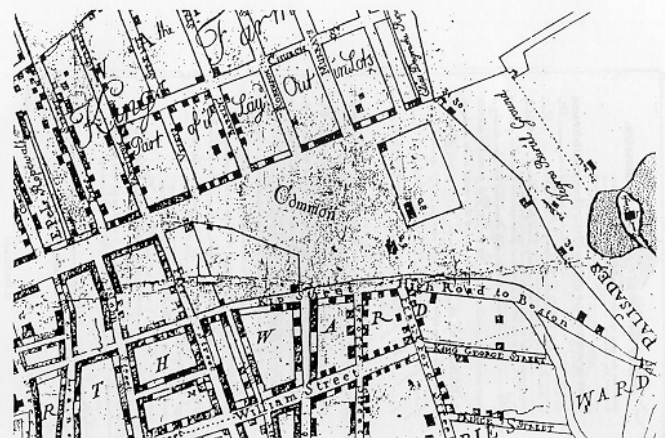
FOLLOW-UP: The New York African American Burial Ground sponsors an annual writing competition for students. The theme for the contest is the African presence in colonial New York City. Poems should be 150 words or less. Students should use the pictures on the activity sheet to help them write their poems. It is okay to be angry about images. To learn more about the contest, contact its sponsors at: (212)377-2001 or <http://www.africanburialground.com>.

Images of Slavery in Colonial New Amsterdam and New York



Figure 1. "Neu Amsterdam" is the first detailed print depicting Dutch New York, circa 1642. (From I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, Volume 1, plate 5, Robert H. Dodd, 1916.)

This woodcut from 17th century New Amsterdam shows a group of enslaved Africans doing the work of the city.

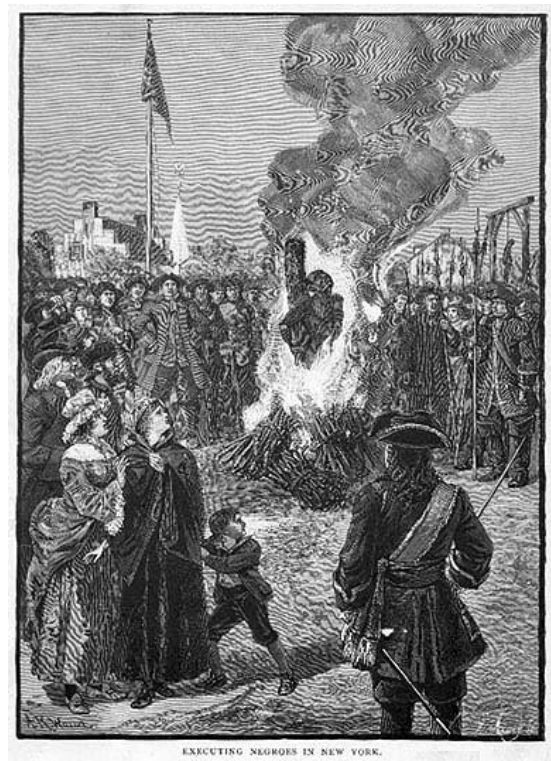


Maerschalk Map dated 1755. (From I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, Volume 1, plate 34, Robert H. Dodd, 1916.)

This map from 1755 shows the African American Burial ground in lower Manhattan. It is outside the city walls because Africans could not be buried inside the city limits.



This painting shows the sale of an enslaved African in 1655 at the Wall Street slave market.



New Yorkers feared a slave rebellion. In 1741 they executed enslaved Africans suspected of plotting a slave rebellion. They were burned alive.

Sample Student Work

Slavery in Colonial New York by Harrison Chicas
Turtlehook Middle School, Uniondale, NY
Teacher: Adeola Tella

Your heart beats fast
As you run across the field
You look at the sky
Hoping it is not real
You're caught in a corner
Fighting in a chain
They put you in a cage
And take away your fame
You're in the middle
As other blacks stare at you
You think it's a dream
Or is it really true
You are put on a ship
Chained with others
As you think of your parents
Your sisters, your brothers
That's slavery.

Africans brought to this country
Whipped, bounded, and starved

Not knowing what's free
That's slavery.

After two months
You arrive at Wall Street
Whites check out your face, hair, arm and feet
You're sold to a man
A man very strange
He looks at you
And gives you a name
Everyday you work harder
You wish you were further
Wish you were better and smarter
But you're a slave
Months pass, March, April, and May
And what you get in return is being fed
But you prefer to be dead
That's slavery.

Africans brought to this country
Whipped, bounded, starved
Not knowing what's free
That's slavery.

So Long by Charlycia Strain
Law, Government and Community Service Magnet
High School, Cambria Heights, Queens
Teacher: Michael Pezone

We were running, out of breath, dying of hunger and thirst. I saw her and stopped for her, picked her up and keep running. I could hear them coming closer and closer. My heart was pounding like village drums. I turn to put her down, I told her "I'll be back". I tell her not to worry I promise I'll come back. I start running again, my legs ache, my head pounds. I feel is if I'll die.

There I saw him, he saw me. Soon they all came. I heard one say, "Hang him we must show what will happen". They tied me, I fought, bite, scratched. I bleed. I now have taste of blood in my mouth and a bleeding wound on my legs. They walk me through a crowd hitting and poking at me. They tie me to a wooden pole.

I stand there, my heart aches, I have butterflies in my tummy as if I'm to be married. I don't know what to think, all I know is I will die tonight. This is my end I should have done more. I should have fought harder. I shouldn't have tried.

But then I thought if I'll die this is the way to die, the reason to die. Dieting to be free, to be human, to have a chance.

I look up and I knew he would be the one, the one to end my life. The powerful man just the one to do it. A stick in his hand, with a gun and sword by his waist. He is walking up slow now and he says "ANY LAST WORDS NIGGER". I look at him and the crowd and scream "IT WILL ALL CHANGE SOMEDAY FREEDOM". He throws the flame on my flesh. I let out a scream, as well I should. It felt like thousands of hot needles poking at my flesh. The fire paces my knees now and I can no longer feel the bottom.

With my last words I scream "the girl." Tears run down my face. I cried not from the pain but because I made a promise that wasn't being kept. Is she scared, heavens oh how I'm sorry. God please save her. The flames now reach my neck, I look down at the man and next to him is the little girl. My heart dropped. I soon felt nothing; I think that's when I died.

That's how it happened. This is how you see it. "In 1741 they executed enslaved Africans suspected of plotting a slave rebellion. They were burned alive."

THINK ABOUT IT.