Teaching Hard History Podcast Transcripts: Season 1: American Slavery

What we don't know about American history hurts us all. *Teaching Hard History* begins with the long and brutal legacy of chattel slavery and reaches through the victories of and violent responses to the civil rights movement to the present day. From Teaching Tolerance and host Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Teaching Hard History* brings us the lessons we should have learned in school through the voices of leading scholars and educators. It's good advice for teachers and good information for everybody.

Episode 1: Slavery & the Civil War, Part 1

What really caused the Civil War? In this episode, Salem State University Professor Bethany Jay offers tips for teaching lesser-known history that clarifies this question and cuts through our cloudy national understanding of the Confederacy.

Resources

- Teaching Hard History, A Framework for Teaching American Slavery
- Teaching Tolerance magazine, Getting the Civil War Right
- Teaching Hard History, Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union

Hasan Kwame Jeffries (host)

- Teaching Tolerance, *Teaching Hard History* (podcast)
- Hasan Kwame Jeffries, History, Ohio State University
- Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt*

Bethany Jay

- History, Salem State University
- Bethany Jay and Cynthia Lynn Lyerly (editors), *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: It finally happened, an Original Pancake House was opening in Columbus, Ohio, and I could not wait to go. It had been one of my favorite breakfast spots in Atlanta when I was working on my dissertation, although I was never able to eat there as much as I wanted. When you're a graduate student, even eggs are expensive. The Columbus restaurant was just like the Atlanta one, the mouthwatering aroma of buttermilk pancakes greeted you well before you reached the door. Pure deliciousness.

Once I was inside, I gave my name to the hostess and took a seat in the small waiting area. That's when I noticed what was playing on the television. I forget which cable news network the TV was tuned to, but I'll never forget what was being broadcast. Although the TV was muted, the

images spoke volumes. It was Saturday, August 12th, 2017, and all hell had broken out in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The night before, I had caught glimpses on the news of the white supremacists' tiki-torch march and I had assumed that would be the worst of it, but the white supremacists who claimed to be there to protest the decision to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee clearly were there to provoke violence. I totally lost my appetite.

Things got much worse in Charlottesville as the day wore on and when it was over, those white supremacists had killed one person and injured several dozen more.

In the wake of that horrible event, contemporary issues of race and culture began to be confused and muddled in ill-informed discussions of slavery, the Confederacy and the Civil War. Making matters worse, the misinformation was amplified by politicians, the media and even ordinary people online.

As a historian of African-American history, I find historical debates about the Civil War that always seem to avoid or gloss over slavery, exhausting. I've grown even more tired of watching these debates keep us from talking about the serious issues of racism and racial inequality that face us today.

On countless occasions, I've thought to myself, *If only there was a way to help future generations better understand this important history*. Fortunately, I'm also an educator and if you're listening to this, chances are you are too.

I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. It's a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides an in-depth look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In each episode, we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material and offering practical classroom exercises.

Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges, so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery.

The connections between slavery and the Civil War are significant, so much so we're going to spend a couple of episodes exploring that relationship. In this episode, historian Bethany Jay explains the complex and surprising story that slavery played in causing the Civil War. She outlines for us ways to incorporate historical accounts and public records into lesson plans. She also identifies opportunities to confront some of the common misperceptions that students typically bring into the classroom. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy.

Bethany Jay: Controversies surrounding slavery's role in the Civil War have been simmering since the end of the Civil War. They've been just below the surface of the American consciousness for the past 150 years, and these controversies have re-emerged recently in the forefront of many Americans' minds, bubbling up in the public consciousness. Because as we talk about removing Confederate monuments or the appropriateness of displaying the Confederate battle flag on public buildings, at the heart of that question is what the Confederacy was about. Was the Confederacy about a sort of abstract Southern way of life that is removed from the question of slavery and the rights of African-American people, or was the Confederacy intrinsically tied to the issue of slavery? Was it in fact a movement whose main focus was to perpetuate the enslavement of three and a half million people? Reasonable people around the country are making arguments that the veneration of Lee is not tied to the subjugation of African Americans.

I've had conversations with people in Gloucester, Massachusetts, who say, "Why take down statutes of Lee? He was such a great man." So this is not a Southern problem. We frequently separate the Confederacy and the Old South from the system of slavery in a way that's artificial, and really was created more in the 20th century.

To understand how slavery was connected at the time, we need to understand the Confederacy in its own historical terms, so we're going to talk about the historical questions that are at the heart of this debate: what is the connection between slavery and the Civil War? How does that relate to the issue of states' rights? What role did slaves actually play during the war or in their own emancipation? And just as a modern-day questions are complicated, we'll find that the history is much more complex as well. Specifically, let's focus on two distinct historical moments.

First, let's look at the period leading up to secession and what ways slavery was the cause of the Civil War. Then, let's look at the progress of the war itself, but from a different perspective. Let's examine how the actions of enslaved people and free African Americans influenced the outcome

of the Civil War on and off the battlefield, which is something we really, as a nation, haven't considered very much. As the historical roots of the Civil War become clear, the historical and contemporary connections to slavery will also become much more clear.

No matter where you're teaching across the United States, if you ask students to name some of the causes of the Civil War or the cause of the Civil War, you'll most likely hear states' rights come up, and that's even in classrooms where students are not at all emotionally attached to the subject of the Civil War.

For many students and for most Americans, states' rights is an issue that's separate from, and in fact a sort of alternative to slavery, as a cause of the Civil War. They don't necessarily see these two issues as linked together. But that conversation about states' rights and slavery, which one, as though it could be one or the other as the cause of the Civil War, that's a conversation that we really only can have after the Civil War. That's the conversation that people have pretty much been having since 1877, since the end of Reconstruction 12 years after the end of the war. But that's different than the conversations that people were having before the war because everybody knew the reasons that people were seceding before the Civil War because the South was very clear about why they were seceding. They were seceding to protect slavery, and the issue of states' rights was connected to the issue of slavery.

So this is a conversation that has only happened as we've historically looked back at the Civil War, whether we're looking back at it in 1877, in 1954 with *Brown v. Board* or in 2018.

We're going to jump back to the 1850s and the decades before the Civil War to really complicate the notion that it's either states' rights or slavery as a cause of the Civil War. By looking at how they were related in the decades before the war, we can understand the actual connection much more clearly.

From the ratification of the Constitution onwards, one of the biggest issues that separated Northern and Southern states was the enforcement of federal laws relating to slavery, particularly whether federal laws could compel people in the North to return escaped slaves to slave owners in the South. The Fugitive Slave Clause was written into the Constitution. It's in Article 4, Section 2, and it guaranteed that slaves who fled to free states would still have to be returned to slavery if Southern slave owners claim them.

The reason why this was such a thorn in the side of Southerners for most of the 19th century was that Northern states flagrantly disregarded this piece of the Constitution and they passed

Personal Liberty laws, state laws that actually prevented the return of slaves hiding in their state. So for years and years and years, Southern lawmakers railed against the basically unconstitutional actions on the part of their Northern counterparts and argued for increased federal attention to the enforcement of returning escaped slaves.

These slaveholders finally got what they wanted in 1850, when Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act as part of the Compromise of 1850. The act significantly increased federal enforcement power for the Fugitive Slave Act. The big weakness of the Fugitive Slave Clause was that it didn't specify anything about the process. It didn't name any particular person or entity as responsible for finding or actually returning fugitives—or even how they should do it. The 1850 law did just that. It created commissioners who instead of judges could issue warrants for the capture and return of escaped fugitive slaves.

My students are often completely outraged to hear that a commissioner would earn $10 if he determined that an accused person was actually a fugitive and returned him or her to slavery, and only $5 if they found that the accused fugitive was free. Suspected fugitives could not testify on their own behalf, but a simple affidavit from an absent slaveholder could be used as proof of ownership.

This law obviously has an incredible impact on accused runaways, but it also had an impact on Northerners. It allowed the commissioners to deputize any citizen to help enforce the law. Those citizens or public officials could be fined or even jailed if they refuse to cooperate.

So what was the reaction to this beefed-up law? Southerners were really excited about it and they increased their efforts to recapture their fugitive slaves. And in the North, it fueled animosity and fear. White Northerners were outraged that they could be compelled to enforce the law and they promised civil disobedience, if necessary.

As you may expect, black Northerners had the most to lose. Many fugitives, even those who had been living in the North for decades, had to flee to Canada or went into hiding. I often tell my students that this is one of the places where we see the underground railroad to Canada really having an impact as folks leave places like Massachusetts for Nova Scotia. And even black Northerners who were free and were born free, were worried that they might be kidnapped because the number of fraudulent claims about runaways also increased.

For the classroom, you can find many broadsides online with titles like, *Beware Kidnapper*. There's particularly a number from the Boston area, warning free black Northerners and

possible fugitives that slave catchers and kidnappers are in the area. And those broadsides mostly date to right after that 1850 Fugitive Slave Act was passed.

The black community was right to be concerned. Here are two examples that show the very real ways in which the Fugitive Slave Act impacted the lives of black Northerners. I teach in Salem, Massachusetts, so I like to talk about the case of John Andrew Jackson. Jackson escaped from South Carolina in 1847 and ended up settling in Salem for several years. He kept his name, he did not try to hide who he was, and he openly spoke about his experience in slavery. This goes to show us just how ineffective those original fugitive slave laws were, that he could publicly speak using his own name and exactly where he was from. And he did this as a way to raise funds to buy his wife and baby daughter out of slavery. But before Jackson was able to get enough money to buy his family, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act was passed.

So that Act pushed Jackson into hiding and he had to flee Salem. He went to Canada eventually via the underground railroad. So while he's passing through Brunswick, Maine, Jackson stayed at the home of Harriet Beecher Stowe, where he told her about his life as a slave. And there's an English professor named Susanna Ashton who contends that Jackson and his stories about slavery were key inspirations for Stowe's book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which as you know, Lincoln playfully noted was one of the causes of the Civil War.

The point of this story is that Jackson's case also demonstrates the relative openness that many escaped slaves like Jackson lived with in some Northern cities, and the ways the 1850 law changed that. In addition to Jackson, the 1854 case of Anthony Burns in Boston is also a useful study for classroom discussions about the Fugitive Slave Law.

But before we can talk about the meaning of the Anthony Burns case, we want to know exactly what happened. Burns had been a slave in Virginia and he escaped to Boston. In Boston, Burns was likely planning to blend in with the city's substantial free black population. And he also probably hoped to be protected by its powerful abolitionists' movement. Unfortunately, Burns' former master intercepted a letter between the Boston fugitive and his brother who was still enslaved. This happened despite Burns taking numerous precautions to try to secure the letter. Nevertheless, when the former slaveholder learned where Burns was, he traveled to Boston to reclaim what he saw as his property, namely Anthony Burns. In May of 1854, Burns was eventually arrested. He was jailed in Boston's federal courthouse. Boston abolitionists mobilized in response to Burns' arrest, and this is an interesting detail: There were actually two separate meetings of white and black abolitionists that were happening in two different locations in

Boston. And eventually those two meetings converged on the courthouse where Burns was being held.

In the chaos that ensued, a police officer was fatally wounded, but Burns remained in jail. So despite the obvious opposition of the citizens in Boston, federal authorities were determined to make an example out of Anthony Burns. They declared him to be a fugitive slave and they sent soldiers to come and collect Burns from Boston and bring him back to slavery in Virginia. After the Burns judgment, 50,000 Bostonians lined the streets to watch as he was marched in shackles right to a waiting vessel. Reaction to Burns' arrest and his return to slavery was profound in Boston. One Massachusetts native wrote, "We went to bed one night old-fashioned, conservative, compromise Union Whigs and waked up stark mad abolitionists." It's probably exaggerated, but it does give us some sense of exactly how much this had an effect on people.

The Burns case is a really dramatic chapter in the history of slavery and it translates very well for students. There's really two reasons why the 1854 Burns case works so well. It provides a useful counterpoint to that assumption that Southern slaveholders were always advocates of states' rights over federal authority. In fact, the Burns case demonstrates the way that slaveholders really relied on the federal government protecting their slave property, really in opposition to Northern states and their laws. The second reason why the Burns case is so important is that it really illustrates the depth of tension that existed between the Northern and Southern sections of the country over this law.

In the classroom, you can screen parts of the 2013 PBS documentary, *The Abolitionists*, which offers a really nice overview of the Anthony Burns case that can lead to a really great discussion with your students. In discussing the Fugitive Slave Law and Anthony Burns, you'll want to get at the heart of not only the story and what happened, but its connections and its impact on both the North and the South and the development of the sectional crisis. So thinking about asking questions like, What did the Southern slaveholders want? Did they have the authority to go into Massachusetts and capture Burns? What gave them that power? Think about, Why did the Northerners resist? How might Northerners feel if they were forced to search for a fugitive slave?

Those discussions in your classroom should lead students to several conclusions. First, that when it came to protecting slaveholders, Southern politicians were firmly in favor of that federal Fugitive Slave Law. And that they were in favor of that law because it trumped the state laws of Massachusetts that protected people like Anthony Burns. In other words, the states that would

become the Confederacy were certainly not in favor of states' rights when those states were threatening slavery. So that Fugitive Slave Act is, I think, the best way to really demonstrate the complicated relationship between states' rights and slavery, and to really think about the ways that slaveholders opposed states' rights when that position protected their slave property.

The second important thing that comes from the Anthony Burns case is that your students should really recognize, this is a key moment in galvanizing Northern opposition to slavery. Think particularly about that quote, "We went to bed one night old-fashioned, conservative, compromise union Whigs and waked up stark mad abolitionists." Because Northerners had to watch individual people be taken from their communities. Slavery was no longer an amorphous, faceless something that happened elsewhere. Here, we're making Northerners complicit in the capture of fugitive slaves and we're giving faces and names to what had initially been an invisible and anonymous enslaved population to the North.

Another nice thing about discussing the Fugitive Slave Act as a way to investigate this connection between slavery and the cause of the Civil War is that it's already part of that sectional crisis and the Compromise of 1850 that we're all talking about in our classrooms anyway. But this allows us to give it a slightly different focus and meaning for our students.

When we teach about the 19th century and the decade leading up to secession and the Civil War in our classrooms, we talk about the fact that there was always hope that this is going to be the compromise that actually works. Whether it's the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, whatever it might be. Well, it becomes quickly clear as we go through the 1850s that the Fugitive Slave Act and the other laws that were part of the Compromise of 1850 did nothing to quiet sectional tensions between Northern and Southern states. And when I say sectional tensions, I'm referring to the repeated clashes between Southern slaveholding states and the largely Northern non-slave or free states that really characterize a better part of the 19th century, from the 1820 Missouri Compromise through the Civil War. And so in the 1850s, what we have our pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces that are really fighting throughout the decade in multiple ways.

They're fighting over territory and what would become known as Bleeding Kansas. They're also fighting on the floor of Congress. Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner was brutally beaten at his desk in the Senate chamber by South Carolina Representative Preston Brooks. Sumner had insulted Brooks' relative while giving an anti-slavery speech. They were even fighting a legal

battle in the Supreme Court during the Dred Scott case over whether African Americans, free or enslaved, deserved even basic human rights.

This festering tension, these moments of violence all came to a head in 1860 when Abraham Lincoln won the presidency. Very shortly after Lincoln wins the presidency, South Carolina passes a resolution declaring, "the Union now subsisting between South Carolina and other states is hereby dissolved." The secession crisis had started. Within another two months, six more states: Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas had also seceded and their representatives in federal government made last speeches, packed up and headed home.

And as those states left the union, Southern politicians explained exactly why they had seceded, and they did this in numerous documents and in numerous speeches. So we can look at those particular documents, and that becomes another way to discuss with our students the complicated relationship between secession, slavery and that concept of states' rights.

I'm not the first person to do this. In fact, much of this work draws on historian Charles Dew, who did a great job analyzing these documents and speeches in a very short and accessible book called *Apostles of Disunion*. And Dew has noted that there's a lot of similar themes that emerge in many of them.

The first theme is that secessionists really believed that Lincoln's election represented a crisis for the institution of slavery. Lincoln had been very clear throughout his candidacy and really even before that, that he didn't believe he had the constitutional power to do anything about slavery where it existed and he really just ran on the non-extension of slavery into the territories, but apparently slaveholders didn't believe him. Because in the numerous documents and pronouncements that they made about secession, they argued that leaving the union was necessary to protect the institution of slavery from Lincoln.

For example, South Carolina's Immediate Causes documents said that with Lincoln's election, Northerners conspired to elect "a man to the high office of President of the United States whose opinion and purposes are hostile to slavery." And in light of Lincoln's election, Southerners declared "that the public mind must rest in the belief that slavery is in the course of ultimate extinction."

South Carolina's secessionists followed this argument about Lincoln to its ultimate conclusion. They argued that Lincoln's inauguration would mean that among other things, "A war must be waged against slavery until it shall cease throughout the United States. The guarantees of the

constitution will then no longer exist. The equal rights of the states will be lost. The slaveholding states will no longer have the power of self government or self protection, and the federal government will have become their enemy."

That quote is really one of the only real references to states' rights in documents. Here, South Carolinians are rallying behind the sovereignty of the state because they viewed the federal government under Lincoln as threatening their slave property. So in one of the only articulations of states' rights in document, we see secessionists are really talking about slave property.

If Lincoln's election was the final straw pushing these states out of the union, the seceded states also argue that the long-standing failure to enforce a Fugitive Slave Act and the existence of Personal Liberty laws in Northern states were also causes of secession. If that had been a problem throughout the 19th century, Lincoln's election certainly wasn't going to make it any better.

So if we think about the South Carolina Immediate Causes documents as being a kind of secession counterpart to the Declaration of Independence. The failure to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act and the Personal Liberty laws are among the grievances that they're including in this document. So you can use two quotes from this document in your classrooms to make the link between discussions of the Fugitive Slave Act and the secession crisis. The first says, "The States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa, have enacted laws which either nullify the Acts of Congress or render useless any attempt to execute them. In many of these laws the fugitive is discharged from the service or labor claimed, and in none of them has the State Government complied with the stipulation made in the Constitution."

This passage clearly names the states that had passed those Personal Liberty laws that we talked about before, that protected supposed fugitives from being returned to slavery, and it also accused them of not complying with even the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. Further in the document it reads, "those states" (the non-slaveholding states they just listed) "have assumed the right of deciding upon the propriety of our domestic institutions and have denied the rights of property established in 15 of the states and recognized by the constitution. They have denounced as sinful the institution of slavery; they have permitted the open establishment among them of societies, whose avowed object is to disturb the peace and eloign the property" (or seize the property) "of the citizens of other states. They have encouraged and assisted thousands of our slaves to leave their homes."

So there's a lot here, right? The Fugitive Slave Act, Personal Liberty laws, abolitionist societies, they're all referenced. South Carolina is accusing the Northern states of deciding that slavery is wrong, refusing to return the property of Southern slaveholders even though their obligation to do so was recognized by the Constitution. They're also talking about the emergence of abolitionist societies, when they say, "They have denounced as sinful the institution of slavery, and they have permitted the open establishment of societies," the secessionists are really talking about the growing abolitionist movement among Northerners. And the line, "They have encouraged and assisted thousands of our slaves to leave their homes." There, they're making reference to the Underground Railroad and other methods that were used to actually ferry individuals away from enslavers in the South.

So how do we teach this in our classroom? What you can do is ask your students to put these arguments into their own words, using excerpts from pre-war secessionist documents like South Carolina's Immediate Causes. I've found that this is very successful even with my college students. If they're forced to think about, "How would I say this?" they should come to a few different conclusions. First and foremost, students should recognize that Southern politicians were not always in favor of states' rights. In fact, for the majority of the 19th century prior to the Civil War, they supported the use of federal authority over states' rights to protect slavery. But when they did secede, and they're very clear about that, they seceded to protect slavery. They're seceding to protect their way of life that is based on slavery. And when we see these political arguments that are being made in that moment, at the time of the secession crisis, we see that state's rights are now connected to slavery. Southern lawmakers begin saying, "Look, states' rights are necessary if we're going to protect slavery."

So what changed? What changed from the Constitutional Convention in 1787 to 1860? Well, what changes is, is Lincoln's election and Southerners feeling that the power of the slaveholders and the federal government is no longer going to be a sort of bulwark to protect slavery no matter what. This brings up something really interesting that I talk about with my students. When we think about this moment, the secession moment, the South isn't doing anything different than it had always done. The South makes the argument that, "Look, we created this union that allows slavery and you guys have changed. You're the ones who are moving away from the original plan with your abolitionist societies and your non-extension of slavery. We're the ones doing things as we always have. We're holding up our end of the bargain and it's you guys in the North that are changing things."

And they're not wrong. It is the Northerners who have kind of changed because the Constitution is created to protect slavery. This was a slaveholding republic from the start. There's all sorts of protections for slavery and slaveholders in the Constitution beyond just the obvious ones. Southerners were confident in that throughout most of the 19th century, but Lincoln's election signaled a larger shift.

Now that we've done the work of looking at the Compromise of 1850 and the Fugitive Slave Act, looking at this moment of the secession crisis and what the seceded states are saying the reasons for their secession are, we can see how artificial it is when we continue to talk about states' rights as an issue that is separate from, or an alternative to, slavery. If we take slaveholders at their word, in their own words, we know that slavery is the reason for secession, and that it's the preeminent cause of the Civil War.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Bethany Jay is an associate professor of history at Salem State University, where she teaches courses in 19th-century American history, African-American history and history education. She is also co-editor of the informative book that this podcast is based on.

We're going to continue our discussion of slavery and the Civil War in our next episode, moving from slavery's role as the cause of the war to examine how the actions of enslaved people shaped the war and contributed to their own emancipation.

Teaching Hard History is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press, they're the publishers of a valuable collection of essays called *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*.

In each episode, we are featuring a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection. We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials which are available at tolerance.org. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of American slavery.

Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find those resources online at tolerance.org.

Thanks to Dr. Jay for sharing her insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shea Shackelford, with production assistance from Tori Marlin and Gregory Dann at Rockpile Studios. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music by Chris Zabriski

If you like what we're doing, please share it with your friends and colleagues, and consider taking a minute to review and rate us on iTunes. We appreciate the feedback, which helps us get more visibility among potential listeners.

I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, associate professor of history at The Ohio State University and your host, and you've been listening to *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- Teaching Hard History, Civil War, Grades: 3–5
- Teaching Hard History, Civil War, Grades: 6–8
- Teaching Hard History, Civil War, Grades: 9–12
- Teaching Tolerance, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*
- Teaching American History, U.S. Constitution: Article IV, Section 2I: Fugitive Slave Clause
- U.S. Congress, Fugitive Slave Act of 1793
- The Compromise of 1850, The Fugitive Slave Act
- Teaching Hard History, The Underground Railroad (1871)
- John Andrew Jackson, *The Experience of a Slave in South Carolina*
- Harriet Beecher Stowe, Autographs for Freedom
- MassHumanities, Fugitive Slave Anthony Burns Arrested (1854)
- American Battlefield Trust, Bleeding Kansas
- Wikipedia, Caning of Charles Sumner
- Smithsonian Magazine, Election Day 1860
- Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War*
- Wikipedia, Personal liberty laws

Episode 2: Slavery & the Civil War, Part 2

Dr. Bethany Jay is back to talk about teaching the end of the Civil War, and how enslaved people's participation in the war helped subvert the institution of slavery.

Resources

- Teaching Hard History, A Framework for Teaching American Slavery
- SPLC, Teaching the Hard History of American Slavery
- Teaching Hard History, Civil War, Grades: 3–5
- Teaching Hard History, Civil War, Grades: 6–8
- Teaching Hard History, Civil War, Grades: 9–12
- Teaching Tolerance magazine, Getting the Civil War Right

Bethany Jay

- History, Salem State University
- Bethany Jay and Cynthia Lynn Lyerly (editors), *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: My uncle never took my brother and I to the movies. He took us everywhere but to the movies. We went to the Brooklyn Academy of Music to see Alex Haley, the author of *Roots*, and to Yankee Stadium to see South African freedom fighter Nelson Mandela on his first trip to the U.S. after being released from prison. But he never ever took us to the movies.

So when my parents told us he planned on taking us to see a movie, I knew immediately we wouldn't be seeing the latest installment of *Indiana Jones*. And I was right. *Glory*, my uncle was taking us to see *Glory*. It was 1989 and just between you and I, when I heard we were going to see a Civil War movie, I was like, "What the hell?" In my infinite 16-year-old wisdom, I could think of a thousand things I'd rather do than trek up to Harlem to watch a Civil War movie. But I really had no choice in the matter. My parents' house, my parents' rules.

And it wasn't just my brother and I. My uncle had gathered a half dozen sons and daughters of his friends to watch the movie too. And by the looks on their faces before the movie started, I could see I wasn't the only one thinking, *What am I doing here?* But by the time the movie

ended, the point of the outing was clear. My uncle wanted us, a group of black teenagers growing up in New York City in the 1980s, to see African Americans fighting for their freedom in the 1860s. I remember him explaining to us afterward that freedom wasn't just given to black people, handed to them happily by Abraham Lincoln. Black people earned it. They seized it by picking up guns and laying down tools, by running to Union lines and disrupting Confederate ones. *Glory* didn't capture the whole story, but it got enough of it. It was a lesson about African-American agency that was new to me, totally upending normative narratives of slavery, abolition and the Civil War, and it made sense. And I never forgot it.

A few years ago, I began teaching a course entitled "African-American History Through Film." And for the unit on the Civil War, I show *Glory*. And without fail, before we watched the film, I recognize that same "What the hell?" look on my students' faces that I had almost 30 years earlier. This is because the same myths and misconceptions about black folk not having a hand in their own liberation still persist. But when we discuss the film afterward, I also recognize that same new understanding that I had: that African Americans played a major role in their own liberation. And this is an absolutely foundational lesson essential for understanding the black and white experience in slavery and in freedom. This is a lesson that my students have to learn, just as I did as a teenager sitting reluctantly with my uncle in a movie theater in Harlem.

I am Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. It's a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides an in-depth look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In each episode, we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material and offering practical classroom exercises.

Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery.

In this episode, we're going to continue looking at the connections between slavery and the Civil War. Specifically, we're going to explore the role that slavery and enslaved people played in the war once it actually began. We are joined again by historian Bethany Jay, who examines how slavery's presence in the Southern and border states shaped the war. She provides terrific lesson ideas and historical resources to help your students understand the actions that enslaved people

took during the conflict and the very real effect that their actions had on the development of the war, including the pursuit of emancipation. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy.

Bethany Jay: We often just think of the end of slavery or the possible perpetuation of slavery as a part of the Civil War. And we don't think about the enslaved people themselves and the role that they played, not as an abstract concept—slavery— but as individual human beings. And that's also going to be a part of our conversation, as we think about the very real effect that individual people and their actions had on the progress of the Civil War and the course of emancipation. So with that in mind, let's shift our attention away from the cause of the war and look at the way that slavery's presence in the Southern and bordering states affected the war itself.

We're used to talking about slavery when we talk about the Civil War; it's maybe one of the only places that many students learn about slavery in the American history curriculum. Similarly, when we teach about the end of slavery, we often just talk about the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment, right? These two moments that gave slaves their freedom, in a way that we often speak about it. But just as we did with the causes of the Civil War, what we want to do is complicate this version of the end of slavery, the notion that enslaved people were given their freedom. And we can do this by looking at two interrelated things.

The first is a slow evolution of wartime Union policies relating to slavery and the ways that those policies led to the Emancipation Proclamation. And then the second is the way that the actions of free and enslaved African Americans on the battlefield and on the home front, ended up hastening the end of slavery, altering Union policy, damaging the Confederacy and ultimately undermining the institution, long before Lincoln's proclamation. We really want to correct the notion that slaves were given their freedom. Free and enslaved African Americans worked tirelessly to make emancipation the outcome of war.

So let's first turn our attention to Union policy in 1860. It is not a given, in fact, it would be highly unlikely that slavery would end as a result of the Civil War. In fact, Lincoln couldn't have raised an army to fight a war to end slavery in 1861. Actually, in 1860 everybody's thinking that the war is going to be a couple of weeks long. When the war was beginning, there was a whole lot of bluster about exactly how short it's going to be and exactly how few lives are going to be lost on both sides. And so few people are really thinking about a potential impact for the war on the institution of slavery.

So the first thing that we will want to look at as we examine the issue of slavery and the progress of the Civil War, is the evolution of Union policy relating to slaves. This policy sort of emerges spontaneously when Brigadier General Benjamin Butler declared that the three men who had escaped to Union lines in Virginia were "contraband of war," and therefore subject to confiscation. It's important because Butler's actions here become codified in the first Confiscation Act, which was strengthened by the 1862 Second Confiscation Act. And what those acts really did was allow Union generals to take enslaved people as contraband of war, the same way you might take houses, food and other things belonging to the enemy.

These confiscation policies are one of the first mechanisms that helps drive the Union towards a more general policy of emancipation. In fact, the Second Confiscation Act explicitly declares Confederate slaves as captives of war who were forever free. This is one of the first places where we start to see military activities and an attack on slavery, go hand in hand. What we see is the Union Army's commitment to emancipation as a part of the war.

That Second Confiscation Act freed all slaves of rebel masters who made it to Union lines. So not just men who could serve or work as laborers in the military, but women, children, anybody. Enslaved people who were confiscated as a result of these early policies were generally employed in the Union Army as things like laborers: digging trenches, cutting down trees, etc. They're not soldiers. Neither of those Confiscation Acts led to black military service at this point.

Historian Joseph Glatthaar has argued that these policies were important to the Union effort in two main ways. First, it demonstrated that the Union Army was going to make a commitment to emancipation as an act of war. Second, it aided the Union Army's war effort, while it took away from the Confederacy's. So former slaves are doing some of the work of the Union Army, freeing soldiers for the front lines, and therefore those slaves are not working towards a Confederate war effort. They were depriving the Confederacy of valuable manpower. Those Confiscation Acts were really important, but as we might imagine, few black Americans were content with serving only as laborers for the Union Army.

From the onset of the war, free blacks in the North clamored for a chance to serve as soldiers in the Union Army. Frederick Douglass, whose sons would eventually serve as Union soldiers, is a good example of black arguments about military service. Again, it's historian Joseph Glatthaar who knows that Douglass viewed black service as essential to the war effort and he famously said, "This is no time to fight with one hand when both are needed. This is no time to fight with only your white hand and allow your black hand to remain tied."

The reason why Douglass is so passionate about black military service is that he knew that the outcome of the Civil War could affect the future of both free blacks and enslaved people. Douglass said, “Once let the black man get upon his person, the brass letter US. Let him get an eagle on his button and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States.”

Even Confederate politicians recognize the implications of black military service. Joseph E. Brown, who was the governor of Georgia, famously stated, “Whenever we establish that they are a military race, we destroy our whole theory that they are unfit to be free.” So even though men ranging from Frederick Douglass to the Confederate governor of Georgia recognize that black service could have a tremendous impact on the war and the future of African Americans, change was still slow. And there’s a variety of factors that serve to delay Northern actions on this. Primarily, we have Northern prejudice. Lincoln was afraid that the white soldiers would not enlist if they saw this as a war to end slavery. Second, we have the need to keep the border states in the Union: Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri and West Virginia. Those border states are slaveholding states and they remained loyal to the Union. Obvious threats to slavery could push those border states and all of their resources and manpower into the Confederacy. All of those things combined to delay any changes in military policy regarding African Americans until 1862.

The Union policy on African-American service is incremental. It’s like this incremental step towards emancipation that makes total sense as an act of war. By 1862 it was clear that this was not going to be a quick fight. It was a brutal war. And the Union Army needed to keep its numbers up and it could do this by using African-American soldiers. So that year, we see both emancipation and black enlistment become official policies of the Union Army. First in July, Congress passed the Militia Act, which authorized Lincoln to use black soldiers in the military. And then in September, Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which promised freedom to slaves and states still in rebellion as of January 1863.

So together, these two policies had a big impact on the war. Black soldiers were quick to respond to the opportunity to fight for the Union. And so you see that Union enlistment really benefits from the Militia Act allowing black soldiers to enlist. By the end of the war, nearly 180,000 black soldiers had fought in the Union Army. Of those, 98,500 had been slaves who fled the Confederacy. This is important because recruiting slaves from Southern plantation strengthened the fighting force of the Union and denied the South their labor. So we’re seeing that it’s

weakening the Confederacy on two fronts. It's weakening them by providing service to the Union Army on the front lines, and it's also weakening their ability to feed their military and civilian populations.

The other thing it did was it also helped to ensure that Britain would withhold their support from the Confederacy. Always a concern for the North was whether England's dependence or at least perceived dependence on Southern cotton, would push them to support the South. And by tying emancipation to the Union war effort, that helps to keep abolitionist Britain out of the fight for the Confederacy.

The historian Stephanie McCurry argues that, while it may have taken Lincoln a little while to realize the impact the war could have on slavery, slaves immediately recognize the significance of the war to their personal freedom. McCurry has written an important book, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*, and much of what I'll talk about next is taken from her work.

So on plantations close to the front, enslaved people ran in huge numbers to Union lines, sometimes in groups of 60 or 80 at a time from a single plantation. Those escapees didn't just include men who were running to join the army. It also included men and women of all ages. We can think of this as slaves freeing themselves, and they did it so frequently that planters were forced to acknowledge that the Union Army was not their only enemy, that who they saw as their trusted and valued laborers at home, were also working against the Confederate war effort. The pattern repeated itself throughout the war as Union troops moved further and further into the interior of the Confederacy and slaves risked everything to make it to Union lines.

As McCurry and other historians have noted, those mass departures greatly affected the war effort. First, as I just mentioned, it removed valuable laborers from the field. At the beginning of the war, Confederate leaders really thought that the three and a half million slaves on the home front were going to be one of their greatest resources, but what we see is that they're not. By moving to Union lines, by freeing themselves, they diminish the Confederacy's ability to supply its army and feed its population on the home front. The mass departure of slaves meant that work was not getting done.

Second, perhaps equally as important, the exodus of the enslaved people had a devastating impact on Confederate morale. Remember, the vast majority of the war is being fought in the South. Southerners are bearing the brunt of the physical damage that is coming from the war

and the personal privations that are coming from the war. And so even as that devastation is happening, those who slaveholders always claimed that they considered trusted servants or virtual members of the family, were also continuously leaving Southern farms and plantations. So the Confederates, particularly women, became increasingly demoralized as this happened over and over again.

When you read the diaries that Confederate women left, you can see the very personal effect that slave departures had on them. You can see their attitudes changing and you can use the candid recollections from their diaries and letters to explore this very personal effect of slaves' departures.

Mary Boykin Chesnut from South Carolina is the most famous Confederate diarist. And her entries capture these particular moments and reactions. For example, on January 9th, 1864, she wrote, "The president's man Jim." And here she's referring to Confederate president Jefferson Davis. "The president's man, Jim, that he believed in as we all believe in our own servants, our own people, as we are apt to call them, and Betsy, Mrs. Davis's maid, decamped last night. It is miraculous that they had the fortitude to resist the temptation so long. At Mrs. Davis's, the hired servants are mere birds of passage. First, they are seen with gold galore, then their wings sprout and they fly to the Yankees." She continues to say, 'I do not think it had ever crossed Mrs D's brain that these two would leave her."

Another Southern woman, Gertrude Thomas, wrote on June 12th, 1865, "I must confess to you my journal, that I do most heartily despise Yankees, Negroes and everything connected with them. Everything is entirely reversed. I feel no interest in them, whatever," referring to her former slaves, "and hope I never will."

There's a lot that's happening in both of these passages. If you use them in your classroom, ask your students how these women felt about their relationships with the slaves before the war; how has that relationship changed? Let's identify specifically what the slaves are doing and how those women react. Students should be able to recognize the sense of betrayal, surprise and then real bitterness that existed alongside their matter-of-fact rendition of events.

Of course, not all slaves could leave their farms and plantations. Often, when we talk about how African Americans aided the Union war effort, we only think about their participation in the army. We probably show a clip of *Glory* in our classrooms. But that's actually only part of the story. It's important to acknowledge in our classroom the actions of the millions of enslaved

people who did not serve as soldiers. There were other critical ways that enslaved people actively affected the war effort and the progress of the Civil War.

Slaves immediately recognized that with the Civil War, the slave system was breaking down, and they took multiple actions to further destroy it. So we can look again at Jefferson Davis's own slaves. Jefferson Davis's brother fled from his plantation with a group of household slaves when the Union Army got close by. The remaining slaves took control of the two Davis plantations. They helped themselves to the valuables. They refused to work for anyone other than themselves, and in general, they kind of lived as free people on the Davis plantation for the better part of the war.

And of course the Davis slaves weren't the only ones making those decisions. Together, on plantations across the South, these open acts of rebellion made it difficult for the Confederacy to supply their troops on the front and the civilian population at home.

Slaves on the Confederate home front actively conspired against the Confederacy. Stephanie McCurry reminds us that slaves often risked their own lives to provide valuable intelligence to the Union Army. They did things like give Confederate positions to Union soldiers, tell them how many Confederate troops were waiting for them. They even provided cover for federal forces by leading them through swampy territories to surprise Confederates.

So what happens is that the Confederate army has to divert forces kind of to patrol plantations as they're also trying to fight the war. Stephanie McCurry notes the impact of this, saying, "The slaves determined war against their masters and their master states opened an internal front in the Confederate war and demanded the diversion of military resources to fight it." Fleeing to Union lines, refusing to work, sabotaging the Confederate war effort; these acts of open rebellion point to numerous ways in which enslaved people affected the war effort and contributed to their own emancipation.

All of us deal with the end of slavery as the most significant outcome of the Civil War. But many of us in the past probably haven't considered the role that slaves played in bringing about the end of slavery. So hopefully, we're changing the story within our classrooms by having these different discussions about the multiple actions that enslaved people took to impact emancipation. And building on this work that we're doing in our classrooms, it's also important to consider what our larger national story of emancipation is. How do we represent it to ourselves as a nation and as a people?

We can do this by asking our students to critique a famous Thomas Ball statue that's entitled alternately Emancipation Memorial or Freedman's Memorial. You can find images of it online. The statue was erected in Washington, DC, in 1876 right at the end of Reconstruction. It depicts Abraham Lincoln standing over a shackled slave who is down on one knee. Lincoln is gazing thoughtfully towards the slave, his right hand holds a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation. His left hand hovers over the enslaved man who is kneeling, naked except for a loincloth.

To do this activity with students, it's important to first have them look carefully at the statue. Ask them, "What do you see?" And it's not about interpretation here. It's not about analysis. It's literally about what is right in front of you. How was the enslaved person dressed? How was Lincoln dressed? What's the difference in the way their bodies are positioned? Once your students have done a good job really looking at the statue, then we can move on to those contextualizing and analytical questions. Ask the students, "What do we think is the relationship between these men? What is each one doing?" And then we can ask, "What is the statue telling us? What does the relationship between these men mean?"

And at the end of this questioning, students should realize that Lincoln is the one who has all the power. He is the only one who is active in the statue. Lincoln is emancipating the slaves. And then we can ask them, "Thinking back on our discussion so far, is this accurate?" Students love to critique things and so they will most likely pull this statue apart. It's supposed to be the Freedman's Memorial, but it's really more of a memorial to Lincoln himself. I love Lincoln and we call him the Great Emancipator, but he's not the only one who was active. There were multiple Great Emancipators in this story.

As your students are doing this critique, you should ask them to provide evidence from your discussions of Abraham Lincoln, the free black population and the enslaved the population to support their responses. Having determined the ways in which the statue is inaccurate, students should consider the implications of this narrative of emancipation. If we don't recognize the ways that African-American people contributed to the end of slavery, what impact might that have on the political future of African Americans? You can also extend this discussion by asking students to use their existing knowledge to create their own Emancipation Memorial. What should it look like?

After this memorial exercise, you can begin to conclude your classroom discussion of slavery and the Civil War with an examination of Abraham Lincoln's eloquent Second Inaugural Address. Lincoln was sworn into office just three weeks before the end of the Civil War. When he

addressed the crowd, he acknowledged that everyone knew that slavery was somehow the cause of the war, and he admitted that few believed the institution would end even before the conflict. But Lincoln continued on to posit that the war's terrible human cost may have been God's way of forcing the United States to serve penance for the sin of slavery. Lincoln said, "Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsmans' 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword. As was said 3,000 years ago, so still, it must be said, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Lincoln's words are eloquent, so much so they're carved in the wall of the Lincoln Memorial. But his remarks remain ambiguous in somehow describing slavery as the cause of the war and his attribution of Divine Will in determining the end of slavery, Lincoln leaves historians unsatisfied.

Through this work, we can help students to flesh out the ways that slavery was at the heart of the succession crisis. By highlighting those extant sources that we discussed surrounding the Fugitive Slave Acts and the secession crisis, students can now articulate the complications that come with using states' rights as an alternative explanation for the conflict. And by examining the ways that slaves seize the opportunities that came with the chaos of the war to free themselves and to proclaim their loyalty to the union cause, teachers can also complicate the narrative of slaves being given their freedom, and instead help students to understand the ways that slaves help to bring about and mold their own emancipation.

It's really necessary for us to have these conversations, addressing the ways that we've either avoided or misrepresented our past, whether it's done intentionally or just unthinkingly. As history teachers, we want to give our students the opportunity not only to understand and engage in the past, but also to contribute to and impact the present. This subject, it's not easy to talk about. These are complicated issues, but they're not so complicated that we can't deal with them historically. And if we can deal with their historical complications and understand those, then we can also equip ourselves and our students to deal with the complicated impact that the history of slavery has had on our present-day life.

As a nation, we've allowed these partial, incomplete or confused narratives to play too much of a role in the way that we understand the Civil War and the way that we understand the end of slavery. We need to address this history because we're living with the very real ramifications of our collective inaction over the past 150 years. We can't have a productive conversation about

removing Confederate statues if we don't acknowledge what the Confederacy was about. Similarly, if we don't acknowledge the massive impact that slavery and the enslaved had on our past, we can't see the impact that their legacies have had on our present. And maybe the first step towards righting the wrongs of today is getting the history right.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Bethany Jay is an associate professor of history at Salem State University where she teaches courses on 19th-century American history, African-American history and history education. She is also co-editor of the informative book that this series is based on.

Teaching Hard History is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a valuable collection of essays called *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. In each episode, we're featuring a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection. We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials, which are available at tolerance.org. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of American slavery.

Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find those resources online at tolerance.org.

Thanks to Dr. Jay for sharing her insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shea Shackleford, with production assistance from Tori Marlene and Gregory Dan at Rockpile Studios. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zabriski.

If you like what we're doing, please share it with your friends and colleagues and consider taking a minute to review and rate us on iTunes. We appreciate the feedback.

I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, associate professor of history at The Ohio State University and your host. You've been listening to *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- Edward Zwick, Glory(film)
- U.S. Constitution, 13th Amendment
- National Park Service, Major General Benjamin F. Butler: Contraband Decision

- The New York Times Magazine, How Slavery Really Ended in America
- Joseph T. Glatthaar, University of North Carolina
- Teaching Tolerance, Meet Frederick Douglass
- New Georgia Encyclopedia, Joseph E. Brown (1821-1894)
- National Archives: Educator Resources, Black Soldiers in the U.S. Military During the Civil War
- Teaching Tolerance, Emancipation Proclamation
- Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*
- Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut, *A Diary From Dixie*
- Gertrude Thomas, *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848-1889*
- Thomas Ball, Emancipation Memorial
- National Park Service, Lincoln's Second Inaugural (1865)
- Teaching Tolerance, Teaching Hard History With Primary Sources

Episode 3: Slavery & the Northern Economy

Follow the money. Dr. Christy Clark-Pujara explains why American slavery couldn't have existed without a national commercial infrastructure that supported and benefited from the labor of enslaved people.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, How Did Sugar Feed Slavery?
- Teaching Tolerance, Sugar Manufacture in the Antilles Isles
- Teaching Tolerance/TED ED, The Atlantic Slave Trade: What too few textbooks told you (video)

Christy Clark-Pujara

- Afro-American Studies, University of Wisconsin
- *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island*

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: My people are from Kelly, Georgia, which is a little more than an hour's drive east of Atlanta. There they experienced the horror of enslavement and the joy of emancipation. My great-grandfather was born there around 1870. He was the first in my family born free on American soil, and I was born a century later, a world away in Brooklyn, New York.

Growing up in Brooklyn, all of the family members I knew lived in and around New York. And while I did think about the enslavement of my ancestors, I didn't dwell on slavery itself. Just about everything I had been taught in school about the peculiar institution focused on the cotton-producing South. And every time I checked, there weren't any cotton fields in New York City. But I began to think differently when I enrolled at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia.

At Morehouse, my dorm room could have easily been mistaken for a shrine to New York. Together with my roommate, who also hailed from the city, every inch of every wall was plastered with reminders of the Big Apple. There was a poster for *Mo' Better Blues*, a Spike Lee joint, pennants for the Mets and the Yankees. I was a Mets fan, of course, and he was the Yankees fan. And even a New York City street sign, but don't ask us how we got that.

And much to the chagrin of my professors, I didn't confine my New York nationalism to my dorm room. I freely shared it in the classroom including during discussions about slavery in America. I don't remember exactly what I said in my freshman history class about American slavery that day, but it was some wisecrack about slavery being basically a Southern thing. I do remember exactly how Dr. Windham responded. "Brother," he said, "you got a lot to learn." And he was right.

So I did what many people believe is impossible for New Yorkers to do. I shut up, I listened and I learned. I learned about the practice of slavery in the North, about the critical role that the region played in maintaining the institution, first by financing the transatlantic slave trade and then by fueling demand for products produced by enslaved people. I learned that slavery was anything but a Southern thing.

At the end of my freshman year, I drove with my uncle out to Kelly, Georgia, and visited the gravesite of my great-grandfather for the first time. As my uncle and I stood quietly by ourselves in a dense thicket of underbrush, he began to tell me about our family's post-slavery history, from Georgia to Ohio to New Jersey and to New York. It was an extension of the lessons on slavery that Dr. Windham had taught me all year, that colonies and states like Georgia and New York were interconnected and interdependent from slavery onward. Thinking back on it, I find it more than a little ironic that I had to go south to learn about the North.

I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. It's a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides an in-depth look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In each episode, we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material and offering practical classroom exercises.

Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery. In this episode, we're going to confront and challenge the notion that slavery was simply a Southern institution. Historian Christy Clark-Pujara will explain how commerce in the North was integral to perpetuating slavery, and how the Northern economy was in many ways built on its active participation in the institution. She'll share a framework for exploring these connections in the classroom, along with several rich examples.

And understanding the role of slavery in the Northern economy ultimately raises important questions for students about how to understand America and its economy today. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy.

Christy Clark-Pujara: We misunderstand the institution of slavery when we only locate it on the plantation. We misunderstand the history of the United States as a whole when we do not acknowledge that the institution of slavery was national, rather than regional. Moreover, when we don't acknowledge the role that Northern colonist and citizens played in the maintenance of the institution of slavery, we misunderstand the institution.

Slave plantations did not exist in isolation. It's the people outside the plantation that bring the captives, that bring food, clothing, wood and other basic necessity. It's the people outside of the plantation that transport the goods produced by captive workers. They were dependent upon the activities of people outside of the plantation for those places to thrive and exist.

When we think of slavery as simply a Southern institution, rather than a national one, the erasure or marginalization of the Northern black experience and the centrality of the business of slavery to the Northern economy allows for a dangerous fiction: that the North has no history of racism to overcome. It also feeds into a false narrative that black people were not part of the founding of the Northern colonies, and they were.

We think that the North has no need to redress institutional racism or work toward reconciliation. In other words, that contemporary racial disparities are not grounded in history, but are rather a reflection of poor personal choices or even worse, innate inferiority. So understanding, fully understanding, how and why the institution of slavery is central to understanding American history shapes how we see ourselves today.

The business of slavery, as all economic activity that was directly related to the maintenance of slaveholding in the Americas, specifically the buying and selling of people, foods and goods that made plantations possible. How did enslaved people get brought to the plantation? How were they fed? How were they clothed? Where did the seeds come from? Where did the money come from to invest in those places? Where do the products leave from and how do they leave?

Understanding that the plantation didn't exist in isolation; the business of slavery was essential to the institution of slavery. Our understanding of slavery has grown tremendously in the last several decades, but our understanding has been dominated by a few particular visions of

enslaved people, particularly the horrors of the Atlantic slave trade, and people toiling under the threat of the lash in the hot sun.

These depictions are accurate. However, they are not solitary. Enslaved people labored in small households throughout the Northeast. Enslaved people labored on docks. Enslaved people labored on slave ships. Examining the business of slavery allows for a fuller picture of the economic systems that sustained and maintained race-based slavery throughout the Americas. It was the business of slavery that allowed New England to become an economic powerhouse without ever producing a single staple or cash crop.

Furthermore, enslaved and free black people called the Northern colonies and states home, and the history of those places remain incomplete without a full accounting of the experiences of black people in those places. Without a full accounting of the role that enslaved and free black people played and the centrality of the business of slavery in the founding, the maintenance and the economic ascent of the United States, objections to righting the wrongs of the nation's past will remain.

Whether it is Affirmative Action at our institutions of higher education or addressing racial disparities in mass incarceration, we must remember that our interpretations of the past shape who we think of as worthy, contributing members of our nation. In many ways, slavery, the stalled emancipation process and circumscribed black freedom cast people of African descent as apart from the nation, even though their labors were central to its creation. A lack of understanding of how race-based slavery and its legacies marginalized an entire race of people for centuries serves to further ostracize people of African descent today.

So I'm going to give three examples of the business of slavery in the North. The first is the West Indian trade, the second is the Atlantic slave trade. And the final example is going to be about the modern economy in the 19th century and the textile industry, particularly around the commodity of cotton.

First, the West Indian trade. Sugar production forever changed the Western diet and waistline. The first plantations in the Americas began operating in the 17th century. And in the Americas, sugar was cultivated in the Caribbean. As the demand for sugar grew and becomes insatiable, just as it is now, these plantations would become increasingly dependent on Northern American colonists.

Most of the land in the Caribbean is going to be used for sugar production, so they imported all of their food and their necessities. And New England farmers and merchants acted as the grocers and the big box stores for the West Indian sugar plantations. There's this constant demand for sugar, and so all the arable land is being used for sugar. That means you need to import all of your food. It means you need to import wood because you have to boil sugar at the end of the production process. It means that you import candles because these sugar mills are running 24 hours a day, and you also need candles to light your home. It means that you are importing clothing. It means you're importing all the basic necessities of life.

And New Englanders provided those necessities. New Englanders supplied enslavers in the West Indies, "the West Indies" and "the Caribbean" are used interchangeably, with captive laborers, with livestock, with dairy products, with fish, with candles and lumber. The plantations cannot run without these imports from the outside because plantations do not exist in isolation.

In return, New Englanders received molasses, which is a byproduct of sugar production, it's the runoff, which they distilled into rum. Rum becomes a major export out of New England. In Rhode Island, it's the number one export. In the city of Newport alone, there were 16 distilleries. And in the 18th century, rum becomes its own form of currency. Then and now, liquor always has a market. But in a place like Rhode Island, the connections were even more salient. And I'll just give you an example of what I mean.

Local slave labor played a key role in the growth of commerce. Moreover, the abundant plantations of the West Indies provided farmers and merchants with a market for their slave-produced products. And so, farmers in the Narragansett country, this is the southern half of Rhode Island, put thousands of enslaved men, women and children to work producing foodstuffs and raising livestock for the West Indian trade. You have enslaved people in southern Rhode Island growing foodstuffs for enslaved people in the West Indies.

Merchants in Newport and Providence transported local agriculture, especially livestock and cheese, to the sugar plantations in the West Indies in exchange for molasses. The same merchants then brought back molasses to Rhode Island and sold it to local distillers, who then used it to make rum, the colony's number one export. And so, this bilateral trade was the cornerstone of the economy in Rhode Island.

Now, I'd like to move on to the Atlantic slave trade, which complemented the West Indian trade. I'll start with the story of a slave ship. In 1773, the sloop *Adventure* sailed out of Newport, Rhode

Island. The ship was owned by Christopher and George Champlin. In addition to the captain and officers, there were 11 sailors aboard the ship. The bulk of the departing cargo consisted of local products.

The *Adventure* was outfitted with handcuffs and shackles made by local blacksmiths, 26 gallons of vinegar, pork, beef, sugar, molasses, wine, beans, tobacco, butter, bread and flour. This food was to feed the crew and enslaved people on the return voyage. But the vast majority of the cargo space was reserved for locally distilled rum—24,380 gallons of rum—which was enough to purchase several dozen enslaved captives. Enslaved women cost an average of 190 gallons, and men averaged 220 gallons.

The *Adventure* reached Africa in five weeks. It took the captain four months of cruising along the coast to acquire 62 slaves, along with rice, pepper, palm oil and gold dust. Fifty-eight captives survived, and they were sold in Granada for between 35 and 39 pounds. The ship's owners received a 5 percent return on their investment. Such voyages were common in Rhode Island. Slave-trading voyages produced profits from 2 to 10 percent. Most voyages yielded returns of 5 or 6 percent. And while these profit margins may seem low by contemporary investment standards, investments in the Atlantic slave trade were less risky and more liquid and needed less time to garner returns than all other forms of possible investment in the 18th century.

But it isn't just the transfer of captives from Point A to Point B. The Atlantic slave trade creates a whole other economy within itself, and especially in relation to the bilateral trade between the Northern colonies and the West Indies. It's important that we think about the wider implications of the West Indian and Atlantic slave trades.

Shipbuilders, sailors, corkers, sailmakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, painters, stevedores were all employed by the West Indian and Atlantic slave trades. Coopers made barrels that stored the rum which was exchanged for enslaved people, who were sold throughout the Americas. Clerks, scribes and warehouse overseers conducted the business of the trade. Outfitting even the smallest ship required a small army of tradesmen.

African slave-trading voyages also required additional crew to control and manage the human captives, usually twice as many than a commodity's trade. Merchants, many of whom were slave traders, paid significant taxes to the cities for public works. For example, the duties collected on

the purchase and sale of enslaved people in Rhode Island were used to pave the streets of Newport. So whether or not you owned a slave, you benefited from the business of slavery.

In the classroom, I've given my students the bare-bones information about the sloop *Adventure*. And then I ask them, "What else can we learn about how the economy and society functioned in order for this transaction to have taken place?" And for the most part, students get it almost immediately. They say, "Well, somebody had to build the ship." Okay, so we've got shipbuilders and carpenters and they're like, "Well, someone had to load the ship." And where did they get the stuff from that was on the ship? So that's local farmers.

And then they think about, "Well, where did we get the rum from?" Well, the rum came from local distilleries. And then, they begin to start to understand that an entire economy was caught up on that ship, from tradesmen to distillers, to merchants, to farmers. And then, they start thinking about, "Okay, who's on that ship and what kind of food are they eating, and is this a food they're familiar with?"

"And then, they get sold to a place that they know nothing about, to do work they've never done before. And then that ship comes back home to Rhode Island to do it all over again." Something that a student pointed out to me once was that he tended to think about a profession like a blacksmith in a rather benign way. These ships are outfitted with dozens and dozens of shackles. And when you examine how the sloop *Adventure* made its money, shackles become incredibly important. That's how you kept the people bound who were later sold.

So I give them the bare bones and then ask them, "What does it tell us about our society? What does this tell us about our economy?" And they also get the social component of it; that this is a place where holding certain people as property is normative, acknowledged and respected. Slave traders were not maligned. They were elites, and so it tells us a lot about how a society functioned.

There was slave labor in the North from the colonial period through the American Revolution. Slaveholding was socially acceptable, legally sanctioned and widely practiced in the North. But after the American Revolution, slavery, as an institution, slaveholding as a practice, begins to fall apart in the North. Slavery dies out in these places. The primary reason is the business of slavery was always more important in the North than slave labor itself, and most Northerners are opposed to slavery's expansion, not its existence.

Moving on to the modern economy, and cotton in the 19th century and how it transforms the U.S. economy really is the engine behind the U.S. economic ascent in the 19th century, making the U.S. an economic powerhouse in the world. The history of slavery isn't something that we cannot connect with. In fact, I'm willing to bet that every person listening has a direct connection to slavery that they just don't know about.

Just to give you an example, if you own a pair of jeans, if you've ever worn a pair of jeans, if you've ever bought a pair of jeans, you are intimately connected to the history of slavery in this country. Levi Strauss buys its patent from a textile mill in Rhode Island after the American Civil War. The mill was no longer manufacturing slave clothing, but the patent that was bought was a patent that had manufactured slave clothing. It was called "Negro cloth." It was a coarse cotton wool material made especially to minimize the cost of clothing enslaved people in the American South. It was tough. It was durable, it washed well and it was designed for enslaved people on America's plantations.

Enslaved African Americans in the Southern United States produced the bulk of the world's cotton and almost all of the cotton consumed by the U.S. textile industry during the antebellum era. Northerners, especially New Yorkers, were buying, selling and shipping it. By 1860, cotton represented more than half of all of U.S. exports, and lower Manhattan was populated with cotton brokers, bankers, merchants, shippers, auctioneers and insurers who profited from that export. Only New York banks were big enough to extend a massive lines of credit to plantation owners so they could buy seed, farming equipment and people. New York was also home to the water- and rail- transportation companies that shipped cotton from the South to the North.

When we think about the Industrial Revolution, when we think about public investment in rail lines and shipping industry, we often don't think about it in conjunction with the institution of slavery. But it was the institution of slavery and cotton that was the impetus for it all. Over the 19th century, the textile industry transformed Northern towns. By 1852, the industry employed 14 percent of the labor force, and by 1860, New England was home to 472 cotton mills.

These textile factories were often the sole employers in towns throughout the region. And they were a direct link between Northern advancement and wealth, and Southern slavery. Textile mills are just one example. Manufacturing plants throughout the North, and in New England in particular, that produced farming implements, who are they selling those farming implements to? Southern plantation owners to be used by enslaved people.

Factories that produced shoes were often making shoes for enslaved people who wore them out in the fields. So the manufacturing industry, as it existed in the 19th century, was directly connected to the American plantation. Rhode Island, again, provides a salient example of the connection between Northern investment and Southern slaveholding.

Between 1800 and 1860, more than 80 Negro cloth mills opened in Rhode Island. Twenty-two Rhode Island towns and cities manufactured Negro cloth for over 60 years. More than 80 Rhode Island families owned part of a Negro cloth mill at some point in the 19th century. By mid-century, 79 percent of all Rhode Island textile mills manufactured slave clothing. In the famed Lowell Mills, about a third of all textiles produced were destined for Southern markets, plantations in particular.

The look and feel of a city like New York was transformed by those who were invested in cotton, invested in the business of slavery. The now-infamous Lehman Brothers began as cotton brokers. The first Morgan fortune was made by Charles Morgan, who was a steamship captain and merchant whose shipping line dominated the Gulf coastline, transporting enslaved captives from the upper South to the deep South. So enslaved people were sold by the tens of thousands and then the hundreds of thousands, the estimate is over a million enslaved people were sold from the upper South, the Chesapeake, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware to the new South or the deep South to grow cotton in places like Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana.

Some of them walked through forced migrations, others went by water. Charles Morgan transported people by water from the upper South to New Orleans to Galveston, Texas. That's how the Morgan fortune was first built. You also have people like Alexander Stewart who was a cotton merchant who opened the United States' first department store in New York City in 1848. New York remains a fashion capital of the world and its first department store was opened with investments in slave-picked cotton.

When I teach these connections and the bright line starts showing up for students, what most really begin to grapple with is the understanding that the sin of slavery is national. That whether or not you ever owned a slave, you benefited from slavery if you live and function in this country. And that is a difficult pill for many of my students to swallow: that we all have benefited from slavery because the United States became what it was through the exploitation of millions of people of African descent. To understand that when people say slavery built the United States, that it's not hyperbole or just something you say to be sensational, but just a reflection of the truth and what that means for racial disparities today.

But then the next thing I see is a realization that people of African descent are an essential part of this place, that it's not an add-on. I teach African-American history classes and what I am most trying to do is to get students to understand that African-American history isn't an additive. It's central to understanding American history. You don't know who you are as an American unless you know the story of slavery.

History at its best is not about the past. It's about the present and how we function in the present. And when students begin to understand that slavery is central to the history of the United States, current conflicts and debates about race in this country will have real meaning to them because they'll understand that the stakes are not about what's happening right now, but what's been happening since 1607, and why we have such racial disparities and divides. These are not a function of the last 50 years or hundred years. They're a function of hundreds of years.

And if we're going to really understand who we are as a nation—who contributed, who built, who belongs, who's a part of—we have to reckon with this history. The most common response I get from students is, "Why didn't I know this? Why don't we talk about these things?" And the fact of the matter is our students are going to have to exist and function in an increasingly multiracial, multi-country and global world, and we do them a grave disservice when we let our discomfort in talking about race shape how we teach and what we teach. We owe it to ourselves, we owe it to our students and we owe it to our nation to tell the most complete, honest picture of how we got to where we are.

They turn on the news, they see the headlines. We have an opportunity to provide them with the proper context to understand that. And more importantly, we can provide them with the proper contacts to act differently, to speak differently, to get involved in local, to get involved with local initiatives and community service. A lot is at stake. This is not academic. It's not just about changing what's in a history book. It's about how we function in the world, how we talk to each other, how we interact with people we work with, how we include or exclude groups of people in our neighborhood. It's about our very humanity.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Christy Clark-Pujara is an associate professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in the department of Afro-Americans Studies. She's the author of *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island*, and is currently working on a book about black people in the Wisconsin territory from the French colonial period through the American Civil War. *Teaching Hard History* is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance with special

thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a valuable collection of essays called *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*.

In each episode, we're featuring a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection. We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials available at tolerance.org. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of American slavery. Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can find those resources online at tolerance.org.

Thanks to Dr. Clark-Pujara for sharing her insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shea Shackleford with production assistance from Tori Marlin and David Macasaet at L & S Learning Support Services at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series.

And if you like what we're doing, please share it with your friends and colleagues, and consider taking a minute to review and rate us on iTunes. We appreciate the feedback and it helps us get more visibility among potential listeners. I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, associate professor of history at The Ohio State University and your host. You've been listening to *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- Robert Champlin, *A Rhode Island slaver; trade book of the sloop Adventure, 1773-1774*
- Rhode Island Historical Society, Christopher Champlin Papers
- History Channel, Levi Strauss and Jacob Davis receive patent for blue jeans
- Washington Post, In search of slave clothes: A museum director's hunt for a painful symbol ("Negro cloth")
- Library of Congress, The African American Odyssey: Free Blacks in the Antebellum Period
- National Park Service, Lowell's (Mass.) Southern Connection
- Harvard Business School, Lehman Brothers
- Bethany Jay and Cynthia Lynn Lyerly, *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*
- Teaching Tolerance, What Learning About Slavery Can Teach Us About Ourselves

Episode 4: Dealing With Things As They Are: Creating a Classroom Environment

In many ways, the U.S. has fallen short of its ideals. How can we explain this to students—particularly in the context of discussing slavery? Professor Steven Thurston Oliver has this advice for teachers: Face your fears.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance: Text, James Baldwin: Art, Sexuality and Civil Rights
- Teaching Hard History: Text Library, The Underground Railroad (1871)
- Steven Thurston Oliver
- Secondary and Higher Education, Salem State University
- Twitter

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Get it right. That's what Beverly Robertson, the Executive Director of the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee, told us at the start of the Museum's five-year $27 million renovation. You are here to tell the story of the African American freedom struggle from slavery to the present. Make sure you get it right. Everyone on the exhibit redesign team took her charge to heart.

The National Civil Rights Museum is located at the Lorraine Motel where civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was assassinated on April 4, 1968. So, it is more than just a place where history is told or even just a place where history happened. It's hallowed ground, a sacred space that draws a quarter of a
million visitors annually. So the design team's responsibility to get it right, to tell the historical truth, was a responsibility to everyone who would ever walk through the museum's doors.

As the lead historian for the renovation, I was often asked to explain design decisions usually to the Board of Directors. The questions were simple enough, as were the answers. I will never forget though, the time I was asked to respond to a major donor's concern that the new exhibits just didn't give him that same uplifting, feel-good spirit that he had with the old exhibits. I remember thinking, "Lord have mercy, this dude," and I remember saying, "If he wants to be happy, tell him to go to Disney World." I mean, our charge wasn't to make people happy, it was to get the history right, and that's exactly what we did. We didn't sanitize slavery, we rendered

visible the horrors of the Middle Passage and the auction block and made plain to see the culture of black resistance. We didn't perpetuate the myth that segregation was some kind of minor inconvenience. We made it abundantly clear that Jim Crow was designed to degrade and humiliate black people for the purpose of controlling their labor, and we didn't freeze Dr. King on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, dreaming about how his children might be judged. We explained how he organized to end poverty and died in Memphis fighting alongside sanitation workers, because he believed that all labor had dignity.

The civil rights movement is like American slavery. It's hard history. It's hard to think about, it's hard to discuss, it's hard to teach, and it's hard to learn, but it's also essential history. It's essential that we study it and talk about it, to understand the past and to make sense of the present. So, despite how uncomfortable hard history makes us, whether we're dealing with slavery or civil rights, we have no choice but to get it right.

