

Introduction

- The nineteenth century was the century of emancipation. We will look comparatively at two of them: the emancipation in the United Kingdom and America, and partially in Saint Domingue.
- While abolitionists raised awareness of slavery and indulged in energetic advocacy, emancipation in Britain became a reality as competing capitalists began to view slavery as part of sugar monopolies and harmful to British international trade.
- In the United States, the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 was a war measure. In 1865, it became a constitutional reality.
- In Saint Domingue, it was a response to the greatest slave rebellion in history. The French Revolutionaries made it constitutional in 1794, but this was the only instance in which Napoleon sought to reverse the tide and reimpose slavery in 1802.

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Somerset v Stewart 1772

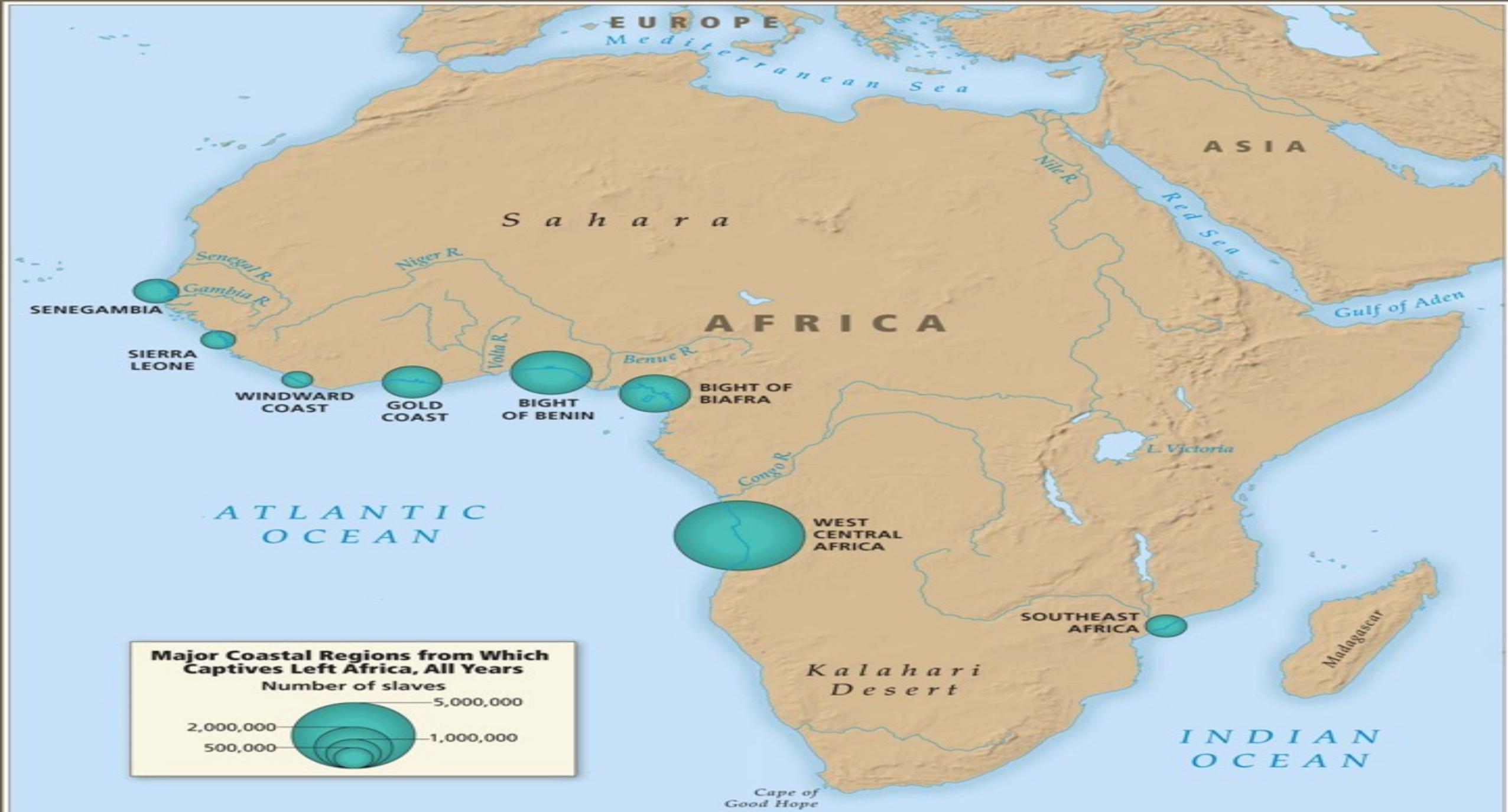
Slavery had no place in England, the Court decreed in 1772:

“The state of slavery is of such a nature that it is incapable of being introduced on any reasons, moral or political, but only by positive law, which preserves its force long after the reasons, occasions, and time itself from whence it was created, is erased from memory. It is so odious that nothing can be suffered to support it but positive law. Whatever inconveniences, therefore, may follow from the decision, I cannot say this case is allowed or approved by the law of England; and, therefore, the black must be discharged.”

