

## Chapter Seven

### UNDERSTANDING THE AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK EXPERIENCE

#### Chapter Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- define chattel slavery.
- identify several slave revolutions.
- describe the slaves impact on the American Revolution.
- understand why slavery was worse in America than other countries.
- discuss the Willie Lynch Speech and Jim Crow Laws.
- provide examples of the treatment of Blacks today.



According to George Henderson in *Cultural Diversity in the Workplace: Issues and Strategies*:

"Ethnicity and race are often confused in the United States. For example, Hispanics from the Americas and Puerto Rico with African ancestors, even though they tend to identify with their native country, are frequently and erroneously labeled African Americans in the U.S. workplace. The terms blacks, African Americans, and people of color are popular. Some writers use them interchangeably without understanding that African Americans do not include peoples of African descent who are not American citizens; and people of color refer to minorities that have darker skin tone such as: Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans and the like--not just African Americans."<sup>1</sup>

So in order not to confuse you, we are going to be addressing the plight of a race of people who have been called many things from Negroes to colored to Blacks and now African American. Today, terms like "Negro," and colored are considered derogatory in many quarters (due to political overtones). The term "Black" still has some currency because not all those with brown skin have a homeland of Africa which is assumption if referring to someone as African-American.

The term "African American" (aka Afro-American, Black American, or Black) is generally used for Americans with at least partial Sub-Saharan African ancestry. Many African Americans are the direct descendants of captive Africans who survived the slavery era within the boundaries of the present United States, although some are—or are descended from—voluntary immigrants from African, Caribbean, Central American or South American nations.



According to 2007 U.S. Census Data there are about 40 million Blacks or African Americans in the United States including those who indicate that they are more than one race. Black makes up 13.5 percent of the total U.S. population.<sup>2</sup> This figure represents an increase of more than half a million residents from one year earlier. The projected black population of the United States (including those of more than one race) for July 1, 2050 is 67 million.<sup>3</sup> On that date, according to the projection, blacks would constitute 15 percent of the nation's total population.

We will begin this discussion with the experience of the first Blacks who arrived in America. Just like other immigrants, these free Blacks saw opportunity.

One example, of a free African looking for opportunities in America is Juan las Canerías, who sailed with Columbus on the first voyage. He was like many Africans in Europe at the time, in that they had achieved freedom and had spent several years in Spain as domestics, soldiers, clerks, and artisans.<sup>4</sup> According to Madeleine Burnside in *Marooned: Africans in the Americas 1500 - 1750*<sup>5</sup>:

Juan Garrido, another free man of African descent, joined Ponce de Leon's expeditions to the Caribbean and subsequently traveled to Mexico with Cortez. His experience appears to have been entirely similar to that of any other Spaniard and, ironically to 20<sup>th</sup> century eyes, the wealth produced by these expeditions came from the sale of Native American slaves. Garrido was accustomed to this, as slavery was a way of life for the conquered in Spain. For centuries, the Moors had been enslaved by Spanish Christians and Christians by Moors, and sub Saharans had been brought to the slave markets of Italy and Spain, along with the Slavs and other eastern Europeans.

Europeans enslaved each other as easily as Africans have ever been accused of doing. According to a new study, Europeans were even enslaved by White Africans (North Africa). This study indicates that a million or more European Christians were enslaved by Muslims in North Africa between 1530 and 1780 – a far greater number than had ever been estimated before.<sup>6</sup>

Why enslave others? Slavery was profitable. Free labor allows those in power to gain wealth at the expense of others. Slavery also existed as a means to utilize criminals. Those who were convicted of crimes instead of being punished by death or other means, they paid their debt to society by enslavement.

But enslaving individuals who would otherwise want their freedom meant isolation. Slaves who were "not" isolated could run away. Therefore it became

common practice to look outside of your own country for slaves. This is one reason that many of the Native Americans did not end up as slaves in America but were instead killed or sent to other countries as slaves. Native Americans knew the land and therefore would not be easy to isolate. For slavery in America to flourish and exist with ease, the slaves needed to come from outside the land-- come to an unknown territory.

A prime area for slaves was on the west coast of Africa called the Sudan. This area was ruled by three major empires Ghana (790-1240), Mali (1240-1600), and Songhai (670-1591).<sup>7</sup> Other smaller nations were also canvassed by slavers along the west coast; they included among them: Benin, Dahomey, and Ashanti. Africans were ideal for this isolated placement in the Americas, as they would recognize immediately that they had no hope of getting home. But this was not the only reason the people of Africa were enslaved. The peoples inhabiting those African nations were known for their skills in agriculture, farming, and mining.

The Africans of Ghana were well known for smelting iron ore, and the Benins were famous for their cast bronze art works.<sup>8</sup> African tribal wars produced captives which became a bartering resource in the European slave market. Other slaves were kidnapped by hunters. The main sources of barter used by the Europeans to secure African slaves were glass beads, whiskey and guns.<sup>9</sup>

Slavery as a form of free labor was on the rise as products like sugar, coffee, cotton, and tobacco became in great need. Many countries like Spain, France, the Dutch, and English wanted their colonial plantation system to work to produce these good and the most profitable means of doing this was by cheap or free labor through slaves. The slave trade was so profitable that, by 1672, the Royal African Company chartered by Charles II of England superseded the other traders and became the richest shipper of human slaves to the mainland of the Americas and the slaves were so valuable to the open market - they were eventually called "Black Gold."<sup>10</sup>

But, we know African slaves were valuable because of their skill level but to the Americas they also were valuable because the Native Americans were difficult to be used as slaves in their own land. Native Americans knew the land and could therefore easily escape. So, it would just be easier to kill off the Native Americans. Africans were also brought to the colonies to replace Native American labor as the Natives died out to the diseases they caught from the Europeans.



For those Native Americans who were not killed they would be bartered for African slaves and would become slaves elsewhere. After King Philip's War in 1697, thousands of Wampanoags were sent to the Caribbean in exchange for Africans.<sup>11</sup>

## Slavery in America

Slavery in America has its own unique story but before this is discussed, one question: Why were the Africans chosen as slaves?

