

THE EFFECT OF SLAVERY ON AFRICAN AMERICAN'S NOW



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2/21/2024

1. How is the impact of Slavery affecting your life now?

In some ways enslaved African American families very much resembled other families who lived in other times and places and under vastly different circumstances. Some husbands and wives loved each other; some did not get along. Children sometimes abided by parent's rules; other times they followed their own minds. Most parents loved their children and wanted to protect them. In some critical ways, though, the slavery that marked everything about their lives made these families very different. [Belonging to another human being brought unique constrictions, disruptions, frustrations, and pain.](#)

2. What impact did Slavery have on our ancestors?

Family

Slavery not only inhibited family formation but made stable, secure family life difficult if not impossible.

Enslaved people could not legally marry in any American colony or state. Colonial and state laws considered them property and commodities, not legal persons who could enter into contracts, and marriage was, and is, very much a legal contract. This means that until 1865 when slavery ended in this country, the vast majority of African Americans could not legally marry. In northern states such as New York, Pennsylvania, or Massachusetts, where slavery had ended by 1830, free African Americans could marry, but in the slave states of the South, many enslaved people entered into relationships that they treated like marriage; they considered themselves husbands and wives even though they knew that their unions were not protected by state laws.

A father might have one owner, his "wife" and children another.

Some enslaved people lived in nuclear families with a mother, father, and children. In these cases each family member belonged to the same owner. Others lived in near-nuclear families in which the father had a different owner than the mother and children. Both slaves and slaveowners referred to these relationships between men and women as “abroad marriages.” A father might live several miles away on a distant plantation and walk, usually on Wednesday nights and Saturday evenings to see his family as his obligation to provide [labor for an owner took precedence over his personal needs](#).

Family separation through sale was a constant threat.

Enslaved people lived with the perpetual possibility of separation through the sale of one or more family members. Slaveowners’ wealth lay largely in the people they owned, therefore, they frequently sold and or purchased people as finances warranted.

Many owners encouraged marriage to protect their investment in their slaves.

Despite the likelihood of breaking up families, family formation actually helped owners to keep slavery in place. Owners debated among themselves the benefits of enslaved people forming families. Many of them reasoned that having families made it much less likely that a man or woman would run away, thus depriving the owner of valuable property. Many owners encouraged marriage, devised the practice of “jumping the broom” as a ritual that enslaved people could engage in, and sometimes gave small gifts for the wedding. Some owners honored the choices enslaved people made about whom their partners would be other owners assigned partners, forcing people into relationships they would not have chosen for themselves.

Legislation

As English colonists began the process of putting slavery into place, they paid careful attention to [family arrangements](#) among enslaved people. Legislators in Virginia and Massachusetts passed laws in the 1600s making clear that the rules would be different for slaves and that

family would not offer protection from slavery. The following is a Virginia statute that changed the English common law provision that a father's status determined his children's status.

Virginia Statutes: ACT XII (1662) (Hening 2:170)

Negro women children to serve according to the condition of the mother.

Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or free, *Be it therefore enacted and declared by this present grand assembly*, that all children born in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother, *and that* if any Christian shall commit fornication with a negro man or woman, he or she so offending shall pay double the fines imposed by the former act.

Labor

The Varieties of Slave Labor

Slavery was work, often very hard work, sustained by force and the threat of humiliation and separation from family and community.

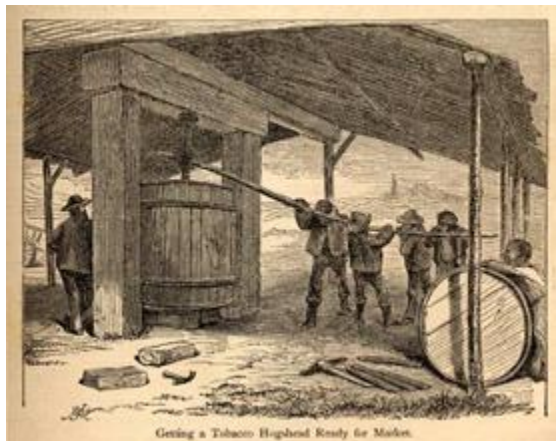
Slave labor differed according to period and location.