Chief Justice Lord Mansfield, London, June 1772

Slavery in the Empire

- Mansfield's decision did not say anything about the colonies and plantations where slavery existed. He did not recognize it in the law of the mother country.
- The empire had it.
- How did the empire reach that point?
- The Maritime Revolution of the fifteenth century coincided with the incessant demand for labor in the Americas. Although we can track the abominable institution of slavery back to Hammurabi's Code 1728 BCE in the First River Valley civilization of Mesopotamia, the rising demand for labor in the Americas scaled the slave trade to levels human history had never seen before.



The Maritime Revolution

- Africa was the first destination of the Portuguese-led European exploration of the Atlantic. Western Africa became their first outpost. They established their first base at Cape Verde in 1444.
- The Portuguese crown leased São Tomé to a private entrepreneur in 1469. He developed it into a sugar plantation using slave labor.
- The Portuguese reached the Gold Coast in 1471 and requested to build a fort in 1482. We now know this fort as Elmina. Through this, they acquired gold equivalent to one-tenth of the world's production at that time, and later also used it for the acquisition of slaves.

The Maritime Revolution

- The Portuguese were not alone in this adventure. The local power brokers had differentiated responses to their initiatives.
- Benin began collaborating, principally to procure firearms. The state monopolized the exchange of goods such as pepper, ivory tusks, stone beads, textiles, and slaves, essentially the prisoners of war.
- Benin's dissatisfaction with some of the practices of its partners led to a ban on the trade of male slaves in 1538.

The Maritime Revolution

- In Congo, the Portuguese had a larger imprint. Lacking any commodities for a two-way exchange, Congo relied entirely on the slave trade that, like Benin, the State monopolized. The Congolese adopted Christianity as the state religion and missionaries had some success with Benin as well. Congo paid for the cost of hosting missionaries and Portuguese goods with slaves.
- The monopoly on the slave trade and the bans remained porous. When the state partners of Portugal introduced restrictions on the slave trade and missionaries in 1538, competing centers of the slave trade emerged responding to the lure of European armaments and other products.

The Maritime Revolution

- Inequality accompanied these massive initiatives. Financing royal pursuits in the Middle Ages had remained an issue. The Portuguese throne found a way to fund its initial efforts by selling the captured Africans from the northwest and the islands of Canaries to slavery. By the end of the century, they had traded 80,000 slaves.
- The private entrepreneurs brought further financial resources but also profited from slavery. The beginning of the gold trade provided additional money.

The Middle Passage

“Stowage of the British slave ship Brookes under the regulated slave trade act of 1788,” 1789, via Wikimedia.”

Slave ships transported 11-12 million Africans to destinations in North and South America, but it was not until the end of the 18th century that any regulation was introduced.

The Brookes print dates to after the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788, but still shows enslaved Africans chained in rows using iron leg shackles. The slave ship Brookes was allowed to carry up to 454 slaves, allotting 6 feet (1.8 m) by 1 foot 4 inches (0.41 m) to each man; 5 feet 10 inches (1.78 m) by 1 foot 4 inches (0.41 m) to each woman, and 5 feet (1.5 m) by 1 foot 2 inches (0.36 m) to each child, but one slave trader alleged that before 1788, the ship carried as many as 609 slaves.



Map 2.1 Slave trade and slaves in Latin America, 1502-1870

Note: The figures are the number of African slaves who disembarked in the Americas following voyages from Africa. Roughly 15 percent of the slaves who embarked on these voyages died in transit. The map depicts the border of countries that were formed later on and does not show the movements of slaves once they disembarked in the Americas.

Source: Authors' elaboration, based on Eltis and Richardson 2010 and Voyages Database 2020.

Middle Passage: Numbers

- “Middle” had various meanings in the Atlantic slave trade.
- For the captains and crews of slave ships, the Middle Passage, 34514 recorded voyages, was one leg in the maritime trade in sugar and other semifinished American goods, manufactured European commodities, and enslaved Africans.
- For the enslaved Africans, the Middle Passage was the middle leg of three distinct journeys from Africa to the Americas. First was an overland journey in Africa to a coastal slave-trading factory, often a trek of hundreds of miles. Second—and middle—was an oceanic trip lasting from one to six months in a slaver. Third was acculturation (known as “seasoning”) and transportation to the American mine, plantation, or other locations where enslaved people were forced to labor.

Middle Passage

- King Charles II conferred a monopoly on the Royal African Company for the slave trade in 1672.
- Royal African ships departed from Bristol, Liverpool, or London carrying rum, guns, iron bars, fetters, glass beads, clothes, and copper pots to trade for slaves. The company used present-day Ghana's Cape Coast Castle as its slaving capital. From there, they will proceed to Barbados or Jamaica.