I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. It's a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides an in-depth look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In each episode, we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material and offering practical classroom exercises. Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges, so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery.

Okay, so how do we teach hard history? Throughout this series we suggest methods for doing just that, and in this episode, we're going to explore ways to create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning about slavery. Steven Thurston Oliver is a professor of education who trains teachers how to teach sensitive topics. He's going to share with us some of the practical classroom strategies that he has developed over the years. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy.

Steven Thurston: I teach at Salem State University in the department of secondary and higher education, specifically within our teacher preparation program, so, working with students that aspire to be teachers. And I'm often asked, even by people who are currently working as teachers in middle school and high school, how they should go about bringing up a subject like slavery with their students, in particular if it's a multicultural classroom. I find that many teachers feel ill-equipped to handle these discussions and, unfortunately, engage in what can only be

described as an act of avoidance: doing everything possible to talk around the issue, not wanting to bring up the fact that this happened. This discomfort that so many feel in being forthright and honest about the ways in which the United States has in times fallen short of its ideals, I find, is rooted in fear, and I find that the only way to deal with this is to address these issues head-on.

Teachers are so fearful about bringing up these issues in this current era that could be described as having a heightened sensitivity around issues of race, and so many teachers have witnessed where one mistake can end a career, so they're wise to be cautious. But the unintended consequence here is that teachers are so immobilized by this fear that they end up not addressing these issues at all for fear that they'll create extreme discomfort for themselves and for their students.

Again, in classrooms where you have students who are coming from diverse backgrounds, and if the teacher happens to be white, the fear that they're going to stir up racial and ethnic tensions and perhaps even give students new language to use against each other. And many teachers, in particular white teachers, can be fearful of making mistakes that could somehow implicate them as being racist, or at the very least, unprepared to facilitate difficult dialogues.

So again, the only way to deal with fear is to address it head-on. One of my mentors, or at least I wish he had been an actual mentor of mine, someone whose work I draw on a lot, James Baldwin, always used to say that the only way to get through life is to understand all of the worst things about it, and that has always stayed with me.

Another story that I sometimes share with students is a story of a Buddhist monk, and if you can imagine a Buddhist monk sitting still, meditating, very peaceful and serene, and he happens to look up and he sees that there's a wild animal just charging directly at him, and then I'll ask students, what do you think the Buddhist monk did when he looked up and saw this wild, ferocious animal charging at him? Invariably, they'll laugh and say, "Well, he probably got up and ran away," or yelled for help, or figured this was the end, and they're always surprised when I say, "No, what the Buddhist monk did, in fact, was he got up and ran directly at this animal that was charging at him." And then I'll ask students "What do you think the animal did?" and in turn they're surprised when I say, "Well, the animal actually cowered away in fear." And this becomes an analogy I find very useful, that oftentimes at things that we're afraid of, when we face them head-on, when we run directly at those things and we're intentional about grappling with them, those things tend to fade and aren't as ferocious as they initially appeared.

So for us as educators, the essential goal here is to cultivate in our students, and in fact ourselves, the ability to stay in the conversation and to avoid the temptation to water down, to avoid, or to just run away altogether. This is critically important because the very discomfort that we're seeking to avoid, and perhaps shield our students from, can in fact be a powerful catalyst for growth and transformation. So, increasing the capacity to stay in the conversation is so important.

I also have found that it's important to invite students to be part of imagining a better reality and that this is a real gift that educators can offer. We have to tell our students the truth. We're not doing our students any favors by not addressing things that have occurred. And after we tell students the truth, we have to create a safe space for students to process the truth, and lastly, we have to provide clear examples of how they can become part of history by making things better for everyone.

The reality is that students are already contemplating these issues. They've already thought about issues of race. If you're a fan of hip-hop, you know that it's in almost every song that's out there. The students have already heard all of the racial slurs and insults, but what I find is that students often don't have a good understanding of where those slurs have come from or why particular words are so loaded. So I spend some time unpacking with them, "What is the history of these words? What is the history of the 'N' word?" Get into conversations and dialogue with them about, "Well, should we just ban this word altogether? Maybe make it so that nobody is able to use it in society." It's really interesting to hear how students relate to that set of questions, and it really has always shown me that we don't give students enough credit for things that they're grappling with and thinking about. So, we don't have to be fearful of introducing students to a lot of these topics, but I would argue that school needs to be a place that allows students to make sense of what they're hearing, and that that's our responsibility as educators.

Some strategies that I found are really helpful for teachers who are grappling with how to address these issues or engaging in the process that I'm describing of sitting with the discomfort, staying in a conversation, not avoiding these sets of issues—that it's very helpful to form learning communities with other educators who are also doing the same work. It's often helpful to share strategies and stories about what did and didn't work in classrooms with people who are like-minded. I find that that's really powerful.

Team-teaching also is critically important for these kinds of dialogues. It's often very helpful to have an extra set of eyes on these issues, and in particular, where it's a class that has students

from various backgrounds. If possible, if you are able to team-teach with somebody who holds a different racial and ethnic identity than the one that you hold, then that's really powerful for students and gives them places of safety to be able to put their ideas out into the space.

One thing that I found very helpful also, particularly when teaching about slavery, is to use slave narratives. With students, I love to use the actual audio recordings, and now there's such a rich body of interviews that were done in the 30's and 40's with individuals who were still living at that time who had actually been slaves. And now with the technology, they've been able to clean up those recordings so they sound crystal-clear, as if you're listening to someone ... This could've just been recorded yesterday, and they may sound like people that you know. I think it's so powerful for students to actually sit and hear the voices of people that were enslaved.

And I'm being intentional about using a word like "enslaved" versus "slaves," because I think that students have heard enough of this that there's almost a disconnect. They don't connect with the fact that these were people. They imagine this is something that happened a long, long time ago, and when you hear these slave narratives, really brings home the human cost of slavery. This was not the totality of who they were. These were human beings with thoughts and feelings and intellect.

One of the narratives I use frequently is an interview done with a gentleman by the name of Fountain Hughes, and he just very matter-of-factly is telling his story, his memory, of having been a slave, of being a young boy, having been enslaved, and says, you know, "Yeah, we were sold. Bought and sold the way you might sell cows or horses," and really details what a difficult struggle it was being a slave. In his narration, he says, "We didn't know anything because we were never allowed to look at a book." That is so powerful and really brings home for students the fact that these were human beings, that if those who were enslaved were ignorant, that was not something innate to them, or a product of biology, that this was something that was done to them by withholding the opportunity to become educated. The impact of withholding an education from individuals.

He also talks about what happened when slavery ended and the ways in which people really had nowhere to go, were just sort of put out like wild cattle, he says, and even that some people, after slavery ended, commented that they actually had it better before, when they were enslaved. There's this really powerful moment where the interviewer asks him, at one point he's asked, "Which was better? Being a slave or being free?", and he says, "No, no, if I even thought for a moment that there was any possibility that I would ever be a slave again, I would just go out and

get a gun and end it right away, because you're nothing but a dog," he says, "Nothing but a dog." The moral authority of someone like a Fountain Hughes just hangs in the room and is such a powerful catalyst for transformation with the students that I work with.

Another powerful tool that I often use, again back to the work of James Baldwin, I often use this, readily available on YouTube, famous debate that James Baldwin did with William Buckley in the UK in the mid-1960's. He does a wonderful job of laying out the case of when people talk about the original sin of the United States. He talks about … And a lot of students, they've never heard of James Baldwin before, he's a very dynamic character, very animated in his delivery, coming out of that rhetorical tradition of the black church, and at one point he sort of lays it out there that, quite literally he says, "I picked the cotton and I carried it to market under somebody else's whip for nothing. For nothing." And then lays out the case that the United States could not have become as wealthy as it did in the period of time that it did had it not had access to all of this labor. That's something else that I think that students don't really think about in terms of the historical and cultural continuum that we find ourselves in.

So in addition to these strategies or examples that teachers might use, it's really important that we create spaces for students to make sense of everything that we're telling them, because if we don't do that, if we don't make space for students to make sense of what they're hearing, then we find that students will just become defensive and they'll shut down. We have to be clear in saying the reason to have these conversations, the reason to sit with the realities of what happened, is that we can be certain as a society that these things never happen again. And so that we as educators, again, can think about how we can position ourselves to be part of continuing to make the society better.

I find that one way that helps me to create safe space as an educator, and in particular for myself … I'm an African-American man. The majority of the students that I work with, especially those who are wanting to be teachers, are white students, mostly young women, and I'm aware of the fact that I may be the first black professor they've ever had. We kind of come into this scenario with them at times, having to make sense of who I am, and I've always used something that people refer to as "Teacher as Text," sharing my own stories. I often lay out for them examples to illustrate, from a generational sense, how close we still are to the legacy of slavery.

So, for example, I'll lay out the year that I was born, 1968, followed by the year my father was born, 1931. His father, my grandfather, 1905, and his father right as slavery was ending in the U.S. It's interesting, I find … I'll ask students, "When do you think slavery ended in the United

States?", and I'll get a wide range of answers, everything from the 1700's to the 1930's. So again, it's very important to fill in the gaps in students' knowledge in terms of where we are in that historical and cultural continuum. But in sharing those stories I'm able to illustrate the ways in which, even though we're living in 2017, that we're really talking about the span of three or four human lifetimes, so it becomes easier for them to make sense of how these issues, how we're still living with the imprint and legacy of these issues in the present time.

Back to this idea of why it's important to create space. We have to deal head-on, we're talking about dealing with fear head-on. We also have to deal with this issue of guilt, and I find that this is particularly a struggle for white students. I can remember teaching my course, "Culturally Responsive Teaching," having a student at the end of the class saying how much they enjoyed it and that, at first, they were fearful that the course was going to be the "White people are bad" course, and we had a good laugh about that. But there's a lot of truth that was kind of in that joke, so I deal with the issue of guilt head-on, because I understand that it's a real thing that students are grappling with. And I find that one thing that's helpful, particularly for white students, is to lay out for them this idea that we didn't do this. All of us sitting in a particular classroom, we didn't do this, we've inherited this mess that we find ourselves in: racism, sexism, homophobia in all the institutional forms. Institutionalized forms of all those "isms." We've all been born into this sort of catastrophe, so I don't want students to expend a lot of energy feeling guilty for societal dynamics that they didn't have a direct hand in creating.

But what follows that very quickly is this notion that all of us, although we didn't create these dynamics, we now have a responsibility and an opportunity to consider the ways in which we might be upholding some of these systems of oppression, how we might be benefiting from some of these dynamics, and most importantly, how we can be part of undoing these systems of oppression. I think that laying it out that way helps students wrap their minds around it.

I also don't present it as something that white people need to do only. So, for myself as a person of color, again back to the idea of "Teacher as Text," I'm often saying to students that I am a person of color, but I have my own biases and assumptions that I continually need to interrogate and make sense of. I have my own sets of work to do. So, it becomes a dynamic of saying "I'm going to do my work, you're going to do your work, and let's be in conversation with each other about how this work is going." I find that not prioritizing whiteness in this way opens up a dynamic to say that we're all in this together.

As I was mentioning earlier, there's a huge fear that people have now that they're going to say something or do something that will cause someone to say that they're racist, and again, being immobilized by that fear such that we don't do anything at all. I am often laying out this idea that I have found very helpful, which is to say that human beings are porous, meaning that we absorb all these messages from the larger society. So human beings are porous, so whatever things we find in society, if there's racism in society we're going to find racism in our institutions. If there's sexism in the society we're going to find those things in our institutions, and we can go down the line. But specifically around issues of racism, if there's racism in the society, we're going to find those things within our institutions (so, schools), and if we're really doing the work of being introspective and interrogating our own stances and biases, if these things exist in the society, we're going to find those things within ourselves.

So, for me it becomes less an issue of pointing out all the ways in which an individual may or may not be racist—for me that's not the issue—the issue is *when* we find racism within ourselves, what do we do with that? For most of us, to get those things out of ourselves requires a fair amount of scrubbing, and I would argue that having these dialogues and addressing these fears head-on and these challenging topics is part of that kind of scrubbing process to get these negative messages out of ourselves.

I think it's important that, again, that we invite students and we encourage them to become part of making the society better, and we have to give them examples of individuals that have done that throughout time. So when teaching about slavery, it's often important to talk about abolitionist movements and point out the fact that there have always been people of all races in the country who have been against the institution of slavery and have worked very hard to end it, telling the history. I'm currently living in Massachusetts, and there are many examples of places that were stops on the Underground Railroad, and those are important for students to hear so that they can think about the ways in which people have been part of making society better and how they might continue in this legacy doing something similar.

Many educators miss out on that critical point, because if we don't give students examples of how they can be part of changing the society, and if all we do is lay on them this heavy story of everything that's happened in the U.S., then they're just going to shut down or they might become defensive. I have found in doing this work that if you introduce all these ideas to a student that hasn't ever thought about these things before, and if you're going to shatter their perceptions in that way, sometimes the reaction that you get is actually anger. Again, if there's

nowhere for this energy to go, sometimes that can be the unintended consequence.

One of the examples that I always use, or using as an analogy, is this children's story of Humpty Dumpty, which now that I'm an adult I realize is a horrible story that we tell to children. So Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall, someone pushes Humpty Dumpty off the wall, I suppose, and he shatters into a million pieces. And oftentimes when we're having students confront these difficult topics, we're taking their worldviews, their perceptions, and we're shattering them into these million pieces. But we can't stop there. We have to be willing to get down on the ground with them and help them put all of these pieces back together and to build something new, to be able to see a way forward. If we're not going to be willing to do the work of getting down on the ground with students and helping them do this, then in some ways it might be better not to go there at all.

One thing that's been interesting me of late is this broader field of contemplative pedagogy, anything that requires students to be introspective, to think deeply, to sit with their thoughts and emotions, I find is very useful when working with students around a topic as challenging as slavery. Anything that takes students in that direction I find is very helpful, and in particular contemplative writing. So earlier when I was talking about using Baldwin, either James Baldwin's writings or some of the things that are available on YouTube, I find it's very helpful to have students just look at a short video clip and then be able to write about their thoughts, their reactions to what they've just heard. I'm often saying to students, "Don't overthink it. I just want you to get words out on the page," and in doing this, I find that even the students who are very reluctant to talk in class, when I provide these opportunities for students just to get their thoughts out there, we find that even the most quiet students, in fact, have oceans within them. And then once they've had a chance to do some contemplative writing, then I can have them in small groups and talk with each other about what they've written and to notice the similarities and differences that exist in different points of view.

This also lets me as a teacher get to know where students are at, where there might be some misunderstandings, and lets me know where I might have some more work to do. I'm always saying to students that the classroom has to be a place where we can make mistakes, that I would rather have students make mistakes in the context of our classroom than to have them go out in their career and make a mistake or say something that may be inappropriate or not appreciated.

I guess maybe a final thing I would say is important for educators is to be really clear about your

intention as to why you're having students look at a topic like slavery, something that will undoubtedly evoke so many charged emotions for all students, regardless of their backgrounds. So, if you're going to take students there, and if you're going to evoke all these feelings and all this discomfort, which I've argued is necessary for growth, if you're going to do that, you have to be really clear and intentional about why. What's the reason for doing this? To be able to say we're spending time thinking about this, and history is important so that we can be sure that these things never happen again.

This is a particularly important question I get asked a lot, particularly by white teachers that are working with students of color, really important, this clarity of intention. I can remember very clearly being in the third or fourth grade and being very, very uncomfortable when topics of slavery came up and watching teachers of mine read through some of the historical texts or literature, thinking about things like Huck Finn, things that were riddled with all of these racial slurs, and reading them with energy. I can remember sitting there and wondering, well, what is this person doing? Are they talking about how bad this was? Are they talking about it as like, these were the 'good ole days'? I remember having conversations with other students, other black students in particular, and we knew the professors for whom we were like, "I think they may be enjoying that particular chapter a bit too much." I know it sounds bad to put it in those terms, but I'm saying that to hopefully be clear that students are sitting with the question of "Who are you? What does this topic mean to you? Why are you introducing this?" And that's why I want teachers right out of the bat to be very clear about their intention in bringing this up and where they stand. It'll go a long way towards engendering trust and creating a classroom environment where the relationships are strong enough to be able to hold such a challenging conversation.

Unfortunately, I can't give you ten easy steps for working effectively with students from diverse backgrounds. I can't give you a toolkit of things you can use in your classroom tomorrow. I wish we could get rid of the word "toolkit" altogether from our vocabulary as educators—that the only way to work effectively with students from diverse backgrounds, from multicultural backgrounds, is to become more multicultural yourselves.

I'm reminded of, years ago, going out to give a presentation at a school district that was struggling with issues of disproportionality and being asked a question by an audience member, who happened to be a white woman, and she was interested in knowing more about African-American culture and wanted to know how she could learn more about it. So, I started

listings for her, books and things that she could read
that would help fill in the gaps in her knowledge, and I tapped into the reaction that comes up from time to time, which was anger. She said, "You mean if I want to learn more about this, I have to go out and read a," just fill in the expletive, "book?" I've become, over the years, kind of used to the idea that what seemed to me to be straightforward ideas might evoke this kind of reaction, but to say, yes, when it comes to this you have to do the work, which means yes, you have to read and you have to read more, and this idea that none of us will ever arrive. There's always going to be something more, something more nuanced to understand.

So, what I'm really gearing for with educators is not this idea of becoming culturally competent, which suggests a final point, but simply to remain open and willing to engage across differences and to lean into things rather than back away from them. I think it's really powerful and really important.

One analogy that I often give that I think helps teachers when thinking about this notion of a learning curve, or the learning curve that all of us as individuals might be on, is something that I gleaned from something that actors do when they have to play a part that's very different than who they actually are as individuals, and it's almost an act of trying to put yourself in somebody else's shoes or situations. So for myself, I might say, for example, that I am not a woman. But if I were a woman, these would be the sets of issues I would be concerned about, these would be the things that would rise to the surface as being most salient and most important. And when I find gaps in my knowledge, then I commit myself to doing my own work to fill in those gaps. For a lot of us, we may need to say, you know what, I am not African American, but if I were … let's sit with that … If I were, well, these would be the issues and concerns, these would be the things that would be most salient. And when I find the gaps in my knowledge, I do the work to fill in those gaps.

What I find, unfortunately, is that a lot of people, they can acknowledge that there are gaps in their knowledge, but they're not willing to do the work to fill in those gaps. There aren't enough periods of professional development in the world that teachers could experience to do this work. We have to engage in it and to see it as sort of a lifelong press and a lifelong journey. I think that if we can do that and if we can position ourselves with our students to say, "Look, I'm on this journey, I am still in the process of learning," there are times … At the end of every class I'll say to students, "If there are things that you enjoyed about this class, I'm glad. And if I did anything wrong, I hope you will forgive me," and that just goes a long way and helps them see that if we're

still on a journey and we're still learning, we still make mistakes, it opens up space for them to make space and begin their journeys as well. Again, it's this idea of, if we're going to grapple with an issue as charged as slavery, then we have to create the environment and the relationships that are strong enough to hold that topic. So, I just want to encourage everybody, we can do this.

So I think all these ideas about increasing one's capacity to stay in the conversation, to grapple with these hard truths, or as I've heard others describe, what it means to be able to sit down in the middle of the whole catastrophe and understand that we're all sort of in this together.

I think it's important in doing this work that, as educators, that we're gentle with ourselves and with others. Again, this idea that we never arrive, there's always something more to learn that we're going to make mistakes, that if we do make a mistake, if someone is offended somehow or put off by something that we say, that we apologize, that we learn from that and that we don't make that mistake again. I really want to encourage us, as educators, to be okay with the messiness of it. I think that if we can do that and model that willingness to engage, and in some cases, even that vulnerability with our students, then we make it okay for them to do that, too. If we think of it in terms of, this is a situation that we've inherited, that we've been born into, but now we've got this amazing opportunity to make things better and that it's going to require all of us, with all of our perspectives and all of our unique offerings and gifts, to make a change—that if we can do that, then I think it pulls students in in ways that don't happen otherwise. So, I want to encourage everybody to lean into it, tell students the truth, create those safe spaces.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Steven Thurston Oliver is an associate professor of secondary and higher education at Salem State University. His research explores how issues of race, class, gender and sexual orientation impact access to educational opportunity and life outcomes.

Teaching Hard History is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a valuable collection of essays called *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. In each episode, we're featuring a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection. We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials available at Tolerance.org. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of America slavery. Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can find those resources online at Tolerance.org.

Thanks to Dr. Oliver for sharing his insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shea Shackelford with production assistance from Tori Marlin and Gregory Dann at Rockpile Studios. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series.

If you like what we're going, please share it with your friends and colleagues, and consider taking a minute to review and rate us on iTunes. We appreciate the feedback, and it helps us get more visibility among potential listeners.

I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, associate professor of history at the Ohio State University and your host. You've been listening to *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- National Civil Rights Museum, Education and Interpretation
- Museum of the African Diaspora, Fountain Hughes
- YouTube, James Baldwin Debates William F. Buckley (1965)
- Teaching Tolerance, Straight Talk about the "N" Word

Episode 5: In the Footsteps of Others: Process Drama

Students learning about slavery often ask, "Why didn't enslaved people just run away or revolt?" Lindsay Anne Randall offers a lesson in "Process Drama"—a method teachers can use to answer this question, build empathy and offer perspective.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, Framework for Teaching American Slavery
- Teaching Tolerance, A Different Kind of Pedagogy

Lindsay Randall

- Curator of Education and Outreach, Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology
- LinkedIn

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Thank you for allowing me into your home. First, I'd like to ask you a couple of biographical questions. Where were you born?

Janie Graves: I was born in Pennsylvania County, Virginia on October 22, 1948.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Janie Graves began teaching Social Studies at Durham High School in 1975, just as desegregation swept across the South, flipping the school from white to black. For the next 20 years she taught government, American history, and street law, a favorite of hers. A keen observer, she knew her students' strengths and weaknesses.

Janie Graves: To get a verb/noun connection, you must know grammar, otherwise you are not going to write well. You're not going to speak well.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: She also knew the fraught racial politics of the school board.

Janie Graves: There's clearly something wrong with the system, when you have legislators dictating, people and the educators that are dictating what should be taught, and how it should be taught.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Which is why she opposed this decision to turn Durham High into a magnet school. That move was meant to flip the school again, this time from black back to white. Her vocal opposition to this controversial plan led me to interview her for my oral history

project. My name's Hasan Kwame Jeffries. I'm interviewing Miss Graves at her home on March 12, 1995.

I was in my first year of graduate school at Duke University, but I was taking oral history with Jacqueline Hall at UNC Chapel Hill, one of the perks of going to school on Tobacco Road, that and ACC hoops, of course. The interview was a part of a group assignment. My group, like the others, interviewed local women in an effort to redefine grassroots leadership.

When I interviewed Miss Graves, she did not disappoint. She spoke with candor about the school board's plans, and with passion about the obstacles black students faced. When she shared her fears about the uncertainty about their future, she welled up. I remember her saying, "Graduation, to me, is a crying day. We've done so much to get them prepared, to walk, but to walk where?"

My group met once or twice to hash out our presentation, settling on something simple. We'd each identify who we interviewed and explain why. It was a truly unimaginative approach to history. The other groups clearly put more thought into the assignment.

As I listened to their presentations, I gained a clear understanding of what their interviewees had accomplished, but I did not get a good sense of who these women actually were as people, and how they actually felt about the world around them.

When it was our turn, my fellow group members read the bland, and frankly boring, biographical sketches that we had crafted. It was worse than I thought. More than any other group, we had managed to turn dynamic, thoughtful, radical women into a list of dates and organizational affiliations. At that moment, I realized we were doing these women a terrible disservice. I also realized that our grade was falling fast.

I was desperate. I scrapped my biological sketch of Miss Graves and hastily arranged a dozen or so index cards with quotes from her interview into what I hoped would be a coherent first-person narrative of her opinions and feelings. I didn't stop there. I decided to actually perform the interview.

When my turn came, I stood up, slowly turned around, and without saying a word, began walking about the room, fidgeting with things here and there, just as Miss Graves had done at the start of our interview. When I finally spoke, I used only her words. Staring off into the distance, just as she did when she formulated her thoughts, and catching someone's eye, as she

caught mine when she wanted to drive home a point. I ended the monologue with the last thing she had said in the interview. A heart-rending commentary on the likely fate of her students.

When I finished, there was a long silence. So, I took my seat, unsure of exactly what I had just done, but when I glanced over at Professor Hall, she smiled and nodded approvingly. I knew right then: mission accomplished. I had salvaged our grade. But I had also accomplished something quite unexpected. While performing the interview, more than Miss Graves' words leapt from my lips. Her passion and her pain did as well.

I remember that moment because I remember being Miss Graves. I also remembered sharing the very last thing Miss Graves said in her interview. For me, graduation from high school is a very sad time because I know it's going to be life …

Janie Graves: For me, graduation for high school students is a very sad time because I know it's going to be life for them. It's almost, it's saying, "Life in prison." The prison, though, is the world. Either they make it, or they die, but oft times, they die.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Oft times they die.

Janie Graves: Oft times they die.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Oft times they die. I thought I had understood the things she had said to me during our interview, but it wasn't until that very moment when I had to think deeply about what her words meant to her, that I truly understood their meaning.

I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. It's a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides an in-depth look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American Slavery.

In each episode, we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material, and offering practical classroom exercises. Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges, so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery. Historical subjects can often seem distant and two-dimensional. It can be a challenge to convey what was at stake for people living through a particular experience.

In this episode, Lindsay Randall explains a technique called "process drama." It is a way to help your students build empathy, and better understand the risks and complexities that enslaved

individuals actually faced. She'll walk us through how to create a successful lesson plan, highlighting things that work and noting a few things to avoid. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy.

Lindsay Randall: Whenever I talk about process drama and how I use it in the classroom, one of the first questions I get is, "What is that?" And when I explain that it is a teaching technique where students are presented with a problem or a situation and interact with each other using improv to move to a conclusion, I am often met with skepticism.

Most educators that I talk to have never encountered this particular teaching method. They might be familiar with other interactive lessons, but not this. They are very weary of it, especially those who teach at the high school or college level. This is because the word "drama" has certain connotations.

When people hear the word "drama," they envision stage performances, costume roles, sound and lighting, and that couldn't be farther from what a process drama lesson really is. Lessons that utilize process drama aren't about creating performances. They aren't engaging with an audience. Shockingly, for the history classroom, they aren't even trying to depict 100% factual scenarios.

Instead, they are explorative. They allow students to use prior knowledge in conjunction with their own life experiences to make meaning of the past. The process is the purpose. The process helps to connect students to the material that is being covered. It encourages students to become more engaged and invested in the classroom.

Having students wanting to learn, without even realizing it—that hits every teacher's sweet spot! Process drama is so much more than a flashy activity that can hook students. In today's world, as educators, we're required to have multiple layers in our lessons. It can't just cover only a topic. It needs to reinforce important skills or other benchmarks and standards.

Process Drama is amazing at ticking a lot of these boxes for history teachers. Logical and critical thinking, check. Understanding cause and effect, check—making this teaching method perfect for the history classroom. It demonstrates that history is more than just the memorization of dates and other facts. It creates a unique framework that can cast the student in the role of the historian.

During the process drama activity, students are allowed to focus only on the facts that they deem most important. This mimics the process of identifying and analyzing points while writing a

research paper. Throughout the activity, the students are debating and arguing with one another. This is similar to working through conflicting historical sources.

At the end of the lesson, students reflect back on not only their experience, but that of their peers. This last crucial step is like synthesizing a pile of muddled information into a coherent narrative. But more important than all of that, process drama allows me, as the teacher, to answer the most universal questions in history education. Ones I know we all get. "Why couldn't they have done _____," or "Why didn't they do _____?" In relation to the topic of slavery, one of the questions I get the most is, "Why didn't slaves just run away or revolt?" Understanding why individuals in the past made the decisions that they did is one of the most difficult concepts for students at all grade levels to grapple with.

In the example process drama lesson that I will be discussing with you today, students are presented with a scenario of enslaved people living on a plantation in Virginia in the lead up to the American Revolution, facing a choice of whether to run away to fight for the British, or to stay.

To the students, this might seem like a no-brainer. If a slave ran away to the British, and the British win the war, then they gained their freedom. Why wouldn't someone choose to do that? Any chance for freedom would be worth it. However, as historians and teachers, we know that such a choice is not nearly as simple as it is in the minds of our students. Process drama can help students begin to understand the experience of historical individuals.

I want to pause here and say, process drama, by no means, can or wants to give students an authentic experience related to any topic such as slavery, nor does it seek to minimize the horrific nature and conditions of slavery. No lesson can or should ever do either of those things. What it does do is force students to look at the facts and situations, to consider the perspectives and motivations of people in the past separate from their own beliefs. It is a tool which fosters empathy in students. Given that this is a very different lesson than most people are familiar with, I'm going to spend some time talking with you about how you might create a process drama lesson.

First, you have to select the topic and focus. This is one of the most important steps in the whole process, because everyone has heard news reports about lessons that sound similar to what I am proposing you do, but went horribly, horribly wrong.

We've all read about lessons where students were asked to pretend they are members of the KKK and to justify the treatment of black people, or ones in which students are asked to debate the ending of slavery with pros and cons as members of the legislature on the eve of the Civil War.

It is understandable that you don't want to be that teacher. You don't want to be the teacher that creates a lesson that harms your students, or their families, or your community. The idea of making a process drama lesson might scare you, particularly one that is related to the history of slavery, or any other sensitive topic. This is because in doing so, you are going to be asking your students to debate, discuss, and argue not as themselves, but as a historical individual. Because of that unease, it is easier to just do a lesson with an impersonal worksheet or an impersonal reading of a primary source—any other type of lesson that doesn't put you and your students out there.

I get it. I really do. But the way to fix the issue isn't to simply ignore this type of meaningful teaching, but to identify the problems with those particular lessons, and learn how to avoid them. Engaging as historical characters isn't the problem. Which characters they were asked to engage with is.

A common thread in every example you see in the news is that the teacher was asking students to create historical empathy and emotional understanding for groups for which it is simply not appropriate to do so. Yes, we need to understand the motivations of the KKK, or the mentality of southern senators in the 1800's, but we shouldn't empathize with them. We don't need to validate their views, and we should never

ask our students to do so either.

When picking a topic, you should ask yourself why you want your students to empathize with those whose history they will be intimately engaging with. Why do you want there to be an emotional investment? What is gained from this type of instruction?

It is also important to communicate your motivation to students. It could take the form of posted learning objectives or essential questions, something so that they understand the goal and motivation of the activity.

For the lesson about the lives of enslaved people during the American Revolution, it was essential for me to have students see past the text in history books to realize that real people were affected in real ways, that this history mattered to real people and still matters today. It helps give a voice to underrepresented historical people in the minds of our students.

Far too often, history books, text books, and even classroom instruction deal with slaves as passive people in history, to which things just happen to. This is damaging to not only our students as historians, but also as citizens of our communities. This history continues to affect us today, and our students need to understand the intergenerational trauma that has been created from it.

This activity also highlights that those that are enslaved, despite the horrific and controlling conditions that they were forced to live under, had personal thoughts, convictions and motivations. While we may never fully know everything about these people, we can see in the records a material culture that they left behind one undeniable truth. They had agency. Limited as their agency might be, it is an important aspect of understanding the history of slavery that our students must know about.

Now, another key to doing this type of lesson well is that you need to know the information related to the topic like the back of your hand. This cannot be a phone-in lesson that you briefly researched via Google for five minutes the night before. There is serious prep work involved, but don't let that scare you either.

It is totally worth it. Once you have built the lesson and supporting materials, it can be used again and again and again. For example, the lesson that I am talking about today is one based on intensive research I conducted for a college course. Well, one of my other process drama lessons is based off my Master's thesis about the relationship between Puritans and Native Americans.

You need to find a subject that you are comfortable taking a deep dive into what has been written about it. This is not to say, however, that you need to take a course or get an advanced degree on a subject in order to have the proficiency required to create this type of lesson. One way that you can gather more in-depth knowledge is to search the internet for a college syllabus related to your topic.

Typically, professors include seminal works or ones that focus on new research in their required readings. They also frequently post guiding questions for each reading. Selecting one or two of these books and using the related questions can help you to make the most of your research.

No matter how you decide to go about it, a good foundational knowledge about the subject will also help you be more confident that the subject is appropriate for a process drama. If you ever feel uncomfortable or unprepared to talk about sensitive topics such as race, this will also help you.

Learning about a topic in-depth will give you the power to see connections between historical events and contemporary issues, giving you the confidence to engage with your students in these discussions. I know that these conversations can be scary to have. As a white woman who frequently teaches students of color about their own history, I get that it can be nerve-racking.

You don't want to mess up something so weighty, so important. While my own racial and gender identity does mean that I will never have the full understanding of everything my students go through, being at least academically prepared about the depth and breadth of their history allows me to better connect with them. It allows me to show them that their history matters, and if their history matters, then that shows that their voices matter.

The next step to creating a Process Drama lesson is to identify the knowledge and skills you want your students to gain from the activity, looking to your own curriculum standards for guidance. Since I'm from Massachusetts, I've used our history and social science curriculum frameworks.

One of the objectives for US-1 is, "Students will be able to analyze how Americans resisted British policies before 1775, and analyze the reasons for the American victory and the British defeat during the Revolutionary War." I use that knowledge objective as a starting point, but instead of focusing on how white Americans resisted British policies, I twisted it a little to focus instead on how others living in the colonies felt about both British and American policies.

Standards tend to have a very white, Eurocentric topical focus, and we sometimes have to be creative so that we can better reflect the diverse history of our country in our classrooms. It is valuable to show our students that the history of events, such as the Revolutionary War, which we treat as being something to celebrate, was in fact more complicated than what we often consider. It was not celebrated by everyone

involved. American victory meant dire consequences for some people. This is the complicated history we owe our students.

To further student understanding, you should also identify skills that the lesson will allow students to engage with. Again, using my state's curriculum standards, one of the skill objectives that I have identified is "Students will be able to understand bias and points of view and how causation relates to continuity and change by being able to: show connections, casual and otherwise, between particular historical events and ideas and large social economic and political trends and development; distinguish between long-term and short-term cause and effect

relationships; explain how a cause and effect relationship is different from a sequence or a correlation of events."

Now I'm going to walk you through a brief list of the parts of the process drama activity that I've created, and then I'll discuss each part in more detail. The components of the lesson are: the scenario, character biographies, student-directed activity, revealing of outcomes, and discussion. Let's break each of those down for you.

First, you have to give the students context or set the stage. To do this, you might read a scenario to the class, which places them in a particular situation. It can be 100% factual, or it can be slightly fabricated. Whatever you think is best based on your research.

In this example, students are presented with a scenario where enslaved individuals must decide whether or not to run away to fight for the British during the American Revolution. Here's what I explained to the class.

The year is 1775, and you are a slave on a plantation in Virginia. Lord Dunmore, the British Royal Governor of the Colony of Virginia, has issued a proclamation. The proclamation states that "All indentured servants, Negros, or others appertaining to rebels, free, that are able and willing to bear arms, they joining His Majesty's troop as soon as may be."

This means that any slaves of American patriots who fight for the British will be given their freedom upon British victory in the conflict. You have heard stories about the British, especially their Ethiopian regiment, which is comprised of runaway slaves. They said that the slaves who join are given plenty of food, nice clothes, in addition to their freedom.

Many colonists, however, began controlling for runaway slaves, and those who are caught trying to make it to the British are severely punished, even hung. A group of youth come together in secret to discuss the choice that Lord Dunmore's proclamation has given you.

Then students receive a character card with information about an individual such as their name, age, and a small biography. If you have ever been to the National Holocaust Museum, it is very similar to what is done there. The information might tell a student that their character was a woman with a young infant child, or that they were an elderly man whose wife had recently died.

Each fact might help students determine what is best for their character to do in regards to Lord Dunmore's proclamation. For example: Name: Elizabeth. Age: 25. You were born on this plantation along with your sister, Celia, who still lives here, and is married to another slave,

Abraham. Everyone here calls you Bet. You have a three-year-old daughter named Abigail. Your husband was sold away from the plantation two years ago, and you have not seen him since. Your primary job on the plantation is to serve as a cook and laundress for your owner and his family.

Again, have fun with this, and make the information in the character cards varied. You might disclose that some characters are single, married, have children or are childless, have elderly parents, male, or female, among other possibilities. These different character traits and factors help to make the lesson more engaging. It allows for an infinite number of outcomes.

Let me pause here to mention a crucial thing to remember when creating character cards. Whenever doing a process drama, the characters should hold comparable roles or social status. There can be differences between positions or experiences characters have, but there should never be a true power imbalance between anyone, such as would exist between a master and a slave.

Again, there are individuals we don't want our students to empathize with. To produce a more complex and nuanced lesson, you might also choose to secretly incorporate a feature that can have unexpected consequences. This could take the form of a student receiving a background card that has a covert role.

Name: Caesar. Age: 40. Background: You were born in the Ashanti Empire where you were captured and brought to the West Indies. You labored in the sugar cane fields for a year before you were sold again to a ship's captain. While working on the sugar plantation, you saw many slaves die from sickness and disease. The captain brought you up to Virginia where you were sold at auction.

You have now lived here for 15 years. You have a wife, Josephine, who lives here at the plantation also. Here's where you could add directions for the student. Optional, personal decision: If you choose to inform your owner about the plans of another slave to run away to the British, you will not sell Josephine to another plantation nearby. There is no guarantee, however, that your owner will keep his word, since in the past he has repeatedly failed to fulfill promises he has made. Then you can end the card with a final set of directions such as: If you decided to inform on another student, you must wait for the directions from the teacher before informing the student of your choice. Do not let other students know that you are an informant.

This can foster discussion after the lesson about the ramifications of a single choice, why individuals may or may not have acted in the manner that they did. It is a great introduction to students about the idea that actions can be viewed through multiple lenses, and that many factors influence them. If a student decides to serve as an informant, is that selfish because they are taking away another character's chance at a better outcome? Or is it self-less, in that they were trying to protect Josephine?

While there are no correct answers to such questions, these are the issues we need our students to begin wrestling with. In doing so, our students can begin to see agency more clearly in examples that aren't as straightforward as they might be used to. But please be careful in handing such a card out. You don't want this activity to make any real tensions or bullying that might be taking place between students in real life worse.

You might also incorporate simple props such as sashes with a color—denotes a person's gender. These types of props help to make discussions and interactions smoother, especially if you have students making the decisions for a character of a different gender. Remember to be very judicious and use props sparingly. They're only meant to help highlight information, not create ambiance or to propagate any racist stereotypes.

During the activity, students meet as their characters and engage with each other to figure out what they would do in such a scenario. Would their character decide to run away or stay? To do this, students should be free to direct the movement of the classroom, such as moving about the room, staying in their seats, meeting in large or small groups, whatever they want.

Students also direct how they will interact with each other. There could be pacts made, arguments, cajoling, limited threats, and as long as it's within the confines of the activity, any and all of it is allowed. While students are engaging with the lesson, your involvement is key. This is not a lesson where only students are participating.

One way that you can interact with the students is by playing a devil's advocate role. This can encourage students to participate. They see that you are also fully committed to this activity, and it can force students to defend their positions. When I'm teaching this exercise, I move around the room while students are talking.

I listen to what they are saying and then whisper things to them. If they are thinking of having their person run away, I might say something like, "You're right, and if more people decide the same thing, you might have an even better chance. There aren't enough resources to catch

everyone. But, if you choose that and your character is caught, well, they would face a very harsh punishment. I wonder if it's worth it?"

If a student was considering remaining on the plantation to protect their family, "I totally understand where you are coming from. You want to protect your family, and this is certainly the safer option. Or is it? What if too many people choose to run away? Do you think that there might be consequences for those who stay behind?"

One of the most central roles that you are also responsible for during the lesson is redirecting students' comments or actions in a positive manner, before they become inappropriate. Since many students consider the classroom a safe place, they may push the boundaries of what is acceptable, whether it's related to the history and betrayal of slaves, Native Americans, or other minorities. This can be used as a very powerful, teachable moment for all students. This needs to be done in a sensitive manner, so as to not single a student out, or inhibit future participation. One of the most pervasive issues I have had is students who want to speak as they imagine their character might. This is always problematic.

One of the best ways to head that off is to lay ground rules in the beginning. One rule I always give them is to just talk like themselves. No accents, no different speech patterns, no different vocabulary. However, when I've had students still try to do this in class, I pause the activity and remind them that they are to talk normally with a brief explanation that how we think people of the past talked is often inaccurate and typically based on a harmful caricature or a stereotype.

Another ground rule I have is that you cannot verbally attack a fellow student, but that you can attack the decisions of a character. We talk about what that distinction means. In the heat of the moment, with self-preservation on the line, this is another area where students might engage in inappropriate actions. This usually is more related to real social issues between students and less with the activity. But it's just as important to deal with these. Knowing your students is key here, and by moving around the room, you can use your role as devil's advocate to redirect in a more positive manner. If a student just comes out and says something really bad or something you need to deal with, don't ignore it.

If a student's actions need to be addressed, it is important to remember that while you don't want to single a student out, you do need to deal with the issues in front of the entire class, whether during the activity or discussion. This is because while you might get through to the single student, the other students may not be aware that you have addressed anything.

Your actions, or perceived *lack* of actions, can inadvertently reinforce stereotypes or create the belief that your classroom is not a safe space. Never be silent. This advice goes not only for process drama lessons, but as just a good classroom policy in general. But if you do ever find yourself having to stop the class, know that class participation may be tentative after that. So again, use your role as the devil's advocate to get the activity moving.

At the end, you're going to ask your students to make a decision based on their beliefs and interactions during the activity as to whether their character would run away to the British or not. To visually show their decisions, one group might go to that side of the room, the rest to the other side of the room.

It is also here where you pause the class and reveal that one student had an optional personal decision, and ask the student to share what they have decided. Depending on the answer, a student may need to move to a different side of the room. Now, you hand out envelopes that reveal the outcomes for the characters based on their decisions. Either their character remains enslaved, is caught and shipped to the West Indies as punishment, or makes it to Lord Dunmore and the British.

If the character is successful in escaping to the British, there can be further ramifications once the British lose. The character can be sold back into slavery, or shipped off by the British to a small settlement in Nova Scotia. A more in-depth example of an outcome for a student who decided that their person would attempt to run away to the British might be: You successfully made it to the British Army. You serve in Colonel Tye's elite black brigade in New Jersey. Despite all your efforts, the British ultimately concede victory to the American colonists. For those who are near New York, the British create a list called the Book of Negros. You are able to convince a British official that you are a runaway slave and had fought for the British, and so your name was added to the list. The British brought you to Nova Scotia, where they promised to give you land and freedom. Although they did keep their promise, the land that you were given was rocky and could not support crops. You also face discrimination and physical threats from your white neighbors.

Or there might be a different outcome for a student who also chose to have their character run away to the British. Like the other outcome, they are still successful, but have a different consequence when the British lose the war. You successfully made it to the British Army. You serve in the British Army under General Cornwallis. You traveled with the Army and helped fight, as well as gather supplies as you march across Virginia. During your march through

Virginia, there was a breakout of smallpox, but you are lucky and do not succumb to the sickness. This meant that you were able to join Cornwallis and the rest of the Army at Yorktown. While under siege, even more soldiers, both white and black, died of smallpox. Since large numbers of the Army are sick, the American and French forces are able to successfully take Yorktown, effectively winning the war. When the American troops enter, they found you, took you, and sold you back into slavery.

There are a multitude of outcomes that can be created that are relatively historically accurate. In reality though, these options were more open to men than to women, which can also be used as a discussion point at the end about the impact of gender on opportunities. The variety of outcomes demonstrates to students that whether their character ran away or not, the outcomes were not often positive ones.

As I had mentioned before, we often think of periods in our nation's history, such as the American Revolution, as very positive events. However, this type of lesson can highlight the difficult realities that minorities, particularly enslaved people, faced during the founding of our nation. Not everyone celebrated American victory.

That leads me to the most critical part of the lesson, one that you cannot skimp on: the wrap-up. Such a discussion can allow students to articulate their thoughts and feelings related to the exercise. It can also demonstrate to you how their perceptions and empathy for historical events and people may have shifted, and can be used in future discussions as a way to make broader, historical connections.

More importantly, it allows students to process what they have learned. To deescalate emotions the students might be feeling, they should be directed to return to their seats. Often simply changing the setting in this manner serves to immediately bring students back to the present.

Then some of the questions you might ask are, "How did you feel during the activity? What were some choices that your character faced? Were they easy for you to make? Why or why not? How did the choices of others impact what happened to you? How did the uncertainty of your choices influence what you decided? How do you think your gender affected your choices?"

While you should give the discussion some direction, students should be free to not only share their

thoughts and feelings related to the exercise, but to also dictate the discussion topics. Your students' own lived experiences informed the choices they made for their character, and unpacking that is a critical component to any discussion.

Their experiences, and that of everyone living in the United States, have been shaped by this history of enslavement in our country. The discussion is where students can engage in a conversation about the important concept of race and racial stereotypes connecting between historical events and today in a safe and supportive environment.

That is really why using this technique to teach history is so valuable. Not only are students empathizing with those in the past, but they are able to begin to make concrete and meaningful connections as to how history impacts current issues. As we work as educators to prepare our students to be responsible citizens, it is vital that we highlight these connections to ensure that our students are prepared to confront, deal with, and change these damaging legacies.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Lindsay Randall is the Curator of Education and Outreach at the Robert S. Peabody Institute at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. She's been a museum educator for over a decade, using archeology and anthropology to teach students about issues of inequality in the United States.

Teaching Hard History is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a valuable collection of essays called *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. In each episode, we're featuring a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection.

We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials available at Tolerance.org. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units, and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of American slavery. Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can find those resources online at Tolerance.org.

Thanks to Dr. Oliver for sharing his insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shea Shackleford with production assistance from Tori Marlin and Gregory Dann at Rockpile Studios. The recording of my interview with Janie Graves is from the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Our theme song is “Kerr’s Negro Jig” by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. If you like what we’re doing, please share it with your friends and colleagues, and consider taking a minute to review and rate us in iTunes.

We appreciate the feedback, and it helps us get more visibility among potential listeners. I’m Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, Associate Professor of History at the Ohio State University and your host. You’ve been listening to *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- Kennedy Center, Process Drama
- Lindsay Anne Randall, Udder Destruction: The Role of the Dairy in the Creation of Conflicts between English Colonists and Native Americans in 17th Century New England
- Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum, The Origins of the American Revolution
- Teaching Tolerance, Proclamation of Earl of Dunmore (1775)
- BlackPast, Ashanti Empire/ Asante Kingdom (18th to Late 19th Century)
- PBS, Colonel Tye
- National Museum of American History, Yorktown: Triumph of the Alliance
- Teaching Tolerance: Student Task, In Their Shoes

Episode 6: Resistance Means More Than Rebellion

To see a more complete picture of the experience of enslaved people, you have to redefine resistance. Dr. Kenneth S. Greenberg offers teachers a lens to help students see the ways in which enslaved people fought back against the brutality of slavery.

Resources

- SPLC, Teaching the Hard History of American Slavery
- Teaching Hard History, A Framework for Teaching American Slavery

Kenneth Greenberg

- History, Suffolk University
- *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting and Gambling in the Old South*
- *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History and Memory*

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Soon after we launched this podcast, I received a direct message on Twitter from a middle school educator. The message began:

Izzy Anderson: "Good morning, Mr. Jeffries. I am a school librarian in the Arkansas Delta. In addition to being a librarian, I also teach a small gifted and talented literacy class, which is made up primarily of black sixth grade boys. My students do not get a full year of social studies at my school, so I'm modifying my curriculum to teach black history to my students this month, and probably for the rest of the year. I am starting with slavery, so I've been listening to your podcast for ideas."

"I am a white educator, and I'm concerned about teaching history in a way that is honest and true, but avoids traumatizing my young students. My students live in an area of the country that, in many ways, is still experiencing the reality of Jim Crow. I think it's really important for them to understand their own history, but I don't want to do an information dump on them without also caring for their hearts. I'd appreciate any suggestions you might have, Izzy Anderson."

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: I knew exactly where Ms. Anderson was coming from, both as an educator, and as an African American who had mostly white teachers in elementary and high

school. I appreciated her candor and concern, as well as her commitment to teach more than what was required. So I messaged her back, "Hi Izzy, thank you very much for your thoughtful note. I suggest beginning the conversation in the present by explaining to your kids that you have to look to the past to understand current times. That will help get them interested, and don't avoid talking about the harshness and brutality of slavery. No one who watches television is unaware of violence, but it needs to be explained that slavery was so brutal, because black people were constantly resisting in every way imaginable."

"Explain to them how central slavery was to American growth, and you can't emphasize enough that there is real pride to be found in this history, the pride of surviving a horribly unjust system, the pride of knowing their ancestors resisted, the pride of knowing that black people were right in their insistence that slavery was wrong, and the pride of knowing that the enslaved never gave up hope, they never surrendered their humanity. Be clear with them, too, about what was right and wrong, about who showed true strength and courage, and they'll get it."

It's not going to be easy, as they will have a range of reactions and emotions, but affirm those feelings. Tell them, 'Yes, this makes me mad too,' and always redirect them toward drawing inspiration from the enslaved who endured, who fought, who survived despite all odds. Good luck." Two days later I received another message from Ms. Anderson, an update on what had been going on in her class.

Izzy Anderson: "Thank you so much for such a long and thoughtful message. Since I've read it, I've been really leaning into letting students express their emotions as we read and learn."

"What I didn't expect is the amount of anger they are expressing. They're angry, wondering, 'Why haven't I learned this before?' and I think the anger is righteous. My job now is to help them express it constructively."

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: "And that's the thing," I wrote back, "Your students' reaction, their righteous anger, is consistent with the reaction of my students in college, both black and white. When they are exposed to the truth in a thoughtful and honest way, they get pissed off, but not at the truth teller, but rather at those who withheld the truth from them. Now you have to capitalize on that anger," I said. "Use it as motivation for them to learn more about what others aren't going to teach them. I promise, you will be the teacher who they will remember because you told them what others wouldn't. Peace, Hasan."

There is nothing more dispiriting to students than to think that the enslaved accepted their fate,

so teaching resistance is the key to getting students to want to learn about slavery. Hard history, you see, is not hopeless history, and there is no greater hope to be found in those dark days than in African Americans' resistance to slavery, and that's what we'll be exploring here. I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. It is a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

This podcast provides a detailed look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In each episode we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material, and offering practical classroom exercises. Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges, so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery.

Our understanding of resistance to slavery in the United States has changed over the years. In this episode, Kenneth Greenberg explains the evolution from looking exclusively at instances of rebellion, to examining the numerous ways that enslaved African-Americans incorporated resistance in every aspect of their lives. He also offers several examples that you can use to explore resistance with your students, and stay tuned at the end of the episode for advice from Ms. Anderson for teaching these topics and techniques for the first time. I'll see you on the other side, enjoy.

Kenneth Greenberg: When we talk about resistance to slavery, at first glance you might think this is a narrow topic, since slavery is such a big, big subject, but it turns out that you're actually touching on every aspect of slavery. It's the most probably revealing way of entering the subject. There is resistance during the entire time, from 1619 or so, when the first African-Americans are brought into Virginia, until slavery is officially legally ended in 1865. I think it's important to have in mind that there's a paradox at the heart of slavery.

Slavery is this horrific, exploitive, brutal institution on the one hand, and on the other hand, African American culture flourishes in the institution of slavery, survives the institution slavery, despite the brutality of slavery, and you want to teach both those things when you teach students about the institution of slavery. If you focus on resistance, you can teach both those things at the same time.

One side of slavery is it is an extremely brutal institution. Every student's going to know that slavery is an exploitive institution, but the details of that exploitation I think are always worth talking about. Even before we talk about resistance, you've gotta make sure that students

understand exactly the horrors of slavery.

First of all, there's the slave trade, involuntarily bringing over people from Africa into America. They're on these crowded ships, there's a very famous image, it's an image which comes from the way enslaved people are supposed to be stored on a ship. They're basically in coffin-size containers, and they sleep that way, and they don't move from those spots, and you traveled across the ocean in a spot like that. This is before modern sanitation is part of this, disease and death are part of this. These are terrible experiences, but what people don't realize, is the image which everybody's familiar with, and your students I'm sure in every textbook that you can find, they have this image, that image is the reformer's image. That's an image of how it'd be more humane to transport people across the ocean in these coffin-size spaces, not what actually happened.

People are vulnerable to rape, to death, on these passages. It's the worst horror you can possibly imagine. Then, of course, slavery is the context in which racism develops. People don't come with ideas about race until you actually see people degraded, and you see them as slaves, and that gets fully developed in the United States because of slavery. Another feature of slavery is that it's perpetual. Once you're in it, it's for your life, and then, if you have children, it's for the lives of your children, and they pass it on to their children. There's basically no way out of the institution.

Another feature of slavery, which, again, this is on the horror side of slavery, is there's no such thing as legal marriage in slavery. Because marriage is a claim that two people can make on each other, it often involves property claims, and masters don't want to concede that there's anybody who has a property claim on the human beings they own, other than the masters, and therefore they don't allow people to

be legally married. They can permit two people to live together and have a little ceremony, which they'll abide by until they don't want to abide by it, but there is no legal institution of marriage.

Throughout much of slavery it's a crime to teach someone how to read who was an enslaved person, because reading is seen as the way in which people can learn about the rest of the world, and get ideas, which might undermine slavery. An enslaved person can be whipped at any time for various transgressions, or other kinds of punishments like that. There's no crime of rape in slavery. If you're a woman and you're enslaved, and a white man sexually assaults you, you can't go to the police, you can't go to courts of any sort. That's not a crime.

In fact, this is one of the great ironies of slavery, because if you're a woman and you're owned by a master, no matter who rapes you, the only legal recourse would be if your master thought there was a violation, and your master could bring the person who raped you to court on a charge of trespass. It's trespassing, it's his property, and someone else has trespassed on his property. But, if a master rapes you, and this happens all the time, it's built into the institution, or anybody on the plantation who's white, that's not a crime. It's not a crime if blacks rape you as well, so women are extremely vulnerable in slavery.

You don't need a license to own anybody in slavery. There are crazy people, because there is no requirement, there are crazy people, there are sadists. A certain portion of the population are sadists who take pleasure in watching the pain of others, but even if you find some kind people who happen to be masters because you're born into it basically, that master can die, that master can go bankrupt. You have to live your whole life with the uncertainty of into whose hands you might fall.

If you move, if the farm you're on involves movement, this happens to whites, the big movement West is one of the great movements of American history. If you move—well, if you're a free person, you move with your family. If you're an enslaved person, unless your family happens to be on the plantation that also moves, and that is not as common as you might think, because usually families exist across plantations. When I say family, it's not the legal marriage we're talking about, but it is relationships of love which exist, and people have children and so forth. When your farm moves, you may be leaving behind large parts of the people you love.

So, that's the one side of slavery, which is the tremendous brutality of slavery, and you can go on and on describing this to students. On the other hand, there's another side of slavery, and this is the other part you have to keep in mind. What is that? Well, that is that within the institution of slavery, the people who were enslaved create a culture, which has become one of the most wonderful cultures on earth.

When you look around you, and you see the wonderful thing that African-Americans do in our society today, where does that all come from exactly? The culture that forges those wonderful institutions—the music, the religion, for example—all those things happen in the institution of slavery. Somehow in the midst of this exploitation, there is tremendous achievement that goes on at the same time. That's the essence of resistance. There's obviously the church, and this has always been a central part of African American life, extraordinary devotion to religion.

Some of the great African-American thinkers went through the church, Martin Luther King, or

Malcolm X, the church is the place where African-Americans thrive. The family, now you might say as I said before, that the horror of slavery is there's no legal marriage, but people fall in love. We know that they tried to do what they could to stay together. When slavery ended in 1865, one of the first things that people did who had once been enslaved was they searched for their relatives, they traveled, and they search for people who they loved.

This happened all over the South when slavery is over, and so one of the great stories of slavery is despite the fact that it's structured so that families are destroyed, in fact families are not destroyed, they thrive, and people try to stay together with their families. The distinct forms of African-American music and dance come into existence in the institution of slavery. This is the place where the great rhetoric occurs. Where did Martin Luther King, where does that voice come from exactly? It comes from African-American culture, and that culture is formed in the institution of slavery.

You can see it when you read Frederick Douglass. Frederick Douglass is one of the great writers, he was also a great speaker, but we haven't got his voice, but you can read Frederick Douglass, and you can hear an incredibly educated man who is also able to communicate extraordinarily. Then the abolitionist movement, the movement for freedom in the United States, of which African-Americans played a big role. It's an interracial movement, but African-Americans play a huge role in that.

That movement, which has inspired us all, then it continues as the fight against racism continues after slavery. There's the reconstruction period once slavery is ended, the brief period when African Americans are able to do things, provide for education and so forth, and get their families together. That is part of the great heritage that comes out of the institution of slavery. The civil rights movement, again, that's one of the later fights during the 1960s. It's the ending of segregation in America, the movement to end legal segregation, but the great story there is that has its roots in the institution of slavery.

The African-American community creates the tactics which will inspire all Americans as to the love of freedom. What did I just say? Two things happen in slavery: tremendous exploitation, and at the same time, a flowering of African-American culture. The two don't quite mesh, but of course you can't do one without the other. Those are central things you want students to recognize. I think the best way to approach this subject is first to talk about historians, what historians have said about this topic of resistance.

Now you might think, "Well, that's a little bit of a diversion, right?" You really want to focus first

on the African-American experience, listen to the voices of African-Americans who were resisting, but I think there's something prior to that because historians in a sense determine how we view the past in a way. They're read by other historians, they write the histories that people read. If you just read documents and you don't have any framework, you're simply lost, and you never learn anything.

One of the important things, I think, is to give students a sense that historians are important. Another point you can make, which is related, is that … Now, this is a funny thing to say, but I think if you can get your students to realize this, this is important—that history changes over time. That's a strange thing to say, that history changes over time, because you'd think that an event that happened in 1830 is dead and doesn't change over time. What can someone possibly mean when you say history changes over time?

It means that when you bring modern eyes, and they're constantly changing, the eyes of someone who was alive in 1950 is different from those alive in 1970, and different from today. As your eyes change, you can go back and look at a date in the past, you can look at an event in the past, and you can see different things. When you go to a library for example to study the subject, when you pick out any book during a certain period of time, the first question you ought to ask—your students ought to ask, is, "Well, when was this written? What is the dominant set of ideas that's occurring during this period?"

That's the framework I'd like to give you now, okay? What I want to talk about briefly is, beginning in the 20th century, what historians have said about slavery and how that shaped the framework, and then point out where the conversation is today in modern times. The first historian I'd like to look at is—a man who was extremely influential at the turn of the 20th century—is a man named Ulrich B. Phillips. He was a professor of history, and he wrote a series of books, but more than that he also had students.

This is the way professors get to be influential. Professors, the ones who award the Ph.Ds. to people, who go on to teach at other universities, and therefore his influence became widespread. If you go into a library today, for example, and pick out any book on slavery written before the 1950s, 9 times out of 10 you would discover that they were either written by Phillips, or by a Phillips student, so he was extremely influential. His basic interpretation of slavery was, as he says in one of his books, and this is a quote from him now he says, "A Negro was what a white man made him."

Now remember Phillips is living at a time when we had the period of segregation in America.

Racism among whites was extremely intense and severe, and Phillips is just in that tradition. He's a white Southerner, and so all this writing he does about slavery comes from that perspective. He read all the sources, people recognize he's a careful historian, and you can find a lot in the sources. It's the same way you can read the Bible and find many different things in the Bible. Phillips found what he was looking for in these documents.

His basic assumption is masters were nice people, they were benevolent, slavery was a school where African-Americans are trained and civilized because he considered them uncivilized in Africa. African Americans he thought of as they were loyal to the masters, they were lazy, and basically they were under the control of the masters. One of the symptoms of that, was that there were very few slave rebellions. That there was, in terms of the topic of resistance, there wasn't that much resistance to slavery, and in his mind the resistance he was looking for was slave rebellions.

This is a whole package, right? This is a vision of African-Americans as loyal to the masters, as masters being kind, and the fact that there were few slave rebellions. There were some dissenters at the time, and there's a wonderful man named Carter G. Woodson who founded the Association For The Study of Negro History and Life in 1915. He was African-American, and a whole cadre of African-American historians were writing about slavery, and they were writing from a very different perspective.

We have Black history month, and he is the founder of Black history month basically at an earlier time. He was writing something different, and then there were a few other historians who also looked at the past and were writing something different as well. No, I mean, he creates an institution, and he creates a tradition, and there are writers who are in that tradition. There's journals, the Journal of Negro History dates from that period. They were considered very credible by many African-Americans, but if you went to a white University, major American institutions, and you walked into their library, you would get Phillips, and those people who are with Carter G. Woodson wouldn't be in those libraries basically.

That was the case during much of the era of segregation in the United States. That view of the past, the view of slavery, was shaped in a sense by people's experience in the 20th century of segregation, and the racism of the 20th century. Then things began to change, so what happens is you begin to get the beginnings of the civil rights movement in the 1950s. The entire structure of laws, which created segregation in America, comes under attack. The most famous attack is in segregated schooling, where for much of this earlier period in the 20th century, it was legal to

segregate the schools.

Then in 1954, in the famous *Brown v. Board of Education* case, the decision was made by the Supreme Court that if you separate the races, you can never give them an equal education, and therefore segregation was unconstitutional. That was just one of many, many decisions, but the great movement which extended into the 1960s and beyond, which attacked segregation, that changed the world. Remember when I said that history changes over time? History is going to change as well, because you can't have the attack on segregation just sitting there alone.

People then go back, and they relook at slavery. They say, "The segregationist Ulrich B. Phillips, he wrote the history, but what if we looked at it again, but looked at it with different eyes? What if we tried to see the places where maybe there was more resistance, or maybe the nature of slavery was misunderstood?" Therefore, they go back. The key figure here is in 1956 a man named Kenneth Stampp wrote a book, and it was another interpretation of slavery, in which he attacked the interpretation of Ulrich B. Phillips.

The most famous section of that book is a chapter called, "To Make Them Stand in Fear." He says slavery was not about the kindness of masters to enslave people, actually what slavery was about was whips and guns. The only reason why people became slaves was not because they loved their masters, it was because their masters had the control of force and kept them in slavery, and that's what slavery was all about. It was not about kind and gentle relations between masters and slaves.

Once you go down the road of saying that slavery is about exploitation, it's about brutality, it's about force, it's about whips and guns. Once you go down that road, then you begin to look at the issue of resistance differently as well because you wonder, "Okay, what about resistance?" You see, you can understand why there would be no resistance if you thought of slavery as benevolent, and masters as kind, but once you have the image of slavery as brutal, then you expect some additional resistance to pop up.

The world is changing, and the world of the 1950s is changing, and the 1960s is changing, and when they look at the period of slavery, they're going to change their image of what that's all about as well. Then what happened was, shortly after Stampp wrote, it was followed by another book, which was extremely influential in the 20th century. It set off huge conversations, and that was in 1959 by a historian named Stanley Elkins, and it was called, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*.

He thought he was following in the footsteps of Stampp. Stampp said slavery was extremely brutal, and Elkins went along and said, "You know what? Not only was it brutal, it was one of the most brutal institutions that human beings have ever created." He simply went down the road of brutality, and extended it, and he actually drew an analogy, an interesting analogy between the concentration camp, which the world had just experienced during that period, the concentration camp designed to exterminate Jews in Europe by the Nazis, and they had images from there when those camps were liberated, and the terrible atrocities that's went on there.

He said that slavery was like that, it was as brutal as that. Therefore, he said, what happens is it has a tremendous psychological toll, it has a tremendous psychological effect, which is destructive to the people who experience it. In fact, there was evidence that that was the case in the Nazi concentration camps, and he said if you go back and look at slavery, what you discover is, yeah, they're not revolting, because they're … He used the phrase infantilized, they become childlike. They have psychological defenses against this kind of brutality, and he said, "It happened to Jews as well, in Nazi Germany, that you identify with the master and so forth."

Now this is chilling actually, when you go back and you read this. It's quite unbelievable, you see, because on the one hand I was describing a moment in time when the dominance of Ulrich B. Phillips, who described slavery as this benevolent institution, that dominance was being challenged, it's about to be overthrown. Yet what Elkins does is he says that slavery, oh, it's brutal. He goes down the road that Stampp went down, but he goes further, and he says it's so brutal that it destroys the people who were enslaved. It destroys their independence and character, and therefore, the odd thing about the Elkins interpretation is they came at the subject of slavery from completely different perspectives.

Phillips on the one hand, Elkins on the other hand—completely different perspectives. Phillips saying it's a benevolent, kind institution, Elkins saying it's the most brutal institution, but their conclusion about resistance was chillingly the same. Elkins said there wasn't much resistance because the culture was so completely destroyed.