Work on a sugar plantation.



A slave's skill level and value to the master often determined how he/she was treated.



Tobacco



View of a rice field in South Carolina.



Slaves working in a cotton field.

3. What do most American say about slavery and its impact?

- Most Americans say the legacy of slavery still affects black people in the U.S. today.
- The legacy of slavery still resonates for many Americans, according to a [Pew Research Center survey](#) conducted earlier this year, with **63%** believing it affects the position of black people in American society today either a great deal or a fair amount.

Wide racial and partisan gaps in views of impact of slavery on black Americans' position in society today

% of each group saying the legacy of slavery affects the position of black people in American society today ...

	A great deal	A fair amount	Not much	Not at all
All adults	31	32	19	16
White	26	32	22	19
Black	59	25	6	9
Hispanic	29	38	19	11
Asian*	33	35	17	15
Rep/Lean Rep	17	26	27	29
Dem/Lean Dem	43	36	13	7

*Asians were interviewed in English only.

Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Whites, blacks and Asians include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics include those of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 22-Feb. 5, 2019.

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Black adults are likely to say slavery continues to have an impact: More than eight-in-ten say this is the case, including 59% who say the legacy of slavery affects the situation of black people a great deal. By comparison, **26% of whites**, **29% of Hispanics** and **33% of Asians** say slavery affects the position of black people in American society today a great deal, though majorities of each group say it does so at least a fair amount.

4. Do you think the country has done enough in giving black people equal rights?

About eight-in-ten black adults say we haven't done enough in giving black people equal rights with whites

The survey also found that more than four-in-ten U.S. adults (**45%**) think the country hasn't gone far enough in giving black people equal rights with whites, while **15%** say it's gone too far and **39%** say it's been about right. About eight-in-ten black adults (**78%**) say the country hasn't made enough progress in this area, compared with **37%** of whites and **48%** of Hispanics.

5. Do you think we will get racial equality in America?

In addition to their bleak views about the country's racial progress, black adults are also skeptical about the prospects for racial equality in the future. Among black Americans who say the country hasn't gone far enough in giving black people equal rights with whites, **64%** say it's not too or not at all likely that the country will ever achieve racial equality. Whites who say the country still has work to do in this area are more optimistic: **80%** say it's very or somewhat likely that black people in our country will eventually have equal rights. Hispanics' views are more mixed.

Democrats and those who lean to the Democratic Party (**80%**) are far more likely than Republicans and GOP leaners (**43%**) to say the legacy of slavery still affects the situation of black people in American society today. And while most Democrats (**66%**) say the country hasn't gone far enough in giving black people equal rights with whites, just **18%** of Republicans agree. About three-in-ten Republicans (**28%**) say the country has gone too far on this issue, while **53%** say it's been about right. These differences are virtually unchanged when looking only at white Democrats and Republicans.

6. Why does the impact of slavery continue to be minimized?

- Centuries later, the lasting impact of slavery continues to be minimized and myths continue to flourish.

Myths about Slavery

- For instance, there's the erasure of the many slave revolts and rebellions that happened throughout the nation, perpetuating the lie that the enslaved were docile or satisfied with their conditions.

- The persistent idea that black labor exploitation is over, when mass incarceration still keeps millions of black Americans behind bars and often working for “wages” that amount to less than \$1 an hour.
- Then there’s the idea that our understanding of slavery is accurate based on what we learned in history textbooks, when in reality, misinformation continues to be taught in our public schools about slavery’s legacy.

7. 5 things people still get wrong about slavery.

1. The myth that slaves never rebelled

Miseducation surrounding slavery in the US has led to an elaborate mythology of half-truths and missing information. One key piece of missing history concerns slave revolts: Few history books or popular media portrayals of the trans-Atlantic slave trade discuss the many slave rebellions that occurred throughout America’s early history.

C.L.R. James’s *A History of Pan African Revolt* describes many small rebellions such as the Stono Plantation insurgence of September 1739 in the South Carolina colony, where a small group of enslaved Africans first killed two guards. Others joined them as they moved to nearby plantations, setting them afire and killing about two dozen enslavers, especially violent overseers. Nat Turner’s August 1831 uprising in Southampton, Virginia, where some 55 to 65 enslavers were killed and their plantations burned, serves as another example.

