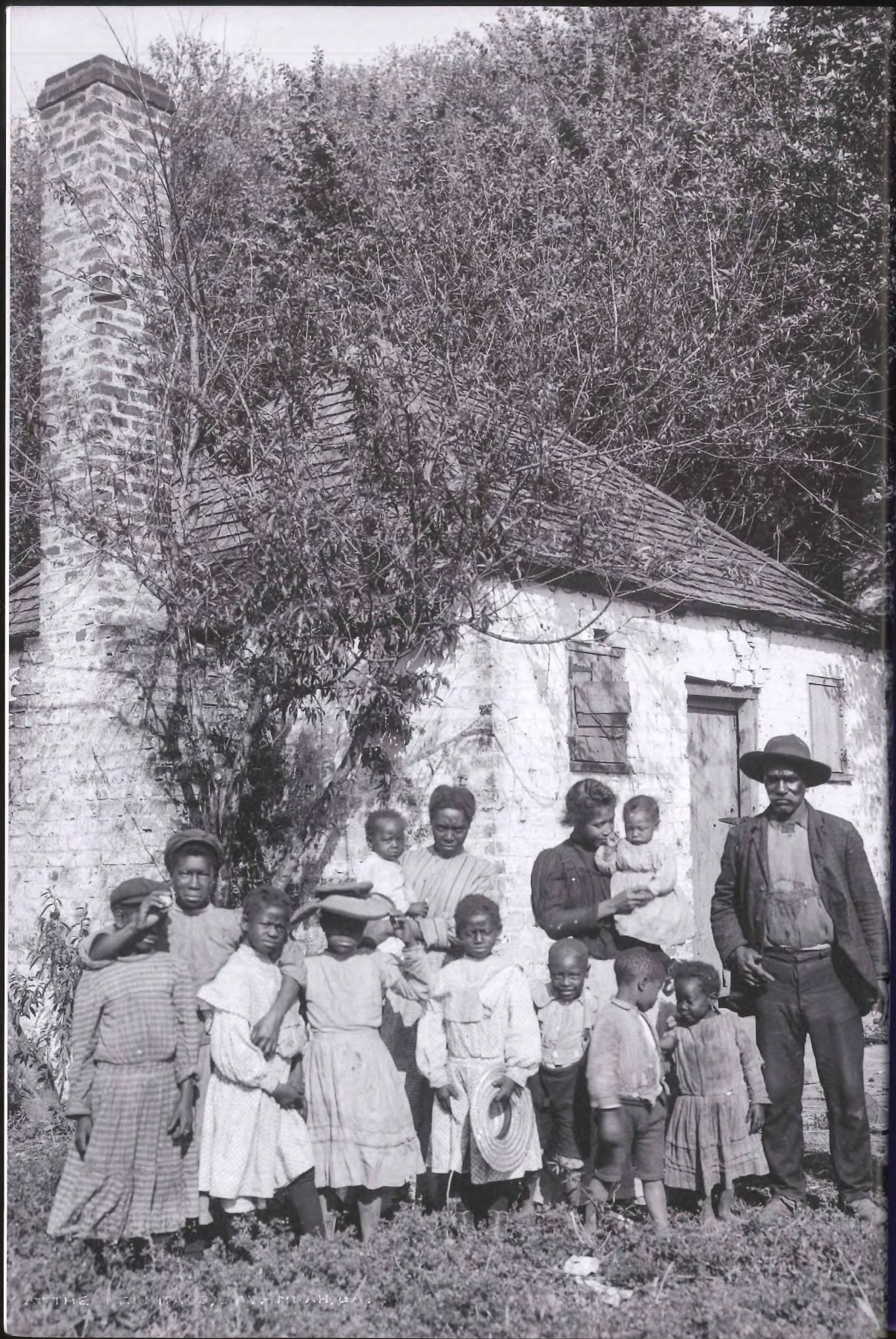


Bianca Erlich-Møller og Mathilde Thomsen

Black Voices

The African-American Experience
from Slavery to Current Racial Issues

Gyldendal



AT THE FARMER'S HOME, ANNAPOLIS, MD.