So, in a way, you see, given that I've said that the thing about slavery is it's got these two sides, right? It's got the brutality side, and you can see that Stampp and Elkins are going down the brutality side of things, and then it also has this survival of African-American culture, and this amazing results of cultural flourishing, which also goes on in slavery and after slavery is over. What's happening is when Elkins writes, he's wiped out the second part. He's rejecting the idea of benevolent masters, but he's saying is it was so brutal that it destroyed African-American

culture and society.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You're listening to Kenneth Greenberg as he talks about slave resistance in this episode of *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. I'm your host Hasan Kwame Jeffries. This podcast is a companion to the Southern Poverty Law Center's reportwood on teaching slavery in American schools. You can find the report at tolerance.org/hardhistory. Now back to Kenneth Greenberg.

Kenneth Greenberg: All these historians writing in an earlier time generally defined resistance as slave rebellions. That's the iconic moment of resistance, when someone rises up with a gun, or an ax, or a sword, and kills the master. That's an act of resistance which is violent, and that can lead to slave rebellions if you get other people to do it as well. That's the iconic moment of resistance. What happened was, as people after Stampp, and even before Stampp, began to talk about resistance, they said there were more rebellions than people had thought about, and they identified many rebellions which got repressed.

Masters didn't want to talk about rebellions, didn't want to write about rebellions, that information was repressed. Once you're a historian who realizes, who was on the lookout for more rebellious activity, you discover that there is more rebellious activity. On the other hand, if you put rebellions in a comparative

context, in other words, not just looking at them in the United States, but say you compare rebellions in other slave societies to rebellions in the United States, every historian who looks at this says, "The American rebellions are smaller in number, and they seem to be smaller in size."

To take one example, one of the most famous slave rebellions, is the Nat Turner rebellion in Virginia in 1831. That involves maybe 60 rebels who kill 55 white people, and you compare that to Haiti, which is inspired by the French Revolution, where the entire country undergoes a revolution. Thousands and thousands of whites are slaughtered in this revolution, and Haiti becomes the first country ruled by Africans in the New World. Russian surf rebellions, Russian serfdom is very much like slavery, and there are hundreds of thousands of people involved in those rebellions.

Brazil is full of these gigantic rebellions of tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people, or Caribbean rebellions and so forth. You go back to the Nat Turner rebellion, one of the biggest—not the biggest—but one of the biggest American rebellions, and it involves 60. You get back to this question of, well, where is the resistance exactly? Well first there was this huge

outpouring saying, “Well the absence of rebellions doesn’t mean that there wasn’t resistance, it means that resistance took other forms.”

For example, in the United States, the United states had a much larger white population than many of these other areas, and it was hard to have a rebellion in an area where there were so many whites who could organize and repress the rebellion right away. The whites in the United States were organized in powerful militias at the state level, and at the local level, and they could just jump in and repress rebellion. Plantation sizes were much smaller, so the units were smaller.

The terrain is inhospitable to rebellions, the places where you get lots of rebellions. You can hide in the mountains, you can hide in the swamps, and the United States had comparatively fewer of those areas. Therefore, the feeling is, well, there are fewer big rebellions in the United States, but that has nothing to do about resistance to slavery. Resistance to slavery in the United States took other forms. Of all the things that you want to be able to teach students, it’s this: it’s the changing definition of resistance, which does the most to change our opinion of what resistance to slavery is all about.

As long as you focus on rebellions, all those historians who were of that era, they were looking for rebellions. Only when you change the definition of what resistance is do you begin to get a different picture of what slavery is all about. If you want to engage in rebellion, and rebellion meaning “rise up and kill the masters,” if you weren’t going to do that, how could you resist slavery? Now let me give you examples, okay? You can ask your students to come up with these examples.

One thing is you could light a town on fire. It doesn’t take much. You’re a lone person, you hate your master, and you simply light up a portion of the town, and the whole town burns, or the plantation house burns. Again, no one’s writing about there’s just been a tremendous slave rebellion there, on the other hand it can be very destructive. Southern cities burned all the time, and we don’t know why they burned, but I can tell you that they burned in part because of resistance to slavery.

As an individual you could put ground glass—if you’re a cook—you can put ground glass in your master’s oatmeal. People can be very creative about the ways in which they resisted institution. You don’t need to rise up. If you rise up with swords and axes and hatchets, you die, but if you put ground glass in your master’s oatmeal, your master will die.

Another way to resist, is you can slow the pace of work. What masters thought they were seeing was a lazy group of slaves in the institution of slavery, but actually what they were looking at were people who were resisting by slowing the pace of work. Why would you work at a fast pace if you were an enslaved person? You could break tools, the wagon. Masters were always talking about this, "My tools, somehow, they break all the time," and of course enslaved people don't have an interest in making sure that these things work properly, and that's another kind of resistance. You could also resist by feigning illness, you could say, "I'm sick today, I can't work." Now masters, of course, tried to fight that, and they had all kinds of techniques, but nonetheless that certainly happened enough.

You could engage in thievery at night when the plantation, the masters, were asleep, the whites were all asleep on the plantation, you could quietly break in and steal something if you wanted food for example. Another kind of resistance is you could learn to read. Remember there were those laws that said you weren't allowed to read in the institution of slavery, and you were an enslaved person, you knew that this is something that the masters used to keep you under control, and therefore learning to read, figuring out the ways in which you could learn to read, would be another form of resistance.

Of course, if you could learn to read and to write, then one way they had of keeping you on the plantation was masters needed to write a pass. If you wanted to leave the plantation, the master would have to write a pass saying you were authorized to leave, where if you could write the pass yourself, well, that undermines a significant portion.

You could practice your own religion. Now I mentioned religion already, but, you see, masters wanted enslaved people to have religion, but the religion that masters had in mind was the religion in which you looked at the Bible, and you got messages about how God wanted you to obey your earthly masters. That's the religion, and so masters tried to control what slaves learned about religion as much as possible. We know that didn't happen. It didn't work that way. Slaves created their own religious forms, had their own religious services, and hush harbors outside the existing churches. It's called the invisible church that was created, and that's the church which ultimately is going to inspire people like Malcolm X become part of that tradition, and Martin Luther King as well.

Marriage and family—again, the master will, at his indulgence, might let you have a relationship, but if you have those relationships on your own, fall in love on your own, that's another way of resisting. Running away—slavery is not a prison, there are no walls around plantations. Every

night, when the master goes to sleep, there are no armed guards guarding the plantation. You can walk away from that plantation. Now there are consequences. The whole society is keyed to catch you and so forth, but nonetheless, at night you can go into the woods, you can meet your friends, you can meet the people you love.

Slavery is full of those kinds of meetings, so what I'm describing here is this recognition. You see how what I'm talking about is the movement away from thinking resistance to slavery is all about slave rebellions. I'm telling you that resistance to slavery is all about religion, learning to read, running away. Those are the acts of resistance which people engaged in all the time. It's not that these were rare, these were daily occurrences in slavery. If you were an enslaved person, you had millions of ways of resisting your masters.

This also led to—ultimately, as historians write about this—to a role for women in resistance. You see, if you defined resistance only as slave rebellion, we know that, for a variety of reasons, slave rebellions is mostly a male enslaved person's activity. There are some women who get involved, and they're interesting stories, but the typical slave rebellion involves men, and therefore women are left out of the issue of resistance. Modern historians today, following in the tradition of redefining resistance, have said, "There's an amazing thing." One wonderful historian, Stephanie Camp, who describes parties, what I've just been describing, where you leave your own plantation and you go to someone else's house, and you party together at night. They're illegal parties, and masters tried to stop these all the time, and Stephanie Camp is a historian who says, "Well this is another form of resistance."

Also, sexual exploitation—remember, it's built into the institution of slavery. It is at the heart of slavery in many ways, and women resisted those in a million ways. They resisted by force, but they resisted in many other ways as well. The other thing about resistance to keep in mind is that the consequences of resistance were huge. In fact, the way to think about slavery ending is that the resistance of people who were enslaved helps bring about maybe the central cause of the end of slavery.

Now, this is an important point. It's the easiest thing in the world for students to say something like— well, if you ask a student, "How did slavery end?" They know about the Emancipation Proclamation, or they knew about the constitutional amendments, and they talk about Abraham Lincoln ended slavery. That would be reconfirming that African-Americans had nothing to do with their own liberation.

We now know that's not the case. It's these acts of resistance which create circumstances which

lead to the collapse of slavery. I'll just give you a few examples of this, but this is really important—running away. Now at first you think, well what's running away? You leave your plantation at night, and often you'd go back during the day, okay? That doesn't seem like it's going to bring slavery to an end. But what if you run away to the North? There are some number of people, there are thousands, tens of thousands, of enslaved people who run away to the north.

The North does not have slavery at least by this period of time—they had it earlier. You could run away to the North, and then the United States Constitution says that states have an obligation to return runaway slaves, because the slave states wouldn't join the union unless they were sure that once enslaved people ran away to a so-called free state, that they had to be returned. There are laws passed at the federal level to ensure that an escaped enslaved person who is found in the North is brought back into the South.

The act of running away under those circumstances means that the North is implicated in slavery. You can go to a place like Boston. You could leave Virginia as an enslaved person, you could find your way to Boston, and seek friends in Boston. Again, you wouldn't be free, right? You'd be protected by people, if they caught you, you could be sent back, at least till just before the Civil War. The question is, what's gonna happen? Well, you're going to get arrested if they find you.

Your master will try to find you in the North, and therefore you could be in Boston, which thinks of itself as a part of a free state, and you discover you're not really free of slavery. Some Northerners, who otherwise might not get excited about slavery, say, "Well this is Southerners extending slavery into the North," and there were people who will violently defend the freedom of enslaved people. That's how— think of what I just said—the act of running away, done on the scale of moving from South to North, creates circumstances, which leads to conflict between North and South.

Of course, that's going to lead to the Civil War, ultimately, and lead to the end of slavery. Even during the Civil War itself, think about this, at first when Northern armies are fighting Southern armies, one of the goals of the war is not to end slavery. In fact, when Lincoln is inaugurated, he doesn't want to have the South succeed, he doesn't want to end slavery at that time at least. In his inauguration he says, "I'm not going to abolish slavery," in fact it would have been told as probably unconstitutional at that point, but he says, "I'm not going to abolish slavery, that's not my goal."

He's interested in the extension of slavery in the territories, which is another subject here.

Lincoln doesn't want that, so at the beginning of the Civil War, it's not a war to end slavery, but if you're an African-American, and the Northern soldiers go past you, what are you then? Are you a slave at that point, or are you free? If you're still in Virginia, and the Northern armies extend—or in Louisiana, or Mississippi—and the Northern armies have conquered that area and occupied that area, who are the people who are in that area?

They still have slavery, they're still legally slaves, so the question is, what are the armies going to do? What is the President going to do about this kind of a situation? Are the Northern armies going to arrest an enslaved person who finds himself behind union lines, or runs away from a Southern plantation? Are they going to arrest that person, and force him back to his master? Who initiates the end of slavery under those circumstances? It's the person who runs away, who creates circumstances, which make it impossible for slavery to survive.

If you want to look at the way slavery ends, it's this kind of resistance, not slave rebellion. The simple act of running away, and there are many other acts like this basically, which create circumstances which are going to strain slavery, and lead ultimately to the end of slavery.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: This is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, and I'm your host Hasan Kwame Jeffries. Along with this podcast, you can find a detailed framework for teaching slavery along with sample units and primary sources at tolerance.org/hardhistory. Again, here's Kenneth Greenberg.

Kenneth Greenberg: I'd like to end by saying a few words about how to teach this to students because it's important that a teacher have these concepts in mind and know where they're going with the teaching, but you'll also want material that students can read, and appreciate things for themselves. My general advice is don't read historians, that creates too much of a distance with students. They need to read the original documents, and my recommendation is that they read the words of African-Americans.

If you want to learn about resistance, that's the place to go, so I have three recommendations, and what you can do is take excerpts from these books generally. They're mostly too big for students to read in their entirety, but if you show them excerpts, it can reveal a great deal. The first suggestion I have is that there's an amazing document called, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. This refers back to the rebellion of 1831, and I've actually edited those confessions.

They're only about 20 pages or so, but I've edited them with some other documents of the period. Trial records of the rebels, newspaper accounts, a document written by a Northerner

from Boston, who is talking about the need to use violence to end slavery, an African-American man named David Walker.

A diary from the governor of Virginia, and then someone writing a summary of the debate in the Virginia legislature. They were so frightened in Virginia by the Nat Turner rebellion, that they actually considered abolishing slavery as a result.

They didn't, but that was an interesting thing, so I recommend that you pick excerpts from a few of those documents, and in particular, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. This is a slightly side thing, but this is an interesting thing, when you read, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, and you see all the documents of the period, the one thing you need to emphasize with students I would say, of all others, is that they need to pay attention as to whose voice they are hearing. Now you might say, "Well what exactly is, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*?"

Well, let me tell you how it got made. Nat Turner escaped capture for two months after the rebellion. He hid out in the woods. Finally, when he was captured, it was two months after the rebellion. He was brought to his jail cell, and there were about 10 days or so between when he was captured, and when he was tried and hanged 10 days later. While he was in his jail cell, he had a white visitor, a lawyer—not his lawyer—but a white visitor named Thomas Gray. Thomas Gray met Nat Turner in his jail cell and wanted to find out the real story of the rebellion and basically interviewed him.

What *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, are, are the result of those interviews. If you read it, it sounds like it's Nat Turner's voice, except there are some places where Gray intentionally says, "Well, here's the situation." He's using his voice basically, but most of it is written as if it's Nat Turner's voice. One question you have to ask students is "How do you know it's Nat Turner's voice?" Nat Turner doesn't actually write this down. There is no tape recorder, right? It's Thomas Gray who writes everything down, organizes the confessions, so one of the great puzzles of doing any document from the past like this is to ask the question of whose voice do you hear?

Let me just read you a section of this. It's worth thinking about. This is from the beginning of the confessions. I'll read you this because it can be used to illustrate a couple of things—the issue of voice, but other things as well. This is Nat Turner describing his childhood, and he says the following, "In my childhood, a circumstance occurred, which made an indelible impression on my mind, and laid the groundwork of that enthusiasm, which has terminated so fatally to many, both white and black, and for which I'm about to atone at the gallows."

In other words, this is in Nat Turner's voice, right? Well when I read this, and again, your students won't pick this up right away, I think that you have to point this out to them. Have them linger over this. Did Nat Turner really say this? Did he refer to the fact that he's about to atone at the gallows? Everything I know about Nat Turner, and if they read some more about this, will discover that he's a man thinking that he was sent by God to end slavery. For him to say that he refers to this enthusiasm, meaning (a religious enthusiasm was a negative term basically) he calls himself a fanatic there basically, and it ended up killing so many people, black and white, and he's about to atone at the gallows. I know Nat Turner didn't say that.

So, one of the lessons you want to teach your students is they need to be, not only when they read works of history, as to who the historian is, and when they wrote, but when they read a primary source as well, they need to know who wrote it. Actually, if they read anywhere, all these other documents which are included in the volume on *The Confessions of Nat Turner*—newspaper accounts, trial records—those aren't unmediated African-American voices.

What's a trial record? We have a few sentences that purport to be African-American voices, but if you're an African-American captured under these circumstances, and you're testifying at a trial, are you speaking freely of what's on your mind? My guess is not, so, again it's important to teach students how to read a source like this and to be skeptical about something like this.

Then there are places where you definitely hear Nat Turner's voice, and here's one, and this gets at the religious angle of things, too, how important religion is. Listen to what he says here. He's describing his religious visions, he thinks that God has chosen him to free his people from enslavement. He thinks of

himself as a prophet, kind of like Moses. This is Nat Turner purportedly speaking. "As I was praying one day at my plow, the Spirit spoke to me saying,"—and here's a quote, he's quoting the Spirit, "Seek ye the kingdom of heaven, and all things shall be added unto you." Then Gray inserts his voice, and he says, "What do you mean by the Spirit?"

Then Nat Turner answers, "The Spirit that spoke to the prophets in former days, and I was greatly astonished, and for two years prayed continuously when my duty would permit. Then I had the same revelation again," so when you get these revelations, this is Nat Turner's voice, and you can see the power of the religion. Nat Turner has the strength to undertake this because of his religion, it's part of the larger way of attacking slavery. There's another moment too in the confessions, and this is probably … If you want to read, if you want to go over one thing with your students, it's this extraordinary moment in the volume I edited, it's on page 46.

Gray is talking to Turner, who's describing the rebellion, and Gray says, "Do you not find yourself mistaken now?" See, Gray wants to be reassured too, he's hoping that Nat Turner's going to say, "You know, this was a stupid idea, everybody got killed, I'm about to get killed." That's what he wants Turner to say, okay? Here's what Turner does say, and this is where I hear his voice, and see if your students hear the same voice. When Gray says, "Do you not find yourself mistaken now?" Nat Turner answers, "Was not Christ crucified?" Was not Christ crucified?

It just sends chills up and down your spine. Here's a guy who knows he's going to be killed, who's surrounded by his enemies, who has no chance of survival, and he has the tremendous confidence to speak back to Gray in that jail cell, and says—compare himself to Christ, saying, "Christ was crucified. You could lose, you could die, and still be on the right side of things." It's an extraordinary moment, and again, it's the power of religion in here mixed in.

Now, it's a rebellion, that's certainly the case, right? The other thing about the confessions is you get to see, he talks about his family, the influence of his parents telling him he's a special person. He talks about learning to read. Again, these are other forms of resistance, which lead up to the rebellion. He runs away at one point. He uses running away as a tactic. The rebellion begins because he gathers with a few friends, and they have a roast pig in the woods, and they all bring various things to a party in the woods, and that's how the rebellion begins.

You see how when you say it's a rebellion, it's true, but it has all the elements of things which I've been describing as a rebellious activity leading up to it as well. Another book that I recommend you read with your students is a book by Harriet Jacobs. It's called, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. This is an amazing book because most people who ran away from slavery were men. When you run away from slavery and then you write your life story, what typically happens is you run to the North when you've learned to read somehow, then you write your story, or you tell it to somebody else who writes it down for you, but that's the story.

Most people who did that, who wrote their stories, who escaped from slavery that way, were men. Women tended not want to leave their family behind, they sometimes had children they refused to leave as well, so it was men who tended to do it much more. This, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, is one of the few books written by a woman where you can see what resistance to slavery is all about from the perspective of a woman. I want to give you a sense of a woman in slavery, and how vulnerable they were to attack within the institution of slavery.

Here's a section. It's on page—in the volume I'm using, it's on page 470. It says the

following—she's describing being vulnerable, sexually vulnerable to her master. This is tricky because this is 19th-century language, right? She's not gonna get too explicit here, but you know what she's talking about. She says, "He tried his utmost," (the master) "tried his utmost to corrupt the pure principles my grandmother had instilled." Again, she had a very powerful grandmother, a free black woman actually who taught her morality basically.

"He," meaning the master, "peopled my young mind with unclean images, such as only a vile monster could think of. I turned from him with disgust and hatred, but he was my master. I was compelled to live under the same roof with him, where I saw a man 40 years my senior daily violating the most sacred commandments of nature. He told me I was his property, that I must be subject to his will in all things. My soul revolted against the mean tyranny, but where could I turn for protection? No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony, or as fair as her mistress, in either case there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death. All these are inflicted by fiends who bear the shape of men."

This book describes a woman who is vulnerable to sexual exploitation, and she also describes her ways of resisting. Now the ways are amazing. She goes to her grandmother—her grandmother's a free person. She tries to get another white man who's in the neighborhood. She has an affair with that man, which she believes she chooses voluntarily—that's not so clear whether it's voluntary—and he's powerful, and she hopes to use his power against the master. She'll resist physically by force. So, she has a million ways of resisting.

As she describes it, she successfully resists rape by her master, but some historians have looked at that and they said, "She just doesn't want to write about this," because she's writing for an audience of Northern middle-class white women who don't want to hear about a woman getting raped and expected her to choose death rather than submit to rape. Nonetheless, it's a complicated story, but it's a story of a woman, and the vulnerability of a woman in the institution of slavery, and the way she resists.

She does not, in the end, resist by creating a rebellion. Unlike Nat Turner, she does resist by running away, ultimately, in the end. Before she runs away, she actually hides in her attic for seven years. I know this sounds incredible, but her grandmother's attic—her grandmother had an attic. She could look out the window and watch her children grow up. She never revealed herself to them, but to get away from the master, she chose that. Before she ran away, she actually did that. Many people read this, and they said, "It couldn't happen. That sounds like a crazy story." There's a wonderful historian who has gone over this, and she's confirmed virtually

everything that Harriet Jacobs said about this experience.

The last person I want to talk about is Frederick Douglass, who wrote his narrative of his experience in slavery called, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. It got published in the North, and one of the key moments in that document is something where he's describing being an enslaved person and the ways in which he resists.

One big way is he learns to read, and he understands reading as resistance. At first, he has a kind mistress who starts to teach him to read. The master says, "This is going to undermine slavery." He stops the mistress from doing this, and so Douglass is a resilient man and discovers a way to learn to read without the mistress. He actually—whatever money he can collect, or objects he has, he gets poor white kids, he gives them things, and they teach him the alphabet, and teach him how to read basically, but he does this himself, and understands reading as an act of resistance.

There's another amazing moment, too. He is sent at one point—because he resists slavery—he is sent at one point to someone known as a slave breaker. It's a really tough guy, his master wasn't tough enough, and so this is someone who will brutalize him and treat him so poorly that they're hoping to break the spirit of Frederick Douglass, but Douglass is not so easily broken. This man's name is Mr. Covey, and at one point in his narrative, Douglass describes the confrontation. He decides he can't take this anymore, he's just beaten over and over again, the demands on him are irrational excuses for beating him, and so he decides he's going to stand up to Covey.

Now in his mind, he's gonna lose his life. This is almost like a rebellion, okay? He stands up to Covey, and when Covey starts to beat him, he beats Covey back. The two of them fight each other for a long period of time, probably for hours, and they're hitting each other back and forth, and back and forth, and back and forth. We don't know what was in Covey's mind during this whole time. He tries to get other enslaved people to join him to try to subdue Douglas, but they won't do it. They said, "We're not here to do that kind of work for you."

So, this is, basically, from Douglass's point of view, it's a draw. He stands up, and then his experience is Covey no longer beats him after that. In other words, he has resisted slavery—no longer beats him. The way Douglass describes the feeling of having stood up to Covey is he says, "From that day forward, I no longer felt I was a slave." Even though legally he was a slave, even though he was in slavery, Covey himself understood what his limits were and couldn't subdue Frederick Douglass.

Douglass didn't even have to flee to the North to get the sense that he was liberated somehow, that this act of resisting, this willingness to die basically, to stand up as an individual. Not a slave rebellion, not the Nat Turner rebellion, but just standing up gives him the sense of freedom. The other moment is when he runs away, but actually the key moment in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* is the moment when he stands up to Covey, and he gets this inner sense of his own worth and freedom.

Those are examples that you can teach with students about the acts of resistance, of which enslaved people were capable of. It's an amazing story, and you have an obligation to inspire your students with these acts of resistance. They inspire me, they should inspire you, and they should inspire your students.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Kenneth S. Greenberg is a distinguished professor of history at Suffolk University. He is also the author of, *Honor and Slavery*, and the editor of *Nat Turner: And Related Documents*. Before we wrap things up, I wanted you to hear from another educator who's starting to expand her slavery curriculum with her students, so once again, here's librarian Izzy Anderson who teaches middle school in the Arkansas Delta.

Izzy Anderson: I have nine boys and one girl in this class. I was going to do a quick overview of black history, but I realized that my kids don't really know anything about slavery, and they also don't have a concept of a timeline. They don't understand the distance between Martin Luther King and slavery, or how long slavery had been around. They just didn't know anything about it, so I was, "Oh, we have to stop here," because slavery is understanding the black experience, and their experience in the world as black people that live in the deep South.

Black people whose grandparents, and great-great-grandparents didn't leave during the great migration after slavery. They're the ancestors of the people who stayed here, and so I was like, I feel like they really need to understand slavery and that experience in order to understand where they came from. I'm like, "Okay, I'm not the person that should be teaching them about where they came from. I'm not the person who should be teaching them about this trauma, but I'm the only person that's here who's going to do it, so I have to figure out how to do it right."

My concern was that they were just going to be like, "This is horrible, and it makes me feel really bad, and I feel really bad about this," because obviously conversations about slavery, and being like, "Your ancestors were slaves, your ancestors were abused and murdered for a really long time, and mine weren't." It's a really hard conversation to have, and I was really worried, okay if I'm gonna lay this out on the table for them, am I going to traumatize them? Am I going to give

them all this horrible information, and they're going to hear about all this horrible stuff, and all this rape and stuff as sixth-graders, and then they're just going to have nightmares, and it's going to be horrible, and I'm going to get angry calls from parents, because their kids can't sleep?

Should I whitewash it a little bit? Should I sanitize it a little bit for them, because they're young, but still have the knowledge that nobody else may ever teach them about this again, and that sanitized version of it may be all that they learn about it? Should I just put it out on the table, and assume, or hope that it's something that they can cope with? I feel like I need to talk to somebody who actually knows about this, and so that's where I ended up finding this podcast, and then reaching out, and that really gave me a direction to go in.

I'm going to focus on resistance movements. I'm going to focus on the development of culture in the face of people who really didn't want slaves to develop culture. Not to avoid those really, really tough topics— that our kids are exposed to violence and things in their real lives, and in media all the time. For us to assume that they can't handle it is probably not giving them enough credit, and that I can tell them about these things as long as I frame it in the context of resistance, in the context of survival, of being like, "Okay, yes, black people endured this, but they also survived it, and thrived, and created a culture, and resisted all the time."

If I teach it to them, all these things to them, in that context, then it's going to be really powerful for them. That's the direction that I've taken it. Once I really dove in and started to have these really scary conversations with kids, and telling them about these really scary things, they handled it much better than I thought that they were going to. They expressed that they were really happy to know this, and they took out of it what I had hoped that they could take out of it, which is this anger, but it's a righteous anger.

I think looking at the people who change the world, there are often people that have righteous anger. I think if I can engender that, or help kids develop that anger, because there's a lot of things now that they should be angry about. If that anger can be formed in a base of history and understanding of the world, then I hope that kids can go out, and my kids can go out and be advocates. That anger that I see in them is the right kind of anger, it's what I wanted, and it's what I want to continue to develop as I keep talking to them about these things.

I understand wanting to skirt around really tough topics, especially if your kids are younger, but just in general, those conversations can be really, really hard to have. You can be worried that you're going to do something wrong, but I try to operate under the assumption that I have no

idea whose classroom my kids are going to be going into in the future. What kind of person's classroom, what they're gonna teach them, whether or not what they're gonna teach them is true.

We know history books leave huge chunks of things out, or make slavery seem fun, or make the Trail of Tears look like people were just happily migrating, because the white people asked them to, or whatever. I don't know whether or not people are going to teach that, and I think for our kids to be informed citizens of the world, for our kids to understand and go out into the world, and be the advocates that we so desperately need, that we have to dive in. We have to teach them, because they have to know.

Even if it's scary, I think just seeking out resources, and making sure that we're asking the right questions of our fellow educators, and looking for the right resources, that it'll be okay, because somebody's got to do it, and it's gonna have to be you, because you never know if it's gonna be anybody else.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: *Teaching Hard History* is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a valuable collection of essays called, Understanding and Teaching American Slavery. In each episode, we're featuring a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection. We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials, which are available at tolerance.org.

These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units, and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of American slavery. Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find those online at tolerance.org. Thanks to Dr. Greenberg for sharing his insights with us.

This podcast was produced by Shea Shackleford, with production assistance from Tori Marlan, and Chris Dwyer at Suffolk University. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zabriskie. If you like what we're doing, please let your friends and colleagues know, and take a minute to review us on iTunes. I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, Associate Professor of History at the Ohio State University, and your host. You've been listening to *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- Teaching Hard History: Text Library, Frederick Douglass Describes Enslavers
- The New York Times, The Historian Behind Slavery Apologists Like Kanye West (Ulrich B. Phillips)
- SPLC report, U.S. Education on American Slavery Sorely Lacking
- Association for the Study of African American Life, Founders of Black History Month: Carter G. Woodson
- Teaching Tolerance, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*
- Kenneth M. Stampp, *Peculiar institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South*
- Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*
- Teaching Tolerance: Lesson, Nat Turner
- Kenneth S Greenberg (editor), *The Confessions of Nat Turner: And Related Documents*
- History News Network, Stephanie M. H. Camp
- Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*
- Teaching Tolerance, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

Episode 7: Diverse Experience of the Enslaved

Most students leave school thinking enslaved people lived like characters in Gone With the Wind. Dr. Deirdre Cooper Owens reveals the remarkable diversity of lived experiences within slavery and explains the gap between what scholars and students know.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
- BlackPast, Malcolm X, "Message to the Grassroots" and "The Ballot or the Bullet" (1963)
- American RadioWorks, Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet"
- Teaching Tolerance, Lessons of 1964: The Movement Continues
- Teaching Tolerance, Creating a Culture: the Music of Enslaved People
-

Deirdre Cooper Owens

- 21st Century Griot
- *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*
- History, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: (*rapping*) The soundtrack of my youth began and ended with New York City hip-hop. It started with "Rapper's Delight," the 1979 rap classic by the Sugarhill Gang—its opening lines as memorable as any (*rapping*). And it ended with "Fight the Power," Public Enemy's protest anthem for a generation of African Americans who came of age during the Reagan era. Who can forget "1989, the number, another summer, sound of the funky drummer"? (*rapping*). "Music hitting your heart, because I know you got soul, brothers and sisters." But the soundtrack of my younger years was composed of more than just fresh beats and dope lyrics. It also featured the stirring oratory of Black Power prophet Malcolm X.

When I was ten years old, I stumbled upon four albums of Malcolm's speeches buried in my father's record collection. Included were "Message to the Grassroots" and "The Ballot or the Bullet." And when I listened to them, I was transfixed, hypnotized by Malcolm's wit and wisdom, by his ability to make it plain. When nothing was on television, and it was either too cold or too wet to play outside, I would drop the needle on one of his albums, stretch out on the sofa, and listen to Malcolm over and over again. I was especially taken by Malcolm's allegory of the house

negro and the field negro. "There were two kinds of enslaved people," explained Malcolm in "Message to the Grassroots." "There was the house Negro and the field Negro. The house Negros, they lived in the house with master."

Malcolm X: *The house Negro, they lived in the house with master. They dressed pretty good.*

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: They dressed pretty good.

Malcolm X: *They ate good.*

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: They ate good.

Malcolm X: *Because they ate his food, what he left. They lived in the attic or the basement, but still didn't live near their master. And they loved their master more than the master loved himself. They would give their life to serve their master's house quicker than the master would. The house Negro, if the master said, "We got a good house here," the house Negro would say, "Yeah, we got a good house here." Whenever the master said "We," he said, "We." That's how you can tell a house Negro.*

If the master's house caught on fire, the house Negro would fight harder to put the blaze out than the master would. If the master got sick, the house Negro would say, "What's the matter, boss? We sick. We sick." He identified himself with his master more than his master identified with himself.

And if you came to the house Negro and said, "Let's run away, let's escape, let's separate," that house Negro would look at you and say, "Man, you crazy. What you mean, separate? Where is there a better house than this? Where can I wear better clothes than this? Where can I eat better food than this?" That was that house Negro. In those days he was called a "house nigger." And that's what we call him today, because we've still got some house niggers running around here.

On that same plantation, there was the field Negro. The field Negro, those were the masses. There was always more Negros in the field than there was Negros in the house.

Audience: *That's right.*

Malcolm X: *The Negro in the field caught hell. He ate leftovers. In the house they ate high up on the hog. The Negro in the field didn't get nothing but what was left of the insides of the hog. They call them chitlins nowadays. In those days they called them what they were: guts. That's*

what you were, a gut-eater. And some of you all still gut-eaters. The field Negro was beaten from morning till night. He lived in a shack, in a hut.

Audience: *That's right.*

Malcolm X: *He wore cast-off clothes, and he hated his master. I say he hated his master. He was intelligent. That house Negro loved his master. But that field Negro, remember, they were in the majority, and they hated the master. When the house caught on fire, he didn't try and put it out. That field Negro prayed for a wind, for a breeze. When the master got sick, the field Negro prayed that he'd die. If someone come to the field Negro and said, "Let's separate, let's run," he didn't say "Where we going?" He said, "Any place is better than here."*

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: The house Negro and the field Negro parable was vintage Malcolm, powerful and persuasive, humorous and hard-hitting. There was just one problem. As I later learned, this history was not true. To be sure, the political analysis of the rebellious spirit of the enslaved masses was spot-on, but the house Negro/ field Negro binary was a false dichotomy, one rooted in a popular misunderstanding of the wide range of experiences enslaved people had. Experiences that shaped their actions and beliefs.

Knowing whether an enslaved person worked in the house or in the field is not nearly enough to understand their lived experience. You also have to know what kind of work they did in the house, what kind of crops they tended in the field, whether they were enslaved on a large plantation or a small farm, in a port city or an inland community, in a northern colony or in a southern state. You have to know whether the enslaved was a man or a woman, a parent or a child, whether he or she was new to America or several generations removed from Africa. Reducing the manifold experiences of enslaved African Americans to a simple binary might be good for making political points. But it obscures far more than it reveals.

The soundtrack of my youth was shaped by when and where I was born, by my race and my gender, and by my parents' political leanings. And to hear it, all you have to do is know where to listen. Enslaved African Americans have their own soundtrack, one that wasn't captured on wax, but echoes through time nonetheless. And like my own, it too can be heard, all you have to do is know how to listen. And that's what we'll be talking about today.

I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. It's a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides a detailed look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In

each episode, we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material, and offering practical classroom exercises. Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges, so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery.

Understanding the diverse experiences of enslaved African Americans is important. It teaches students to think critically about the form and function of the institution of slavery, about the kinds of work the enslaved performed, which enriched slaveholders and the nation as a whole. In this episode, Deirdre Cooper Owens shows how the experience of slavery varied and evolved based on such factors as time, place, space and gender. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy.

Deirdre Cooper Owens: When you're teaching your students about slavery in America, do you feel comfortable? Are you satisfied that the history you're teaching is accurate? How do you determine fact from mythology? I've taught college students across the country about United States slavery, from its colonial past to its abolishment brought on by the Civil War's end. I've had students share their insights with me about slavery, and unfortunately, much of what they know is either wrong or misinformed.

For example, I have had students believe that enslaved women were only allowed to perform domestic work, while enslaved men did all the agricultural work. I have also been told that very light-skinned black or biracial black slaves were called mulattoes, were house slaves, and all dark-skinned slaves were in the fields. My students also learned much of what they know about slavery from Hollywood films that, until recently, romanticized the Old South and sanitized the harsh and often brutal treatment enslaved people received from their owners. So how do you teach students about a past that shows the country's inconsistencies with liberty, democracy and equality for all people?

You do so with honesty, a commitment to having open dialogue with your students who will need to understand historical context, and expose them to the numerous primary sources that tell the diverse experiences of the enslaved.

I'll begin with a story from Mary Raines. She was a former slave who lived in Fairfield County, South Carolina, during the 1930s. A government worker interviewed her about her life in slavery when she was a much older woman. He asked basic questions like her age, and even how she received her name. Ms. Raines shared the following in her interview.

She stated, “How old would Marse William Woodward be if he hadn’t died before I gwine to die? A hundred and twenty, you say? Well, that’s about what they figured my age was.” She then shared a story about how her birth weight pleased her master so much that he named her after his mother. Ms. Raines explained that her mother’s yelling from the slave quarters alarmed her white owners and their dinner guests, who are about to enjoy a sumptuous meal. A local doctor was at the table and was asked to check on Ms. Raines’ mother. Ms. Raines shared, “All dis him leave to go see Mammy, who was a squallin’ like a passel of patarollers was a layin’ de lash on her. When the young doctor go and come back, him says as how my mammy done got all right and her have a gal baby. Then, him say that Marse Ed, his uncle, took him to de quarter where Mammy was, looked me all over and say, ‘Ain’t her a good one? Must weight 10 pounds.’ I’s gwine to name dis baby for your mama, William. Tell her I name her Mary for her. But I ‘spects some folks’ll call her Polly, just like they call your mama Polly.”

Mary Raines’ oral history tells us a lot about the nature of slavery. Through her admission to her interviewer, we learned the slaves had no real knowledge of their birth dates, and often used the birth years of their masters or some significant event to mark their births. The interviewer describes Ms. Raines as 99, although she believes she’s closer to 120 years old. Also, she likens her mother’s screams from childbirth to being whipped by patrollers. These were typically poor white men who worked for slave owners to keep watch for enslaved people who ran away or left their plantations without permission.

Ms. Raines also describes how involved slave owners were in the lives of their slaves and had absolute control in every way imaginable. Mary’s mother was neither able to name her daughter nor give her a cherished nickname. Just as there are multiple themes that can be explored in this oral history source, I intend to emphasize how the institution of slavery was influenced by chronology or time, region or geographical location, and gender. First, however, you must establish definitions and provide basic facts for students to understand the institution so that everyone is on the same page.

Initially, I introduce the concept of race to my students. Secondly, I link American slavery to other international institutions of slavery, especially those that emerged in the Atlantic world. Those are the nations that border the Atlantic Ocean. Lastly, I follow a chronological and region-based approach that demonstrates how salient slavery was to the United States of America and its government through the exploration of various industries, with a particular emphasis on gender.

One of the major objectives that I outline for my students is how utterly American the institution of slavery was, that it was not solely southern during the colonial period. By the late 1700s, slavery was becoming largely a southern affair because of the cash crops produced in the region, like tobacco, rice, indigo, and later, cotton. However, by the mid 19th century, northern industries profited greatly from Southern slavery, especially textile mills that relied heavily on cotton grown in the deep South. Thus, teachers can have students acknowledge that the existence, growth and maintenance of American slavery was not unique during the era of its emergence, and the institution affected all parts of the country.

One of the more important functions of history is to contextualize the past. By doing so, it helps sharpen critical thinking skills and also helps students to understand differing viewpoints. They begin to understand quite clearly that the past was dynamic and not static. One of the best methods for addressing the proverbial elephant in the room is to first provide students with a clear definition of race and its social construction. Often, students believe race is a biological concept and find it difficult to view it as an idea that has undergone transformation in different regions and areas.

Understanding American slavery must begin with the discussion centered on the changing definitions of race, especially blackness, because students can be confused about the early terms used to describe black people hundreds of years ago. For example, Guineamen, Ethiopes, Mulattoes, Negresses and Coromantees. It's important to contextualize how various European people thought about those of African descent. Europeans' conceptions of blackness were based on their prior experience, or lack thereof, with African peoples.

Starting with Christopher Columbus is an effective way of discussing how historical eras matter. You can also tie in a lesson around race and labor. Columbus is typically taught as an explorer who was heralded as the founder of the Americas. As contentious as Christopher Columbus has become, he is a good example to use in the study of American slavery, because his voyages to Hispaniola and the Caribbean introduced chattel slavery to the Americas—slavery where human beings are considered movable property, and in the United States and colonial British America, it also designated that one would be a slave for life.

As a young man, Christopher Columbus was trained in the Madeira Sugar Trade on behalf of the Spanish crown, working in sugar plantations in Porto Santo Island off the coast of Portugal. He brought this experience to the islands he called the West Indies. During his second voyage to the New World in 1493, Columbus introduced sugar cane to the Caribbean. He literally established

the first successful cash crop for a European nation that used native people—that means people born on the island—and African born slaves.

Indigenous people were not good laborers on sugar plantations for many reasons, particularly because so many became sick and died as a result of disease and violence. The Spanish, in turn, began to primarily use African slaves much as the Portuguese had done in Madeira. White gold, as sugar was called, worked as the engine of the initial slave trade that brought millions of Africans to the Americas, beginning in the early 16th century. The history of every nation in the Caribbean begins with sugar cane plantations. These plantations produced cash crops that shaped much of South America and later parts of the Southern United States, like Louisiana, which was colonized initially by the French and Spanish, before the English took over the colony.

Profits from the sugar trade were so significant that it may have even helped America achieve independence from Great Britain. During the American Revolutionary War, Britain devoted much of its military defense to the protection of its Caribbean sugar colonies, as compared to the colonies on the North American mainland. By the turn of the 16th century, West Africans have become more important to New World slavery than indigenous Indian groups had. Many Africans had been skilled in sugar cane cultivation, and as New World slavery developed, the labor system became increasingly associated with blackness.

As North American colonies grew, and thousands of west and central Africans were brought in primarily as slaves, the English began to codify, or make into law, the labor and preservation of slavery based on race and gender. We'll now talk about the first British colony in what becomes the United States, Virginia.

Virginia's law makers were the earliest to use gender in making explicit distinctions about the work responsibilities of enslaved African men and women, and white indentured servants. Almost a century after Virginia became the first British colony, in what we later called the United States, they established a rule that went against everything the English had believed in and enforced regarding the importance of a child status.

In 1705, Robert Beverley, a legislator and historian, who also grew up as the son of a prominent Virginia plantation owner, wrote a book on the history and present state of Virginia. In distinguishing the differences between indentured servants, and these were contract workers with a defined period of time for working, and slaves, he wrote, and I quote, "Slaves are the Negros, and their posterity," that means their children, "following the condition of the mother,

according to the maxim, *partus sequitur ventrem*, they are called slaves in respect of the time of their servitude, because it is for life."

The fact that English lawmakers created an edict that went against gender norms in their country, and was rooted in economics, shows the importance of slavery. White men impregnated enslaved women routinely. If they enforced paternity and inherited statuses of children based on paternity, those men would lose money. So, they created a rule that all infants born to enslaved women, no matter the race or even the status of the father, would inherit the condition of the mother.

Another feature of Beverley's book was, he wanted to attract more English men and women to immigrate to the British colony. He assured potential colonists that they would not enter Virginia as slaves, and he distinguished between the labor of slaves and indentured servants. He wrote, "Because I have heard how strangely cruel and severe the service of this country is represented in some parts of England, I can't forebear affirming that the work of their servants and slaves is no other than what every common freed man does." So, in terms of the work that black slaves and English servants were to perform, the legislator stated, "The male servants and slaves of both sexes are employed together in tilling and manuring the ground, in sowing and planting tobacco, corn, et cetera."

The legislator also defined that slaves were Negros who would inherit the condition of the mother, and that all black slaves, regardless of sex, would work the ground, and that English women servants were not to work on the ground. Ultimately, these rules about labor, race, and gender had reverberations that influenced how enslaved men and women would be treated on plantations and smaller farms across colonial America. Black women were perceived as physically stronger than white women, and would perform the same strenuous agricultural labor as both black men and white men.

Further, white women were considered a protected class, not meant to perform harsh agricultural labor. Black women in contrast to white women were not protected, and were akin to black men in terms of the farming work they did. As slavery became a permanent fixture in Virginia, and more broadly, within colonial British America, black people experienced the dichotomy between freedom and slavery, especially as the 18th century progressed.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: This is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. And we're talking about the diverse experiences of enslaved African Americans. I'm your host, Hasan Kwame Jeffries. This podcast is a companion to the Southern Poverty Law Center's report on

teaching slavery in American schools. You can find the report at Tolerance.org/HardHistory. Now, we're going to turn our attention to Charleston, South Carolina, and the practice of urban slavery. Again, here's Deirdre Cooper Owens.

Deirdre Cooper Owens: At one point, South Carolina had the largest number of slaves. And in urban spaces, their numbers often predominated over white residents of the colony that later became a state. So, in urban centers like Charleston, especially as cash crops began to boom, slave owners began a trend that changed the way they lived and displayed their wealth to others. They began to demand house servants and craftsmen as an addition to the slave population on their plantations and large slave farms.

Thus, for wealthy white men who owned large numbers of black men and women, usually upwards of 30 or more, their need for slaves to perform more specialized work and domestic chores also meant that more of the enslaved engaged in more diverse and non-agricultural labor, especially in regions like South Carolina's low country and Georgia. Largely, enslaved men performed the skilled labor, such as driving, carpentry, and smith work, and their abilities to do so greatly increased their economic value among white slave owners and traders.

Like most enslaved men, bondswomen were mainly confined to field work in the late 18th century too. However, there were a few skilled domestic workers and slave nurses and midwives who began to appear on slave lists. Their numbers tended to be small and restricted to larger plantations. Although nursing was tedious labor for enslaved women, who continued to work in fields, their homes, took care of their families, their healing work allowed them to garner respect from the members of their slave communities, and sometimes earn money for their owners if they were sent to assist the local white community.

Teaching students to view slave labor through the lens of gender allows them to examine slavery more complexly. By understanding American slavery from various vantage points, ultimately aids students to broaden their views about the kinds of work men and women were supposed to do in early America. This teaching framework allows students to develop a fuller and more critical understanding of American slavery's diversity. For instance, region or place is really important. The life of a North Carolina slave on a tobacco plantation would be very different from that of a domestic slave who lived in Delaware.

Place is central to other themes mentioned, because understanding where and how black men, women, and children moved across the African continent, to the Caribbean, and migrated up and down colonial America, and lastly, the United States, demonstrates that the diverse

experiences of the enslaved included migration based the development of cash crops. All slaves did not live on large plantations. Some lived on small, family-owned farms, where they worked alongside their owners or released out for work.

Until the Antebellum era, from 1810 to 1860 or so, slaves worked on cash crops depending upon where they lived, and most did not pick cotton until the middle of the 19th century. In the Piedmont and Tidewater areas in Virginia, Maryland and North Carolina, tobacco was huge. In South Carolina, slaves worked in rice fields, grew and processed indigo, and later picked cotton. In New York, when slavery was legal, enslaved people worked on ships, at wharfs, performed agricultural and domestic labor, and worked as craftsmen. Whereas in Mississippi, enslaved people primarily picked cotton during the Antebellum period, until the end of the Civil War in 1865.

Region determined culture. Language, like the West African-influenced Gullah Geechee language spoken by many slaves in isolated parts of South Carolina, the Georgia coastal region, and Florida. And even skill levels in work: cotton pickers were considered largely unskilled compared to low country South Carolina and Georgia enslaved men, who were considered master iron workers. Even blues music that came out

of Mississippi has origins in slavery from that region. There were commonalities that linked slavery throughout the years, but also regional distinctions emerged as well.

What teachers of American slavery must emphasize for their students is how varied the experiences of the enslaved were over three centuries. Teaching American slavery does not have to be a task fraught with difficulty. It is one of the subfields of United States history that has flourished for many decades. With a plethora of primary and secondary sources available, teachers can employ a variety of approaches that reveal how the enslaved lived through and responded to their bondage over time. I'll list four that I find really helpful for my students.

Harriet Jacobs, who was a former slave, wrote a memoir, *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl*, that spoke about her experiences and escape from slavery in North Carolina. The Works Progress Administration Slave Narratives was a collection of over 3 thousand interviews of men and women who were formerly enslaved, and that source can be found on the Library of Congress's website. Pioneering historian, Deborah Gray White, wrote, *Aren't I A Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, that speaks about the unique experiences of black women across the South, living in bondage. And lastly, Ira Berlin's *Generations of Captivity: A*

History of African American Slaves provides a wonderful backdrop of the development of slavery in what becomes the United States of America.

Through an examination of race, region, place, labor, gender and a host of other topics and themes, students are able to move past the one note generalizations that describe the enslaved found in popular culture and media representations. They can think deeply about how slavery was not solely a southern phenomenon, but began as a colonial American institution that had international implications. As such, slavery informed how the United States would ultimately treat people of African descent who lived within its borders, even after the labor system was abolished. For history teachers, the reward in teaching these kinds of lessons about American slavery is that a new generation of Americans can appreciate how all members of society contribute to the building of a nation, even those considered the most oppressed.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Dr. Deirdre Cooper Owens is an assistant professor of history at Queens College, City University of New York. She's also the author of *Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology*, published by the University of Georgia Press.

Teaching Hard History is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a valuable collection of essays called Understanding and Teaching American Slavery. In each episode, we're featuring a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection.

We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials, which are available at Tolerance.org. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units, and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of American Slavery. Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find those online at Tolerance.org. Thanks to Dr. Cooper Owens for sharing her insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shae Shackleford, with production assistance from Tori Marlin and Robert Auld at the Radio Foundation Studios in New York.

Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zabriskie. If you like what we're doing, please let your friends and colleagues know, and take a minute to review us in iTunes. We always appreciate the feedback. I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, associate professor of history at the Ohio State University and your host. You've been listening to *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- Mary Raines (Federal Writers' Project), *South Carolina Narratives, Volume XIV, Part 4*
- Robert Beverley, *The History and Present State of Virginia*
- Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
- Library of Congress, Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1938
- Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South*
- Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves*

Episode 8: Film and the History of Slavery

Film has long shaped our nation's historical memory, for good and bad. Film historian Ron Briley offers ways to responsibly use films in the classroom to reframe the typical narrative of American slavery and Reconstruction.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, Exploring Diversity and Stereotypes in Film
- Teaching Tolerance, Examining Multiple Perspectives in Film
- Teaching Hard History, Episode 9: Ten More: Film and the History of Slavery (podcast)

Ron Briley

- *All-Stars and Movie Stars: Sports in Film and History*
- *The Ambivalent Legacy of Elia Kazan: The Politics of the Post-HUAC Films*
- *The Baseball Film in Postwar America*
- LA Progressive (articles)

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: I have always loved the movies. Among my fondest childhood memories are trips with Aunt Shirley and Aunt Shelley to the old Kings Plaza Theater on Flatbush Avenue in Brooklyn. There, I left the borough behind to explore galaxies far, far away, and phoned home when I found the *Lost Ark* before traipsing through the *Temple of Doom*.

When I was old enough to go to the movies by myself, I always tried to do the right thing and not be a menace to society, so I stuck to house parties, where I had a little bit of juice, because I wasn't just coming to America; I was straight out of Brooklyn. After my school days at Morehouse, I spent more than a few dead presidents waiting to exhale on a Friday, chasing a love jones, but settling for some soul food with my best man at the barber shop. So, it should come as no surprise that my favorite class to teach is African-American history through film.

My film class covers the black experience from slavery through the present. Once a week, we meet at a theater on the outskirts of campus and watch a major motion picture. The last time I taught the class, we started with *12 Years A Slave* and ended with *Moonlight*, and in between, we screened everything from *Amistad* and *Glory* to *Fences* and *Fruitvale Station*. These movies make the black experience come alive, adding depth and dimension to the famous and the

forgotten, to the extraordinary and the everyday. They help students imagine the seemingly unimaginable; generating empathy by capturing and conveying deep emotion.

As much as my students enjoy these films, they alone are not enough to teach them to think critically about popular portrayals of hard history like American slavery, so I pair every movie with documentary films. Sometimes, three and four a week. I found that students who resist reading 20 minutes a night will watch a two-hour documentary in a heartbeat.

In the past, I've put *12 Years a Slave* together with *Unchained Memories,* and *Glory* with *The Abolitionists*, and have paired both of these films with episodes of Africans in America. Doing so provides students with critical background information. It also challenges their basic assumption that what appears on screen must be true. This happens when what is discussed in a documentary, such as women's resistance to slavery, fails to show up in a movie about enslaved resistance, such as the *Birth of a Nation*.

The old Kings Plaza Movie Theater on Flatbush Avenue closed not that long ago after a 40-year run, but the memories of my outings there are as vivid as ever, because that's where I learned to love the movies, and that's also where I learned about the power of film.

I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. It's a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides a detailed look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In each episode, we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material, and offering practical classroom exercises.

Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges, so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery. For students to get the most out of movies in the classroom, they need to be able to understand what they are watching. How does a depiction of slavery onscreen compare to historical reality? What does this tell us about the time period the film was made? In the end, students need to be able to ask and answer, "How does a particular film help us better understand American slavery?"

In this episode, Ron Briley shares ideas for incorporating movies into your lesson plans. He recommends specific films that will allow you to explore topics from the Middle Passage to

Reconstruction. He also suggests pedagogical techniques, such as using primary source material to help students critically analyze those films. I'll see you on the other side. Wakanda forever.

Ron Briley: I've employed film in the classroom now for almost 40 years, and I've found it an incredibly rewarding experience. When I talk to students many years later, it is often what they remember the most from the classroom and the discussions surrounding these films, and I'd like to share with some of my fellow teachers some of those challenges and excitement of using film, especially to teach a controversial, important topic such as American slavery.

First, let me just mention, before we look at some specific films, some of the reasons for using film in the history classroom, both documentaries and feature films. First of all, for better or worse, as much as we might want students to read, unfortunately, many students learn their history through film, and thus I think it's essential to bring film into the classroom. We might wish that they would be reading the leading historical monographs, reading scholarly journals. Instead, like most Americans, they're going to be watching movies.

So, I think what we need to do as teachers is sort of accept that fact, and then, I think it's important to learn some critical viewing skills and how to ask questions of the material that they're watching. What I hope is that by using film in the classroom, this will encourage students to dig deeper and to actually do some reading assignments, and I usually give bibliographies and make suggestions as to how students can then further pursue the topic that's been introduced through film.

Another really good aspect of film is that it introduces empathy, and I think this is so important for our students. It's different sometimes, seeing it on the screen. Let me do a quick example. Say *The Grapes of Wrath*, for a moment. Wonderful book that really depicts in so many strong ways the travails of the Joad family in America during the Great Depression. However, seeing a film clip from John Ford's *The Grapes of Wrath* seems to drive this home even better than Steinbeck's wonderful text. Hopefully, students would look at both, but I think the idea of the film brings such empathy, and I think that in a controversial, emotional topic such as American slavery, this is an important contribution that film can make.

Another really good aspect for using film is, when you're looking at a film in the classroom, it's not just the subject on the screen that you're looking at, but you're also looking at the values of the time period in which the film was made, how especially feature films reflect the time period in which they were made. They reflect the values of that period. Thus, a film dealing with

American slavery, if it's made after the civil rights movement, it's often going to have a very different perspective than one that was made before the civil rights movement. So, I think you really have to look at how the values of the time period in which the film is made are also reflected on the screen, and I think that is something very important that film brings to the classroom.

Then of course, with a topic like American slavery, and probably using film in general, you're going to get complaints sometimes from parents. On one level, it goes with the territory, especially when you teach and have the courage to teach controversial subjects. I think if you look at some of the reasons for teaching film that I've outlined here, and, I think, present them to the parents, I think you can win most of them over. I've certainly found that to be true in my teaching career, but I think film is too important to not be employed in the classroom. Again, I would really encourage teachers to use film in tackling a subject such as American slavery.

Now, obviously for an emotional subject such as American slavery, you need to very carefully prepare the students for what they're about to see. Doesn't mean they will necessarily be comfortable with it, but you don't want to shock them. You want to prepare them. And, in terms of using film, preparation is essential. Of course, there are some very negative stereotypes about using film in the classroom. It's a Friday afternoon, everyone's tired, and you just simply put on the film and everyone just kind of takes the afternoon off.

Well, film is much more important than that, and teachers need to carefully prepare films that they're going to use in the classroom. For example, an English teacher would not teach a book they had never read before, and I think the same thing is true for history teachers. If you're going to use a film in the classroom, you can't just put it up there and expect students to watch it and get something out of it. You have to very carefully screen the film first, be very familiar with the film text.

I think that preparation in regard to films is essential, and also, I think there are a few other things in regard to teaching film. I think there's a tendency sometimes to get overly hung up on the details. Is this exactly the right uniform in a military film? You can get hung up on that sort of thing, and sometimes lose sight of the larger historical issues and truths. I think most filmmakers try to get this right, but that's really not the thing to focus on in the classroom. It's really these larger historical truths that are essential to engage our students.

Also, especially when using feature films, teachers need to realize that in order to tell a story within a two-hour format, it's very important for the director, the filmmakers, to compress time, to fit it within these two hours. Also, you sometimes have to use composite characters to do this, and you don't want to falsify history, but I think sometimes in looking at films, there's a tendency to be overly critical of filmmakers when they don't follow every historical detail. I think that teachers need to point this out, and students need to be educated in that regard so they continue to focus on the larger historical truths that the film is trying to get across about a subject such as American slavery.

Another aspect is time. Time is a huge consideration. Always, always crucial in the classroom. It would be wonderful if you had the time to screen an entire film, but most teachers do not have the time to show a two-hour film. Maybe occasionally you do, but most of the time, that's not going to happen. So, what you really need to do is carefully pick out film clips. A 10, 15, probably tops-20-minute clip from the film. Students have to be introduced very carefully, prepared, say, with characters, what's sort of going on in the plot. You need to very carefully set up that selected film clip to raise some of the points you would like to raise with the class. But it's very important to set the context for those clips that you're going to use.

In selecting a clip, first of all, you need to screen the film carefully, okay? That's the first step, and be taking some notes. Think about, maybe, what are the themes that you would really like to raise with your students from this film? And look at a clip that really brings these issues to the forefront. For example, in *Gone With the Wind*, there is the character of Mammy, a former slave woman who is the mammy to Scarlett O'Hara, has looked after her, brought her up since she was a child, and has been like almost a mother to her.

You can pick a scene with her interaction with Miss Scarlett, and you can raise a lot of questions about the roles of women, the roles of black women, especially black women in slavery. Some of the incredible inconsistencies with slavery. How a system based on this idea of racial discrimination, inferiority then places the training of their own children in the hands of black women. Things like that can be brought out. I think it depends on what it is that, as a teacher, you're wanting to illustrate, that you want to draw out of the film. There's probably a lot of different issues that you could raise. Maybe look at what you think will resonate best with your students.

And then last but certainly not least, in this era in which we hear so much about fake news and people being misled by items on Facebook, et cetera, it's so essential that we endow our students

with critical viewing skills and ask difficult, challenging, critical questions of images. I think that a serious engagement with film in the history classroom is simply something we must do in order to prepare better citizens. So, for all these reasons, I think film offers a wonderful opportunity for teachers, and really is essential in the classroom.

An area where we might look at employing film in the classroom and how feature films have really influenced how we view a period is in the teaching of Reconstruction, and I think in teaching Reconstruction, you must relate that to slavery, because I think the popular perception of Reconstruction is a rather negative one. Historians such as Eric Foner have done a great job in recent years of trying to change how we perceive Reconstruction; to view Reconstruction as a great experiment, a biracial coalition seeking to promote racial understanding, trying to overcome the burden of slavery.

But instead, Reconstruction is often viewed, as author Claude Bowers put it, as the "Tragic Era," in which the South was taken advantage of after the war by free blacks, northern carpetbaggers, the freedmen former slaves, and poor southern whites. Popular culture has often presented Reconstruction as a travesty in which white southerners were treated terribly till they rose up and redeemed the South and retook control. That is the myth of Reconstruction, and it has certainly been perpetuated by Hollywood.

I think it's very important to look at Reconstruction because presenting Reconstruction this way, as former slaves, blacks, out of control, ends up providing a justification of slavery. In addition to the economic aspects of slavery, certainly racial control was part of the institution of American slavery, and therefore, it's very important that this stereotype of Reconstruction be challenged as historians like Eric Foner have done.

What I would like to do is talk about some specific examples. This sort of myth of Reconstruction, which one still often finds in the history classroom and in some textbooks, has been perpetuated in films such as *Birth of a Nation* from 1915 and *Gone With the Wind* from 1939. These two pivotal films really present the negative stereotype of Reconstruction, which has permeated American popular culture, and to a great extent, American politics throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century.

Let me talk about using these two very controversial films, clips from them, in the classroom. The first one that I would like to talk about is *Birth of a Nation*, made in 1915, by director D.W. Griffith. The film is still shown in lots of film classes. It's well over three hours, dealing with the

Civil War and Reconstruction. It introduced many important film techniques. It is a great work of art.

Unfortunately, that work of art perpetuates racist ideas, attitudes and stereotypes, and thus, you have to very much prepare students for this. The clip that I like to use, one I think really works best, is sort of the last 20 minutes of the film. Again, it's a well over three-hour film. So, what's occurring at the end of the film that the teacher would want to set up is, you have two families. The Cameron family is a southern family, again, white family. The Stonemans, a northern family. The senior member of the Stoneman family is a radical Republican. Sounds like a strange term today. It's a radical Republican who wants to institute racial equality in the South, and he has raised to prominence in the South a black man named Silas Lynch. Interesting choice of words for the character.

What happens is, Silas Lynch reveals that he wants to marry a white woman, and Stoneman seems okay with this till he finds out that the woman that Silas Lynch wants to marry is his daughter, Elsa. This sets off the entire conflict here, where Elsa is taken captive, the father is taken captive in town; meanwhile out in the countryside, freed blacks are taking over and attacking a cabin in which the Stoneman and Cameron families, other members of the family, have taken refuge.

Things look bad. Again, the emphasis here is that what the blacks want to do is break in, attack, and rape the white women. So, who's going to ride to the rescue? In this film version, the Ku Klux Klan rides to the rescue and saves the day. The South and southern virtue is symbolized by the women who are rescued from the clutches of the blacks, and the Klan is viewed as the hero, and then the film concludes with the white families from the South and the North are reconciled while the film actually shows the 15th Amendment being openly violated, and blacks being refused the right to vote, and somehow, the North and South is reconciled with blacks once again put in their place.

Incredibly racist material based on a novel and a play by Thomas Dixon, who just also happened to be a good friend of President Woodrow Wilson. Now, the way the Klan is shown is, by today's standards, it's almost laughable. One has to be very careful and set this up that the students watching this really don't laugh at this. This is very serious business, because what actually happened in America in 1915 is Americans went to the theater. Many whites saw this. Racial violence in the country increased. Lynchings increased.

What students need to realize is, what might seem somewhat ludicrous on the screen now very much influenced events in 1915 and encouraged discrimination, violence against black Americans. So you're looking at the racism of Reconstruction perpetuated into the progressive era of 1915, when the film was made. The film was very popular. Blacks protested it. It was not actually taken out of circulation until World War I, when there was a feeling that you needed black support for the war effort. In many states, the film was withdrawn after three years.

This is a very important source to introduce to students, but also, a very troubling source. Very complicated issues. Challenging issues to deal with in the classroom, but I think important issues to deal with. The sexual politics of slavery, of Reconstruction, are very important topics, and they do resonate with students. It's interesting that the director, D.W. Griffith, didn't think the film was racist, even though he said that he did not want black men touching white women in the filming of *Birth of a Nation*. So therefore, as ludicrous as it might seem, actually, almost all of the blacks in the film are played by whites, using shoe polish and blackface.

A very troubling moment in American history. However, in many textbooks, many teachers, presentations, this stereotype of Reconstruction has been perpetuated. And it continued with the very famous *Gone With the Wind* in 1939, and I use *Gone With the Wind* after we have screened the *Birth of a Nation*. The first half of the film is set in slavery; the second half of *Gone With the Wind* deals with Reconstruction, and *Gone With the Wind* is a little less over the top in its racism than *Birth of a Nation*. The NAACP insisted that use of, for example, the N-word, be taken out of the film, and actually, the Klan is not mentioned by name, but is certainly alluded to.

I think there's particularly one scene there that I would like to talk about, that teachers might employ in the classroom. Let me spend a few minutes talking about that scene in *Gone With the Wind*. I think a useful way to view *Gone With the Wind*, and especially its heroine, Scarlett O'Hara, is to see Scarlett O'Hara as a symbol of the South. She is under attack in the film as the South was under attack during Reconstruction. I don't use these words lightly, but in this stereotype, you're really sort of looking at the rape of the South by poor southern whites, carpetbaggers from the north, and freed blacks. The saviors of the South? The Ku Klux Klan, again.

In the particular scene that I would use from the second half of the film, you have Scarlett O'Hara who has married a man by the name of Mr. Kennedy, and she has worked with him, and they've set up a lumber company. After the Civil War here, she has a very successful business.

What happens is that she takes a shortcut while driving in her buggy, a shortcut through a shantytown. Living in the shantytown are a lot of poor whites and freed blacks. What happens is they attack Scarlett O'Hara, okay? And it looks as if she is about to be raped. She passes out.

She is rescued, however, by Big Sam, a loyal former slave from her plantation terra. He comes to her rescue and she is able to escape with Big Sam. She goes to her husband, who rewards Big Sam for his faithful service, and Big Sam says he's had enough with these carpetbaggers. So, you haven't shown actually northern carpetbaggers involved in the rape, but it's very clear that they're behind these freed blacks and poor southern whites.

Then, her husband says, "I'll take care of this." He says he's going to a political meeting, and she needs to go visit her friends. By the way, it's clear that this is not really a political meeting. The film emphasizes that he takes out his pistol, puts it in his holster, pats the gun. Clearly, he and his friends are going to go take revenge against the shantytown, and the political meeting he's referring to really is the Klan, although the word Klan is not used in the film.

Then the film shifts to the women that evening, knowing that their men have gone out on this mission. Scarlett O'Hara doesn't quite understand the total nature of the mission. However, Rhett Butler, a man she later marries, comes to see her and the other women, and wants to warn the white southerners that the Yankee troops are waiting in ambush. Butler, however, does not get there in time, and the ambush is completed, and Scarlett's husband is killed. However, they did succeed in burning down the shantytown.

Again, the bad guys are the northern troops, the freed blacks, except for loyal former slaves like Sam, and this is all orchestrated by the carpetbaggers. But again, this view of Reconstruction very much perpetuated in popular culture, from *Gone With the Wind* down to the present.

I'm older. I went to school in the 1960s, and this was very much the view of Reconstruction that I was taught, and I still see it throughout our culture. So, I think using these films to look at how cultural stereotypes are established are very important, and encouraging students to challenge these types of cultural stereotypes. So, I think these two films looking at the myth of Reconstruction are very important to use in the classroom.