According to many researchers like Peter Wood, the Western Africans lived comfortable lives punctuated by the usual environmental and ecological problems that one would expect in the 6th century through the 19th century.<sup>12</sup> Actually Wood states in his text: "it was because of their settled domestic situations that Africans made good targets for slavery and the slave trade. The very similarity of their material existence to the Europeans of that period made it possible for them to function in the plantation economy of the Americas. If they were wild people living in jungles they would not have made good workers so, they were plucked from their lands not only for their brawn, but for their skills as well."<sup>13</sup>

The number of Africans brought to the Americas has been hard to estimate. While records of the "official" trade are reliable, records of the early trade and smuggled slaves are non-existent. Estimates vary between 9 and 15 million. The slave trade began in the 1500s with only several thousand being bartered or stolen, then over the next 400 years there were tens of thousands being shipped.<sup>14</sup> However, the slave trade dramatically increased from the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century through the first quarter of the nineteenth, with more slaves being shipped in the trades last one hundred years than in the previous three hundred.<sup>15</sup> The total estimate of slaves shipped to the United States is more than 600,000.

What happened to make the slave trade grow? Sugar, which was a warm climate crop, created demand for hard working slave (free) labor. Then there were the plantations of tobacco and cotton. While slavery had been a profitable institution to many in the world, slavery in the United States took on a different meaning. Slaves in other areas often could work off their time or even buy their freedom, but slaves in the U.S. were considered a permanent fixture as they were not even considered humans worthy of rights and freedom.<sup>16</sup>

This inhumane treatment started from the point of transferring the slaves from Africa to this part of the world. This transference is known as the Middle Passage and it was an example of what the slave institution would be like in America. Brutal, disgusting, horrifying and frequently fatal was it for the Africans to live through the Middle Passage.<sup>17</sup> But it also showed the African's capacity for survival and fight as the rebellion of the slaves started at this point also. So upon arrival, the Europeans tried to lessen any further likelihood of slave rebellions by transporting people in mixed ethnic groups so that they could not communicate with other transported Africans or family members. This enslavement of blacks was not just about people working the fields and being treated as peasants. As stated earlier, many countries have enslaved people, even countries in Africa. But, it must be stated again that these institutions of slavery were quite different than the enslavement of Blacks in the U.S.

Imagine you, your children, and spouse arrive in an unknown country in a ship on which many people died during the voyage. They didn't just die trying to escape but died because women and children who were less valued were thrown off the ship to decrease the ship's weight. Now, you and your family are standing on an auction block with people flocking around you as though you are workhorses. Then, in a language you are not familiar with you hear words, then see your children and husband sent away each to different places. You are then tied up and gagged to keep the noise of your tremendous emotional outcry down. You arrive alone (without your family) on new land and are stripped, inspected, and raped. You are then given new clothing, tools and scraps that no one else wants to eat.

You are forced to work from sun up to sun down, working in the field and raising the White folk's children. When there is the slightest bit of rebellion you are stripped and hung on a tree and beat till blood covers your body. You are taken down and given some time to heal and put right back to work. You are the possession of your master who has total control and will work you, beat you, rape you, and drink the milk out of your breast that's for your newborn baby, all at his desire. You have no rights and are not even considered human; you're just somebody's possession.

This is just one illustration that depicts the experience of slavery from a woman's perspective. There are so many other stories that also depict the horrific experience of slavery in the U.S. But, rather than bombard you with story after story of how the slaves were treated, it is necessary that you understand that slavery was not as depicted on the television production of "Gone with the Wind."



Slaves were not out there in the fields singing because they were happy to be slaves.

The brutality of this slave institution was not accepted or tolerated by the slaves. These people who fathered the Civil Rights Movement or Black Freedom Movement as it is often called have a history consumed with a fight for equality. Their fight was unlike the immigrants who voluntarily came here and found discrimination and fought against it. The Africans and their generations of American born children were forced here into a situation where they were treated worse than the wild animals that walked the streets.

Therefore, the Africans had to fight to get back the dignity and rights they had lost. While there were many movements for this fight for dignity, the most well-known is The Civil Rights Movement, which is a century long history, rooted largely in Southern Black communities. This struggle was against the legally mandated structures of White supremacy.<sup>18</sup> The movement was mobilized and sustained with the mass protests of the 1960s. But, as important as this movement was, it would not have happened if the slaves had not mounted revolutions that forced the issue of freedom and then the issue of equal treatment. The slave revolutions started when they got off the boat and did not end until freedom was proclaimed.<sup>19</sup>

## **Slave Revolutions**

Slave revolutions took place because the African people never lost sight of their heritage or their freedom. They did not choose to immigrate here or leave their bountiful continent, which is one of the richest continents in the world. Africa also the first known civilization to man was years ahead (as it relates to intelligence and structure) of many other continents of the world. These great African ancient civilizations that the slaves came from were just as splendid and glorious as any on the face of the earth. These Africans came from greatness and were forced to leave it and would not be satisfied until they were free again.

While some history books and television shows would like to make you think that Africans were savages out in the wild--naked, hungry and illiterate--this is not the true picture of Africans at all. If we were to buy this image, it would make the enslavement of these people in the U.S. seem more like a favor than the brutality that it was. It would seem that there was no reason for the Africans to fight back and if there are no historical accounts of these people fighting back,

then maybe people will believe there was some value to slavery in America.

But the truth is there was no value to slavery except to those White slave owners who amassed a fortune from the free labor. According to the 1860 U.S. census, nearly four million slaves were held in a total population of just over 12 million in the 15 states in which slavery was legal.<sup>20</sup> Of all free persons in the 15 slave states, 393,967 people (8%) held slaves.<sup>21</sup> The majority of slaves were held by planters, defined by historians as those who held 20 or more slaves.

So, from the time that the first African was captured until completion of the Emancipation, slaves struck out against the institution in one way or another. Actually, many Africans rebelled even before making it to the ship. Reports show that many Africans committed suicide before they would be taken from their homeland.<sup>22</sup> "Many more committed suicide while crossing the Atlantic. Some others revolted and/or plotted revolt during the voyage. Once subjected to American slavery, many Africans ran away, some found refuge with the Native Americans. Others lived in maroon camps."<sup>23</sup>

Runaways who banded together or who had joined with the Native Americans occupied these maroons. Their existence was fragile and although maroon communities provided a haven for the runaways, it was also an opportunity for new alliances or for flight to thinly populated lands where new life could be made. As the European conquest expanded it became harder for slaves to find anywhere to escape to. But, they never stopped looking for safe havens or stopped fighting for their freedom.