Enslaved Africans resisted and rebelled against individual slave holders and the system of slavery as a whole. Some slipped away secretly to [learn to read](#). Many simply escaped. Others joined the abolitionist movements, wrote books, and gave lectures to the public about their experiences in captivity. And others led or participated in open combat against their captors.

Omitting or minimizing these stories of rebellion helps hide the violent and traumatic experiences enslaved Africans endured at the hands of enslavers, which prompted such revolts. If we are unaware of resistance, it is easier for us to believe the enslaved were happy, docile, or that their conditions were not inhumane. It then becomes easier to dismiss economic and epigenetic legacies of the transatlantic slave system.

2. The myth that house slaves had it better than field slaves

While physical labor in the fields was excruciating for the enslaved — clearing land, planting, and harvesting that often destroyed their bodies — that didn’t negate the physical and emotional violence enslaved women, and sometimes men and children, suffered at the hands of enslavers in their homes.

In fact, rape of black women by white enslavers was so prevalent that a [2016 study](#) revealed [16.7](#) percent of African Americans' ancestors can be traced back to Europe. One of the study's authors concludes that the first African Americans to leave the South were those genetically related to the men who raped their mothers, grandmothers, and/or great-grandmothers. These were the enslaved African Americans within the closest proximity to and who spent the longest durations with white men: the ones who toiled in the houses of slave owners.

A [2015 study](#) determined that [50 percent](#) of rape survivors develop [PTSD](#). It is hard to imagine that enslaved and freedom-seeking African American survivors of rape — female, male, old, young, no matter their physical or mental abilities — did not experience further anxiety, fear, and shame associated with a condition they could not control in a situation out of control. Those African Americans with the most European ancestry, those tormented mentally, physically, emotionally, and genetically in the house, knew they had to get out. In fact, they fled the farthest — Southern whites are more closely related to blacks now living in the North than the South.

3. The myth that abolition was the end of racism

A common myth about American slavery is that when it ended, white supremacy or racism in America also ended.

Recently, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell offered a familiar variant of this myth when he said he opposed reparations “for something that [happened 150 years ago](#).” To the Kentucky Republican, a descendant of enslavers, slavery simply was, and then it just wasn't, as though the battlefield had leveled the playing field when it came to race.

But the truth is that long after the Civil War, white Americans continue to carry the same set of white supremacist beliefs that governed their thoughts and actions during slavery and into the post-emancipation era.

In the South, especially, whites retained an enslaver's mentality. They embraced [sharecropping](#) and [convict leasing](#) to control black labor in late 19th century, enacted Jim Crow laws to regulate black behavior in the early 20th century, and use racial terror to police the color line to this day.

In the North, whites also rejected racial equality. After emancipation, they refused to make [abandoned and confiscated land](#) available to freedmen because they believed that African Americans would not work without white supervision. And when African Americans began fleeing Dixie during the Great Migration, white Northerners instituted their [own brand of Jim Crow](#), segregating neighborhoods and refusing to hire black workers on a nondiscriminatory basis.

Slavery's legacy is white supremacy. The ideology, which rationalized bondage for 250 years, has justified the discriminatory treatment of African Americans for the 150 years since the war ended. The belief that black people are less than white people has made segregated schools acceptable, mass incarceration possible, and police violence permissible.

This makes the myth that slavery had no lasting impact extremely consequential — denying the persistence and existence of white supremacy obscures the root causes of the problems that continue to plague African Americans. As a result, policymakers fixate on fixing black people instead of trying to undo the discriminatory systems and structures that have resulted in separate and unequal education, voter suppression, health disparities, and a wealth gap.

Something did “happen” 150 years ago: Slavery ended. But the institution's influence on American racism and its continued impact on African Americans is still felt today.

4. The myth that history class taught us everything we needed to know about slavery

Many of us first learned about slavery in our middle or high school history classes, but some of us learned much earlier — in elementary school, through children's books, or even Black History Month curriculum and programs. Unfortunately, we don't always learn the entire story.

