

How We Remember

The Struggle Over Slavery in Public Spaces

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This lesson is part of a [suite of activities developed to accompany How the Word Is Passed](#) by a Zinn Education Project curriculum collective, which includes the authors listed above.

IN THE PROLOGUE TO HIS BOOK *HOW THE Word Is Passed*, Clint Smith writes that “The echo of enslavement is everywhere.” *How the Word Is Passed* captures a few of these echoes and tries to make sense of them for our lives today. Smith shows how in different sites, slavery is remembered, slavery is distorted, and slavery is forgotten.

He travels to Thomas Jefferson’s home of Monticello, where, during Jefferson’s life at any given time, he enslaved 130 people; to the Whitney Plantation outside of New Orleans, near the largest revolt of enslaved people prior to the Civil War; to Louisiana’s Angola State Prison, site of a former plantation; to the Confederate burial ground of Blandford Cemetery in Petersburg, Virginia; to Galveston Island, home of the first Juneteenth commemoration, where the first non-Native enslaved person arrived in 1528; to New York City, which on the eve of the American Revolution had the highest proportion of enslaved Black people to Europeans in the North; to Gorée Island in Senegal, a center of the trade in enslaved Africans from the 16th century to 1848. Finally, Smith returns to his own family, whose ancestors were enslaved, to make sense of the intimate, close-to-home impact of the “crime that is still unfolding.”

In his research for *How the Word Is Passed*, Clint Smith spoke with people who “are, formally or informally, public historians who carry with them a piece of this country’s collective memory.” This activity asks students to imagine themselves as “public historians,” trying to draw on an

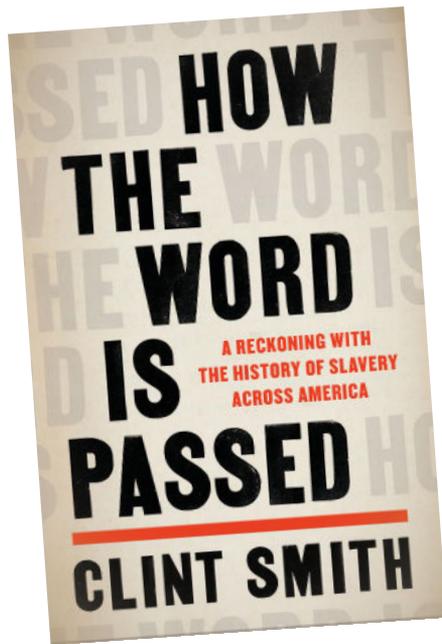


Statue on Whitney Plantation in Edgard, Louisiana.

Elsa Hahne/Whitney Plantation

infinitely painful history to help us make sense of our society today. How should we “teach” about the meaning of each of these places in a way that educates people about the truth of U.S. history? And about what that history demands of us now? Those are the questions students confront here.

In the lesson, students receive facts about each of the locations in *How the Word Is Passed* and imagine how they might commemorate what occurred there. If time allows, students can supplement these fact sheets with their own research. Each instruction sheet for students encourages them to think beyond traditional museum



remembrances — although museums themselves needn't be the staid, neutrality-feigning sites of yesteryear. As Smith points out in the book's Epilogue, the National Museum of African American History and Culture “recognizes that Blackness is not peripheral to the American project; it is the foundation upon which the country is built.” That is the sensibility we hope students will bring to each of their commemoration proposals.

Suggested Procedure

1. Ask students to think about times in their lives when they've encountered history lessons in public spaces and build a list of their examples on a Google Doc, whiteboard, or chart paper. Students' response to the phrase “history lessons in public spaces” might be, “Huh?” So you'll want to have some local examples to get the ball rolling. These might include statues, markers, walking tours, and museum exhibits; you might ask students to recall from their elementary school years any field trips to places of historic significance. Encourage students to think broadly: Have they seen or listened to the soundtrack of *Hamilton*? Think about Hollywood films on historical events or individuals. The goal of creating this list is to provide students lots of starter ideas for the form their commemoration might take.

2. Tell the class, “Today we're going to think about how the history of enslavement should be remembered. You and a group of collaborators will design your own commemoration of a real place where slavery left its mark. You can build off of or combine some of the commemorations we brainstormed together or design something entirely new.” Hand out the “How We Remember” Assignment Sheet to each student and review it together.
3. Divide students into seven groups. Provide each group member the factsheet for their site.
 - Monticello, Virginia.
 - The Whitney Plantation, Louisiana.
 - Angola State Prison, Louisiana.
 - Blandford Cemetery, Virginia.
 - Galveston Island, Texas.
 - New York City.
 - Gorée Island in Senegal.
4. Encourage students to read their fact sheets aloud in their small group, to mark up the fact sheet as they read, and to “talk back” to the text: ask questions, register strong emotions, and make connections to what they've studied, as well as to things going on now. Remind them that since they will design a commemoration of this site, they'll need to think about what's worth remembering about this site and why.
5. Circulate from group to group as students read and discuss. If necessary, you might pause their discussions and ask students to return to the “How We Remember” assignment sheet and, specifically, to the questions included in #1.
 - What is most important to teach your audience? What information, what ideas, do you want to communicate?
 - What does the history of enslavement that occurred at this site have to teach us today?
 - Who is your audience?



