

CHAPTER 4

Transatlantic Moment

ART 4214 SWAN QUITO

NOTICE
WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship or research". If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use", that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order, if in its judgement, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

I 19473874

European engagement with the Muslim world contributed to a cultural awakening and commercial expansion resulting in profound political transformations. An energetic Europe burst upon the world scene in the fifteenth century, ushering in a new era. Labor exploitation was key to the expansion, and critical to such labor was the capture and enslavement of Africans. African captives in the Muslim world were important and numerically significant, but the transatlantic trade was exceptional for its high volume and compact duration, with the overwhelming majority of Africans transported in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The consequences for Africa and its exported daughters and sons were catastrophic.

Like the inner workings of a clock, the interconnectedness of several global developments gave rise to the transatlantic slave trade. Christian-Muslim conflict, international commerce, sugar, and New World incursions were foremost in creating circumstances whereby the African emerged as principal source of servile labor, laying the foundations of the modern world.

Reconquista

Muslim forces in al-Andalus, never in control of the entire Iberian peninsula, were continually threatened by Christian enemies during their nearly 800-year rule. The latter stages of the struggle for Iberia, referred to as the "reconquest" by the Christians, unfolded at the same

time as an equally momentous contest between Christian and Muslim powers raging near the Black Sea. There, Muslims fought for control of the old Byzantine or eastern Roman empire (referred to by the Muslims as *Rūm*). In both Iberia and the Black Sea region, Muslims and Christians sold their captives into slavery.

The means by which captives were marketed underscores the period's expansive commercial activity. Maritime innovations allowed the Italian city-states of Pisa, Genoa, and Venice to participate in an eastern Mediterranean trade principally involving silk, spices, and sugar; but they also trafficked in war captives. The Genoese, for example, sold Christian captives to Muslims, and Muslim captives to Christians, by the thousands, while the Venetians purchased captives from the Black Sea. Many, mostly women, were brought to Italy, where they performed agricultural and domestic tasks left undone by an Italian population reeling from the Black Death. The newly enslaved joined the ranks of the similarly exploited in Crete and Cyprus, but especially in Sicily, southern Italy, Majorca, and southern Spain, where slavery was of a considerable vintage. The enslaved in Sicily were mostly Muslim and, like Venice and other Italian sites, female.

If the fourteenth century saw increased reliance upon captive labor in the Mediterranean, the fourteenth and fifteenth witnessed changes in the source of that labor. The reconquest of Portugal in 1267 signaled the beginning of the end of territorial disputes between Muslims and Christians. Muslim power in Spain also began to gradually decline as a result of battles and treaties. Iberia as a source of servile labor dried up, forcing Europe to turn elsewhere. By the end of the fourteenth century, the demand for slaves was largely met by captives from the Black Sea. But the struggle for Byzantium ended in 1453 with the Muslim conquest of Constantinople (henceforth Istanbul) and the consolidation of lands in Anatolia (Asia Minor) and adjoining the Black Sea. Captives were thereafter funneled to Muslim markets. Some forty years later, the combined forces of Castile and Aragon defeated the last Muslim bastion in Iberia, Granada, bringing the reconquest to an end in 1492.

With these reservoirs of servile labor tapped out, the northern Mediterranean was in need of workers, a demand occasioned by, among other projects, the cultivation of sugarcane. Spreading from southeast Asia to India in antiquity, sugarcane was introduced to Persians and Arabs during Islam's early years. They transferred its production to Syria and Egypt, and later to North Africa, southern Spain,

Sicily, Cyprus, and Crete. European crusaders first came into contact with sugar in the Holy Lands, and they developed their own sugar plantations in Cyprus, Crete, and Sicily by the early thirteenth century. Europe gradually acquired a taste for sugar (although expensive until the nineteenth century and frequently used for medicinal purposes), having known only honey as a sweetener. Italian merchants spearheaded its production by supplying the capital and technology for its expansion into southern Iberia and (eventually) Madeira and the Canary Islands off the West African coast.

While the Italians provided the financing, the Portuguese supplied the labor. How the Portuguese secured the labor, however, is very much connected to Indian Ocean commerce. Both the Italians and the Portuguese had long been interested in accessing its lucrative trade directly, as opposed to going through the Red Sea and Arabian peninsula. This long-range goal of eliminating the Muslim middleman, together with such short-term objectives as securing outlets for West African gold, led the Portuguese and Italians to explore the West African coast during the first half of the fifteenth century. By 1475, the Portuguese had crossed the equator, and by 1487 they had rounded the Cape of Good Hope. By then, the Portuguese were exporting as much as 700 kilograms of West African gold in a peak year, and averaged 410 kilograms per year in the first twenty years of the sixteenth century, accounting for nearly one-fourth of all West African annual gold production. Vasco da Gama's 1497–1498 voyage signaled Portugal's entrance into the Indian Ocean; by 1520 the Portuguese were an Indian Ocean power.

Busy with gold and empire, the Portuguese also tapped into West African labor. The Guanches, the indigenous population of the Canaries, were taken by the Portuguese and enslaved in both Madeira and the Mediterranean in the early fifteenth century. Lisbon began importing as many as 1,000 West Africans annually from 1441 to 1530; from there they were dispersed to southern Spain, Portugal, and elsewhere in the Mediterranean. However, it was Madeira that emerged as the most important Portuguese possession, with its cultivation of sugarcane, initially with Guanche and then West African mainland labor (the Guanches were eventually extinguished as a group by European diseases). By the 1490s, Madeira was a wealthy Portuguese colony, exporting sugar throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. In 1495, the planters of Madeira began operations in the West African islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, operations so successful that the Old World

slave trade remained numerically dominant until the middle of the sixteenth century.

The use of black slaves to cultivate sugarcane therefore did not begin in the Americas, but in the Mediterranean and on West African coastal islands. Columbus's 1492 voyage to the "Indies" (to avoid circumnavigating Africa) set into motion a process that, among other things, transferred a system of slavery from the Old World to the New. The gradual exploitation of African labor was consequently not the result of some far-reaching European design to demean and debilitate Africans and Africa — at least not by the fifteenth century. In a real sense, Africa was a casualty of geography as much as greed.

Scope of the Trade

The trickle of African captives in the second half of the fifteenth century turned into a veritable flood by the seventeenth century. Columbus made his "discoveries," and in 1501 Pedro Cabral returned to Portugal with claims to Brazil. The movement of the Portuguese and Spanish into the New World saw the rise of mining and agricultural industries and an increased reliance on captive African labor that was due, most importantly, to epidemiology. In sum, Europeans introduced an entirely new disease environment into the Americas, from which indigenous peoples had no immunity. The latter were subjected to smallpox, measles, influenza, diphtheria, whooping cough, chicken pox, typhoid, trichinosis, and enslavement, and the results were catastrophic: In central Mexico alone, an estimated pre-Columbian population of 25 million fell to 1.5 million by 1650, after which it slowly recovered; in Hispaniola, native Arawak numbers plummeted from approximately 7 million to less than 500 by the 1540s. In total, an indigenous population as high as 100 million (or less than 20 million, depending on the estimate) was decimated by as much as 90 percent by the late eighteenth century, a process referred to as the Great Dying.

Africans, in contrast to the indigenous population, shared with Europeans a certain proportion of the Old World disease environment. African mortality rates in the Americas were alarmingly high as a result of other factors, as were those for Europeans in places like seventeenth-century Virginia, but neither was quite as devastating as those visited upon the indigenous. The Great Dying, European familiarity with African enslaved labor, and the cost-effectiveness of

transporting Africans to the Americas explains their enslavement in the Americas, one of the most extensive mass movements in history, a displacement to beat all displacements.

Within ten years of Columbus' 1492 voyage, enslaved Africans were in the New World, along with sugarcane and experienced planters from Portugal and the Canaries. Hispaniola (current day Haiti and the Dominican Republic), Cuba, and other Spanish-claimed territories were early destinations, and by the 1520s, Africans were replacing the indigenous Taíno in servile capacities, including gold and silver mining. From 1521 to 1594, from 75,000 to 90,000 Africans were brought to Spanish-held territories, with over half going to Mexico. Approximately 110,525 Africans entered Mexico and Peru between 1521 and 1639; by the time of formal emancipation in 1827, some 200,000 Africans had labored in Mexico alone. By 1560, Africans outnumbered Europeans in Cuba and Hispaniola, and by 1570 they equaled the number of Europeans in Mexico City and Vera Cruz.

Not all Africans entering the New World in the sixteenth century were enslaved. Free Africans took part in the military conquest alongside white conquistadores. Africans and their descendants had long resided in various Spanish towns, where they often experienced a freedom qualified by substantial financial hardship. The opportunity to sail for the New World was welcomed by individuals like Juan González de León, who among other things served as an interpreter of the Taíno language, and Juan Garrido, who came to Seville in 1496 and thereafter enlisted for service in the Americas. Garrido fought against the Taíno in Hispaniola, and both men participated in Ponce de León's conquest of Puerto Rico beginning in 1508. From Puerto Rico, Ponce de León raided the Caribs for captives in Santa Cruz, Guadeloupe, and Dominica, with the assistance of both men. The two even accompanied Juan Ponce de León to Florida in 1513 and 1521, mining for gold for a time.

Though there were black explorers and conquerors (dubious distinctions to say the least), slavery in sixteenth-century Spanish-claimed lands was far more significant, and even more so in Portuguese-held Brazil. Sugarcane was planted as early as the 1520s in the northeastern region of Pernambuco, and with the arrival of planters from Madeira and São Tomé, the industry grew slowly. Portuguese involvement in Kongo and Angola saw a dramatic increase in the importation of African captives, and by 1600 Brazil had outstripped Madeira as the world's leading sugar producer. Brazil was the port of call for the vast

majority of captive Africans for the whole of the seventeenth century, accounting for almost 42 percent of the total

The early African presence in the Americas was but the beginning of woes. The export figure remains a matter of debate, with some arguing for estimates that trend toward 100 million (including losses in Africa). The scholarly consensus, however, is that approximately 11.9 million Africans were exported from Africa, out of which 9.6 to 10.8 million arrived alive, translating into a loss during the Middle Passage of about 10 to 20 percent. Some 64.9 percent of the total were males, and 27.9 percent children. The transatlantic slave trade spanned 400 years, from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries. The apex of the trade, between 1700 and 1810, saw approximately 6.5 million Africans shipped out of the continent. Some 60 percent of all Africans imported into the Americas made the fateful voyage between 1721 and 1820, while 80 percent were transported between 1701 and 1850. In comparison with the trade in Africans through the Sahara, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean, the bulk of the Atlantic trade took less than one-tenth of the time.

Many European nations were involved in the slave trade. Britain, France, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland all joined Spain and Portugal at different points in time, as did Brazil and the United States. From the fifteenth century through the middle of the seventeenth, Spain and Portugal controlled the trade; Spain transported relatively few captives under its own flag, relying instead upon foreign firms to supply its territories under a licensing system called the *asiento*. From the mid-seventeenth century, a number of European entities entered the slaving business in addition to those previously mentioned, including the Brandenburgers, Genoese, and Courlanders. Throughout the eighteenth century and into the first decade of the nineteenth, the height of the trade, British and French involvement accounted for at least 50 percent of the trade.

Of all the voyages for which there is data between 1662 and 1867, nearly 90 percent of captive Africans wound up in Brazil and the Caribbean; indeed, Brazil alone imported 40 percent of the total trade. That part of the Caribbean in which the English and French languages became dominant yet transformed through African inflections, syntaxes, and vocabularies, was not far behind Brazil, receiving 37 percent of the trade in more or less equal proportions. Spanish-claimed islands accounted for 10 percent of the Africans, after which North America took in 7 percent or less.