Most of us only learned partial truths about slavery in the United States. After the Civil War and Reconstruction, many in the North and South wanted to put an end to continuing tensions. But this wasn't done just through the Compromise of 1877, when the federal government pulled the last troops out of the South; it was also done by suppressing the rights of black Americans and elevating the [so-called “Lost Cause”](#) of the enslavers.

[The Lost Cause is a distorted version of Civil War history](#). In the decades after the war, a number of Southern historians began to write that slaveholders were noble and had the right to secede from the Union when the North wished to interfere with their way of life. Due to efforts by a group of Southern socialites known as the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Lost Cause ideology [influenced history textbooks](#) as well as books for children and adults. The accomplishments of black Americans involved in the abolition movement, such as Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Maria W. Stewart, Henry Highland Garnet, and William Still, were downplayed. Union generals like Ulysses S. Grant were denigrated, as were anti-racist whites from John Brown to William Lloyd Garrison. Generations later, there are still many people around the country who believe the Civil War was about states' rights and that slaves who had good masters were treated well.

Even an accurate historical curriculum emphasizes progress, triumph, and optimism for the country as a whole, without taking into account how slavery continues to affect black Americans and influence present-day domestic policy from urban planning to health care. It does not emphasize that [12 of the first 18 presidents](#) were enslavers, that enslaved Africans from particular cultures were prized for their skills from rice cultivation to metallurgy, and that enslaved people used every tool at their disposal to resist bondage and seek freedom. From

slavery to Jim Crow to civil rights to the first black president, the black American story is forced into the story of the unassailable American dream — even when the truth is more complicated.

Given what we learn about slavery, when we learn it, and how, it is clear that everyone still has much more to learn. [Teaching Tolerance](#) and [Teaching for Change](#) are two organizations that have been wrestling with how we introduce this topic to our young. And what they're learning is that the way forward is to unlearn.

5. The myth that slavery doesn't exist today

One of the greatest myths about slavery is that it ended. In fact, it evolved into its modern form: mass incarceration.

The United States has the highest prison population in the world. More than [2.2 million Americans](#) are incarcerated; [4.5 million](#) are on probation or parole. African Americans make up roughly [13 percent](#) of the general population. But black men, women, and youth have outsize representation in the criminal justice system, where they make up [34 percent](#) of the 6.8 million people who are under its control. Their labor is used to produce goods and services for businesses that profit from prison labor.

For those who study the early history of mass incarceration in America, these statistics are not surprising. From the late 1860s through the 1920s, [over 90 percent](#) of the prison and jail populations of the South were black. Thousands of incarcerated men, women, and children were hired out by the state to private factories and farms for a fee. From sunup to sundown, they worked under the watchful eye of brutal “whipping bosses” who flogged, mauled, and murdered them. They earned nothing for their toil. Today, labor exploitation, the denial of human dignity and the right to citizenship, family separation, and violent punishment define our criminal justice system in ways that mirror slavery.

[Hundreds of thousands](#) of incarcerated people work. According to a [2017 report](#) published by the Prison Policy Initiative, “the average of the minimum daily wages paid to incarcerated workers for non-industry prison jobs is now 86 cents.” Those assigned to work for state-owned businesses (correctional industries) earn between 33 cents and \$1.41 per hour. In 2018, incarcerated Americans [held a nationwide strike](#) to end “prison slavery.” In a [list of demands](#), striking individuals called for “all persons imprisoned in any place of detention under United States jurisdiction” to be “paid the prevailing wage in their state or territory for their labor.”

Conclusion

This is a year to remember slavery's origins. It is also an opportunity to critique its legacies. Let's not get so caught up in our efforts to commemorate slavery's beginning that we fail to advocate for its end.

Jesus Identity

(Revelation 1:14–15) The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.

1:14 white like wool: In Dan 7:9, the Ancient of Days' clothing is white like snow and the hair of His head is compared to pure wool. John combines the two descriptions to describe the head and hair of Christ.

(Daniel 10:6) His body was like topaz, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

The Apostle John and the Prophet Daniel describe Jesus Christ as a Black man with wooly Hair.

Why does Christianity preach about a Caucasian image of Jesus?

(2 Corinthians 11:4) For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the Spirit you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

The Descendants of the 12 Tribes of Israel today