One of the things students notice is some of the difference between *Gone With the Wind* and *Birth of a Nation*. Still plenty of racial stereotyping, et cetera, but in many ways, the racist is less obvious, and students do note this. But nevertheless, they notice the connections between the

two films. They notice how, oh, there seems to be a reference here to the Klan, but the Klan is not mentioned by name. They're a terrorist organization that shall not be named, and they do pick up on these subtle differences. They pick up on these subtleties.

But what they also perceive, and they do a good job of this, of seeing, in many ways, how the film texts are similar. You still have this idea in both films of southern womanhood symbolizing southern civilization that's under assault, and we have to protect southern womanhood. It also ties into discussion of the Lost Cause in the South, and many times leads us into discussion of Confederate monuments and how the memory of slavery, Reconstruction is molded in the American mind.

Again, I try to always bring in reading material on this that will expand these issues, and in terms of Confederate monuments, there's a new book out by the New Orleans mayor, Mitch Landrieu, that raises many of these same issues in regard to confederate monuments. So, I think you can take these film texts and use them to take us right into contemporary, modern day discussions and subjects.

Now, I like to talk about two other feature films, and these feature films do a better job of bringing in black agency. That is the Steven Spielberg film, *Amistad*, and the Edward Zwick film, *Glory*. Let's begin with Amistad. The film deals with a slave mutiny aboard a Spanish slave ship. What happens is, the mutiny is successful. However, after the mutiny, the ship ends up off the coast of North America, and the mutineers are taken in by the American government, and the question is, what to do with them?

Again, it's important that the students understand that this is based on a true story and that the basic overall facts in the film are accurate, but there are a few caveats that we should take a look at. The film really focuses not so much on the revolt itself, but on the court case. What do we do with these slaves who have mutinied and have now been taken into custody by the United States government? The Spanish government wants them returned. Abolitionists take on the case and argue for the freedom of the slaves.

The film culminates in a series of court cases, but culminates in the arguments of John Quincy Adams, former president, who is now in the House of Representatives and played by Anthony Hopkins, in a role for which he was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor. It culminates in his argument before the Supreme Court, in which he basically appeals for the freedom for the mutineers and their leader, Cinqué. He says that they should be freed, and

he uses primarily arguments from the Declaration of Independence. He appeals to the court using the arguments of people like Jefferson, even though he was a slave owner. His own father, John Adams, George Washington, also a slave owner. And what happens is, the court agrees, and the mutineers are freed and returned to their home in West Africa.

Now, there's a couple of problems with the film. First of all, though, I would use it because it does show a sense of black agency, even though the emphasis is sometimes more on the court case than the actual mutiny. But one of the things that I think is very good to use with the film is, during the testimony, there is a flashback to the Middle Passage. Cinqué, through an interpreter, tells the story of what happened to his people in the Middle Passage. It shows the capture of Cinqué and many others, how they're brought to a slave garrison, sold to a Spanish slave vessel, and there, the emphasis is then on the terrible conditions below deck.

One of the things that probably really stands out that's very powerful is, as people get ill, they die, they throw people overboard, and they talk about actually sharks following the ship for these bodies that are going to be thrown overboard. When they think they're going to be confronted by a vessel attempting to stop the slave trade, they have people in chains and simply throw them overboard, alive, to drown and to be devoured by sharks. It's a very, very powerful scene. Again, I think the fact that it's not simply told with someone just telling the story in a verbal fashion, but that it's shown on the screen, really reinforces just the horror, well, the holocaust, of the transatlantic slave trade.

And you can read all you want to for students about the Middle Passage, but seeing this on the big screen, it's graphic, it's troubling, but nevertheless, I think very important for students to actually see this. So, I think the Middle Passage segment of the film is a very strong element to include in the classroom.

But something else that I would point out to students about the film is that, while it does show black agency in terms of the slave revolt and finally winning their freedom, Hollywood films often tend to emphasize the white characters. So in many ways, the center of the film becomes John Quincy Adams making his arguments before the Supreme Court, and the film tends to ignore the fact that the court, in setting these former slaves free, really was not so much using the Declaration of Independence in their reasoning. They were really talking more about property rights, which they wanted to be sure were protected. After all, this is the same Supreme Court that issues the Dred Scott decision later. Of course, that decision upheld that blacks were not citizens of the United States and therefore, there could be no restrictions legislatively put on

slavery and declared them as a compromise, unconstitutional. I think that aspect needs to be pointed out in students evaluating the film; this tendency to often, even in films that are empathetic toward blacks, to still emphasize the white character.

Another film that shows black agency is Glory, and this film, again, got very good marks from historians. It tells the true story of the 54th Massachusetts regiment in the Civil War, and this was a black regiment. The North was reluctant to raise this regiment. Lincoln was reluctant. But pressured by people like Frederick Douglass, this regiment of black troops is formed, made up of free blacks from the North, made up from former slaves from the South, and they are commanded by a white Colonel Robert Shaw, who's played by Matthew Broderick.

They present this regiment finally going into action in the assault against Fort Wagner in South Carolina, and the film very much does a good job of showing black agency as the troops want to fight for their freedom. This was not something that was just done by whites and handed to blacks. Instead, this was something that blacks took a very important role in, and essentially, the information on the attack is accurate. The attack was unsuccessful, and what you have, in a lack of respect afterwards, is sort of a mass grave in which the black troops were thrown in, their bodies.

Now, in terms of using this in the classroom, there are a couple of clips that you might use, okay? One scene that's very powerful is how Colonel Shaw decides that he has to bring discipline to his black troops. One of them is a composite character by the name of Silas Trip, played by Denzel Washington, who won an Academy Award here for Best Supporting Actor in this role. In this particular scene, Matthew Broderick, playing Colonel Shaw, is trying to provide a sense of discipline for his black troops, and the character Silas Trip, played by Denzel Washington, who is a former slave with a rebellious streak who has run away and joined the Union army, has left the regiment without permission.

One problem for the 54th Regiment is that they lack supplies. They do not have shoes, and his feet are killing him. He's not deserting. He is actually foraging, looking for shoes and food. When he is brought back, to instill discipline, Colonel Shaw says there's no choice but to give him a lashing. As he is tied down to be lashed, his uniform is removed and his back is covered with scars from his experience as a rebellious slave, and you realize that he's been beaten a great many times already as a slave, and now the Union army is also administering this beating. You can see the pain in Shaw's face as he realizes now that he's going to inflict more punishment upon Trip, and Trip does not cry out. Tears roll down his eyes, and the two men look at one

another, and both men form a bond through this terrible scene, as actually, at the end of the film, they're buried together in a mass grave after the unsuccessful assault on Fort Wagner in South Carolina. That's a very, very powerful scene that one might use.

Another scene that one might use in the classroom is actually the final assault. Some have criticized the assault for perhaps celebrating violence. On the other hand, it is worth remembering that the terrible violence of the Civil War did achieve the end of slavery, and that's certainly something to talk about in the classroom with your students. But the assault is, again, unsuccessful and in the end, you see Colonel Shaw, the white officer, thrown into this mass grave with the black troops.

It might be also worth pointing out that having black troops with a white commanding officer, that was really the standard for American Forces from the Civil War era down to World War II. That really, the American Army, American Forces, Armed Services, really only integrated by President Truman after an executive order, after the Second World War. It's worth pointing out that for the black troops shown in the film, these are composite characters. Colonel Shaw is an actual historical character, and much of the film is based upon his letters to his parents back in Massachusetts, and these letters are often read in the film. Many times, the emphasis upon white characters also relates to the available sources as well as, to be honest, wanting the film to appeal to white audiences.

So, I would consider both *Amistad* and *Glory* feature films that present a sense of black agency. But, in terms of critical viewing skills, discussions might look at how whites remain privileged in these films. These are four feature films. There are many others. Also, excellent documentaries which one could use in the classroom. I think these four are ones that will appeal to students and introduce some very important ideas into the classroom. It's challenging to present these images dealing with slavery. It can be controversial. But I think it's incredibly worthwhile for what it provides students in terms of visual literacy.

I really encourage teachers to use film in the classroom. I've found it so rewarding both for me and for my students, and you know what? Film is a lot of fun in the classroom, too, and I think that's allowed even when we're dealing with some controversial subjects.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Ron Briley is a film historian who recently retired from Sandia Preparatory School in Albuquerque, New Mexico after teaching history for 37 years. He was also

an adjunct professor of history at the University of New Mexico, Valencia campus for 20 years. Mr. Briley is the author of five books and numerous articles on the intersection of history, politics and film.

Teaching Hard History is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They are the publishers of a valuable collection of essays called Understanding and Teaching American Slavery. In each episode, we feature a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection. We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials, which are available at Tolerance.org. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units, and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of American slavery.

Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find those online at Tolerance.org. Thanks to Mr. Briley for sharing his insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shea Shackleford, with production assistance from Tori Marlin and Megan Camerick at KUNM public radio. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zabriski.

If you like what we're doing, please let your friends and colleagues know, and take a minute to review us in iTunes. We always appreciate the feedback. I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, associate professor of history at the Ohio State University, and your host for *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- John Ford, *The Grapes of Wrath* (film)
- Colonial Williamsburg Foundation: Slavery and Remembrance, Middle Passage
- Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind* (film)
- Claude G. Bowers, *The Tragic Era The Revolution After Lincoln*
- D. W. Griffith, *The Birth of a Nation* (film)
- Thomas Dixon, *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*
- Steven Spielberg, *Amistad* (film)
- Mitch Landrieu, *In the Shadow of Statues: A White Southerner Confronts History*
- Teaching Tolerance: Texts, *Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857)*
- Edward Zwick, *Glory* (film)
- University of Wisconsin Press, *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*
- Teaching Tolerance, A Framework for Teaching American Slavery

Episode 9: (Bonus) Ten More … Film and the History of Slavery

Film historian Ron Briley returns with more documentary, feature film and miniseries suggestions for history and English instructors. From Ken Burns to Black Panther, this episode offers background and strategies for incorporating pop culture into classroom lessons.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, Exploring Diversity and Stereotypes in Film
- Teaching Tolerance, Examining Multiple Perspectives in Film
- Teaching Hard History, Episode 8: Film and the History of Slavery (podcast)

Ron Briley

- *All-Stars and Movie Stars: Sports in Film and History*
- *The Ambivalent Legacy of Elia Kazan: The Politics of the Post-HUAC Films*
- *The Baseball Film in Postwar America*
- LA Progressive (articles)

Transcript

Movie advertisement: *(singing)*

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is a bonus episode of *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. This special series is from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides a detailed look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American Slavery. In our previous episode we spoke with Ron Briley about using film to teach slavery in the classroom.

Ron Briley: Students do notice the connections between the two films, and many times leads us into discussion of how the memory of slavery is molded in the American mind.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: In this bonus episode, Ron provides a great list of additional films and documentaries that you can use with your students. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy.

Ron Briley: Previously, we discussed teaching American slavery using films such as *Birth of a Nation, Gone With the Wind, Amistad* and *Glory* to be incorporated into the history classroom to teach about American slavery. Today, I'd like to talk about additional films one might bring into the classroom to teach slavery.

There are a number of choices, both documentary and feature films. So, I would like to briefly talk about a few of these films that teachers might consider using. First maybe we should look at documentaries. It's very important for teachers to realize that documentaries are not simply facts. They are representations of facts and that documentaries have a point of view which they're trying to drive home. So, students need to be very careful when presented with documentaries and ask some of the same questions of documentaries that they ask of feature films. So, I think that's very important that students must realize that documentaries are also subjective and not simply objective.

I think there have been a couple of excellent ones produced by PBS that we might talk about for just a minute. One of those is the Ken Burns *Civil War* series from 1993. Now most of that series deals with Civil War battles and it's very well done. I think for our purposes, we might want to consider the first

episode which focuses on slavery as the primary cause of the Civil War. This is a causation that is widely accepted by American historians, however, again in the general culture this is not really the case. When you often ask Americans about the cause of the Civil War, you'll have discussions of economics, and especially of state's rights. I think this particular episode is very good in the classroom for making a strong case to students that indeed slavery is first and foremost in the causation of the Civil War.

Something I've also done in the classroom sometimes is used some of the secessionist documents and look at the wording of those, and again you will see how prominent a role slavery plays in this, and reinforces the case made by Burns. Although it is interesting this remains a very hot subject for some students and sure to provoke some discussion in the classroom. But again, I think this first episode of Burns' is really excellent for looking at the central role played by slavery in causing the Civil War. We'd really encourage teachers to use it in the classroom.

Another PBS production, which is less well known is from 2005, entitled *Slavery and the Making of America*. It's a four-part documentary by a film maker Dante Joseph James, and the series uses, again, a lot of documentary techniques but also uses reenactments of various episodes in the history of slavery, and I think these reenactments tend to make this series more popular with students.

Especially of interest is episode one, "The Downward Spiral," which does a good job developing the origins of American slavery, as well as slave resistance. I think this particular episode is especially good for looking at the role of Bacon's Rebellion in which you had poor whites and

blacks coming together to oppose the aristocracy in colonial Virginia and how efforts were made with slave codes to separate poor blacks and whites.

I think this is really a crucial issue to be discussed and certainly has repercussions down to the present that can be discussed and addressed in the classroom. I've also found it useful to use episode three, "Seeds of Destruction," which is excellent on abolitionism, a very important topic to get into the classroom, in terms of reform movements, encouraging student activism, and of course, this episode also deals with the Civil War.

I think this particular documentary is also good because of the supplementary materials available, for example, WPA [Works Project Administration] slave interviews are available on the website and there's a very strong companion volume by James Oliver Horton and Louis E. Horton. This did not do as well as the Burns documentary in terms of ratings, but I think in terms of the classroom, it's a very useful teaching tool in terms of using documentaries.

Other films which teachers might consider using in the classroom, one of course is the 1977 television series, *Roots*. This is very long one, one could really not bring in the whole series, and in some ways it is dated, and the book on which it is based by Alex Haley does indeed have some problems, as far as historical accuracy, nevertheless, Roots is a very important source, because this television series in 1977, which looked at slavery from a black perspective, addressed largely to a white audience, had incredible ratings, and really did begin to change the perception of some Americans about slavery. I think looking at the history of Kunta Kinte and his family is very useful.

I think that something else comes out in the television series and that is the perspective of a black female slave, and here you have to consider the story of his daughter, Kizzy Reynolds in the series. I think that is a topic which is often rather ignored and that is black women in slavery. Enslaved black women. I think that's very important that students take a look at.

Here, you might also look at the 1998 film, *Beloved*, which was based on the 1987 novel by Toni Morrison starring Oprah Winfrey and directed by Jonathan Demme. Again, this is a good source because you're looking at the degree of sexual exploitation within American slavery, a topic that many would wish to ignore, but I think in terms of understanding slavery, I think the exploitation of black women by white masters as Winthrop Jordan talked about in his book, *White Over Black*, is something that needs to be discussed.

I would encourage teachers to think about using Beloved in the classroom.

Another film that you might use is another Seven Spielberg film. We've talked before about *Amistad*, but also one must look at his *Abraham Lincoln* from 2012. A great film, a simply marvelous performance by Daniel Day-Lewis in the title role for which he won an Oscar. But again, there is some problems with this production. The film concentrates upon how Lincoln sought to manage and manipulate Congress to obtain ratification of the 13th amendment and end slavery. The film is very strong on that topic.

However, there's very little in the way of black agency in the film, and in fact, there are not very many black people in the film. This is primarily a film about whites and their efforts to end slavery. So, I think the film is very good, but I think there are also some limitations the film and if one uses Lincoln, one has to look at some of the broader issues as well and perhaps again think of *Glory* and the role of black agency with the 54th Massachusetts regiment.

Let's also, perhaps, look at some more recent films dealing with slavery. One of those is *12 years of Slave*, in 2013. Directed by British director Steve McQueen, not to be confused with the American actor, and the film won best picture. It's based upon the 1853 slave narrative by Solomon Northup who was a free black in the north who was kidnapped in the north and taken into the south and spent 12 years as a slave before being freed and writing this powerful memoir, which also students might read for use in the classroom.

The film itself has a great deal of violence, it has a great deal of sexuality. I'm sure that some school districts would have trouble with using the film in the classroom, but slavery was a brutal institution, and it's hard to talk about slavery without including some of that brutality. So thus, I think the film is a very strong one.

Less graphic, and if you really can't use *12 Years of Slave* in the classroom, you might look at the 1984 PBS production *Solomon Northup's Odyssey*, in which a film historian Robert Brent Toplin plays a key role in producing, and that film raises many of the same themes but in a less graphic fashion in terms of sexuality and brutality. That would be a possibility to use as well. *12 Years of Slave* did very well with the Oscars but not as well with the box office.

Another film that's worth looking at and considering for the classroom but very controversial is the 2016 version, *Birth of a Nation*. This particular film concentrates on the 1831 slave revolt in Virginia led by Nat Turner in which 60 whites perished and hundreds of enslaved people were murdered in retaliation, the vast majority of them having nothing whatsoever to do with the revolt.

This again is a very graphic film which depicts the brutality of slavery and also the brutality of a revolt against that institution. However, this film failed again at the box office. It had been a sensation at the Sundance Film Festival. Many people anticipated this film would do quite well at the box office, but one of the things that happened had to do with the film's director, Nate Parker, and actually star as well, and that dealt with allegations of sexual misconduct by Parker, an accusation of assault from earlier in his career, in which the woman who made the accusations ended up committing suicide. When this came to light, there was much less support for Parker's film. Nevertheless, I think the film and some clips from it still could be useful in the classroom. Also, there's several good books on Nat Turner that one might bring into the classroom here as well including the book by Steven Oates entitled *The Fires of Jubilee, Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion*.

Another recent film from 2016 as well is entitled *The Free State of Jones*. This is another film which did not do well at the box office, at all. Big name cast, starring Matthew McConaughey, directed by Gary Ross, and based on a very interesting true story which is not well known, and concerns poor southern whites in Mississippi led by a man named Newton Knight played by McConaughey who rebelled against the Confederacy and Southern Planters. Knight and his followers were poor southern whites who did not own slaves. They resented very much Southern Confederate conscription laws which allowed exemptions for slave owners, and therefore they rebelled against being drafted and becoming cannon fodder in the war. In fact, ended up with a secessionist free state of Jones.

The film also is strong in that it depicts the reconstruction era in a very positive fashion. It does show Jones and Newton Knight in a positive way, a positive fashion, providing a biracial coalition, and in fact, Knight also remarried a black woman and had a biracial family. It's a very interesting film, yet it did not do well at the box office at all. Here, I think it raises the question of do people want to see films about American slavery? It's a difficult topic, it's a controversial topic, many people would rather not talk about it. Thus, I think all the more important about including it in the classroom.

So certainly, you get a lot of challenges teaching film, especially about American slavery, but I think it's interesting to look in conclusion at the current popularity of the film, *Black Panther*, based upon a comic book hero. I think that this film gives you an alternative vision of what we're looking at often in the films about American slavery. What if you had not had the transatlantic slave trade? What if you had not had European Colonialism in Africa? What might have developed? When you see the African nation in *Black Panther* with all its advancements and

possibilities, you see almost a counterfactual alternative history presented, and I think in many ways in teaching about American slavery, it would be good to bring in some of the themes from *Black Panther* that probably the majority of your students would have seen in the theater. I think bring that in and I think that could be a very useful contribution.

So, what I've tried to do here is give an overview of some other films one might bring into the history classroom. Again, a very challenging topic. Many of these films are difficult, but the topic of slavery is difficult and we must not ignore it. We must not hide behind Confederate statues and assume that slavery never existed. I think as a society we have to confront slavery and its legacy in our land. Therefore, I think these films, incorporating them into the classroom will help provide that. It's a challenge, but a challenge well worth accepting and one that I have found quite rewarding.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Ron Briley is a film historian who recently retired from Sandia Preparatory School in Albuquerque, New Mexico after teaching history for 37 years. He was also an adjunct professor of history at the University of New Mexico, Valencia campus for 20 years. Mr. Briley is the author of five books and numerous articles on the intersection of history, politics, and film. *Teaching Hard History* is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a valuable collection of essays called *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. In each episode, we feature a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection. We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials which are available at tolerance.org.

These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units, and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of American slavery. Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find those online at tolerance.org.

Thanks to Mr. Briley for sharing his insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shay Shackleford with production assistance from Tori Marlan and Megan Kamerick at KUNM Public Radio. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zabriskie. If you like what we're doing, please let your friends and colleagues know and take a minute to review us in iTunes. We always appreciate the feedback. I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, associate professor of history at the Ohio State University and your host for *Teaching Hard History, American Slavery*.

References

- Ken Burns, *The Civil War*
- PBS, *Slavery and the Making of America*
- ABC, *Roots* (1977 TV miniseries)
- Jonathan Demme, *Beloved* (1998 film)
- Steven Spielberg, *Lincoln* (film)
- Steve McQueen, *12 Years a Slave* (film)
- Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853*
- PBS, *Solomon Northup's Odyssey* (TV movie)
- Nate Parker, *The Birth of a Nation* (2016 film)
- Steven Oates, *The Fires of Jubilee, Nat Turner's Fierce Rebellion*
- Gary Ross, *The Free State of Jones* (film)
- Ryan Coogler, *Black Panther* (film)

Episode 10: Slavery in the Constitution

Constitutional historian Paul Finkelman explains the deeply racist bargains the founding fathers struck in order to unify the country under one document and discusses what students need to know about how slavery defined America after the Revolution.

Resources

- Teaching Hard History, Episode 11: Slavery in the Supreme Court (podcast)
- Teaching Tolerance, Human Rights and the Constitution
- Teaching Tolerance, U.S. Constitution: Articles I, IV, V
- Teaching Tolerance, Preamble to the US Constitution
- Teaching Tolerance, Article 1, Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution
- Teaching Tolerance, Exploring American Identity through the Constitution

Dr. Paul Finkelman

- President, Gratz College
- *An Imperfect Union: Slavery, Federalism, and Comity*
- Editor, *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619–1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass*
- Editor, *Encyclopedia of African American History 1896 to the Present*
- Editor, *Congress and the Crisis of the 1850s*

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: The title of my first book is *Bloody Lowndes*. It tells the remarkable story of the transformation of rural Lowndes County Alabama from a citadel of violent white supremacy into the center of Southern black militancy during the height of the civil rights movement. But *Bloody Lowndes* does not begin in the 1960s as one might expect but rather a century earlier at the moment of emancipation. You see, to understand the African-American freedom struggle in the 20th century, you have to understand the African American freedom struggle in the 19th century.

Like most places in the Alabama Black Belt, Lowndes County is resource-poor, making the preservation of local records a luxury the county cannot afford. When I asked the probate judge if they still had rest ledgers from the 19th century, I was not surprised when he took me to a long-neglected shed containing county records scattered about and piled high in no particular order.

After a fair bit of climbing, crawling, sifting and sorting, I actually found what I was searching for, Lowndes County's register of arrests from the 1880s. These turn-of-the-century records revealed a pattern and practice of police misconduct and judicial malfeasance that made a mockery of criminal justice. African-Americans were routinely arrested on trumped up charges and convicted in sham trials and when they could not pay the exorbitant court cost, they were leased to plantation owners and mine representatives who could. It was slavery by another name.

I was especially struck by the ridiculous charges that landed black people in jail, charging black folk with abusive language was a favorite because it could be applied to any black person saying anything to any white person at any time. Another equally absurd charge was reckless eyeballing, when a black person made and maintained eye contact with a white person for too long. No matter the charge, the accused had little recourse. They were at the mercy of Lady Justice and she was not wearing her blindfold.

A few years ago, I watched US Attorney General, Eric Holder, deliver an update on federal investigations in Ferguson, Missouri. He described Ferguson as a community where local authorities consistently approached law enforcement not as a means for protecting public safety but as a way to generate revenue.

Eric Holder: *Revenue, a community where both policing and municipal court practices were found to be disproportionately harmful to African-American residents. A community where this harm frequently appears to stem at least in part from racial bias, both implicit and explicit and a community where all of these conditions, unlawful practices and constitutional violations have not only severely undermined the public trust, eroded police legitimacy and made local residents less safe, but created an intensely charged atmosphere where people feel under assault and under siege by those who are charged to serve and to protect them.*

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: As I listened to Attorney General, Eric Holder, I thought immediately about what I had found in that courthouse shed in rural Alabama. The parallels were striking. Holder could just as easily have been talking about Lowndes County more than a century earlier when he concluded that Ferguson's emphasis on revenue generation through policing had fostered unconstitutional practices and contributed to constitutional violations at nearly every level of law enforcement.

Lowndes County, Alabama, and Ferguson, Missouri, are not anomalies. They are reflections of a legal system that has consistently failed to provide African-Americans with equal justice under

the law. This historical reality begs the question when it comes to African-Americans is America's legal system broken or is it working just the way it was designed to? Let's find out.

I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. A special series from Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides a detailed look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In each episode, we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material and offering practical classroom exercises. Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges, so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery.

The United States was founded on the principles of freedom and liberty. It was also founded on a Deep and abiding belief in the institution of slavery. These conflicting ideas are enshrined in the United States Constitution, which created the legal foundation of our nation. Understanding how America protected slavery in law and treated enslaved people in court is so important that we're going to spend a couple of episodes on this topic.

In this installment of *Teaching Hard History*, legal historian, Dr. Paul Finkelman, explains the role that slavery played in the founding of the United States. He explores how the institution informed both politics and laws during the Revolutionary Era and outlines how the politics of slavery shaped the U.S. Constitution in ways that are still evident today. I'll see you on the other side, enjoy.

Paul Finkelman: The irony of American history is that we're one of the few countries in the world that begin with the stated purpose: we hold these truths to be self-evident that we're all created equal. England doesn't have a statement "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all Englishmen have the rights of Englishmen." France doesn't say this is what it means to be French. The French Declaration of Rights says that, but that's well after France became a country, but we state it.

The Declaration of Independence says "We're all created equal. We're all endowed by our Creator with inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," and yet the man who wrote those words, Thomas Jefferson, owned about 150 slaves when the revolution began. In the rest of his lifetime, he would own many, many more slaves, dying with over 200 slaves.

Slave-owners are all over Continental Congress, which is adopting it and so there is this inherent tension from day one between the rights of slave-owners to be free and to have liberty, including the liberty to own other people, to buy and sell other people, to whip other people, to treat other people like property and other Americans who find this to be immoral and appalling and horrible and that's the tension that comes in with the creation of the United States. So how do we balance slavery and freedom in a nation that on one hand begins with assertions of freedom and rights of liberty and on the other hand these assertions are actually being written by slave-owners?

So, let's start with that problem. During the American Revolution, the English intellectual, Samuel Johnson, sarcastically asked, "Why do we hear the loudest yelps for liberty from the drivers of Negroes?" and, of course, it's a very valid question. If we think of the heroes of the revolution, while many of them are opposed to slavery, John Adams, Samuel Adams, John Jay, the young man, Alexander Hamilton, many of the other leaders of the revolution, Washington, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, the Pinckneys in South Carolina, they all owned huge numbers of slaves and indeed, probably a majority of the revolutionary leadership in terms of sheer numbers were slave-owners and this is a question that very few people in the revolution wanted to think about.

Now, as the revolution began however, liberty began to spread in some parts of the nation. At the battles of Lexington and Concord, there were black soldiers fighting along white soldiers in the Massachusetts militias and at the Battle of Bunker Hill, one of the heroes was a black soldier. When George Washington arrived in Cambridge to take command of the American troops, he was shocked to discover that there were hundreds of black soldiers in his new regiments. Obviously, for a Virginia slave owner, the sight of black men with muskets and bayonets was something he had never encountered and something that he probably always feared and worried about.

But gradually, George Washington came to the conclusion that black soldiers were just like white soldiers, some were cowards, some are heroes. Most were simply men doing their jobs as good soldiers and by the end of the revolution, one of Washington's favorite regiments was the First Rhode Island, which was about 50% black and 50% white and most of the blacks in the First Rhode Island had been slaves when the war began. So we see during the revolution a transition from slavery to freedom.

Some northern states began to dismantle slavery. Pennsylvania passes the first piece of legislation in the history of the world to end slavery, the Pennsylvania Gradual Abolition Act of 1780. The law worked in this way. The children of all slave women would be born free and thus literally, slavery would die out in Pennsylvania. Eventually, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey and even the Canadian province of Upper Canada, today known as Ontario, would adopt a gradual abolition act, based on the Pennsylvania law.

Shortly after Pennsylvania passed its Gradual Abolition Act, Massachusetts adopted its 1780 Constitution, which declared that all men were born free and equal and by 1783, after their Constitution was adopted, the Massachusetts courts ruled that this meant that slaves could no longer be held in Massachusetts. New Hampshire had a similar clause in its Constitution and states that joined the Union after the revolution, like Vermont and Ohio, simply prohibited slavery in their new constitutions.

At the time of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, only Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Rhode Island had passed gradual abolition acts and only Massachusetts and New Hampshire had ended slavery. Slavery was legal in all of the other states and while we think of slavery as being a southern institution, there were substantial number of slaves in both New Jersey and New York at the time the Constitutional Convention met.

The U.S. Constitution was, of course, a complicated document, written by a nation in which slavery was legal and prosperous in most of the states. At the convention, slavery is debated throughout the summer of 1787. At the very beginning of the convention the question is, “How do you allocate representation in

Congress?” and immediately there is a debate between those people who say allocation of representation should be based on the whole number of free people and those who would like it based on the whole number of people.

The difference, of course, is critical because Virginia has the largest population in the nation if you count slaves and free people, but if you only count free people, Pennsylvania has the largest population. Thus, the debate in the convention is about political power. Does the South get political power for its slaves or is the national government going to be based only on the contributions of free people and thus, only free people will be counted for representation?

We all know, of course, that in the end the Constitutional Convention adopts something called the Three/Fifths Clause. The Three/Fifths Clause says, “That representatives and direct taxes

would be allocated in the country by counting the whole number of free people, including indentured servants and others who have some sort of servitude but are not slaves and Three/Fifths of all other persons." So, the Constitution

requires that you count up all the free people and then you count up all the slaves and multiply them by Three/Fifths, 60% and that becomes the basis for representation.

Now, this clause is often misunderstood. The Three/Fifths Clause does not say that black people are 3/5th of a person. It says that political power will be allocated to the states by counting slaves under a Three/Fifths rule rather than a full rule. The irony of this is as follows. Those who opposed slavery did not want to count slaves at all for representation.

After all, if you counted slaves for representation, it simply gave the slave-owners more power. It didn't give the slaves any power. One of the delegates at the convention mocked the idea of counting slaves and said, "Does a voter in Virginia get as many as votes as the number of slaves he owns?" and, of course, this was laughable and not what was going to happen, but it did indicate the political issue at stake.

On the other hand, Southerners said, "You should count all slaves for representation." This didn't mean that Southerners thought black people were equal. It certainly didn't mean they thought slaves were equal. What it meant was the South wanted to get more political power for its slaves and the way to do this would be to count all the slaves. If this had been done, then the southern states would have had probably a majority in the House of Representatives at the beginning of the nation. However, by doing the Three/Fifths ratio, the southern states don't get a majority, although they have close to a majority.

The other place where the Three/Fifths Clause matters a great deal is, of course, the election of the president. During the debate over electing a president, James Madison says, "The fittest things." That's the language he uses. Of course, "Fittest means the best thing, "he said, "would be for the people themselves to directly elect the president," but then Madison says there are a couple of problems with that. One of the problems is that were different rules for voting in different states, so that would mean that if you had a popular vote, the state which had the most expansive voting rules, what they called the "franchise" at the time, that that state would have more votes in the presidential election.

But you could have easily have solved that problem. You could have simply said that every free adult male in the country could vote. No one was considering that women could vote at the time,

so that would not have been on the table. But Madison said the other problem was if you counted just the popular vote, our slaves won't count. He actually says, "We won't get any power because of our Negroes," and of course, what he means by that is if you have a direct election of the president, the North with a much larger population of free people is going to overwhelm the South.

One of the delegates at the convention actually put an asterisk in his own private notes and said that Madison was really trying to make sure that Virginians got elected president because if Virginia can't count its slaves and election of the president, then a New Yorker or a Pennsylvanian or a man from Massachusetts is going to get elected president.

The end result was that the Three/Fifths Clause is folded into that monstrosity called the electoral college. Now, why do we have the electoral college? Not because of states' rights, not because the delegates didn't trust voters, we have the electoral college because it was the only way they could figure out how to count the numerical power of slaves in a country where slaves, of course, wouldn't vote. And so the electoral votes that every state got was based on the number of members of the House of Representatives that each state had and that was based on the Three/Fifths Clause.

If you look at the presidential election of 1800 between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, between a man, Adams, who had never owned a slave and hated slavery and had written the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, which ended slavery in Massachusetts and on the other side you have Thomas Jefferson, who by 1800 owns at least 200 slaves, including a few who are his own children who he fathered with his own slave, Sally Hemmings, you see the power of the Three/Fifths Clause in the electoral college.

If it had been a popular vote, Adams probably would have one because the population of the North was so much bigger than the population of the South if you excluded the slaves. In fact, if you took away from Jefferson all the presidential electors he got by counting 3/5th of the slaves' representation and therefore for electors and did the same for Adams, Adams would have won the electoral college as well. So here is an example where this bargain over slavery in the Three/Fifths Clause affects not only Congress but also affects the President of the United States.

If you look at subsequent debates, if you look at the debate over the Missouri Compromise, which allows slavery to spread into Missouri west of the Mississippi, north of where the Ohio River reaches the Mississippi, the Missouri Compromise could not have been passed if the South had not had a significant number of representatives based on counting slaves as three-fifths of

the population for representation. Similarly, it's impossible to imagine in 1850 that the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 could have been passed if there had been no Three/Fifths Clause because the votes weren't there.

So, what the Three/Fifths Clause does is to change the political dynamic by giving southern whites, slaveholding Southerners, greater political power than northern voters had and this will continue from the beginning of the nation right up until the Civil War. It is not insignificant that almost all of the presidents elected under the Constitution before Abraham Lincoln were slaveholding Southerners and among the Northerners who become president, you discover that three of them came from slaveholding families.

Martin Van Buren was from New York, but he had owned slaves in New York before New York completely abolished slavery in 1827. William Henry Harrison was elected from Ohio, but, of course, the Harrisons were Virginia slave owners and William Henry Harrison had owned slaves for much of his life. Finally, oddly, in 1856, James Buchanan who was elected president, turns out to have come from a family in Pennsylvania that owned slaves and continued to own the descendants of slaves in long-term indentures well after Pennsylvania had passed the Pennsylvania Gradual Abolition Act of 1780.

If you look at the presidency, what you discover is of the 12 presidents between Washington and Buchanan, only four of them, the two Admases, Fillmore and Pierce had not either owned slaves or come from slaveholding families. This, again, indicates the power of slavery in the political process, which comes from the Three/Fifths Clause in Article I of the Constitution.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: This is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. I'm your host, Hasan Kwame Jeffries. We've been listening to Dr. Paul Finkelman discuss the relationship between liberty, slavery and the law in the new nation. People continue to explore the specific provisions in the Constitution that protected the institution of slavery and the interest of slaveholders. Once again, here's Dr. Paul Finkelman.

Paul Finkelman: The other big debate at the Constitutional Convention concerned the African slave trade. Almost everybody in America realized that the African slave trade was horrendously awful and immoral, even people who believed in slavery, even people like Jefferson, who had owned slaves all his life, who would buy and sell human beings throughout his life, who had fathered children with his own slave, even some like Jefferson found the African slave trade to be immoral and wrong.

On the other hand, Georgia and South Carolina had lost thousands of slaves during the American Revolution and when the British troops left the United States, tens of thousands of African-Americans went with them to freedom somewhere else, some to Canada, some to England, some to the British West Indies. Sadly, some were re-enslaved in the British West Indies but most of these former American slaves lived their lives with liberty.

So at the Constitutional Convention, the delegates from Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina insisted that the African slave trade get an explicit, specific protection because these delegates knew that the Congress would abolish the African slave trade immediately because it was popular and because most Americans thought the African slave trade was just horrible and wrong.

Thus, the Constitution provides, and I will read the clause because it's such a convoluted clause and it gives you an idea of how hard the delegates worked to hide what they were doing. The Constitution provides in Article I - Section IX "The migration or importation of such persons as any of the states now existing shall think proper to admit shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eight."

If you read this today, you might have no idea what they are talking about "Importations of such persons." What the Constitution is saying is the Migration and Importation Clause, which we refer to as the African Slave Trade Clause, provided that Congress could not end the African slave trade until at least 1808. However, the clause did not require that the African slave trade ended in 1808. Sadly, many historians, some political scientists and legal scholars don't understand this and often write in textbooks that the clause required an end to the African slave trade. It did not. It says it cannot be ended before 1808.

The Deep South delegates, the South Carolinians, the Georgians, they believed that by 1808 the Deep South would have a bigger population than the North. They believed that this American population was moving south and west and thus, states like Alabama and Mississippi would have been brought into the Union by 1808 and the South would have essentially a veto power over a ban on the African slave trade. Luckily, it didn't work out that way. Luckily, Ohio came into the Union, but Alabama and Mississippi did not. Luckily, by 1808 the northern population was substantially larger than the southern population and so we can ban slave trade in 1808.

What happened in the meantime? At least 60,000 slaves are brought into the United States between 1803 and 1808. This is the largest importation of slaves into what became the United States in the entire history of the country. From the colonial period to 1803, you never had

60,000 slaves brought in in five years and then from 1803 to 1808 you got at least 60,000 slaves. This is the debate over the slave trade.

Towards the end of the convention, Southerners demanded a clause to allow them to recover runaway slaves and Northerners, without any great debate, without very much thought seemed to be worn out by these constant debates over slavery and they are so worn out that they allow for the Fugitive Slave Clause to be inserted into the Constitution. Like the clause on the African slave trade, the Fugitive Slave Clause is almost impossible to understand and is convoluted.

The clause read "No person held to service or labor in one state under the laws thereof, escaping into another shall in consequence of any law or regulation therein be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due." This is Article IV - Section II - Paragraph III of the Constitution. It doesn't mention the word "slave." It doesn't mention the word "fugitive."

But the impact is clear. If a slave runs away from Virginia to Pennsylvania, he cannot become free under Pennsylvania law. If a slave runs from Kentucky into Ohio, she does not become free under Ohio law. Rather, Ohio or Pennsylvania are obligated to return this upon the claim of the person to whom such service or labor may be due and, of course, how do you prove that claim? How do you prove you own someone else?

In 1793, Congress passes the first Fugitive Slave Law, which has almost no protections for people claimed as fugitive slaves, but it doesn't work very well in part because many Northerners simply don't help Southerners capture runaway slaves. In 1842, the Supreme Court will hear its first case on the Fugitive Slave Law. It's remarkable that the law's passed in 1793 and there's no case that reaches the Supreme Court before 1842.

But in a case called *Prigg vs. Pennsylvania*, the court holds that no state can interfere in the return of a fugitive slave. That Congress has the constitutional power to pass the Fugitive Slave Law, although there were many people who said that Congress did not have this power. They thought that this was a regulation of state to state relations. Furthermore, the court ruled that a master had a right to seize a slave anywhere the slave was found without any judicial process. A slave catcher could simply grab someone and say, "This is my slave. I'm taking him or her back to my state," and the free state had no right to interfere.

Now what this led to was a remarkable response by northern states. Northern states immediately passed laws prohibiting their state officials from helping in the return of fugitive

slaves, prohibiting the use of jails for fugitive slaves. Well, it was one thing to cross from Maryland into Pennsylvania, grab your fugitive slave and go back to Pennsylvania. That you could do in an afternoon. Quite another to go up to New York or even to Philadelphia or to Ohio and grab a fugitive slave and try to bring that slave all the way back to the south. You can't do it easily and you can't do it without the help of local officials.

An example of how this worked occurred in Boston in 1842 when a fugitive slave named George Latimer was seized by a slave catcher and put in the Suffolk County Jail. The jailer accepted the fugitive slave until public pressure forced the jailer to let him go because the sheriff of the county was, of course, an elected official and it was clear the population would not stand for allowing Massachusetts' jails to house runaway slaves. Once Latimer was released, his master found that there was no safe place to keep him in Boston and for a small amount of money, he agreed to free him. So, this is an indication of the crisis that occurred in some northern states when the Supreme Court said that states could not protect free Blacks from kidnapping.

This ultimately led to the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, the first national law enforcement act in the history of the United States. It provided for a federal commissioner to be appointed in every county in the United States. The federal commissioner had the authority to authorize the return of fugitive slaves. The commissioner had the authority to call up the Army, the Navy, the Marines, the Coast Guard or local militias to protect an owners' interest in a fugitive slave and it led to about a thousand African-Americans being returned to the South between 1850 and 1860.

One of the ironies of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 is that it completely violated states' rights because the 1850 law, as well as the Prigg decision in 1842 said that the states had absolutely no power to protect their own citizens from being wrongly seized as fugitive slaves. And when we think about the debates of the 1850s and the claim that secession is about states' rights, it turns out to be the opposite.

The southern states did not secede to protect states' rights. They seceded because they were fed up with northern states' rights. They were fed up with northern states that were trying to protect their citizens, their neighbors, their friends from being seized as fugitive slaves. Sometimes the people seized were not actually fugitive slaves at all. Other times they were. But for Northerners, it didn't matter. If your neighbor was living next door to you peacefully, you saw no reason why that person should be dragged to the south as a fugitive slave.

So, the irony is that the first federal law enforcement apparatus was an anti-states' rights law passed by Congress at the insistence of Southerners for the protection of slavery. So, these are

the kind of the major provisions of the Constitution that play-out with regard to slavery. But there are a couple of others that are worth noting.

There are two places in the Constitution where the document provides for the suppression of rebellions and insurrections. Article I of the Constitution - Section VIII says, “Congress shall have the power to provide for calling forth a militia to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrections and repel invasions.” Article IV of the Constitution says, “The United States government can do the same thing against insurrections in the states.”

Now here’s the interesting thing. Why do we have double protection against insurrections and rebellions? The textbooks all say, “Well, they’re thinking about Shay’s Rebellion in Massachusetts,” and certainly, they were thinking about Shay’s Rebellion in Massachusetts, but the Southerners were thinking about slave revolts. They were worried about their own slaves.

When southern delegates go back to the ratifying conventions after the Constitution, they say, “We should support this Constitution. We should ratify it because it’s going to protect slavery,” and one of the ways it protects slavery is that the national government will suppress insurrections and rebellions. And when is the militia called out? When is the army called out?

After Nat Turner’s rebellion, the U.S. Navy hunts for slaves who had been part of Nat Turner’s rebellion. When John Brown organizes a raid into Virginia, now West Virginia, to help free slaves, the local Virginia authorities don’t have the power to suppress John Brown. They have to wait for the US Marines to arrive, led by an Army Colonel named Robert E. Lee and so John Brown is suppressed by the US Army.

So again, the interesting thing is while Southerners talk about states’ rights, they are in fact delighted to have the federal government send troops to Virginia, send troops to what is now West Virginia, send troops to Louisiana, send troops to anywhere where there might be a slave rebellion. And so again, the Constitution protects slavery by guaranteeing that the United States government will suppress slave rebellions.

Finally, most people who were at the Constitutional Convention argued that the convention was a government of limited powers and as a result, the national government could not interfere with slavery where it existed and this becomes very important for understanding the nature of what the Southerners thought they were ratifying. They argue over and over again that the national government can never interfere with slavery, but that the national government can protect slavery.

Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, a general during the revolution, the hero of South Carolina and the head of the South Carolina delegation to the convention, returns to South Carolina after the convention. He tells the state legislature, “We have a security that the general government can never emancipate them. For no such authority is granted and it is admitted on all hands that the general government has no powers but what are expressly granted by the Constitution and that all rights not expressed were reserved to the several states.”

The delegates who come back from the convention are thrilled with what they’ve won. They have one a Constitution, which gives them political power for their slaves, protects the African slave trade for at least 20 years, guarantees that their political power to elect members of Congress will also affect the election of the presidency, guarantees the national government will suppress slave insurrections and rebellions and guarantees that their fugitive slaves can be captured and returned to the southern states.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Dr. Paul Finkelman is the president of Gratz College in Philadelphia. He received his PhD in history from the University of Chicago and later studied at Harvard Law School. He’s the author of more than 50 books and over 200 scholarly articles. The US Supreme Court has recognized his legal expertise by citing him in four of its decisions. We’re going to continue his discussion of liberty, slavery and the law in our next episode, moving from how the institution of slavery shaped the U.S. Constitution to how the Supreme Court dealt with cases about slavery prior to the Civil War.

Teaching Hard History is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They are the publishers of a valuable collection of essays called *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. In each episode, we’re featuring a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection. We’ve also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials, which are available at Tolerance.org. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of American slavery.

Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find these online at tolerance.org. Thanks to Dr. Finkelman for sharing his insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shay Shackleford, with production assistance from Tori Marlan and Jonathan Jennings at Gratz College.

Our theme song is “Kerr’s Negro Jig” by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zobriski. If you like what we’re doing, please let your friends and colleagues know and take a minute to review us in iTunes. We always appreciate the feedback. I’m Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, associate professor of history at the Ohio State University and your host for *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama’s Black Belt*
- United States of America, Declaration of Independence
- France, The Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789)
- Pennsylvania, An Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery (1780)
- Massachusetts, Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (1980)
- U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 2: Three-Fifths Clause (1788)
- U.S. Congress, Fugitive Slave Act of 1793
- The Compromise of 1850, The Fugitive Slave Act
- The Slave Trade and the Constitution, Article I, Section 9: Migration and Importation Clause
- Teaching American History, U.S. Constitution: Article IV, Section 2I: Fugitive Slave Clause
- U.S. Supreme Court, *Prigg v. Pennsylvania (1842)*
- Asa J. Davis, The George Latimer Case: A Benchmark in the Struggle for Freedom
- Teaching Tolerance, Lesson, Nat Turner
- Teaching Tolerance, John Brown's Speech to the Court at His Trial

Episode 11: Slavery in the Supreme Court

In the United States, justice was never blind. Historian Paul Finkelman goes beyond legal jargon to illustrate how slavery was entangled with the opinions of the Court—and encoded into the Constitution itself.

Resources

- Teaching Hard History, Episode 10: Slavery in the Constitution (podcast)
- Teaching Tolerance, Opinion of the Supreme Court in *United States v. The Amistad (1841)*
- Teaching Tolerance, Using Photographs to Teach Social Justice | Legal Action: The Supreme Court

Dr. Paul Finkelman

- President, Gratz College
- *An Imperfect Union: Slavery, Federalism, and Comity*
- Editor, *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619–1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass*
- Editor, *Encyclopedia of African American History 1896 to the Present*
- Editor, *Congress and the Crisis of the 1850s*

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: On a mid-August day in 1990, Uncle Johnny dropped my father and I off at New York City's Grand Central Station, where we boarded a not quite midnight train to Georgia. That spring, I had graduated from Midwood High School in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn and now I was off to Morehouse College in Atlanta. Morehouse is one of only 100 or so historically black colleges and universities—and the only one that is all male. It was founded in 1867 at the daybreak of freedom and its mission was simple: to be the light for newly freed African-American men who had known nothing but the darkness of slavery their entire lives. Morehouse has been educating African-American men ever since.

Morehouse sits high on a red clay hill, just west of downtown Atlanta. Its campus isn't the prettiest. Some buildings are new but most of them are old, and it isn't very large—a couple of neighborhood blocks at best. But manicured lawns and high-tech facilities are not what drew me to Morehouse. They don't draw anyone to Morehouse. Tradition draws people to Morehouse.

The tradition of first-year students arriving on campus a week before classes to learn the history of the school. The tradition of meeting your Spelman College sister. The tradition of playing the Negro national anthem before basketball and football games. The tradition of staying up late in dormitories named after African-American luminaries to debate the black past, argue about the black present and speculate about the black future. And, of course, the tradition of singing the soul-stirring college hymn "Dear Old Morehouse" whenever and wherever Morehouse men gathered.

There is another tradition, too. A tradition rooted in college pride but also in the black cultural practice of playing the dozens. There is a saying about Morehouse graduates, one that has more than a kernel of truth. It's that "You can always tell a Morehouse man, you just can't tell him much." You certainly can't tell him that Morehouse is not better than that other black college on a hilltop, Howard University, in Washington, D.C.

To be sure, Howard is much bigger, but it needs to be, in order to accommodate all those students who applied to Morehouse and didn't get in. It's worth noting, too, that Howard was led for 34 years by one of the greatest educators and religious orators of the 20th century, Mordecai Johnson. It's also worth

noting that that very same Mordecai Johnson was a Morehouse man, class of 1911, as was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., director Spike Lee and actor Samuel L. Jackson.

Now, Howard's list of alumni is certainly distinguished. Folklorist Zora Neale Hurston got her start at Howard, while King T'Challa, Chadwick Boseman (the Black Panther—Wakanda forever!), learned his stagecraft there as well. But no list of notable Howard alumni is complete without Omarosa Manigault and Rachel Dolezal. Just saying: they're Howard, too.

But when it comes to using the law to fight for African-Americans' civil and human rights, there is no dispute: Howard University is the mecca. Charles Hamilton Houston laid the groundwork for black legal activism, transforming Howard Law School during the first half of the 20th century from a struggling night school into a training ground for a cadre of civil rights lawyers who transformed America—a group that included future Supreme Court justice, Thurgood Marshall.

Houston understood the centrality of the law to the African-American experience. He knew that racial discrimination codified in law, from the Three-Fifths Clause in the Constitution to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, and racial discrimination sanctioned by the Supreme Court, from the

court's ruling about black citizenship rights and Dred Scott in 1857 to its support of segregation in Plessy versus Ferguson in 1896, had to be eliminated if African-Americans were ever to enjoy equal rights.

Houston also knew that black lawyers had to be the ones to right these legal wrongs. Racist laws were certainly a problem, but so, too, were the racist lawyers who argued in defense of these laws and the racist judges who upheld them. For Houston, black lawyers were either social engineers fighting for equal justice under the law for African-Americans, or they were parasites, living off of black folks' meager earnings.

It may be that "You can always tell a Morehouse man, you just can't tell him much," but no Morehouse man needs to be told about the significance of Charles Hamilton Houston. That much we understand. If anything, we want to be told *more*—told more about the intersection of race and law and the Constitution to better see what Houston saw, to better understand what Houston knew about the central role that the law and the courts have played in shaping America. And that's the focus of this episode.

I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides a detailed look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In each episode we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material and offering practical classroom exercises. Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges, so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery.

In the United States, Lady Justice was never blind when it came to slavery. In this episode, legal historian Paul Finkelman examines the Supreme Court's decisions regarding slavery, which span nearly a century from the Constitutional era through the Civil War. He illustrates how the politics of slavery became entangled with the opinions of the court, offering insight into the political debate surrounding key cases in early American legal history and the impact those decisions had on free and enslaved African Americans. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy.

Paul Finkelman: At the founding of the American nation in 1775-76, slavery is legal everywhere in what becomes the United States. In fact, slavery is legal everywhere in the New World, from the Arctic Circle to the Straits of Magellan. Every colony all across both South America and North America has slaves and slavery is legal. During the revolution, this begins to

change. Americans who were fighting for their liberty are faced with the dilemma of "how can we fight for our liberty when we deny liberty to other people?" Starting in 1780, some Americans will begin to dismantle slavery.

Nevertheless, slavery influences the creation of the nation at the Constitutional Convention. It overwhelmingly influences politics from the adoption of the Constitution to even the Civil War. Indeed, if there is any theme that runs through American political history from 1776 until 1861, it is the theme of slavery and race because that is always at the back of the minds of everybody. The Supreme Court, to give you one example, hears numerous cases on the power of Congress to regulate commerce—it's known as the Commerce Clause, the Commerce Power.

If we look at the Commerce cases, there is a subtext of slavery in all of them. In some of the Commerce Clause cases, the lawyers actually argue that the courts should decide a particular way because otherwise, it will harm slavery. Even though the cases are not about slavery, the court is hearing arguments about slavery. Slavery is a theme that runs through United States politics from the beginning until the Civil War, and it shapes the nature of the Constitution. Our constitutional law is heavily tied to the needs of protecting and preserving slavery, and many of our important constitutional doctrines that we still live with today came out of slavery.

Much of what I'm going to talk about today deals with law, deals with the Constitution, deals with Supreme Court decisions. These are often hard for students to wrap their heads around and it's even hard for teachers to deal with it because law's a little scary—it uses technical language and it is sometimes very complicated. But the important issue is this: the United States is a self-created nation. The Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, are, in part, political documents and, in part, legal documents that create a nation. Our nation has been shaped in part by court decisions, court interpretations of the Constitution. We created a Constitution to bring 13 states into "a more perfect union"—not a perfect union, by the way, a *more* perfect union. That more perfect union is woven into our history in a variety of ways.

There is almost nothing important in the United States that doesn't sooner or later end up in courts. We are a people who are ruled by the rule of law. We are a people who turn to law. We are a people who turned to the Constitution, to the fundamental principles of the Declaration of Independence, to the Bill of Rights. Americans all know "their rights." "I know my rights," and that's incredibly important to understanding the way the Constitution and Supreme Court interacted with the politics of slavery and race and ultimately, the ending of slavery and then the struggle against segregation in the 20th century.

Slavery came before the U.S. Supreme Court in a variety of ways. In the early years, the District of Columbia, Washington, D.C., did not have a Supreme Court. Rather, all cases from the District of Columbia could be appealed to the United States Supreme Court. Thus, in the period from 1801 until 1835, the Supreme Court heard a number of cases in which African-Americans in the District of Columbia claimed that they were legally entitled to be free. There are actually 14 cases in the court involving the freedom of slaves. Curiously, Chief Justice John Marshall, often called "The Great Chief Justice," wrote the opinion of the court in seven of these cases. In each of these cases, the slaves lost.

In a couple of them, they had actually won at jury trials because a jury of 12 white men in Washington thought that this particular slave was free, either because of a will or because some other legal technicality or because the person was never a slave to begin with. In one case it was proven that a slave's mother had always been a free person, so he couldn't have been a slave at birth, but Marshall overturned every one of these verdicts.

In a number of the other cases not decided by Marshall, slaves got their freedom. These, of course, were minor cases. They didn't involve big issues of American politics, but they did involve, of course, big issues for the particular slaves who either got their freedom or didn't get their freedom, depending upon the court.

The court also heard a number of cases involving the African slave trade. While Congress could not prohibit the African slave trade before 1808, Congress could rein it in and regulate it in a variety of ways. One of the regulations was that American ships were not allowed to participate in the slave trade. Nevertheless, many Americans wanted to participate because it was a very lucrative business. So, slave traders were sometimes captured, their ships would be seized and they would be subject to prosecution. And, they would appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Generally, the U.S. Supreme Court supported the rights of slave owners and slave traders more than the federal law. Again, curiously, Chief Justice John Marshall never ruled in favor of the government in a slave trading case—always seemed to find some technicality to let the slave trader go free. So, slaves were illegally brought into the United States and no one was punished for it. Again, these were not major cases. They did not lead to gigantic emotional issues or political issues in the country.

Three big issues that did lead to huge political questions involved a Spanish ship known as the Amistad (which probably all of you have heard of), the question of fugitive slaves and the status of slaves in the territories. Let me start with the Amistad. The Amistad was a Cuban ship

transporting slaves from Havana to other parts of Cuba. The slaves took over the ship, killed a number of the crew members and forced the remaining whites to steer the ship east towards Africa. But at night, they would reverse course and go north and west, hoping to reach the United States South. Instead, the ship ended off the coast of Connecticut, was towed into Connecticut and the question is, "What is the status of these slaves?"

It turned out that all of them had been illegally imported into Cuba with the exception of the cabin boy on the ship, who was a Cuban-born slave. After a number of trials and a number of decisions, the case reached the U.S. Supreme Court, where Justice Joseph Story wrote an opinion saying that these Africans, by this time called the Amistads for the name of the ship, were entitled to go back to Africa because they had been illegally imported into Cuba. The entire case turned on the interpretation of a treaty with Spain and on the interpretation of Spanish law banning the importation of slaves to Cuba.

It is not an anti-slavery case in any real way. Story doesn't condemn slavery. Story doesn't attack slavery, but, of course, for the Amistads, it's an anti-slavery case because they get to go home. The poor Cuban cabin boy did not get to go home, again showing that it's not about liberating slaves. It's about something else. Nevertheless, the anti-slavery movement uses this case to teach the American people about the horrors of slavery, and the Amistad becomes an iconic moment in helping Americans understand just how awful slavery actually is.

Fugitive slave cases were more complicated. They almost always involved African-Americans who made it to free states and then were grabbed by slave catchers and dragged back to the South. The first big fugitive slave case was *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*. Prigg was a Marylander. With three other men, he went to Pennsylvania. He grabbed a woman and her children, brought them before a justice of the peace in Pennsylvania and said, "These are Maryland slaves. We are bringing them back to Maryland."

The justice of the peace listened to the evidence and said, "You have to let them go." It turned out the woman, Margaret Morgan, had lived her life entirely as a free person in Maryland and, later, research shows that in 1830, she was declared to be a free black person by the U.S. Census. By the way, the census in Maryland was taken by the local sheriff, so local authorities in Maryland said she was free. It also turns out that at least one and maybe two of her children had been born in Pennsylvania and thus, they were free by birth.

Nevertheless, after the judge ruled that they should go free, Prigg and his friends kidnapped them and brought them to Maryland. Prigg was later prosecuted for kidnapping in Maryland,

convicted, appealed to the Supreme Court, and, as I mentioned earlier in this talk, the Supreme Court overturned his conviction by saying that Pennsylvania had no right to protect the liberty of its own citizens, no right to interfere with fugitive slave cases and Justice Story said that a slave catcher has "a common-law right of re-caption." That is, has a right without going into any court to recapture his property and bring it south.

This led to a number of Northern laws in which the Northern states, specifically, prohibited state officials from becoming involved in fugitive slave cases. That led to a number of Northern state judges refusing to help Southerners capture fugitive slaves, and that led to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. A draconian law with heavy penalties for people who helped fugitive slaves, the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 prohibited the alleged slave from testifying at a hearing on her behalf or his own behalf. If you were seized as a fugitive slave, you could not even stand up in court and say, "You got the wrong person. I'm not the person you are looking for."

The law allowed for the Army, the Navy, the Marines, the state militia, to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law. It led to enormous conflicts between local authorities and federal authorities. Fugitive Slave Law was upheld in a number of decisions; perhaps the most important was *Ableman v. Booth*. Ableman was the U.S. Marshall. Booth was an abolitionist in Milwaukee. Booth had led a mob, which helped a slave escape through Marshall Ableman. Marshall Ableman then arrested Booth, and the Wisconsin Supreme Court declared that the Fugitive Slave Law was unconstitutional and let Booth go. Eventually, it goes to the Supreme Court, where Chief Justice Taney says no, the Fugitive Slave Law is constitutional, and Sherman Booth goes to jail for helping a slave escape.

There were other similar cases involving fugitive slaves—far too many to discuss here. It is safe to argue, however, that the conflict over the Fugitive Slave Law was one that undermined the Union and led to enormous conflicts between the North and the South. Southerners saw the opposition to the return of fugitive slaves as a direct violation of the constitutional compact, a violation of the agreement between the states to support the Constitution. Northerners saw the Fugitive Slave Law as an outrageous denial of liberty, due process of law, a violation of the Bill of Rights, an overreaching of the federal government and simply said we cannot allow this kind of behavior by the national government.

One could have imagined a compromise. One could imagine a Fugitive Slave Law where the alleged fugitive is allowed to testify, where the fugitive is guaranteed a jury trial, where the writ of habeas corpus could be used to bring the case to a higher court. But none of these things were

allowed in the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. It is generally considered to be one of the most outrageous denials of rights of any statute ever passed by Congress.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: This is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. I'm your host, Hasan Kwame Jeffries. Politics and ideology shaped Supreme Court decisions regarding slavery, but the court's decisions also sparked deep cultural resentment about the legality of slavery in pre-Civil War America. The Dred Scott case is the most significant example, but to understand Dred Scott, we need to talk about the westward expansion of slavery. Once again, here's Dr. Paul Finkelman.

Paul Finkelman: The other big constitutional issue is the status of slavery in the territories. To understand the status of slavery in the territories, we have to go back to the nation before the Constitution was written. One of the oddities of American political history from, really, the time of the Constitutional Convention until the Civil War is that the debate over slavery is often the debate over slavery where it isn't, rather than where it is.

At no time does Congress debate whether it should abolish slavery in Virginia or Mississippi because that was clearly the province of the states, so the debate is always about slavery in the territories. Do you allow slavery into Ohio? Do you allow slavery in Illinois? Do you allow slavery west of the Mississippi? Do you allow Missouri to become a slave state? What do you do with the territories acquired from Mexico during the Mexican War? In all of these debates, there is this strong issue of whether you allow slavery in these places.

While the Constitutional Convention is meeting in Philadelphia, the Congress, under the Articles of Confederation, is meeting in New York City. There, the Congress passes something called The Northwest Ordinance, which allows for the creation of a government in the territories north and west of the Ohio River, which today encompasses the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and the very eastern tip of Minnesota. The law said that "There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude" north and west of the Ohio River in the Northwest Territory. This was the first federal ban on slavery somewhere.

Implicit in this was that you could have slavery in the Southwest territories, which become Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi. As long as the United States ended with the Mississippi River, there's no conflict. The Northern part of the country would become free; the Southern part will probably become slave. And that's what happens. Ohio comes in as a free state; Mississippi comes in as a slave state. Indiana comes in as a free state; Alabama comes in as a slave state. Then, of course, during this period, the United States buys Louisiana.

When Missouri seeks to enter the Union in 1819, the question is, "Will Missouri be a slave state or a free state?" Northerners argue that Missouri should come in as a free state because under the Northwest Ordinance, it had to be free. Southerners argued this is complete and utter nonsense because the Northwest Ordinance didn't apply to west of the Mississippi, and the Ohio River ended at the Mississippi, so how could anything be either north or west of the Ohio River?

But the real debate is not about geography and when you think about this, when you teach this, you shouldn't get caught up in where the Ohio River ends or begins. What you should see is this is the first great political debate over whether or not slavery should spread into the West. What the Northerners are really saying is it's time to stop the spread of slavery west by not letting Missouri come in as a slave state. Southerners are saying we demand the right to carry our slaves to any part of the country, to all of the new territories.

In the end, a compromise is reached. Missouri comes in as a slave state. Maine breaks off from Massachusetts to come in as a free state. So, you have the same number of slave and free states. The Missouri Compromise says "There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude" north and west of the southern boundary of Missouri. Missouri sits out there like a thumb sticking in the air from the rest of the South. But around Missouri, what becomes the states of Kansas and Nebraska and Iowa, will be free states, and everything north of Iowa will always be free.

This is maintained until the war with Mexico in 1847-48. Suddenly, the United States is much bigger because we've acquired vast new territories, some of which are south of the Missouri Compromise line, like New Mexico and Arizona, parts of Nevada, and some of which are north of the Missouri Compromise line. California, of course, is divided by the Missouri Compromise line.

After the war with Mexico is over, Congress spends two years almost totally paralyzed by what to do about the territories. Northerners now have enough votes to stop anything in the House of Representatives. Southerners are insisting that all of the new territories be open to slavery. Northerners are insisting that none of the new territories be open to slavery, and in the meantime, Gold is discovered in California. The California Gold Rush suddenly brings in a huge population to California. Overnight, it has a population of 100,000—far more than it needs to be a state, and California is insisting on coming into the Union as a free state. There are almost no slaves in California, and the sentiment in California is hugely in favor of a free state.

Meanwhile, Southerners are complaining about the lack of effective fugitive slave laws because, under Prigg, Northern states are ignoring the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 and Texas is

demanding that all of New Mexico should become part of Texas. Furthermore, Texas is complaining that it has debt because the Republic of Texas was deeply in debt when it became part of the United States, and so Texas is literally asking for, what today we would call, the first federal bailout. Texas is begging the rest of the nation to bail it out of its debt because it had huge debts. It spent more than it took in in taxes and it wants the rest of the nation to rescue it.

All of these are thrown into a series of laws, which become the Compromise of 1850. In the Compromise of 1850, after a summer of debate, we settle the Texas boundary with giving a substantial portion of New Mexico to Texas. The United States government agrees to pick up the Republic of Texas debt. Slavery is allowed in New Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Nevada, and slavery is also allowed in parts of what are today Colorado and Wyoming.

In other words, slavery is allowed in all of the territories acquired from Mexico, except California, which is admitted as a free state. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 is passed and as a stop to the North, Congress bans the public sale of slaves in Washington, D.C. The only problem with that is it's not going to prevent the private sale of slaves, and it doesn't prevent masters from simply taking their slaves across the river to Virginia and selling them there. That's the Compromise of 1850.

Following the Compromise of 1850, Southerners insist that much of the Missouri Compromise be repealed, so that slaveowners can move into Kansas and Nebraska, where slavery had been banned under the Compromise of 1820, which is also known as the Missouri Compromise. That leads to the Kansas Nebraska Act of 1854, which opens up Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, most of Montana and some of Wyoming to slavery.