SLAVERY

INTRODUCTION

conceive skabe
pursuit søgen efter
thrive blomstre (fremgang)

The Americas er en term
der beskriver 'den nye
verden' (Nord- og Sydame-
rika), der blev opdaget i det
15. århundrede

"About the latter end of
August, a Dutch Man
of Warr (...) arrived at
Point-Comfort (...) He
brought not any thing
but 20. and odd Negroes,
which the Governor and
Cape Marchant bought
for victuals" Towards the
end of August, a Dutch war
ship arrived at Point-Com-
fort in Virginia. It did
not bring anything but
twenty something Negroes,
who the tradesman and
the Governor bought in
exchange for supplies
20. and odd nogle og tyve

pick cotton plukke bomuld
turnover profit
nickname øgenavn
institution institution

SLAVERY

America is often referred to as 'The Land of the Free', and most people associate America with a country 'conceived in liberty' in which the right and opportunity of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" is given to everyone by God. In America "all men are created equal", and America offers "liberty and justice for all". The reality, however, might be somewhat different. Slavery was a part of the history of the United States of America from the very beginning and thrived in the defining years around the revolution in 1765-1783.

10

SLAVERY AND THE EARLIEST SETTLEMENTS IN THE AMERICAS

"About the latter end of August, a Dutch Man of Warr (...) arrived at Point-Comfort (...) He brought not any thing but 20. and odd Negroes, which the Governor and Cape Marchant bought for victuals."

15

In the year 1607, the first 104 English settlers landed in the Americas, and the first permanent English settlement was Jamestown in the colony of Virginia. The above quote is taken from a letter written by the Jamestown colonist John Rolfe (1585-1622). In the letter John Rolfe describes many different events in the Virginia colony to a friend, and among other things, he mentions the arrival *and* the selling of "20. and odd Negroes". Rolfe's letter is dated January 1619, and it is the first proof of African slavery in the colonies that we have. It shows that African slavery was part of the earliest period in American history.

25

THE COTTON KINGDOM

Most slaves worked in the fields in the Southern states picking cotton from cotton plants, and the production of cotton turned out to be a very profitable business in America. The cotton industry doubled its turnover in every decade from 1820-1860 and the production of cotton created an economic boom in the 19th century. By 1861 cotton made up two-thirds of all the United States' exports.

30

Cotton was crucial to the economy of especially the southernmost states, earning them the nickname 'The Cotton Kingdom'. To maintain this profitable production, slaves were needed as a work force, and therefore, slavery as an institution was absolutely essential in American society at the time. In this sense slavery very quickly became a serious and substantial business in the South.

35

Port Royal Island, South
Carolina. African Ameri-
cans preparing cotton on
Smith's plantation, 1862



voyage rejse
cram together mase
sammen
'tight-packer' mand hvis
opgave det var at gøre
plads til flest mulige slaver
på slaveskibe
two and a half feet feet
er et længdemål. 1 foot er
ca. 33,3 cm. Dvs. her knap
85 cm
mucus slim
proceed udgå fra
flux diarré

SLAVE VOYAGES

African slaves landed by ship in the colonies and later, after 1776, in America. This journey to the new world was a long and terrible experience. Slaves destined for America lost everything – possessions, home, loved ones – and were forced to begin a new life in an alien world.

Conditions on slave ships were horrible. Men were usually kept in chains at all times, and all slaves were kept below deck most of the time, crammed together so closely that they could barely move. On the ships, 'the tight-packers' had installed shelves with two and a half feet of space between them where the slaves had to lie in order not to waste space on the ship.

When the weather was good, slaves could be taken up on deck daily. In poor weather, however, slaves were forced to remain below deck for long periods of time. Alexander Falconbridge, a doctor on numerous slave voyages, described such conditions in 1788:

"While they were in this situation, I frequently went down among them till at length their rooms became so extremely hot as to be only bearable for a very short time (...). The floor of their rooms was so covered with the blood and mucus which had proceeded from them in consequence of the flux that it resembled a slaughterhouse."