Cabin for enslaved people at Whitney Plantation in Edgard, Louisiana.

6. Once it seems that groups have broadly agreed on answers, ask students to begin work on designing their commemoration. The “product” that groups submit at the end of this process can’t be easily standardized, since their designs will be unique and variable. But the idea here is to create a kind of blueprint — something that communicates the shape, look, feel, and content of their design. Some designs might be mostly visual, sketching a memorial or monument, with explanations of the choices made. Some designs might be more text-heavy, if, for example, students design a tour guide’s script for a particular place. Encourage students to feel free to be creative and to consider how the overall design can be created with the participation of *all* group members. Does one person want to sketch what the space will look like? Do a couple of others want to work on the text that will appear on the monument? Does someone else want to design the information pamphlet visitors will receive? What about a poem to open the exhibit? Encourage students to be as specific, as concrete, as possible.
7. If time allows, students can do additional research to supplement the information included in their handouts. As they look in the library or online, they may find material about how these sites are commemorated in real life. But that doesn’t mean that these commemorations are “right.” Students may well have ideas and perspectives that go beyond the original memorial, or go in a different direction entirely.
8. Give students a chance to share their designs with one another in several rounds of a gallery walk and talk. Have half the group stay with their design to explain to “visitors” what they’re looking at, what they hope to communicate, what experience they want for visitors, and answer questions, while the other half circulates and engages with other designs. There is no correct number of rotations, but the more of these students do, the more they will learn about each site and will be able to consider how their peers make sense of this history for today.
9. Ask students to return to their “home” groups. As a class, discuss what students learned about these different sites. What did they notice about the different designs and how they each, and collectively, addressed the history of slavery?

Some possible questions:

- What moved you or startled you about anything you learned from these commemorations?
- Did you learn something that you were surprised you did not know about? Why do you think this was missing from your education up to this point?
- Which place really sticks with you? Why?
- What patterns did you notice in what groups wanted to communicate about the history of slavery? Were there important points that everyone wanted to make about the history of enslavement?
- If any of these memorials or commemorations were enacted, are there groups that would feel threatened or who might oppose them? Why?

10. Finally, give students an opportunity to learn about the way enslavement is actually handled and remembered — or forgotten — in the real places that they learned about. If you have access to copies of Clint Smith’s book, have students read the relevant chapter. Alternatively, you might curate some key excerpts from Smith’s book for each group. If you do not have access to the book, you could have students consult online resources to learn about each place and how it is commemorated. In a written reflection, ask students to compare their designs with the real commemorations.

Some possible questions:

- How did your group’s design address the history of slavery at the particular site they commemorated? Was that similar or different from how the history is commemorated at that site?
- Who did your group imagine to be the main audience for your commemoration? Was that a similar or different audience as the real place?
- What was the most important feeling you wanted to evoke with your commemoration? What feelings did you have as you engaged with the real place?
- Final thoughts: Is the real place you learned about doing a good job of communicating the history of enslavement? If yes, explain why you think so. If no, explain what needs to change and why.

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How We Remember

Assignment Sheet

In small groups, each of you will be assigned a site where slavery is remembered today. All of these places are in the United States, except for one, which is in the African country of Senegal. Work from your own knowledge about slavery and from the factsheet provided to design a way to “teach” others about the history of slavery at your site. Be as detailed as you possibly can be. Here are some things to consider and some choices:

1. Before designing your commemoration, decide what is most important to teach your audience. What information, what ideas, do you want to communicate? What does the history of enslavement that occurred at this site have to teach us today? Think also about your audience. You might have more than one audience in mind, but is there any one group of people, in particular, that would be especially important to reach?
2. Your choice of how to commemorate your site will depend on the particular site and what occurred there. You might choose a tour as a way to commemorate events that occurred at your site. You might choose some kind of memorial, display, exhibit, or monument. You might choose to initiate a gathering of people to commemorate what happened here — perhaps even a demonstration, with calls for what still needs to change. In your commemorations, are there demands that you want to make of local schools or school districts, cities, states, or the federal government? Come up with the exact language you propose to commemorate these sites.
3. In one place that Clint Smith writes about in *How the Word Is Passed*, he describes how one way that the history was commemorated was as a “project of community education. Older kids teaching younger kids. Kids teaching adults, and vice versa. Learning models that break down and break out of our traditional conceptions of what education should look like.” You might consider how you could incorporate this “project of community education” into the place that you are commemorating/teaching about.