Sometimes, historians have looked at these debates and thought everybody was crazy. "Why would you debate whether you could have slavery in Montana?" historians would say, since, after all, you couldn't grow cotton, you couldn't grow tobacco, you couldn't grow any of the slave crops in Montana.

But the answer is this: historically, slaves had always been used for mining. They had been used for raising cattle. They had been used for growing wheat. The Roman Empire grew wheat with slaves. The Roman Empire mined with slaves. There's no reason to believe that the great mining strikes of the West— the silver, the gold, the copper—couldn't have been mined with slaves. It's wrong to think of slavery as geographically bound to warm climates. Slavery is profitable wherever free labor can turn a profit.

If you looked at a map in 1855, a year after the Kansas-Nebraska Act, what you would find is that every place in the West is open to slavery, except Minnesota, which is not yet a state, and what is today Washington, Oregon and part of Idaho. Everywhere else, slavery is legal in the West, except California, which is a free state. You could take your slaves to Colorado, Wyoming, the Dakotas—Slavery is everywhere.

In this mix comes the most famous slave case, Dred Scott. Dred Scott was a slave living in Missouri when his owner, an Army captain, who was also an Army doctor, took him to Illinois where he lives at Fort Armstrong for about a year and a half or two years. Now, Illinois is a free state. Presumably he became free the moment he was brought to Illinois because you can't bring slaves into Illinois. He is also not on the base for much of this time. He is working on private land that his owner, Dr. John Emerson, owns.

Dr. Emerson is then transferred to Fort Snelling in what is today St. Paul, Minnesota, where, again, slavery is illegal, according to the Missouri Compromise. Nevertheless, Dred Scott is kept there for a while. Dred Scott later goes all the way down the Mississippi River with his slave wife and then all the way back up the Mississippi River back to Fort Snelling. While they are on their way to Fort Snelling, his wife gives birth to a daughter, who is born on the Mississippi River between the free state of Illinois and the free territory of Iowa. Presumably this will be a free birth.

The Scotts end up in Fort Snelling, then they end up back in St. Louis, and when Dr. Emerson dies, Dred Scott offers to buy his freedom. He has some white friends who are the sons of his former owner before he was sold to Dr. Emerson, and these white friends are willing to come up with the money so he can buy his freedom for his family and himself. Mrs. Emerson refuses to sell Dred Scott, and so, instead, he sues.

He wins in a jury trial. A jury of 12 white men in St. Louis say Dred Scott is free because he lived in Illinois where slavery is illegal. He lived in what is today Minnesota where slavery is illegal. He is free.

Mrs. Emerson appeals to the Missouri Supreme Court and in 1852, the Missouri Supreme Court says, "No, Dred Scott is still a slave," and the court explicitly says, "We will no longer follow our own precedents. We will no longer follow our own rules—the old rules—that if you take a slave to a free state, the slave becomes free." Dred Scott remains a slave.

At this point, a lot of strange things happen. Mrs. Emerson is remarried, moved to Massachusetts. She marries a doctor in Springfield, Massachusetts, named Chaffey, who is anti-slavery. He will later become a Republican Congressman, and he is an anti-slavery Congressman. He doesn't know that his wife is technically the owner of a family of slaves in Missouri when he marries her.

She immediately transfers ownership of Dred Scott and his family to her brother, a man named John Sandford. John Sandford, while living in Missouri and owning slaves in Missouri, moves to New York, where he's a business agent for his father-in-law, who is based in St. Louis. This is all very complicated, but the bottom line is this: Sandford's living in New York and he's become a resident of New York.

Scott and his family are living in Missouri as slaves and Scott's new lawyer sues Sandford in federal court saying that "I am illegally held in slavery by a resident of New York, John Sandford." Therefore, it's a federal case because it's between citizens of two states, Missouri and New York, and therefore, the federal courts can hear it. "I'm entitled to my freedom because of the Missouri Compromise."

The local judge (the local federal judge) in St. Louis allows Dred Scott to sue. He says, "If you are free, then you are entitled to sue in federal court as a citizen of Missouri." Mr. Sandford's lawyers argue that even if Dred Scott's free, he can't sue because free blacks can never be citizens of Missouri. When it goes to trial, Sandford wins. The judge and the jury rule that they should follow the Missouri Supreme Court and Scott remains a slave. He then appeals to the Supreme Court. He appeals the decision that he is not free.

Sandford does not appeal the ruling that a black can sue in federal court because Sandford won, so he doesn't have to appeal anything. It goes to the Supreme Court. It is argued in the spring of 1856, and the court refuses to decide it; 1856 is an election year. Many people speculate that the court does not want to decide it before the election.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You are listening to legal historian Paul Finkelman as he discusses the relationship between liberty, slavery and the courts in the new nation. This is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, and I'm your host, Hasan Kwame Jeffries. Along with this podcast, you can find a detailed framework for teaching slavery with sample units and primary source material at tolerance.org/hardhistory. Here is Paul Finkelman.

Paul Finkelman: James Buchanan is elected president that fall. Buchanan runs arguing that slavery should be legal everywhere in the federal territories. Even though he's a Pennsylvanian, he's what's called a doughface. He's a Northern man with Southern principles. He's a pro-slavery, Northern Democrat. Buchanan wins in a pretty close election against a brand-new political party, the Republican Party, running a national hero named John C. Fremont, who had mapped the route to California, and he had been one of the heroes in the Mexican War in the 1840s.

After Buchanan is elected, the court hears another set of arguments in the case and after Buchanan is inaugurated, the Supreme Court finally decides the case. The curiosity is this: at his inauguration, when Buchanan got up to give his inaugural address, Chief Justice Taney stood up and shook his hand. These guys were old friend—they had been Jacksonian Democrats since the 1830s. Taney whispered something to Buchanan.

There, in front of the whole audience, Taney, the Chief Justice of the United States, is shaking hands with the president-elect and whispering something to him, and then Buchanan gets up and says that the question of slavery in the territories has bedeviled the nation, but it is not a political question. It's a judicial question.

This is fascinating because since 1787, Congress has been passing laws on slavery in the territories. The Northwest Ordinance, the Compromise of 1820, the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, various territorial laws creating territories all over the country had always regulated slavery in the territories, and suddenly, Buchanan says, "Oh, no, no, this is not political." Even though, as a U.S. senator, he voted on some of these laws, "It's not political, it's judicial." Then he says, "I will abide by whatever the Supreme Court decides."

Two days later, the court says that Congress cannot pass any laws regulating slavery in the territories and that no black can ever be a citizen of the United States. Immediately, Republicans complained that Buchanan must have known about the outcome of the decision because, after all, why would he say he'll support whatever the court does without knowing what the court was going to do? Lots of people say that in this whispering, as they call it, Buchanan was told what the court's going to decide.

Today, we in fact know that Buchanan did know the outcome, that at least two justices, and probably three, had already told Buchanan what the outcome was going to be. We know, in fact, he had been told months before and two days later, the court says, "no bans on slavery in the

territory" and that no black can ever be a citizen of the United States. This wasn't even argued; the court just decided it.

The court says that, even though blacks are citizens of some states. They could vote in half a dozen states. They had held public office in states. There had been a representative in the Vermont state legislator who was black. There had been an elected official in New Hampshire who was black. There was a judge in Massachusetts who was black. They were lawyers; they were doctors. They were voters in a number of states. Even though all of this is going on, Taney says, "They are not citizens of the United States."

This, by the way, raises a really peculiar issue because if you were a black voter in Massachusetts or Rhode Island or New Hampshire or Vermont or Maine or New York, you could vote in the presidential election. You could vote for members of Congress. What Taney is saying is non-citizens are being allowed to vote for the president, and that's okay because the rules for voting were determined by the states—very peculiar.

The other thing is that, at the time of the ratification of the Constitution, blacks could vote in at least six states, and so the question is if blacks were voting to ratify the Constitution, presumably they were citizens of the United States at the time. But Taney says, "No, no, no, blacks have never been citizens of the United States. They can't be citizens."

This leads to an enormous backlash in the North. Even Northerners who are racist, even Northerners who don't like the idea of blacks living in their neighborhoods, are shocked by these two holdings. One, that blacks cannot be citizens of the United States, and two, that you can't ban slavery in the territories.

This becomes an enormous boost to the new Republican Party, and the most articulate critic of the Dred Scott decision is a fairly obscure, mostly failed politician from Illinois named Abraham Lincoln. By this time, Lincoln had had one term in the House of Representatives. He had served a number of terms in the Illinois legislature. He had quit politics, basically, in 1850—stopped becoming involved, stopped running for office. He was concentrating on his law practice, and then Dred Scott comes along, and Lincoln spends the next three years criticizing Dred Scott. That catapults him to the White House.

Meanwhile, Taney is vilified. His decision is overwhelmingly racist. He says things about blacks, which are, by modern standards, horrifying. He says, "They have no rights that the white men need respect. They are not entitled to any rights." People are shocked by this, and this helps set

the stage for the election of Lincoln, the election of the Republican Party. That, in turn, sets the stage for secession.

The final thing to understand about the Constitution is that secession in 1860-61 is about slavery. It is not about states' rights because, as we've seen, the Southerners hate states' rights because states' rights are what Northerners are using to fight slavery. In fact, in their secession documents, a number of Southern states complained about Northerners allowing abolitionists to speak freely about Northern criticism of slavery. That Northerners won't let Southerners travel through their states with slaves. In other words, they complain that the Northerners are using states' rights to preserve freedom.

Southerners also say, "We are seceding," as South Carolina says, "because a man has been elected president who believes that slavery should ultimately be put on the road to extinction." The Texas Secession Convention says that "Slavery will exist forever in the state of Texas." Mississippi says, "Slavery is the most important institution in the world," and they're seceding to preserve slavery. That is what secession is about.

The other thing secession is about is a racial ideology. The Vice President of the Confederacy, Alexander Stephens, gives a speech on the eve of the Civil War, after secession but before the war has started. He says that in the North, people believe in racial equality. Whether this is true or not is irrelevant. This is what he says. Then he says, "Our government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests upon the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and normal condition." Thus, our new government "is the first in the history of the world based upon this great physical, philosophical and moral truth." Then he goes on to say that Northerners assume that the Negro is equal and "we do not."

The South becomes the first country in the history of the world to be created on the basis of racial inequality and racial subordination. In addition, of course, Stephens goes on to say that the cornerstone of the Confederacy is both slavery and racism. This becomes a new Confederate nation.

When we see the revival of the Confederacy, when we see the demands for a Confederate Heritage, what we are sadly looking at is a heritage that is deeply steeped in hate and in racism and in slavery. This doesn't mean that every Confederate soldier felt that way. Most Confederate soldiers, like any other soldiers, don't think a lot about politics. They are in the Army because everybody in their town is in the Army. I'm talking about the leadership. I'm talking about the

generals, the people who went to West Point, the people who were educated by the dollars of Northerners and Southerners and then made war on their own country, not to protect states' rights, but to protect slavery, and they said so over and over again.

Moreover, they are sometimes putting up monuments to war criminals because many of the Confederate officers allowed the murder of black Union troops who were surrendering. They allowed for the enslavement of free blacks in the North. When Lee's army marched into Pennsylvania, it captured free black people and dragged them to the South and enslaved them. This was a violation of every known rule of war in the Western world. It violated the Confederate military codes. When free black soldiers surrendered at Fort Pillow, they were massacred. They were shot. Some of them were buried alive. General Lee and President Jefferson Davis did nothing to reprimand the Southern commanders who did this.

When Southerners insist on flying the Confederate flag over their state capital or insist on having monuments to the leaders of the Confederacy, they are, in fact, supporting a regime. They are, in fact, remembering a regime that was created to support and preserve white supremacy and slavery.

If they look at their own secession documents, they see the Southern states saying, "We are seceding to protect slavery." When they put up monuments to "the heroes of the Confederacy," they are putting up monuments to men who fought and killed, and sometimes died for, the preservation of slavery. They may or may not know that Alexander Stephens said the Confederacy was created to preserve white supremacy and to preserve the subordination of blacks to white people. But, certainly, that concept is inherent in part of our cultural DNA, and it is what makes race so difficult to deal with in this country.

The new Confederate nation goes to war because they have lost the presidential election. For the first time, at least since the election of John Quincy Adams, but maybe the first time ever, the United States has a president who is openly opposed to slavery. That leads to secession and Civil War, and the end result, of course, will be the complete rewriting of the Constitution, ending slavery and creating racial equality, and ultimately, guaranteeing that people should be able to vote without regards to race.

The legacy of slavery is still with us. In the Constitution, we still have the electoral college, created to make sure that slave owners got a bonus in electing presidents, but more precisely, to deny fundamental democracy to all Americans. In the constant tension over race, we have the problem that, for so many generations, so many decades, so many years, Americans viewed

black people as inherently dangerous, as an inherent threat to the legal and political and social order and, at least where slavery was preserved and working, as fundamentally inferior. We have written into our constitutional law, Chief Justice Taney's decision that "blacks have no rights that whites need to respect." These are theories of law, these are theories of race, that are built into our DNA.

What is the takeaway from all of this grim history? What do we take away from a nation built on slavery? What do we take away from a region of the nation that made war on the rest of the nation to preserve slavery? Part of the takeaway, I think, is that we have to learn how to overcome our past. We can only move on and move forward if we know where we are coming from. We can't obliterate the past. I wouldn't ban the teaching of the Civil War, but I wouldn't memorialize traitors, either, and I wouldn't memorialize people who fought against their nation to preserve slavery.

But what I would do is say you have to understand what their motives were, and that means, in part, getting rid of the nonsense that the Civil War was about states' rights or the Civil War was about Northern economic power versus Southern economic power, about agrarian versus industrial. If it was agrarian versus industrial, it would have been New York City against upstate New York. If it were about the Northern oppression of the South, why is it that all the Northern industrialists didn't want the war?

It's not about that. It's about slavery, and that's part of our dark, ugly past. In a sense, the only way we can deal with our modern world is to understand how we got to where we are. My friends used to say, "You are what you eat," and that's true for nutrition. For history, you are where you have been. This history tells us where we have been. It's not pretty, but it's who we are, and it's what we have to deal with.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Paul Finkelman is the president of Gratz College in greater Philadelphia. He received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago and later studied at Harvard Law School. He's the author of more than 50 books and over 200 scholarly articles. The U.S. Supreme Court has recognized his legal expertise by citing

him in four of its decisions. *Teaching Hard History* is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They are the publishers of a valuable collection of essays called "Understanding and Teaching American Slavery."

In each episode, we are featuring a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection. We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials, which are available at Tolerance.org. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of American slavery. Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find these online at Tolerance.org.

Thanks to Dr. Finkelman for sharing his insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shay Shackleford, with production assistance from Tori Marlon and Jonathan Jennings at Gratz College. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zobriski.

If you like what we are doing, please let your friends and colleagues know, and take a minute to review us on iTunes. We always appreciate the feedback. I am Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, associate professor of history at the Ohio State University and your host for *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- NAACP, Charles Hamilton Houston
- U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 9: Slave Trade Clause (The Commerce Clause)
- U.S. Supreme Court, *United States v. The Amistad (1841)*
- U.S. Supreme Court, *Prigg v. Pennsylvania (1842)*
- The Compromise of 1850, The Fugitive Slave Act
- U.S. Supreme Court, *Ableman v. Booth (1859)*
- U.S. House of Representatives, The Northwest Ordinance of 1787
- Library of Congress, Missouri Compromise: Primary Documents in American History
- U.S History, Kansas–Nebraska Act of 1854
- Teaching Tolerance, *Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857)*
- Bill of Rights Institute, Roger Taney and Injustice
- Smithsonian, The Human Factor of History: Dred Scott and Roger B. Taney
- The Avalon Project (Yale Law School), Confederate States of America : Documents

Episode 12: Confronting Hard History at Montpelier

At James Madison's Montpelier, the legacy of enslaved people isn't silenced—and their descendants have a voice. Christian Cotz, Price Thomas and Dr. Patrice Preston Grimes explain how that happened, and why it's important.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, Preserving a More Honest History
- Teaching Tolerance, The White House: A Slave's View

Christian Cotz

- James Madison's Montpelier
- Twitter
- LinkedIn

Price Thomas

- LinkedIn

Dr. Patrice Preston Grimes

- Associate Dean, African-American Affairs, University of Virginia
- Montpelier, African-American Descendants Project
- LinkedIn

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: I have always been fascinated by historic sites. Mesmerized by the thought of standing in the very same place where history happened. As a kid growing up in New York, I enjoyed field trips to places that commemorated the American Revolution in nearby Massachusetts, even more than I did getaways to Great Adventure Amusement Park in neighboring New Jersey. History, of course, happens everywhere, but pivotal moments in history happen only in specific places, and only a handful of those places have been preserved. So, a year or so ago, when I was invited to be a part of small, focused think tank about race, and the legacy of American slavery at Montpelier, the Virginia estate of James Madison, the nation's fourth president, I immediately said yes.

James Madison was the father of the United States Constitution. He was also an enslaver. He held more than 100 people in bondage at his plantation, and never freed a single soul. Not even

upon his death. So, while the historian in me, as well as the kid in me, was enthusiastic and eager about being a part of this dialogue at Madison's home, the African American in me, the brother in me, had serious reservations.

As a descendant of enslaved African Americans, I hold no affection for those who kept my people in bondage, nor fondness for the forced labor camps where they toiled. This is a part of that double consciousness that DuBois talked about: the inescapable way black people see America, because of the harsh way America treats black people. These thoughts are not easily set aside, which is part of the cost of being black and woke, so I carry these thoughts with me to the think tank.

The Montpelier workshop took place on a weekend in January 2017, and since I was already scheduled to deliver a MLK Day address in College Park, Maryland, that Friday, I decided just to drive the two hours to Montpelier. It turned out to be a relaxing ride. My lecture on making Dr. King matter again had been very well received, so I was in good spirits. And the traffic gods shined favor on me, getting me in and out of D.C. ahead of the rush-hour crush. Montpelier is tucked away in the rolling hills of the central Virginia countryside; the restored mansion, Madison's home, sits on high ground, offering sweeping views of hundreds of acres of verdant fields, and lush old-growth forest. Far from the hustle and bustle of urban life, Montpelier's remoteness and natural beauty is calming. But as I drew near, I felt a real uneasiness. This was, after all, a site of black enslavement. I remember thinking as the mansion first came into my view, "Bruh, you need to keep on driving, and go home." But once again, historical curiosity got the best of me, so I pressed on.

I pulled up just in time for a behind-the-scenes tour of Montpelier's exhibition on slavery, called "The Mere Distinction of Colour," which was then still six months away from opening to the public. Christian Cotz, Montpelier's director of education and visitor engagement, who led the tour, explained in vivid detail the exhibit's purpose, themes and features, making clear that they were crafting a narrative that recog nized black humanity, that celebrated black resilience and resistance, that acknowledged the yawning gulf between Madison's beliefs and behaviors, and explained the importance of slavery to the nation's founding.

The staff's commitment to telling the unvarnished truth about American slavery, and engagement with the descendants of Montpelier's enslaved community, was refreshing to see, and it eased my anxiety considerably. But that night, all of my spidey senses were working overtime. Somehow, I had overlooked the fact that we were actually all staying on-site. In

well-appointed farmhouses, but still, on-site. On a former slave plantation, in the middle of rural Virginia. I kid you not, that night, I made sure my door was securely locked. I hadn't seen the movie *Get Out* yet, but I was ready to bounce at the first sight and sound of white weirdness. No, I didn't ask for any tea, thank you very much.

But, morning came, as it always does, and I was still free, so I set about the task at hand—working with the other scholars and filmmakers to develop ideas for a film treatment on the legacies of slavery. It was a thoughtful, thought-provoking, productive and engaging full day of work. One that eventually gave rise to a fantastic film short that is featured in the permanent exhibition that connects America's past to America's present in a soul-stirring way.

James Madison's Montpelier explores American slavery at a historic site, exactly the way it ought to be done: accurately and honestly. And although I do not consider Madison's home a personal pilgrimage site, as do many of the white visitors who journey there to pay homage to the father of the Constitution— you see, it's that whole double-consciousness thing again—I do very much consider it the place to go, the historic site to visit to see, to feel and to understand, the depth and breadth of American slavery, and the experiences of enslaved African Americans.

I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides a detailed look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In each episode, we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material and offering practical classroom exercises.

Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navi gating those challenges, so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history, and legacy, of American slavery.

In June 2017, the Montpelier Foundation unveiled an exhibition called "The Mere Distinction of Colour," that examines the great American paradox of slavery and freedom. In this special episode, I talk with three people who helped develop the exhibit and promote it. We discuss the genesis of the project, and the kinds of educational programs they have created for integrating slavery, and its legacy, into the story of the founding of America and the drafting of the Constitution. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy.

I am really excited to welcome to the *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery* podcast, three special guests with connections to James Madison's Montpelier in central Virginia. We have Christian Cotz, who is the director of education and visitor engagement at James Madison's Montpelier; Mr. Price Thomas, who is the director of marketing and communications at Montpelier; and Dr. Patrice Preston Grimes, who is an associate professor of social studies education and associate dean in the office of African-Amer ican affairs at the University of Virginia. She has been involved in the African-American Descendants Project at Montpelier as an educational consultant. Thanks so much for taking the time out to share some thoughts and observations with the podcast.

Patrice Preston Grimes: Delighted to be here.

Christian Cotz: Yeah, man, we're excited.

Price Thomas: Absolutely.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful. Christian, let me begin with you. Could you share with us just a little bit of the historical background of James Madison, and the history of Montpelier?

Christian Cotz: Sure. Montpelier is a plantation about 30 miles north of Charlottesville, Virginia. Today it's 2,650 acres; in Madison's time, it was well over 5,000. It contains lots of open fields and wooded lots. It was first built by Madison's parents in 1765. The plantation itself was started by his grandparents in the 1720s. Madison was born in 1751, he attends Princeton in the late 1760s-early 1770s, and then gets involved in the American Revolution on the political end of things. He becomes the champion of religious freedom in Virginia, passes Jefferson's statute for religious freedom, pushes that through the state legislature. He becomes the father of the Constitution in 1787, the architect of the Bill of Rights, helps Hamilton write *The Federalist Papers*, getting ratification in New York for the Constitution, and then makes a campaign promise when he's running as representative in the house, to include a Bill of Rights in the Constitution, and thereby gets Virginia's vote for ratification.

He will be Secretary of State for Thomas Jefferson and the fourth president of the United States, from 1808 to 1817, and then spends his retirement years here at Montpelier from 1817 until he dies in 1836. He's married to Dolley Madison for 42 years; they have a great relationship. They never have any children, but Dolley had a child from her first marriage named Payne Todd who will grow up here. Madison will abhor slavery his entire life, he writes about it all the time, from

the time he's a young man in college, until the time he dies—and yet he'll be a slave owner his entire life and will never free a single individual. And he'll own well over 100.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: When did Montpelier become a visitor site? A site where people from around the country, and around the world, could actually come and explore the life and legacy of James Madison?

Christian Cotz: Montpelier is unique amongst founding fathers' homes because Montpelier was a private residence until 1984, so we're very young as far as presidential sites go, and historic house museums go. We opened as a museum in 1987, but there really wasn't much of a museum here then—it was just a great big open house without much furniture in it. It wasn't until we completed the architectural restoration in 2008, that the house really transformed, and let visitors really envision the president's home.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Price, if I could bring you into the conversation a little bit, could you share with us what the overall mission of James Madison's Montpelier is today?

Price Thomas: Yeah, our mission is really to connect the past to the present using the institutional knowledge that we have, which is the Constitution and the lens of the Constitution, and how that fits and weaves into the American founding era, and how that era has influenced our American DNA and a lot of what we're contending with in modern times. What we don't want to be is a period piece, or a period site, right? We don't want to explore history for history's sake; we want to explore it for the sake of relevance and to help contextualize the life that we're all living today.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: How has the mission—connecting the past to the present—changed and evolved since Montpelier came online as a public site?

Price Thomas: I think the beauty of a site like this is that history is additive. And I think it's important for sites like ours to be agile, and to also be forward-thinking. The present is obviously not always the present, right, because that's a moving target, so it's been extremely important over the past two or three years to do all the work that we've done around slavery, around difficult history, and around our continued descendant en gagement. That has been a project that has been very important to Montpelier for the last 19 or 20 years. Being able to connect, again, to the present as a time period, but also to the people, and to the stories, and to the voices of those who have the lived experiences, who have the connections to the site and the history, is vitally important to accurate, authentic and holistic interpretation.

Christian Cotz: If I can just add to that: Madison has always been at the forefront of our interpretation. I've been here for almost 20 years now, and as the house has been restored, more of Madison and his world has become visible. But as we've restored the Madison house, we've recognized that we needed to also restore the landscape, and the lives of the enslaved community that lived here. There were a half dozen Madisons that lived here over the course of 150 years, but there were over 300 enslaved people here. So, over the last two decades, we've slowly been rebuilding that landscape as well, starting with the Gilmore cabin back in 2005, then moving into the south-yard area in 2008, '09, '10. We restored the segregated train depot in 2011, and then we did the final restoration of the south yard just in these last few years.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: So, it really has been additive, Price, as you were saying. One of the things that has been missing from so many of the historic sites, presidential sites, that deal with slavery, that has needed to be added, and in cluded, and interpreted, has been the history of the enslaved people who were a part of these households.

Dr. Grimes, if I could ask you this, what have you seen? Could you share with us just some general observations about this sort of marginalized history of enslaved people at these historic sites—Montpelier, Mount Vernon, Monticello—if you will?

Patrice Preston Grimes: Sure. For the majority of the presidential sites—quite frankly all of them until very recently—it was one story. It was the narrative of the privileged, it was the narrative of the people who owned the land, who bought the slaves. Because that history was so intertwined with the founding fathers, there was a narrative that was told that supported, glorified, rationalized, many of the things that occurred throughout our history. The challenge of that is, when there's a dominant narrative, it can be very difficult for people who have other voices and other stories and other perspectives that are just as valid, and just as real, and empirically have been proven to exist, to have a voice.

What I think has made Montpelier so unique is that while some may see its journey evolving on this path as being relatively new, compared to Mount Vernon, or Monticello, for example, that's the very thing that has really enabled the voice of descendants and people in community to be heard and to come to the fore. Another thing, too, that I think really influenced Montpelier evolving in the way that it did was the fact that the lands and the grounds were held by very few people over generations, and so within the Orange County, Virginia, communities, you have descendants who are still living in the area. You have ties that the community has had. Christian mentioned, specifically, Rebecca Gilmore Coleman. She was the granddaughter of George

Gilmore, who was enslaved. When he was free, he purchased the land across the road from Montpelier, and the fact that she's still living in this community, and she has descendants in this community, was a really big impetus for people to say, "We want to see a more physical representation and interpretation."

Then, finally, I think there's something about the land itself, and because of the tremendous archeological work, versus historical documentation that's done at many sites, literally the earth and the ground tell the story. Because, you know, we know so often from a Eurocentric standpoint, if it hasn't been written, people would say it didn't happen. We're not only relying, now, on historical archives, letters, diaries, things of that sort, that people have left, we literally are using the earth that's being excavated to find the places and spaces where people lived, and worked and co-habited.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Christian, Dr. Grimes just noted that the recapturing and retelling the story of the enslaved who are part of the history of Montpelier, who make Montpelier go, and who make it possible, that it's been necessary to grab different threads, different—sort of historical threads, evidentiary threads, that can be woven together to create a tapestry that re-creates, replicates to a certain extent, the history of their lives. One of those, certainly, is archeology. Could you say a little bit about the archeological work that is going on at Montpelier?

Christian Cotz: Dr. Matt Reeves is the director of archeology here, and he's had a great public archeology program going for almost two decades. Matt and I started in the spring of 2000, and one of the first things that Matt did was really open up Montpelier to be a place where other people could come and learn about archeology. He didn't want to be a scientist hiding in a bubble, or behind the scenes. He wanted other people to understand what archeology was, and what it was capable of, and that it was more than just digging in the soil and examining artifacts. Over the last couple years, he's developed a program where not only field school students from universities, but the public at large, can come and participate in archeological digs, learn how to be an archeologist. Go through lectures and seminars, and understand the history, and spend time digging in the units, finding artifacts, washing artifacts, cataloging artifacts.

He's also created programs where people are learning how to rebuild the structures that were here, historically, that they're finding the architectural evidence of. They dig in the ground, they find the evidence of the building, and then people can come and actually learn how to timber frame or build a log cabin and rebuild the structure. As these programs have grown and

developed, Matt's also been at the forefront of engaging with the descendant community, and by that, I mean the descendants of the enslaved community here. People in that community have come in and participated in the archeological digs, and in the rebuilding programs. You have the descendants of people who were enslaved here unearthing artifacts that were last held, potentially, by their ancestors, and then rebuilding their ancestor's homes so that they can be an educational venue for visitors to Montpelier to learn through.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: I tell you, that really is amazing, and that really does not only make the past come alive, it makes that connection, that Price that you were talking about, between the past and the present. In a way, it sort of shrinks time, by having folk who have blood ties to that land, to that place, to that soil, be a part of the retrieval process. Christian, if I could ask you, could you say a little bit about how the engagement with the descendant community began?

Christian Cotz: Well, it started back in 1999, when Rebecca Gilmore Coleman came knocking on the front door of Montpelier. Literally. She talked with our director at the time, and said, "Hey, do you know what that fallen-down log cabin is over there, across the street from the main gate?" And, at the time, Montpelier was pretty new—10 years old as a historic site. There were 160 structures on the 2,600 acres, and really the only ones that we were really concerned with were the mansion and the temple, at the time. Both Madison structures. The other 158 structures were various buildings that were built over the 19th and 20th centuries by different owners of Montpelier, as far as we knew. So, we didn't know what that falling-down structure tucked in the woods across from the main gate was, and she informed us that it was the home of her great- grandfather, who was enslaved in Montpelier, who built that house after emancipation. Her father was born in that house, and she thought it would be a good idea if Montpelier restored it, so that we could tell the story of Emancipation and Reconstruction.

We agreed with her, and we thought it would be a good idea, too, and we announced the restoration in 2000, or 2001, and it took a few years to get the job done because it had very limited funding, but we opened the Gilmore Cabin in 2005. Over the years, Rebecca's really opened doors for Montpelier into the African-American community in Orange, and elsewhere. As we met new people and learned new stories, we were able to come to a completely new, fuller and different understanding of the enslaved community and their experiences here at Montpelier. Those relationships grew, and we met more and more people, and more and more people got involved, and people began to come on Matt's archeology programs, and on the rebuilding programs, and people came to descendant reunions.

Patrice Preston Grimes: I think it's really important to note: Nothing happens this way without vision and without leadership. The thing that made Montpelier, and the people, different at the time—was they were willing not to dig into and retain a master narrative. Everything was not secondary to the master narrative about James Madison, and that when Rebecca Gilmore Coleman was able to articulate her ownership, and her legacy, and her representation as one of many people, there were people on the other side of that table who were open to listening. I think that's really, really key. So, from the very beginning, descendants who were skeptical, who maybe had never paid attention and driven by that rundown cabin and didn't know, as well, were much more open to engaging because they thought they had a chance to be heard. I think that's really important. And, for many years, there was that distinction; we call it Town-Gown, we call it, you know, in universities, just in terms of plantation, community.

This is not to say that the relationships with the African-American community, and people within the Montpelier Foundation, have always been good, have always been rosy. Quite the contrary. For many people, for many generations, Montpelier and Orange County was the place where black people worked. They didn't even see it as being a historical site. So, it definitely took some openness and a frame of mind on both parts to begin to have these difficult conversations, to see what could come from it. And then having the physical entity of the cabin, I think, was so important because again, we tend to be people who will believe more of what we can see, and touch, and feel, as opposed to what we're told.

Once people in the community realized "No, there is something very concrete here that we can look at, that gives us a sense of ownership." Not in the traditional sense that Madison had, but we have a stake in the game. These are lands that we definitely helped to create, to fuel the economy, and lifestyle, and so on, that happened in the community. I think that was a key turning point, and that was when people from the community were willing to come through the gates of Montpelier, as people from Montpelier became much more willing, then, to work with the Orange County African-American Historical Society; of which I was a board member for four years, in those early years, when we were trying to bring people to the table to have these discussions before we could even do a lot of the planning.

Christian Cotz: If I could just say a little bit more about that, I mean, people have come to be part of the descendant community through just a multitude of ways. Patrice, you started out interacting with us by bringing your students here, didn't you?

Patrice Preston Grimes: Yes, yes. I teach classes in social studies education at the University of Virginia, and I came to Orange County for a black history program that was in the community, and I met Rebecca Gilmore Coleman, and anyone who's met her knows that she's really dynamic, and as soon as she was telling me about Montpelier, I realized it was a place where I had to bring my students. So, every semester for several years, I brought a group of students to Montpelier, and I'm literally able to teach a certain form of history that spans three centuries, from the mansion to the Gilmore cabin to the train station that was repurposed and done, and I can't think of anywhere in the United States where I've taught where I can give students an arc of history in the same way. Not only over the course of time but also the multiple perspectives.

I've got 20- and 21-year-old students who want to be social studies teachers, in elementary and high schools, who seem to be pretty knowledgeable about the content, but whenever they see the cabin, when ever they see the train station that has the "white" and "colored" signs vividly outside with the artifacts inside, they've written some phenomenal blogs and essays on how it's really begun to change their thinking about their own sense of knowing, and how they teach students.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: What I'm hearing is that the key, really, to engaging the descendant community is building relationships that are mutual, that are two-way. In other words, it's not just a give or a take, but it's a give and a take. It's respecting people's histories, and people's experiences, including fraught and tense contemporary experiences with place. Price, I'm wondering if you could say a little bit about how you go about, how Montpelier has gone about, developing and cultivating relationships based on trust and mutual respect with the descendant community?

Price Thomas: Part of it comes from a clarity of mission, and you know, another part of it comes from honesty. When we talk about our American DNA, when we talk about the evolution of this country, it's not really rainbows and sunshine. And black history is not hardly, in any case, rainbows and sunshine for a lot of people. And for a lot of these descendants, this is a real, lived experience for them. They remember those stories passed down from their parents or grandparents or great-grandparents, which is extremely important to us. The other thing, I think, is an openness to more than just what we can find in the historical record. A large portion of our descendant community doesn't come with DNA evidence, or documentary evidence for a multitude of reasons—but that doesn't devalue their stories; that doesn't devalue their oral histories, or the impact that this history has on them and their families. For a lot of the folks that

come through, it's merely a connection to the history, a connection to our mission, a connection to our work.

Part of the reason that we have such an active and engaging descendant community is that we are excited and respectful, and overwhelmingly appreciative that they're willing to share those stories with us. A lot of that's tough to talk about. It's tough to rehash, and sometimes uncomfortable, but this is sort of the courage, and the wisdom, that filters through them from their side, has really helped us to be more open, to be more honest and has shaped our interpretation over the past 15 years here at the site.

Patrice Preston Grimes: If I could tag onto that, one of the things that I've heard Kat Imhoff, the president, say: "You don't have to spit into a test tube for us to check your DNA for you to be engaged with Montpelier." There are people who are engaged who are biological descendants; there are people who are engaged because they may have lived in this area all their lives, but not necessarily know their ancestry. There are people who realized they may have just cultural connections to the experience of enslaved Africans coming to Virginia, you know, right down the road, you know, in Jamestown, in 1619. I think it's an openness, and a welcome spirit, that Montpelier has had to just to learn, to learn the different stories, to learn the different perspectives. And honestly to be able to say, "We don't know." It's an empowering, so to speak, that comes from mutual respect of being willing to listen, and also being willing to take the hits when decisions are made, when things are done, and people within the descendant community go, "You know, you might want to think about that."

But, when you think that it's genuine in terms of people asking, and people understand that I don't have the same kind of understandings that you do, and let us sit at the table and see if we can mutually engage where we have similarities, but also respecting those differences. As you know, we've been in different settings where there have been some tough conversations, and some things have been thrown out, and people have had to have some pretty thick skin, and, yet, I think it's the courageous kind of conversations that we've been able to begin here on a smaller scale, that we could use a lot more of in society today, in other realms, in terms of people who may seem to be different, but we find that we have much more in common, in some ways, than we think we do.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Dr. Grimes, I wonder to what extent the absence of a white, organized descendant community of James Madison, that has been deeply invested in

perpetuating that master narrative that you have talked about, creates space for the participation, inclusion, incorporation of an African-American descendant community?

Patrice Preston Grimes: Oh, I definitely think it's made all the difference in the world, that not having, as I refer to, that dominant narrative with descendants, who, for their own reasons, were invested in the story, and the history, and the culture of being retold in certain ways.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Obviously, James and Dolley Madison don't have any biological children, so you don't have a white descendant community like you have at Monticello with (Thomas) Jefferson, or Mount Vernon with George Washington.

Patrice Preston Grimes: There was a space that was there, and, I guess, good fortune for the African-American community that it was a space that was waiting to be filled. And because, again, people within the community were willing to have their story told, I don't think descendants ever looked at it in terms of an either/or, or a counter-narrative; it was just our story. And the fact that there wasn't another story that had to constantly be challenged, or to have the debates going back and forth. I think it's definitely helped the … I don't want to say the speed in which things have happened, because, you know, that's a very relative term. But when you look at where Montpelier was in 2005 when I came to Virginia, for example, and look at what we've accomplished over this period of time, there's still much more to be done, and yet when you look at where other historical sites are still in time and space, I think we have been able to do some things that we might not have been able to do otherwise.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You mention this idea of our story, African Americans, descendants of the enslaved community at Montpelier, wanting to share their story, wanting to share our story. Collective story of the experience of being enslaved, but then also the experience of fighting slavery, transitioning to freedom and giving meaning to freedom. Christian, Montpelier very easily could have said, "That's great—we're so happy to hear your stories, and thank you very much." And moved right on. But Montpelier didn't do that; you didn't do that. In fact, you wound up creating an entire exhibit, "The Mere Distinction of Color," that really explored this part of the Madison household, if you will, of this community of Montpelier that just wasn't white with a few black folks sprinkled around, but that had black folks central to the entire Montpelier experience. Could you give us an overview of, first, how the exhibit came about, and the thinking behind it, and then also sort of what could visitors expect to see when they come to see the exhibit?

Christian Cotz: Montpelier's been open to telling the other side of the story, I think, for as long as I can remember. We've always valued the African-American experience—and the African-American journey here, and because of Madison, and because of his connection with the Constitution, you have this sort of arc of citizenship that you can track, here, through the historic sites. Patrice was talking about this a little bit. We have sites here going back to the 1720s and '30s of enslavement, all the way through the 20th century. There was a Civil War camp here; the Confederate army camped here over the winter between Gettysburg and Wilderness, and so there are these archeological remains of Confederate sites. And then you have the Reconstruction era, George Gilmore cabin, that's built right on top of that Confederate encampment, and then you have the 1910 segregated train depot, talking about Jim Crow and the segregation era.

So, we've had, for a long time, we've had this story of the arc of citizenship, and really the descendant community is the part of the story that brings it to the present day, because if you have the segregation leading into the civil rights era, and then the descendant community is the present tense. Over the last several years—the exhibit project that you're talking about started in 2015, just a year before that, we had had a meeting with the descendant community, and we brought them in for a three-day weekend. Patrice, remember this? Where we talked about interpretation.

Patrice Preston Grimes: I do. And I think it's no coincidence, as I sit here and think, that if any site were to be the site for this, it would be Montpelier because of Madison being the father of the Constitution. And what immediately came up in that meeting was just the contradiction. How can someone who has written these precepts that we've had for 200-plus years, done that, and still been the slaveholder? And I think these questions, which are more in academic circles—and we're hearing more about them now—were not even on people's lips 10, 15 years ago. And so, again, with a strong educational program at Montpelier related to the Constitution, and having Constitutional scholars, and educators, and people coming from all over the world to learn, it really seems that now had to be the time to continue to do that work and move forward. You can't not include the role of the African folks who were here and did that.

Again, I look at the arc of, you know, with the Obama presidency, you know, for the eight years, how that is overlaid with this. There were some things, I think, that were very unique that kind of came together to make more and more people realize "No, this is my country. The stories need to be told. The history needs to be uncovered." It's very much interwoven, and we're never going

to move forward if we don't acknowledge, and teach, and deal with what has happened in the past. Because if we don't, we continue to be stuck, and we never will be able to move ahead.

Christian Cotz: I think that really came out in that meeting that we had in 2014 when the descendant community came and we spent three days examining the different kinds of interpretation we do about African-American history at Montpelier at the time. We walked through every different program that we offer; we spent a whole day doing that, and we brought in outside scholars from the new Museum of African-American History and Culture, which hadn't opened yet, but they had a staff, and a few people came down to give talks and tell us what was going on in the world of African-American interpretation around the world. And then we spent a whole day asking the community, "What would you like to see us do? What else needs to be here? What aren't we doing?" And of course, the big resounding thing that came back was that we had to put the African-American presence, the enslaved presence, back on the landscape. We couldn't allow visitors to leave here without realizing that there were over 100 people enslaved here at any one time.

Patrice Preston Grimes: And I think that that was a key ah-ha moment in the room because I think so often museums and historical sites think of themselves as being local, and they think and work from the inside out. And I think because of the way everything was evolving, we realized that Montpelier, and the experiences that we were having, were perhaps not unique, but they were an example of a larger world. And so then, to have scholars and people come in, and give us a sense of the diaspora, and how that then played into the Americas, and how Montpelier was an example of that, at that moment, I think, everyone looked at one another and we realized that what we were doing was so much bigger, even than recounting the stories of the enslaved families and people who were here. But, it truly was a representation of the experiences of many people—even if they had never physically been connected, or been to, Montpelier. So that's when the potential of an exhibit became very exciting because we just hadn't seen anywhere where a national site was willing to make the international and worldwide connection of enslaved people and slavery, bringing it through the present day. In addition to the personal connection, and the personal stories that people had.

That's why I think "The Mere Distinction of Color" has become an exhibit that people really want to see because it tells the two stories simultaneously. They exist in tandem. It's not an "either/or"; It clearly brings out the personal stories of people, and how their lives were affected, but it also places those people in a bigger societal institutional realm, which we as a society very

often don't want to do because we don't want to look at the structures that create the inequality. It's much easier to talk about the individual stories.

Christian Cotz: Yeah, and that's—exactly what Patrice is talking about is exactly what came out of our next meeting with the descendant community advisory council, right? Which is after we had created a rough conceptual plan of the exhibit, we shared it with a group of about 30 people and let them tear it to pieces, and that was a hard day.

Patrice Preston Grimes: Yeah.

Christian Cotz: What came out of that meeting, and meetings before as well, was that, as the home of the father of the Constitution, we needed to own the fact that the Constitution protected the institution of slavery in about a half dozen different ways, and our guy is the guy who created that thing. So, we needed to own that and unpack that for people. We needed to help them explore how slavery fit into the economy of the young nation, and for Madison in particular, how it fit into the ideology of the young nation. Our exhibit does that. It looks at economy. It looks at ideology. It unpacks the ways that the Constitution protected the institution of slavery.

But, then, we also needed to own the fact that because the Constitution protected slavery, even though the Constitution also ended slavery in 1865, there are repercussions to that institution. Right? There are reverberations. There's a legacy of that institution that we live with every day in our society. We needed to own that, and unpack that for people, and to put it out there. Which I think is probably one of the most provocative parts of our exhibit. We made about a 12-minute-long video piece, that's a multiscreen video experience, that looks at the legacy of slavery and takes it right up to the present day, which is something that a lot of museums heretofore have not been willing to do. But our leadership went there, and I'm glad they did. We've won a couple of national awards for that piece in particular.

Patrice Preston Grimes: It's much easier to keep people frozen in time because then you don't have to be inclusive.

Christian Cotz: Right.

Patrice Preston Grimes: And you can just continue to do what you've always done, and there's people who will be receptive to that. But, if you're really about being more inclusive, telling a more complete history, engaging people in ways that they have not been engaged before, and more importantly, trying to make these past-to-present connections so we can move forward, and not stay on rewind, I think that's another way that Montpelier is showing other

museums and educators and people in the area that it's possible. And as Christian alluded to, it's not easy work. We definitely did have to have a facilitator, and we had to take some breaks, but people were still willing to come back to the table. Again, because we shared the common vision of wanting that story to be as representative as it could be in today's time. And that again is another thing that I think makes it different from other sites.

Christian Cotz: Yeah, and another way that past-present connection works, the connecting of the dots, is part of the exhibit talks about the national story of slavery, as we just discussed, but the other part of the exhibit looks at the lived experience of slavery here at Montpelier. So many museums have talked about slavery before, but most museums focus on the daily work, the poor living conditions and the hard work that the enslaved had to do, or go through.

Patrice Preston Grimes: Or there may be one or two people who are identified in the narrative, and they become the focal point, or the example, and you know, that's one of the issues that I do have with some sites in this area—that you can talk about one person, but completely forget about all of the people, in many realms, who made that life possible, and that their lives were not only the day-to-day existence, but just the resilience, the strength. Just so many characteristics and features which we talk about in other realms, but have never been intertwined in telling those narratives as well.

Christian Cotz: Yeah, you know, in most museums, you either have the celebrity enslaved person, or you treat all of the enslaved as a monolithic group that all share the same experience. I think when we study slavery, we think about this monolith, right, of 12 million people who are enslaved all have the same experience, and it's easy for that experience to be diluted that way because you're spreading it out over 12 million peo ple. But, when you start to think about slavery happening to one person at a time, when you think about the enslaved grandmother, or the enslaved 6-year-old, or the enslaved father who loses his child, then it becomes more heartfelt. It's harder to process that. Which is probably why a lot of museums have steered away from that: because it's not a happy museum experience—it's a painful museum experience. But we wanted people to empathize with the lives of the enslaved, so we designed one whole part of the exhibit to really be more of an emotional exploration of slavery than an academic one.

Patrice Preston Grimes: And it's very well done, in that it helps you understand the familial relationships, and that when people are being bought and sold, people are literally being severed from their families involuntarily. Perhaps never to be seen again. And just the emotional toll

that that takes on people, and yet, we still rise. So, I think, again, the exhibit, because of the way in which it was designed, captures both of those.

Another area that we haven't mentioned yet that's on the property is the African-American Slave Cemetery. Again, as remains are uncovered throughout the site, there's a specific and very deliberate effort to memorialize, to commemorate, those sites—to mark them. When Juneteenth celebration occurs this year, co-sponsored with community organizations, one of the very first things that's done in any major program like that is that there's a libation ceremony or some sort of commemoration that is done to honor the ancestors who were a part of that. There are other historical sites where the remains have not been treated, or cared for, as considerately. It's things of that sort that I think say things to people when they come on the site without a guide, or without a specific direction: the way in which the care has been taken to honor those things that are an important part of the community.

Christian Cotz: I think, too, your point about the ancestors and the descendant community is important, and it's something we took advantage of in the exhibit, because we thought, "Why tell this story through an institutional voice, or through an academic voice, when we have this wonderful community of descendants here?" So, for many parts of the exhibit, the narrative is told through the voices of the descendants. You have descendants telling their ancestors' story.

Patrice Preston Grimes: I think, even if I'm not a descendant from Montpelier, because of my experience as a black American, I can come and I can have a connection, and I can relate, and it can perhaps give me an understanding. And that's what I think an important contribution is of what is happening here. And that as new family members are discovered, as new artifacts are discovered, as various things are happening, there's an elasticity, or a flexibility of what is here, so those things can be incorporated, as opposed to something being very stagnant, or static, and having to wait until someone else donates money to build a building, to then put things inside a building. So, there are multiple spaces and parts of the way this is designed that make it much more flexible. It's constantly a work in progress. Never would I think that Montpelier would be finished. I mean, it's only as far as the next discovery. Whether it's archeological, whether it's familial, whether it's through historical records, whether it's through the academic work that's being done in the constitutional village. Again, there are many inroads, and many ways that people can contribute, and I think that makes it important, too.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: I'm so glad you touched upon the way in which the exhibition personalizes the enslaved experience. Christian, I remember when you were taking a group of us

through for the first time, one of the first things you said was, "This isn't a re-enactment of the daily toils of an enslaved woman in a kitchen. That's not what we're after. We're about, certainly, explaining the hardship of the labor, and how labor was a part of the daily life, but that work in the kitchen was not the sum total of the experience of an enslaved person. That they lived full lives, that they had rich lives. That it was multigenerational. And, in a way, that slavery is not something as an institution." This really comes across throughout the entire exhibit, that is just local. Dr. Grimes, as you were pointing out, this isn't just a central Virginia, or Orange County story, or just a Montpelier story. This really is a national story, and in many ways, an international story.

I like that. If our listeners get to this episode, and they've listened to 1–11, then everything that they have been listening to, slavery and the Constitution, slavery and the Supreme Court, slavery and the Northern economy and those connections, the wonderful exhibit on trade, and the trade routes that were in and out of Montpelier, all of that is really brought out in very physical ways, represented in the exhibit. I think that's really a part of the power of what you have created.

Patrice Preston Grimes: I realize, too, that because I have been involved with the descendant community for over 10 years, my lens is more focused than others, and yet, in bringing students here, in my own personal experiences, in talking with colleagues, I don't have a sense, when I leave Montpelier, of being heavy. I've been to certain exhibits where I leave, and there's a sense of either depression, or I feel downtrodden, or I feel pessimistic. On the contrary, whenever I come to Montpelier and I leave, there's always a sense of resilience. There's always a sense of uplift. There's always a sense that getting that more complete story gives me a sense of ownership, it gives me a sense of pride—but it also makes me want to act. It makes me want to do. It's not just enough to come here and say, "Oh, this is nice." It really brings it to today in terms of "How can I take all of this that's here, and how can I continue to push it and move it forward?"

It is physically beautiful. I mean, I tell people that this part of central Virginia is one of the most beautiful places that I've ever visited. And I've been fortunate to be in many. Just the awe of all of that. And yet, as one of the descendants at Montpelier told some students in my class, "You see the Blue Ridge Mountains, and it looks beautiful, and yet you have to remember that for the people who were enslaved, that mountain was a barrier. They weren't thinking about what was beyond that for the westward expansion. It was a barrier that they were never able to cross." So, there are all these dichotomies that are just constantly going on when you're here. I leave here just so much more stimulated. It's reflective, but yet I also want to put things into action, as well.

Christian Cotz: I think that notion of action is really important to comment on because I think that's what differentiates Montpelier's work from other historic sites, is that a lot of plantation homes have tracked the descendants of enslaved people, but for the most part, those other sites have looked at them as, almost like a scientific set of data. They want to know who's descended from whom, and where those people live.

Patrice Preston Grimes: Or a social club.

Christian Cotz: Yeah, to some extent, that's exclusive.

Patrice Preston Grimes: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Christian Cotz: But, for the most part, other sites have not tried to turn the descendant community into stakeholders, right?

Patrice Preston Grimes: And I think that's the big difference. It's the descendant community, and also people within the broader community as well because there were people within Orange, Virginia, who were a part of making Montpelier happen. There was the enslaved community, and yet there were the tradespeople and farmers, and other people, as well. And so, it was a very interactive group of people at that time, and so there are no clear lines that are drawn in terms of "You're a descendant, but you're not." You know? "You were involved to this extent, but you weren't." Again, I think that's the case where, not having the baggage, I'll say, of having the dominant family, or the descendants, not having a narrative that you want to protect, or maintain for various reasons. That was freeing, in many ways, to kind of take that and turn it on its head, to give Montpelier… What could have been a liability, or people could have said, "You're too young. You don't have all these things; you don't have the depth." That really did become an advantage to say, "And with that, then, we are open to taking this where it goes."

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Mm-hmm. The point of walking through the exhibit, and coming out on the other side, and not feeling, Dr. Grimes, as you had pointed out, depressed and down, but, rather, hopeful, is a point that we have been trying to emphasize with this podcast. That if you teach, and talk about, and tell, the history of American slavery accurately, and honestly—meaning that you recognize and restore the humanity of enslaved peo ple—that that is still a hard history, slavery will always be hard to talk about and teach, but it is very much a hopeful history for the very reason that you talked about. The resilience of a people to endure the worst that man had to offer, and still retain their humanity, and build upon that over the generations. Price, I'm wondering if you could share some of the reactions to the exhibit. It's

been open for, coming up on a year now. Reactions from the public, just visitors coming through, but then also from professionals—professional historians, public history organizations, other museums, other historic sites and the like.

Price Thomas: You've got a little bit of everything, to be honest. I mean, from all of our colleges, the reception has been almost exclusively praiseworthy. I mean, the work that Christian and the team did putting it together, that the research group did, with the foundation, and Matt, Kat and the descendant community, and I mean, it really was the work of many hands, and it was exciting to see that all coalesce and come to fruition in a couple of physical spaces. So, the museum community has been "over the moon." We've had people out here to tour it, and they've all loved it, and they've said how wonderful and brave—I think part of what's interesting is that, you know, in talking to the folks around here, you know, we never really saw it as that. We just saw it as the right thing to do. You know? It is validating, right? But at the end of the day, we did what we did because it was right, and we have a responsibility when interacting with the public to tell an honest and complete story.

But, you know, obviously receiving applause from your peers is also great. Obviously, we won a couple of awards recently for some of the multimedia pieces. The public has been overwhelmingly positive as well, but I think part of the interest is that this exhibition was meant to have people feel some kind of way when they left, right? I think that it's meant to be emotional, to a degree, and it's meant to challenge people, and it's meant to be unique and to offer everyone who comes through there something a little bit different. We've had tears, we've had anger, we've had curiosity. We've had people who want to have deeper discussions. That spans age, ethnicity, background, right?

It's been really interesting to interact with folks as they come out, or to sort of walk around and watch how people are interacting with the different pieces or the quotes and comments that they leave in some of the ports where you can actually write and leave things there.

Patrice Preston Grimes: And yet, I think part of what's interesting, too, is kind of the lens that people are coming in because we can navigate through places and spaces that we choose, and so it would still be possible, in some respects, if someone came and they wanted a more 1950s textbook history of Madison, to go to the house, to look at certain exhibits and so on, and you cannot physically skirt the exhibit, which I think is a brilliance of Montpelier—that you may try to avoid it in some ways, you know, you may have a guide that may emphasize one thing over another—but it's the physical presence of the exhibit that's here that's just undeniable. And yet, I

have had students who've come, and I've gotten comments from them where they weren't necessarily ready for what they were going to hear, and they were expecting a more generalist perspective, and so when they did hear the descendants talk about the enslaved community, and see certain things, it was disturbing. These are 20- and 21-year-old students at the University of Virginia who are thought to be well versed and have studied.

I have observed even younger students, and I think the word "disturbed" is accurate because they then wrote essays and blogs about it. And yet, I've had the benefit of engaging with those students over time, and invariably, given three months, or six months, or definitely no more than an academic year, I've had a couple students come back and go, "You know, I think I'm going to go to Montpelier again." I can't think of too many college students, for all the things that they could do, that might say they're going to visit a historical site on their own time, you know, before they graduate. I think it's most profound because it's making people think. And if people may not be ready to do that, they still have to see what they see, and that in and of itself is enough to begin to move people in a way that they might not have been moved otherwise.

Price Thomas: Yeah, and then there's an element, like Patrice said, an element of confrontation to it. In all places in our lives, we self-select as much as we want to, and as much as we can, but there is an element of coming here where you are faced head-on with a part of this history. The depth with which you choose to interact with

that, right, is up to you. We hope you'll come and experience it in its fullest form, but whether or not you do that, it is a part of the landscape; it is a part of the vernacular. It is a large part of our mission and what we want to do. And that is, bring that forward to the public.

Patrice Preston Grimes: And part of the restoration that's really been important, is that it's happening throughout the grounds, and throughout the area. Fifteen years ago, if you drove into Montpelier, you wouldn't have seen the cabins where the enslaved people lived next to the house. You cannot miss it. You physically drive down a long view, and you can see them there, and yet that's not the only place where they are. Because, you know, I've been to some other historical houses in parts of the South, and you'll see the cabins close to the front of the house where the people who worked in the house are, but there's never any mention of any people who worked in the field, or did any other duties.

One thing that I think is represented and important here is that as you walk through the grounds of Montpelier, there are various sites that are noted throughout the grounds of where the presence of the lives of those folk were. I think there's subtle things like that, but I think they're

very important distinctions that are made, in terms of having that presence be around people as soon as they set sight on the grounds.

Christian Cotz: I think it's that cognitive dissonance that we were after, right? I mean, when you said, "challenge people," and I think that that's one of the things that we wanted to do, is challenge people's perspectives—or perceptions, I should say—of their history. Everybody wants to remember the rosy version and not the real version. For us to challenge those perceptions, and make people stop, and reconsider, and think, and start a conversation on the way home, or come back three months later, is exactly what we were hoping for.

Patrice Preston Grimes: And, so, I think this kind of segues, in some ways, into just the educational part, which I've been involved. Not only was there the physical restoration, and not only has there been the exhibits, but also the work that's been done at Montpelier with the docents, with the people conducting tours. With the people that Matt Reeves has worked with in-depth with the archeology. The language in which people are using, as facts are verified, as new archeological discoveries occur, how that is interwoven into the narrative. That there is an effort made that it's a more inclusive narrative for anyone who comes with any particular group. It's not an à la carte where you kind of pick and choose what you include and what you don't. Because at the end of the day, it's that teaching that occurs, and the follow-up from that, that then gets the story beyond Montpelier, in addition [to] the technology that can really make a difference and have that transfer from generation to generation.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: That's a great point, and I'm glad you brought it up because one of the things that I think many of our listeners would be interested in are ways to incorporate something like historic sites like Montpelier into a curriculum—whether it's through a physical visit, or from a distance virtually. Dr. Grimes, do you have any thoughts about the best ways to incorporate into curriculum historic sites such as Madison's Montpelier?

Patrice Preston Grimes: Yeah. As a matter of fact, every semester that I've taught my social studies course to students who are going into their field for their initial teaching positions, I've incorporated what I call the field trip, or the road trip. I think for professors, for educators, it has to be deliberate, it has to be specific—it can't be "the food, folks and fun." It really has to be grounded in terms of helping people understand this is a part of the narrative and the content that's really important. For my fellow educators out there, I would recommend planning the trip, and for many semesters, I would do it with students. The last two semesters, I have not been able to have them physically be together; they've gone on their own. I'm getting feedback

from that to see the differences between a group experience versus an individual experience. But yet, it must be scaffolded, and it must be built into what you're doing. Sites like Montpelier become an exemplar. They're a case study for how we can teach social issues using historical sites. How we can teach history—I know with the Teaching Tolerance work, this has been done, teaching the hard history. What better way to have an example that people can see this, either by physically visiting the site, or this is where we benefit from technology, where you can do this in a virtual sort of way.

Again, when students can do the inquiry, and they have the evidence that they can look at themselves, it's not me telling them what happened, it's them having the tools to be able to discover, and inquire, to examine the documents, to ask the questions. For them to tussle with it, and them to then get the insights that come from it. I mean, that's really authentic learning in that way. The feedback that I've gotten from my student-teachers in the field is, they've taken classes from as young as fifth grade, all the way to 11th grade, and brought them here. One of the reasons they were able to come was having had that experience in their own preservice teaching and training. It made it easier for them to think about considering doing it when they're in the field, particularly at a time when sometimes funds in school districts have limited the degree the students can travel and do field trips and things like that outside of school.

Then finally, the curriculum. It really is important that we have the proper curriculum. Having the work that Teaching Tolerance has done, having workshops with teachers to specifically engage with that mate rial, all of it works together, and yet the curriculum is important because many people will never be able to come to this site, and yet, with that material, and with technology, they can still engage their students in a way to make it relevant and important.

Christian Cotz: I think, too, when you think about primary sources that students interact with, so often, it's the master narrative, right? It's the dominant narrative, and the primary sources you see are the Constitution, the Declaration. You don't see, maybe it's a letter between Madison and Jefferson, but it's certainly not a let ter between Madison's enslaved field worker and his wife, or between Paul Jennings, Madison's enslaved manservant, and Dolley, who's requesting time away from Dolley because his own wife is dying, and he wants to be at her side. And those sorts of primary sources open your eyes to the other side of history.

Patrice Preston Grimes: They do. Particularly for elementary students, just the concreteness of it all—that if they can't come to Montpelier, they can look online and they can see, these are the tools that people used, these are the nails that were made that built the buildings that are

here. Again, that tactile sense for younger children is so important, and that's an initial connection that they don't forget, so when they get into other places and spaces, they can make connections that way, too.

Price Thomas: And there's also this relevance and context side of it, which, I think when it comes to schools and education, it's vitally important. We talk about how we were all acculturated. Obviously, we have Patrice from working at UVA; Christian, who's an alumnus at JMU; myself at William and Mary, and we sort of forget the bubbles in which we live and influence our views of the world. I think that understanding history, and understanding why two black dudes can't sit in Starbucks, but a white girl can carry an AR-15 on a college campus—why is that the way it is? Why do those things matter? I think part of the way we educate kids now, it's so content-focused. Do you know names? Do you know dates? But we can talk more about the how and the why, and why these things manifest themselves the way that they do, and what's the historical context for a lot of the modern issues that we're dealing with today that are popping up in the news, and that really hit our area of Virginia a year ago. Again, starting to put all of these pieces together, you know, has become very important to us.

Christian Cotz: You should talk about the Let 'Em Shine program and the tandem programs that we put together because that's a whole different kind of education that we turn this exhibit that's primarily about the past to the present day.

Price Thomas: Yeah. We had the opportunity to run two programs earlier this year for the Albemarle County Public Schools, and for a local private school, and we did exactly that. It was a combined effort site wide—and also some great friends of ours from various sites, and also some of our exhibition fabricators—where we were able to bring students out here to have those more in-depth, a little more esoteric conversations, about how history maps to today, and trying to bring it forth for this younger generation. How is it relevant to 17-, 18-, 19-year-olds today? How do we use history to have modern conversations? Do we under stand how slavery and Reconstruction and Jim Crow influences a lot of the issues we see today when we talk about the achievement gap or wage discrimination or mass incarceration? All these things matter, and all these things are connected. I think an important part of being a cultural institution in our evolution, to be able to engage the public on a more real level, is to be able to talk about these things. To talk about, and to deconstruct, what white privilege means. Why don't people understand what that means? How do we branch that out across history? How do we talk to people in a very realistic way about that? Again, always grounded in what we know, and what we have. Which is history, and which is this Constitutional framework of America.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: That's a great way to sort of wrap it up and bring us to the present, connecting—Price, as you had mentioned earlier—the past to the present, and keeping in mind this idea of the power of a place like Montpelier because of the work that it's doing as a site where authentic history—I really like that term, authentic learning—can take place. I think that's really powerful, and what we want to get at in the end. That's the kinds of experiences, both in the classroom, and taking the classroom outside of the school building—outside of the schoolhouse, the college, the high school, the middle school—where that kind of learning that is most impactful and powerful can take place.

Christian, one last question: Where do we go from here? Where does Montpelier go from here? Where does the exhibit go from here? Dr. Grimes had pointed out that, and I think she's absolutely right, this isn't, it's not a static exhibit; as new material, new interpretation, literally, as the archival work, as building reconstruction takes place, new interpretations, new descendants become a part of the conversation, this history is still evolving and being told in a way. I just wonder, where do you envision? Where do you see Montpelier going from here?

Christian Cotz: Well, I think, like so much of my experience at Montpelier, it's sort of "We'll figure it out as we go," and then do a good job at getting there. A couple of things have shaken out recently that are really interesting and surprising and were not foreseen. One, this past February we hosted an event that we called the National Summit on Teaching Slavery, through which we invited academics and other museum profes sionals, and descendants from plantations all across the South to come join us at Montpelier—there were 50 people in total—to talk about the best practices that museums can engage in when they engage descen dant communities. We talked about different practices and research, and relationship building, and relationship maintaining. And education. And interpretation. What are the best ways to go about doing this?

Out of those 50 people, we had stories of success, we had stories of failure, mistakes. We had people who hadn't done any of it before, people who were there to learn. We had voices, again, from the descendant community, and from the academic side of things. That was a really useful three-day weekend, and the results will be published, hopefully, in the near future, in a small pamphlet that we're putting together that will be sort of a rubric for other sites to follow. Sort of a guidebook. Because when Montpelier engaged in this work, it hadn't been written about in the academy. There was no scholarships that said, "This is what you should do if you're going about this kind of work." It was really sort of groundbreaking.

Patrice Preston Grimes: And probably good that it hadn't because it then helped it be from the bottom- up. It helped it germinate and take the life that it took. Because in the academy, if somebody gives you the blueprint, people tend to follow that. I think, again, it was good that that did not exist because we didn't have any limits. There were no boundaries on where we would take it, and what we could do. And also, too—I was fortunate to be at that session, and there are varying academic viewpoints as well. There are people who think that the envelope needs to be pushed much farther and much harder. There are people who are looking on a global level. There are people who want the local interpretations to go deeper. I think it was important for all of us to see that there is no one way; that there's a range in which this is being done, and trying to find the places and the spaces that would be inclusive of all of that. I think that was important for us to see, too.

Christian Cotz: And then, the other thing that's come up is we opened the exhibit last June, and literally two months later, we had the events of August 12th happen in Charlottesville, right down the road. I mean, most of the people who work at Montpelier live in and around Charlottesville. It's our urban center. It's our home city.