African Provenance

Nearly 85 percent of those exported through the Atlantic came from one of only four regions: West Central Africa (36.5 percent), the Bight of Benin (20 percent), the Bight of Biafra (16.6 percent), and the Gold Coast (11 percent). The busiest ports in these regions were Cabinda and Luanda (West Central Africa), Cape Castle and Anomabu (Gold Coast), Bonny and Calabar (Bight of Biafra), and Whydah (Bight of Benin). Slavers (slave ships) often took on their full complement of captives in single regions of supply, and Africans emanating from the same regions tended to be transported to the same New World destinations. Captives from West Central Africa comprised the majority of those who came to Saint Domingue (present day Haiti) and South America, accounting for an astounding 73 percent of the Africans imported into Brazil. The Bight of Benin, in turn, contributed disproportionately to Bahia (northeastern Brazil) and the francophone Caribbean outside of Saint Domingue; six out of every ten from the Bight of Benin went to Bahia, while two out of every ten arrived in francophone areas. The Bight of Biafra constituted the major source for the British Leeward Islands and Jamaica, although the Gold Coast supplied 27 percent of those who landed in Jamaica and was clearly the leading supplier to Barbados, the Guyanas, and Surinam. Sierra Leone (a region that includes the Windward Coast in this discussion) provided 6.53 percent of the total export figure, followed by Southeast Africa and Senegambia at 5.14 percent and 4.3 percent, respectively. Transshipments between New World destinations could be substantial.

A review of these regions reveals considerable complexity not only with respect to language and culture, but also as it concerns forms of government, agriculture, regional and transregional commerce, and technologies relating to each of these categories. Stated differently, while there were many similarities, there were appreciable differences of every kind among the captives.

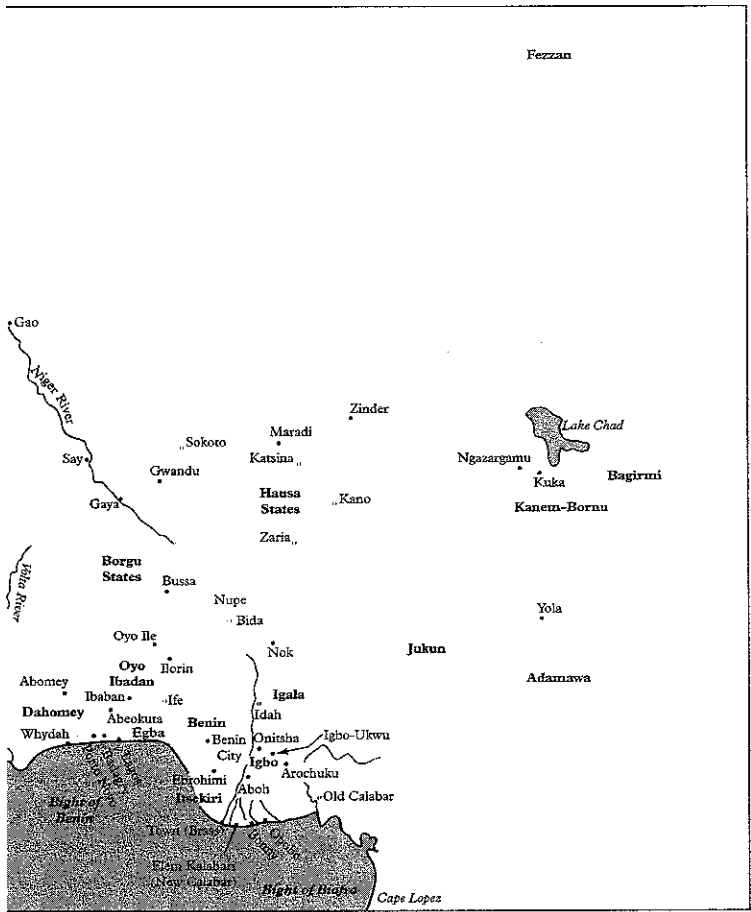
West Central Africa was a vast region dominated by the states and populations of Kongo and Angola. Life conformed to the four ecological zones (river, swamp, forest, and savannah) of the Congo River basin, the people further linked by closely related Bantu languages. Statecraft in the region ranged from kingdoms to villages, with Kongo, Ndongo, Kasanje, and Loango representing states of substantial size and elaboration. Agriculture, the material basis for these societies,



MAP 4 West Africa in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

was usually performed by women (except land clearing), whereas men hunted and tended fruit and palm trees.

Communities throughout West Central Africa believed in a supreme deity, often referred to as Nzambi a Mpungu, and related spiritual entities. Since the fifteenth century, a tradition of Christianity was established in the region, the result of Portuguese commercial activities. The social history of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Kongo arguably evolved around the exchange between Christianity and Kongoles



MAP 4 (Continued)

religious movement that sought to reconstruct a Kongo reeling from war. A prophet-priest or *kitomi*, her claim to be the incarnation of St. Anthony, combined with her teachings that Jesus, Mary, and the prophets were all Kongoles

In West Central Africa, spirits of the dead who had led good lives were believed to live in *mpemba*, a subterranean realm separated from the living by a large body of water, or *kalunga*. The deceased changed color within ten months of their demise, becoming white. It is therefore

mostly patrilineal (tracing descent and inheritance through the male line). Women also regularly fought to defend their villages. Above all else, though, women were revered as mothers, wives, and keepers of the soil. Regarding the latter, they enjoyed a special connection to Ala (or Ana), the earth mother. Ala and the land (*ala*) were highly esteemed and inextricably interwoven, forming the basis of Igbo law. Ala was functionally the most important deity in Igbo society, although she was not the high, creator god. That honor was held by Chineke or Chukwu, who, like the Fon-Ewe's Mawu-Lisa, was a blend of male and female components (*chi* and *eke*), and from whom sprang powerful spiritual forces known as the *alusi* or *agbara* as well as the personal guardian spirit or *chi* of each individual. The ancestral dead, the *ndichie*, added to the realm of the disembodied.

According to Igbo beliefs, the individual in consultation with his or her *chi* undertook a plan of action that resulted in high individual achievement, guided by a philosophy and value system stressing success and known as *ikenga*. The individual drive of the Igbo, together with their regard for the earth and belief in destiny, would clearly influence the direction of African-derived cultures in the Americas.

Regarding the Gold Coast, its southern half was dominated by Akan and Ga speakers, the former in turn divided into Twi and Baule speakers. As was true of the Igbo, women were prominent in Akan societies, as is evident in the belief that their ancestresses came from the sky or earth to found the first Akan towns in the forests. Matrilineal for the most part, Akan clans each claimed descent from a common mother. Each clan had a male and a female head, and women played critical roles as advisors and heads of the matrilineal clans. Similar to the Igbo, the Akan espoused belief in the earth mother, Asase Yaa, who, together with the high god Onyame (or Onyankopon), created the world. In keeping with most African theologies, the Akan high gods were remote, but the next order of deity, the *abosom* (who numbered in the hundreds), were accessible.

Akan societies contributed to the wide variety of political contexts out of which captives were taken. In this case, Akan speakers were either a part of the expansionist Asante empire (established around 1680) or they lived in its shadow. Asante was a vast realm ruled by the *Asantehene* (king) and a bureaucracy intent on maximizing trade with both the African hinterland and with Europeans on the coast. Gold, in addition to captives, was a key export; gold dust was the standard currency of Asante. One of the most militarily powerful and

structurally complex states in all of Africa, Asante's political union was symbolized by the *Sika Dwa*, the Golden Stool.

Sierra Leone was a region whose interior was dominated by the large Muslim theocracy of Futa Jallon, and by a series of independent, small-scale villages along the coast composed of multiple groups. A discussion of the coast underscores the rural existence of a majority who were farmers, fishers, and hunters. Although many groups were patrilineal, women tended to wield extraordinary influence through their roles as expert agriculturalists and leaders of "secret societies." Concerning the former, women cultivated rice, cotton, and indigo, skills that would be coveted in North America. Secret societies, in turn, were instrumental in intervillage diplomacy and commerce, and they were critical to the maintenance of social order. The Sande or Bundu society of women was one of the better known organizations, but women also played leading roles in such male societies as the Poro. What therefore emerges from the Sierra Leonian region are gender relations that may have been more egalitarian than elsewhere.

While located in Sierra Leone's hinterland, Futa Jallon was also vitally connected to the Senegambian region. We have already discussed Islam in Africa, so it is sufficient to observe that from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, militant or reformist Islamic states were founded in Senegambia (and indeed throughout West Africa), and Futa Jallon was a key participant in this development. Muslims captured non-Muslims in wars and were themselves captured, and captives from both sides wound up in the Americas. Muslims were exported through Senegambia, Sierra Leone, and the Bight of Benin, the latter mostly the result of conflict between Muslim Hausa-Fulani (related groups in contemporary northern Nigeria) and Yoruba combatants (some of whom were Muslims themselves). Muslims were also exported from the Gold Coast, but to a lesser extent. A number of Malagasy and Swahili captives from the coast of Southeast Africa were probably Muslim, but many would have been from the interior and therefore non-Muslim.

Belly of the Whale

The transatlantic transport of all of these various Africans to the Americas qualifies as the quintessential moment of transfiguration, the height

of human alienation and disorientation. It is a phenomenon unlike any other, with millions forcibly removed from family and friends and deposited in lands foreign and hostile. It cannot be compared with the millions of Europeans who voluntarily crossed the Atlantic, a journey which for all of their troubles was their collective choice. Words will never convey the agony, despair, and bewilderment of these innocents, the depth of their suffering, the pain of their separation. The transatlantic voyage, also called the Middle Passage, was an unspeakable horror.

The movement across the Atlantic actually began on African soil, where those captured in the hinterland were brought to coastal holding stages, or barracoons. Between initial capture and the barracoon, anything was possible, including escape. Alternatively, they could have been taken north to the transsaharan trade, or retained in Africa as slaves, where eventual export to the Americas (or the Mediterranean) was a continual possibility. Welcome to the realm of uncertainty and fear, gateway to the land of the macabre.

Reference to captives points to the debate over the capture itself. Do scholars who maximize African involvement in the capture and sale of other Africans do so for the purpose of minimizing Western culpability? Are those who are appalled by the very suggestion of African participation in the slave trade motivated by the same logic, only in reverse? The truth of the matter may be more nuanced than straightforward. There can be no doubt that European and American demand for slave labor drove the entire enterprise. It is also the case that Europeans entered Africa and hunted humans like prey, especially in the case of the Portuguese in Angola and Mozambique. But it is equally undeniable that, as was true of the transsaharan trade, there were African groups and governments involved in the capture of other Africans, together with instances of cooperation between European and African traffickers. At Bonny in the Bight of Biafra and points along the Gold Coast, for example, Europeans used "boating," or the sailing of small vessels upriver to purchase captives from villages along the banks, a practice also found along the Windward Coast. While other African states and groups resisted the slave trades and may have been successful in defending some, they clearly could not save nearly 12 million others.