Destinations



- Between the 1500s and 1800s Portuguese imported about 4.8 million enslaved people to Brazil. A little less than this had Caribbean as their destination, while 450,000 disembarked in North America. As a proportion of the enslaved population, there were more enslaved women in North America than in other colonial enslaved populations.
- Enslaved African women also bore more children than their counterparts in the Caribbean or South America, facilitating the natural reproduction of enslaved people on the North American continent.

Slave Trade and Emancipation

- In the UK, the slave trade was abolished in 1807. Emancipation occurred through the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, but the freedmen were entrusted to their owners as apprentices until 1838.
- The US government banned the transatlantic slave trade in 1808, prohibited the slave trade in the District of Columbia in 1850, and made slavery unconstitutional altogether in 1865.

The Road to Emancipation

- How did it happen?
- Abolition Movements in the UK and the USA played a key role in spreading awareness of and advocating for legislative battles against slavery.
- Formerly enslaved persons taking these leadership roles included Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoano in Britain, and Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Harriet Jacobs in America.
- British abolitionist movement leaders included William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and Thomas Fowell Buxton in Britain and William Lloyd Garrison in America, among several others.

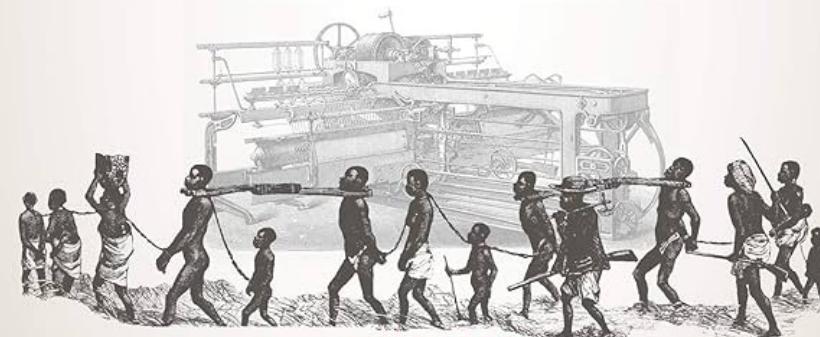
The Road to Emancipation

- How did it happen?
- Eric Williams argues, however, that British capitalism and international trade played the decisive role in emancipation.
- British capitalists in the West Indies, known as West Indian monopolists, had enormously benefited from the Navigation Laws and monopoly on sugar. The mainland capitalists, he explains, began to resent the monopolists' profiteering and strived to eliminate the monopolies. Besides slavery, they attacked the monopoly. The opponents of monopolists were not only the humanitarians and the abolitionists, but also the capitalists.

“In 1944 Eric Williams published his classic *Capitalism and Slavery*
which sparked a scholarly conversation that has yet to die down.
In many ways, the debates it generated are more vibrant now than ever and
promise to be a lasting touchstone for historians well into the future.”
—*Black Perspectives*

CAPITALISM and SLAVERY

THIRD EDITION



Eric Williams

with a new foreword by William A. Darity Jr.
Introduction by Colin A. Palmer

Capitalism and Slavery

- Who was Eric Williams? He had his doctorate from Oxford in 1938.
- His dissertation was: The Economic Aspects of the Abolition of the Slave Trade and West Indian Slavery, published in book form as *Capitalism and Slavery*, 1944.
- Eric Williams held leadership positions in his native Trinidad and Tobago, beginning in 1955 and till his death in 1981.

The Road to Emancipation

- The capitalists' attack, William affirms, falls into three phases: the attack on the slave trade, the attack on slavery, and the attack on the preferential sugar duties. The slave trade was abolished in 1807, slavery in 1833, and the sugar preference in 1846. The three events, in Williams' mind, were inseparable.
- Whereas before, in the 18th century, every important Western interest in England was lined up on the side of monopoly and the colonial system; after 1783, one by one, every one of those interests came out against monopoly and the West Indian slave system.

The Road to Emancipation

- This is how it functioned: British exports to the world were in manufactured goods, which could be paid for only in raw materials- the cotton of the United States, the cotton, coffee, and sugar of Brazil, the sugar of Cuba, the sugar and cotton from India. The expansion of British exports depended on Britain's capacity to absorb the raw material as payment. The British West Indian monopoly, prohibiting the importation of non-British plantation sugar for home consumption, stood in the way.
- Every important vested interest, the cotton manufacturers, the shipowners, the sugar refiners; every important industrial and commercial town, London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Shefffield, the West Riding of Yorkshire, joined in the attack on western slavery and West Indian monopoly (Williams, 154).