Patrice Preston Grimes: For me, I had the Klan literally march two blocks from my house in Charlottesville, and so to have done all that work last summer, and then to have experienced the violent riots in Charlottesville within a matter of a couple months, it was quite a year.

Christian Cotz: And since then, we've had teachers, and we've had leaders of nonprofits and leaders of museums, differ ent corporate groups, come to us and say, "We want to do something with our class, our group, our staff, about race and identity." Most of the people who are calling us don't know what they want to do—they just know that we have this exhibit, and they want to come and use the exhibit as a vehicle to talk with their group, their community, about all of this stuff that's going on. We've had to respond to that in the best way we can, but we're historians. We're really good at talking about stuff that's happened up to about, I don't know, 30, 40, 50 years ago. But, get us to start talking about current events and it gets a lot more challenging. It's not what we're trained to do. That's one of the things that we're doing now: we're going through some facilitated dialogue training with our staff, and trying to get people geared up to talk to our visitors about how the history of slavery really does have a legacy that's very present in our society today, and how we come to terms with that. And what we can do about it.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: All right. I don't know how y'all feel about that, but I thought that was fantastic.

Christian Cotz: Good.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Christian Cotz, Price Thomas, Dr. Patrice Grimes, thank you so much for sharing your expertise, your insights and your experiences with how to tell this hard history of American slavery accurately, honestly and effectively. Thank you so much.

Christian Cotz: Thank you.

Price Thomas: Thanks, man.

Patrice Preston Grimes: Thank you, our pleasure.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Christian Cotz is the director of education and visitor engagement at James Madison's Montpelier. Price Thomas is the director of marketing and communications. And Dr. Patrice Preston Grimes has been involved in the African-American Descendants Project at Montpelier as an educational consultant. She is an associate professor of social studies education and an associate dean in the office of African-American Affairs at the University of Virginia.

Teaching Hard History is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a valuable collection of essays called *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. In each episode, we're featuring a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection. We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials, which are available at Tolerance.org. These materials include over 100 prima ry sources, sample units and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of American slavery. Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find these online at Tolerance.org.

Thanks to Mr. Cotz, Mr. Thomas and Patrice Preston Grimes for sharing their insights and experiences with us. This podcast was produced by Shea Shackelford, with production assistance from Tori Marlan, and Kendall Madigan at James Madison's Montpelier. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Car olina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zebriski.

I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, associate professor of history at The Ohio State University, and your host for *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- Montpelier, The Mere Distinction of Colour (exhibit)
- The White House, James Madison
- Congress.gov Resources, The Federalist Papers
- White House Historical Association, Dolley Madison
- George Washington, Mount Vernon
- Thomas Jefferson, Monticello
- Montpelier, One Person at a Time (Rebecca Gilmore Coleman)
- Montpelier, Archeology (Dr. Matt Reeves)
- AfroVirginia, Gilmore Cabin - Montpelier
- Orange County African-American Historical Society
- Smithsonian, National Museum of African-American History and Culture
- Historical Marker Database, Montpelier Slave Cemetery
- Henry Louis Gates, Jr.,What Is Juneteenth?
- Montpelier, The Life of Paul Jennings
- Montpelier, Let 'Em Shine

Episode 13: Drop Us A Line – Your Questions. Your Stories. Your Episode!

A listener's question leads to a meaningful moment. And now we want more! Take a listen, then email podcast@tolerance.org to tell us your story about teaching hard history for an upcoming, special episode.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, Black History Month: Teaching the Complete History
- Teaching Tolerance, What Is White Privilege, Really?
- Teaching Tolerance, Black Oppression and Resistance

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: My people! This is your host, Hasan Kwame Jeffries.

For several months we've been talking about ways to better educate students about the history of American slavery—and we've said a whole lot. But now it's time for us over here to be quiet and to listen to you! Teachers and educators, what new ideas, suggestions or techniques have you tried since listening to podcast? And what happened? How did your students react and respond? Did the experience raise new questions for you? These are the sorts of things we're interested in.

So, we want you to send us your questions and stories. You can email them to podcast@tolerance.org. Seriously, send us your stuff—tell us what you've been doing. That email address, again, is podcast@tolerance.org. We're going to answer as many of your questions as possible in an upcoming episode of *Teaching Hard History*.

Remember, back in Episode 5, the exchange I shared with a middle school educator who was wrestling with how to teach American slavery? Her frank and honest inquiry, and my response, is the kind of exchange we hope to have with you.

The message began: "Good Morning Mr. Jeffries…"

Izzy Anderson: "Good morning, Mr. Jeffries. I am a school librarian in the Arkansas Delta. In addition to being a librarian, I also teach a small gifted and talented literacy class, which is made up primarily of black sixth grade boys. My students do not get a full year of social studies at my school, so I'm modifying my curriculum to teach black history to my students this month, and

probably for the rest of the year. I am starting with slavery, so I've been listening to your podcast for ideas."

"I am a white educator, and I'm concerned about teaching history in a way that is honest and true but avoids traumatizing my young students. My students live in an area of the country that, in many ways, is still experiencing the reality of Jim Crow. I think it's really important for them to understand their own history, but I don't want to do an information dump on them without also caring for their hearts. I'd appreciate any suggestions you might have. Izzy Anderson."

"I have nine boys and one girl in this class. I was going to do a quick overview of black history, but I realized that my kids don't really know anything about slavery, and they also don't have a concept of a timeline. They don't understand the distance between Martin Luther King and slavery, or how long slavery had been around. They just didn't know anything about it, so I was, 'Oh, we have to stop here,' because slavery is understanding the black experience, and their experience in the world as black people that live in the deep South."

"Black people whose grandparents, and great-great-grandparents didn't leave during the great migration after slavery. They're the ancestors of the people who stayed here, and so I was like, I feel like they really need to understand slavery and that experience in order to understand where they came from. I'm like, 'Okay, I'm not the person that should be teaching them about where they came from. I'm not the person who should be teaching them about this trauma, but I'm the only person that's here who's going to do it, so I have to figure out how to do it right.'"

"My concern was that they were just going to be like, 'This is horrible, and it makes me feel really bad, and I feel really bad about this," because obviously conversations about slavery, and being like, "Your ancestors were slaves, your ancestors were abused and murdered for a really long time, and mine weren't.' It's a really hard conversation to have, and I was really worried—okay, if I'm gonna lay this out on the table for them, am I going to traumatize them? Am I going to give them all this horrible information, and they're going to hear about all this horrible stuff, and all this rape and stuff as sixth graders, and then they're just going to have nightmares, and it's going to be horrible, and I'm going to get angry calls from parents because their kids can't sleep?"

"Should I whitewash it a little bit? Should I sanitize it a little bit for them, because they're young, but still have the knowledge that nobody else may ever teach them about this again, and that sanitized version of it may be all that they learn about it? Should I just put it out on the table, and assume, or hope, that it's something that they can cope with? I feel like I need to talk to

somebody who actually knows about this, and so that's where I ended up finding this podcast, and then reaching out."

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: I knew exactly where Ms. Anderson was coming from, both as an educator, and as an African American who had mostly white teachers in elementary and high school. I appreciated her candor and concern, as well as her commitment to teach more than what was required. So, I messaged her back: "Hi Izzy, thank you very much for your thoughtful note. I suggest beginning the conversation in the present by explaining to your kids that you have to look to the past to understand current times. That will help get them interested, and don't avoid talking about the harshness and brutality of slavery. No one who watches television is unaware of violence, but it needs to be explained that slavery was so brutal because black people were constantly resisting in every way imaginable."

"Explain to them how central slavery was to American growth, and you can't emphasize enough that there is real pride to be found in this history, the pride of surviving a horribly unjust system, the pride of knowing their ancestors resisted, the pride of knowing that black people were right in their insistence that slavery was wrong, and the pride of knowing that the enslaved never gave up hope—they never surrendered their humanity. Be clear with them, too, about what was right and wrong, about who showed true strength and courage, and they'll get it. It's not going to be easy, as they will have a range of reactions and emotions, but affirm those feelings. Tell them, 'Yes, this makes me mad too,' and always redirect them toward drawing inspiration from the enslaved who endured, who fought, who survived despite all odds. Good luck."

Izzy Anderson: "And that really gave me a direction to go in. I'm going to focus on resistance movements. I'm going to focus on the development of culture in the face of people who really didn't want slaves to develop culture. Not to avoid those really, really tough topics—that our kids are exposed to violence and things in their real lives, and in media all the time. For us to assume that they can't handle it is probably not giving them enough credit, and that I can tell them about these things as long as I frame it in the context of resistance, in the context of survival. Of being like, okay, yes, black people endured this, but they also survived it, and thrived, and created a culture and resisted all the time."

"If I teach it to them, all these things to them, in that context, then it's going to be really powerful for them. That's the direction that I've taken it. Once I really dove in and started to have these really scary conversations with kids, and telling them about these really scary things, they handled it much better than I thought that they were going to. They expressed that they

were really happy to know this, and they took out of it what I had hoped that they could take out of it, which is this anger, but it's a righteous anger."

"I think looking at the people who change the world, there are often people that have righteous anger. I think if I can engender that, or help kids develop that anger—because there's a lot of things now that they should be angry about—if that anger can be formed in a base of history and understanding of the world, then I hope that kids can go out, and my kids can go out and be advocates. That anger that I see in them is the right kind of anger. It's what I wanted, and it's what I want to continue to develop as I keep talking to them about these things."

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Two days later I received another message from Ms. Anderson, an update on what had been going on in her class.

Izzy Anderson: "Thank you so much for such a long and thoughtful message. Since I've read it, I've been really leaning into letting students express their emotions as we read and learn."

"What I didn't expect is the amount of anger they are expressing. They're angry, wondering, 'Why haven't I learned this before?' and I think the anger is righteous. My job now is to help them express it constructively."

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: "And that's the thing," I wrote back, "Your students' reaction, their righteous anger, is consistent with the reaction of my students in college, both black and white. When they are exposed to the truth in a thoughtful and honest way, they get pissed off, but not at the truth teller, but rather at those who withheld the truth from them. Now you have to capitalize on that anger," I said. "Use it as motivation for them to learn more about what others aren't going to teach them. I promise, you will be the teacher who they will remember because you told them what others wouldn't. Peace, Hasan."

What I love about hearing Izzy's question and story again is how much we can learn from each other's experiences in the classroom. Because we all want to do a better job of teaching the hard history of American slavery.

So, email those questions and stories to podcast@tolerance.org. We're looking forward to reading them.

I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, associate professor of history at The Ohio State University, and your host for *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

Episode 14: Slavery Today

Enslavement didn't end with Emancipation. Historian James Brewer Stewart discusses modern-day slavery happening across the world—and right here in the U.S.—showing educators how to connect the past with the present.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, Human Trafficking
- Teaching Tolerance, Historical Repercussions Today

James Brewer Stewart

- Founder, Historians Against Slavery
- James Wallace Professor of History (emeriti), Macalester College
- *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery*
- *Abolitionist Politics and the Coming of the Civil War*

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: On December 4, 1947, Elmore Bolling, a 30-year-old Black businessman in Lowndes County, Alabama, was murdered in cold blood near his home. An NAACP report documenting the lynching described Bolling's body as having been "Riddled by shotgun and pistol shots." Clarke Luckie, one of Bolling's white neighbors admitted publicly to having orchestrated the murder, and justified his actions by claiming that Bolling had insulted his wife over the telephone.

But NAACP investigators uncovered the truth behind the killing. They found that Bolling was simply, and I quote, "Too prosperous as a Negro farmer."

The lynching of Elmore Bolling was neither the first nor the last that occurred in Lowndes County during the century after emancipation. Whites lynched Theo Calloway in 1888. Will Jones in 1914. The brother Will and Jesse Powell in 1917. 16-year-old Neal Guin in 1931. Jim "Buck" Seles in 1933. Organizer Jim Press Meriwether in 1935. And Roosevelt Thompson in 1942.

I discovered these lynchings while conducting research for my dissertation about the civil rights movement in Lowndes County, and I was struck by the fact that none of the white people who

had committed these atrocities hid their identities. No one wore a mask when they killed Black people in Lowndes County. And no one went to jail. So I swore that I would not only identify in my dissertation, the victims of racial terror in Lowndes County so that people would have to say their names, but I would also identify their murderers, so their names would be said, too. It was a promise I kept. I also promised a local grassroots activist that I would send her a copy of the dissertation when I was done. I kept that promise, too.

Several years after I finished the dissertation, I received an email from Mrs. Jo McCall, the daughter of Elmore Bolling, who wrote to thank me for my research. Apparently, copies of my dissertation had been floating around Lowndes County like some kind of underground mixtape. And a friend of hers who knew she was looking into the death of her father, shared my work with her.

Mrs. McCall explained, she was only three years old when her father was murdered. And that her only memory of him was seeing him shot dead. Her family never spoke of the killing, so she grew up not knowing what had happened. In her retirement though, she decided to discover the truth. And when she read my dissertation, she reached out for a copy of the NAACP report that I had found. This led her on a journey of discovery that culminated in her family dedicating a plaque at the site of her father's murder that documents his death as well as his life.

The Elmore Bolling marker is less than a half-hour's drive from the newly-unveiled National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, which is dedicated to the victims of racial terror in America. Both the marker and the memorial tell a crucial part of the story of Black life in the century after emancipation. The story of the persistence of racial terror. Indeed, for a century after the end of the Civil War, the pattern and practice of exploiting Black labor to generate white wealth, which had been at the heart of the institution of slavery, continued unabated, albeit in new forms. And violence, which had been the cornerstone of slavery, continued to be the cornerstone of these new forms of slavery such as sharecropping and convict-leasing. Even today, violence is at the heart of the most common forms of un-freedom, such as mass incarceration.

The story of American slavery does not end with the ratification of the 13th Amendment, but continues into the next century and beyond. This is because a slaveholder mentality persisted. Whites throughout the South continued to believe that they were entitled to free Black labor, and had no problem using violence to get their way.

So today, we speak the names of those who were the victims of the most extreme forms of white supremacy. In Lowndes County, they were Theo Calloway, Will Jones, Will and Jesse Powell, Neal Guin, Jim "Buck" Seles, Jim Press Meriwether, Roosevelt Thompson, and Elmore Bolling.

We speak their names so we never forget what happened to them. We speak their names so we know what happened to slavery once the war was over and the constitution was amended. And we speak their names so we understand the new forms of slavery that exist today.

I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides a detailed look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In each episode, we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material, and offering practical classroom exercises.

Talking about students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges, so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery.

Slavery didn't just disappear in 1865. It evolved into other economic and legal systems, the legacy of which can still be seen today. And the outright practice of slavery continues throughout the world on a far greater scale than one might imagine. In this episode, historian James Brewer Stewart uses the pre-emancipation history of American slavery to make sense of modern enslavement. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy.

James Brewer Stewart: Hey, my name is Jim Stewart, and I'm a retired professor of history who has studied the problems of slavery for a very long time, like about 40 years. Mostly interested in how slavery systems get abolished, and the more I studied that subject, the more it began to disturb me that slavery systems sometimes transform themselves without necessarily becoming abolished.

That became a realization that I thought I would work on real hard after I retired a few years ago, so I founded an organization called Historians Against Slavery. So what Historians Against Slavery does is try and take historical knowledge, perspective, and bring it to bear so that we can see this big, contemporary problem in the United States and all around the world that's really hard to focus on, which is called contemporary slavery.

And contemporary slavery has a lot of different definitions to it. It has a lot of different systems or forms connected with it. It's very complicated. It doesn't look at all like the old plantation slavery that you have been spending a lot of time coming to terms with. It does on the other hand, especially in the United States, have a great deal to do with the legacies of plantation slavery, that is segregation, marginalization, and some would argue the legacies of that slavery show up today in the discussions about the school-to-prison pipeline, in the prison-industrial complex, in a lot of issues having to do with criminal justice and law enforcement that probably are very much on the minds of your students. You've done a great deal of work working with your students to develop all kinds of knowledge about slavery in the American past and its resonance in the 21st century. And my job is to invite you to capitalize on that knowledge, their knowledge, as much as you can to be able to wrap your arms and get your students more to wrap their arms around the fact that today, across the world, there are more enslaved people than there have been in any other time in human history. That's a pretty staggering statistic. That's debated, but it's a statistic that, for the past decade, has been rising in increments of 10 to 15 percent annually.

The best analogy that you can make between the external costs of slavery, what slavery does to a society, what slavery corrupts in society, what slavery wastes in society, what slavery poisons in society, is very, very much like thinking about living next to a chemical plant. Shortened life expectancies. Loss of talent pools that normally create productive and abundant societies. Inefficiency. Driving down of wages of free people.

The whole idea that enslavement finally makes life miserable for everybody, is just like living next to a hog-slaughtering plant, or drinking polluted water, or living in Flint. The analogy between environmental consequences of the corruption of nature in the environment and the analogy to slavery as a corruption of human relationships with health consequences, production consequences, investment consequences, day-to-day living consequences, law enforcement consequences. The whole net effect of enslavement on the rest of society is like an environmental disaster. Because you've done so much work on American slavery, you do really have an opportunity when you come to this topic, to engage your students as to why history matters. You know a lot about slavery in the past, what does that tell you about now? How can we begin to tie together all kinds of information to be able to understand the current dilemma that really is one of the most important human rights issues, and one of the most difficult to deal with in the entirety of our time.

So what I'm going to do today is, present a few reasons why studying this subject can engage your students in a valuable and deep and participatory way, and also to suggest a few methods for doing that. And let's start by taking probably what would be the simplest road into the problem of contemporary slavery, which is to simply ask the question: what does it look like? And there are many, many ways that people are enslaved today. I mean, there were lots of occupational diversity in the old slavery, too. There were skilled artisans. There were field hands. There were people who were cooks. There were people who were sewers. There were people whose skills were so highly valued that they were rented out to other people to be able to do high-end craftsmanship and things like that.

In modern slavery, there's a tremendously large diversity of job descriptions as well. I mean, you can think about—a lot of it is just plain old hand-stoop labor. The idea of having to dig in the dirt with primitive tools, and tending crops or mining things, or turning raw material into crude building materials like building bricks, or mining the various products that go into making cement. The idea that this is low-end brute force industrial labor that, maybe under other conditions if you were living in a high-tech modern industrial agricultural system, would be mechanized.

These are the tasks that enslaved people will do with picking crops, harvesting cacao, going into the rainforest and tearing down trees and getting rid of the ecology, chicken plucking. The whole business of working in assembly lines and animal disassembly plants. The whole idea of working long hours over a sewing machine. You can begin to get an idea of all these different forms of semi-skilled labor that are involved with doing the work that no one else wants to do, and that can be done far more cheaply if you take labor costs and drive them down to zero.

These are disposable people. When they've run out of what they can wring out of their hands and their muscles, they're gone. So there's a lot of just brute force labor of that kind. A second kind of enslavement that you can find in a number of different places is the kind of enslavement that is involved basically with sex. The same problems that create the vulnerability to this brute labor with your hands kind of slavery that I'm talking about, that is warfare, environmental displacement, natural disasters. The fact that well, right now one out of every three people in the world lives in a condition of food insecurity. That means that you're one meal away from being able to not to have enough calories to survive. There are lots of different forms that that takes that makes you vulnerable to being enslaved in the ways that I've described, or can make you desperate enough to volunteer to go into enslavement—and this happens a lot in Central

Europe—volunteer yourself to go into sexual enslavement, sell yourself to somebody, become the agent of that particular master, or to sell your children this way. There is plenty of opportunity to envision conditions where people voluntarily say "Enslave me, or I die." That's pretty wicked.

There is also a form that has a lot to do with China and India called debt peonage or debt bondage. The idea is that 10 generations ago, the great family who lived on the hill lent a bunch of money to a family that lives way down in the gully. And it was promised that, until that interest and principal was paid on that loan, those lower people would work constantly for no pay until the loan was paid off to these higher people. Debt bondage in that way is a form of slavery that can be traced, since the principal of the loan is never paid off and the interest always compounds over a period of five and six generations. That's a traditional form of slavery that takes exception to everything else that I've said about now having to do with the kind of slavery that gives you no sense of community, no sense of family, no sense of tradition.

People who are in debt peonage in China and India have the ability to create a kind of communal bond that does seem very much like what African Americans were able to accomplish in slavery in the United States.

Another way that enslavement happens, and this is sort of the horror of parents across the United States and a lot of other places, is simply by the seduction of children through the internet, through captivity, through gradual addiction, through one drug after another to the point that you become homeless, streetless. There are a good number of sexual enslaved adolescents who have been kicked out of their household because of their sexual preference. Sex work is the way to be able to survive when there's not anything else that you can do. That vulnerability makes enslavement for sex work the easiest thing for exploiters who want to be in this kind of business to do.

There are a lot of people in the world who fit the technical and legal definitions of being enslaved, and you'll find them in all kinds of places. And a great deal of the enslavement that you'll find in the world is located in several very obvious places. One of the places where it's been traditionally embedded forever and ever and ever is in India. And in Southeast Asia. And in Pakistan. And in Mainland China.

Those are places that have long, long traditions of suppressing labor through a whole set of family hierarchies, clans. In India, it's castes, where certain people are innately interpreted as being the servants of other, stronger people. These are societies that have huge hierarchical

bases, and so you'll find a tremendous amount, for example, of the contemporary enslavement of people in clothing factories for example. In brickyards. In mining. And in a lot of what happens in hotels and on the streets that has to do with sexual enslavement. That basically covers Southeast Asia, India, China and so forth.

Of our 46 million people that we're talking about all together, that is maybe 25 percent of that. But if you remember that China and India are also the big industrial, post-industrial engines of a global economy, and they're the places that are exporting to us a tremendous percentage of what's in everything from our cellphones to our tires, to the clothing that we're wearing, to a great deal of the food that we eat. One of the big places where slavery is very predominant in Southeast Asia and in China, is in shrimp farming. And the whole idea of going to sea with enslaved labor to catch fish. That's a very old form of slavery that you can find in lots of places in the world. But take your first chunk and that would be it.

A second place that you'll find a tremendous amount of enslavement is in different parts of Africa. Now, Africa, as you and I like to talk about, is really a western invention. Nobody who lived in that continent ever called themselves Africans until we did. There are a tremendous number of nations. If you talk to somebody from that continent, they're first of all, going to tell you that they're a Ghanaian, not an African, or they're going to tell you they're a Nigerian.

Nevertheless, there's a great deal of enslavement that goes on there in agriculture, in cacao plantations with the whole business of chocolate. The whole business of creating a lot of different sweets that come from sorghum, from a lot of other different agricultural products, that get built into stuff that we eat off the grocery shelf every day.

One of the biggest and most difficult parts of certain regions within Africa's enslavement is child soldiers. Now, this is some of the most horrible stuff that you can think of. These are children that are captured by rebel armies, religious fanatics, indoctrinated, drugged, abused, beaten, forced to kill other people, systematic rape, 'til finally you have the zombie that you want that can walk through the woods and systematically annihilate other people and burn villages.

You hear the flipside of all that with the occasional big headline about the disappearance of several hundred Nigerian girls from a school. Those are all people who've been turned into sex slaves. And there's a lot more going on in Africa than that. There's a good deal of mercantile or fishing slavery that takes place off the Horn of Africa, in Ethiopia. And you'll find the same kind of problems happening where you begin to see areas of—regions of the world deeply displaced

by warfare. You've created an untold number of Middle Eastern people who are now enslaved for labor and sex in many different parts of the world. Consequence of what's happened to the Middle East since the US invasion of Iraq way back in 2003. Much of that labor has ended up in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Bahrain, and places like that are using enslaved labor to create their big cities, and to create all the wonderful amenities that go along with wealth.

To give you an example. New York University decided that they would build a campus in Qatar. They would have a Qatar campus where all the oil gazillionaires could send their kids. They began building a campus, and all of a sudden, labor investigators are coming back accusing New York University of employing slave labor. And they did. Did they know it? No. Did they try and get rid of it? Yeah. But what we're seeing then is another form of enforced labor that has to do with public works projects, has to do with private construction. Move further into Western Europe and into Eastern Europe, and you'll find—especially coming out of places like Romania, Bulgaria, Southeast Europe, Hungary, after the fall of the Soviet Union, and the tremendous amount of disruption that happened there, there's a tremendous out-migration of really impoverished peasants, women mostly. Some of whom are children who have been sold by their own parents into the sex trade in order to find temporary income for momentary survival.

I mean, we're getting down to things that are really raw, really crude, but the whole sex trade coming out of Southern Europe is really large, and it's mostly subsumed into Western Europe and into Italy. In the western hemisphere, in Brazil, one of the principal ways of being able to make steel is by making charcoal that's hot enough to be able to take metal and begin to heat it and bend it.

Making charcoal means chopping down trees, which means getting rid of rainforest, which means working with other forms of agricultural labor to strip the forest canopy away from the land, and create places where you can basically grow agricultural products at the expense of the ecology. The people out there with chainsaws doing that labor are usually overseen by guards with machine-guns.

The relationship between ecological devastation and enslavement, that's about as good an example as I can show you of that. And it gets you into a lot of other issues once you begin to start thinking about how different forms of enslavement. Labor enslavement of course has everything to do with the migration northward of displaced people from violent nations like Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. Which is all involved with this whole question of what we see at the border and unaccompanied children and families fleeing, seeking refugee status.

There's a tremendous amount of enslavement that goes on along the way, where people are peeled off and turned into exploited labors, sex slaves, so forth and so on.

In the United States, you have all these forms of slavery going on right now, working in jobs that you wouldn't want to have in hotels, in laundromats, in fields, in factories, in agricultural labor, stoop labor, find people picking strawberries or tomatoes in the Panhandle of Florida, where the Justice Department will intervene and say, "That's slavery." Who are they working for? They're working for somebody who's called a boss, but who's actually finally implicated in working for say, Burger King.

I think the best site to look for in the United States, if you want to look at it, is the Polaris Project, and to see what forms of slavery are reported. There is a hotline number, which I should have memorized, where anybody who sees something that looks suspicious about slavery can use to call through the Polaris Project number and notify local authorities to do investigations.

As a consequence of that, Polaris has developed a series of maps of the kinds of slavery cases that have been prosecuted, how many, and where. You can get a real good profile of what slavery in the United States looks like, both as a system of exploited industrial and agricultural labor and as sex slavery by looking in sources like that.

It's a big sprawling subject that makes it very hard for you to simply assign a book. Especially if you're teaching high school kids. Which immediately raises the question, how do you find about contemporary slavery? There are terrific books, but if I had one single author to suggest to you, it would be a guy named Kevin Bales, who's written a number of really important books for general audiences introducing the problem of slavery globally, locally, in relationship to its implication in environmental disasters, tragedies and warfare, all over the world. Good English. Easy for you to read, easy for me to read. He's a great educator, but you can't assign Kevin Bales's book to an 11th grader.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: This is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. And I'm your host Hasan Kwame Jeffries. Now that we have a better sense of what contemporary slavery looks like, Dr. Stewart is going to talk about how students can use a comparative analysis of slavery then and now to better understand both the past and the world today. Once again, here's James Brewer Stewart.

James Brewer Stewart: Slavery past. Slavery present. How can the present and the past work together in order to be able to give us an idea of how we're grounded and how we shape the future? Can what we know about the past illuminate the present directly?

Think about it for just a minute, if you can. You've been studying a system that's called a system: plantation slavery. It's got a lot of different forms. It's got a lot of different connotations, but the idea that one way or another, this is or was a system. It was located in a series of very clear places, and it was run by people who were considered perfectly respectable human beings. They became presidents of the United States for example. They became members of Congress, they were leading clergymen. And the fact of the matter today is that slavery we're finding all around us, is for the large part for most of us—except if we're participating in it—invisible. Back then, it was easy to presume, with as much racism as you want to apply to the situation, that when you saw Black people you saw enslaved people, or people who had to prove that they were free.

Today, race matters, colors of skin matter, but there is no direct correspondence at all between being enslaved and being of any particular skin color. Visibility, invisibility. How do you make the invisible visible? The way to make the invisible visible is to do, well, basically a set of comparisons. And it's revealing to think about the day-to-day living conditions of enslaved people today, as opposed to the slavery that students have been studying. The secret to the old slavery from the standpoint of living conditions was the fact that in the United States, the enslaved population reproduced itself. And this is very unusual, because this didn't happen in other Africanized enslaved systems in places like Brazil and Cuba. Parents had children. Children had to be taken care of. Older people had to be looked after.

In other words, while there's no recognition of enslaved marriage, there's a deep recognition by the master class that there is such a thing as slave families, and that families can be systematically either rooted up if you can make money off them, or kept together if you can make money off them. The idea back then was that slavery was profitable because it involved reproduction. And you found people concentrated together having the opportunity to create enslaved communities. The idea therefore, is that there is a stable place for enslaved people to live for a long enough period of time to create relationships, to develop an informal economy, to develop their own expressions of spirituality, to create their own understanding of the relationship between work and society and nature and so forth. And by the time you're done, you've created the origins of African-American culture, which is one of the biggest, most

creative, most thriving and dominant things that we have in the United States, period. Sorry, but that's just true.

And that all comes from the idea of the rootedness of the enslaved experience in the United States. Absolutely different for enslaved people today. Enslaved people are on the move, they're under the radar, they're moved from place to place. They go where the person who is trading them sells them to. They are set up in such a way as to be masqueraded to avoid authorities, except in places where enslaved prostitution is so obvious like Bangkok, where enslaved people are basically selling their bodies behind glass windows on the street.

For the most part, enslaved people live lives that are completely fractured, totally marginalized. Where there is no real strong sense of collective ability to resist. There's no way to be able to show in contemporary slavery, any form of mass upheaval against slavery, great slave insurrections like Nat Turner's or Gabriel Prosser's, because slavery is so highly fragmented and so—or agitated, so under the radar and so widely distributed.

And in that way, slavery is no respecter of skin color. The fact that African American people knew one another from the fact that they had African backgrounds, that they had become African Americans, that they were an ethnicity, that they were a new ethnicity. The first generation of enslaved people came to these shores seeing themselves as Africans. Two generations later, these are African Americans, who have a completely different collective orientation about how to deal with the world and with one another and with people who are going to oppress you.

There's no sense of that kind of ethnicity really at all, unless you take very clear exceptions like the caste system in India, where the untouchables know that they're untouchable. That's one you can set to aside. But for the most part, enslaved people live on the margin of starvation, on the margin of being completely overworked and isolated. The common problem in the United States are isolated enslaved people from one part of the world who are working as enslaved house servants, never getting out of the house, for some rich other person who comes from another country who's accustomed to having that kind of labor. So, it's a difference really between collaboration and isolation. The idea of being able to create a historical memory of your people, as opposed to not being able to do that.

I do have one suggestion for teachers so that there's at least a way to open an easy door to this complex set of comparisons between the slavery that your kids have been studying, and this

awful variegated form of slavery that seems to be all kinds of different things that I'm introducing you to.

And I've suggested already that comparison is a really good but difficult thing to try. So try by offering a very simple example. You can use any element to do this, but I like to use dogs.

Okay. On the one hand, I have a Chihuahua sitting in my left hand inside of a teacup. At the meantime, I'm riding on the back of a Great Dane, okay? One I'm mounted on, the other one I'm carrying. You can't imagine a bigger set of contrast between animal organisms than a Chihuahua and a Great Dane. Got it? Good.

Okay. At the same time our mind naturally takes us to a point where we intuitively begin to understand that there is a common quality of dogness that these two very different organisms share. And you can really appreciate the Chihuahua's very small size, or the Great Dane's enormous capacity to take up space, by seeing the one through the lens of the other. Do you see what I mean? You appreciate each of them for their distinctive qualities much more if you understand that they have shared common qualities of dogness. They all have tails.

We do this sorting and comparing all the time. It's something that's inured in our minds in such a way that Plato and Aristotle used to argue about how we do it. Which was the reality? Was the reality in the distinctive features of the Chihuahua on the one hand and the Great Dane on the other? Or was the reality in the abstract essence of dogness between them? Aristotle thought the first, Plato the second. You can do the same thing with slavery systems.

The more you know about the power and detail and unity and comprehensiveness of slavery in one place—the plantation system that you've been studying, the better you're grounded in that, the more rapidly you're going to see the comparisons and contrasts with all those other systems. And you'll find at the same time that the essence of slavery is this brutalization of people, the commodification of bodies, the claim of one morally bankrupt person that he or she can control, not only the body, but the mind and the soul of someone else. Specifics, generalities.

So I think the idea of doing that kind of comparison, and starting with something very simple. You're trying to find how to see each representation of slavery for what it is by comparing it to another one. And the one you know best is the one you've been studying.

Let's just try family for one. You know some things about enslaved families in the South. Enslaved families in the South were vulnerable. Enslaved families in the South were

nevertheless, to the extent that the master thought that it was in his interest, located in a certain place and capable of being able to be socially reproduced from one generation to the next, correct? Got that?

Okay. That first look seems like, and I'm going very slowly here, stability. Hop over here to an isolated young woman from Romania who is now sexually enslaved in a brothel someplace in Paris with five other younger women from many different parts of the world. The contrast between the two seem absolutely enormous, don't they? Skin color, common heritage, community, social reproduction from one generation to the other, on the one hand. Anonymity, marginalization, loss of culture, loss of linguistic ability. Remember, these people can't talk to each other because they all speak different languages. You begin to see both systems more clearly by seeing these huge colliding and contrasting differences, right? Are we clear so far?

Dig, dig, dig, dig deeper. The whole problem of sexual exploitation within slavery in the old South, first of all, it's constant. It's everywhere. And what is one of the greatest fears and debilities of enslaved families—and women particularly in the South? Having your children stolen from you? Being involved in a tremendous amount of forced sex?

The commentators at that time, from 1700s on into the 1900s, are talking over and over again about how this new mixed race of black and white is showing up in the slave society, and that's why it's important to have this one drop rule. Only one drop, supposedly, of African American blood makes you a slave. That's a huge testimony to sexual exploitation, to marginalization. It's done on the basis of intimacy. The planter lives next door. You sleep in the next room. The overseer gets drunk and comes into your cabin and takes your wife or your child. These same kind of vulnerability, of sexual exploitation, violence, criminality, can be found in the Paris brothel.

Looks different. Is different. The comparisons are important. The comparisons are absolutely necessary to understand. But at the same time, there is this essence of enslavement which involves the exploitation and violation constantly of bodies and souls. And in that sense, the brothel in Paris with five women all speaking different languages, all being exploited by anonymous men, is both profoundly different and even more profoundly the same as the situation of people living enslaved in the deep South before the Civil War.

So comparative analysis is really, really important. And the idea, remember, is to try to appreciate and see more clearly the differences between each of them from the other by doing this, while at the same time connecting them in one way or another.

There's a wonderful set of websites put out by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati. I'll say that again, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, which is an institution, really important, that actually shows exhibits of both kinds of slavery. You step on one side of the aisle, you see a big set of representations about the African American system that you've been studying. Hop across the atrium to the other side of the aisle, and all of a sudden you see exhibits of a kind of slavery that looks so different from the one you just saw, that the question of building the bridge between them is what becomes really important. And it seems to me it's websites like that, particularly what you'll find on the National Underground Railroad Freedom site, that will allow you to start to make these comparisons.

So slavery past and slavery present becomes a way to take the knowledge that you have of the plantation system, the way it was enforced, the way people survived, the way that people in enslaved situations created culture, built institutions, were able to resist, and how they were treated in a variety of different context in the slave trade and so forth, and bring that to bear on questions of contemporary slavery today.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You are listening to historian James Brewer Stewart discuss contemporary slavery. This is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, and I'm your host Hasan Kwame Jeffries. Do you have any questions about how to teach American slavery in your classroom? We want to hear from you, our listeners. In an upcoming episode, we are going to answer as many of your questions as possible. And if you have a story about teaching American slavery to your students, we'd love to hear that, too. You can reach us at podcast@tolerance.org. Once again, here's Dr. Stewart.

James Brewer Stewart: The slavery that you've been studying is easy to document because it was always legal. Everything was bill-of-sale. Everything had an insurance policy. Everything had a bill of transfer. Everything had a law. Everything had a code. Slavery got into the census all over the place because it was property. When it's legal, it's easy to document, and when it's legal it's easy to define who is enslaved and who is not. If you have a price tag around your neck and somebody else has written on it, stamped on it "paid," you're enslaved.

Today, the problem is that slavery is completely illegal. It's a criminal enterprise. Theoretically, every country in the world, including North Korea, has a anti-slavery law that says, "No slavery here." Now, that doesn't mean those laws are enforced, but that does mean that every element of enslavement that you want to look at today, as opposed to the one that your students are more familiar with, is a system that operates outside the law. Is up for grabs. Can take any more of a number of different forms.

And probably the best example to give you of how different it all is, depending on legal and illegal, is the fact that in 1850 say, in Mississippi, a prime male field hand of 25 years of age, his value adjusted for inflation in today's dollars would be worth about a medium-price Lexus. Kevin Bales' first book about contemporary slavery is entitled Disposable People. A Lexus on the one hand, people you can just throw away and use up on the other hand.

In other words, when slavery is a legal system, it involves making an investment. When slavery is an illegal system, it involves a kind of exploitation with an unlimited labor supply that you really don't pay for, and that you have no real incentive to try and sustain. The average length of survival on the streets of Bangkok of an enslaved sex worker is approximately four years. By that time, either some socially-transmitted disease or just general abuse or whatever finds that person homeless, without income, and facing death. That's not what happened in the plantation South.

A way to be able to get students engaged is to just have them think about what terminology we use. How can slavery be defined? What does and does not today constitute actual enslavement? And this is very, very important. The idea of knowing what precisely slavery means today is a real problem. We use the term all the time. People can say that they're enslaved to tobacco, that they're enslaved to bad relationships, that they're enslaved to their smartphone. It's a metaphor that we use for being dependent on things. And the idea that it has to have legal standing in order to be able to prosecute people in court for having exploited, by buying and selling and trapping and coercing people so that they can't walk away, that that's a jail sentence, that that's a thing that gets you in trouble, that you've crossed a legal line because it's illegal. It's very important to have that definition really, really clear. And—and when slavery hides in the woodwork, that's a very hard thing to do. But I think it's important for people to ask questions like, "How does enslavement differ from other forms of exploitation?"

One of the ways that this all gets discussed is talking about human trafficking.

This is really, really crucial question. Human trafficking is not the same thing as slavery. If I'm a desperate person and I pay some criminal to stuff me in a boat so I can get across the Adriatic, he's exploiting me but he's not keeping me. Do you understand the difference? But human trafficking can become slavery. Or people can traffic in enslaved people, okay? I have an enslaved person. I will sell that person to you. Do you see how the term "trafficked" gets bent around in different ways? Sometimes it means slavery, sometimes it doesn't.

I think the real important thing to understand is the basis of the master-slave relationship in our time is based on nothing but pure force. You can't walk away. You have no choice but to be there. There is a great big body of law that's come out of the United Nations and a number of other places, protocols of one kind or another that define modern slavery as what it is even though it's illegal.

In other words, if—if it's illegal, the idea that you should be able not to be in it is the first thought that you have. The second thought that you have to have after that, is that what keeps you there is somebody who is, in one sense or another literally or figuratively, someone with the power to slice your throat. You don't walk away because you can't walk away. You stay there because you don't have any alternatives.

If you have an alternative, if somebody says, "Why don't you do something else?" And you're able to go home every night, cash your paycheck and come back on your own free will, then you're not enslaved, correct? I mean, if you're going to have a terrible job in a terrible place, say you're spending 16 hours a day in a chicken factory wringing chickens' necks or trying to pull feathers off them, that probably is about as bad a job as a human being can have. Is that the same thing as being enslaved if the person comes to work voluntarily every day? Now, that's a very difficult question to answer. It's a bad, bad, bad job, but you do have the freedom to leave.

Now, the person who's in that kind of situation could say back to you—and this is where it becomes very difficult—"If I leave this job, there's no other place for me to work. Either I accept these terribly low wages, because I am being paid. I take my paycheck and I walk away. I can be someplace else and report back to work, but from my point of view this is slavery anyway, because I have no other economic option." It's not like you have a gun pointed at your head or somebody about to slice your throat, but if you walk away you slice your own throat.

There are lots and lots of big problems and contradictions in what I've just said. And that's why the whole question of defining slavery as a legal crime, so that you can prosecute people in court

and say, "All right, you're going away for 20 years because you did that, and that was slavery and we can prove it." You have to be able to have a body of law that proves that. You won't be able to prove that in the case that I gave you about the guy who's wringing chicken necks all day, goes home and chooses to come back because he has no other choice.

That will not be called slavery. That'll be called exploitation. That'll be called a tragedy. That'll be called a lot of awful things, but I don't think you could take the owner of that factory to court and prosecute him for slavery.

So precise terminology is really important.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: This is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. I'm your host Hasan Kwame Jeffries. Next in our discussion of slavery today, we're going to shift our focus back to U.S. history to answer the question: what happened to the institution of slavery after the Civil War and emancipation? Did state-sanctioned slavery end in America after 1865? Spoiler alert: not exactly. Here's James Brewer Stewart.

James Brewer Stewart: Another way to begin to get students to see the, you know, have an opportunity to use history to engage the present is to address this problem of slavery not being abolished. Now this is a really hard one. One of the most important moments in the whole of the history of slavery that you've been studying is the moment of emancipation. Four million people. Four million people who represented an aggregate, the second largest capital investment in the entire U.S. economy. You know, it's really hard to think about four million people representing all that. The only thing that was more valuable than they were was land. There's a great periodization moment that happens when all of that owned labor becomes free.

Slavery is formally by the United States government abolished. That's what the 13th Amendment says. And for the people who went through that transformation, that periodization is tremendously important. It's also become a national article of faith that slavery in the United States was abolished and has been abolished forever ever since then. Now, that's not true, and that's where the complication comes. You say to yourself, "Slavery was abolished in 1865," and suddenly we are a free nation and free society. Well, we're not. Not only do we have the problem that we are contending with now, with thinking about 46 million people, many of them in the United States, but to take the question of slavery in the United States further, the fact of the matter is that slavery for African-Americans became a continuing experience after emancipation, and I'm sure you've heard about a lot of this.

One of the most important challenges facing abolitionists—and remember I'm much more a expert on people who are trying to abolish slavery and the history of those people than I am actually of slavery itself. And the biggest challenge that people who are abolishing systems of slavery or hoping to face, is the idea of what happens next? And there's a great deal of evidence to show that when systems of slavery get abolished, they reformulate themselves again, and the term that Douglas Blackmon uses, "Slavery by another name," is one thing you can call them.

The idea is, there's a very famous abolitionist whose biography I've written, and I just love this man so much, his name is Wendell Phillips, and he was a great orator and philosopher of abolition. And when the 13th Amendment was passed, he immediately remarked, "We have abolished the slave but the master remains." And that's true. All of those enslaved people were suddenly not slaves anymore, but who were they living right next to? Five and six generations of families that were accustomed to owning them. And they weren't going away. And they needed to put a crop in the ground. And they needed to get their lives back in order. And they didn't know how to do anything but grow cotton. And they didn't have any other source of labor except these same people who have just been emancipated.

What would you do under those conditions? You'd figure out as best you could, the closest thing to slavery that you could imagine, to get those people back on the plantation again and growing cotton and hoeing cotton for you. The initial push of emancipated people was for them to flee to the margins of the plantations and to start operating their own little farms, plump truck farms. Places where you could grow vegetables, places where you could begin to start to think about dairy industries, thinking about agricultural diversification, which is not the sort of thing that a plantation's really good at.

Planters had to stop that, so they did, by all kinds of uses of force and manipulations, and twistings of laws. After a while, you've got slavery by another name and a system called sharecropping. Now, sharecropping wasn't slavery but it was close. There was not slavery because the sharecropper, the person who is renting land for a very short period of time to grow cotton on for somebody who owns that land, gets to make a different deal every year and decide to move one place or another. He's not a slave.

But accompanying all that are systems of lynching, violence, disenfranchisement, stripping away of civil rights, all with the idea of creating a new labor regime that's going to approximate slavery as closely, as closely as it can be. Historians and political scientists have a name for this phenomenon, you can see it happening with the elimination of slavery systems all over the

world. It's called labor substitution. Labor substitution means that you are trying to figure out what is the next available population to exploit, given the fact that the system that you've been using all this time has just been overturned.

In Cuba for example, when slavery ended, suddenly there is a tremendous influx of enslaved indigenous people from Mexico, and people from China that were suddenly growing sugar in Cuba right after emancipation. Boom. Boom. So this is all the consequences of slavery, and a good abolitionist is always trying to figure out how to keep labor substitution from working, how to make sure that the promise of freedom and equality is actually realized.

Well, when you look at the history of the American South, you'll find that from the moment of emancipation, the whole idea of creating tremendous legal disabilities against—and the actual re-enslavement of—African-Americans is everywhere, enforced by the same kind of violence that is commemorated in that big new lynching museum that everybody's talking so much about off in Alabama, which commemorates the loss of over 4,000 people to violent events that were community-sponsored and became big public celebrations all over the south: necktie parties. Are you free as a laborer when you know that around you are necktie parties? No. All this is slavery by another name, and moving forward and moving forward in time.

Is it possible to be enslaved without being owned by a master? Those are the kinds of questions that are asked over and over again about workers imprisoned for long periods of time who are working for less than 10 to 15 cents an hour and have no choice, creating goods and services for many different retail products and also for the Defense Department.

These are all questions that are open for debate. They're open for challenge. They allow students, it seems to me, to really talk about a lot of different things that are going on in their world, while at the same time having a historical basis of knowing what slavery was and was not.

Historians who are interested in the origins of today's modern prison-industrial complex, note what I've been talking about very seriously, and then begin to ask the question: Why is sentencing of people to long terms and maximum prison sentences so heavily disproportionately weighted towards dark-skinned people?

What is that makes it after those people end up in prisons, many of which are privatized prisons that are run by private corporations for profit, just like a plantation was, using free labor—labor that is free in the sense that it's not paid, not in the sense that it's liberated? Using no cost labor to produce billions and billions of dollars of goods for the retail market. For the military. The

whole relationship between privatized prisons, unbalanced sentencing, differential sentences, and the prison-industrial complex and the school-to-prison pipeline, is all seen by any good abolitionist as the next set of adjustments being made in labor substitution, based at the same time on a tremendous animosity and hatred of dark-skinned people.

Is the prison-industrial complex slavery? That's a debatable point. Is the prison-industrial complex indebted to slavery for its existence is not debatable. In the 13th Amendment, there was what's called the exception clause, which said everybody who has been enslaved is free, except for people in prisons, people who've committed crimes. Now, you can see the logic of not wanting to free prisoners all over the United States who are kept in bondage for having committed crimes. But the fact of the matter is that that law was then bent by those same old guys who used to enslave people before 1865 to re-enslave them again after 1865 in prison convict labor, in debt peonage, in all kinds of different forms of slavery by another name. Some people call this neo-slavery, but you can see how it complicates 1865 for people. So slavery did end in 1865 and did not end in 1865. Yes and no. But. And. Well, it did. And it didn't. And history's that way.

And the idea of having your students hold in their heads the complications of what history actually challenges us to think about, is I think really an important moment of opportunity for teachers to be able to get students to start thinking about what narrative means. Does history come to a satisfying conclusion? Do things ever get settled? It's a challenge. It's not a memorization. And that's obviously what you're trying to show your students, is the real fun and the real gain in studying the past to begin with.

But you can cut through a whole lot of the confusion of when slavery was abolished, and if it was abolished, and what emancipation meant by picking up one single book. And it's a book called *Slavery by Another Name*. The author of that book won the Pulitzer Prize back a few years ago. His name is Douglas Blackmon. B-L-A-C-K-M-O-N. The nice thing about that book is that it's got some tremendous pictures, photos, that really do document post-emancipation slavery in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Virginia and so forth. The other thing that's important about that book is that Doug was able to parlay it into a film, which you can pick up off the internet, which is also called *Slavery by Another Name*. He has a website that also works with that.

Another way to be able to get into this by looking at one specific area, is to watch how a plantation in Louisiana *[NB: Parchman was actually in Mississippi]* called Parchman

plantation that the Parchman family owned with a lot of slaves on it back before the Civil War, was immediately turned into a huge cotton field plantation prison after emancipation. It's called Parchman. The Parchman Prison. And the author of a book that writes about this is David Oshinsky, and the title of his book is Worse Than Slavery. So you have *Slavery by Another Name*, you have *Worse Than Slavery*, showing you the historical plantation slavery afterward roots of today's prison-industrial complex. And then I think if you want to really pull it all together, take one more book, take a long run at it, that would be *Slavery By Another Name*, *[NB: title is incorrect. The book is actually titled* The New Jim Crow*]*, Michelle Alexander's book. Look it up, because there are websites that come off of it as well, and that takes the more recent origins of the prison-industrial complex.

So I've given you a few points to think about: the value of contemporary analysis, the need to define precise terminology, the vale of criticizing and accurately analyzing historical periodization, when slavery ended, 1865. So, being able to see how slavery continues, how slavery is manifested in your own life, gives you again a question of learning from history and asking the provocative question, "Do you care to do something about this?" It's not a political question that has to do with voting Republican or Democrat. It doesn't have anything to do with getting in trouble with the school board. It has everything to do with teaching social responsibility. And that, it seems to me, is also a tremendously powerful way, given students' knowledge of slavery past and present, to connect the local with the global.

Ask your students to go to a website called Slavery Footprint. This is where things get really hard and very personal, and I think good teaching can really happen. Slavery Footprint is a big computer-driven database that will allow you to input your own retail preferences for all kinds of things: shoes, shirts, jeans, food, cars, computers, whatever. And then once all that's put in there, what spits back is a profile of you and how much of what you consume is actually produced by slave labor living in the world today. The idea that slavery implicates us directly now through consumerism is, first of all, one way to be able to break down the narrative that slavery ended in 1865. It's another way to make it very personal, but in a way that is challenging rather than intimidating. For students to begin to see how the problem of slavery lives through history and comes into the present.

One of the best examples that I can think of for illustrating this point is chocolate. There's a wonderful, about 45-minute video called *The Dark Side Of Chocolate*, which is all about how cacao in West Africa is cultivated by enslaved children on cacao plantations and then slipped out

to places like Nestle's, Cadbury, to be turned into all the different chocolates that we've become addicted to, and show up in your Snickers bar, your Mars bar, so forth and so on. And the whole question of how consumerism supports or works against slavery is really embodied in what chocolate bar you pick. Now, all of this is information that's available because their—the big industrial corporations around the world that are concerned about their reputations are, in a variety of different ways, trying to what they would say, "clean up their supply chains," by trying to keep enslaved labor out of the raw materials that create the finished goods that go into the parts that are assembled, or the food that you eat, and so forth and so on.

I'm very aware that I've been piling guilt on you guys all this time thinking about, "What do I do when Jim Stewart comes along and tells me about all these terrible dilemmas in the world, some of which I'm implicated indirectly, by the goods I consume, by the clothes that I wear? How do I as one lonely, solitary person deal with all this suffering and what's my moral responsibility if I have any at all? Or should I just feel crushed by this, and pessimistic, and should I just go back to seeing what PlayStation has to offer?"

The awful and beautiful fact about contemporary slavery is that there's contemporary anti-slavery. And that's the actual business that I'm in. Historians Against Slavery is a big group of scholars, teachers, students, activists, all together figuring out what to do about this problem. And the problem's different in every place, in every city, but there are certain common things you can do together. First thing that you can do that's really easy, is to educate other people. And educate them in such a way that you are teaching them to do something about it, rather than doing what I've been doing, which is just make you feel bad.

There are, for example on my college campus, there is an anti-slavery group which could just as easily be on your high school campus, that holds a Halloween party. And their Halloween party is something they prepare for by letting people know all kinds of things about chocolate, that subject I was talking about before. What kinds of gifts are you going to put in somebody's Halloween bag? What sort of chocolate are you going to eat on your own? Wouldn't it be good to show the film? Oh, there are these people that are boycotting Nestle's? Hmm, that's interesting.

Once you begin to dive into the problem of slavery, you get to what I think is the real miracle of anti-slavery. I started in this business when I was 72 years old when I retired from my college career, and took all the writing that I'd been doing, all those decades, about the problem of slavery and how to abolish it historically, and tried to put it in a really contemporary idiom.

You can see how I've done this by looking up HistoriansAgainstSlavery.org on the web. You'll find a lot of things there. But more important from your point of view, you'll find out that there are groups of people all over the place. They're doing fundraisers. They're doing education projects that are raising awareness of all kinds of different issues in local communities, that are connecting problems of slavery to problems of hunger, urban marginalization, high school dropouts, drug problems. Once you begin to get involved in anti-slavery, there's so much opportunity to be able to pick the thing you're good at. All of us are good at different things. Some people are very, very good at using their hands and creating art. Other people are really good at analyzing problems by using numbers and computers. Other people are, you know, on and on you can go. And the nice and really wonderful thing about antislavery, is that it's an open system where you bring what you're good at.

People love volunteers, but they love volunteers who are able to contribute something. Contributing something means not reaching out to say, "Oh, my God! What am I going to do about 700,000 debt peonage people suffering in India?" The question is instead, "What am I going to do right here?"

I think about Frederick Douglass all the time, the great African-American abolitionist, who fought so hard against slavery in the United States before the Civil War, and so hard for racial equality afterwards. While he was doing that, he knew perfectly well that there was this system of slavery that was much, much bigger than the one he was fighting against that lived in Brazil. He understood that he had certain limits about what he could do, and that the United States was his ball of wax. And more important, when you look at his life more carefully, the city of Syracuse, New York, was his ball of wax. He lived in Syracuse. A lot of other African-American activists lived alongside of him. They created as strong and vibrant a free black anti-slavery community as they could put their hands on. They tried to create for themselves, and they did succeed to a certain extent, an anti-slavery city.

The idea is that your reach and your grasp should be the same, and we're all small people and we all have short arms. But at the same time, we have strong fingers connected to those arms, and we can reach around, and grasp opportunity and grasp each other in a way that we can work together. So I think the real answer to the problem of feeling immobilized is to realize that in—in all areas of life we are really small people and we are immobilized unless we're working on a scale that's the same size as us. And fortunately, that scale is available to each and all of us. And that's what I'd recommend.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: James Brewer Stewart is the James Wallace Professor of History at Macalester College, and the founder of Historians Against Slavery. He has published a dozen books on the history of the American anti-slavery movement, as well as numerous articles and reviews about the problem of slavery and the implications of how it was abolished in the United States.

In 2002, Dr. Stewart retired from teaching and turned his attention to addressing the institutions of contemporary slavery around the world, and throughout the United States.

Teaching Hard History is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a collection of essays called *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. In each episode, we're featuring a different scholar to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that collection. We've also adopted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials, which are available at tolerance.org. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units, and a detailed framework for teaching about the history of American slavery. Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center—providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find these online at Tolerance.org.

Thanks to Dr. Stewart for sharing his insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shea Shackelford—with production assistance from Tori Marlan and Veronica Rodriguez at Minnesota Public Radio. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zabriskie. I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries—Associate Professor of History at The Ohio State University and your host for *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt*
- Polaris Project, Human Trafficking
- Kevin Bales, *Blood and Earth: Modern Slavery, Ecocide, Climate Change*
- National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, For Educators
- Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*
- James Brewer Stewart, Wendell Phillips: Liberty's Hero
- National Memorial for Peace and Justice, Lynching Memorial

- David Oshinsky, *Worse than Slavery: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice*
- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow, Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*
- Slavery Footprint, Made In A Free World
- Miki Mistrati and U. Roberto Romano, *The Dark Side Of Chocolate* (documentary)
- Teaching Tolerance, Meet Frederick Douglass

Episode 15: Classroom Experiences

How it's done. Tamara Spears teaches middle school Social Studies in New York and Jordan Lanfair is a high school English Language Arts teacher in Chicago. Each has been developing additional lessons about slavery for years. They share their experiences.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, Reconsider Columbus Day

Tamara Spears and Jordan Lanfair

- Teaching Tolerance, "We Are Our Ancestors' Wildest Dreams"
- Jordan Lanfair, Edutopia

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: In the late 1980s, New York's Board of Regents did something very few people expected. Together with the commissioner of education, they created a task force to determine if the state's social studies curriculum adequately reflected the pluralistic nature of American society.

The task force was a veritable who's who of scholars of color. And with great care, they examined the curricular materials used in New York's public schools. What they found was disturbing. In a report entitled "A Curriculum for Inclusion," they concluded that African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and Native Americans were, as a whole, negatively characterized in the existing curriculum. They also discovered that the contributions made by these groups to U.S. society and culture were almost completely omitted. As a remedy, they suggested revamping the entire curriculum so that it reflected the multicultural experiences and contributions of every American.

I was in high school when the task force released its report, just chillin' at Brooklyn's finest public school—Midwood High School at Brooklyn College. Midwood is in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, a working-class neighborhood that produced the Fu-Schnickens, Special Ed and the Notorious R.B.G.—Biggie's from around Bed-Stuy. So I can attest to the truth and accuracy of the "Curriculum for Inclusion" report. The black experience was almost entirely absent from my

classes. Subjects like slavery were reduced to the unfortunate personal practices of a handful of men way down South somewhere. And when slavery was over, well, it was just over.

The "Curriculum for Inclusion" report came some 20 years after the height of organizing efforts by black Brooklynites to gain greater curricular control over the schools in their neighborhoods. In this sense, "A Curriculum for Inclusion" was long overdue. But it was still the Reagan era, so the report was also very much ahead of its time.

When the report was made public, political conservatives lost their collective minds. They accused the task force of "contemptuously dismiss[ing] the Western tradition" and of contributing to the "reduction of history to ethnic cheerleading."

Bowing to political pressure, New York's commissioner of education shelved "A Curriculum for Inclusion." A few years later, another task force reached similar conclusions. But once again, the findings report infuriated the "Western tradition" crowd, so its recommendations were also largely ignored.

I am often asked, what was it about my early education that sparked my interest in history? Inherent in this question is an assumption that there were subjects covered in my elementary and high school classes that whetted my appetite for more. And in a sense, there were. But my historical curiosity did not stem from what I was learning in the classroom. It was, instead, a result of what I was not learning. I was not learning about slavery and its legacy in a way that made the slightest bit of sense to me given the stark racial inequality that I saw every day as I rode the subway to school. And I was not learning anything about enslaved people or their descendants—nothing about my people or me. My education as a kid was neither inclusive nor accurate.

In recent years, state social studies standards, including those in New York, have improved significantly. Although far from perfect, they provide many more opportunities than when I was in school to teach subjects like slavery. As I have watched these developments, I have often wondered what it would have been like to have sat in a class at Midwood High School where subjects such as American slavery received significant and substantive attention. Would I have chosen a different career path if I had been satisfied with what I was learning about America's past and present?

But as I listened to Jordan Lanfair and Tamara Spears, the dynamic pair of high school teachers featured in this episode, talk about the exciting ways they teach the hard history of slavery, I

became convinced that I still would have pursued a career as a historian. But I would not have done so to fill glaring gaps in my education; I would have done so to broaden and deepen what I had been learning. My motivation would have been positive, not negative, which I am convinced is the way it ought to be.

I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides a detailed look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In each episode we explore a different topic—walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material, and offering practical classroom exercises.

Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery.

Jordan Lanfair is an English language arts teacher in Chicago. Tamara Spears teaches social studies in New York City. For several years, each has been developing lessons about the history of slavery for their students. So we brought these two educators together for a conversation about their experiences. In this episode, they share their approaches to lesson planning, discuss the reactions of their students and reflect on the challenges they have faced along the way. They also offer practical advice for teachers who are just beginning to revise their curriculum.

I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy!

Jordan Lanfair: I am Jordan Lanfair. I teach ninth- and tenth-grade multicultural literature at an IB school on Chicago's South Side.

Tamara Spears: I am Tamara Spears. I teach sixth through eighth grade out in Coney Island in Brooklyn.

Jordan Lanfair: I've worked with students from all across the spectrum, all over the world, but I'm really excited this year to be working with another predominantly black school. And definitely, I love working in my hometown. I'm a Chicago boy through and through, so …

Tamara Spears: I'm mostly working with black and brown students, and I've been teaching social studies for my entire teaching career. So how do you approach teaching slavery with your students?

Jordan Lanfair: So, one of the things that I've been really big on, is I don't teach slavery as an individual unit or, like, just one lesson. I don't have a slavery curriculum. I have a curriculum, right? But it just so happens that you can't talk about American history as it is without teaching black history. We kind of interweave our history and the history of black and brown people, but we intersperse it throughout the year. And so I really get a start with it when Columbus Day rolls around. We'll use Columbus Day as an entry point to talking about the slave trade because we get to learn about his role in starting it. And from there, we're able to move into more complex conversations about… what was slavery? What is its legacy? How do we remember those who survived slaves? And how did they shape America?

So that's our entry point. That is a tangible day on the calendar that we can point to. So that's something that I use annually. And we talk about other holidays: St. Patrick's Day, Pulaski Day we have in Chicago—because all these days are days that were given to immigrants, ethnic groups that are white now but weren't at that time, and those holidays kind of helped make them white. And then we kind of parlay into talking about Juneteenth, which is our real Black Independence Day. And so we use current events to use our historical knowledge, to use our literary analysis skills, our writing abilities, the things that they learn in my class to challenge the current system.

And so those conversations help ground us in who we are as a country, kind of what we celebrate, why we celebrate it, and then they give me the gusto to kind of change some perceptions about the history that we think we know, and what we can move into from there.

Tamara Spears: That's pretty similar to how I incorporate the slavery curriculum. It's interwoven, interspersed throughout the story because, like you said, it is American history. They can't be separated. So black American history is American history. My course overall objective is to what extent do the ideas and experiences of American history shape the American society today? That's the way that I weave it in, so each stop that we do on the curriculum train involves something about black Americans.

So, I start talking about slavery really with the Native Americans, and talking about Bartolomé de las Casas when he was suggesting that, instead of using the Native Americans, they use

Africans. I also go back into West Africa with the Three Kingdoms, because in my school curriculum they don't really cover it. We go through, like you said, with Columbus, colonial times, revolution, the invention of the cotton gin. And then when we get to the Civil War, I do stop the formal slavery, but then I start talking about, what are the legacies of slavery? Because that's the thread that runs throughout my entire curriculum. What are the legacies of the things that we study?

I do use the current events that are happening today. So when we were talking about what was happening in Charlottesville, we started talking about, well when did these monuments actually come up? So, I do go through Jim Crow, we talk about World War I and World War II—how did that influence black thought? The Great Migration? And we go all the way through to the civil rights movement.

Jordan Lanfair: When I ground it in literature is I always start with, like, To Kill a Mockingbird, because that leads me to Jim Crow laws, which leads me to lynching, which leads me to talking about Emmett Till, which leads me to talking about "Strange Fruit" by Billie Holiday, which, you know—it opens up all these doors for conversation. So that I still have students who in their heart of hearts never want to read To Kill a Mockingbird again, but they also can talk about all the issues around it. And so it's always a lot easier for me to give them an entry point and work backwards. Unless I'm talking about, like Columbus Day, in—in which case I'm working forward.

Tamara Spears: So, my curriculum is more social studies-based, because it's not a humanities class. But I do incorporate readings from outside. I make sure I have a heavy mixture of primary and secondary sources. I feel like primary sources are what the kids can really build their facts on, because when they're making claims, I stress evidence. Not just evidence from secondary sources, but read the primary sources yourself. Do the history work yourself. So I have a heavy focus on documents and stories as well. So we read some of the narratives. We talk about, okay, what was it actually like for them? Why would they be skilled at growing rice? What were they doing back in West Africa or Central Africa or wherever they came from?

So I try to focus on the actual doing of the history. You know, we can read a text—even though I don't use textbooks in my class, but we can read a textbook, they say, "Okay," and they take that as the truth, the holy grail. But I'm trying to get them to see that they can do the work themselves. We have a few documents. Some of them, you know, you have to modify so that the reading they can actually understand what's being said, but I mostly focus on the document

approach. And then each period we go to, taking them through, "Okay, what are the documents from that period? What are the claims that people are making? What claims can we make ourselves?" That's pretty much the way I focus on giving the kids in there doing the work themselves.

So we'll start with the Middle Passage. Of course, we can look at the famous image of, you know, them placing the enslaved into the boat, but also, what are the numbers like? Where did people go? So we look at charts. We'll look at graphs. We'll say, "Oh! Only 4 percent actually came to, you know, what was North America—becoming America—[50 percent] went to Brazil." And then that gives them also—this is a side thought—the connection of the African diaspora, and how it—South America, Central America, also the Caribbean. But if I'm thinking about other sources, we look at actual documents. Like, Josie Jordan recalls an outbreak of "malitis," which is a story about how a group of enslaved people basically tricked their master into giving them some extra food. So that is a primary source that students will look at when we talk about, how did people resist, and in what ways can people resist slavery.

Jordan Lanfair: How do you think your students have handled these somewhat difficult conversations, these bigger topics?

Tamara Spears: I have never taught any other students besides black and brown, but my students range from sadness to rage, pity, denial and we even have apathy and sadness. Those are the emotions that they come with. And I—you know, I give them space and I let them know that you can feel what you're feeling, but we're not going to sit in any one emotion too long because we need to analyze these documents and read these stories about how people resisted these things that were happening to them.