Herbert Aptheker, a famous historian and author, has recorded hundreds of insurrections. Many slave revolts in America were small and ineffective because the slaves did not have access to weapons or resources to fight against the plantation owners who had access to money and weapons.<sup>24</sup> However, three insurrections in particular chilled Southern hearts. These were led by Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner and occurred within the short span between 1800 and 1831.<sup>25</sup> In the spring of 1800, Gabriel, slave of Thomas H. Prosser, a 24 year old man who stood six feet two inches tall began laying plans for a slave revolt that would enlist between 2,000 and 50,000 slaves and field hands.<sup>26</sup> People of all races participated. The plan also enlisted the aid of such resident aliens as the radical Frenchman Charles Quersey and the probably German Alexander Bedeenhurst, and Lucas, a non-Black worker.<sup>27</sup> Gabriel envisioned the conspiracy as the promised realization of the American Revolution, the struggle of



oppressed workers of all races as well as slaves against the "merchants". This was not a war on race but on class.

At this time there were many oppressed white workers who were indentured servants, not free or able to take advantage of capitalism. Gabriel committed his followers (the oppressed) to his vision. They planned and organized for several months where they were able to assemble weapons. They collected clubs, swords, and other crude weapons. On the day of the insurrection, Gabriel and his followers had some bad luck--a severe storm hit Virginia which wiped out many roads and bridges.<sup>28</sup> Their plans were then delayed. This delay hurt them though as word had gotten out about what was occurring.

After several masters on plantation knew of the details, they got the government of the United States involved. The government took swift action and 26 of the 35 organizers including Gabriel were hung, and the other nine were transported to Louisiana.<sup>29</sup> In September 1800, during the first weeks of the trials of Gabriel's comrades, the slaves of South Carolina were staging an uprising as well.

In Charleston, some 20 years before these trials of Gabriel's, a slave named Denmark Vesey won \$1,500 in a lottery with which he purchased his freedom.<sup>30</sup> During the following years he worked as a carpenter. Originally from the island of St. Thomas, Denmark had been enslaved for a time in Haiti (around 1781).<sup>31</sup> While Denmark could have been satisfied with his own freedom, he was not. He knew that others were enslaved and he could not just do nothing about this so he created a plan for an insurrection.<sup>32</sup> According to Author Norman Freedman, "he and other freedmen collected two hundred pike heads and bayonets as well as three hundred daggers to use in the revolt, but, before the plans could be put into motion in 1822, a slave informed on them."<sup>33</sup>

Most of the members of Denmark's group were from the "African Church" (the secessionist Methodist Episcopal Church). Over a hundred arrests were made, including four whites who had encouraged the project, and several other leaders including Denmark were executed.<sup>34</sup>

Some additional slave insurrections and conspiracies (these are just a few of the many) are discussed below<sup>35</sup>: In 1826, the people of Newbern, being informed that forty slaves were assembled in a swamp, surrounded it, and killed the whole party. Other citizens were discomfited in Hillsboro and Tarboro in North Carolina by these types of uprisings.

- In August of 1839, Joseph Cinque led an African revolt on the slave ship *Amistad* with 53 Africans aboard, killing the captain: "the vessel was then captured by a United States vessel and brought to Connecticut." "Defended before the Supreme Court by former President John Quincy Adams, and were awarded their freedom." This was the basis for the American Film, *Amistad*.
- On November 7, 1841 the slave ship *Creole* of Richmond, Virginia was transporting slaves to New Orleans; the crew mutinied and took her to Nassau, British West Indies. "The slaves were freed and Great Britain refused indemnity."

Gabriel, Denmark, and their countless predecessors had been intelligent, cunning, rhetorical, and powerful Black figures, but in 1831 a truly charismatic leader emerged from the slave social order—Nat Turner. While Gabriel was a resistance leader, Denmark a preacher, Nat Turner was a prophet. Nat's warrant came from God and the Holy Spirit. Nat's African born parents read the marks on his head and breast as confirming that the child was a prophet who would be able to recount tales of events before they occurred as well as tell the future.<sup>36</sup> His grandmother told him that he would never be of any use to anyone as a slave. Nat proved these things to be true because as a child he had a thirst for knowledge and could give insight into things as a child. Nat soon knew that he was destined for great things.

Several years before an 1831 rebellion, Nat began to experience visions and inner voices.<sup>37</sup> He used these visions and inner voices to assemble slaves basing their plans on what was to occur—their eventual freedom. On August 22, sixty to eighty slaves and free Blacks rose up to join Nat.<sup>37</sup> For two days they ravaged Southampton, killing some fifty-five adults and children of the slave-holding classes. "Nat eluded capture for almost two months. While he was at large, a panic seized large parts of Virginia, North Carolina and Maryland . . . The panic rolled over a large part of the South. It was the barking of a dog that betrayed Nat. When he was finally captured, guns fired all over Southampton County. At his trial he pleaded not guilty, saying that he did not FEEL guilty. Nat Turner was found guilty and sentenced to hang until he was "dead! dead! dead!"<sup>38</sup>



There is documented evidence of conspiracies throughout the entire duration of chattel slavery. Few actually realized fruition, since most were discovered or betrayed by scared and or loyal servants. Moreover, there were plenty of individual acts of rebellion, including a refusal to work hard, poisoning, arson, killings, and the breaking of tools, faking sickness, and escape (e.g. the Underground Railroad"). Native Americans often aided the slaves, and for various reasons, including retribution and conviction, some Whites too.

It is no doubt that during this time slave insurrections and the fear of their occurrence created great a need for alarm among the White general population. Because of this fear, they built shelters so they could escape if necessary, slept with guns and even a number of them had heart attacks which caused their death.

Due to this fear and the physical strength of the slaves the plantation owners had to seek various methods for trying to control the slaves. They often would use poor Whites to catch the slaves once they had run. They created slave patrols, which were enlisted groups who could enforce laws against the slaves.<sup>39</sup> state militias. Slave patrols were often equipped with guns and whips and would exert brutal and racially motivated control.<sup>40</sup> Militias were organized to handle revolts. White preachers were used to instill docility and the acceptance of the lot of slavery. Many bible verses were twisted to say that being Black was a curse and slavery was an accepted manner to handle these cursed people (many churches still preach that being black was a curse). They also told their congregations that if slaves were obedient, they would be rewarded in the hereafter.

