

RATIONALE:

In its curriculum guide for grades 9-12, the N. J. Commission on Holocaust and Genocide Education asks, "What does the mandate require?" The answers direct us to teach tolerance, encourage a depth of conscience in our pupils, and provide a focus on personal responsibility against prejudice. The Commission also asks us to assure that students grasp the consequences of the failure to confront hurtful behavior. The sum of those ideals leads us to prepare a response for students inquiring into the issues surrounding the history of slavery in North America.

This guide for dealing with those questions is intended to add to the classroom teacher's approach to applying the lessons of America's toleration and eventual abolition of slavery while meeting the New Jersey core curriculum standards for social studies. Folded into lessons designed to teach tolerance, recognize prejudice, or preclude bigotry, it should help students synthesize historical facts and interpretations to reach personal conclusions about significant historical events (6.3.13).

HELPFUL SOURCES & SITES FOR RESEARCH:

<http://www.history.com/topics/slavery>

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/experience/freedom/history.html>

<http://www.besthistorysites.net/index.php/american-history/1800/south-slavery>

www.ushistory.org

http://mbuggieh.hubpages.com/hub/Evolution_Slave_Labor_System_British_North_America

www.slavenorth.com

<http://civilliberty.about.com/od/raceequalityopportunity/ig/History-of-Black-Civil-Rights/Slavery-in-the-United-States>

www.archives.gov

<http://freedomcenter.org/>

<http://www.civilwar.org/education/history/civil-war-overview/slavery-slideshow/>

A RESPONSE RESOURCE FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS:

FIELDING COMMON QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE HISTORY THAT DOCUMENTS AMERICAN SLAVERY



Prepared by the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education with research support from the New Jersey Amistad Commission.

QUESTIONS SURROUNDING SLAVERY IN AMERICA:

When were the first slaves brought to any of the English speaking colonies in what is now the U.S.?

Slavery came to Colonial America in 1619 when the first African slaves were brought to the Jamestown settlement in the Virginia colony to aid in the production of such lucrative crops as tobacco. Although estimates vary, scholars believe that roughly 475,000 Africans were brought to North America and enslaved prior to 1808.

Why did slavery exist in the colonies that became the United States?

Slavery was practiced throughout the American colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries, and African slaves were forced to labor for the benefit of their masters. The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 solidified the central importance of slavery to the South's productivity.

Why did slave traders pick Africans for slaves instead of Native Americans (Indians)?

Africans brought agricultural skills to the New World, especially in the cultivation of rice crops in colonial South Carolina. They were also more easily enslaved in the Colonies because Native Americans were familiar with the environment and could escape into the wilderness where African slaves had more difficulty surviving. Additionally, Colonial America depended heavily on the sugar trade, which led to malaria, a disease the Africans were far less susceptible to than were Native Americans.

Was slavery ever legal in the U.S.A?

Yes, until 1865. Article IV of the U.S. Constitution provided that slaves escaping from one state to another be returned to their owner and the Presidential oath of office requires the President of the U.S. to "...preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the U.S."

Was slavery practiced in any of the Northern colonies?

Yes. All the British colonies in America allowed slavery at one time.

Did slaves count as citizens in the United States?

Slaves were counted as 3/5th of a person for legislative representation and tax distribution.

Who were "The Abolitionists"?

The abolitionist movement sought an end to all slavery, segregation and racial discrimination in the United States.

What was the "Underground Railroad" that helped slaves escape to freedom?

The Underground Railroad was neither underground nor a railroad. It got its name because its activities had to be carried out in secret, using darkness or disguise, and because railway terms were used by those involved with the system to describe how it worked.

How was slavery abolished in U.S.?

The 13th amendment to the Constitution was passed by Congress on January 31,

1865, and ratified on December 6, 1865, abolishing slavery in the United States and providing that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, ...shall exist within the United States..."

When were civil and voting rights extended to former slaves by the United States government?

The process began when the 14th amendment to the Constitution was passed by Congress on June 13, 1866, and ratified on July 9, 1868. This amendment modified the Constitution and said that "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." The 15th Amendment, granting African-American men the right to vote, was formally adopted into the U.S. Constitution on March 30, 1870. Passed by Congress the year before, the amendment reads: "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." After decades of discrimination, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 aimed to overcome legal barriers at the state and local levels that denied blacks their right to vote under the 15th Amendment.