Notions of African unity, and even "race" for that matter, were alien to Africa until relatively recently. As has been discussed, Africa was inhabited by people of differing cultures, religions, and political agendas, and these differences were exacerbated (or created) to feed the slave

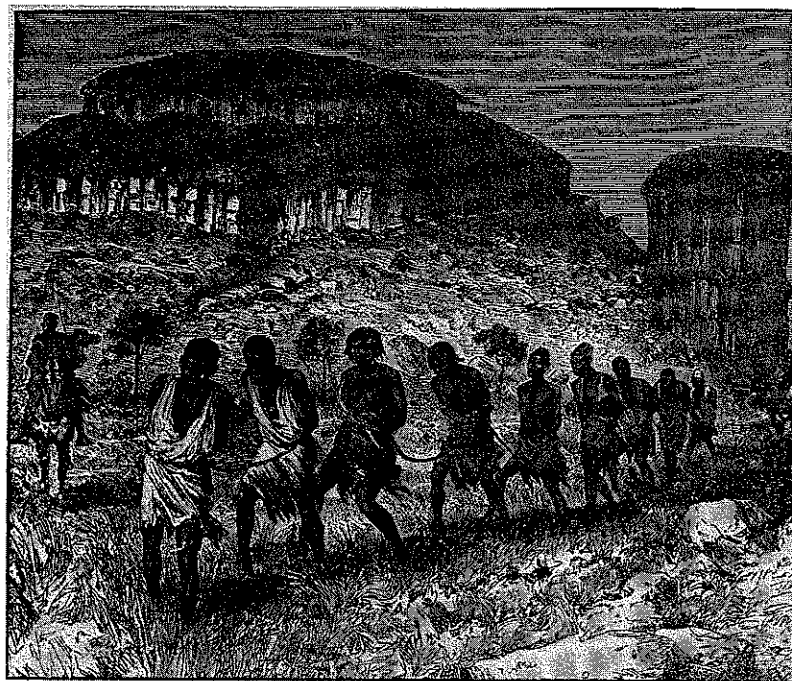


FIGURE 2. Slave coffle, western Sudan, 1879-1881. From Joseph Simon Galliéni, *Mission d'exploration du Haut-Niger: Voyage au Soudan Français* (Paris, 1885), p. 525. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, IC-USZ62-32008

trade. Raids, kidnaping, and warfare produced most captives, while individuals found guilty of crimes, or sold into bondage to pay debts, were also taken. Indeed, with the acceleration of the slave trade came a corresponding surge in the number of persons convicted of crimes. Can African participation in the slave trades be divorced from the engines of European and American demand? Culpability was shared, but was it symmetrical, and does the answer matter?

Captured Africans, in their forced march from the hinterland to the sea, could cover substantial distances, anywhere from 100 to 700 kilometers, depending upon place and time. They could take four months or longer to reach the coast. Loss of life during the trek is conservatively estimated to have averaged 10 to 15 percent, and in Angola it reached an obscene 40 percent. Captives who reached the shore could remain there for months, as a result of poor health and the need to convalesce, or to wait for the next slaver. Ports with established

traffic attracted larger numbers of slavers with greater frequency and differed, along with other barracoons, in type and size. Some barracoons were simply pens exposed to the elements, sometimes adjacent to European factories (trading posts). Others ranged from weather-protected dwellings to fortified castles. Still others, according to Mungo Park's late-eighteenth-century observation along the Gambia, were compounds attached to nearby communities, for "if no immediate opportunity offers them to advantage, they are distributed among the neighbouring villages until a slave ship arrives, or until they can be sold to black traders who sometime purchase on speculation." Park described their circumstances, stating that "the poor wretches are kept constantly fettered, two and two of them being chained together, and employed in the labours of the field; and I am sorry to add, are very scantily fed, as well as harshly treated."

The Gambian experience paralleled that of the Angolan. The latter involved coffles averaging 100 captives from the interior. They were fed the cheapest food, often rotten, which they were forced to carry. Bound and brutalized, they were taken to Luanda, where conditions remained deplorable, and there branded three times: on the right breast with a royal coat of arms, on the left breast or arm to indicate individual ownership, and on the chest with a small cross, as captives were baptized before embarking for Brazil. They then waited for weeks if not months, chained and exposed, with little to eat and little to wear, eating, sleeping, and eliminating in the closest of spaces. As many as 12,000 captives arrived annually in Luanda for export; between 6,000 and 7,000 survived for eventual shipment. The "putrid miasmas" of human filth and disease and death filled the air, circulating throughout the city.

The boarding of captives did not necessarily mean that the voyage was underway. There were often further delays of weeks if not months, as the slaver sailed from barracoon to barracoon until a full complement was achieved. A Middle Passage of only two or three month's duration was not the experience of many; rather, the total amount of time from the initial capture to embarkation could last the better part of a year.

The *James* departed England on April 5, 1675 and did not arrive in Barbados until May 21, 1676. Having reached Assini (on the Gold Coast) on August 30, the *James* exchanged commodities for both gold and captives at several points along the coast until January 11, 1676, when the vessel arrived at the English factory near Wyemba. There the

slaver boarded captives each day for about a week, most of whom were described as "very thin ordinary slaves," indicative of the preceding ordeal onshore. The *James* made yet another stop at Anomabu and did not set sail for Barbados until March 8, 1676.

Similarly, the Dutch slaver *St. Jan* began loading captives at Ardra in the Bight of Benin, also called Slave Coast, on March 4, 1659. The ship continued east, picking up additional captives and supplies in the Bight of Biafra. By the time the *St. Jan* left the Biafran area for the Cameroon River on May 22, it had boarded 219 Africans. From that time to August 17, the vessel journeyed along the coast in search of food as far as Cape Lopez (just south of the equator). The search for provisions was a major preoccupation for slavers, and the captain of the *James* complained that his search for food was a "great trouble." His concern was echoed by the captain of the *Arthur* operating in the Biafran Bight in February of 1678: "This day we sentt our Boat att Donus to see whatt might be done there, wee findinge negroes to be Brought on Board of us fast enough but wee nott free to deale in many fearing lest wee should take in negroes and have noe provisions for them." It was Barbot's calculation at the beginning of the eighteenth century that a "ship that takes in five hundred slaves, must provide above a hundred thousand yams; which is very difficult, because it is hard to stow them, by reason they take up so much room."

Once purchased by European slavetraders, captives were often branded with the company's coat of arms. These became their only coats, as they were usually stripped of all clothing. In 1699, Bosman recorded that "they came aboard stark naked as well women as men; in which condition they are obliged to continue, if the master of the Ship is not so charitable (which he commonly is) as to bestow something on them to cover their nakedness." Some 128 years after Bosman, Mayer noted in 1827 that two days before captives were loaded onto the slaver, the heads of both males and females were shaved. And then:

On the appointed day, the *barracoon* or slave-pen is made joyous by the abundant 'feed' which signalizes the negro's last hours in his native country. The feast over, they are taken alongside the vessel in canoes; and as they touch the deck, they are entirely stripped, so that women as well as men go out of Africa as they came into it — *naked*. This precaution, it will be understood, is indispensable; for perfect nudity, during the whole voyage, is the only means of securing cleanliness and health.

Brantz Mayer, *Captain Canot, or, Twenty Years of an African Slaver* (New York: Appleton, 1854), p. 102

While slavetraders may have been primarily concerned with hygiene, they were not oblivious to the psychological implications of denuding. Contrary to popular ignorance, most Africans did not go about butt naked, swinging through trees, but in fact placed great value on textiles, the primary commodity for which captives were traded to Europeans in the first place. The humiliation of prolonged nakedness before captors, the opposite sex, and children seared into the psyche an overwhelming sense of vulnerability.

Captives did not suffer silently. To the contrary, they often rebelled. To prevent mutiny and escape, male slaves were chained together at the wrists and ankles in groups of two as soon as they were boarded. Women and girls were physically separated from the males and usually unfettered, an arrangement that became standard procedure by the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The segregation of the sexes was maintained throughout the voyage except under certain circumstances on deck. Europeans had learned to prepare for rebellion as early as 1651, when captain Bartholomew Haward was told that "there is put aboard your *Pinck Supply* 30 paire of shackles and boults for such of your negers as are rebellious and we pray you be veary carefull to keepe them undr and let them have their food in due season that they ryse not against you, as they have done in other ships."

The separation of male and female captives also facilitated the long, sordid history of the rape of African women and girls by European men, a humiliation that began before they were ever sold to New World planters (who promptly went out and did the same). In point of fact, crews were given sexual access to captive females as a matter of policy. Even a small number of females violated infrequently was sufficient to establish the assailability of the captive population.

In addition to fetters, captives were often kept below deck, in the hold of the slaver, until the African shoreline was no longer in sight. This was done to discourage revolt, for the African maintaining visual contact with her homeland was sorely tempted to return. The *Hannibal's* Captain Phillips poignantly records the African response: "The negroes are so wilful and loth to leave their own country, that they have often leap'd out of the canoes, boat and ship, into the sea, and kept under water till they were drowned to avoid being taken up and saved by our own boats, which pursued them; they having a more dreadful apprehension of Barbadoes than we have of hell."

That the African viewed the New World as hell is related to her fear that Europeans were cannibals. Barbot records that it "has been

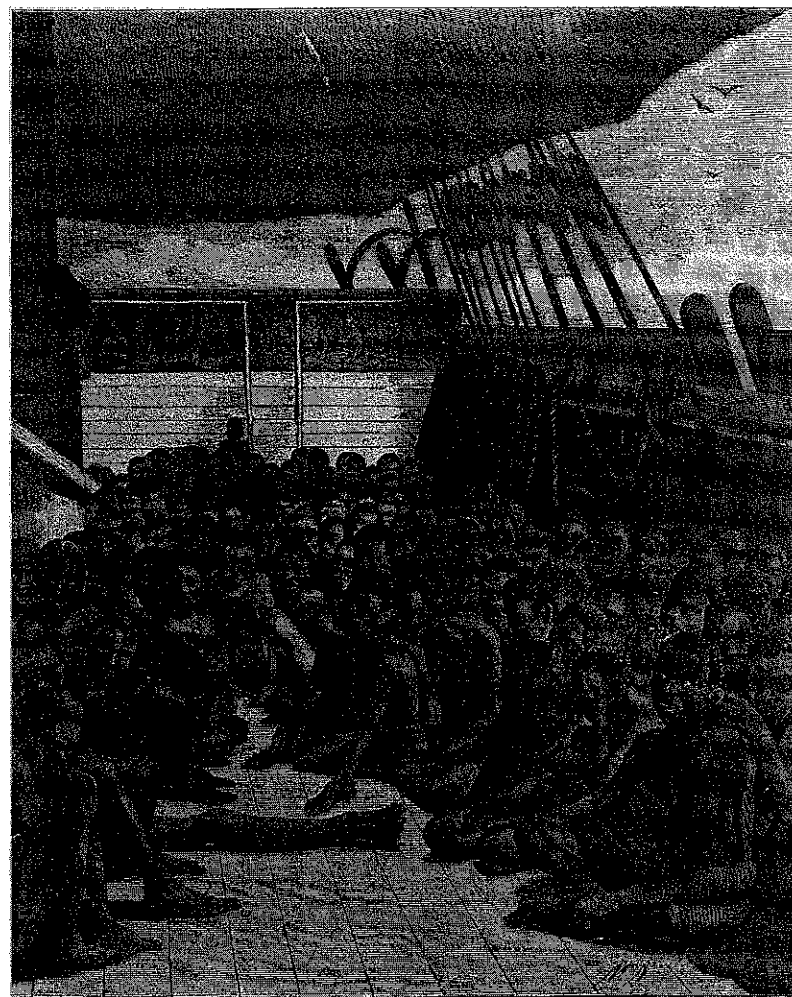


FIGURE 3. The Africans of the slave bark *Wildfire*, brought into Key West on April 30, 1860. From *Harper's Weekly* (June 2, 1860), vol. 4, p. 344. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-41678

observ'd before, that some slaves fancy they are carry'd to be eaten, which make them desperate; and others are so on account of their captivity: so that if care be not taken, they will mutiny and destroy the ship's crew in hopes to get away." Olaudah Equiano, upon seeing whites for the first time, became "persuaded that I had got into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. . . . When I recovered a little, I found some black people around me. . . . I asked them

if we were not to be eaten by these white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair." Equiano's apprehensions were consistent with those in West Central Africa (Equiano was an Igbo from what is now southeastern Nigeria), where Europeans were seen as spirits, their advent a portent of death. Such was the fear of the New World, so overwhelming was the sense of separation from family and land, that many chose to starve themselves; refusing to eat was an option so pervasive that crews often had to use force. Those who resisted were given a "cat," or flogging. In the face of their past capture, present suffering, and less-than-bleak future, many chose suicide by other means. Those who could went over the side; those who could not often went insane.