How many slaves set out from Africa no one knows, but it is estimated that a total of 10-11 million slaves crossed the Atlantic Ocean from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century. Since many slaves died on the journey, Africa's total population loss was much greater.

auction block det podium
hvorpå slaveauktioner blev
holdt
slave coffles håndjern, der
lænkede slaver sammen i
en lang kæde
eager ivrig

quota kvote, akkord
exceed overstige
legal terms ifølge loven
recognize anerkende
dreaded frygtet
flourish blomstre

THE AUCTION BLOCK

When slaves were finally let off the ship, they were brought directly to auctions by slave traders. Slaves were often chained in 'slave coffles' on their way to the auction. At auctions, slaves were put on an auction block, examined by eager customers and sold to the highest bidder. Families were often split up, as many slave owners were not interested in buying an entire family. This meant that husbands and wives were separated, and young children were taken away from their parents. In most cases, slave families never saw each other again after a slave

15 auction.

SLAVE LIFE

Slave labour could be many things. When working at the cotton plantations, slaves were given a production quota. This meant that each slave had to pick a certain amount of cotton every day, and anyone who failed to meet their quota was punished. Slaves were rarely rewarded if they exceeded their quota. Instead, they were given an even higher daily target. Some slaves worked in the houses as cooks, servants, butlers or nannies, taking care of the master's children.

Slaves typically organized themselves in families with a father and a mother and their children, and in many respects they lived like normal families when they were at home. However, in legal terms slave families did not exist as no Southern state recognized marriage between slave men and women. In the same way, legal authority over slave children rested not with their parents but with their masters. In practise that meant that slave families only lived together as long as the master allowed it, as all slaves could be sold at any time. Sale of any sort was one of the most dreaded events in any slave's life, as it meant being permanently separated from home, friends and often family members, as well as adjusting to a new owner in a new environment. In the upper Southern states rumours of a far more brutal slavery in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana flourished, and therefore, most slaves dreaded being sold to those areas. Being 'sold down the (Mississippi) river' was therefore both a fear as well as a threat that masters used in order to make slaves obey and behave.