Even with these resurrections and control methods those in the south did not want the news of what was going on to get back to the white populace. They censored reports and distorted just how amenable the slaves were to slavery. They did not want Whites outside of their areas and foreigners to learn of the warlike environment that had been created due to the Africans fighting back. They still felt that they could get the "Negroes" under control.<sup>41</sup>

## **Slaves and the American Revolution**

While this unrest between slaves and their owners continued, the U.S. found themselves fighting the American Revolution for the same thing—freedom.

During this time of war, do you think the Africans stopped their fight? Would you (as a slave) have helped the U.S. fight for freedom? Did you read about the slaves' role during the American Revolution? If you heard of nothing regarding the slaves during the American Revolution was it because they just quietly sat back and watched?

Well, despite what you may have heard or not heard, Africans played a significant role in the American Revolution. They fought on the opposition's side in many roles because they were promised their freedom by the opposition. Those who did not fight in the war, continued to stage slave uprisings. Therefore, the American Revolution was not a solitary insurrection but several simultaneous upheavals. Yet, according to author and historian Cedric Johnson, in his book on slavery and the constitution, he notes few historians or others portray the Revolution preferring instead to follow George Bancroft (another historian) in staging the Revolution as a "culminating event" that transformed a complex colonial society "into a comfortable, democratic nineteenth-century society that was, after all, good enough for everyone."<sup>41</sup> The American Revolution was hardly anything of the kind, for it bequeathed civil rights on what Linda Grant DePauw, professor of history at George Washington University, estimates to be only 15 percent of the population, leaving poorer colonists, the slaves, all women, and Native Americans to the mercies of a few.<sup>42</sup>

This limited freedom was not what most Americans fought for—the poor whites, the Blacks, and the Native Americans possessed a radically different mission. There were also many uprisings that occurred before this time that forged the American Revolution. Many of these uprisings were that of Blacks (the enslaved and the free). This war of the Blacks, frequently allied with Native Americans and sometimes abolitionist colonials, provided the occasion for the liberation of what some estimate to be one hundred thousand slaves, a fifth of the Black population.<sup>43</sup> This constituted the largest emancipation of slaves in the Americas prior to the Haitian Revolution. But many historians have treated these events as though they did not happen because they are not recounted in many American history books.

## **Willie Lynch & Slavery**

As the slaves fought back and died as punishment, the White slave owners continually sought out ways to keep control without losing their free labor. One example was the "Willie Lynch Chip." The "Willie Lynch Chip" was a controversial letter that some say did not exist, but if it did not exist it certainly was a system that was used to control slaves whether Willie Lynch was the author or not.



Whether you accept that the Willie Lynch speech existed or not--isn't the issue (the method of control is). Kenneth Stampp in his important work on slavery in the American South, *The Peculiar Institution* (1956), uses the historical records to outline the five rules for making a slave<sup>44</sup>:

1. Maintain strict discipline.
2. Instill belief of personal inferiority.
3. Develop awe of master's power (instill fear).
4. Accept master's standards of "good conduct."
5. Develop a habit of perfect dependence.

The Willie Lynch speech follows these same rules of thumb. Willie Lynch Chip was named for a White slave owner named William "Willie" Lynch, who supposedly, in a speech delivered on the banks of the James River in 1712, said there were many ways to maintain control over Black slaves.<sup>45</sup> His strategy of 287 years ago is still being used, in the view of many. The city Lynchburg, VA is named after this man's brother John Lynch. The word lynching was coined because of their family's practice of beating, tarring, feathering and hanging his Black victims coined as "Lynch law."<sup>46</sup>

A replica of the speech given in 1717 by William Lynch follows below<sup>47</sup>:

Gentlemen:

I greet you here on the banks of the James River in the year of our Lord 1712. First, I shall thank you, the gentlemen of the Colony of Virginia, for bringing me here. I am here to help you solve your problems with slaves. Your invitation reached me on my modest plantation in the West Indies where I have experimented with some of the newest and still the oldest methods for control of slaves. Ancient Rome would envy us if my program is implemented.

As our boat sailed south on the James River, named for our illustrious king, whose version of the Bible we cherish, I saw enough to know that your problem is not unique. While Rome used cords of wood as crosses for standing human bodies along its old highways in great numbers, you are here using the tree and rope on occasion.

I caught a whiff of a dead slave hanging from a tree a couple of miles back. You are not only losing valuable stock by hangings, you are having

uprisings, slaves are running away, your crops are sometimes left in the field too long for maximum profit, you suffer occasional fires, your animals are killed.

Gentlemen, you know what your problems are; I do not need to elaborate. I am not here to enumerate your problems. I am here to introduce you to a method of solving them.

In my bag I have a foolproof method for controlling your black slaves. I guarantee that if installed correctly it will control the slaves for at least 300 years. My method is simple and members of your family or any overseer can use it. I have outlined a number of differences among the slaves, and I take these differences and make them bigger. I use fear, distrust and envy for control purposes. These methods have worked on my modest plantation in the West Indies and will work throughout the South. Take this simple list of differences, think about them. On top of my list "age" but it is there only because it starts with "a", the second is "color" (or shade); there is intelligence, size, sex, size of plantation, status of plantation, attitude of owner, whether the slave lives in the valley or on a hill, east, west, north, south, has fine hair or coarse hair, or is tall or short.

Now that you have a list of differences, I shall give you an outline of action, but before that, I shall assure you that distrust is stronger than trust, and envy is stronger than adulation, respect, or admiration. The Black slave after receiving this indoctrination shall carry on and will become self-refueling and self-generating for hundreds of years, maybe thousands.

Don't forget you must pit the old black vs. the young Black and the young Black male vs. the old Black male. You must use the dark skin slave vs. the light skin slave. You must also have your white servants and overseers distrust all Blacks, but it is necessary they trust and depend on us. They must love and respect and trust ONLY us.

Gentlemen, these kits are your control; use them. Have your wives and children use them, never miss an opportunity. My plan is guaranteed, and the good thing about this plan is that if used intensely for one year, the slaves themselves will remain perpetually distrustful.

Thank you, gentlemen.