Facts on Thomas Jefferson, Slavery, and Monticello

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- Monticello was the main residence of Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States. Jefferson began designing Monticello after he inherited land from his father at age 26. It is located outside Charlottesville, Virginia. It was a plantation of originally 5,000 acres.
- “At any given time at Monticello there were approximately 130 enslaved people, far outnumbering Jefferson, his family, and the paid white workers.” (p. 9)
- Jefferson “was one of the founding fathers who fought for their own freedom while keeping their boots on the necks of hundreds of others.” (p. 9)
- “I thought...of how in 1827, after Jefferson’s death, Edward and Jane Gillette [people Jefferson had enslaved] along with nine of their children and 12 of their grandchildren were sold. How David Hern along with his 34 surviving children and grandchildren were sold. How Joseph Fossett was freed in Jefferson’s will, but his wife, Edith and seven of their children were sold. How these families were separated to posthumously pay off Jefferson’s debts.” (p. 14)
- “I thought of all the love that had been present at this plantation, and I thought too of all the pain.” (p. 14)
- Over the course of Jefferson’s life, he sold more than 100 people. (p. 17)
- According to Walter Johnson in *Soul by Soul*, “Of the two thirds of a million interstate sales [of enslaved people] made by the traders in the decades before the Civil War, 25 percent involved the destruction of a first marriage and 50 percent destroyed a nuclear family — many of these separating children under the age of 13 from their parents. Nearly all of them involved the dissolution of a previously existing community.” (p. 15)
- “Jefferson believed himself to be a benevolent slave owner, but...Jefferson understood, as well, the particular economic benefits of keeping husbands and wives together, noting that ‘a child raised every two years is of more profit than the crop of the best laboring man.’” (p. 18)
- “Around 1810, James Hubbard, an enslaved man who worked in Monticello’s nail factory, ran away. He had done so once before, about five years prior, and was caught shortly after his escape.... When Hubbard was returned, Jefferson wrote, ‘I had him severely flogged in the presence of his old companions.’” (pp. 18–19)
- “‘To give liberty,’ [Jefferson] wrote in a letter in 1789, ‘or rather, to abandon persons whose habits have been formed in slavery is like abandoning children.’” (p. 25)

- Jefferson wrote that Black people “are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind.” (p. 27)
- “There is no story of Monticello — there is no story of Thomas Jefferson — without understanding Sally Hemings. We have no letters or documentation written by Sally (birth name was likely Sarah) Hemings and nothing written by Jefferson about her. There are no photographs of her... And yet the story of Sally Hemings sits at the center of Monticello.” Jefferson began “a nearly four-decade sexual involvement with Sally, one that started when she was around 16 and Jefferson was in his mid-40s.” (p. 29–30)
- A recent visitor to Monticello: “From the moment [Jefferson] got up in the morning till the moment he went to bed at night, he’s relying on slave labor for every aspect.” (p. 33)
- “...Monticello is not singularly defined by Jefferson. It could not have existed without the enslaved people who lived there, who had families there, who built a community there that spanned generations. As a public servant, Jefferson spent more than half his life away from his plantation, while many of the hundreds of people enslaved at Monticello stayed on that land for the entirety of their lives. As much as this land illuminates the contradictions of Jefferson’s legacy, it also serves as a reminder of the hundreds of Black people who made a home there. Their lives are also worthy of remembrance, and commemoration.” (p. 50)

Facts on the Whitney Plantation

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- The Whitney Plantation is located in Wallace, Louisiana, about an hour west of New Orleans. The Whitney Plantation is the site of the largest rebellion of enslaved people in U.S. history.
- “On a rainy southern Louisiana evening in January 1811, Charles Deslondes, a mixed-race slave driver, led this massive armed rebellion. Composed of hundreds of people, Deslonde’s army advanced along the serpentine path of southern Louisiana’s River Road to New Orleans with a military discipline that surprised many of their adversaries. It is remarkable to consider that hundreds of enslaved people, who came from different countries, with different native languages and different tribal affiliations, were able to organize themselves as effectively as they did.” (p. 53)
- “*Mathurin. Cook. Gilbert. Amar. Lindor. Joseph. Dagobert. Komina. Hippolite. Charles.* These were the leaders of the largest slave rebellion in American history.” (p. 52–53)
- The 1811 rebellion was inspired by the Haitian revolution in 1803. “...the enslaved population in Haiti rose up against the French and in 1804 founded what became the first Black-led republic in the world.” (p. 53). The story of this rebellion spread throughout plantations across the South and served as a model for what was possible.
- “Unlike other rebellions, like Nat Turner’s or John Brown’s, the 1811 slave revolt has received little attention in the collective public memory.” (p. 55)
- In response to the rebellion, slaveholders in Louisiana invested in slave patrols to watch enslaved people in their quarters with heightened surveillance and violence. To protect Louisiana, the United States realized it had to defend the institution of slavery and granted Louisiana official statehood. “Louisiana remained a state until 1861, when it seceded from the Union.” (p. 55)
- It is important to note that the 1811 rebellion took place after the United States enacted a law to prohibit the transatlantic slave trade. “Taking effect in 1808, during Thomas Jefferson’s presidency, the United States officially prohibited the transatlantic slave trade. While the transatlantic slave trade did not come to a sudden halt, it became a criminal offense to capture and import Africans to the United States. Some ships, however, continued to smuggle in persons from West Africa and the Caribbean. Half a century later, in 1860, the number of enslaved people in Louisiana had multiplied 16-fold, with over 331,000 enslaved. Much of the increase was due to the domestic explosion of the enslaved population as a result of the internal slave trade, though some of the increase was because of the continued illegal slave trade.” (p. 65–66)
- “. . . not only the physical power of the person enacting violence against them but also the power of the state, the power of patriarchy, the power of a society. These acts were not only permissible, but legally encouraged. There were laws stating that a crime committed by a white person against