But many did not go insane or over the side, and because the slave trade was, in the final analysis, a business transaction, the African had to be maintained in some fashion. Captives were therefore usually fed twice a day aboard the slavers. Their diet included horse beans, rice, yams, limes, lemons, ground Indian corn, and palm oil. Meat was extremely rare, though fish caught along the voyage was occasionally provided. Water was obviously highly valued and rationed.

Medical practitioners called surgeons were often included among the crew to attend the medical needs of the captives. Of dubious ability and questionable reputation, these surgeons were further restricted by few resources. They monitored the health of the captives on a regular basis, segregating those with serious illnesses and treating them with such physics as wine or sago, a starchlike substance. The surgeons examined captives on African coastal shores to determine their fitness, and they prepared them for market once the New World was reached.

The consequences of the surgeons' limitations and the cramped, filthy conditions aboard the slavers was nothing short of ruinous. Diseases assailing the captives included dysentery (the "flux" or the "bloody flux"), measles, scurvy, and "fever." Ophthalmia, a condition leading to blindness (possibly related to river blindness), was widespread. Yaws was as prevalent and potentially fatal. Intestinal worms added to the collective misery. Aside from the bloody flux, contracted from food and water contamination, smallpox was of greatest concern; whole ships were quarantined upon reaching New World destinations until the pox had run its course and was no longer contagious.

Spacing also contributed to captive misery, and "tight packing" occurred frequently aboard slavers. Scholars disagree over its precise frequency and over its impact on the health of the captive population,

but there can be little doubt that tight packing contributed to suffering, and suffering is definitely a health issue.

In addition to those who did not survive the Middle Passage, many perished in Africa itself. Depending upon the specific region in question, from 10 to 40 percent of those captured in the interior died en route to the sea, at which point at least another 10 percent expired while awaiting export along the coast, during the barracoon phase. When mortality rates from points of capture through the Middle Passage are combined, rates that do not take into consideration those initially killed in slaving raids and wars, from 30 to 70 percent of those captured for eventual export to the Americas never arrived. Mutinies and shipwrecks added to the hosts of the dead. Slave ships, in the Dutchman Bosman's words, were "always foul and stinking." The "stench of a slave ship could be scented for miles," the slave deck "so covered with blood and mucous that it resembled a slaughter-house." The surgeon Isaac Wilson was convinced that two-thirds of the 155 who perished aboard the *Elizabeth* (out of 602) died from "melancholy," observing that once the captives were taken aboard, "a gloomy pensiveness seemed to overcast their countenances and continued in a great many." The sounds emanating from slavers usually included a "howling melancholy noise." To combat this mother of all blues, captives were brought on deck and forced to dance and sing, and sometimes had to be beaten to get them to comply. An early form of minstrelsy, this feigned animation in the midst of such sorrow demonstrates the deep and complicated history of black performance, its relationship to coercion both disturbing and instructive.

From the belly of the whale, the sons and daughters of Africa were dispersed all over the New World, occupying every conceivable place, performing every imaginable task. The terror of the passage would be forever seared into the memory of the dispersed, a memory passed on to descendants. But for all of the horror of the transatlantic slave trade, it did not completely rupture ties to the homeland. Africa would remain a central consideration in the hearts and minds of many, the dream of reconnection, of reversing sail, one of the Diaspora's central challenges.

Suggestions for Further Reading

The best place to begin examining the volume of the transatlantic slave trade is the database compiled by David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt,

David Richardson, and Herbert Klein entitled *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1999), which contains records for over 27,000 voyages, the most comprehensive response to Philip D. Curtin's groundbreaking *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1969). Works mentioned in the preceding chapter's suggested reading section, such as those of Patrick Manning and Paul E. Lovejoy, are applicable here as well. The literature on the transatlantic slave trade, exploring the economic, political, and social implications for all or segments of those involved, is in fact vast; one would want to include, however, Joseph E. Inikori's *Forced Migration: The Impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies* (New York: Africana, 1982); Joseph E. Inikori and Stanley L. Engerman, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: Effects on Economies, Societies, and Peoples in Africa, the Americas, and Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke U. Press, 1992); and Joseph C. Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

John K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1998), 2nd ed., and David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1984), have excellent chapters on the emergence of the trade in the Mediterranean and Iberia. The work of A. J. R. Russell-Wood, especially *A World on the Move: The Portuguese in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, 1415-1808* (Manchester: Carcanet Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), provides keen insight into Iberian developments as they relate to the slave trade. Ruth Pike's *Aristocrats and Traders: Sevillian Society in the Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell U. Press, 1972) is also pertinent, while Eric R. Wolf's *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1982) remains a pathclearing contribution.

For the Middle Passage, see Olaudah Equiano, *The African: The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (London: Black Classics, 1998) for a firsthand account. Elizabeth Donnan's *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institute, 1930-35) has information on this and other aspects of the slave trade. For interpretative analyses, see Herbert S. Klein, *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U. Press, 1978).

A discussion of the Middle Passage as well as the origins and cultures of transported Africans can be found in Michael A. Gomez,

Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1998). An interesting and at times technical study of the impact of Old World migrations into the New is located in Guy A. Settignano, ed., *Columbus and the New World: Medical Implications* (Providence, RI: Oceanside, 1995). Finally, treatment of these and other issues is contained in Joseph E. Harris, *The African Diaspora*, eds. Alusine Jalloh and Stephen E. Maizlish (College Station: Texas A & M U. Press, 1996).

CHAPTER 5

Enslavement

Africans experienced a most painful introduction to the New World. The forced march to the sea and the subsequent horrific sea voyage represent the birth of not only the modern African Diaspora but also modernity itself. Europe's rise and expansion were undergirded by slavery; its economic prosperity was fundamentally related to the exploitation of Africans (an argument championed by Trinidadian scholar Eric Williams). The vast wealth, considerable privilege, and seemingly limitless opportunities associated with American elites were all achieved on the backs of impoverished Africans and subjugated Native Americans. To be sure, a peasantry and working class from all points of the globe would eventually find themselves in the Americas, where they would also make contributions under exploitative conditions. Even so, it was enslaved African labor that paved the way for all to come.

Focus on the introduction of Africans as enslaved workers does not reject the possibility of a pre-Columbian African presence. Artifacts, archaeological remains, linguistic evidence, Native American traditions, and European explorer accounts render plausible the idea that Africans crossed the Atlantic at some unspecified point prior to Columbus. Indeed, there are references in West African sources to transatlantic voyages under imperial Mali in the fourteenth century, so the effort was probably made. It would not appear, however, that these earlier Africans achieved a regular correspondence with Native Americans, a steady commerce that for subsequent Africans was eventually established at their very considerable expense.



MAP 6 Latin America, 1828.

Aspects of American Enslavement

A consideration of slavery can begin with Brazil. This vast, Portuguese-claimed territory has a diverse economic history with fluctuating agricultural periods. Northeastern Brazil was the destination of the vast majority of Africans from the second half of the sixteenth century through the whole of the seventeenth, with the captaincies (provinces) of Bahia and Pernambuco receiving the lion's share of a work force



FIGURE 4. Slave market, Pernambuco, Brazil, 1820s. From Maria Graham, *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil* (London, 1824), opposite p. 107. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-97202.

cultivating sugarcane. From the late seventeenth century through the mid-eighteenth, gold and diamond mining redirected as many as two-thirds of all Africans to the captaincies of Minas Gerais, Mato Grosso, and Goiás. However, with the collapse of the mining boom by the 1770s, the majority returned to Bahia and Pernambuco to produce sugarcane and tobacco. Cotton became significant early in the nineteenth century, but from the 1820s coffee was king, resulting in the growth of African slavery in central and southern Brazil, particularly Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo.

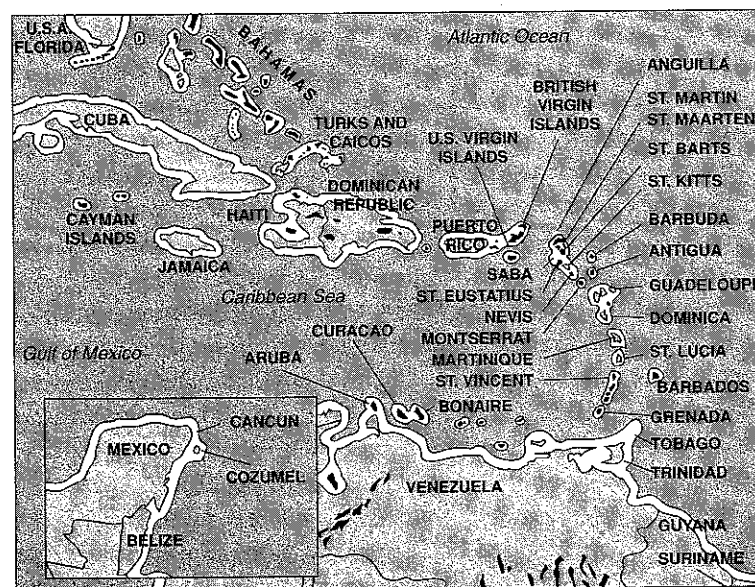
The various agricultural regimes, fluctuating demographics, differing climates, and changing rates of captive importation meant that slavery in Brazil was multifaceted and complex. However, three aspects of Brazilian slavery stand out: First, the number of Africans imported into Brazil was enormous; second, Africans brought to Brazil were overwhelmingly male, in ratios of nearly 3:1; and third, the percentage of children brought into central and southern Brazil was astonishing, accounting for nearly 40 percent of enslaved persons.

Concerning the English-speaking Caribbean, the British arrived in Jamaica in 1655, having established a presence in St. Kitts (St. Christopher) in 1624, Barbados in 1627, Nevis in 1628, and Montserrat and

Antigua in the 1630s. Limited arable land in St. Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat, and Antigua meant that these islands could not compete with Barbados, the wealthiest and most densely populated of English colonies in the seventeenth century. Originally covered by thick tropical growth with neither mountains or rivers, Barbados had a high percentage of cultivable land, and it was cleared for sugarcane within the first forty years of foreign occupation. However, the exactions of sugarcane, combined with territorial limitations, eventually exhausted the soil.

Jamaica was also relatively abundant in arable flat land. The Spanish maintained a minimal presence for 150 years before 1655 and the English incursion. English-speaking Jamaica was “founded in blood,” seized from the Spanish by a motley crew of unruly soldiers. For the remainder of the seventeenth century, it was the principal site for buccaneering operations against the Spanish. The end of the century, however, saw a transition from pirating and small-scale farming to large-scale plantation agriculture, in concert with a dramatic rise in the number of black slaves, soaring from 514 in 1661 to 9,504 in 1673. Between 1671 and 1679 another 11,816 Africans arrived, and by 1713 the enslaved population had reached 55,000, larger than that of Barbados. The year 1817 saw the largest number of slaves in Jamaica,

MAP 7. Caribbean map



some 345,252, but by that time many persons of African descent were no longer slaves. The island developed a reputation as the preserve of Akan speakers from the Gold Coast, but in fact more were imported from the Bight of Biafra. These two regions account for the origins of some 62 percent of all Africans arriving in Jamaica, and they enjoyed considerable cultural and social influence.