The Road to Emancipation

- In the United States, restoration of the Union was the war aim of the Union Army. Enslaved persons, crossing over to the Union lines in thousands, added emancipation to the war aims.
- By the end of 1862, Du Bois contends, the movement of enslaved persons had become “a general strike... The trickling streams of fugitives swelled to a flood. Once begun, the general strike of black and white went madly and relentlessly on like some great saga...There was no plan in this exodus, no Moses to lead it...” (Page 81).

The Road to Emancipation

- In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation shifted the war's aims from simple union to emancipation. It also welcomed freed persons "into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service."
- Framing the Emancipation Proclamation as a war measure, Lincoln and his cabinet freed the enslaved persons in states or parts of states in rebellion against the Union.
- Lincoln made constitutional emancipation a reality in 1865.

Agency of the Enslaved Persons

- Like Du Bois in America, Williams also makes a case for the contribution of slaves' struggle for emancipation. Slaves, he contends, were the most dynamic and powerful social force in the colonies. They were not just instruments of production and manifested agency in many ways. Here are a few examples he offers.
- The slave took the scriptures that slave owners gave him and adapted them for his purposes.
- To coercion and punishment, he responded with indolence, sabotage, and revolt. Most of the time, he was as idle as possible. That was his usual form of resistance- passive.

Agency of the Enslaved Persons

- The docility of the Negro slave is a myth. The Maroons of Jamaica and the Bush Negroes of British Guiana were runaway slaves who had extracted treaties from the British government or the Dutch before them and lived independently in their mountain fastness or jungle retreats.
- The emancipation had begun late eighteenth century. In response to the situation in Saint Domingue, the French National Convention abolished slavery in 1794. In 1802, however, Napoleon took the counterrevolutionary step of restoring slavery and the slave trade in the French colonies. His nemesis, the forces of Toussaint L’Ouverture, prevailed in Saint-Domingue and created Haiti by the end of 1803.
- The successful slave revolt of Saint Domingue was a landmark in the history of slavery in the New World. After 1804, when the independent Republic of Haiti was established, every white slave owner, in Jamaica, Cuba, or Texas, lived in dread of another Toussaint L’Ouverture (Williams, 202). Slavery endured in the remaining French Empire until April 1848.

Agency of the Enslaved Persons

- The slaves consensually believed that emancipation had been passed in England while their masters had withheld it. In 1807, Jamaican slaves had construed the abolition of the slave trade as nothing less than general emancipation.
- They also viewed the Jamaican assembly as having withheld some rights that the 1816 Act of the British parliament requiring registration of all slaves provided. The planters then recommended a parliamentary declaration that emancipation was not contemplated. A similar misunderstanding existed among the slaves in Trinidad and Barbados.
- Every change (departure) of a governor was interpreted by them as evidence of emancipation, (Williams 203).

Agency of the Enslaved Persons

- The frequency and intensity of slave revolts after 1800 reflect the growing tensions that reverberated in the stately halls of Westminster.
- In 1808, a slave revolt broke out in British Guiana.
- In 1816, slaves in Barbados revolted (Williams 204).
- In 1823, British Guiana went up in flames for the second time. Fifty plantations revolted, embracing a population of 12,000. **They had so carefully and secretly planned the revolt that it took the planters unawares.** The slaves demanded unconditional emancipation (Williams 205).

Agency of the Enslaved Persons

- In 1824, plantations in the parish of Hanover in Jamaica revolted. The slaves as a group could only with difficulty be restrained from interfering with the execution of the ringleaders.
- The executed leaders were fully impressed with the belief that they were entitled to their freedom and that the cause they had embraced was just and vindication of their rights (Williams 205).
- No state of the Negro mind was so dangerous as one of undefined and vague expectation, surmised the governor of Guiana (Williams 206).