It is believed that Willie's message or this type of system was passed around the South as an effective way of handling Black slaves. These new types of control worked through violence but also through a divide and conquer philosophy. Many White slave owners embraced this thinking in order to control their possessions (the slaves) and increase their profit.<sup>48</sup>

Cotton was the largest imported product during this time period and if the plantation owners did not have the slaves to pick the cotton and work for free they would lose a tremendous amount of money. Can you imagine having hundreds of workers who worked for free, were fed the scraps that your family would not eat, that you spent no amount of money on to take care and could work from sun up to sun down. Many families became wealthy as a result of this free labor. Additionally, the United States became a prosperous country on the backs of slaves.<sup>49</sup> These slave owners would do what they could to keep this free labor as long as possible. But, despite this huge incentive to keep control of slaves, slavery did not last.

The slaves ran, utilized the Underground Railroad, and fought for their freedom. This freedom was gained through their bravery, ability to survive the cruelest circumstances, intelligence to learn this new land and language through the desire to be as physically free as they were in their minds. But, in an environment where the slaves were against slave owners who had everything to lose if slavery was abolished, this was not a fight of all Whites against Blacks. Sure, Willie Lynch taught many White minds to distrust Blacks, a distrust that we still see today. But, there were other Whites who knew that slavery was an inhumane institution and they worked with the Africans to abolish it.

## **White & Black Abolitionists**

By the 1840s those associated with the abolitionist movement had gained strength in American life. Abolitionists made slavery a moral issue and used the political process of citizen protest and actions to increase pressure for change. Though the abolitionist movement did not cause the Civil War, it clearly defined its moral principles.

The very first abolitionist demonstration in America took place in 1688. A group of brave Quakers gathered in Germantown, Pennsylvania, to voice their religious objections to the slave trade.<sup>50</sup> At first, few free Whites paid much

attention to the Quakers' calls for an end to slavery. But, eventually those men and women of all races who participated in the abolitionist movement made their case through speeches, pamphlets, and journals. In these spoken and written words by individuals such as William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, and Angelina Grimke Weld they captured the moral passion of their cause.

Many when they think of slavery see blacks verse whites. But, when you note that oppressed whites joined in the fight against slave owners (the merchants), that whites risked their own freedom in order to teach blacks the American language (a language very different from their native tongue), that whites joined forces to become abolitionist as well as walk alongside blacks during the civil war—this African American experience cannot be blamed on “whites” as a group because not all whites bought into what was occurring to blacks in America.

The first abolitionist organization on record, the American Colonization Society, was founded in 1816 and focused on gradual emancipation by individual slaveowners.<sup>51</sup> Once the slaves were freed, some thought it best that they be returned to Africa. William Lloyd Garrison, a White man and reformer from Boston, directly challenged the claims of this mindset. He felt that such an approach was racist and focused more on returning slaves than on ending slavery.<sup>52</sup> He also challenged the central writers of the U.S. Constitution because it was the document that granted freedom to all.

On January 1, 1831 he published the first issue of *The Liberator*, which became one of the leading antislavery journals in the U.S.<sup>53</sup> In a church basement; he organized a new abolitionist group, the New England Anti-Slavery society that included Blacks and Whites. In 1833, he and 62 others established the American Anti-Slavery society. This organization became what many referred to as “militant in their views” because they started threatening all slave owners.<sup>54</sup>

Abolitionists used different tactics to persuade the nation to end slavery. The primary method was the moral appeal to do the right thing and to convince Christians that slavery was a sin. Other abolitionists used more direct methods such as bringing anti-slave petitions before Congress and by forming alternative political parties. Another approach was to boycott goods made by slave labor hoping this economic method would be felt through loss of profits.

Mob violence was following abolitionists wherever they took their message. When William Garrison wrote an editorial attacking mob violence for *The Liberator*, Angelina Grimke, a White Quaker, wrote a private heartfelt



response in support of Garrison but hesitated to send it.<sup>55</sup> After a few days she mailed it and without permission, Garrison published it in his paper. Many abolitionists believe that it forwarded the movement immensely, but it forced Angelina and her sister Sarah to repudiate the letter and remain Quakers in good standing or embrace the abolitionist movement.<sup>56</sup>

They decided to embrace the abolitionist movement and were met with the same violence that Garrison had spoken of in his letter. Many abolitionists welcomed them as women because as southern women they knew first hand of the horrors of slavery. The Grimke sisters helped the cause because they reached an untouched segment of society—southerners and women. Yet while they were welcomed by some abolitionists, some did not welcome them as they felt they were abandoning their God given role as women.<sup>57</sup> They came to understand that their sex would be used against them as another way of attacking the anti-slavery movement—as would be the case for thousands of women to come. The Grimke sisters became loyal feminists because they realized that if they did not create an environment in which women could operate, they would not be effective in the fight against slavery.

Furthermore, Angelina became the first American woman to address the state legislature on behalf of slavery and women's rights.<sup>58</sup> Sarah Grimke addressed slavery but also addressed it from a woman's perspective. She also did a review of the bible to understand how it related to women. Through her study of the bible she offered one of the most coherent arguments for woman's equality of all races yet written by a woman in *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes*.<sup>59</sup> She identified and characterized the difference between sex and gender taking race and class into consideration. She tied the subordination of women both to educational deprivation and sexual oppression. She identified white males, individually and as a group, as having benefited from the subordination of women. These women worked twofold as they saw the connection between slavery of Africans and subordination of women.

These types of issues of course added to the complexity of the abolitionist movement. But there was a much further complicated issue that was addressed by Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Douglass and other Black abolitionists sharpened the view even more: they called attention to the effects of slavery and discrimination felt by Blacks.<sup>60</sup> This was different because White abolitionists tended to see slavery and freedom as absolute moral opposites, while African Americans knew that there were degrees of freedom. Many of the Black abolitionist experienced discrimination from some of their White abolitionist colleagues. The White abolitionist refused to hire Blacks. Due to this difference

and Douglass speaking out against this discrimination, there was friction between Douglass and Garrison and they went their separate ways.<sup>61</sup>

While there were many issues that the abolitionists brought forth by addressing slavery, each had a different commitment to their view. But, despite their differences, both Black and White and male and female abolitionists agreed more than they disagreed and generally worked together. They supported each other's publications, worked together fighting discrimination as well as slavery, and united in defending themselves against attacks of people who regarded them as dangerous fanatics.