a Black person was, in fact, not a crime at all.” (p. 68)

- Yvonne Holden, the director of operations for the Whitney Plantation told Smith: “There’s so many misconceptions about slavery.... People don’t really consider the *children* who were brought over, and the children who were born into this system, and the way to get people to let their guard down when they come here is being confronted with the reality of slavery, and the reality of slavery is child enslavement.” (p. 62)
- “Children sustained and embodied the institution of slavery, especially after the formal end of the transatlantic slave trade in 1808. By 1860, there were nearly four million enslaved people, 57 percent of whom were under the age of 20.” (p. 62)
- “But much of the community still suffers from the intergenerational poverty that plagues many formerly enslaved communities more than a century and a half after emancipation. Poverty is common in Wallace, Louisiana, the area encompassing the Whitney where over 90 percent of the population is Black. Wallace is also one of a series of majority-Black towns lining the Mississippi River from Baton Rouge to New Orleans that — as a result of their proximity to petrochemical plants — form what is known as Cancer Alley. Neighborhoods here have some of the highest cancer risks in the country, and chemical emissions from these plants are linked to cardiovascular, respiratory, and developmental ailments.” (p. 57–58)
- Clint Smith points out that “there are no photos or stories of the people who once lived on the [Whitney] plantation itself.” (p. 63) In your group, consider how you will bring to life the humanity and lives of the enslaved.
- Holden, noted during the tour of the plantation with Smith: “But also, we can’t continue to view enslaved people only through the lens of what happened to them. ... We have to talk about who they were, we have to talk about their resiliency, we have to talk about their resistance, we have to talk about their strength, their determination, and the fact that they passed down legacies. Maybe they’re not physical legacies but, they passed down legacies to generations, and those legacies are living well inside of African Americans today.” (p. 71–72)

Facts on Angola, Louisiana

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- "... [T]he land upon which [the Louisiana State Penitentiary at] Angola is built had once been a plantation owned by Isaac Franklin, a man whose business, Franklin & Armfield, became one of the largest slave trading firms in the United States. The plantation produced 3,100 bales of cotton a year, a yield higher than most other plantations in the South." (p. 95) In 1840, Isaac Franklin had 333 enslaved men, women, and children working on his plantation. A large number of the people enslaved were under the age of 10.
- An article by Edward E. Baptist in *The American Historical Review* described the treatment of enslaved women by Isaac Franklin and the firm of Franklin & Armfield. The article says that "systematic rape and sexual abuse of women were part of the normal practice ... and the normal practice of many of their planter customers as well." Franklin joked about the sexual abuse of women in his letters.
- After the Civil War, Samuel Lawrence James bought Angola from Isaac Franklin's widow. James "was a former slave-trading major in the Confederate Army." He "agreed to a 21-year lease with the state to purchase access to all of the state's prisoners as long as he was able to keep all of the profits. James subsequently subcontracted the prisoners to labor camps where — as Roger had told us — they worked on levees and railroads in horrific conditions. A prisoner under James' lease had a greater chance of dying than an enslaved person did." (p. 95)
- "But following the Civil War, white Democrats across the South sought to subvert the rights of newly freed slaves by imposing a new system of control: convict leasing. The 13th Amendment barred involuntary servitude, 'except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.' The convict leasing system allowed Black people to be imprisoned for years under spurious charges and be 'rented' out to companies. These people and institutions, whose businesses had once been built on the labor of enslaved people, experienced a vacuum in the years following abolition. But with convict leasing, imprisoned Black men could now be legally forced to provide that labor for their railroads, their plantations, and their businesses." (p. 87)
- "As one man told the National Conference of Charities and Correction in 1883, 'Before the war, we owned the negroes. If a man had a good negro, he could afford to take care of him: if he was sick get a doctor. He might even put gold plugs in his teeth. But these convicts: we don't own 'em. One dies, get another.'" (p. 87)
- "In Louisiana, in order to ensure that there were more convictions, and thus more prisoners available for labor, in 1880 the state legislature shifted the requirement for juries from unanimous to non-unanimous. This way courts could allow a few Black people to serve on the jury — in accordance with their new rights as freed persons — but by requiring only nine of the 12 jurors