In addition to amassing the largest group of slaves in the British Caribbean, Jamaica also had one of the most diversified economies of the region. By 1832, slightly less than one-half of all the enslaved worked on sugar plantations; 14 percent worked on coffee plantations, 13 percent worked in "livestock pens," 7 percent inhabited minor staple plantations, 8 percent lived in towns, and 6 percent performed general labor. Owing to environmental needs, sugarcane plantations were concentrated along the island's northern coast but could also be found elsewhere.

European occupation of Trinidad began in July of 1498, and for the next 300 years the island languished under Spanish domination and neglect. This changed with the *cédula* (decree) of 1783, by which migration and slavery's expansion were encouraged through the offer of land. Any purported Roman Catholic from a nation friendly to Spain could swear an oath and receive free land; additional land was provided for every slave imported. The *cédula*'s terms essentially excluded all but the French, a group that included wealthy planters, the Irish (Northern), and others of various backgrounds, who would later be joined by those fleeing the French Revolution. By 1784, the island was effectively a French colony, with the French outnumbering the Spanish 20:1. Immigrants arrived that year from Grenada, Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, and Cayenne, speaking French and Creole languages (mixed African and European tongues). Their numbers would be augmented by Royalist planters fleeing the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804).

In contrast to Jamaica, Barbados, and other Caribbean islands, the arrival of substantial numbers of enslaved Africans in Trinidad was relatively late. The absence of both gold and significant Spanish interest in agriculture meant that Trinidad's pre-1783 population was never more than a few thousand; for example, in 1777, there were 200 enslaved blacks, 870 free "mulattoes," and 340 whites in Trinidad. However, by 1789, the population had increased to 18,918, including 2,200 indigenous people, 10,100 enslaved persons, 4,467 free "coloreds," and 2,151 whites. The African distribution in Trinidad reveals that nearly

63 percent arrived from the Bight of Biafra, followed by 18.2 percent from West Central Africa, 10.4 percent from the Gold Coast, and 4.5 percent from the Bight of Benin.

The British seized Trinidad in 1797, by which time the island had over 150 sugar estates. Sugarcane had become the island's most important crop; by 1832, 90 percent of the total value of Trinidad's exports was provided by sugar and its by-products, requiring some 70 percent of the enslaved labor. The impact of the 1783 *cédula* was the swift peopling of the island and the emergence of a bustling export economy.

While the sugar industry was important in Trinidad, cocoa, coffee, and cotton were also grown. Cocoa production had continued from the Spanish period, expanding even more rapidly during sugar's spectacular rise. Cocoa, however, was a smallholder's specialty, principally cultivated by the free colored and black populations and therefore not as dependent on slave labor. In 1810, at least 20 percent of Trinidad's population was free and colored, owning 37.3 percent of all estates and 31.5 percent of all the slaves. The large percentage of free persons growing cocoa explains its expansion, but the fact that they were overwhelmingly smallholders partially accounts for cocoa's mere 6.2 percent of the total value of exports in 1832, together with the observation that demand for cocoa only became very significant in the 1860s, when the taste of the drink *chocolat* was improved by the addition of the powdered extract.

Slavery in the Caribbean was distinguished from its North American counterpart by the presence of large plantations and the widespread absence of plantation owners. By convention, a North American plantation was an enterprise of 20 or more slaves, whereas Caribbean plantations had at least 100 slaves and often considerably more than that. Absentee ownership of Caribbean plantations increased toward the end of legal slavery in the British West Indies, and it underscores the relatively small number of whites in the islands. In Jamaica, for example, the black population already constituted 90 percent of the total by 1734.

Captive males were imported into the anglophone Caribbean at twice the rate of their female cosufferers, although early in the histories of Jamaica and Trinidad the proportions were more or less the same. Taking the anglophone Caribbean as a whole, we can see that life and labor were extremely arduous. Early in the history of the Caribbean, the relatively low costs of procuring captives from Africa made it less

expensive to simply replace enslaved workers with new recruits rather than promote stable families and strategies of reproduction in the islands. Imbalanced sex ratios and appalling working conditions resulted in a life expectancy of less than ten years upon disembarkation. In Barbados, for example, the importation of some 85,000 captives between 1708 and 1735 raised the enslaved population from 42,000 to only 46,000.

As was true throughout the Americas, newly arriving Africans, referred to as "fresh" or "saltwater" blacks, often underwent a painful period of adjustment known as "seasoning," lasting up to three years. It was during this time that captives became enslaved, whereas prior to disembarkation anything was possible, including mutiny. Seasoning involved acclimating to a new environment, new companions, strange languages and food, and new living arrangements. Above all, seasoning involved adjusting to life and work under conditions cruel and lethal. As a result of brutal treatment, the shock of the New World, disease, and the longing for home, between 25 and 33 percent of the newly arrived did not survive seasoning.

Slavery required force, coercion, or it could not operate. The whip was therefore everywhere employed, supplemented by an assortment of tortures and punishments in the Caribbean chamber of horrors. The unimaginable included burning body parts with varying degrees of heat, chopping off limbs, placing the slave in stocks, and implementing solitary confinement. Women, many pregnant, were whipped on their bare behinds, after which salt and pepper were often poured into the wounds along with melted wax – a reflection of slavery's sadistic nature.

Throughout the English-claimed Caribbean, women worked in many of the same capacities as men, particularly on large plantations. During harvest between October and March, they worked eighteen hours or more a day in the sugarcane fields and in the sugar mills; by the early nineteenth century, three-quarters of the enslaved throughout the Caribbean were working on sugarcane plantations. These plantations required greater female participation in the fields than did coffee plantations because of the disproportionate use of males in processing the cane, and it was the sugarcane plantation, generally an unhealthy place, that had the highest rates of slave mortality, morbidity, and infant mortality rates (followed by coffee plantations, and then cocoa and cotton plantations). In addition to working as hard as men, women and girls were susceptible to sexual exploitation in ways and at rates that did

not apply to men (the subject of males as victims of sexual assault has received little scholarly attention, with the exception of lynching and its attendant castration ritual). Absentee owners had to rely on managers and overseers, both white and black, who viewed sexual access as their right. Many enslaved children resulted from these unions; the question of how these interactions should be understood is a matter of debate. The rewards of voluntary cooperation could have included an easier life, but avoidance of violation may not have always been possible, especially when enslaved women (and their families) risked serious reprisal for refusing advances. The element of coercion was therefore present in every case, even in romanticized unions of "consent." Enmity between black and white women was a by-product, the latter often as harsh in their treatment of slaves as white men.

The official value of the Caribbean's slave-produced exports to England was fourteen times that of exports from North American colonies north of the Chesapeake before 1765, at which time their value dropped to ten times as great. Indeed, the value of exports to Britain from the anglophone Caribbean led that of commodities from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the whole of North America from 1713 to 1822, while the same anglophone Caribbean was the principal importer of British goods in comparison with Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Clearly, the British-held Caribbean was of enormous value and importance to Britain, premised on the backs of African labor.

In 1697, Hispaniola was formally divided into Spanish-held Santo Domingo and French-controlled Saint Domingue (later Haiti, which reunited with Santo Domingo from 1822 until 1844, when the latter declared its independence as the Dominican Republic). As important as the British Caribbean was to Britain, the French-held territory of Saint Domingue was, by 1789, the wealthiest of all West Indian colonies. The French national economy benefited from slavery in Saint Domingue as much as did the rich planters, but events on the island, particularly the revolution of 1791–1804, were arguably of even greater significance to the African-descended throughout the Americas, and these were certainly influential in France's decision to cede vast territories to the United States in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803.

Engagés, or white indentured servants of peasant and working class backgrounds from France, were originally called upon to provide labor in Saint Domingue. Under three-year contracts, the *engagés* were

eventually working alongside small numbers of Africans. The move to indigo production by 1685 was a definitive turn in Saint Domingue's history, as the importation of Africans increased significantly. With the introduction of sugarcane twenty years later, Africans became the overwhelming source of labor, with the engagés acting as the overseers and tradesmen. Between 1680 and 1776, nearly 700,000 Africans were brought to Saint Domingue, producing a population of nearly half a million by 1789. Of that figure, some two-thirds were African born, significant in light of the Haitian Revolution. West Central Africans, following the earlier arrival of small groups from Senegal through Sierra Leone in the sixteenth century, would eventually account for nearly 48 percent of the total number imported, followed by 27 percent from the Bight of Benin.

As was true of places like Jamaica, Saint Domingue's plantations were characterized by increasing absentee ownership, with some owners never having seen the island. Absentee interests were represented by agents or managers, *procureurs*, who acquired a kind of power of attorney and enjoyed all of the advantages of the absentee owner. Both absentee and in-country owners were known as *grands blancs*, as were French merchants and colonial officers in the cities. Other whites were *petits blancs*, many descendent from seventeenth-century engagés, while others were such townspeople as barristers, shopkeepers, carpenters, criminals, and debtors. The *petits blancs* were sometimes called *faux blancs* and even *nègres-blancs* by blacks, an indication of low esteem. But is this "white trash" characterization convincing as an expression of derision, or does it ultimately rest upon the disparagement of blacks?

The concept of race, the notion that human beings can be clearly differentiated into basic, hierarchically arranged categories based upon certain combinations of shared physical characteristics, developed in tandem with slavery. The concept emphasizes difference rather than commonality, and as a tool of power and privilege it has few rivals. The specifics of race would vary throughout the Americas, but the essence of the idea was consistent: Whites and blacks, as categories of contrasting mythical purity, also represent the concentration of power, wealth, and beauty in the former case and the absence of such in the latter. Native peoples, Asians, and persons of "mixed" heritage were located along the continuum between the black-white polarities; in some societies, mixed groups achieved a stable intermediary status, where in others they shared economic and social disabilities similar

to those of blacks. White elites used race to their personal advantage; poor whites accepted race because it ennobled them, granting them a status that could never be challenged by darker people, with whom they refused to see any similarity of circumstance. On the other hand, some of African descent also came to embrace the concept of race, as they suffered as a group and saw benefit in collective resistance. However, as will be discussed concerning Brazil in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, race could not only be kaleidoscopic in variation among those born in the Americas, but even the African born did not always accept associations based upon skin color, preferring a cultural and linguistic-based identity instead.

Race was also complex in Saint Domingue. In addition to whites and the enslaved were the *affranchis*, or free blacks, and *gens de couleur* ("persons of color" or mixed ancestry). The *affranchis*, mostly women, numbered about 27,500 in 1789, equaling the number of whites and owning about 25 percent of the enslaved. Some 15 percent of this group lived in urban areas, including Cap Français and Port-au-Prince, and accounted for 11 percent of the total urban population. Two-thirds of the *affranchis* were *gens de couleur*, largely the consequence of liaisons between white slaveholders or their managers and enslaved females, a system of concubinage in which ties between slaveholder or manager and enslaved often carried the understanding that children from such unions would be free. As a result, there developed a sizeable free colored population by the beginning of the eighteenth century, and by 1789 their numbers were greater than their counterparts in the whole of the British- and remaining French-claimed Caribbean combined. *Affranchis* took advantage of the rapid rise in coffee cultivation, and by the middle of the eighteenth century they were planters in their own right. A few even joined the exclusive *grands blancs* club of sugarcane planters, but most were excluded by their inability to inherit or own money (or its equivalent in land) beyond a specified amount, thus explaining their concentration in coffee cultivation as well as various trades and commerce.

Because the *affranchis* were dominated by *gens de couleur*, they constituted a third racial category and were used as a buffer group between whites and the enslaved masses. Striving to be accepted by whites, the *affranchis* adopted their tastes and habits, and because many were slaveholders, they identified with powerful, white property interests. However, although at least 300 planters were married to women of color by 1763, there was no reciprocation of policy in kind.