Agency of the Enslaved Persons

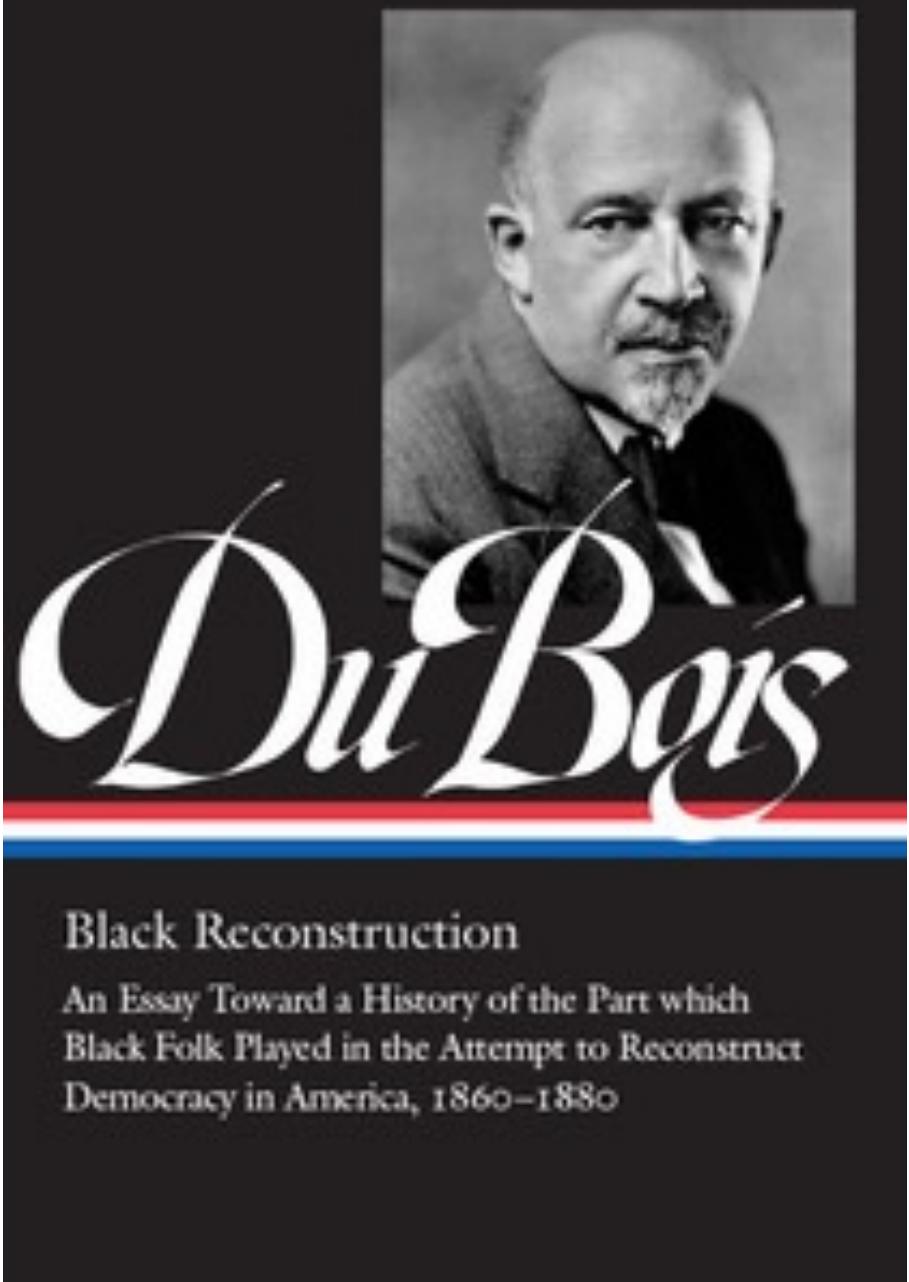
- In 1831, the slaves took the matter into their own hands in Antigua, where an insurrectionary movement developed. The slaves believed that in the event of insurrection, the King's troops had received positive orders not to fire upon the slaves.
- During the Christmas of 1831, Jamaica, the West Indian colony with more than half the slaves in the entire British West Indies, revolted in the western district (Williams 206).
- By 1833, Williams concludes, the alternatives were clear: emancipation from above or emancipation from below. But emancipation. The Negroes had been stimulated to freedom by the development of the very wealth which their labor had created (Williams 206).

Post-Emancipation

- The British capitalists, after 1833, remained involved in the slave trade. They sent British goods from Manchester and Liverpool, cotton, fetters, and shackles directly to the coast of Africa or indirectly to Rio de Janeiro and Havana, where their Cuban and Brazilian consignees used them to purchase slaves. By one estimate, 7/10th of the goods used by Brazil for slave purchases were British manufacturers.
- The British were reluctant to destroy the barracoons on the coast because they would thereby destroy British trade in calicoes.
- British banking firms in Brazil financed the slave traders and insured their cargoes to earn the goodwill of their hosts. British mining companies owned and purchased slaves whose labor they employed in their enterprises (Williams, 172).

Post-Emancipation

- The Lancashire capitalists opposed in 1843 a bill prohibiting the employment of British capital, however indirectly, in the slave trade on the ground that it would be a dead letter. In that year, British firms handled three-eighths of the sugar, one-half of the coffee, and five-eighths of the cotton exported from Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, and Bahia, (Williams, 172).



What is Emancipation:
Du Bois defines it :

“What did the emancipation of the slave really mean? It meant such property rights as would give him a share in the income of southern industry large enough to support him as a modern free laborer; and such a legal status as would enable him by education and experience to bear his responsibility as a worker and citizen” (Page 934).

Compensation £20 million (app £1.7 billion, current value).