## Jim Crow Laws

Once slavery was abolished, it was clear that the slaves were not the only ones who had been exposed to Willie Lynch's brainwashing methods. The White servants and family members of these slave owners had also been brought into Willie's ways of thinking, the distrust and fear of blacks that he so advocated still existed. Plus, there was still an air of White supremacy. Many Whites still felt that Blacks were inherently inferior and to support this belief sought rationalization through religion and science—as some still attempt to do today.<sup>62</sup> During the 1880's, the U.S. Supreme Court was inclined to agree with the White supremacists judgment and began to strike down the foundations of the post-Civil War reconstruction.<sup>63</sup> It declared that the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was unconstitutional.

There were also many attempts made to keep Blacks and Whites separate. In 1896, the Supreme Court legitimized the principle of "separate but equal" in its ruling *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The high court ruling led to an explosion of "Jim Crow Laws" named after Jim Crow a Black character in minstrel shows. From the 1880s until the 1960s, a majority of American states and cities enforced segregation through these Jim Crow Laws. The following pages give some examples of Jim Crow laws from various states and are taken from [www.eastridgehigh.org/academics/departments/english\\_languageArts/documents/Jim\\_Crow\\_Webquest.doc](http://www.eastridgehigh.org/academics/departments/english_languageArts/documents/Jim_Crow_Webquest.doc)



## Jim Crow Laws from Varying States

**Nurses** No person or corporation shall require any White female nurse to nurse in wards of rooms in hospitals, either public or private, in which Negro men are placed.

**Buses** All passenger stations in this state operated by any motor transportation company shall have separate waiting rooms or space and separate tickets windows for the White and Colored races.

**Restaurants** It shall be unlawful to conduct a restaurant or other place for the serving of food in the city, at which White and Colored people are served in the same room, unless such White and Colored persons are effectually separated by a solid partition extending from the floor upward to an instance of seven feet or higher, and unless a separate entrance from the street is provided for each compartment.

**Pool and Billiard Rooms** It shall be unlawful for a Negro and White person to play together or in company with each other at any game of pool or billiards.

**Toilet Facilities, Male** Every employer of White or Negro males shall provide for such White or Negro males reasonably accessible and separate toilet facilities.

**Intermarriage** the marriage of a person of Caucasian blood with a Negro, Mongolian, Malay, or Hindu shall be null and void.

**Theaters** Every person...operating . . . any public hall, theater, opera house, motion picture show or any place of public entertainment or public assemblage which is attended by both White and Colored persons shall separate the White race and the Colored race and shall set apart and designate... certain seats therein to be occupied by White persons and a portion thereof, or certain seats therein to be occupied by Colored persons.

**Railroads** the conductors or managers on all such railroads shall have power, and are hereby required, to assign to each White or Colored passenger his or her respective car, coach or compartment. If the passenger fails to disclose his race, the conductor and managers, acting in good faith, shall be the sole judges of his race.

**Wine and Beer** All persons licensed to conduct the business of selling beer or wine . . . shall serve either White people exclusively or Colored people exclusively and shall not sell to the two races within the same room at any time.

**Reform Schools** The children of White and Colored races committed to the houses of reform shall be kept entirely separate from each other.

**Circus Tickets** All circuses, shows, and tent exhibitions, to which the attendance of . . . more than one race is invited or expected to attend shall provide for the convenience of its patrons not less than two ticket offices with individual ticket takers and receivers, and in the case of outside tent performances, the said ticket offices shall not be less than twenty-five (25) feet apart.

**Housing** Any person . . . who shall rent any part of any such building to a Negro person or a Negro family when such building is already in whole or in part in occupancy by a White person or White family, or vice versa when the building is in occupancy by a Negro person or Negro family, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine of not less than twenty-five (\$25.00) nor more than one hundred (\$100.00) dollars or be imprisoned not less than 10, or more than 60 days, or both such fine and imprisonment in the discretion of the court.

**The Blind** The board of trustees shall . . . maintain a separate building ... on separate ground for the admission, care, instruction, and support of all blind persons of the Colored or Black race.

**Intermarriage** All marriages between a White person and a Negro, or between a White person and a person of Negro descent, to the third



generation, inclusive, or between a White person and a member of the Malay race; or between the Negro and a member of the Malay race\*\*; or between a person of Negro descent to the third generation, inclusive and a member of the Malay race, are forever prohibited, and shall be void.

\*\*The Malays are the race of people who inhabit the Malay Peninsula (what is today Peninsular Malaysia) and portions of adjacent islands of Southeast Asia, including the east coast of Sumatra, the coast of Borneo, and smaller islands that lie between these areas.

**Education** Separate schools shall be maintained for the children of the White and Colored races.

**Promotion of Equality** Any person . . . who shall be guilty of printing, publishing or circulating printed, typewritten or written matter urging or presenting for public acceptance or general information, arguments or suggestions in favor of social equality or of intermarriage between Whites and Negroes, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a fine of not exceeding five hundred (\$500.00) dollars or imprisonment not exceeding six (6) months or both.

**Intermarriage** The marriage of a white person with a Negro or mulatto or person, who shall have one-eighth or more of Negro blood, shall be unlawful and void.

**Hospital Entrance** There shall be maintained by the governing authorities of every hospital maintained by the state for the treatment of White and Colored patients separate entrances for White and Colored patients and visitors, and such entrances shall be used by the race only for which they are prepared.

**Prisons** The warden shall see that the White convicts shall have separate apartments for both eating and sleeping from the Negro convicts.

**Education** Separate free schools shall be established for the education of children of African descent; and it shall be unlawful for any Colored child to attend any White school, or any white child to attend a Colored school.

**Intermarriage** All marriages between . . . White persons and Negroes or White persons and Mongolians . . . are prohibited and declared absolutely void . . . No person having one-eighth part or more of Negro blood shall be permitted to marry any White person, nor shall any White person be permitted to marry any Negro or person having one-eighth part or more Negro blood.

**Education** Separate rooms [shall] be provided for the teaching of pupils of African descent, and [when] said rooms are so provided such pupils may not be admitted to the school rooms occupied and used by pupils of Caucasian or other descent.

**Textbooks** Books shall not be interchangeable between the White and Colored schools, but shall continue to be used by the race first using them.