Each year I see they have very skewed ideas—even being black and brown—of what is racist. What does that mean? And when I bring up systematic racism, they really have no clue what I'm talking about until I break it down to them and they say, "Oh yeah, I can see that." So they know, but they just don't know that they know.

I really had to go in and create a whole, I guess, mini-unit. Well, what is race? Because a lot of our students are products of the colorblind era, where if you say a color black or you say somebody's white, they think of that as racism. So I really had to go back and do a lot of the work myself and come up with a mini-unit that was appropriate for the age. Talking about what race is. What is racism? How did these things develop? And that's how I got into this whole… Okay, I

have to go back as far as I can, to West African kingdoms. And even going back that far, I didn't have a lot of information myself, so I had to do some homework. And still, to this day, I'm still looking for resources of what can I use to show that these were human beings who had lives before they came over here.

So when we do the Great Migration, they really get into—especially, you know, Chicago being one, New York is one of the other ones, they get into that. When we do World War I, talk about the Harlem Hellfighters, they get really excited about the fact that there's a street that you wouldn't even know was named after the Harlem Hellfighters. And we can go there and see the street and then talk about them. So they get pretty excited as well as the other range. So that's pretty much how my students react emotionally to it. How about your students? How do they feel when you teach, and how do you approach?

Jordan Lanfair: Whenever I work with my black students, you know, the kids who look like me, and even brown, there's just this great rage at not being taught it. Because when I've worked with Latino students, one of the spins that we've also put in is that the civil rights movement supported the workers' rights movement, you know? César Chávez, you know, had communication from Martin Luther King. I mean, even the 504 protests, you know, for Americans with Disabilities, got support from the Black Panther Party. So, there are… there's always this great betrayal that they kind of mention feeling. That they've been in school all these years and they've never gotten accurate history or in-depth history in the way that they got to see themselves, and they kind of feel lied to. It can all just feel like this unbearable pain. But giving them the opportunity to challenge and to resist and to fight and to grow helps them take that pain and turn it into action.

And it's always interesting because, when you start with Columbus Day in October, and we mentioned—and I mentioned Juneteenth, we inevitably end up talking about elections. And so one of the things I always teach about is, I teach the election, but I teach like, how are schools funded? What is an election? How do you vote? And whenever we talk about school funding, that's another entry point. It's because my kids have always realized Chicago's one of the most segregated cities that you're going to find. And they realize, like, my school is like this because of where I live. I live here because this is where, you know, people came or were forced to live. They came because of the end of slavery in the South and the racism. They were in the South because of slavery. So like, we kind of draw that line that, kind of where they are now and where we exist is that this cross-section of, you know, our own history and contemporary politics and issues.

And so I try and build an action for them so that they feel not just this great weight of history, but that they can do something about it.

You know, when I taught the Holocaust, I would also try and pair it—not one-to-one unit pairing, but I teach the Holocaust in units. I try to teach slavery in units so that we can talk about who we are as people, right? And because one of the big things that I like my kids to know when they leave my course is: monsters don't exist. People do. Monsters are, you know, these mythical things. They're hard to stop. You know, we will—some people are like, "Oh well, Hitler was a monster." No. He was a man, you know? You know, these slave masters, they weren't monsters. They were people.

And so it was this attempt to get kids to see that these were people that did these things. Monsters are difficult. They're… monsters hide and are terrifying and are unbeatable. People can be changed and people can be stopped.

Tamara Spears: So it sounds like you're getting into, you know, the big concepts that you want them to take away. Would you say that those are the concepts you want them to take away from the overall study of it?

Jordan Lanfair: I think there are always a few. One of the things that was really cool to do this year was read To Kill a Mockingbird and go see Marshall. And I think the big takeaway for that was, the law is supposed to be… you're supposed to be equal before the law, but people aren't. You have to fight. That was the big takeaway, right? We got to read—for my seventh-graders, we read Number the Stars and The Diary of Anne Frank. And then we looked at the pyramid of hate from the Anti-Defamation League, and they outlined the ways that you get to genocide, right? There are these steps that every oppressive regime has followed, and it ends in genocide and mass murder.

And so my students looked at that, and then unprompted they looked—they just went, "That's what happens to black people," you know? It's—you know, it starts with, like, name-calling and things like that. And then it works its way up to violence against property, violence against people and, you know, then it ends in murder and genocide. And they recognize that. And so that was a big takeaway, you know, being able to utilize the Pyramid of Hate to understand what happens if we don't stop these behaviors early. So I think, depending on what I'm working with and on, I have different takeaways. But I do want them to be able to see how we are informed by history and their roles and responsibilities in shaping the future.

But what about you? Kind of like, when you look at your units, you know, or when you look at kind of what you worked on, what do you want them to see or know?

Tamara Spears: Well, I would say when I'm—I guess because I did say in the beginning, you know, it's interwoven within whatever time period we're in, but my overall takeaways for slavery itself is that it's the foundation of this country. Not just for racial beliefs and the way we, you know, are socially segregated, I guess you can say, but also for the economic growth of the country. And I probably wouldn't be too far off if I said Europe and the world at that time, it really was central to the development of growth.

Being in New York, I also focused the kids on, "What was New York's role in this? What was the complicity? Why were we profiting so much off of something that we claim was only happening in the South?" And you know, those two things I really try to help them see. And the last thing I also want to focus on is the resistance. A lot of times they're like, "Oh," you know, "all of this was happening to them, and they didn't do anything about it." And we have to talk about the ways in which people resist. And when we go through each of our units and, like, say, when we get to World War II, because you did mention the Holocaust, and people will say, "Well why didn't they just, you know… when they were in the camp, why didn't they just overthrow the soldiers?" And it's that same concept. What are the different ways that people can resist in the situation that they are in? What are the active ways? What are the passive ways? What are the ways they still hold on to being human? And that in itself can be a resistance.

So, I really focus on foundational for America, not only racially but economically, and the resistance that people had. And then I tie it all together with the idea of individual racism, as well as systematic. And how do we start to see things move from this is my individual thought to this is the institution of slavery. This is the legacy of the institution of slavery. So really, I guess that would be four concepts I try to get the kids to really see.

In my curriculum, slavery starts with the Middle Passage. It goes into the Civil War. And the New York curriculum, which is Passport to Social Studies, they do a pretty good job with slavery being the cause of Civil War. But I felt like something was missing. And then the incident with Trayvon Martin happened, and the way that I teach, you know, I start with current events and I go backwards. And that really messed with my head, and I said, "Well, how can I get these kids to see that the things that are happening today are legacies of the things that happened in the past, specifically slavery and the creation of race as we see it today, and white supremacy, and all

of those things?" How can I get the kids to see that this is just not something that sprang up with Trayvon Martin or even Rodney King or Emmett Till?" Like, these things go way, way back.

So the Trayvon Martin murder was the point where I said, "For this next curriculum I really need to delve deep for these students—and for myself—to really look into the legacy of slavery, and how come it's not something that we talk about much." And this idea of race and white supremacy, and how did it build?

Jordan Lanfair: I think I'm similar in that, on some guttural level, there was something about Trayvon Martin's murder that I think every black person kind of remembers how we felt. And it's in part because you got to hear the 9-1-1 call. Like, I remember that. And I think we also remember where we were when we heard, you know, not guilty. We heard no indictment. When we—and so something about having to have those conversations really made me start thinking about—I was uncomfortable to have it, honestly. You know, I think now it's so much easier to be as unapologetically black as we want to be, but it was hard. It was hard thinking about our history and trying to get other people to appreciate and understand. It was hard to—at least in my heart—try and get other people to grapple with their own history, and their—their family's history, and their family's role in the enslavement of black people and the persecution of Native people.

And it's grown over the years. And the thing is, it never quite looks the same every year. There are always some things that I try and hit. So, I always try and hit Columbus started the slave trade. Columbus Day shouldn't be celebrated. Juneteenth is a real holiday, and we enjoy ourselves and have fun, but we need to be critical of our country because if we actually love it, we're gonna be critical of it. And that's a lesson I got from Kaepernick too, you know? I think that was the—the major push for me, that my job as a teacher—because I'm not—I'm just not one for going to rallies. That's me. Like, I have anxiety and big issues. And so I sat with someone once and was like, "I feel like I'm not doing the movement justice because I don't go to these things because, you know, I have a friggin' panic attack." Like, "Well, what are you doing?" Like, "I'm teaching." Like, "Well, what are you teaching?" And that was my challenge.

You know, why are they kneeling for the national anthem? Okay, well here's why. Do you think we should sing the national anthem? Do you know that there's a verse in it that, you know, mentions slavery? Okay, how do you feel about it now? Why are they doing this? Challenging those perceptions through education, through the resources we bring in, through the deep conversations and perspective, that's kind of my part of the movement. And so that's what got

me into it and past my—my discomfort was realizing that, like, this is my lane. This is what I do. This is what I'm good at. This is what I enjoy doing. And so here's how I serve the movement at large.

Tamara Spears: I like how you bring that up about, you know, being part of the movement. After what happened in Ferguson—Mike Brown—I was up on Twitter, like, night after night after night, losing sleep, crying, all these things, trying to follow along with the people on the ground. And then, you know, in New York we had, like—like you said—a rally, protest. And I went to it, and I was like, "Well, can I really afford to put my body on the line when I need to get in that classroom and work with the 60-odd minds that I need to help shape?" So, like you said, teaching for me is my path to being in the movement.

Jordan Lanfair: Mm-hmm.

Tamara Spears: I can't necessarily go out to every rally or, you know, go to D.C. when they're doing something, or even go to a place like Ferguson. But I can work with the kids. And when you talk about Kaepernick, you know, there was—there's an issue when the, you know, when they come on and we got to say the pledge and kids are looking at me and I'm like, "You know, you don't have to stand if that's something you don't feel like you have to do." And then you have another teacher that says, "Well, you better stand."

And then when we study in social studies—when we read, say, for instance, Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" and those connections that they can make, and then you look at veterans' tweets on Twitter. What are the veterans themselves saying about the issue? To me, that all leads back into, how do we use the curriculum to be current with the students? So that they can see that this is just not something you study and you leave in school. Like, you're not going to leave what you learned about slavery in school. You're going to use it to your advantage to know what is going on today.

Jordan Lanfair: Yeah.

Tamara Spears: I think for me, like you just said, that's—that's two of the reasons that I got into really focusing on—heavily on—how do we teach slavery? So, doing that work, Trayvon Martin and, you know, all the things that came after that, was really what was the impetus for me.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: This is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. I'm your host, Hasan Kwame Jeffries. Teaching Tolerance recently launched another podcast called *Queer America*, about how to teach LGBTQ history in your classroom. It's hosted by professors Leila Rupp and John D'Emilio. You can find our sister podcast *Queer America* in iTunes, or visit tolerance.org/podcasts. Once again, here are Jordan and Tamara.

Tamara Spears: So, I think you were talking a little about how it has evolved over time.

Jordan Lanfair: Over time, I think one of the big things that we kind of lock on to is the sense of community. That's one of the things that I like to talk about. There is some camaraderie in survival. And there is this thread that brings us all together because we have survived and because we continue to survive. And that is to be admired. That's to be cherished. You know, we still, of course, we're living through the effects, like you said, of slavery. And so you know, when we look at the violence in Chicago, we… we take it from both a personal place because, you know, my brother was killed in Chicago, you know? And that's always going to be a thing to me. So we look at it from a personal place. You know, many of my students have lost people. But we also look at it from a "How did we get here? Like, where is the violence happening? Where isn't it happening? Where are, you know, a lot of our reports of police brutality? Where aren't they? Why do you think that is? What does that mean for us?"

Tamara Spears: For me, that's one of the things that has evolved over time: helping the kids see the connections. My first teaching year, I basically did a really good job of letting the kids know slavery was the cause of the Civil War, and that was pretty much as good as it got. Now I feel like I'm much more methodic and intentional about where I start and where I go. What's the ending? What is the goal? And how did we get here?

Like you say, you know, about the violence in Chicago, a lot of people are like, "Oh, you see? It's black-on-black crime." But we never talk about why, and what is happening with the institutions there, with the closing of schools and the building of this huge police academy, and just thinking of those things and, like you said, how does it actually affect the people there?

Jordan Lanfair: When we talk about the Great Migration, when people left the South, Chicago was one of the black meccas. The running joke is: Do you know how much our ancestors had to hate racism to come to Chicago? Like, it gets negative 12 degrees. That's what they wanted. That—that was preferable to life in the South.

But that always lets us talk about, you know, the Great Migration because a lot of my kids have families that are still in Arkansas and Mississippi and, you know, Kentucky. We're like, "Well you know, you do realize that there was this time when everyone just kind of went north?" And they went to Harlem, and they went to Chicago, and that drastically altered how the South looks and how the North looks. And, you know, what's going on. But that also lets me teach about the Southern Strategy.

And so one of the really cool things that I've been able to do is use *13TH*, Ava DuVernay's documentary.

Tamara Spears: Mm-hmm.

Jordan Lanfair: To kind of talk about, you know, black depictions and media, and what is the 13th Amendment and, you know, how does it feed into the prison-industrial complex? But it lets us have those conversations because we talk about the 14th Amendment and, you know, voting rights bills and what makes a citizen, and how it all still kind of had to end on this abolishment of slavery, and how we were ill-prepared as a country to kind of handle that.

Tamara Spears: My great-grandfather was a sharecropper in Denmark, South Carolina. He made his way, as they say, on the midnight train to New York, and became a janitor. After about a year, he was able to bring up his wife, my great-grandmother, as well as my grandmother and eight other children. Seven of their own, and my great-grandmother's nephews and niece. Previous to him coming up, his sisters came up. And so as you can see, it's that whole idea of the Great Migration. And I tell the kids, you know, "to me that's fascinating that my great-grandfather was able to get away from being a sharecropper, come up to New York, work as a janitor, then bring up a whole family with basically ten people." And they lived in the little janitor's quarters. They were on East 10th Street, I believe.

And then after that, a couple of years, they were able to buy a house. They were the first black family out in Crown Heights. And what happened was the white flight. After they saw black faces arriving, a lot of the white families disappeared and it became a mostly black people block. And to me that's—that's very fascinating. I tell the kids: "We look down on certain people and the jobs that they do, or the reasons they come over, or how did they get here? But this is the movement of people. This is the story of America—of people coming here to make a better way." And I interweave that story and have pictures—I show them the pictures and they're like,

"What? That's crazy!" And they're always fascinated in just how our individual stories are part of the American story, are part of the black American story.

This is part of an oral history. And I ask them to go back, ask your family, you know, find out how did you get to New York? What generation New York are you? Like, I tell the kids I'm only second-generation New York because of this story. And a lot of kids also come from the Caribbean, and they tell their stories about how they got here, and how their family worked night and day, and then they became where we are today. So interweaving that story of the Jim Crow era, the Great Migration, my grandfather was in the Korean War. So making sure that they can see I see myself in history. So then, how can you see yourself in history? How about you, Jordan?

Jordan Lanfair: Okay, listen, there are a lot of great Dad stories, but this is not my best Dad story. So, my daughter is half white. And so, once when we went to Florida I didn't put sunblock on her. I'm like, "I don't need sunblock," and then I walked off. Because I don't. Because I have a lovely melanated complexion, but my daughter's a bit lighter. And she burned just a little. I'm like, "Okay." It was this entry point that was big for me to think about. She's gonna not be white enough to be white. And for some people, she's not gonna be black enough to be black. And so she inhabits this completely different world that I have no clue about. And so it really made me start thinking about, you know, my family. And my mom is 53. And so I was like, I started doing the math. I'm like, "Oh wow!" Like yes, schools were integrated but, you know, they weren't happy about it. They—they were still fighting it. But she has older siblings. I'm like, "Oh, they went—they definitely went to segregated schools."

And my grandma died and she was 80. I'm like—and I remember her telling me like, "Oh yeah. You know, your grandpa came home one day and he just said, 'We got to go.'" And that was from Little Rock, Arkansas, in, like, the early 1920s, or—well 1930s-ish. I'm like, "Huh. Okay.' And so I messaged my mom once. I'm like, "So great-grandma would have been a sharecropper." She's like, "I believe so. And if I'm not 100 percent on great-grandma, great-great-grandma would have either been a sharecropper or a slave, just because of how the years worked out." I'm like, "Wow. Here I have this daughter who inhabits this completely different world. I have this mom who inhabits this completely different world. This grandmother, this aunt, this uncle—all black, living in the same country, but navigating spaces differently, navigating what it means in this world in such different ways."

For me, my daughter—you know, the great love of my life, she's gonna have this incredible duality within her. So, really, every day honestly makes me reflect on, how am I fitting in this world? Because I'm not going to inhabit the same world she does, and I don't the same one that my mom does and all this. So it's this constant conversation about, like, who am I, and who is she going to be, who am I preparing her to be? And because my daughter goes everywhere with me, I mean, she comes into my classes. And these are conversations that I kind of have openly when I worked with Latino students. One of the big things for them was, "I don't speak Spanish. My parents do. Like, my parents are from Mexico or somewhere else." And that's different for us. Like that's hard for me to walk in this world and, you know, then they talk about their past experiences.

Tamara Spears: You just reminded me of something when you were saying about the integrated schools. So, when I was in college, we had—I took an oral history class and we had an assignment, you know, pick a topic, interview people. And I was interviewing my mom and my dad about busing. And they had some very interesting stories about being bused out of their neighborhood to a neighbor—another neighborhood where they would be chased with bats and made sure they get on the bus at the right time, because if you miss the bus, you know, who knows what might happen to you?

And so even that current history can be reflected, even though it's not directly slavery. And just a word about oral history, or even any kind of project that we would give our kids or teachers would give their kids relating or pertaining to slavery, you know, not—not saying, you know, "Go back to your family and find out who was a slave." That may not be the right way to go about some type of oral history project.

Jordan Lanfair: No.

Tamara Spears: But making sure that, if you do an oral history project, keeping it within a topic that all of the kids could explore. And then if those type of stories do come out, then hey, even better. But not focusing on, you know, "find out if your ancestor was a slave" type of thing.

Jordan Lanfair: Yeah. You know, just going and directly asking about traumatic events or America's shame—not things that I would recommend for people. But I think one of the cool things that—it's always great to do with oral history—and sometimes I just make it homework—is just go ask about a moment that was important to someone in your family, you know? Like, it's those moments that you can, on your own, you can go look at the context, right?

Like, sometimes when my aunts or uncles or, like, my grandma would talk about, "What I remember that we used to be able to walk home from school, and then we'd go have lunch at home, and then we'd go back to school." And they would, you know, be able to describe the neighborhood and all this. And, you know, that's her great moment. And me being able to be critical, I go back and look at the time frame and I look at the school and I look at the neighborhood, and it was like, "Yeah, you could do that because you lived in a segregated neighborhood. Like, there was redlining around there." But that doesn't necessarily matter when you're just thinking about these moments sometimes.

And so I think, like, one of the great access points we have as teachers and as people in—in gathering oral history but just in having great conversations—is looking back and thinking about moments that are important. And then we can put the context to them later. But to get that firsthand account—and with context, with time, I'm able to add those layers, but my entry point is still this person. And so I think these conversations are always interesting, especially when we have them with family members but like, "Well, what do you remember from school?" It's like, "Oh well, what it—like, what did you study? What was the neighborhood like?" And then getting to add those layers on. That—that's always interesting for me.

Tamara Spears: Which is to me, I guess, a good segue, you know, what advice would you give teachers considering expanding their curriculum regarding slavery, or Jim Crow era? But specifically slavery, what advice would you give them?

Jordan Lanfair: Hmm. I mean I think it's twofold, wouldn't you? Like, because we… we serve different clienteles. Or maybe I'm wrong in that. But like, we have black people—and specifically black people who are going to teach slavery. And we have—actually three, then. We have white people, and we have non-black people of color who are teaching about slavery. And I think each of those groups has a different kind of responsibility. They have a different entry point, but they also have a different history and experience with America, with black people, with racism. You know, we have different power dynamics in there. And so I think the number one rule is, find your entry point that's authentic, right?

Like, if my entry point is, you know, I've worked with the children of migrant workers, so let's say that was an entry point. I got a lot of quality work when we mentioned—when we talked about the workers' rights movement, when we delved into their history, and then showed how it linked with the civil rights movement, and then worked backwards at what was going on, you know? As a black person, I can honestly—I could just head it on, you know? Like, that's my

history, that's my family, that's my experience with racism, with institutional and structural racism, with, you know, people asking, can they touch my hair? Can they touch my daughter's hair? So, I'm able to handle it, you know, especially when I work with black classes, I can just go right at it. I wouldn't suggest that for some people.

I think white teachers have to take a lot of care, and they need to know their stuff. And I don't just mean their curriculum, I don't just mean their dates and their facts. They need to be able to understand what role their privilege and their history has played in the formation of this country. And because of the formation of this country, the oppression of people of color and the continued and systematic murder and oppression of black people. Like, that's just the reality of it. So you have to have that in mind, and that has to inform your decisions. But I don't know, maybe I'm seeing it—maybe I'm seeing those three different groups, and that's not quite how to look at it. What do you have? Like, what would you recommend for people who are, you know, considering teaching slavery, or kind of dipping their toes in the curriculum planning?

Tamara Spears: I think those three groups are pretty distinct, you know? So I would agree that there would be about approximately three different groups of people approaching this. But I think, regardless of the group, you have to learn. You have to spend the time to know the content. A lot of people are like, you know, "Skills, skills, skills." But not knowing the content, not knowing the content knowledge, will hamper you. Because they say when you're doing public speaking, one of the ways to be confident is to know what you're talking about.

Jordan Lanfair: Mm-hmm.

Tamara Spears: And that goes for teaching, too. So I would say, learn, learn, learn, regardless of if you're white, if you're black or, you know, some other race that's not white or black, any of those things. You still have to learn. You still have to know what you're talking about before you go in. I would say the next thing is, have a plan of knowing how you're going to deal with your own emotions, whether that be rage, whether that be denial, or whether that be apathy because you feel like you don't have any skin in the game. You have to be able to deal with, not only your emotions, but the emotions of the kids you will teach. So when you're having discussions, be mindful of, is the question you're asking going to just make the class explode? Or is it a question that they can get some academic knowledge out of it? And if it would make sense to have a conversation. So thinking about the way that you frame questions so that there—there's not like a powder keg and you're just setting things off and you don't have a way to bring it back.

So I guess having a safe space is crucial. So starting from day one. If you're a teacher that likes to have discussions, you would already know that you've got to create a safe space. But if it's something that you're not used to, if you're used to just lecturing, then you have to create a safe space if you're going to have a question—or even not questions. Even if you are a lecturer type of teacher, you still need to create a safe space because what you're saying is going to impact those students that you teach, regardless of the race that they are.

Also, developing activities that are not just the student listening to what you have to say. Make them think, make them write, make them discuss, put them out there so that they can start developing their own thoughts. There's a lot of influence nowadays. People are out there saying all types of things and, you know, that whole fake news thing. That idea that you can just say whatever you want to say, and don't have any facts or base knowledge. Or when people present you with the facts and you say, "Well, there's alternative facts," you know? So giving the kids the opportunity to work with facts, work with secondary sources, work with primary sources. Use sources from today. Pull up the latest tweet from such and such person and really dissect what they're saying. And I guess that—that would be my last thing. Make connections with today so that the kids can really see the relevance.

Jordan Lanfair: Yeah, I mean fake news, but I think without going too deep down the rabbit hole, the thing that I'm very, very adamant about with my students: Those things are dangerous because we have people actively trying to rewrite history. You know, like when we had Texas trying to rewrite textbooks to talk about, like, the happy slaves, or omit slavery completely. That's dangerous. When we had that computer game that was gamifying a slave's escape. Those things are dangerous. And so, I think that's the big thing about what we do and what we have to keep in mind and know and be really preaching to people, is that the stakes are high even when they seem like they aren't. Like, you may just view it as an activity or a lesson a day or a reading you had and a really cool idea, but when you have someone come out and say that the Ku Klux Klan, "Oh, I thought they were great until I found out they smoked marijuana,"—these are actual quotes—it's like, if you don't have the wherewithal, the come—the competency to understand who and what the Ku Klux Klan is and was and what they've done, that goes over your head.

If you don't have the historical context to look at voting blocs and then understand why gerrymandering is a thing, why it's hurting us, and why voter disenfranchisement is hurting us, why these activists, why you know, Obama's foundation, why Eric Holder, they've come out and spoken on the gutting of the Voting Rights Act. If you don't teach and understand these things,

it's dangerous for you as a citizen. And I think that's the—the big push is, at the end of the day where—we aren't making students, we're making citizens. They're students in our class, right? Like, I teach slavery and Jim Crow and I teach, you know, the civil rights era, and I teach these things because they are curriculum now, but they're lives as well. You know, I taught *The Hate U Give* this year, which… talk about a book that in an accessible way talks about the legacy of slavery—but it's because the stakes are so high, right? We're constantly trying to make better citizens. Because at the end of the day, that's what our kids are going to be.

And so you have to go into these lessons, you have to go into this preparation, this—this learning that you're talking about… this capacity-building, understanding that your curriculum better make better citizens and better people. Through having them check their privilege, through having them look at their history, through having them engage with primary and secondary sources. Because if our only goal is to have some great activities, we're not doing our ancestors any bit of good. We're not doing our country any bit of good.

Sorry. That was my soapbox. I sit down on it now. But like, that's kind of why we need to do what we do.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Jordan Lanfair teaches ninth- and tenth- grade multicultural literature on Chicago's South Side. And Tamara Spears teaches social studies to sixth- through eighth-graders in Coney Island, Brooklyn.

Teaching Hard History is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a collection of essays called *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. Throughout this series, we have featured scholars to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that award-winning collection.

We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials—which are available at tolerance.org/podcasts. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units and a detailed framework for teaching the history of American slavery.

Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center—providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find these online at Tolerance.org.

Thanks to Ms. Spears and Mr. Lanfair for sharing their insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shea Shackelford, with production assistance from Russell Gragg. Kate Shuster is

the project manager. Our theme song is “Kerr’s Negro Jig” by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zabriskie.

I’m Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, Associate Professor of History at The Ohio State University and your host for *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- BBC, Strange Fruit: The most shocking song of all time?
- HERB: Resources for Teachers, Former Slaves Remember Resistance (Josie Jordan)
- PBS The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross, Who Were the Harlem Hellfighters?
- Teaching Tolerance, Help Students Remember César Chávez
- NYCDOE Social Studies K-8, Passport to Social Studies
- Frederick Douglass, What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?
- Ava DuVernay, 13TH (documentary)

Episode 16: Sample Lessons

Using the present to explore the past. Tamara Spears and Jordan Lanfair suggest a Social Studies unit about Resistance & Kanye West, and a set of English Language Arts lessons examining holidays to understand the legacy of American slavery.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, Reconsider Columbus Day
- Teaching Tolerance, Twelve Years A Slave
- Teaching Tolerance, A Slave Auction
- Teaching Tolerance, Teaching Thanksgiving in a Socially Responsible Way

Tamara Spears and Jordan Lanfair

- Teaching Tolerance, "We Are Our Ancestors' Wildest Dreams"
- Jordan Lanfair, Edutopia

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is a bonus episode of *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. In our last episode, we heard from Tamara Spears and Jordan Lanfair. Now, these two teachers are going to walk us through some lessons they created to explore the history of slavery with their students. We'll begin with a social studies lesson about understanding resistance and Kanye West, followed by an English language arts lesson that examines holidays as a way to help students understand the history and legacy of American slavery. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy!

Tamara Spears: I would like to share a lesson that I do on resistance and how I use current events—bringing the present into the classroom—to change up my curriculum. I was sitting on my couch scrolling through Twitter, you know, looking at the latest news, checking out what Black Twitter is saying, what is EduTwitter upset about? And then I saw Kanye West saying that slavery was "a choice." I literally sat up, grabbed my fake pearls, and I was like, "How, Sway?" Then the reality of the statement really settled in, and how would my students be able to know this didn't make sense? Would they process it, or would they just take it at face value?

This happened right after we had finished a critical film study of *12 Years a Slave*, and my next

lesson was to be the types of resistance that the enslaved used. I couldn't have picked a better statement for the kids to do the real work of doing history and understanding why it's important—not just to have the skill of research, but to actually use the skill of research. And looking at how this knowledge plays into what you know, and how does that make you a freethinker.

The New York City curriculum, Passport to Social Studies, which was created by teachers—I really like using some of the materials that they have because they focus heavily on primary sources. One of the lessons there—I kind of modify it for my own use—it's called "Types of Slavery." And they talk about "What were the passive and active ways of resistance that the enslaved used?"

I let the kids watch Kanye West and the TMZ interview—not the whole thing, 'cause I think it was like 40 minutes. But just the part that we needed, related to when he said that slavery was "a choice." And then we watched Van Lathan, the producer in the studio who challenged him and his thoughts. So I let the kids watch it, then I said, "We're not going to discuss this just yet.

I need you to take out your journals," 'cause I have journals for the kids. I said, "Please write down—what are your thoughts? What are you feeling?

How do you feel about this statement that Kanye made? How do you feel about the rebuttal that Van Lathan gave?"

So, they write it down. And all of them are looking at me like, "I want to discuss, I want to talk about it!" One kid shouts out, "He needs to read more books!" and all of these things. And I'm like, "No, no. Not yet. Just, really, write it down. Get your thoughts on paper." So they write it down. Then I say, I'm going to play two more videos for you. So I played Eve's response—I think she was on *The View*—and she talked about bringing facts into your freethinking, and not just having freethinking. And then I play for them the will.i.am response where he was talking about if you're going to have these thoughts, base them on research, and make connections to what's happening today, and how these are not choices for the people that are living in these communities today. And he also brought up the point about disrespecting the ancestors, which one of the kids really grabbed onto.

So, I said again, "We can't have a discussion yet. You guys have to really get your thoughts down on paper before you're influenced by what anybody else thinks." There's one girl—I can't really say her name, but I'll just call her "D." She was scribbling, scribbling, scribbling—so excited. She

wrote like two whole pages before we even had time to get to discussion. After we watched those three videos I said, "Okay, now's the time that we're going to get into discussion." So we had a discussion. And I also brought in an article, "The Most Damaging Myths About Slavery" by Yohuru Williams. I took excerpts from it. It was on the History Channel's website. And he talked about the different ways in which there are these myths that come up time and time again. And even though Kanye thought he had some new freethought, it was actually something that has been used by white supremacists forever and those who want to say that Slavery was a happy situation for the slaves.

So I have them go through the excerpts from his article. And I have the kids really digest it. And after those two days, we got into the actual primary sources, because I wanted them to actually do the work themselves. I said, "Okay, we heard what other people had to say. Let's hear from the enslaved and the way that they felt that they resisted slavery." So I begin the class with our central question which is, "What choices do people make in the face of injustice?" We talked about the enduring understanding. The enduring understanding was: "Enslaved people resisted the efforts of their enslavers to reduce them to commodities in both revolutionary and everyday ways." Again, we're focusing on the passive and active ways of resistance. I start every class with these things.

And finally, we got to the aim: "How do we debunk the myth: slavery was 'a choice'?" I tell the kids, "You know, this is again about you actually doing the history." So the first primary source that we look at is called, "Josie Jordan Recalls an Outbreak of 'Malitis.'" And I'll just read a little excerpt for you to give you an idea of how we go through it. The first sentence: "I remember Mammy told me about one master who almost starved his slaves." And so I pause. I say to the kids, "What does this tell you right off the bat? Who's telling the story? How do we know that this person was not the actual person there?" You know, just a little inference. Then we move on. It says, "Some of the slaves were so poorly thin that their ribs would kind of rustle against each other like corn stalks drying in the hot winds."

Now we talk about how the author paints the picture for us. "What does that tell us about the way the enslaver treated the enslaved?" So this gives us the condition, right? So the story goes on to talk about how they called the master over, and all the hogs were laying out on the ground. And they told the master that the hogs had "malitis." And they pretended like they didn't want to touch it. So of course, the master says, "Well I don't want the hog meat. I'll give it to you slaves." So then they eat it, and they have a great feast. So the story goes on to say, "Don't you all know what 'malitis' is?" At this point, I stop and I say to the kids, "Do you understand what this story

is saying?" Some kids, they get it right away. Some don't. So we keep going. "And she would laugh remembering how they fooled old master so they get all that good meat. One of the strongest Negroes tapped the hogs between the eyes with that mallet. 'Malitis' set in mighty quick. But it was an uncommon disease, even for hungry Negroes around all the time."

When they read this part, the kids crack up laughing. They say things like, "Oh!" or "Yo!" because they really realized that they tricked the master in order to get the food for themselves because they were so hungry. So we get right into the questions. And one of the first questions is: "What type of resistance is this? Is it passive or is it active?" And they have to get a quote directly from the reading that supports what they say.

Then we talk about the consequences. "Were there negative or positive consequences for these actions? Was it effective? Did they get what they wanted out of the action that they took?" And then this is when we get into the deeper work, where we talk about connecting this to what we're looking to do: debunk the myth of "slavery was a choice." So we say, "How useful or helpful is this primary source in providing the information about resistance of slavery by those who were enslaved?" And this is where the kids really can get into the deeper discussions.

The first questions are, you know, to set them up for understanding where they're going in the learning, right? But this question is to really help them dive into can they actually use this document to support what way the person resisted slavery? And since this is the model document, kids are calling out the answer. We had answers like, "Yeah of course, this is perfect, because it shows that they can trick the master to get any kind of food that they want." So then I bring them back to that last sentence. "This was uncommon, even though people were hungry all the time." So, knowing that, could they use this method often, and what would happen if they overused this method?

Another thing, I want them to practice the skill of corroboration. So I say, "How does this primary source support what we saw in *12 Years a Slave*? Is there anything that corroborates it? How about when we read the 'Debunked' article?" So the whole premise of the lesson is bringing the kids to reading the primary sources, and then making those connections with the resistance and other secondary sources to have their own claim. Like, "What evidence would they use?" There are some other primary sources at this time. I put the kids into their house groups because I use a house system in my class. Each group has a separate document. There is one about Joe Sutherland who learned how to read and write by going to the courthouse with his master. Then he learned how to forge a seal. He's selling you passes, and people are escaping.

And then finally he gets caught. And then he gets sent "down south." That's what the narrator says.

There's another article about Sukie who resists her master's advances. She's making soap and, you know, he tries to come in. And, you know, he pulls down her dress and gets her to the floor. It doesn't get much more graphic than that. But she punches him, throws him into the soap, and the kids are cheering while they're reading. I'm like, "Okay, you must have got to the part [with] the soap." And then, she gets sold a few days later. So the kids, when they get to Sukie, they really think about Patsey from *12 Years a Slave*.

And I say, "See, Sukie resisted aggressively, or actively, while Patsey was passive." And they're able to use the academic vocabulary to pinpoint the different ways that people resisted. There's also the Nat Turner—that comes with an excerpt about what happened, and it gives the engraving from 1831. And then the kids can analyze. So, you know, bringing some images into that as well.

After we do all of this work, and the kids are working together, and I go from house to house or group to group for better understanding to see what are they talking about. I throw questions out at them. I try to stump them. And I really saw the kids struggling with being able to look at, was the action effective or not? To me, that's gold right there, because I can see that they go back through their documents, they pull out their guide that they use from *12 Years a Slave*. They pull out their article about 'Debunked.' And they try to make the corroboration. So they really—I wouldn't say enjoyed, but—they really got into the work of doing the history themselves so that they can make the claim, and go back to Kanye and say whatever they wanted to say.

So that's when I bring the class together. We discuss what each house found, and we point out the things that people agreed with or disagreed with. And then I say, "Okay, let's get back to our journals." So I have them revisit the question. And now that they can pull in all of this different information from, not just what people told them about it from the secondary sources, but from the primary sources—and even though it's just three or four that we studied—it's enough for them to have an idea of their own about the resistance and the choices, or the false choices that people had to make. And we also say what is "a choice"? So that's when you can get into that whole idea of a false choice.

So once they're done with their journal entry, I have them do a writing assignment. They can even do an op-ed piece that can be on one of our fake magazines or I can give them a real magazine name and say, "This is going to show up in such-and-such magazine. You need to

write an op-ed piece about what Kanye West said, and why or why not what he said makes sense." They can even do a string of tweets because, you know, Kanye at that time, he had like a ton of stream-of-thought tweets. So I say, "You know what? You're on Twitter. You're seeing what he's saying. You're going to respond to him." But, you know, Twitter has a format—I think it's 280 now—where each of your blocks has to be concise enough, which is more difficult than an op-ed piece because you have to get your point across within that little bit of words. Even though you're threading it, it still needs to stand alone. So some kids chose to do that.

And some kids said, "Well, can I just write a letter?" And I said, "Okay, that's fine." So I gave them those three options because that was the assessment: Could they actually do the work? Could they use the evidence from the primary sources and the secondary sources to come up with a claim and use those sources as evidence as to why they think that Kanye was wrong or he was right? Basically, how can we debunk the myth that slavery was "a choice"? And after we do that, you know, I read over them. Some kids wanted to share and we had another, further discussion. But, you know, I had to move the lesson along. And this is not something you can do in a 45-minute period. It just so happens that every week I have one double period. So you would use this as one of those longer periods, or you would break it into chunks. So if I'm starting with Kanye and what he said, that was three lessons before I actually got to the lesson where the kids had the chance to respond, and write, and get into the primary sources.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: This is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. I'm your host, Hasan Kwame Jeffries. Teaching Tolerance recently launched another podcast called *Queer America* about how to teach LGBTQ history in your classroom. It's hosted by professors Leila Rupp and John D'Emilio. You can find our sister podcast *Queer America* in iTunes or visit tolerance.org/podcasts. Once again, here are Jordan and Tamara.

Jordan Lanfair: We use Columbus Day as an entry point to talking about the slave trade because we get to learn about his role in starting it. And from there, we're able to move into more complex conversations about—what was slavery? What is its legacy? How do we remember those who survived [as] slaves and how did they shape America?" So that's our entry point. That is a tangible day on the calendar that we can point to as someone who started the slave trade and everything that they stood for. So that's something that I use annually. We look at the proclamations from different cities that have changed the name of Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day.

I try to get it started about a week or a week and a half before Columbus Day. And there is a

great article that I like sending home for annotation, "How Columbus Sailed Into U.S. History." And it's from NPR. And it talks very in-depth about how, essentially, this push came from Italians when they became Italian Americans. And so they wanted someone who represented them. That is honorable. And we talk about, "Why might people want this?" Because one of the things that I don't do is just say, "This is bad." Okay? We need to understand—if it's been here for so long, why? Who's still fighting for it?

And so we kind of do some research, as homework after annotations and some work in class. And so, "Who is supporting this? What does that say about them? Do you think we should support it? Why or why not?" Then we look a little deeper. "Who might be hurt by this day? Anyone? Oh, why? You don't have to. You're you! You know this man started the slave trade. Well, maybe you didn't. But you know now. How will you feel when we have the day off? Of course, you'll have the day off, so that'll be fun. I'm looking forward to having a day off, too. But it's a day in celebration of this person. And so generally when we celebrate people, we celebrate the ideals along with them. Do you support those ideals? Hmm. Okay, so what could we do differently?" And then we look at the proclamations that have been written for Indigenous Peoples' Day. We talk about the vocabulary around that: "What is an Indigenous person? Chicago doesn't celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day. What do you think about that? What are some ways that we could change that? Do you want to?"

And so then this takes us a few days because we bring in different nonfiction articles. Reading A–Z has a book about a student doing a project on Christopher Columbus and learning the truth that I use with my struggling readers. Front-loading a lot of information about who he was, so that we come to this clear understanding of, "If we're going to have this holiday, this is what we're celebrating. Here are other holidays. This is what, in essence, they're celebrating. These are the people that we are aspiring to and the values we are. So let me show you another one. Where does this fit with your current understanding? What do you want to do about it?"

For teachers who may be listening, this is—I mean, this is my Juneteenth lesson. This is the one that has it's—it follows the Columbus Day work that we do where. It comes generally after my students have done either a formal or informal debate. And the reason I station this after is because I want them to take a larger action about our school calendar. So I try to encourage them to push for our school calendar to be changed, or to write letters to the mayor about, you know, changing holidays. And so we focus in on Juneteenth.

I play the first about five or six minutes of the *Black-ish* episode based around Columbus Day

because they have a skit about what Columbus did on the island of Hispaniola, which was begin genocide. And so I cut it right there, and we talk about, "How is he depicted? Based on what you know, is this accurate? Recall back to our past few lessons; do you believe that people get the full history when they look at holidays?" Then we just do a few quick review questions such as, "Well, what's the importance of Columbus Day to its supporters? What holidays is it similar to? Okay, how might it be similar to St. Patrick's Day? What do these groups have in common? Today we're going to talk about another holiday: Juneteenth. Who's familiar with it? Okay.

Well, if I told you that we were going to talk about Independence Day, what day do you think I would talk about?" And of course, you know students, "July 4th." "Why might that be a bit problematic? Why might that not tell the whole truth?"

Inevitably, you kind of poke, and prod, and guide them to, "Well, was everyone free on the Fourth of July? Okay, so what we're going to look at is this episode that's going to very much talk about this holiday. And then we're going to have some conversations and questions. But this is just one day in our bigger conversation." So we roll some more. There's a pretty funny moment where Dre and his father confront one of the teachers by, like, "Well, why don't we celebrate these other holidays, you know, like Magic Johnson Is Still Alive Day, Tupac's birthday and then Juneteenth." And it's like, "Well, you should have led with that one.' And so I always like to stop here and, "Would we celebrate Magic Johnson Is Still Alive Day? Should we celebrate Tupac's birthday? Okay, so what is the importance of holidays?"

And this also calls back to a few conversations we have about, like, statues, and the artwork and, you know, who do we post, and who do we name schools after? So then we go through and we listen and analyze some of the songs that come up, including the "We Built This" song. You know, I ask, "What colleges and universities did you hear? Where do you notice many of them are? Okay, what happened recently?" And this was after the Charlottesville protests, also. And then there's a point where they mention the legitimate dollar costs of slavery, and so we talk about that. "What are the costs of slavery? Huh. How old is the United States? If we assume that we were founded on July 4th, 1776—but how old are we? Okay, looking at some of the things that we know from history, does that make us an old or a young country? Okay, well how did we get the political and economic strength that we have?"

Alright, so add that in. Maybe not the dollar amount that they discuss, but, "What are some of the soft costs, we'll say, some of the nontangible costs of slavery? How did America get to be who it is? Alright, on the flipside, what are some of the negative costs associated with slavery? What

did it do to people? What did it make that might not be positive, based off of what you saw and what you know from your own experience? Okay." And so then again we go through more of the episode. It is a lot of watching, and because *Black-ish* is hilarious, we do have moments where we enjoy so we can go deeper into the conversation, and it helps me pull them back out. And so at the end, one of the things that we focus on as far as writing and then bringing into a full discussion over the next day or two is, "How do these holidays relate?" And one of the things that a student said that really stayed with me was, "We have a holiday for the man that started slavery, but not the end of slavery."

To which you would say, "Why do you think that is? Hmm. What does he say at the end of the episode that you resonate with?" And because there's, of course, this wrap-up, this summary. And I know for me, one of the things that Anthony Anderson's character says is, you know, at least if we celebrated Juneteenth, it might feel like an apology. You know, like America actually feels bad about what happened. And then it mentions that there has been a formal apology issued, but it's a half-hearted apology. "Yes, we're sorry for slavery. But nothing really happened." So then we move into inaction.

"Based off of the holidays that we've looked at, based off of what we know now, what are some things that we could do? Hmm. Do you think I should keep teaching this? Why? You all said you felt betrayed, like you didn't know all of this, and people should have told you." I had a student say, "You know, I've been in school this many years, and they've been telling me about this day, and I've been celebrating the wrong things." And so, "What can we do to make sure that other students don't feel that that's not the case? Who has power that could change some of these things? How would we appeal to them? What's your 'ask'? Okay, let's go ahead and try and take some initiative on that. Let's move forward."

And so then, the wrap-up is either a letter to someone who could change things. So we, of course, do the whole "Write your congressperson, write your mayor, write the principal, bring the principal in for your debates." Because at least we can change it on our school calendar. So they can see those tangible results, but they are adding their voice to this larger debate as well. And that is kind of how that lesson goes. And it can expand anywhere from a day or two, depending on how deep the conversations get—how long the class period is.

Tamara Spears: The use of *Black-ish* and the episode. When you are watching it with the kids, do they get tied-up? I know you mentioned that they laugh because it's pretty funny. Do they get tied-up in the actual episode, or can they focus on the history of the episode?

Jordan Lanfair: It gets serious. It gets into the history. I like it because it gets into it in a way that is accessible for them, because it almost gets them just uncomfortable enough, just angry enough, just woke enough that we can keep the momentum going. And the conversations that we have are what drive them deeper into understanding. And because of that—for many of them, deeper into frustration. And so I find that pairing these really in-depth and hard conversations and questions with the episode that, you know, takes you through a multitude of emotions. The episode helps bring them back out, and that's what I like. We don't just go so deep into it that I can't pull them back out.

We use current events to use our historical knowledge, to use our literary analysis skills, our writing abilities, the things that they learn in my class, to challenge the current system. And what that does is, it helps them not feel weighed down by history. If they don't get to do something—at least for me, because we look at the text a lot, because we look at history a lot, and we read firsthand accounts from people, we read heavy fiction—it can all just feel like this unbearable pain. But giving them the opportunity to challenge, and to resist, and to fight, and to grow helps them take that pain and turn it into action. And so that's why I like to be able to bring in actual things that are happening that they can impact, so that they understand that it's their responsibility to not allow these things to repeat themselves.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Jordan Lanfair teaches ninth- and tenth-grade multicultural literature on Chicago's South Side. And Tamara Spears teaches social studies to sixth- through eighth-graders in Coney Island, Brooklyn.

Teaching Hard History is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a collection of essays called Understanding and Teaching American Slavery. Throughout this series, we have featured scholars to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that award-winning collection. We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials, which are available at tolerance.org/podcasts. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units and a detailed framework for teaching the history of American slavery. Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center—providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find these online at Tolerance.org.

Thanks to Ms. Spears and Mr. Lanfair for sharing their insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shea Shackelford—with production assistance from Russell Gragg. Kate Shuster is the project manager. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who

graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zabriskie. I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries—Associate Professor of History at The Ohio State University and your host for *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- Steve McQueen, *12 Years a Slave* (film)
- Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853* (book online)
- NYCDOE, Passport to Social Studies
- American Social History Productions, Josie Jordan Recalls an Outbreak of "Malitis" / "Sukie" Resists a Master's Advances
- NPR, How Columbus Sailed Into U.S. History, Thanks To Italians
- American Heritage, Columbus and Genocide (Queen Isabella quote)
- Museum of the American Indian, Indigenous Peoples' Day: Rethinking How We Celebrate American History
- Vox, Black-ish's musical episode about Juneteenth is a pointed lesson on American ignorance

Episode 17: Young Adult Trade Books

From elementary to high school, YA literature can introduce fundamental themes and information about slavery, especially when paired with primary sources. John H. Bickford shows how to capitalize on the strengths and weaknesses of trade books about slavery.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, Lies My Bookshelf Told Me: Slavery in Children's Literature
- Teaching Hard History, A Framework for Teaching American Slavery
- Teaching Tolerance, Examining Stereotypes in Books

John Bickford

- Social Studies Education, Eastern Illinois University
- Selected Works of John Bickford

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: The documentary film *The Abolitionists* explores the people and personalities who breathed life into the crusade to end slavery in America. The two-hour film made its national broadcast debut on PBS's "American Experience" in January 2013. Not too long after that, I assigned it as required viewing for students in my African-American History through Film class.

I began teaching my film course in 2012, just before The Abolitionists came out. Then as now, the class meets one day a week—always on Mondays—for three hours. During our time together, my students and I watch a major motion picture that attempts to chronicle an aspect of the black experience, from slavery through the present. Over the years, we've watched everything from *12 Years a Slave* to *Fruitvale Station* to *Moonlight*. Last year, I tossed in *Mudbound*. This year, I've added *Blackkklansman* and *The Hate U Give*.

This class has proven to be wonderfully effective in getting students to think critically about popular perceptions of the black past. The key to its success, though, is not the movies we watch together. That's just what fills seats. Tell a kid that we'll be watching *Black Panther* and *Get Out* in lieu of a textbook, and they're down for whatever. The reason the class actually works is because I pair each movie with several hours of documentary films on the movie's core subject. I

have a devil of a time getting students to read for 20 minutes, but they'll watch a two-hour documentary on Netflix in a heartbeat.

The students view the documentaries during the week leading up to our Monday classes. And I watch those documentaries that I've never seen before during the weekend before we meet. And so it was a few years ago on a quiet Sunday afternoon that I was watching *The Abolitionists* in preparation for viewing *Glory* in class the next day. And as I was doing so, my then five-year-old daughter, Asha, kept popping in and out of the room—stealing glances at the television trying to figure out what I was watching. And whenever she appeared, I immediately paused the program to keep her from seeing slavery dramatized. This quickly devolved into a game of cat and mouse: her peeking, me pausing; me pausing, her peeking. It was not the most efficient way to prepare for class. Then she slipped into the room without me seeing and caught sight of a young Frederick Douglass fending off an attempted whipping by his enslaver.

When I saw Asha, she was staring at the television, mouth agape. I stopped the program and beckoned her toward me. She came, we sat, and I waited. Then finally she asked, "Why was he doing that to him?"

"Well," I started, quite confidently, "the young black man was Frederick Douglass, and he was enslaved.

And the white man was the one who enslaved him. And he was trying to force Frederick to do something against his will."

I felt good about my answer, although I wasn't quite sure "against his will" would register. But, that, I thought, could be easily clarified. But before I could say more, Asha asked, "But why was he a slave?"

I responded quickly, "First, he was enslaved, not a slave." I thought to myself, *That's a really an important point*, but really I was just stalling for time. I knew I was approaching a slippery slope. "Well," I dragged the word out as long as I could to buy myself a few more seconds to think. "Frederick Douglass," I continued, "was black. And black people were enslaved." As the words escaped my lips, I thought, *That, was a gross oversimplification; I'm going to have to unpack that.*

But before I could figure out what to say next, Asha pressed on: "Were you a slave?"

Whoooaaa. Wait. What? I thought to myself. "No, no I wasn't," I answered quickly. "Slavery happened long before I was born." *Good recovery*, I thought, before adding, "But had I been born during slavery, I would have been enslaved too." That hung in the air for a while.

Then Asha said, "Because you're black?" It was more of a statement than a question, but I answered anyway. "Yes, because I'm black."

Then she hit me with a series of questions in rapid succession.

"Would mommy have been a slave?"

"Yes."

"Grandma?"

"Yes."

"Poppa?"

"Yes."

"Uncle Hakeem?"

"Yes."

"Me?"

"Yes, you too."

"Because we're black?" She was asking for final confirmation.

"Yes," I admitted. "Because we're all black."

There was a long pause as we sat staring silently at a frozen image of a young Frederick Douglass on the screen. Then all of sudden—in the most nonchalant voice that you could possibly imagine—my five-year old, African-American daughter declared: "Then I don't want to be black."

Did you hear that? That silence? That was me, at an absolute, complete, and total loss for words as I watched my African-American daughter bounce off the sofa and bound up the stairs, having come to the conclusion—based on the information that I had provided her—that it made no sense whatsoever to be black in this world.

I think often about that conversation with my daughter; about what went wrong. And I realize now that you can't introduce the pain of being black in America without first introducing the beauty of being black in America. The problem that occurred is not that I had a conversation about slavery with my young daughter—it's that I had the wrong conversation with her. I approached it from the wrong angle. Teaching hard history is like teaching the hard sciences; scaffolding is essential. Foundational concepts have to be taught in the early grades so that fundamental principles can be learned in the later grades. The question then is: "How do we do this?"

I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and this is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, a special series from Teaching Tolerance—a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides a detailed look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. In each episode we explore a different topic, walking you through historical concepts, raising questions for discussion, suggesting useful source material and offering practical classroom exercises.

Talking with students about slavery can be emotional and complex. This podcast is a resource for navigating those challenges, so teachers and students can develop a deeper understanding of the history and legacy of American slavery.

Young adult literature allows us to introduce fundamental themes and information about slavery to elementary school students. We can also use these fiction and nonfiction trade books to critically explore slavery in our middle and high school Language Arts classes. In this episode, I talk with John Bickford about the vital role these books can play in teaching hard history. Dr. Bickford is a professor of Social Studies Education who has researched how slavery is presented in works for children and young adults. And he has some valuable suggestions for us on how to capitalize on the strengths as well as the weaknesses of trade books. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy!

I'm really excited to have with us Professor John Bickford, who teaches at Eastern Illinois University and really is a specialist on the kinds of books we use and should be using in the classroom for curriculum, instruction and the like. John, thank you so much for taking time to share your insights and expertise with us.

John H. Bickford: Thanks for having me.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Absolutely. So, we're all familiar—certainly as students, and former students, and teachers—with using textbooks to teach the history of American slavery. But you, in your research and in your teaching, you focus on trade books. Could you explain to us what's the difference between trade books and textbooks?

John H. Bickford: Sure. Sure. Trade books are like biographies, narrative nonfiction, expository texts, historical fiction. It's different books that you'd give kids on a different topic—Harriet Jacobs or Harriet Tubman, narrative nonfiction about the Middle Passage, things like that. Those are trade books. And they're great for teachers because you can really pick the reading level. And say you're doing a topic on the Middle Passage or Harriet Tubman, you can find high, middle, and low books for your particular grade range. There's hundreds on virtually every topic. When you get more into certain historical figures, there may be just a dozen or so, but there's a lot of options.

And unlike a textbook—where there's one narrative, and there's one voice, and it presents it kind of like, you know, Morgan Freeman narrating history—in a way the trade books—where students look at different trade books; they can see what different authors focus on. This is really the historiography that historians engage in. When they look at different interpretations of the same event or era, and they can see how different authors focus on different things. It's more discipline-specific than simply reading a textbook that tries to be but is never comprehensive. Textbooks, they're a mile wide and an inch deep. In trade books, you can delve deeper.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: So what are some of the strengths of some of the best trade books that you have encountered that deal with the topic of American slavery?

John H. Bickford: Oh, in the last 20 years there have been 2,000 books published focusing on slavery, or some aspect of slavery, or a slave, or a slave owner—you know, like Jefferson or Lincoln. There are thousands of options. And it is not just boring biographies. There are some remarkable, remarkable different trade books, historical fiction books and books that are very difficult to categorize within a genre.

It is not just historical comprehension where you're giving kids names and dates. These are stories. And E.L.A.—whether it's in second grade or 12th-grade AP Literature—E.L.A.'s all about stories. And there are some remarkable stories that are stranger and more engaging than any fiction. And there's some historical fiction out there that'll blow your mind, too.

Julius Lester is a remarkable author. And he's perhaps my favorite children's and young adult author. He's written some remarkable books. One of my favorites is *To Be a Slave*, where he had etchings from artists on different slave plantations and different oral histories. And they're juxtaposed in powerful ways, powerful ways. When I used to teach the seventh grade using different excerpts from this book, every year there would be kids drawn to tears looking at some of these images with some of these stories. One that just blew me away was a guy talking about looking for his kids after freedom. He kept saying, "After freedom, I've been looking. I've been looking since freedom. I've been looking since freedom." It was in 1888 … 1888 that that oral history was captured. And he's talking about how he just wandered. He was a vagabond looking for his kids, for 23 years. Oh, it's powerful stuff.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: So what are the commonalities in the books that really treat slavery in a way that can help a teacher teach it accurately and effectively in the classroom? You mentioned Lester as an example. And one of the things that he does really well is give voice to enslaved African Americans who are caught up in this historic and horrific sort of sale of human beings—largest in America. What are some of the other things that he does and that others do in these trade books that really make them essential for teaching in the classroom?

John H. Bickford: Oh, they offer space for exploration into the primary sources. Sometimes they'll show an image, say of a slave poster. Okay? Where it'll say, you can get clues for certain things. And it just shows the image. But now teachers can locate the original Library of Congress document or in the National Archives. And they can explore in more depth. For example, if one of these slave sales or say a runaway advertisement, if it says, and I'm quoting here, "Ran away. A negro girl called Mary. Has a small scar over her eye, a good many teeth missing. The letter A is branded on her cheek." Okay?

Now, this is just an image that's inserted in a trade book. And students may look at it, skip it, you know what I mean? Move forward. But the teacher then has the opportunity to get the original, to print it off so they can look at the details and then to ask, "Look at that small scar. Where do you think she got that? And those missing teeth? Did she get hit, or is this malnutrition? Now, what does 'branded' mean?" And in a way, these trade books hop and skip between secondary source, like a narrative of an event, and the primary sources. And students are able to go back and forth, back and forth between the contemporaneous historical documents, and then what historians know. And that's the secondary narrative. And I love the way Julius Lester especially brings in archival documents right into the narrative. And he adapts it in a way that's very accessible for young students. Because for these kids, if they're 10, if

they're 15 years old, their working memory is all in the 21st century. And to go back 200- some years, it's very difficult.

And these trade book authors, they're specialists when it comes to children's and young adult readers— their reading levels and things like that. And in a way, they're kind of at the convergence between reading and history. If it's a Venn diagram, they're right in the middle there. And they make very difficult topics accessible for young learners.

Another thing that teachers really value is how you can differentiate. One great book isn't going to cover every topic. You can't. You just can't. So you get three or four books and you let the students pick. Teachers know that choice is powerful in the classroom. Students value choice. They want choice: "Look: you can read this book, this book or that book." Or the way teachers can organize it into literacy circles for high, middle and low students' abilities. It's a wonderful way to adapt and to differentiate: using materials that aren't available in a textbook.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Given that there are so many trade books out there to choose from, on the good side, what should teachers be looking for in these books to help them select which books to use in the classroom?

John H. Bickford: Well, first, I always say, "Teachers need to consider the reading level," 'cause that's number one. If the kids can't read it, it's not worth it. So pay attention to the Lexiles and the reading levels, and, you know, that's available on any website that sells books. The second thing is, pick a topic that's engaging because American chattel slavery was three centuries. And you can't cover everything, so pick a topic that's really engaging. And the next thing I'd encourage them to do is to go to the *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery* framework and look at those themes. See what is present within the book, and see what's absent. Because that framework is a wonderful guide for things to pay attention to. You can't cover everything in every class, but in a week or a two-week period, the teacher can pick what's most important.

And as they're looking through the book, they can pay attention to, say, white owners' compassion and even assistance. This is so common in trade books, especially the younger you go. And it's so historically misrepresentative. Here's a direct quote from one book: "One day you'll be free, perhaps in the master's will. I believe my husband will set you free." This is a slave mistress talking to a slave about how "Yeah, you can hope for freedom." That's ridiculous. That's ridiculous.

Or pay attention to your book when it comes to, say, slavery's brutality. Is it actually present? So often you'll hear threats like, "Don't make me slap or punish you." And if that's the most [threatened] that slaves were in this book, then you've got to find ways to insert primary sources to fill this gap. This is a gap that shouldn't be left alone because, otherwise, it makes slavery look like an exchange of free work for food, clothing and shelter. And it wasn't.

Teachers can easily insert that primary source about the runaway slave advertisement to show "This girl got this scar somehow. This girl lost [these] teeth somehow. Her face was branded." I'm not saying that you need to terrify children. I'm not saying that this should be things that you should incorporate, say, with second-graders. But if you look at the framework for *Teaching Hard History*, this gives you guideposts, signs on a highway, things to pay attention to. "Is the family presented as a nuclear family? Or was there a lot of forced family separation? How are the origins of slavery presented?" A lot of times they just skip it, like it's the weather: "Well, winter comes after fall. So you know, slavery happened in North America." That's so false, it's ridiculous.

Slavery was created and maintained by a group of people that benefited tremendously from it. How is that incorporated in the book? Paying attention to these things so that the teacher is aware of what's included, and minimized, and excluded, will help teachers focus on important things that they'd like to include. Now those are common gaps. You could call them misrepresentations by omission. There's also misrepresentation by commission, where they present anomalies as if these are the typical. Like Harriet Tubman—love the lady; I hope she gets on an American bill—but she represents a typical slave's life about as well as September 11th, 2001, represents a typical day in New York City. She was an anomaly.

Take a look at Thomas Jefferson. In nearly all of his trade books, and I've reviewed a hundred on Jefferson, if you were to look in books that were intended for second grade and 12th grade, 20-page books and 200-page books, they all focus on this idea that he was a good master who loved liberty and wanted to give it to everyone. But he just couldn't free his slaves because of the debt that he had or how the American high society was a difficult social structure for him to negotiate. Get serious! He was a slave master. He spoke of liberty, but he only freed the slaves he most likely fathered. These are lies by commission, where they're presenting the anomalies as typical. Bill Gates is not a typical college dropout. Harriet Tubman was not a typical slave. And if only Harriet Tubman's story is told, then it implicitly blames other slaves like, "Why didn't you run away? Why didn't you fight back?" You know what I mean? It presents the anomaly as the typical, and that's wrong. And teachers need to be aware of that. And that's why paying attention

to the *Teaching Hard History* framework—those 10 targets are wonderful goals to think, *Okay, what is included, what's minimized, what's disregarded? How can I integrate these sources?* It guides you to specific primary sources and others to help you fill the gaps, so to speak.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: One approach to dealing with those problematic trade books is simply not to use them, to avoid them completely. But no book is perfect. And of course, any book that you use in a classroom is going to have its own flaws and shortcomings, both—as you pointed out—perhaps by omission and perhaps by commission.

But it seems to me as well that we shouldn't run away from the problematic books. These texts on Thomas Jefferson, for example, can, in fact, be used in the classroom, although they would have to be treated in a particular kind of way. Can you suggest some ways that teachers can use these problematic trade books on American slavery in the classroom itself?

John H. Bickford: Oh yeah, absolutely. Sometimes the worst historical books are the best curricular resources. You know, they're easy targets for kids to knock down. The bad books that are the most historically misrepresentative are also wonderfully evocative classroom curricular resources. And I encourage teachers to spark students' curiosity and elicit their critical thinking and disciplinary literacy in ways that are very cognizant of their children's educational psychology.

We know how kids think and what gets them excited. Young learners are remarkably inquisitive, so we have to give them something to be curious about. Organize your curriculum so it's a puzzle that they can piece together. Or adolescents. We know they are remarkably egocentric and confident. A teenager in a roomful of mathematicians and physicists knows he's the smartest. So find ways to prompt him to act like he's an authority. Find ways to put him in a position where he's acting like an authority figure because that's what adolescents want. Or all kids have a deep sense of fairness, a deep sense of fairness. So find ways to get kids to empathize with folks who are being mistreated and subjugated.

And there's ways that you can do this for second grade, for seventh grade, for 12th grade. There's ways you can do this in a social studies classroom and also in an English, or reading, or Language Arts classroom. The *Teaching Hard History* framework, it's wonderful for teachers. I worry that it would be only adopted in the social studies and history classrooms. But with Common Core focusing on about half of all reading, writing, word study, Language Arts topics should be nonfiction, there is a place for history and social studies in the English Language Arts

curriculum. I can give you some examples with, with say, the elementary grades and middle grades and high school, if you like.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Oh absolutely. Let's start with the elementary grades and work our way up.

John H. Bickford: Sure. The first one is for second- or third-graders. Deborah Hopkinson wrote this book called *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*. In it, there's a young female slave named Clara. And it talks about her experiences on the plantation and the Underground Railroad. I'm going to focus on different close-reading tasks that students don't just seek to answer, but answer again and again, and build their answers as they're going through the reading. And there's also different text-based writing tasks that you can engage the students with when it comes to different forms of narrative writing. The themes that are included are family separation, and the division of labor between field and house slaves, and slaves trying to free themselves through escape. There's also some misrepresentative themes, like the lack of violence or how easy it was to obtain freedom.

Clara makes a quilt based on a map with guidance about locations from other slaves on how to escape to Canada through the Underground Railroad. Now she sneaks off her plantation onto her mama's plantation to set her mama and her baby sister free. From a historian's standpoint, it's remarkably implausible that she escapes so easily; and that she even knew exactly how to go to a boat hidden in the brush along the Ohio River hundreds of miles away; and that she left a quilt on the plantation as a guiding tool for other slaves to escape. There's also no violence, there's just threats of violence.

But it's also very representative in [various] ways. She's tended to by Aunt Rachel who (and I'm quoting here) "wasn't my for-real blood aunt, but she did her best to care for me." So it shows that slave families were separated frequently. Clara also works in a field, but Aunt Rachel works in the big house. And there's some disparities between field slaves and house slaves, and that's brought up in the book. Or how the master joins the pattyrollers, their euphemism for patrollers, to catch escaped slaves. These are very historically representative aspects.

Now, it's a great story. Second- and third-graders will probably be engaged by this story. And there's some good aspects and some bad aspects. Now, what if a teacher were to say, "Okay, I'm going to give you these three or four questions, and we're all going to look at these questions now before you read. And as you're reading, I want you to answer them. And answer them as many times as they come up. Don't give me one answer because you saw 'an answer' on page

two. Give me all the answers that come up. Here, let me give you a couple." And these close-reading questions can guide students' scrutiny of the book.