to convict someone of a crime, they effectively subverted any political power Black people, or those sympathetic to them, might otherwise have had. Those responsible for the change did not equivocate in their rationale. The purpose of the 1898 convention, in which the new law officially became part of the Louisiana Constitution, was, as summarized by the chairman of the convention's judiciary committee, 'to establish the supremacy of the white race.' A non-unanimous jury policy would invariably make it easier to convict people — and these convictions were a key part of Louisiana's convict leasing system." (pp. 87–88)

- Today, 71 percent of the people serving life sentences at Angola State Prison are Black, and three-quarters of the total prison population are Black. The average sentence at Angola is 87 years. More than 70 percent of the people currently incarcerated at Angola will die in prison.
- "Monroe Green, who arrived at Angola in 1957, was explicit: 'I saw a big farm. There were a lot of men in the fields. The living conditions were like on those slave ships coming over here, with the quarters filled with slaves.'" (p. 104)
- "If in Germany today there were a prison built on top of a former concentration camp, and that prison disproportionately incarcerated Jewish people, it would rightly provoke outrage throughout the world." (p. 101)
- At Angola, prison authorities ordered prisoners who worked in the welding shop to make the bed where death row inmates would be executed — without telling them that's what they were making. When the men found out, they refused. According to one former inmate, this resistance led to a "standstill" at the prison for three days.
- In *How the Word Is Passed*, Clint Smith talks to Norris Henderson, who spent almost 30 years imprisoned at Angola. Henderson remembers his experience working in the Angola cotton fields: "Man ... it's like knowing your history, knowing what our folks went through, and all of a sudden, having one of these cotton sacks in your hand.' He cupped his hand and then closed his fingers around the bag we were both imagining in his grasp. His knuckles were dark and cracked, and when he reopened his hand he rubbed the inside of his palm with his thumb. 'I think that's the biggest challenge more than anything else,' he continued, 'Not the work but just the mindset of being there and knowing you're kind of reliving history, in a sense. I'm going through the very same thing that folks fought and died for, so I wouldn't have to go through it, and here it is all over again.'" (p. 117)

Facts on Blandford Cemetery, Petersburg, Virginia

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- The oldest marked grave at Blandford Cemetery is from 1702, but it is best known as the gravesite for about 30,000 Confederate soldiers, one of the largest mass graves of Confederate soldiers in the South. Of the 30,000 buried there, only about 2,200 are identified, because the artillery was so devastating that “Sometimes all that was left was a leg or an arm or a head with no body attached.” (p. 120) Soldiers had no standard identification like “dog tags” or ID bands. There is a stone arch at the entrance to the cemetery reading, “Our Confederate Heroes.”
- Although veterans of every U.S. war are buried at Blandford, the largest is the mass grave of Confederate soldiers.
- What is known as the “Siege of Petersburg” was a series of battles around Petersburg, Virginia, fought between June 1864 and April 1865. Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant ordered trenches built to cut off the supply lines for the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, and Gen. Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia. The Confederate defeat there led to the final Confederate surrender on April 9, 1865, at Appomattox, Virginia.
- Robert E. Lee was the commander of the Confederate army during the Civil War. He is often remembered fondly in U.S. history textbooks. One widely used book, *The Americans*, published by Holt McDougal, claims that although he “believed slavery was evil, Lee nonetheless fought for the Confederacy out of loyalty to his beloved home state of Virginia.” The textbook says that Lee was “modest rather than vain,” and during the Civil War, he exhibited “bravery, honesty, integrity, and compassion.”
- Clint Smith: “As a slave owner, Lee was ruthless in breaking up families. According to historian Elizabeth Brown Pryor, ‘By 1860 he had broken up every family but one on [his] estate.’ When three of Lee’s enslaved workers escaped, he had them hunted down and, when they were returned, had them beaten in a spectacle of cruelty.” (p. 128) Here is part of a testimony from one of these individuals: “[W]e were immediately taken before Gen. Lee, who demanded the reason why we ran away; we frankly told him that we considered ourselves free; he then told us he would teach us a lesson we never would forget; he then ordered us to the barn, where, in his presence, we were tied firmly to posts by a Mr. Gwin, our overseer, who was ordered by Gen. Lee to strip us to the waist and give us 50 lashes each, excepting my sister, who received but 20...” Gen. Lee stood by and “frequently enjoined [Dick] Williams [a county constable] to ‘lay it on well,’ an injunction which he did not fail to heed; not satisfied with simply lacerating our naked flesh, Gen. Lee then ordered the overseer to thoroughly wash our backs with brine [salt water], which was done.”(p. 129)