Affranchis could not hold public office, vote, practice law or medicine, or participate in certain trades. By the 1770s, they could not take the names of their former owners, they could not enter France for any reason, and they were subject to sumptuary laws. However, they were required to render militia duty to protect the colony, serving in their own units commanded by white officers. Affranchis exclusively comprised the *maréchaussée*, whose chief function was to hunt down runaway slaves, a role played by poor whites in the United States (where they were called patrollers, or "patty-rollers" by blacks). By making the *maréchaussée* exclusively colored, the whites in power drove a deep wedge between them and the vast majority of Africans and their descendants. However, by refusing to grant them full rights and privileges, whites denied the affranchis access to full freedom. They therefore became a subject caste, with serious implications for the future of Saint Domingue.

By 1789, Saint Domingue was the site of more than 3,000 indigo plantations, 2,500 coffee plantations, nearly 800 cotton plantations, and 50 cocoa plantations. Such was the island's coffee production that it became the world's leader after 1770. But it was Saint Domingue's dominance in sugar production that distinguished it. By the time of the Haitian Revolution in 1791, Saint Domingue's sugarcane industry was operating at peak capacity, with almost 500,000 enslaved laborers on nearly 800 plantations producing 79,000 metric tons of sugar, compared with the 60,900 metric tons of Jamaica's 250,000 enslaved population. France reexported rather than consumed most of the 1791 sugar crop from its colonies, thereby supplying 65 percent of the world's market in sugar, 50 percent of which came from Saint Domingue. In contrast, Britain consumed most of its Caribbean-produced sugar and only reexported 13 percent to the world market between 1788 and 1792. The divergence between France and Britain is partially explained by wine and rum; the French were far more interested in the former, whereas Saint Domingue sugar was used in the rum production of various colonies as a result of its higher sucrose content and lower production costs.

The riches of Saint Domingue were built on the backs of black suffering. The context for that suffering was a shortened life span, when in the eighteenth century half of all newly arriving Africans lived another three to eight years. As for those born into slavery in Saint Domingue, the so-called creoles, they could expect a working life of fifteen years. As was true of the early British strategy in the Caribbean,

the French determined it more cost-effective to simply replace worn-out, useless, or dead slaves with new arrivals.

By the 1780s, the male-to-female ratio in Saint Domingue stood at 120:100, down from the high of 180:100 in 1730. Both women and men were organized into work groups or *ateliers*, and both sexes performed heavy labor in the fields that included tilling, weeding, clearing trees and brush and stones, digging trenches and canals, and planting and picking. Work days averaged eighteen hours, with some slaves working twenty-four-hour shifts. For those on sugarcane plantations, the grinding season between January and July followed the harvest and was just as arduous, whereas coffee plantation workers labored under a seasonal system that was different yet taxing. Field hands were the backbone of the labor regime, but enslaved workers were also boilermen, furnacemen, carpenters, masons, coopers, wheelwrights, and stockmen. Males dominated such jobs, while women and girls performed most agricultural tasks; in the 1770s and 1780s, some 60 percent of the field hands were female. Females were also dominant as washerwomen, house servants, and seamstresses, tasks that would inordinately feature women of African descent throughout the twentieth century in various parts of the Americas. Most cooks were males, while valets and coachmen were always so. Creoles rather than the African-born filled most domestic jobs; whites were more comfortable with those who could speak their language and who were, in many instances, of partial European descent.

Like their counterparts in the British-claimed Caribbean, the enslaved in Saint Domingue maintained their own provision grounds, small plots of land upon which they cultivated crops for personal consumption. The enslaved had to squeeze in time to attend their gardens, usually on Sundays, holidays, and around noon during the week, when they had a two-hour respite. Surpluses from their provision grounds were sold in nearby towns on Sundays and holidays, an activity dominated by women. Women-controlled markets may have resulted from restrictions placed upon men by slaveholders, but such markets were probably a continuation of West African practices, where women were often in charge of local markets. As West African organizational continuities, the provision grounds and market days of the Caribbean are often cited as features further distinguishing the experiences of blacks there from their cosufferers in North America.

Provision grounds and markets notwithstanding, the enslaved of Saint Domingue were, generally speaking, perpetually hungry and

consistently malnourished. This should not have been the case, since the institution under the French (like slavery in the Islamic world) was regulated, at least in theory, by a body of rules known as the *Code Noir*, first promulgated in 1685. The idea was to minimize the brutality of the slave regime as a whole and the slaveholder in particular by requiring certain minimum standards of treatment. The hours worked by the enslaved, the amount of food they received, and the types of punishment permissible were all covered by the *Code Noir*. As was true in the Islamic world, however, there was often a chasm between theory and reality. The enslaved were overworked and underfed.

They were also severely abused, and in ways as savage and shocking as could be found anywhere in the New World. In addition to the tortures mentioned as part of the British Caribbean experience, slaveholders in Saint Domingue added such measures as hurling humans into blazing ovens; cramming their orifices with gunpowder and igniting the powder, transforming their bodies into human fireballs; mutilating their body parts (especially the genitalia, male and female); burying victims alive after forcing them to dig their own graves; burying individuals up to the neck, allowing for the slow dismantling of sugar-covered heads by insects and animals; and so on. Could anything concocted in the Western imagination regarding African "savagery" be any more perverse?

Given Saint Domingue's prominence in the production of sugar, the Haitian Revolution instigated a "dramatic transformation" of the world sugar market, occasioning an upsurge in sugarcane production elsewhere. Jamaica and the British isles were the initial beneficiaries of Saint Domingue's demise, with Jamaican sugar production doubling between 1792 and 1805. Jamaica's production continued to be substantial if not quite so prodigious, but it would be replaced as the leading sugar producer by Cuba in the 1820s. Brazil would compete, but its market share was hampered by outdated technology and inadequate transport. Cuba continued to dominate world sugar production in the second half of the nineteenth century, but it suffered a decline in sugar prices from the rise of the French beet sugar industry between 1827 and 1847.

Regarding slavery in Spanish-held territories, Hispaniola was probably the first site to which enslaved Africans were brought early in the sixteenth century, and *ladinos*, or Africans with some command of either Spanish or Portuguese, were the first to be imported. But as early as 1503, Nicolás de Ovando, Hispaniola's first royal governor,

petitioned Spain to stop sending *ladinos* to Hispaniola because they were suspected of inciting revolt. Instead, de Ovando requested the importation of *bozales*, or "raw," unacculturated Africans directly from West Africa. The governor did not appreciate, however, that *ladinos* and *bozales* were coming out of the same region, Senegambia, and that the former's familiarity with European culture was mitigated by their shared cultural ties with the latter, with Islam as an important factor. The revolts therefore continued, and it was not until 1513 that the Spanish began to import Africans from West Central Africa. By 1514, there were some 1,000 *ladinos* and *bozales* in Hispaniola, along with 689 Europeans.

Nicolás de Ovando may have also been responsible for introducing Africans in Puerto Rico in 1509, when he brought them from Santo Domingo. By the following year, an unspecified number of Africans were on the island along with 200 Europeans. The 1516 appeal of Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas to prohibit the enslavement of Native Americans and enslave Africans and Europeans instead reinvigorated the African trade. Charles I restarted the shipment of Africans in 1517, an important decision for Puerto Rico, whose *boricua* or native population was in decline, as was its gold supply. Colonists, faced with the choice of either abandoning the island or developing an alternative source of income, chose the latter and planted sugarcane. The first *ingenio* (sugar mill and surrounding lands) was established on the grasslands of San Germán (contemporary Añasco) in 1523. In addition to Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, there was also a Senegambian presence in early-sixteenth-century Costa Rica and Panama.

By 1529, Africans had arrived in Venezuela in small numbers. Initially a "poverty-stricken outpost" of Spanish imperialism, Venezuela by the eighteenth century had become a leading source of cacao. The slave trade, insignificant before the eighteenth century, accelerated between 1730 and 1780, providing labor for the production of cacao, sugar, indigo, and hides. Pearl divers of African descent were also used in Venezuela (and Colombia). The end of the "cacao boom" around the turn of the century led to the eventual cessation of the slave trade in 1810, by which time there were some 60,000 enslaved persons in Venezuela. As for Colombia and Peru, Africans destined for Lima, Santo Domingo, and Puerto Rico in the late fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries arrived initially in Cartagena. Those headed for Peru voyaged another nine to ten days to Portobelo, where they made a difficult two-day crossing through the isthmus. Africans began arriving

in Peru as early as 1529 to work the silver mines (high up in the Andes), and by the middle of the century the African population in Lima was near 3,000. In 1640 there were probably 20,000 Africans in Lima, one-half of the city's population and two-thirds of the Africans in the whole of Peru.

The Peruvian economy in general and agriculture in particular benefitted from the increased African numbers. Olives, plantains, oranges, sugarcane, wheat, and barley were all cultivated by Africans, who also produced sugar and wine. They tended the cart-pulling oxen and mules, and they fulfilled various roles in trade and shipping along the Pacific coast. They were prominent as masons, carpenters, shipwrights, bricklayers, blacksmiths, and tailors, and they were employed as *jornaleros*, or day wage workers hiring out their labor. Africans were also domestics in the urban areas, especially Lima, where they were on conspicuous display. In 1791, there were 40,000 enslaved and 41,398 free blacks and persons of mixed ancestry in Peru; by the time of abolition in 1854, there were about 17,000 slaves in Peru. The 1876 census estimated the black population at 44,224.

Briefly concerning the Rio de la Plata (the estuary formed from the combination of the Uruguay and Parana Rivers), early-nineteenth-century Montevideo (Uruguay) was the port through which southeastern slave trafficking was required to pass before going on to Buenos Aires (Argentina), Paraguay, and Bolivia. Some remained in Uruguay, and from 1770 to 1810 about 2,691 Africans were imported. From 1742 to 1806, perhaps half of the slaves entering the Rio de la Plata came from Brazil, with the other half hailing directly from Africa.

We end the discussion of Spanish slavery with Cuba. Except for Havana, there were no large concentrations of Africans in Cuba prior to the eighteenth century. The slave trade was irregular, and slaves who arrived were used for diverse tasks. The island's planter class would be encouraged, however, by England's transformation of Barbados into a sugar colony, the English seizure of Jamaica in the mid-seventeenth century for the same purpose, and the corresponding establishment of the French in Saint Domingue. The cultivation of sugarcane was unevenly developed until the 1740s, when the Spanish Crown lifted all taxes on Cuban sugar entering Spain at a time when the world market was paying more for sugar. From 1750 to 1761 the number of ingenios (sugar mills and surrounding lands) increased from sixty-two to ninety-six, a portent of things to come.

The period between 1763 to 1838 brought dramatic change to Cuba. In 1763 the English occupied Havana for ten months, effectively ending the *asiento* system. This intervention, together with Cuban planter initiative, opened up the island to greater numbers of Africans. From 1763 to 1792, some 70,000 entered the island, followed by some 325,000 between 1790 and 1820. The second dramatic increase was in response to several developments. First, the Haitian Revolution created a tremendous void in the production of sugar and coffee, sparking a sharp rise in the price of sugar in Europe. Second, some planters fleeing Saint Domingue resettled in the eastern parts of Cuba, bringing the enslaved with them (their ranks would be joined by planters from Louisiana after the 1803 Purchase). These developments, coupled with technological improvements, led to skyrocketing sugar production in Cuba, with the number of ingenios tripling from 529 in 1792 to 1,531 by 1861. A concomitant rise in coffee production also drew heavily upon enslaved labor, with their numbers swelled by a slave trade officially abolished in 1820 but proceeding unabated through the 1860s. By 1838, Cuba had been transformed from a land of few towns, scattered ranching (*potreros*), and tobacco farms (*vegas*) to a huge sugarcane and coffee complex. By 1862, when there were more people of African than European descent in Cuba, the island held 368,550 enslaved persons, 60 percent of whom were male, working on sugarcane and coffee plantations as well as small-scale farms (*sitios*), ranches, and in tobacco fields.