- Neither British nor American enslaved persons attained emancipation as defined by Du Bois. Britain compensated the slave owners for the loss of their property. In America, the planters retained their lands and rights.
- The Legacies of British Slavery (LBS) project tracks the slave owners who received compensation.
- The West India interest still had a powerful voice in Parliament and the City and was able to negotiate a sum of £20 million (app £ 1.7 billion in today's money) in compensation for the loss of 'their property' – enslaved men and women.
- The owners maintained that £20 million represented just over 40% of the valuation attributed to the 800,000 enslaved people in the colonies affected by the Abolition Act ([Emancipation and the Remaking of the British Imperial World--Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland](#)).

Compensation £20 million
(app £1.7 billion, current value).

- In addition, the slave owners received interest on the compensation for the period between 1 August 1834 and the payment date, which varied between 1835 and 1845, with the vast bulk of payments made by 1838.
- Furthermore, they received the value of the further period of forced labor known as 'Apprenticeship,' originally intended to be between four and six years but truncated in 1838.
- Economists have estimated it as another 33 to 47% value of the enslaved labor ([Emancipation and the Remaking of the British Imperial World--Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland](#)).

The Centre for the
Study of the Legacies of British Slavery

- Legacy of Charles McGarel

Bank of England—Compensation Database

- The collection of slavery compensation, 1835-43
- The Bank of England administered the payment of slavery compensation to slave owners on behalf of the British government.
- Using records held in the Bank's Archive, a data set of 13,500 unique transactions has been produced, which details the collection of £3.4 million of compensation awarded in the form of government stock (3.5% Reduced Annuities).

Bank of England—Compensation Database

- A BOE study shows that just 10 individual account names had over 8,000 transactions totaling £2.2 million. The largest agents were partners in London banks and merchant firms that had pre-existing commercial ties to the colonies that received compensation in Reduced Annuities (Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, and the Virgin Islands).
- “.... All of this provides further evidence for the strong links between financial institutions in the City of London, the capital generated through the transatlantic slavery economy, and the compensation process during the 1830s.”

Emancipation—Sumner's Vision

- In December 1865, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts shared his vision, “...we must give African Americans land of their own; we must ensure a good education for African American children; and we must protect free speech, a free press, and the right to travel...Impartial suffrage must be established. A homestead must be secured to every freedman, if in no other way, through the pardoning power... Our present desires may be symbolized by the four “E’s,” standing for Emancipation, Enfranchisement, Equality, and Education.”

Emancipation—Thaddeus Stevens' Vision

- Thaddeus Stevens spoke to his constituents in Lancaster on September 7, 1865. He said, “We propose to confiscate all the estates of every rebel belligerent whose estate was worth \$10,000, or whose land exceeded two hundred acres in quantity... The whole fabric of Southern society must be changed, and never can it be done if this opportunity is lost...”
- Introducing HR 29 in 1867, Stevens gave his proposal a concrete shape, seeking approval for a plan for confiscated land in the "Confederate States of America."
- Section four of the proposed bill explicitly called for land to be distributed to former slaves: “Out of the lands thus seized and confiscated, the slaves who have been liberated by the operations of the war and the amendment of the Constitution or otherwise, who resided in said "confederate States" on the 4th day of March, A.D. 1861 or since, shall have distributed to them as follows namely: to each male person who is the head of a family, forty acres; to each adult male, whether the head of the family or not, forty acres; to each widow who is the head of a family, forty acres; to be held by them in fee simple, but to be inalienable for the next ten years after they become seized thereof. . . . At the end of ten years, the absolute title to said homesteads shall be conveyed to said owners or to the heirs of such as are then dead.”

Johnson's View of Emancipation

April 15, 1865 – March 4, 1869

- Johnson pardoned all Southerners engaged in the rebellion except wealthy planters with more than \$20,000 in property. Below that value, planters resumed control of their abandoned lands, denying all access to the freedmen. The Southern aristocracy had to appeal to Johnson for individual pardons.
- A report to the 42nd Congress estimated the total value of Southern property at \$ 4,363,030,347.05. It also estimated the loss of slaves as property at \$ 1,634,105,341 (Du Bois, Page 727).
- The “lost property” could make no claims on the assets it had made possible.

Compensation is a Norm

- We see, nevertheless, that disadvantaged groups do win their case for reparations and compensation in America.
- By 1999, the US government paid out more than \$1.6 billion to persons of Japanese ancestry whom the FDR administration had interned during World War II. The Congress authorized \$20,000 in redress to each one of the 82,219 eligible claimants.
- [The Justice Department](#) made these payments under the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which acknowledged, apologized, and made restitution for the fundamental injustice of the evacuation, relocation, and internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II.
- Individuals, powerful or not, and consumers winning compensation through the courts is daily news.