- During the Civil War, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee was “disturbed by the sight of Black soldiers in Union ranks. White soldiers under his command ruthlessly executed Black soldiers who attempted to surrender during the infamous Battle of the Crater [part of the Siege of Petersburg] — the first time Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia had faced large numbers of Black troops.” (p. 129)
- One Confederate soldier from Georgia described the Confederates’ treatment of Black troops fighting for the Union: “Our men killed them with the bayonets and the but[t]s of there [*sic*] guns and every other way until they were lying eight or ten deep on top of one enuther [*sic*] and the blood almost s[h]oe [*sic*] quarter deep.” (p. 130)
- During the Civil War, almost 200,000 Black troops fought for the Union Army. This does not include people who fled the South to work with the Union. The greatest concentration of Black troops in the war was at Petersburg, Virginia. In December of 1864, all the United States Colored Troops around Petersburg joined into three divisions to become the XXV Corps of the Army of the James — the largest Black force assembled during the war, ranging between 9,000 and 16,000 men. In the Siege of Petersburg, African American soldiers were awarded 15 Medals of Honor, the highest military decoration presented by the U.S. government. One of these went to Corporal Miles James of the 36th Colored Infantry Regiment. From the official citation: “Having had his arm mutilated, making immediate amputation necessary, he loaded and discharged his piece with one hand and urged his men forward; this within 30 yards of the enemy’s works.”
- In 1928, the scholar W. E. B. Du Bois wrote that “the inescapable truth [is] that Robert E. Lee led a bloody war to perpetuate slavery.” Did the South fight for States Rights? “No. People do not go to war for abstract theories of government. They fight for property and privilege, and that was what Virginia fought for in the Civil War.”
- When Southern states seceded from the Union, they made it clear in their secession documents and speeches at the time of secession that they were leaving the Union to preserve slavery. Louisiana: “The people of the slaveholding States are bound together by the same *necessity and determination to preserve African slavery.*” (p. 152)
- One white visitor to Blandford Cemetery told Clint Smith that “he had 78 family members buried in the cemetery dating back to 1802. He frequently comes to visit the tombstones of his family members.” (p.157)

Facts on Galveston Island and Juneteenth

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- Juneteenth is an annual holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the United States, celebrated by African Americans since the late 1800s. The holiday received its name by combining June and 19. The day is also sometimes called “Juneteenth Independence Day,” “Freedom Day,” “Jubilee Day,” or “Emancipation Day.”
- “The Emancipation Proclamation was not the sweeping, all-encompassing document that it is often remembered as. It applied to only the 11 Confederate states and did not include the border states that had remained loyal to the United States, where it was still legal to own enslaved people. Despite the order of the proclamation, Texas was one of the Confederate states that ignored what it demanded.” (pp. 174–175)
- “The long-held myth goes that on June 19, 1865, Union general Gordon Granger stood on the balcony of Ashton Villa in Galveston, Texas, and read the order that announced the end of slavery...more than two years after Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation and more than two months after Robert E. Lee’s famous surrender.” (pp. 173–174)
- “...Juneteenth was predicated on the fact that some enslaved people, both in Texas and elsewhere, had gone on working without knowing they were free.” (p. 190)
- Smith quotes a formerly enslaved man, Felix Haywood, recalling the moment he heard General Order Number 3: “The end of the war, it come jus’ like that — like you snap your fingers.... Hallelujah broke out.... Soldiers, all of a sudden, was everywhere — comin’ in bunches, crossin’ and walkin’ and ridin.’ Everyone was a-singin.’ We was all walkin’ on golden clouds...We was free. Just like that we was free.” (p. 175)
- “The earliest iterations of Juneteenth in Texas following the end of the Civil War ranged from ceremonial readings of the Emancipation Proclamation...to church services...there were parades, large displays of song and celebration that shook the streets...there were massive feasts.... There were picnics, beauty pageants, baseball games, and an endless stream of songs that emanated throughout the streets.” (p. 187)
- “...the jubilation of June 19, 1865, was for many short-lived. General Granger’s proclamation did not bring about the immediate liberation of enslaved people in Galveston, or in Texas. As historian W. Caleb McDaniel has said about the days, weeks, and years following Juneteenth, ‘Slavery did not end cleanly or on a single day. It ended through a violent, uneven process.’” (p. 191)
- Felix Haywood, again: “We knowed freedom was on us, but we didn’t know what was to come with it.... We thought we was goin’ to be richer than the white folks, ‘cause we was stronger and

knowed how to work. . . . But it didn't turn out that way. We soon found out that freedom could make folks proud but it didn't make 'em rich." (p. 192)