Taking the slave trade to Cuba as a whole, we see that approximately 28 percent and 23 percent of the captives came from West Central Africa and the Bight of Biafra, respectively, followed by the Bight of Benin (19 percent), southeast Africa (12 percent), and Senegambia (2 percent). Over 80 percent of all Africans imported during the nineteenth century wound up on a plantation as opposed to a town (where they were domestics, tradespersons, or *jornaleros*). By the late 1860s, nearly 50 percent of all the enslaved worked on ingenios under white overseers (*administradores*) and their assistants (*contramayorales*), some of whom were black. Whites also occupied "skilled" positions on these plantations, while semiskilled jobs were performed by Asian indentured servants, so-called Chinese coolies, nearly 125,000 of whom entered Cuba between 1853 and 1874 and labored under slave-like conditions.

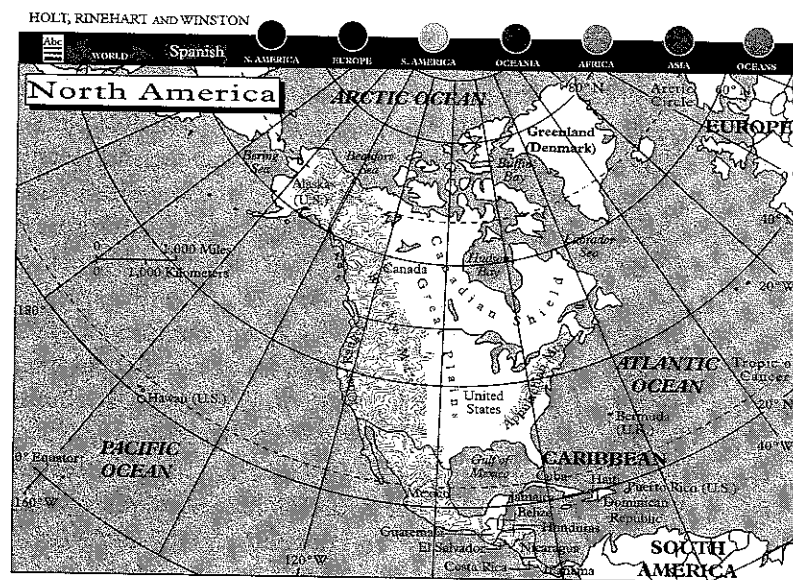
Like other Caribbean societies, Cuba also developed a free mixed race or *pardo* category of individuals; their tally was 33,886 in 1791, a

figure that nearly tripled fifty years later to 88,054, when the number of the enslaved of mixed ancestry is estimated to have been 10,974. Altogether, those of mixed ancestry represented almost 10 percent of the total 1841 population of 1,007,624. The free pardo group, together with free blacks (or *morenos*), were concentrated in the towns and eastern provinces.

Like the French Code Noir, the Spanish had the *Siete Partidas*, a series of regulations originally developed in the thirteenth century that included slave codes. The *Siete Partidas* served as the basis for slave laws developed in 1680 and revised in 1789, 1812, and 1842, but in many if not most cases the slave codes constituted an exercise in semantics, as either they were not implemented or, in the case of the 1789 revision, not even read in Spanish-held territories.

As was true in the British and French Caribbean, slaves in early Cuba were worked to death and replaced with new recruits from Africa. The *zafra* (crop time) and *tiempo muerte* (dead season) of the agricultural cycle were both regulated by whips, stocks, and shackles. Females, outnumbered by males on the plantations 2:1, were required to return to work forty-five days after giving birth, having labored alongside males into their ninth month of pregnancy. As expected, infant mortality soared. A key indicator of the deplorable plight of those of African descent comes from a decline in their population, from 596,396 in 1860 to 528,798 in 1887, a shift from 43.7 to 32.5 percent of the total population. The decline suggests their inability to maintain their numbers absent a slave trade abolished in the 1860s, a picture inconsistent with the claim that Cuban slavery was more benign than its counterpart in North America.

And North America was no picnic. The proverbial twenty Africans who landed in Jamestown in 1619 are usually cited as the first to step foot in North America, but as early as 1526 a contingent of African captives was brought to South Carolina by the Spanish. Further, the Jamestown Twenty were indentured servants, not slaves. It was only in the second half of the seventeenth century that the fast association between African ancestry and slavery was legislatively achieved. By 1756 the African population had increased markedly, numbering some 120,156 and nearly matching the white population of 173,316. Slavery spread quickly, with Virginia, South Carolina, Maryland, Georgia, and Louisiana serving as its foundational colonies in the South, where the enslaved initially cultivated rice and indigo with women-developed



MAP 8 North America.

skills and techniques brought from Africa and introduced to whites. However, captive Africans were also as far north as New England, though not as numerous. Colonial New England primarily invested in slavery as a commercial enterprise; a number of slavetraders were there, and the slave trade was a major economic engine for New England until 1776. Slavetraders exchanged fish and rum for Africans, molasses and sugar, and while some Africans remained in New England to help build its ports, many were shipped elsewhere, including the Caribbean. Conversely, captives originally enslaved in the Caribbean were often shipped to New England in small parcels. By 1776, Massachusetts had the largest number of blacks with 5,249, but Rhode Island boasted the heaviest concentration, with 3,761 blacks to 54,435 whites. The Mid-Atlantic colonies of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania were also slaveholding, but after the war with England the percentages of the enslaved fell; by 1790 only 28 percent of some 50,000 blacks, half of whom were in the state of New York, were enslaved. Slavery was dying out in New England even more rapidly, so that only 3,700 out of 13,000 blacks were enslaved by 1790. While rural for the most part, the total North American black population of 750,000 in 1790 also featured an urban component, principally in New York City, where there were 3,252 (of whom 2,184 were enslaved), and in

Philadelphia, where only 210 out of 1,630 were in formal bondage. In contrast to New York City, all 761 black Bostonians were free.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the South shifted from indigo, rice, and tobacco production to cotton, made possible by the cotton gin and the introduction of the upland, short-staple variety of the plant. The area under cultivation increased dramatically, and with it the demand for servile labor. In contrast to the early pattern elsewhere in the Americas (with the exception of Barbados), North American planters elected to create conditions in which the enslaved could sustain their numbers. The strategy worked, because by 1860 an importation of no more than 750,000 had produced a population of slightly less than 4.5 million people, more than 10 percent of whom were not formally enslaved.

Approximately 48 percent of Africans arriving in what would become the United States originated in West Central Africa and Senegambia (27 percent and 21 percent, respectively). Next came the Bight of Biafra (19 percent), Sierra Leone (17 percent, including the Windward Coast), the Gold Coast (12 percent), and the Bight of Benin (3 percent). Those from the Bight of Biafra were numerically dominant in Virginia, whereas West Central Africans were the majority in South Carolina and significant in Georgia. Senegambians were numerically superior in Maryland and Louisiana, followed (in Louisiana) by those from the Bight of Benin and West Central Africa. Senegambians were substantially represented everywhere, as were those from Sierra Leone (except in Louisiana). Of those imported, males constituted 68.7 percent and prepubescent children 19.6 percent.

The legal importation of captive Africans ended in 1808, but a clandestine trade directly from Africa, together with transshipments from the Caribbean (especially Cuba), continued until the outbreak of the Civil War. The domestic slave trade became very important, facilitating the westward expansion of white settlers and their enslaved workers by 1815. Planters relocated from the seaboard states to Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, and then on to Texas. Manifest Destiny came at a high price, paid largely by Africans, Native Americans, and (later) Asians.

Although there were 8 million white Southerners in 1860, only 384,884 were slaveholders. This would suggest that the vast majority of whites had no relationship to slavery, had no vested interest in it, but just the opposite was true. Particularly after 1830, the vast majority of whites supported slavery, and the regional economy was entirely dependent upon it. The large white population was in stark contrast

with the demographic picture in the Caribbean, as was the fact that some 88 percent of slaveholders in 1860 held less than twenty of the enslaved, with the vast majority of slaveholders living on their plantations. While blacks may not have been concentrated on large, Caribbean-style plantations, over 50 percent lived on holdings of twenty-five slaves or more, and some 25 percent lived on properties with fifty or more. They furthermore tended to be "clustered" on farms and plantations along rivers, in the Tidewater of Virginia, in the Georgia-South Carolina Low Country, and on the Gulf Coast, representing veritable "black belts" of people and soil. Within such concentrations, individuals from different holdings maintained a regular commerce, so that the physical configuration and frequency of interaction allowed the enslaved to somewhat approximate the intimacy of the larger Caribbean setting. Clustering not only characterized the South, but also New England as well, helping to explain significant African influences in its culture.

Unlike Spain with its *Siete Partidas* and Saint Dominque with its *Code Noir*, neither the British Caribbean nor North America developed a single system of laws governing slavery. What emerged instead was a hodgepodge of rules and regulations developed in each of the slaveholding states and colonies, in North America collectively known as the Slave Codes, which were in many ways complementary. As opposed to the French and Spanish notions of providing protections for the enslaved, the Slave Codes were more concerned with protecting the rights of the slaveholder. The enslaved were considered to be chattel, property to be bought and sold like cows and horses. As property, the enslaved could not participate in legal proceedings (unless those deliberations involved other blacks), make a contract, defend themselves against whites, buy or sell, and so on. Punishments included the infamous whip. But of course, all of this assumes an application of the law, such as it was, to cases involving slaves, when in fact whites often were a law unto themselves, treating black folk as they saw fit.

In 1850, there were 3.2 million enslaved persons in the United States, of whom 1.8 million worked on cotton plantations; others performed a variety of tasks, including raising cane in places like Louisiana. The calculation in general was that one slave was needed for every three acres of cotton. During harvest, adults were expected to pick 150 pounds of cotton per day, sunup to sundown. Given the emphasis on the cash crop, little time was available for subsistence farming. In contrast to parts of the Caribbean, some of the larger

plantations featured a central kitchen where food was prepared for all, and even when there was no central facility, many received regular rations of meal and salt pork, supplemented at times with peas, rice, syrup, sweet potatoes, and fruit. It is possible for one to venture some interpretive comparisons between this North American distribution system and the provision grounds of the Caribbean, and one could assert that the different arrangements engendered docility and passivity in the recipients of the former while encouraging independence and entrepreneurship in the participants of the latter. A difficulty with such an analysis is the "collapsing" of history, or the failure to consider intervening periods of time that also affected later developments. The postemancipation period in the United States, for example, saw freedpersons more self-reliant than ever. Furthermore, many slaves in North America maintained gardens and livestock and regularly hunted and fished. North American slave gardens did not approach the scope of the Caribbean provision ground, but too much can be made of the differences.

In addition to cultivating cash crops, the enslaved in North America were carpenters, coopers, wheelwrights, painters, seamstresses, tailors, shoemakers, masons, and the like, and they were hired out by slaveholders to earn additional income. The hiring out process, more vigorous during the "lay-by" period between harvest and new planting, was similar to the Spanish *jornal* system, although the latter appears to have afforded more autonomy. In urban areas there were other uses for slaves, such as working on the docks as porters. While most of the enslaved in the various towns were used in domestic capacities and as common laborers, others built southern railways; some found themselves in the iron and lead mines of Kentucky or in textile mills from Florida through Mississippi.