Four Million Enslaved Persons : Over a Billion Dollars

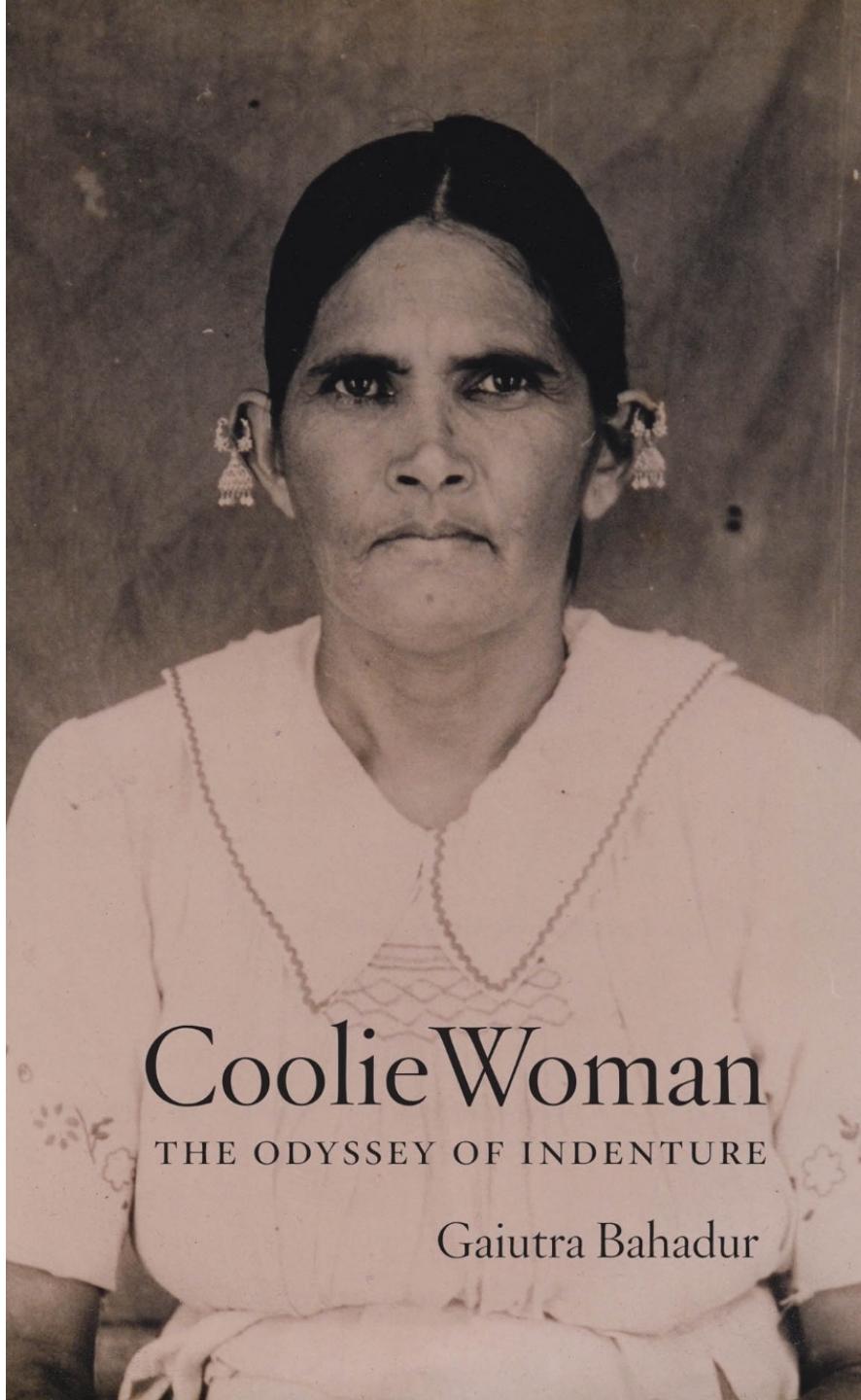
- Internationally, the Federal Republic of Germany adopted various reparation plans for the victims of Nazi policies and the Holocaust.
- In 1956, it passed the Federal Compensation Act (BEG), which covered many aspects of compensation for Nazi injustices not covered by the Allied restitution laws for certain groups of persecuted persons. It settled many claims. As of mid-2019, approximately 25,000 Holocaust survivors worldwide still received a monthly pension for “damage to health” provided under the BEG.
- In 1957, the FRG passed the Federal Restitution Law (BRüG), which attempted to provide appropriate compensation for immovable and movable property that could no longer be returned.
- As of 2011, approximately \$2.255 billion had been paid out under the BRüG.

Did it End There? The Indentured Labor

- After emancipation, the UK planters prevailed on the colonial administration to allow recruiting indentured labor from India. About two million Indians boarded British ships as indentured labor, up to 1917. They sailed initially to other colonies of the British Empire. Later, with the consent of the British Empire, the French and Dutch Empires also imported indentured labor for their colonies.
- Historically, indenture had been an established form of labor for centuries before it reached India in the nineteenth century. Indentured labor, for example, remained the mainstay of the British colony of Virginia in North America from its earliest days until the late seventeenth century, when the planters switched to slavery, by then a cheaper and more abundant source of labor.