**Libraries** The state librarian is directed to fit up and maintain a separate place for the use of the Colored people who may come to the library for the purpose of reading books or periodicals

**Militia** The White and Colored militia shall be separately enrolled, and shall never be compelled to serve in the same organization. No organization of Colored troops shall be permitted where White troops are available, and while White troops are permitted to be organized, Colored troops shall be under the command of White officers.

**Intermarriage** All marriages between a White person and a Negro, or between a white person and a person of Negro descent to the fourth generation inclusive, are hereby forever prohibited.

**Cohabitation** Any Negro man and White woman, or any White man and Negro woman, who are not married to each other, who shall habitually live in and occupy in the nighttime the same room shall each be punished by imprisonment not exceeding twelve (12) months, or by fine not exceeding five hundred (\$500.00) dollars.

**Education** The schools for White children and the schools for Negro children shall be conducted separately.



**Juvenile Delinquents** There shall be separate buildings, not nearer than one-fourth mile to each other, one for White boys and one for Negro boys. White boys and Negro boys shall not, in any manner, be associated together or work together.

**Mental Hospitals.** The Board of Control shall see that proper and distinct apartments are arranged for said patients, so that in no case shall Negroes and White persons be together.

**Barbers** No Colored barber shall server as a barber [to] White women or girls.

**Burial** The officer in charge shall not bury, or allow to be buried, any Colored persons upon ground set apart or used for the burial of White persons.

**Restaurants** All persons licensed to conduct a restaurant, shall serve either White people exclusively or Colored people exclusively and shall not sell to the two races within the same room or serve the two races anywhere under the same license.

**Amateur Baseball** It shall be unlawful for any amateur White baseball team to play baseball on any vacant lot or baseball diamond within two blocks of a playground devoted to the Negro race, and it shall be unlawful for any amateur Colored baseball team to play baseball in any vacant lot or baseball diamond within two blocks of any playground devoted to the White race.

**Parks** It shall be unlawful for Colored people to frequent any park owned or maintained by the city for the benefit, use and enjoyment of White persons . . . and unlawful for any White person to frequent any park owned or maintained by the city for the use and benefit of Colored persons.

**Transportation** The . . . Utilities Commission . . . is empowered and directed to require the establishment of separate waiting rooms at all

stations for the White and Colored races.

**Teaching** Any instructor who shall teach in any school, college, or institution where members of the White and Colored race are received and enrolled as pupils for instruction shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof, shall be fined in any sum not less than ten dollars (\$10.00) nor more than fifty dollars (\$50.00) for each offense.

**Fishing, Boating, and Bathing** The [Conservation] Commission shall have the right to make segregation of the White and Colored races as to the exercise of rights of fishing, boating, and bathing.

**Mining** The baths and lockers for the Negroes shall be separated from the White race, but may be in the same building.

**Telephone Booths** The Corporation Commission is hereby vested with power and authority to require telephone companies . . . to maintain separate booths for White and Colored patrons when there is a demand for such separate booths. That the Corporation Commission shall determine the necessity for said separate booths only upon complaint of the people in the town and vicinity to be served after due hearing as now provided by law in other complaints filed with the Corporation Commission.

**Lunch Counters** No persons, firms, or corporations, who or which furnish meals to passengers at station restaurants or station eating houses, in times limited by common carriers of said passengers, shall furnish said meals to White and Colored passengers in the same room, or at the same table, or at the same counter.

**Child Custody** It shall be unlawful for any parent, relative, or other white person in this State, having the control of custody of any White child, by right of guardianship, natural or acquired, or otherwise, to dispose of, give or surrender such white child permanently into the custody, control, maintenance, or support, of a Negro.

**Libraries** Any White person of such county may use the county free



library under the rules and regulations prescribed by the commissioner's court and may be entitled to all the privileges thereof. Said court shall make proper provision for the Negroes of said county to be served through separate branch or branches of the county free library, which shall be administered by [a] custodian of the Negro race under the supervision of the county librarian.

### So, what does this mean regarding the **Treatment of Blacks Today?**

Race is a real part of black people's lives—so much so that it keeps them guessing about why they are being treated a certain way when situations occur. "Is it because I'm black or is it me?" "Was that an insult because I am black or just because...?"

As people, we might not be aware of it every day but it only takes a look, a word, an inappropriate action, or an overt denial of basic rights or privileges to make race present, felt, and therefore real.

These are burdens of the past that still affect many today and can become an everyday experience for Blacks. Race and inequality has been the cause that has united Blacks (despite attempts to divide and conquer); fighting for the promise of mutual respect and a level playing field of economic opportunity. The struggle for many Blacks or Blacks as a group continues because after hundreds of years of mistreatment, forty years of equal rights laws and a Black President (President Barack Obama) it just is not enough to level the playing field and keep blacks from wondering "is it just me or is it because I am black."

Despite having a Black man as the President of the U.S. it still has not changed the mind of some that see Black men (young and old) as violent and criminal acting—a force to be protected against.

Many blacks are just a few generations removed from their slave ancestors, so would slavery still bother them? Would confederacy symbolism and nooses that represent lynching's still bother them? Would words utilized during slavery (like boy, colored people, fetch this) still bother them? The answer in many cases is yes--as for many blacks the wounds are still open and have not healed.

But who should be responsible for this healing? Whites? This would make a complex problem seem simple. Majority of whites did not benefit from slavery, did not participate in slavery and have not directly done an injustice to blacks.

So then how does healing occur?

A start would be a serious apology for the brutal treatment of Africans in this country. This actually has begun when Rep. Steve Cohen, a Democrat from Tennessee, drafted the resolution and presented it to the House on July 29, 2008 indicating in his speech that a total of 120 lawmakers, including two Republicans, co-sponsored the resolution, Cohen said.<sup>64</sup>

In February, the Senate apologized for atrocities committed against Native Americans, and the body apologized in 2005 for standing by during a lynching campaign against African Americans throughout much of the past century. Twenty years ago, Congress apologized for interning Japanese Americans in concentration camps during World War II.<sup>65</sup>

While an apology for slavery has long been an issue for African Americans it is often stated that this apology was prolonged because of the issue of reparations. There has yet been any type of reparation and the apology continues as Iowa Democratic Senator Tom Harkin sponsored a resolution that passed on June 17, 2009 that "acknowledges the fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality and inhumanity of slavery," and "apologizes to African Americans on behalf of the people of the United States for the wrongs committed against them and their ancestors who suffered under slavery and Jim Crow Laws."<sup>66</sup>

#### So now what?

- Reparations (repayment for all the hundreds of years of free labor that corporations and land owners had)?
- More laws and policies to stop racial profiling, an unfair criminal system targeted towards Blacks (read the sentencing project found on [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)) and enforcement of workplace policies that would level the playing field forcing equal treatment?
- History books in the K-12 curriculum that teaches the real story about people of color in the country?
- Media that is not focused on black violence which always makes the headline aside from other group's violence?