- "The state of Texas currently has a larger Black population than any other state in the country —about 3.5 million Black people call the state home — but as is the case across the country, the Black community experiences profound disparities across income, wealth, education, and criminal justice." (p. 183)
- Smith asks a white Union Army reenactor, Stephan Duncan, what motivates his work: "It's such a divisive, horrible time in our history. I mean, we saw the country at its absolute worst. We saw people who thought that it was just fine to hold other people in bondage. And seeing that we struggled through that and made it through to the other side seemed really important to me." (p. 184)
- "In 1979, newly elected Texas state legislator Al Edwards Sr. introduced House Bill 1016, which would make June 19 a state holiday." (p. 188)
- Smith interviews Al Edwards's son, who explains of Juneteenth: "...it was essentially our Independence Day, and he wanted to make sure that people understood that we do view this that way. Just as the rest of the nation views the Fourth of July." (p. 195)
- Jackie Bostic, descendent of enslaved people in Texas: "...you have to keep telling the story in order for people to understand. Each generation has to know the story of how we got where we are today, because if you don't understand, then you are in the position to go back to it. . . . How you were emancipated, how others came and took your land. . .if you got it to take at all — how they weren't given anything." (pp. 202- 203)
- "The responsibility of passing on this history falls to both the community and the schools." (p. 203)
- "The project of freedom, Juneteenth reminds us, is precarious, and we should regularly remind ourselves how many people who came before us never got to experience it, and how many people there are still waiting." (p. 206)

Facts on Slavery in New York City

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- Slavery was extraordinarily profitable for those who sold and owned enslaved people. According to *The Trading Book of the Sloop of Rhode Island*, kept by Captain Peter James, in 1675, European enslavers could purchase an enslaved person in Africa for an average price \$354.89, and in New York City enslavers could sell this person for an average price of \$3,792.66.
- According to *A Short History of Slavery in New York City*: “On April 6, 1712, nine white New Yorkers were killed in what would become the city’s first slave uprising. On April 6, 1712, 23 enslaved Blacks armed with guns and knives set fire to a building on Maiden Lane. When the fire soon spread, the slaves attacked the white colonists who rushed to put the fire out, killing nine of them. British soldiers dispatched militia units and soon captured the 23 slaves. Six of the captured committed suicide, but the rest were executed, most burned alive. Laws were quickly established following the revolt making it illegal for slaves to meet and allowing slave owners to punish their slaves as they saw fit.”
- Slavery continued to be an important source of New York City’s labor force into the early 18th century, with 40 percent of white households owning slaves — more than Philadelphia and Boston combined — making New York the largest slave-owning colony in the North.
- On the eve of the American Revolution, New York City had the highest proportion of enslaved people to Europeans of any Northern settlement: 3,000 in the city; 20,000 within 50 miles of Manhattan.
- In 1822, more than half the goods shipped out of New York City were produced in Southern states. Cotton alone — planted, tended, and harvested by enslaved people — made up more than 40 percent of New York City’s exported goods. [paraphrased from p. 221]
- New York City — and Brooklyn, in particular — was home to many prominent abolitionists. According to the Brooklyn Historical Society, James W. C. Pennington, escaped slavery in Maryland in 1827 and became a distinguished preacher and abolitionist. Willis Augustus Hodges (1815–1890), was a free Black man who lived in Williamsburg, in Brooklyn, and started an influential abolitionist newspaper. Elizabeth Gloucester, a Black abolitionist, invested in real estate and died one of the richest women in the United States in 1883.
- New York State abolished slavery in 1827. However, it was only in 1841 when New York outlawed the “right” of nonresidents to enslave people in the state. [paraphrased from p. 219]
- At one point, New York City had the second largest “market” selling enslaved people in the United States. The first largest was in Charleston, South Carolina. [paraphrased from p. 222]
- Lewis Tappan, who was white, was one of the wealthiest and most prominent abolitionists in the United States. He lived in New York City. In 1834 a white mob ransacked his home and burned

his belongings in the street. [paraphrased from p. 223]