Did it End There? The Indentured Labor

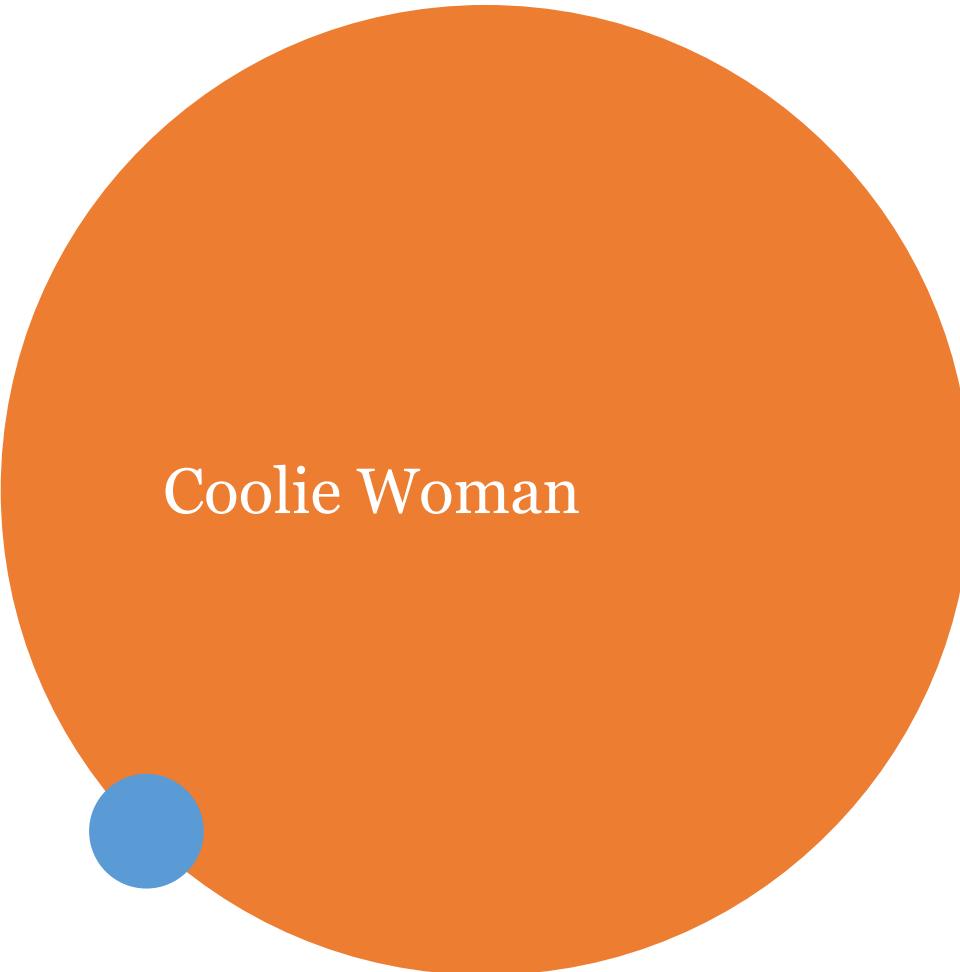
- Contractually, the South Asian servants collected wages. Their contracts also provided for return passage to the country of origin upon completion of fixed terms.
- Historically, the indenture system in the Americas ended because of economic reasons. Political reasons, on the contrary, put an end to the indenture system in the British colonies in 1917.
- Gaiutra Bahadur summed up their plight in her family history published as a biography of her grandmother, titled *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture*. This is an excerpt from her book:



Coolie Woman

THE ODYSSEY OF INDENTURE

Gaiutra Bahadur



Coolie Woman

And if caste didn't define her, did place? In rural India, navel strings are buried where babies are born, signifying a sacral attachment to that land. Did it grieve Sujaria that she might never return to the earth that held her navel string? Her descendants would continue to bury the umbilical cords of their children, wherever born. They would retain the folk custom but lose any sense that sacred texts declared the seas would erase their identities. Did my great-grandmother realize that this would really only matter for the returned--and that she wouldn't be among them? (Gaiutra Bahadur, Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture).

Conclusion

- The enslaved persons acquired the status of free British subjects following emancipation in 1838 and struggled to begin new lives with no compensation ever paid to them. The Indian indentured labor took their jobs at the plantations.
- In the United States Thirteenth Amendment became part of the Constitution in December 1865, the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868, and the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 consolidated the constitutional guarantees for emancipation.
- African Americans received no compensation for centuries of servitude and historical, social, and moral dispossession. They ended, nonetheless, the exclusion from the constitutional framework of 1787 and continued their struggle for civil rights in the face of horrendous challenges that recurred at the end of the Reconstruction era.