You think about what would it take. Most certainly an attack on Affirmative Action (the policy that seeks to level the playing field) is probably not the answer. Politicians and big business (those) who have directly benefited from slavery have to recognize that America would not be the "powerhouse" it is today without those hundreds of years of free labor. So now that that was all done, do you just walk away and say oh well we, the U.S. are (in some eyes) okay now?

Unfortunately, still today you can find that "race" an obvious difference among people—perpetuates itself in many negative ways. Are there those who are afraid of Blacks because they have been portrayed as violent even though they were the ones taking the lynchings and not giving them? Is it not the case that blacks still disproportionately live separate from their suburban counterparts where acceptance and integration in certain neighborhoods is occurring very slowly? Is it not the case that Blacks get racially profiled when it comes to crimes, jobs, driving, and voting opportunities? The list could continue but you get the point.

There is still another disparaging fact—despite all of this oppression against blacks in this country, Blacks have and continue to make significant contributions to our U.S. society; yet, this has not been included in American history. Black history month is when you learn about African American contributions but you learn very little about the Black scientists, doctors and inventors (areas that are perceived as only for the intellectual best). We learn instead that blacks contributed when it benefited themselves during the Civil Rights Era. We hear about black athletes and entertainers. But is this all that Blacks in America have and continue to do? If you don't know the real answer then that is unfortunate. If we are to continue in our quest for valuing diversity, it is not only necessary to understand the past and the struggles of different groups in our society, but it is just as important to understand each group's contributions. Otherwise, we wonder: why do "these people" deserve the respect and equal treatment they are always demanding.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Restoration of the rich history that slavery and segregation severed seems necessary if we are to understand why yet still today we are addressing various plights from social to systematic racism faced by blacks. Few would argue against

the fact that nearly four decades of employment law have made a significant change to the face of the American workplace. But, after hundreds of years of racism toward Blacks, equal opportunity is not yet a realism for African Americans.

### End of Chapter Questions

1. What is meant by chattel slavery? Why was slavery in America more brutal than other slave institutions?
2. In what manner did the slaves fight back against slavery?
3. How does the Willie Lynch speech still impact blacks and whites today?
4. Is equal opportunity a reality today for blacks, why or why not?
5. Is the following a true or false statement: All whites were in favor of slavery, explain your answer.
6. What does the following:
  - racial profiling (targeting individuals for suspicion of crime or wrong doing based on the individual's race),
  - current (2014/2015) police brutality or killing by police of unarmed Black men,
  - racial disparities (unequal care due to race) in health care according to the 2010 National Healthcare Disparities Report

Have to do with stereotypes and prejudices toward blacks and how can this create unequal treatment of Blacks in the workplace?

### Internet Exercise

Using the Internet, go to

[http://inventors.about.com/od/blackinventors/a/black\\_inventors.htm](http://inventors.about.com/od/blackinventors/a/black_inventors.htm) or to the following site to look at a more extensive list of black inventors

<http://inventors.about.com/library/blblackinventors.htm> or go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and type: black inventors



- Now list eight to nine of the inventions that would change how you interact in your life.
- Now answer the following question: Blacks seem to be highlighted when it comes to sports and entertainment or civil rights—what is your view on sharing these important scientific contributions to U.S. society, how can this cultural knowledge (area of knowledge and contribution perceived as only for the intellectual best) change or enhance one's view of Blacks? How could it help Black children? How could it help non-Black children?

### End of Chapter Exercise

Read the following known facts:

- Eight thousand years ago, people in present-day Zaire developed their own numeration system, as did Yoruba people in what is now Nigeria. The Yoruba system was based on units of 20 (instead of 10) and required an impressive amount of subtraction to identify different numbers. Scholars have praised this system, as it required much abstract reasoning.
- More than 35,000 years ago, Black Egyptians scripted textbooks about math that included division and multiplication of fractions and geometric formulas to calculate the area and volume of shapes. Distances and angles were calculated, algebraic equations were solved and mathematically based predictions were made of the size of floods of the Nile.
- Before the European invasion of Africa, medicine in what is now Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa, etc. was more advanced than medicine in Europe. Medical procedures performed in ancient Africa before they were performed in Europe:
  - vaccination,
  - autopsy,
  - limb traction and
  - broken bone setting,
  - bullet removal,

- brain surgery,
- skin grafting,
- filling of dental cavities,
- installation of false teeth,
- Caesarean section,
- anesthesia and tissue cauterization
- surgeries under antiseptic conditions universally when this concept was only emerging in Europe

D. The picture that has been shown as it relates to people in the continent of Africa or go to google and choose “images” not “web” then type: pictures starving children in Africa



Now answer the following five questions:

1. By only seeing the picture in (D) as it relates to Africans, what association would people make about those who currently or come from the continent or 54 countries of Africa?
2. What does knowing the “real” facts about Africa say about the skills and intellect of many of the ancestors of Blacks in America?
3. Some people say that slavery did Blacks a favor because they were uncivilized people, yet this is not accurate of many of the countries of Africa now or past days...what arguments can you make against this belief based on the facts in a-c above.
4. In the first few chapters, we state that knowing cultural history is important, how does what you learned in the chapter about the fight of blacks for equality, the skills and talents of Africans/blacks go against the stereotypes that are still very prevalent toward Blacks today.



5. If someone was raised to believe that Blacks were inferior (due to slave status etc.) as a people or just violent or ignorant, how does just knowing this small amount information in the exercise among the many other facts found at:  
<http://atlantablackstar.com/2013/12/07/10-african-kings-and-queens-whose-stories-must-be-told-on-film/5/> and <http://www.africanlegends.info/> and <http://www.greatblackheroes.com/> regarding the history of Africans or contributions of Blacks change that perspective