The issue of nonagricultural, vocational skills raises the question of literacy among the enslaved. Through the nineteenth century, many people, white, black, and red, could not read or write in the American South (or anywhere else, for that matter). Given that the overall rate of literacy was low, it comes as no surprise that the Slave Codes often included laws against educating the enslaved; the ability to read and write could be used against slaveholder interests. Despite these concerns and the overall abysmal level of literacy among slaves, there are numerous instances of their learning to read and write. In fact, slaveholders themselves sometimes taught those they claimed to own; Frederick Douglass, for example, was taught by his mistress. But

beyond the realm of the exceptional experience, and contrary to expectation, there were even a few schools in the South established for the education of black children, or in which a few black children were enrolled along with white children.

Literacy among the enslaved did not exclusively depend on receiving an education in American schools or at the feet of a slaveholder. Many slaves, perhaps thousands, entered North America already literate, some having learned Portuguese or Spanish or French, and others Arabic. Recent research has shown that the number of Muslims entering North America from West Africa was much higher than formerly believed. Individuals such as Umar b. Said (d. 1864), who wound up in North Carolina, and Bilali, who lived on the Georgia sea island of Sapelo during the early nineteenth century, were just two of a number of individuals who left written documents and represent the many literate in Arabic.

Differing skills and varying sorts of responsibilities meant that, while most were enslaved, not all experienced the institution in the same way. While too much can be made of the divide between so-called field and house negroes, as there are many instances of cooperation and collaboration between the two categories, they nevertheless represented different levels of material comfort, exposure to abuse, and even status, however relative. In the same way, the enslaved who were hired out in urban areas, or who enjoyed skills beyond the agricultural, had the potential to pass through enslavement in a fashion less brutalizing than the average field hand. Such distinctions provided one of the bases for eventual class distinctions within the African-derived community. Another basis was color differentiation, but this factor had to be teamed with some vocational distinction to make a difference. Stated another way, there were plenty of lighter-complexioned persons who remained field hands and who made common cause with their darker-hued brethren, but those who were selected to learn other trades, or who were put to work as domestics, were disproportionately lighter-skinned persons.

Those who acquired additional skills were in instances able to save money and purchase their freedom. Likewise, those whose fathers were white (the 1850 census states there were 246,000 mixed race persons out of 3.2 million enslaved) were in better position to acquire their freedom, although this was far from guaranteed. As a result, the acquisition of freedom was another basis for eventual class divisions within the black community and was related to vocational training. In 1790

there were 59,000 free blacks in the United States, with 27,000 in the North and 32,000 in the South. By 1860 there were 488,000 free blacks, 44 percent of whom lived in the South. Of course, the concept of a "free" black in a slaveholding society has many limitations, and there were any number of laws issued for the purpose of inhibiting such freedom, in the North as well as the South. Nevertheless, in spite of heavy repression, those of African descent were able to register modest gains. In 1860, black folk owned over 60,000 acres of land in Virginia, with urban properties worth \$463,000; in Charleston, 359 blacks paid taxes on properties valued at more than \$778,000. In Maryland they paid taxes on properties exceeding \$1 million in value. New Orleans represented the pinnacle, as blacks in 1860 owned properties worth more than \$15 million.

One of the more interesting anomalies of North American slavery was the black slaveholder. He or she was usually someone who purchased his or her spouse, or some other relative, to deliver the person from slavery. However, there were blacks who were clearly slaveholders in the grandest sense, such as Cyrian Ricard of Louisiana, a slaveholder of ninety-one persons. It can be observed in his personal, written communications with neighboring white planters that he fancied himself a peer. As such, Monsieur Ricard joins the company of many in places like Trinidad, Saint Domingue, and Brazil, who also saw no contradiction in the observation that they, as descendants of Africans, claimed to own others of similar descent. In the long annals of history, Europeans have held other Europeans in bondage, as have Asians and Africans. That the Ricards of North America appear an oddity underscores the degree to which slavery in the New World was racialized. But the example of Ricard, as unsavory as it seems, cannot be interpreted to mean that anyone in America could have become a slaveholder (assuming the desirability of such a goal). Does the example of Cyrian Ricard have any implications for contemporary society, where success stories of African Americans are often employed as an argument against the existence of systemic barriers over which so many of African descent have yet to vault?

Although scholarly debate continues, the essence of the thesis raised by Eric Williams concerning the relationship between slavery, the transatlantic slave trade, and the economic development of Europe and North America remains viable. While scholars may bicker over the profitability of the slave trade, there can be little doubt that participation in it provided a boost to such port cities as Lisbon, Nantes, Liverpool, and Bristol, stimulating a commercial expansion that

resulted in the rise of such related industries as shipbuilding, port expansion, the establishment of businesses to service the ports, and so on. These secondary and tertiary economic benefits were important and are not unlike the central role played by slavery and the slave trade in the economy of the United States. The tentacles of both the trade and the institution were far-reaching, touching if not enveloping the lives of many. Even leading universities such as Brown, Harvard, and Yale were the beneficiaries of the nefarious enterprise. Brown University was founded in part by slavetraders John and Nicolas Brown, while the founder of Harvard Law School endowed the school with money from slavetrading in Antigua. As for Yale University, its first professorship was endowed by one of the most notorious slavetraders of his day, Philip Livingston, and the school's first scholarships came from the profits of slaveholder George Berkeley's New England plantation. We could go on.

By 1840, the American South was cultivating some 60 percent of the world's cotton, representing more than 50 percent of the value of all exports from the United States. This means that goods and capital imported to develop the United States were largely paid for by slaves. Ports such as Charleston and New Orleans were not only paid for with cotton grown by slaves but also were literally dug out of the earth by the enslaved, as was true of a significant proportion of the country's colonial and antebellum infrastructure. New York City, for example, was a major and direct beneficiary of enslaved labor, as cotton was distributed and exported from there in exchange for fees and services connected to insurance, interest, commissions, shipping and handling charges, and so on. Thus, it is not at all surprising that Wall Street, site and symbol of the world's leading financial markets, was originally the site of a slave market. The argument can even be extended, as 70 percent of the cotton grown in the American South was used by Britain's textile industry, and it was by means of textile exports that Britain financed its empire. The statement, "We built this country," commonly heard in African American casual conversation, is no groundless assertion; indeed, not to take anything away from the millions of European and Asian immigrants who also labored in the United States, the statement is more accurate than not. In fact, it leads to the following query: Just who were the founding fathers, and what about the founding mothers?

A bloody apocalypse would bring the institution of slavery to an end in the United States. But neither did that war, nor myriad emancipatory actions throughout the Americas, simply materialize out

of thin air. Rather, all such actions developed out of a context of long and bitter struggle waged by people of African descent, a struggle to which the next chapter turns.

Suggestions for Further Reading

The literature on slavery in the Americas is massive, examining general trends and specific regions and locales; the treatment, cultures, and societies of the enslaved; the lives of slaveholders; relations with other societal components, the economies affected, the role of ideologies; and so on. One could begin with Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina, 1944), for a discussion of its impact on capitalist development, and contrast it with David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge U. Press, 2000). David Brion Davis's *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell U. Press, 1996) and *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell U. Press, 1975) remain valuable contributions, although they are not so much concerned with the slave experience as with the implications of slavery for Western society.

As for Caribbean slavery, Carolyn E. Fick's *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution From Below* (Knoxville: U. of Tennessee Press, 1990) is a wonderful introduction to Haitian slavery and is a response to the pioneering contribution of C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins; Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Dial Press, 1938). Both of these works inform the next chapter of this book. Another highly useful compilation is Verene Shepherd and Hilary McD. Beckles, *Caribbean Slavery in the Atlantic World: A Student Reader* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle; Oxford: James Currey; Princeton, NJ: Markus Weiner, 2000). Others include Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1967); Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713* (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1972); B. W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807–1834* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1984); James Millette, *Society and Politics in Colonial Trinidad* (Curepe, Trinidad: Omega, 1970); Gabriel Debien, *Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles* (Basse Terre: Société d'histoire

de la Guadeloupe, 1974); Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985); Carl Campbell, *Cedulants and Capitulants: The Politics of the Coloured Opposition in the Slave Society of Trinidad, 1783–1838* (Port of Spain Trinidad: Paria Pub. Co. 1992); and Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad, 1783–1962* (Port of Spain, Trinidad: Heinemann, 1981). For the cocoa industry in Trinidad, see Kathleen E. Phillips Lewis, "British Imperial Policy and Colonial Economic Development: The Cocoa Industry in Trinidad, 1838–1939" (PhD dissertation, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada, 1994).

Works focusing on women and gender in the Caribbean include Verene Shepherd, Bridget Brereton, and Barbara Bailey, eds., *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective* (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle and London: James Currey, 1995); and Hilary McD. Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Women in Barbados* (London: Zed, 1989). Darlene Clark Hine and David Barry Gaspar, eds., in *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 1996), expand the scope of the discussion.

For Latin America and Brazil, see Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México: estudio etnohistórico* (Mexico, DF: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972), 2nd ed.; Frederick P. Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru, 1524–1650* (Stanford, CA: Stanford U. Press, 1974); Colin Palmer, *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico, 1570–1650* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1976); Leslie B. Rout, Jr., *The African Experience in Spanish America: 1502 to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1976); Franklin W. Knight, *Slave Society in Cuba During the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1970) and *The African Dimension in Latin American Societies* (New York: Macmillan, 1974); Rolando Mellafe, *La introducción de la esclavitud negra en Chile: tráfico y rutas* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1984); Laird W. Bergard, Fe Iglesias García, and María del Carmen Barcia, *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790–1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1995); Stuart Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550–1835* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge U. Press, 1985); Mary C. Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1850* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U. Press, 1987); and Katia M. de Queirós Mattoso, *To Be a Slave in Brazil, 1550–1888*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers U. Press, 1986).

For what becomes the United States, there are myriad studies. For the experience of slaves, John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994), 7th ed., is a helpful place to start. Among the more beneficial monographs are John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1972); Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard U. Press, 1998), or his more accessible *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves* (Cambridge and London: Belknap of Harvard U. Press, 2003); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971); Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Knopf, 1956); Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1996); Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1996); Nathan I. Huggins, *Black Odyssey: The Afro-American Ordeal in Slavery* (New York: Pantheon, 1977); and David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London and New York: Verso, 1991). A classic remains Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1968).

CHAPTER 6

Asserting the Right to Be

The achievement of freedom throughout the Americas, however qualified, was very much a consequence of the myriad struggles of those of African descent. Their efforts would be supported by well-meaning whites and some indigenous groups. The American War of Independence and the French Revolution would contribute concepts and language to the struggle, but the enslaved did not need theoretical principles, developed to facilitate a breakaway republic in North America or to resolve class conflict in Europe, to know much more definitively than any enunciation of Enlightenment rationality could ever approximate, the depth of their anguish and yearning for deliverance.

The fight against slavery would assume any number of shapes and was waged in a thousand theaters of war, both literal and figurative. Activities from large-scale revolt to marronage to absconding to work slowdowns to poisoning were employed throughout the period of legal enslavement. However, as the antislavery struggle progressed, it became clear that the African was not only combating a nefarious system of inequitable labor extraction but was also up against a force arguably even more insidious: the conviction that African ancestry was an immutable mark of inferiority. Slavery was to leave an indelible imprint upon the attitudes and opinions of all who lived in the Americas, particularly those of European ancestry, who by and large came to view Africans and their descendants as intellectually and morally deficient. Various ideas would come along to buttress this view, including social Darwinism and the rise of pseudoscientific racism in the nineteenth century, by which time African inferiority was held as a certainty. Given