And if you were to say to these second-graders, "Tell me about Clara's family and friends and other folks in the plantation. What did kids and adults do on the plantation?" Or, "How was Clara—and her enslaved friends—treated? How did she escape? Who helped? What was scary? What was lucky?" Or, "Clara escaped. Did others?" And thinking back, "How did slavery begin?" Or, "Why did it begin?" Now these are for children to answer, and reconsider, and adjust their answers, and add to their answers as they're reading this book. And if you hear them again, you'll see how these questions carefully humanize the enslaved African Americans with language like, "Clara's family, friends and other folks on the plantation." They weren't slaves, but people. And each of these questions target different elements—often minimized elements—of chattel slavery, like the division of labor or treatment and violence, or the sheer luck of escape, or the origins of slavery.

Some of these, there are no answers to, like, "Why and how did slavery begin?" That's not in the trade book, and kids won't find that. That's a wonderful opportunity to insert primary sources. Some of the other ones kids can target, like, "What was lucky and what was scary about escaping?" The idea of finding a boat that was safely hidden 300 miles away. Second-graders can look at that and see that it's implausible. These are wonderful opportunities to add engaging primary source materials, like oral histories, that can illustrate plantation life. Or teachers can integrate other aspects, like a slave whip—just an image of a slave whip—to talk to the kids about different forms of punishment. There's definitely rated-R and -PG examples of primary sources that you probably wouldn't want to give these second-graders. But there are G- and PG-rated versions that can show that slavery was more than just "free work."

One of my favorite primary sources that I would insert—especially with this particular story—it's about a slave named Jordan Anderson. He escaped from his master, I think in one of the Carolinas, and he made it to Canada. And sometime after the Civil War, his master wrote a letter asking, "Would you come back and work for me on my plantation? You can be free." And what you have is Jordan's response. You have Jordan's response to his former master, the guy whose dad owned his dad and whose grandfather owned his grandfather. And statements like, "Even though you shot at me twice when I was running, I'm glad to hear the Union soldiers didn't get you." You know, he's wonderfully audacious in asking his former [slaveholder] for back pay. And he also integrates things about how incredibly precarious his escape was. And that's very different than Clara's escape, which was very serendipitous and lucky.

And it gets into the starvation where he's saying, "I'd rather freeze up here in Canada than scrounge for food down there with you. I'd rather be a man here than your servant there, even if you're giving me your freedom." You know? To show that slavery was far more than just ownership. There was indignity and marginalization and subjugation that came from this. And this primary source is a wonderful little supplement to *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* that you can add into a trade book that can really, really add nuance and detail to the story.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You know, I really love the way you are suggesting that teachers incorporate the primary sources as supplements and complements to fill in gaps and to enhance the reading, especially for the youngest students. At second grade, we often don't think about using these kinds of primary sources at that young age. Would you do something similar for middle school kids?

John H. Bickford: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. And the primary sources aren't perfect, just like the secondary sources aren't perfect. Take Jordan's story or an oral history. So often the slave dialect comes out. One of the things from my own experiences when I was a teacher: kids looking at the dialects and the accents as if they're indicative of ignorance or something silly. And a lot of times children try to present it and talk like that. In a way, it's like literary blackface. And teachers need to be very mindful of that. Whatever they include, teachers need to carefully consider, "Big picture, what's the worst thing that can happen with this?"

And within the middle level, you're probably going to use more text-based sources; you don't need to rely on visual sources near as much, because they're much stronger readers. But teachers need to pay attention with that. When you get into adolescence, bullying is ubiquitous. So we can't give them a victim to mock. We can't find ways to teach about the worst subjugation in American history and allow it to be reason to mock those people that were subjugated.

Within the middle grades, my favorite book is the Julius Lester *Day of Tears: A Novel in Dialogue*. It's remarkable. It's about the largest auction of enslaved African Americans in American history. If I could just give a brief synopsis: Pierce Butler, this enslaver, he had to auction off his chattel slaves to pay for debt accrued from a divorce from his abolitionist wife Frances, or Fanny. Fanny didn't know that he owned a slave plantation. They lived up in Philadelphia. And the book is problematic because the violence is minimized, and it's only to the slave men, not women and children.

There's a lot of positives, too. Family separation was sure obvious. But slaves' literacy and white benevolence—those were very common in the book. There was a white abolitionist store owner

who lived down near them who taught Joe, a slave, to read and later told Joe how to escape. But the book shouldn't be jettisoned because this story gives voice to folks who've history [we] really haven't heard from— especially history students in the middle schools. They haven't heard these stories of these particular folks in this one particular event.

And the primary sources that you can include—the Kemble Collection of the Lenox Library Association has photographs on this plantation, on this plantation, where it just says, "A slave girl." But you can look in the book at the list of the slaves that were sold and wonder, *Which one would this be?* She's probably 12 or 15. We know their ages by their slave sale records. "Who might this be?" And saying to the kids, "This photo is a nameless, enslaved, African-American girl. Look at what she's doing in this image. Based on the story, who do you think this is?" There's lots of different, young, African-American chattel slaves in the story. And students can explore and argue and consider who this image is of. And in a way, that's what historians do. They argue about whose interpretation is right.

This one photograph—and there's dozens in the Kemble Collection at the Lenox Library—this one photograph can spark remarkable discussions. Or, say when it comes to the threats of whipping, one of the more often reproduced photographs is of Gordon, who was an escaped slave who ran to the Union troops during the Civil War, sometime around 1863 or '4. And they took a photograph of his back. And those whip marks weren't just scars. They were raised welts on his back. They looked like worms crawling on his back, they were raised so high. And unlike just a story about a whip or an image of a whip, this one image can very graphically portray to kids what a whip does, what a cat-o'-nine-tails does to the human body.

Or they can read William Lloyd Garrison's article. He called it "The Peculiar Institution," the great slave auction at Savannah. Often textbooks use the phrase "the peculiar institution." This is one of the times where Garrison—one of the great abolitionists and one of the owners of *The Liberator*—where he uses that phrase. Where he's talking about this one particular slave sale. And you can get an outsider's perception. Or you can get the actual journal by Frances Kemble, Fanny Kemble, called *A Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation* [sic]. And you can get actual excerpts from her diary on what it was like to go by boat to this slave island for the first time and to see these people that your husband owned. And how profoundly sad it was for her, and how she knew she had to do something. And how giving extra food or doing small gifts of kindness got rebukes from her husband. And she's writing in her journal about this. It's a wonderful supplement to the story, and it gets students to explore things that they may not have considered.

The trade book is great because it has so many gaps that can be filled with so many evocative primary sources that really spark students' interests. That's what I do for the middle grades.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: And for high school?

John H. Bickford: Oh, man. I'd go into someone big like Lincoln or Jefferson. Everybody knows something about this person. And it's great because people have a lot of prior knowledge about this, or they think they do. But there's a huge gap between what historians, and ordinary citizens, and American teenagers understand about Lincoln. Lincoln's relationship with slavery illustrates this divide more than anything else. He opposed slavery, but he did not believe in equality. Today, he'd be considered a segregationist. He was not a radical abolitionist as an adult—and he sure didn't feel that way as a kid. He wasn't elected on an abolitionist platform. It was one of containment, actually. And he certainly didn't try to start the Civil War. And he certainly didn't do it to abolish slavery. And the Emancipation Proclamation, it didn't free all the slaves. Only those in rebellious states. In reality, African-American slaves contributed mightily and in various ways to their own freedom. But this idea of "Lincoln freed the slaves," it's so common. It's like "Columbus discovered America."

Now, this isn't about historical quibbles like, "Who did the Emancipation Proclamation actually free?" That's just a detail. That's *Jeopardy* stuff. My goal is to get teachers to be aware of what's included, excluded and minimized so that they can use this as a puzzle piece to get kids to examine primary and secondary sources. Not reading to comprehend, but reading to interrogate; reading to scrutinize. Like a detective at a crime scene.

One of the things that I would have the students do is engage in "narrative revision," where they're taking different sections of the trade book and they're picking it apart, sometimes deleting completely misstatements, or adding in citations or endnotes to add details. For high school students, I would say, "Hey, we're going to include lots of different trade books. Some of these are definitely below your reading level. But I want you to be able to pick them apart. After we've explored all these wonderful elements of the *Teaching Hard History* framework, I want you to find where these elements are present in the books, and where they're absent in the books."

And you can see different quotes like, "In New Orleans, young Abraham saw a slave market for the first time. Black slaves in chains were being sold like cattle. Seeing that done to people made Abraham miserable, and he said he would change things when he grew up." The idea of comparing that to certain things that Lincoln did and didn't do. When he was a state senator, he

criticized a New York presidential candidate who voted to enfranchise free African Americans in New York. When Lincoln was president, he tried to negotiate repatriation back to Africa or Central America, or the American West in what is now Oklahoma. Comparing this quote with Lincoln talking with other folks about, "Look, we've got to get 'em out of here. Whites can't live with their former slaves. Where will we put them?"

This idea of the history versus the history that's told in that trade book. Or a quote like Lincoln saying, "I helped pass a law that ended slavery in America and freed all those people." You know, slaves freed themselves in numerous ways. There's this one journal by a white Southern woman called *The Journal of Kate Stone* [sic]. And she wrote it two or three years after the Civil War. And she talks about how incredibly difficult it was well before the Civil War—and especially during the Civil War—to control the slaves. How they were constantly slowing down work. They were constantly breaking equipment. They were constantly stealing. They were constantly doing very agentive acts, where they were acting as agents of their own freedom, to make things harder for their owners, and then to run away and to gain freedom.

And in a way, this journal from a white Southern woman who talks about, "Oh, when will this terrible war be over?" It's a wonderful way to show how slaves freed themselves—but you're not telling the kids that. If you just told the students that and gave them a test question and they answer it, that's historical comprehension. That's not historical thinking.

What I would do is have them engage in what I call "narrative revision." Say you give these 12th-graders or 10th-graders a book intended for fourth grade. And you were to say to everybody, "All right, pick five pages. You can pick any five pages. And now add footnotes and endnotes—and, including citations—about where there's omission and where there's misrepresentation about Lincoln's attitudes as a child, or where they're talking about slaves, slaves, slaves. Do you want to point out, 'These were humans. These were enslaved African Americans, not simply slaves'? Or when they use the phrase 'plantation,' do you want to point out this is a euphemism for 'slave labor camp'"?

The idea of telling these teenagers, "Hey, this adult author got it wrong. This person didn't enslave, but this person got it wrong—what slavery was about. Let's correct this. There's something unjust, not only about slavery, but about presenting slavery in this very innocuous way. Or making Lincoln seem like the hero on high trying to fix everything. What I'd like you to do is revise this narrative. Add to the trade book in certain places where there's gaps. Add citations where the trade book author got it kind of right and then kind of wrong, you know?"

And in a way, this engages students in the close reading and text based writing that's essential within Common Core for English Language Arts teachers, and also the C3 framework. The idea of: "This is how slavery's told. How should it be told?" Does that make sense?

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: That makes a lot of sense. And it also seems to play directly into what you were talking about before, about the sort of psychology of playing into the psychology of the students.

John H. Bickford: And what do teachers want more than anything? They want kids excited about their classroom. They want students engaged, and hooked, and curious. These are wonderful ways to evoke their curiosities and elicit their attention through the puzzle format, or through their sense of fairness, or through their sense of authority. Like, "I know this. This author doesn't, but I do. They were wrong!" And ELA teachers can use that. In a way, it's kind of like fire. Where fire can heat your house or burn it down. Students' attention and their interests is a wonderfully powerful thing in the classroom. And this is a great spark, in my estimation.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Right. This sense of empowering the student to say, "We have these texts and we're supposed to see them as definitive, and yet, based upon what we have been studying in the classroom, you are able to not only pick out and identify the flaws. But now I'm empowering you as the instructor to correct it and to right the wrong—not of the past but of the present and how we are remembering."

John H. Bickford: You got it. Absolutely. And if you've seen Bloom's Taxonomy—his pyramid of critical thinking: comprehension, application, understanding, so to speak. Those are all at the bottom two or three tiers. "Did Lincoln free the slaves? Did the Emancipation Proclamation free slaves in the border states?" That's comprehension or application. It's bottom-level historical thinking, where they're just memorizing something that somebody else said. What I'm encouraging teachers to do is to look at Bloom's Taxonomy as guideposts. This is the educational psychology part. And then look at the *Teaching Hard History*—this is the content part. And kind of mix and match them. How can you get kids to evaluate? How can you get kids to analyze? If analysis is third from the top, and evaluation's the second from the top, the idea of, "Okay, how can we get kids to scrutinize this? 'What do you think?'" Or, "'Where is there something wrong?'" That's *immediate* evaluation.

And then the idea of creation, which is the highest level of Bloom's Taxonomy. Not create anything, but creatively demonstrate a newly generated understanding. Creatively show me your new ideas. It comes across in that narrative revision I was talking about, where they're picking

apart the narrative with citations and endnotes, and they're adding and deleting and crossing out, and then they're justifying why they're doing this. Where it's not just an opinion. They're making a statement. And then they're substantiating it with sources.

Students can easily do this. You're putting them in a position to act like historians. Think about this. A second-grade teacher gives her kids a math problem. "Two plus blank equals seven." That is pre-algebraic thinking. It's analysis and evaluation. "Two plus blank equals seven; find the blank." In a way, those second-graders are engaging in math-level thinking like a mathematician. A kindergarten teacher playing Sink or Float—where they're looking at boats and bottles and shoes in a big tub of water, talking to kids about buoyancy—they're engaging in scientific thinking in age-appropriate ways for kindergartners but much like a scientist would, where they're testing hypotheses.

Our students deserve the same out of history. Our students deserve more than a textbook to be memorized. And the way to do that is to position students to evaluate like historians, to position them to analyze and then creatively show what they know in new and novel ways. I've got a ton of suggestions on different close-reading strategies, or text-based writing strategies that can definitely hook the students. And I'm sure not the only one out there offering these things, but pairing primary sources from the *Teaching Hard History* framework with different trade books that are age-appropriate, and engaging narratives—teachers can do a lot of fun things with that. And the best part about this is, they're engaging their students like historians at the highest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: What should teachers do in preparation for using trade books in the way that you're talking about using them, which I think is phenomenal and really engaging, and should really draw students in? What kind of preparation should teachers do walking into the classroom, so that they can be most effective with using trade books in these ways?

John H. Bickford: The first thing is to explore the *Teaching Hard History* framework. It's exceptional. It covers all the gaps.

And I love how accessible it is. So you can see: "Okay, these are themes that cannot be ignored entirely." And to recognize there are historical gaps in whatever source I take. The diary from Fanny Kemble? It's a great diary, but this is just one lady, a Northerner who just had a year on what we'd call a plantation. It's limiting. So recognizing whatever source you pick, there's going to be gaps. Whatever trade book you have, it's not going to cover everything.

But be aware of those gaps, and compare it to what's in *Teaching Hard History*, because there's some wonderfully engaging and free resources through the National Archives and the Library of Congress. And *Teaching Hard History* directs teachers to these places and others. There's wonderfully free resources where teachers can find ways to fill these gaps.

Now there's also creative ways to pair close reading and text-based writing using these resources. Okay, take the idea of writing a newspaper, a historical fiction newspaper. If you were to say to the kids, "All right, we're gonna look at this event. And let's say that you guys have 1850, which is right after the Fugitive Slave Act. Or 1860, during the election, but before President Lincoln is inaugurated. Or 1859, right after John Brown. And let's say one group of students does it from a Northern perspective, an abolitionist perspective. Say, "All right, you've got Chicago." And somebody else does it from a border state. Pick a town in Kentucky. "You've got that town newspaper because you're a border state."

And now another group's got a group from the Deep South: "Okay, you've got Birmingham. Pick an event or a date. Now write a historical fiction newspaper with this date in mind and with this perspective in mind." And there's a lot of multi-genre writing that's involved here. When it comes to the Common Core, take an op-ed, or a letter to the editor. That's a persuasive essay.

That's one of the Common Core writing standards. Or do a current event. Something that just happened. "There's stuff going on at Harpers Ferry with this guy named John Brown who came from Kansas." That's narrative writing. That's a different form of Common Core writing. Or take political or social commentary. That's an evidentiary argument. All three of these are three very distinct writing styles that are all represented within the Common Core, and English Language Arts teachers know what that's about. And the idea of, say you've got five different groups of five kids in your classroom. And you were to say, "Pick a year, pick a region, get started."

What if you were to say, "You've got the classified ads. What would be sold? What would be sold at this time and place?" And think about how you can incorporate geography and economics into this discussion of history. You know, there's wonderful ways with just this one idea—historical fiction newspapers—to get kids to select and present different perspectives that they created, that represent different years and different events in the history of our country. That's what I would have teachers do.

It's a four-part thing. Identify the gaps in the books that you like—that's the first one. The second one is find different free resources to fill these gaps. You could pay for them with things like Jackdaws, which are $50 a pop for primary sources you can get free at the Library of

Congress. Or you can go to *Teaching Hard History* and Teaching Tolerance and they can offer you these. That's the second step: Find wonderfully free resources that can fill these gaps.

And then the third one, there's lots of creative ways to pair close reading and text-based writing with the primary and secondary sources. And the last one would be to find ways to use their educational psychology against them. Find ways to puzzle students. This idea of confusion is a wonderful thing. Confusion, in a way, is the antecedent to discovery. Confusion is a powerful thing. When kids are confused, they can be engaged. Not confused to the point of tears. Nobody's saying make them cry, but find ways to confuse or intrigue them. Just like a puzzle. The goal of a puzzle isn't to look at the picture at the end. It's to piece these together. It's the same thing with these different historical resources that you can fit together in a puzzle.

Find ways to evoke their curiosity and to spark their interest. And with adolescents, find ways to think, *The author was wrong. I know something the author doesn't know*. Or find ways to spark kids' deep sense of fairness. Kids want to empathize. They feel mistreatment very powerfully, 'cause they've all been bullied in some ways. So, respond to their sense of fairness. That's the fourth step, when it comes to how should teachers approach this. And this is just my own suggestions, and I'm sure not the only one out there doing this. There's some great authors out there doing neat stuff, too.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Confusion is the antecedent to discovery.

John H. Bickford: It is!

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You're absolutely right. I mean, it just hits home. And this idea, you're right. Process means everything in terms of where we want to begin and where we want to end. Let me ask you one more question.

John H. Bickford: Sure.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: We often hear—sometimes they make headline news—of teachers doing things with regard to how they teach American slavery, problematically.

John H. Bickford: Oh, I know!

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: In other words, it's not just sort of the book they use, but it's what they do in the classroom itself. So in thinking about these trade books, what are some things that teachers shouldn't do, or should absolutely avoid when using them in the ways that we want to use them in the classroom?

John H. Bickford: Yeah, and I get this. Every year I get sent different articles from former students about teachers doing ridiculous things, like reducing the Underground Railroad to a game of tag on the schoolyard, where one group's the pattyrollers, and one group's the escaped slaves, and home base is Canada. I mean, that's ridiculous. Or making the kids sit underneath their desk as they're reading stories about the Middle Passage—as if this is going to create the Middle Passage.

So often I see teachers try to engage in a "brown eyes, blue eyes" kind of thing. Jane Elliott in the 1960s after Martin Luther King died, made this popular with teachers: privileged the blue-eyed kids and then marginalized the brown-eyed kids one day, and then flipped it the next. And it was really powerful. And I know that in Riceville, Iowa, a very small lily-white town, I'm sure it worked out well. But you can't re create slavery. You can make people feel discriminated against, but you can't re-create hundreds of years of subjugation where that dude owned my dad, and he will own my child and there is virtually no hope unless I do something. So I wouldn't encourage teachers to try to role-play it out.

I think teachers need to, first, think about the Hippocratic Oath: do no harm. If you're a teacher and there's 24 white kids and two black kids, don't find a way to say, "Hey, you want to be Frederick Douglass for this role-play?" Do no harm. Another thing: you definitely want kids to creatively demonstrate what they know, but be careful with the creative writing. Creative writing can be very beneficial because it puts students in a role as if they were this historical figure. But what about the kid that asks, "Can I be a slave catcher?" Or the kid who wants to be the plantation owner's child who takes pride in his father's brutality?

Teachers should carefully consider subjugation. And the role of the aggressor, or the abuser—it should never be taken or even toyed with. Suffering should not be trivialized. And I think teachers need to ask themselves this when it comes to the language that's used: "Is suffering trivialized when it comes to this?" Or when it comes to reading oral histories. I used to say this to my students all the time: "If you're reading it and you don't understand it, try to pronounce it exactly as it's written. Pronounce it like it's written phonetically, and you'll probably piece it together. But don't you dare laugh. We don't make fun of people from Boston who don't drop their Rs, okay? And they certainly weren't picked on the way these slaves were. And we're not going to engage in literary blackface." But find ways that suffering isn't trivialized, and pay darn careful attention to that.

And pick your words carefully, because so often in some of the oral histories, the n-word is present. And slaves refer to themselves that way. Teachers use their own judgment, but I mean that should not be a word that students read and talk about. That should not be a word, in my mind, that students can even read aloud. Do you know what I mean? Find different ways to humanize these folks, because they were forgotten and mistreated for their entire lives. Teachers need to be very cognizant of suffering and abuse in their curriculum because it can get away from them.

I encourage teachers to be very, very mindful of what they do and the implications of what they do. Because sometimes the best intentions don't mean anything if you're playing tag on the playground. You know what I mean?

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: No, absolutely. I mean we need to be mindful of the guardrails.

John H. Bickford: Yeah.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: And that if we want to get from point A to point B, there are certain restrictions just because of the world in which we live and the cultural baggage that students are bringing with them into the classroom that they don't leave at the front door. So these are really helpful reminders I think, of what we should do and also what we shouldn't do.

John H. Bickford: Yeah, yeah. I agree.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: John, thank you so much. This has really been fantastic. You have provided us with tremendous, not only insights and observations, but practical ways of taking this material, using trade books to teach the hard history of American slavery, both accurately and effectively in the classroom. Thank you so much.

John H. Bickford: Thank you for your time.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: John H. Bickford is an Associate Professor of Middle Level Education at Eastern Illinois University and a former middle school social studies teacher. He has published numerous articles on history literacy and the pedagogy of social studies education, including "Examining the Representation of Slavery within Children's Literature," with co-author Cynthia W. Rich.

Teaching Hard History is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a collection of essays called

Understanding and Teaching American Slavery. Throughout this series, we have featured scholars to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that award-winning collection.

We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials, which are available at tolerance.org/podcasts. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units and a detailed framework for teaching the history of American slavery. Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center—providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find these online at Tolerance.org.

Thanks to Dr. Bickford for sharing his insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shea Shackelford, with production assistance from Russell Gragg. Kate Shuster is the project manager. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zabriskie.

If you like what we're doing, please let your friends and colleagues know. And tell us what you think on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We always appreciate the feedback. I'm Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, Associate Professor of History at The Ohio State University and your host for *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- PBS American Experience, *The Abolitionists* (film)
- Teaching Hard History, Frederick Douglass Describes Enslavers
- Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
- Julius Lester, *To Be a Slave*
- Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* (runaway slave ads)
- Deborah Hopkinson, *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*
- Jordan Anderson, To My Old Master
- Lydia Maria Child, *The Freedmen's Book*
- Julius Lester, *Day of Tears: A Novel in Dialogue*
- Lenox Library, Kemble Collection
- William Lloyd Garrison, The Liberator (abolitionist newspaper)
- William Lloyd Garrison, Inaugural Editorial
- Frances Anne Kemble, *A Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation*
- Kate Stone, *Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone*
- Benjamin Bloom, Taxonomy of Educational Objectives
- Teaching Tolerance, John Brown's Speech to the Court at His Trial
- PBS Frontline, The Brown Eyes and Blue Eyes Exercise (Jane Elliot)

Episode 18: Wrap up: Questions from the Classroom

Historian Bethany Jay returns – answering questions from educators across the country. Host Hasan Kwame Jeffries and the co-editor of Understanding and Teaching American Slavery confront teacher anxieties and counter misconceptions in our season finale.

Resources

- Teaching Tolerance, What Learning About Slavery Can Teach Us About Ourselves
- Teaching Tolerance, The Journal of a Slaver (Middle Passage)
- Teaching Tolerance, Teaching Hard History With Primary Sources

Bethany Jay

- History, Salem State University
- Bethany Jay and Cynthia Lynn Lyerly (editors), *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*
- Teaching Hard History Podcast, Season 1 - Episode 1: Slavery & the Civil War, Part 1
- Teaching Hard History Podcast, Season 1 - Episode 2: : Slavery & the Civil War, Part 2

Transcript

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: So are you ready?

Bethany Jay: I'm ready. Let's go.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: All right. Let's do this.

This is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, a special series from Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. This podcast provides a detailed look at how to teach important aspects of the history of American slavery. And this is the final episode of our first season.

I'm your host, Hasan Kwame Jeffries, and today I'm joined by Bethany Jay. She and Cynthia Lynn Lyerly co-edited the anthology *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. Throughout this series, we have featured scholars from that collection, and we invited Bethany back to help us wrap things up. We're going to spend most of this episode answering questions we've received from educators around the country. I'll see you on the other side. Enjoy.

I'm very excited to welcome Bethany Jayback to the podcast. Bethany Jay, what's going on? How are you?

Bethany Jay: I'm doing well. I'm excited to be here talking with you about this stuff.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: We have wrapped up this season; we're coming to the end. And so there's really no better way to end this first season of the podcast than to have you with me here answering questions from our listeners.

Bethany Jay: Thank you for having me.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You know, I wondered what was it that led you and Cynthia to get together to write *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*, the book from the University of Wisconsin Press.

Bethany Jay: There are two big reasons. And the first is really a deep belief that we need to be talking about this history in our classrooms, and that that's just not happening at this point. And in teaching slavery for about 10 years—and Cynthia has been at it a little bit longer than that, what we realize is that when we talked to educators about teaching slavery, there was always this sense that slavery was something that they were going to teach at one point in the curriculum. And we realized that that was causing people a lot of anxiety because they were imagining this moment where you've been kind of gliding along on a very nice narrative of U.S. history, and then, boom! Here's two weeks of slavery that comes out of nowhere. And so we really created the book to change that approach.

I always say that I begin my American History courses saying there were Africans in Virginia before there were Pilgrims in Massachusetts. So we're going to talk about African-American history, and we're going to talk about slavery, and we're going to talk about it throughout our course. And if we talk about slavery across the time and landscape of American history, if we include slavery as part of the American story right from its very start, then we start to build capacity in our students to understand the subject, to deal with its complexities, and the hard conversations don't come out of nowhere and shock your students.

Instead, they're part of a sort of larger and deeper understanding of the course and the subject from the start. So I think the problem that we're seeing as we've talked to educators throughout this entire process is that teachers feel anxious because they feel ill-equipped to teach slavery, and they feel ill-equipped to teach slavery across that sort of landscape of American history.

And this is natural because, for a large part, today's teachers have been trained by the same system that we're trying to change. So *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery* was created to provide content strategies and resources that will help teachers to include slavery across American history curriculum and the Teaching Hard History project picks right up on that as well.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Do you see ways of incorporating the material, the approaches that are in the book, as well as with the framework and with the podcast, into existing curriculum? Or does it require a total revamp of what exists? I mean, can teachers plug and play? And if so, how does that work?

Bethany Jay: The way we created the book, and the frameworks that are on the Teaching Hard History website as well, was really to address that exact issue. Because I think teachers are also thinking, *I'm going to have to completely reinvent the wheel in order to incorporate this kind of history*, into their classrooms. And that's just not the case.

Because slavery is so integral to every part of the American history curriculum, you don't need to completely rethink your curriculum. So, how we made the frameworks and how we made the book was to say, "Look, here are the subjects that teachers are going to teach. When you teach immigration into the British North American colonies, talk about the Pilgrims in Massachusetts, you can talk about the Quakers in Pennsylvania, but also talk about the forced migration of Africans as part of the Middle Passage. When you teach the Revolution, right? Do your George Washington and your Bunker Hill, and all of the things that you're used to doing, but also talk about African-American soldiers. Talk about those who—who joined the British [at] a chance for freedom, right? Talk about the *Book of Negroes* in New York. That you can plug and play certain examples.

I think what teachers find, is that when they start doing that work of switching out an example, of being more mindful of how slavery is represented in their curriculum, it does end up changing the narrative that they're telling, but it's not necessarily a top-down approach of saying, "Look, I need to completely rethink American history." It's something that happens organically as you start paying attention to these different sides of the story.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You know, that really addresses a number of questions that we received. One from Aretha Brown on Facebook and that was, you know, "Before I could even teach this material, I have to sort of get my administration on board. Do you have any thoughts

or suggestions for how to get principals and assistant principals and the decision-makers within school buildings on board with the importance of teaching hard history, not in just a day or two, but really fully involving it and integrating it into the curriculum?"

Bethany Jay: I think one of the things that we've seen is the need for professional development around these kinds of topics. That teachers need to have time to talk with one another about strategies that they think will or will not work in their particular districts. They need time to sort of think about resources together as educators who are working in a particular community. You know, going to administration to support things like faculty learning communities or team teaching opportunities seems like a good way to sort of get support behind that. But of course, every district is different, right? And that's not going to work everywhere. I will say that I think the approach that we were just talking about, of really saying, "Look, this is part of American history. So when I'm teaching American history, if I'm just teaching this as part of the curriculum in the frameworks that I'm being asked to teach, then it just becomes a part of my classroom." Are you really asking to do anything different than you're doing already? Does that make sense?

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: No, it does. It makes a lot of sense. It's somewhat about how we frame it.

Bethany Jay: Right.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: How teachers frame what they are doing in the classroom to get buy-in from those who are not in the classroom to actually hear what they would be doing. You know, Bethany, that actually ties into a question that we received from Liz Kleinrock via Instagram. And she asks, "How do you recommend engaging families as part of this learning process when they might be against teaching about enslavement in the classroom?" And that raised two issues for me because that's really two different constituencies, I think, and I'd love to get your thoughts on both of these. Historically, slavery has been taught poorly in the classrooms. So for parents of children of color, particularly African-American parents or parents of African Americans, there is a good reason to be hesitant and skeptical when you hear that slavery is suddenly going to be taught, and there can be pushback from them about this.

But then you have white parents, we see this coming up in Texas most recently, who are resistant to talking about slavery in the classroom at all, because they don't want their children to feel white guilt and shame and all these other things. So both groups, they both wind up

saying, “Don’t teach it.” Obviously, we need to teach it. So how would you address those two different constituencies that are approaching the issue from two different angles?

Bethany Jay: Those are tough questions, right? I mean, they’re—and they are in some place, in some ways, place-specific, right? And teachers need to know the communities that they’re teaching in. But the way I’ve really dealt with this is by using the advice that Steven Oliver offered in both that sort of chapter in *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery* and his episode here, which is, with families of black students who may be hesitant to have their children learning about slavery from a white woman like myself, the idea is to be clear about one’s intentions. I make it very clear to my students that I’m talking about this history because I care deeply about it. That we’re going to be examining it because it’s an integral part of understanding our common history. And I also make it clear that I know a lot about the subject that I’m talking about. And so that gains my students’ trust pretty quickly.

And then with those white parents who are hesitant to have their students learn about it, because of either white guilt or hostility or whatever it might be, making our intentions clear as well. You know, one of the things that Steven says in the episode is—is starting some of these conversations with the idea that none of us in this room are responsible for the history that we’re talking about, no matter what your background. What we’re trying to do is learn from it, right? And create a better future together. So being really clear about the intentions, not laying any guilt on anybody, I think can help to create a productive foundation for these kinds of discussions.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You know, I think one of the issues that African-American parents would have with teaching this subject, is how do you teach the brutality of it in a way that is sensitive to the young people in the room? We had a question from Melissa Aguedelo from Twitter, who expressed her worry that focusing on the brutality of slavery would de-emphasize the fact that enslaved Africans built this country. “What’s the right balance” she goes on to say, “between talking about and teaching about the humanity and contribution of black folk who are enslaved, to teaching about the sheer horror of the institution itself?”

Bethany Jay: I thought that your conversation with Izzy Anderson on the “Resistance” episode with Kenneth Greenberg was one of the best examples of a real teacher dealing with that exact question. Feeling like she was in a difficult position, teaching a majority African-American student population in the Deep South, and really sort of grappling with this question of, How do I balance? Making sure that these kids are hearing this history somewhere. And if I want to

make sure they're hearing it, then it's going to have to be in my classroom. But also thinking, *I don't want to just beat them down*. And that question of resistance, and the way that she addressed sort of, "We're going to talk about the horrors of slavery, but we're also going to talk about the fact that, through all of this, enslaved people built cultures and lives and families," right? And persisted. So it's resistance in the face of slavery. And I think that's such an important balance to strike. It's a hard balance to strike, but it's an important one for our students to hear in the classroom.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You know, I was thinking about a conversation with my oldest daughter when she was just five years old. I'm telling her and talking to her about the brutalities of slavery. And then her response was like, "Well heck, I don't want to be black," right? Like just, "I can't. That's too much for me." And I realized then that I had to strike just in that conversation, the balance between black beauty, black humanity and black pain. Because if you emphasize one over the other and you don't strike that balance, you either get pushback, "I don't want to have anything to do with it," or you don't provide the adequate context for understanding what was really an amazing struggle in human history. So it really is a fine line to walk, but it's so critical that we actually do it.

You know, we received a question from Erin Annis on Instagram, who asks, "How do we counter the quote unquote 'No one thought it was wrong' question with regard to people owning other people?" Which reminds me of a very common question that occurs at historic sites. Our friends at Montpelier, James Madison's residence, if you ask them, "What's one of the most common questions that you get when you talk about James Madison as a person who claimed ownership over 100 enslaved African Americans?" And they'll say, "Well, wasn't he a good master?"

Bethany Jay: Mm-hmm.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Or, "He was just a man of his times." Where does that come from? And what is the proper response to that?

Bethany Jay: I think it comes from this deep desire to have American history be completely celebratory and progressive.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Hmm.

Bethany Jay: I once heard Colonial Williamsburg's early tours being, "America started off great and it's been getting greater ever since." And I think it comes from the desire to sort of

maintain that narrative and to maintain our heroes. Mount Vernon had a memorial to enslaved people placed there in the 1920s and another one in the 1980s, before they ever really started connecting the fact that those enslaved people lived on Mount Vernon meant that George Washington owned enslaved people. Somehow, those two narratives worked on parallel paths. They never intersected. And I think that's the way we've been dealing with this history for a long time. Montpelier is the best example of bringing those two narratives together.

I think it's still a sort of battle in many of our public history sites, and it's still a battle in our classrooms. And when my students bring up a kind of "men of their time" argument: "Well, we can't judge them, right, by our standards today," my response is, "No, but we can judge them by the standards of their day." And I usually bring up two examples. I bring up George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette, who were in a continuous dialogue about slavery, you know, from the end of the Revolutionary War until Washington's death, with the Marquis de Lafayette being a committed abolitionist and in favor of equal rights, and sort of dragging Washington behind him in some ways, right, into these conversations. I also talk about Thomas Jefferson and his mentor, George Wythe. Wythe, who was an enslaver, becomes an abolitionist of sorts after the Revolutionary War, ends up freeing his enslaved people and advocating for equal rights. Jefferson takes a very different path after the Revolution.

And so these are men who are in communication with each other. They're not just living at the same time. They're friends with one another. And we see that there are counterexamples that were present for Thomas Jefferson and for George Washington. And they each chose to sort of deal with those conversations and those examples in different ways.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: And these are very much, as you point out, conscious decisions that they're making to participate and to engage in the ownership of people.

Bethany Jay: Mm-hmm.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: And at the same time, they also have a conscious awareness, right? So not only are they engaged in dialogue in the defense of their actions, but we see sometimes in the writings of Madison, "Yeah, we're gonna pay for this down the road," you know? I mean, so they're not walking through the world with blinders. They know this is fundamentally wrong. And yet …

Bethany Jay: It's like Jefferson's "wolf by the ears." Yeah.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Exactly. Very much so. I mean, they know they are handling fire. And yet they can't put it down, partly because, I imagine, not only the personal stake, the personal financial investment that they have in it, that some people will acknowledge like, "Oh well, it's hard to sort of put down what makes you money." But then you can't also separate that from the—their deep belief in white supremacy. So you know, in theory, they know it's wrong. But they're like, "Look, James Madison. He's a third-generation enslaver. This is his life and connected with that is this deep belief in white supremacy." And it's hard to separate yourself from that because you don't want to, because of what you believe.

Bethany Jay: And it is. It's sort of, like you're saying, very conscious ignorance. And I remember Paul Finkelman talks about an example of Jefferson receiving all Benjamin Banneker's work on astronomy, and he dismisses it saying, 'Well, that must be the work of his white mentor.'"

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Hmm.

Bethany Jay: Jefferson's smarter than that, right? We would think he would be better than that. Even when presented with examples of achievement, he sticks to his sort of white supremacist guns.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: I think you're absolutely right. That has more to do with how people want to remember the past than how the past actually was.

Bethany Jay: Mm-hmm.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: I'm very much of the mind when thinking about that question that there is no such thing as a good master. I mean, the system itself is so inhumane and so corrupt, that even if you are less violent than somebody else, you still have to, by your very—the very nature of you participating in that system designed to exploit the labor of other people, the cornerstone of which is violence, you yourself have to be corrupted. You cannot engage, participate in any small way in that evil system and not be corrupted by it. Look, in my mind, the only good master's a dead master. But that's a story—this is why this is the final episode of this podcast.

Thinking about other questions that came up. One of the things that struck me were questions that teachers asked about the initial questions that students ask coming in. We all know that students don't enter classrooms as empty vessels. Even if they haven't spent a lot of time in

formal instruction on American slavery, they still picked up things here and there. And Kinette Richards, who's a middle school psychologist, shared with us a common question that she hears from middle school teachers and that is, "Why did Europeans enslave African people?" In other words, why were Africans the ones who wind up as the central labor force in this system of involuntary labor? It seems to me that that really opens up this bigger question of, "Hey, we got to talk about sort of the global Atlantic slave trade at some point. But how do you respond to that in a way that a student could understand?"

Bethany Jay: It's a good thing it's not a hard question, right? So I've used this in my classrooms as an opportunity to teach students about historical interpretation and really think about, you know, how different historians have studied the trans-Atlantic slave trade and its causes and the enslavement of African people. And my methodology for it is actually pretty, pretty specific in that I use a collection, David Northrup's *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, where he's got excerpts of all of the big thinkers about why were Africans enslaved. You know, you've got Williams, Jordan, Eltis, Davis in there. I have my students read those portions, and then together as a class, we dissect them. What are their arguments? What are their evidence? What are the ways that they agree or disagree with one another? And then together as a class, we come up with a sort of compiled list. Taking from all of those different sources, the various sort of economic, cultural and even coincidental reasons why African people were enslaved. We talk about the fact that Europeans were enslaved at different times as well.

And it really sort of works well, because you're dealing with these very difficult questions of race, and you're dealing with them head-on, you're dealing with them sort of at the beginning of the course, right, of—of your discussions, but you're doing it in the context of historical arguments, right? Evidence about medieval thinking about race. The way that you're having these conversations is very grounded in the sources that you're looking at.

Where teachers get in trouble sometimes is asking their students, "Can you think of any justifications for slavery? Can you think of why African people might be enslaved?" That's not what we're asking students to do. What we're asking students to do is say, "What have been the reasons historians found for why Africans were enslaved?" And I've found that that's gotten us through some very productive conversations. I've done that work with world history students who were not majors in history—you know, freshman kids, diverse classrooms—and in every instance, it's worked. To treat kids like adults. They can handle these sources, they can handle these difficult arguments, but work them through it as a classroom.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: It seems that part of what you're saying is, and this goes back to what you were sharing at the very opening of this episode, is that you just can't drop in on American slavery, you know, halfway through a semester.

Bethany Jay: Mm-hmm.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Or just pick it up in, you know, the 1810s, 1820s, or before the Civil War. But you really have to put American slavery in a global context. And that begins starting sort of in the colonial era, and before it really even touches these shores. Is that—is that right?

Bethany Jay: That's what I try to do. And I try to also talk about Africa before Africa was embroiled in the transatlantic slave trade as well, right? Thinking about the great civilizations of Africa. We think about Europe and why Europeans and the English, you know, left England, and we—we reach back to Europe to understand immigration to British North America. Let's reach back to Africa so that we can understand what was going on there before British North American migration.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Yeah, one of the things I think that does is that it helps humanize those people who will become enslaved.

Bethany Jay: Mm-hmm.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: In other words, we think of slavery as an eternal condition when we drop off the element of "Africa before." These are people who are coming from a people. Their existence doesn't begin solely with this status of slave. I think that is critically important.

Bethany Jay: The other piece of that that I often hear is, "Well, didn't Africans enslave other Africans?" right?

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Ah. Of course.

Bethany Jay: "Weren't Africans the ones selling enslaved people?" And that just speaks to our sort of larger misunderstanding of—of Africa as sort of one monolithic place, and not a vast continent filled with different peoples who may or may not like one another, right? But—but thinking about how does the trans-Atlantic slave trade change Africa? Like yes, slavery does exist in Africa before the Portuguese start buying people to work in, you know, the Cape Verde Islands. But the incredible demand for enslaved labor in the West Indies and South America and North America fundamentally changes slavery in Africa. So yes, African people engage in selling

other African people to the slave trade, but that doesn't mean that, you know, we all get to wash our hands of culpability. We need to understand the systems—right?—that operated within that slave trade and how the slave trade changed Africa fundamentally.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Right. And that European involvement. I mean in other words, there's systems of involuntary servitude around the world.

Bethany Jay: Mm-hmm.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: But I think it's also something that is explicitly unique about what evolves and becomes the Atlantic slave trade. And part of that is the dehumanization of those who find themselves caught up in it. I mean, literally being cast out of the human family in some ways, and that almost eternal status, or the attempt to make it an eternal status of the inheritance through birth of someone's condition, this social condition.

So I think that's also part of an important way to talk about the conversation. What do these different forms of involuntary servitude look like, and what are the distinctions that we can draw between the two? Because it's not just simply oh, taking one person from one system and putting them in another. It's a transformation, moving one to the other. And then the impact that that has on some of the demands for a population of involuntary labor.

Bethany Jay: Right, right. How do you talk with students about the fact that slavery ends, but this oppression continues. And thinking about the creation of those systems, right? These are vast, massive systems, and the culture that supports them—right?—the underlying assumptions and pseudo-science that supports them, doesn't go away with the 13th Amendment. That's what a—part of what makes all of this so hard to talk about, is that we're still in many ways living with the structures that supported slavery.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Right.

Bethany Jay: With the assumptions and stereotypes that supported slavery.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Do you think that that's part of the reasons for the hostility? For teaching it? That if you look too deeply, there is a concern and fear on the part of some, that it becomes an indictment. It becomes an implication that we then have to, if we're being honest with ourselves, do a full assessment of who we are and where we are as a nation and as a people?

Bethany Jay: I do. I do think so. And I think it goes back to wanting to look at the founders as good slaveholders, right? Of—of wanting to sort of believe the—the celebratory version of American history, instead of really grappling with the nation's more complete history. And when we're talking about things that persist to today. So it's also talking about making a change today, you know? Understanding slavery and its impact kind of compels us to want to do something more today. And I think that's also threatening or dangerous in certain instances to people.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You know, we had a question from Joe Schmidt along these lines. He asked: "Many students see history and slavery as something that happened in the past,"—as we were just talking about. "And something that is over and finished. A terrible thing that's done." And so he asked, "What are some strategies for guiding students to seeing the connections between slavery and modern-day events? Sort of the contemporary implications, or maybe even the legacies of slavery today."

Bethany Jay: I've had terrific conversations with my students about things like, you know, mass incarceration of African-American men. And we start talking about that with Reconstruction, and it naturally happens, right? You talk about things like vagrancy laws, and students naturally make these connections. Convict labor. Again, they're not—they're not as sheltered as we think they are. They know more than we give them credit for, and they'll make connections. At some point we were talking about stereotypes of African-American men in slavery. And one of my students made the connection to the way that Michael Brown was described by police. And it was in a very sort of mixed classroom, probably about 60 percent African-American kids, 40 percent white kids. And my white students were like, their mind was blown by this. And my African-American students were like, "Yeah. This is—this is every day—right?—that we're navigating the different ways that people see us, as we go through our world."

And it was really this very kind of profound moment. I found that that has happened naturally with what my students are bringing into the classroom, as much as what I'm trying to sort of allow them to see or get them to see.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: As you shared that story about Michael Brown, and Michael Brown of course was a young man who was killed in Ferguson, Missouri. 2014. I was thinking about Trayvon Martin and the Stand Your Ground bill. Trayvon Martin of course, a young man who was shot by a self-deputized sort of local—I don't even know what you would call him. Wannabe police officer. But his actions, in combination with Stand Your Ground gun laws, are very

reminiscent—and trying to police and patrol black bodies by non-law enforcement are very reminiscent, if you look at slave codes in South Carolina in 1740 coming out of the Stono Rebellion and revise where they literally say all white men are empowered to police black bodies, to police black folk, whether enslaved or free. You know, can carry arms, can stop, can detain. And if people refuse, they can kill. So there literally are echoes today of behavior that was institutionalized in law back then.

Bethany Jay: One of the misperceptions that I think many of my students have come to class with, is the idea that white privilege means that all white people's lives are easy. And really just thinking, no, white privilege is partly just the freedom from those kinds of assumptions that people—right?—white people don't need to worry about being shot for wearing a hoodie in the wrong neighborhood, or getting pulled over for driving through an affluent neighborhood, for the most part. White privilege is just not carrying the racial baggage of 250 years of American history with you everywhere you go.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: And I think right along those lines, I mean whiteness bestows the privilege of not having to remember this history.

Bethany Jay: Mm-hmm.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: I mean, you can forget it and your life can go on just fine. But for African Americans or people of color, they cannot afford not to think about their relationship as citizens to law enforcement. To do so runs the risk of putting them in serious physical harm and physical jeopardy. It also doesn't help you understand the world in which you are in. It's a privilege that African Americans, descendants of enslaved folk, just simply don't have. They cannot not remember the past, because it's still alive and present today.

Bethany Jay: That reminds me, just last night I was talking with my—my history preparation students. My students are going to be teachers, and we were talking about teaching the students who are in your classroom, right? Teaching the kids who are in front of you, and how do you reach them? And one of the texts that we were talking about was Christopher Emdin's book, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood ...and the Rest of Y'all Too*. I don't know if you're familiar with it. It's a great book.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Bethany Jay: But he quotes the poet Adrienne Rich, and he says, "The poet Adrienne Rich affirmed this sense of negation when she observed that, quote, 'When somebody with the authority of a teacher, say, describes a world and you're not in it, there is this moment of psychic disequilibrium. As if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing.'" And that just hit home with me and sort of tying a lot of this together. Our responsibility as teachers to reflect the world that our students are living in, to make sure that our students are reflected in the history that we're talking about in our classrooms. And even if you don't teach in a classroom with a ton of African-American kids, to make all of your students aware of our shared past. And it just seemed to sort of bring a lot of these ideas together for me.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You know, we had a couple of questions from educators who teach in overwhelmingly or exclusively white environments, and the question was very much along those lines: "How do I convince my students that this history and this aspect of this history, learning about the African-American freedom struggle and slavery, so not just the economics of the institution, but really understanding the full complexity of the entire system, including the lives of black folk, why should they know about that? Why should they care?" And it seems that that begins to speak to the importance of that. But are there some strategies for, not just the college level who you can lay something out and that really becomes clear to them, but even for younger white students in nondiverse, racially or ethnically diverse environments, to get them on board with this history?

Bethany Jay: Just making this history our history. The sense that somehow George Washington is a part of our shared past, but Harriet Tubman isn't, right? Or thinking that learning about the average experience of a Revolutionary War soldier is part of our common past, but the average experience of an enslaved person is not our common past, is creating a very artificial understanding of who built this country and the factors that have gone into this country, right? I mean, if most of us look at our past, we're not a direct line to George Washington, right? You know, most of us come from backgrounds of diverse, average people who don't necessarily show up in history books. So you know, talking about the great varieties of people who have built the United States is reflecting all of our past, much more than just talking about the great white men who did things. I don't know if that—does that make sense?

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: No, it does. It does. I mean, what you're sharing with us, what you're telling us is this is American history, right? Like, this is the history of all of us. And in some ways when you study African Americans, folk on the ground, folk who were enslaved, folks whose

names we remember, folks whose names we never will but that were the labor force behind the growth and development of this nation, that that is fundamentally American. That we can dive deep and study and explore the African-American experience, but to do so is also to peek at, to look at the American experience from a very important angle. Because the two, in fact, can't be separated at all.

Bethany Jay: Right. They're completely intertwined.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: This is the last episode. Last episode, first season. Second season will be about *Teaching Hard History: The Civil Rights Movement*. What are some of the legacies of slavery that we should be paying attention to as educators as we move out of the era of slavery into the post-emancipation era and the era of freedom?

Bethany Jay: I think part of what we need to pay attention to is that the idea of the post-emancipation era is, in some ways, false. That slavery as we know, continues for many people, just in a different form. And that even for those people who live as free people, that there's a lot of structural inequality that exists. And that that's not just confined to the South. My students in Massachusetts like to think that we are free from the racial baggage that the South carries. And again, when you pay attention to African-American history across the United States and across chronology, you realize that's not the case. So paying attention to structural inequality, paying attention to all of the ways that slavery persists in the absence of, you know, one person's ability to own another. That we see all of the different ways that forced labor persists. Maybe "in the absence of slavery" is a better way to put that.

I was saying earlier, one of the hard things about teaching slavery is we want to draw a line at 1865 and say it's over. But really, when we're talking about the end of slavery, and when we're talking about sort of real progress towards racial equality, we're not talking about 1865. We're talking about 1965, right? That's a much shorter history that we're dealing with.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: You know, one of the things that I think we do too much in the classroom, is we drop slavery just as you said, in 1865. Or we drop the discussion of it.

Bethany Jay: Mm-hmm.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: And in essence, slavery is a way of ordering society. And once the legal protections for that are removed, that does not mean that the desire to order society in a similarly hierarchical way disappears. And I think that's important for us to understand as we

move out as educators into that new era, that we do not just suddenly set aside the desire of white people in America to control black labor, and to regulate black behavior for the purposes of enriching themselves. And as a result of that, are looking back at what they had done during slavery to figure out, or to inform sort of actions, behaviors, practices and policies in this post-emancipation, post-slavery moment.

Bethany Jay: How do we accomplish that in the absence of—of legal slavery, right? In the form it existed before? And, you know, when we talk about the civil rights movement, it doesn't make any sense if we drop slavery in 1865.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Mm-hmm.

Bethany Jay: And that's another thing that I think we do. If we pick up and we begin talking about slavery in 1820 or '30—right?—is where I think most curriculum frameworks want you to kind of bring in a narrative of slavery, so that you can deal with it as part of the sectional crisis and you can end it with the Civil War. You know, if we do that, then slavery doesn't make much sense. And in the same way, if all of the sudden African-American people reemerge in the 1950s to be reintegrated into a society, but we haven't dealt with segregation, we haven't dealt with Jim Crow, we haven't dealt with the oppression of that era, then what context do our students have to understand civil rights, right? In some ways we diminish the accomplishments of civil rights by not discussing the contexts that they came out of.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: And that is so true. And when we get them in the classroom and they're looking at us all confused, we can't then look at them and be like, "What's the problem?" right? Because we haven't done right by them, just as you said, in terms of providing them with the context that they need to understand these important moments in American history where dramatic changes and shifts are occurring. Like, we cannot go from Frederick Douglass to Abraham Lincoln to Martin Luther King to Barack Obama. That line, without understanding and explaining not only the context of the times in which they lived, but what was happening in those moments in between, explains how you can link them. But in the absence of that, it just makes no sense whatsoever.

Bethany Jay: Right. I—my best friend is a kindergarten teacher, and she's always wondering, *How do I teach Martin Luther King to kindergartners who have no context for what King's fighting*, you know? And it's part of her curriculum framework. She always finds she's backing

up and doing a lot of—a lot of work, you know, to teach Martin Luther King, you know, in January. Yeah.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: No, it's the same thing with, you know, by comparison, if you just drop Harriet Tubman on a student even at a young age, without actually introducing what slavery was first?

Bethany Jay: Mm-hmm.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Then it's like, "Well, what was her point?" Like, "What was she doing?" It's like, "Oh, she's this great person of resistance. Example of resistance." But you've never actually explained what is she resisting.

Bethany Jay: Resisting. Yup.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: And it's the same thing with sort of Dr. King, right? He's just upset over some signs? Like, "No you have to really dig deep."

Bethany Jay: Mm-hmm.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: So I think there are real parallels between the pedagogical challenges that we face in teaching the hard history of American slavery and the hard history of the civil rights movement. And so I don't think you can separate the two, both in terms of helping to understand one and the other, but then also understanding the best ways to teach it accurately and effectively.

Bethany Jay: I completely agree. Yeah. And I guess within the sort of large context of all of the sudden these big things coming out of nowhere, the fact that slavery is the cause of the Civil War makes more sense when you've understood the broad sort of cultural, political and economic context of slavery. And if in your classroom, you haven't raised the issue of slavery before you talk about the Civil War, then slavery as the cause of the Civil War doesn't make much sense, right? Understanding the Confederacy as a nation that was built to preserve slavery doesn't make sense without the longer context of the social, political, cultural, economic benefits that slavery brought to the southern part of the United States.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: One of the principal legacies, if not the principal legacy of slavery, is white supremacy. The beliefs that undergird the entire system. The justification that rationalized the enslavement of one people by another people. And when emancipation ends, white

supremacy doesn't suddenly evaporate. It still serves as the guiding principle, the guiding ideological belief in America. And it's not just confined to Southerners or former slaveholders, it's a nationwide national belief. And so when we look at discriminatory practices and behaviors in a post-emancipation period in the 20th century, early and later and even today, there are direct connections that we can make to a belief in white supremacy.

Jim Crow is undergirded by white supremacy. Lynching, the use of racial terror to prop up the Jim Crow system, is undergirded by white supremacy. Some of the justifications for mass incarceration and the criminalization of black behavior that we see in the early 20th century, just as we see in the early 21st century, are guided and informed by a belief in white supremacy. And so there really is no discontinuation, unfortunately, between slavery and freedom. When we think about the links between the central ideology that undergird it all, which is this deep and abiding belief in white supremacy that goes back to the very founding and beginning of the nation.

Bethany Jay: And in fact, I think our understanding of the Civil War, both as historians and as Americans as it's been represented in popular culture throughout the better part of the 20th century, our understanding of the Civil War has been one that was built to reinforce white supremacy as well, right? The *Gone with the Wind* narrative of the Old South, *The Littlest Rebel* and Shirley Temple, those are all white supremacist narratives of the Civil War as well. So we think of the sort of cultural resonance of these ideas.

I think one of the things that's really impacting the way that teachers are approaching this subject is the kind of "gotcha" culture that we're in. Where you feel like anything that you say can be live tweeted, when you're having a fight with your spouse on an airplane, or there's a snapshot that shows up on you, and everybody is afraid of sort of going viral. And I think that's a lot of what's kind of driving some of the hesitance to teach this history in our classrooms, is that teachers really are afraid that they're going to say something and they're going to end up, you know, a national news story. And there's just a couple of things that I want to sort of address within that fear, because I completely understand it. But we need to sort of keep those viral examples in context. There are thousands and thousands of teachers who are doing this work every day, and the vast, vast majority of those teachers are not ending up shared on Twitter and Facebook and with an NPR story about them.

Teaching slavery does not automatically land you in the news, and it doesn't automatically land you in your principal's office explaining things. But—right?—you do want to be sure that you are

teaching this topic in a responsible way, and the way to do that is to just familiarize yourself with the content, be intentional with the resources that you're bringing in to your students. Make sure that your discussions are grounded in the historical facts and resources that you have on hand. And just start doing it, because what you'll find is that a lot of that anxiety is anxiety that is understandable but misplaced.

Overwhelmingly, the only emotion I get from my students about this is anger that they haven't heard it before. Anger that, "Why am I just hearing this now in my college classroom?" This is so important, and it's righteous kind of anger that they come with. It's not anger at me for talking to them about something they don't want to hear. They want to hear this history. And again, we are fooling ourselves if we think that they're not already aware of a lot of what we think we're tap dancing around in our classroom.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: And I think the reward for that is not only a more informed student, a more knowledgeable student, about both the past and the present like we have been talking about, but it's also a more engaged student.

Bethany Jay: Mm-hmm.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: When you begin to unravel this critical component about, not only early American history but also modern American history, that helps explain so much, students' eyes, once they get over the fact that they hadn't been taught this before, their eyes just open up and they become sponges that want to absorb more and more and more. Not only, "If I haven't learned this, what else about the American past and American slavery don't I know? What else about American race relations and the African-American experience don't I know?" But, "What else about America don't I know? What else has been held back from me because of people's political leanings or social sensibilities?"

And I think as educators, as teachers, like, that's what we want. We want our students to be hungry and yearning to learn. And when you take a subject like American slavery that so many people have danced around their entire lives, and you just make it plain for them and accessible and lay out these fundamental truths about the American past, they get fired up to learn more. And there's nothing better than having a student in your classroom or a class as a whole that's just yearning for more of what you have to give them.

Bethany Jay: It's true. And I think teachers think that they need to be the ones telling their students about slavery, and what's great about the resources that are compiled with *Teaching*

Hard History and with *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*, is that they point you to the resources so that students can discover this history for themselves as well, right? And I think that takes some of the anxiety off, too. Let me send them to the sources. If they want to understand the slave trade, let me send them to the sources on the domestic or the international slave trade. That becomes key in my classroom.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: And in many ways that, as you pointed out, that not only relieves some of the burden from you as an instructor, but that sense of learning on their own, that sense of self-discovery is empowering for the students who then will turn around—and this has been my experience, who will then want to learn more from me. It's like, "Okay, I learned this here. So what else? Point me in another direction. Help me—help—help explain this to me." I think that is so critical, because sometimes we can get in our own way, and we also have to deal with the biases that students will bring with them into the classroom. For whatever reason. And so sometimes we as instructors have to get out of the way and let the students, as you said, point them in the right direction so they can have a sense of self-discovery, and then come in and offer the assistance and guidance for further learning and further discovery, and deeper dives into this history.

Bethany Jay: Yeah, I like to think of it as guiding discovery, as opposed to imparting the history.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Bethany, I have really enjoyed hearing your thoughts and answers to these questions. This has just really been a fantastic, thoughtful and thought-provoking way to wrap up this first season of *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. So thank you so much, not only for bookending this season for us, starting us off with those great two episodes on the Civil War, and wrapping up with answering these questions that have come up over the course of the season, but thanks especially for really laying the foundation for this podcast with your co-edited collection, [*Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*]. So thank you so much, Bethany.

Bethany Jay: Thanks so much for having me, Hasan. And thank you for the work that you've done throughout this season to give an additional layer of context and meaning to so much of the scholarship through these podcast episodes. I really appreciate it, and always learn from you. It's always a pleasure talking to you.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Thank you so much.

Bethany Jay: Oh, no worries. You, too.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Since you started us off, how about you join me in closing us out?

Bethany Jay: That sounds great.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Bethany Jayis an associate professor of history at Salem State University, where she teaches courses on 19th-century American history, African-American history, and history education. She is also co-editor of the informative book that this series is based on.

Bethany Jay: *Teaching Hard History* is a podcast from Teaching Tolerance, with special thanks to the University of Wisconsin Press. They're the publishers of a collection of essays called *Understanding and Teaching American Slavery*. Throughout this series we have featured scholars to talk about material from a chapter they authored in that award-winning collection.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: We've also adapted their recommendations into a set of teaching materials, which are available at tolerance.org/podcasts. These materials include over 100 primary sources, sample units and a detailed framework for teaching the history of American slavery.

Bethany Jay: Teaching Tolerance is a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, providing free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. You can also find these online at tolerance.org.

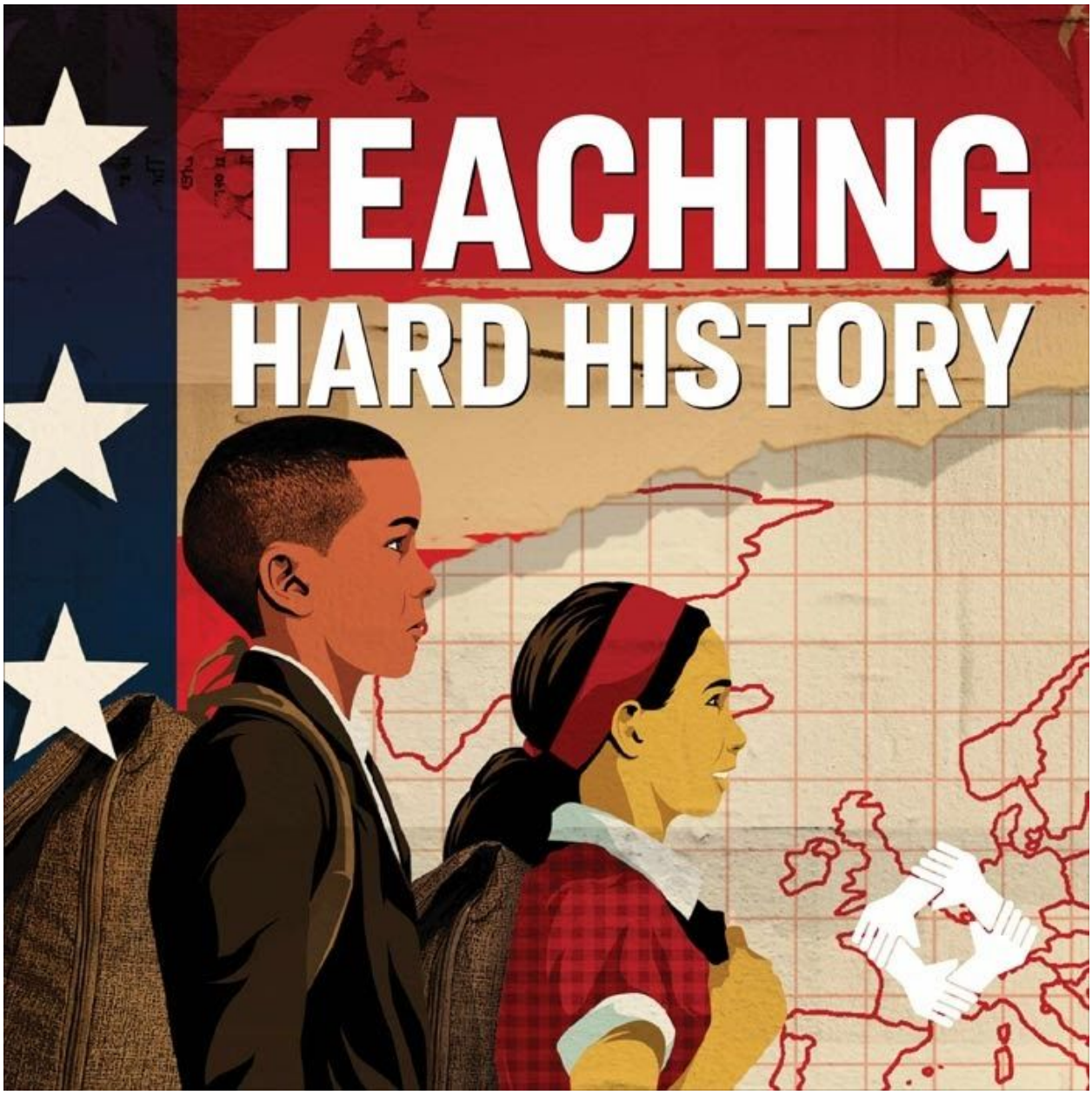
Hasan Kwame Jeffries: Thank you, Dr. Jay, for sharing your insights with us. This podcast was produced by Shea Shackelford with production assistance from Russell Gragg. Kate Shuster is the project manager. Our theme song is "Kerr's Negro Jig" by the Carolina Chocolate Drops, who graciously let us use it for this series. Additional music is by Chris Zabriskie.

Bethany Jay: And if you like what we're doing, please let your friends and colleagues know. And tell us what you think on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We always appreciate the feedback.

Hasan Kwame Jeffries: I'm Hasan Kwame Jeffries, associate professor of history at The Ohio State University, and your host for *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*.

References

- Teaching Tolerance, Frameworks
- Teaching Hard History Podcast, Season 1 - Episode 6: Resistance Means More Than Rebellion (Kenneth Greenberg)
- Teaching Hard History Podcast, Season 1 - Episode 12: Confronting Hard History at Montpelier
- Teaching Hard History Podcast, Season 1 - Episode 13: Drop Us A Line – Your Questions. Your Stories. Your Episode! (Izzy Anderson)
- James Madison's Montpelier, The Mere Distinction of Colour (exhibition)
- David Northrup, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*
- Christopher Emdin, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y'all Too*



Teaching Hard History Podcasts

Season 1: American Slavery

Season 2: American Slavery (and Indigenous Enslavement)

Season 3: The Civil Rights Movement

Subscribe: Apple Podcasts | Google Music | Spotify | RSS | Help

TEACHING TOLERANCE