- In New York City: “In the 19th century, Black people lived in fear that at any moment a slave catcher could snatch them or their children up, regardless of status or social position.” (p. 224)
- New York was and is a center for banking in the United States. Two of the predecessors of the Bank of America, Southern Bank of St. Louis and Boatmen’s Savings Institution, listed enslaved people as collateral in 1863. Citibank also had ties to slavery. [paraphrased from p. 221]
- Seneca Village was a largely African American community in New York City from 1825 to 1857. By 1855, the village had about 225 residents, two-thirds of whom were Black. “Black families built homes, gardens, churches, and a school. By the 1850s, they had created a thriving community that extended from what is now 82nd Street to 89th Street and from Central Park West to Seventh Avenue.” (pp. 232–233) In 1855, Mayor Fernando Wood began using the city’s power of eminent domain to remove the residents of Seneca Village. By the fall of 1857, New York City authorities had forcibly removed everyone living in Seneca Village. This area is now part of Central Park.
- The Statue of Liberty was the idea of the Frenchman Édouard René de Laboulaye, who was an abolitionist and president of the French antislavery society. His idea was that the monument would illustrate the alliance between France and the United States and “lift up the cause of freedom” of enslaved people that had been won through the Civil War and the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In an early model of the Statue of Liberty, Lady Liberty “clutched a pair of broken shackles — believed to symbolize the abolition of slavery — rather than the tablet we know today. By the time the final version of the statue emerged on U.S. soil in 1886, the shackles were no longer in Lady Liberty’s hands but become small pieces of broken chains, less conspicuously, at her feet and partially hidden beneath her robe.” (p. 236)

Facts on Gorée Island, Senegal

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- Gorée Island was chosen as a site for imprisoning enslaved Africans before they were forcibly shipped out of Africa because they could not easily escape from an island. (paraphrased from p. 243.)
- European powers spent two centuries fighting for control of Gorée, which was occupied in succession by the Portuguese, Dutch, British, and French. It was a place of strategic importance for trade, where European ships could restock supplies before leaving the continent. (p. 242)
- As the island’s colonizers changed, so did its name. The Senegalese called the island Ber. The Portuguese called it Ila de Palma. The Dutch changed its name to Goede Reede, meaning “good port.” The French amended it to Île de Gorée. (pp. 242–243)
- The French took over the territory of Gorée Island and the Senegal region in 1677 and maintained control until Senegalese independence in 1960. (p. 243).
- Gorée Island was a site of the slave trade from the 1700s, until 1848, when France abolished slavery in all its colonies. (paraphrased from p. 243)
- Clint Smith visits Gorée Island and asks his translator, Momar Niang, how the history of the slave trade is taught in Senegalese schools. “He said the topic was not discussed in as much depth as it needed to be.” (p. 241)
- Renowned activist Angela Davis visited the island in 1990, writing in the House of Slaves guest book, “To return home; to relive the profound suffering of my ancestors; to know that humanity’s worst crimes were committed at this site. It must never happen again.” (p. 243)
- Boubacar Joseph Ndiaye became the curator of the House of Slaves — the building that served as a prison for enslaved Africans on the island of Gorée — from 1962 until his death in 2009. “Historian Deborah Mack writes that it was Ndiaye who came up with the concept of the Door of No Return, which serves as the centerpiece of Gorée’s story.” (paraphrased from p. 245)
- “The Door of No Return is a famous symbol of the slave trade, appearing at historical sites across the western coast of Africa. The story goes that it was through these doors, looking out on to the Atlantic, that millions of enslaved Africans walked as they boarded ships that would bring them into bondage on the other side of the ocean.” (p. 245)
- The holding cells where Africans were imprisoned in the House of Slaves were only about six steps wide and held between 15 and 20 people. There was another prison cell in the House of Slaves, called the “Cellule Des Recalcitrants,” where they kept enslaved people who resisted. This cell was completely dark. (paraphrased from p. 246 and p. 251)
- Many of the enslaved people in Southern Louisiana were from the Senegambia region, where

Gorée Island is located, and the enslavers there benefited from these Africans' "specific knowledge about cultivating rice and indigo seeds." (p. 249)

- "As the desire for enslaved people increased, Europeans had to justify the human plunder. In order to rationalize taking a person from their home, separating them from their family, and shipping them across an ocean to work in a system of intergenerational bondage . . . these Europeans could not see these Africans as people." (p. 249).
- "Slavery took a toll on West Africa's population; millions of people were stripped from their homelands and sent across the ocean to serve in intergenerational bondage." In addition to the plunder of human beings, colonization also meant the plunder of natural resources. (p. 260).
- There is a debate about how many enslaved African people passed through the island of Gorée. It was originally reported that millions of people were held on Gorée Island, but scholars now estimate it was closer to 33,000 enslaved people. (p. 251)
- The island of Gorée was home to people who lived under many different social statuses. Some people were domestic enslaved people, some were Africans captured for transit to the Americas, some were free Africans, some were *signares* (people of mixed African and European ancestry), some were enslavers and soldiers. (paraphrased from p. 251)
- Some streets in Senegal are still named after European colonizers. (paraphrased from p. 256)
- Clint Smith speaks with Eloi Coly, the current curator of the House of Slaves. "He noted that Senegal, along with other West African countries, has to make sure that it teaches a history that highlights who Black people were before slavery and who they are in spite of it. 'We have to use education to deconstruct, in order to reconstruct,' he said. 'Africans have to know that the starting point was Africa.'" (p. 250)