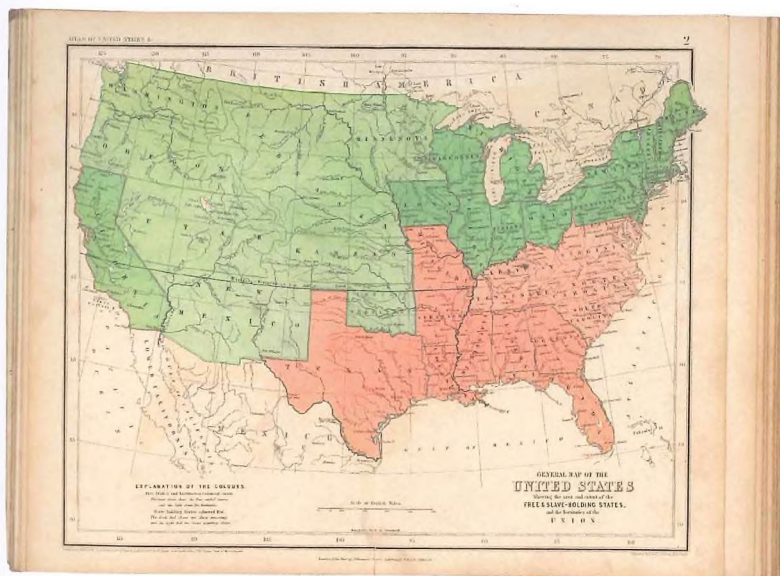


A black far





A black family outside their home in Savannah, Georgia

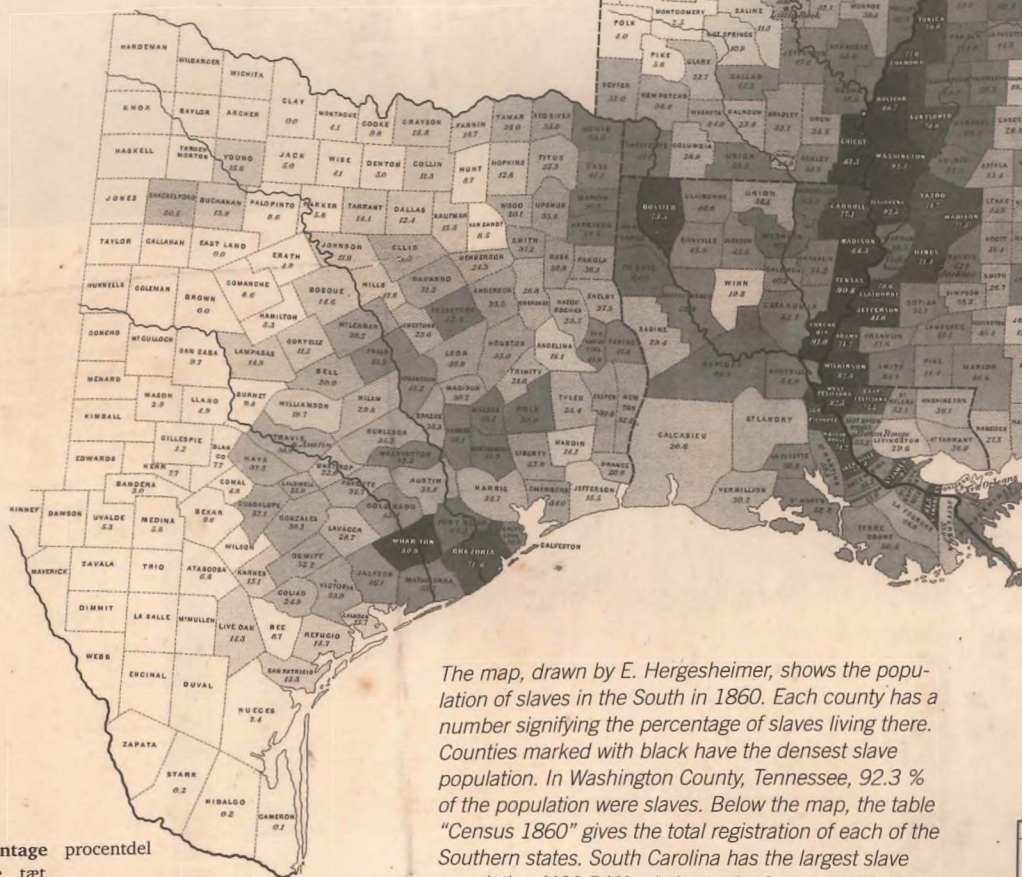


The map is from 1857 (before the Civil War) and shows all of the American states as they looked back then. The states coloured in green are free states, meaning that slaves were not registered there, while the red states are slave states

MAP SHOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SLAVE POPULATION OF THE SOUTHERN STATES OF THE UNITED STATES

Compiled from the
CENSUS OF
1860.

Washington, September 1861.



The map, drawn by E. Hergesheimer, shows the population of slaves in the South in 1860. Each county has a number signifying the percentage of slaves living there. Counties marked with black have the densest slave population. In Washington County, Tennessee, 92.3 % of the population were slaves. Below the map, the table "Census 1860" gives the total registration of each of the Southern states. South Carolina has the largest slave population (402,541) relative to the free population (301,271). Slaves, in other words, made up 57.2 % of the inhabitants of the state.

percentage procentdel
dense tæt
table tabel
census statistisk optælling
relative (her) i forhold til

Census Office, Department of the Interior,
Washington, Sept. 9th 1861.

After a careful examination of the above very interesting map I am prepared to state that it not only furnishes the evidences of great care in its execution, but can be relied on as corresponding with the official returns of the 8th Census.

Geo. B. Klemm
Superintendent

Engr. by Th. L. Loomis

Sold for the benefit of the

Sick and Wounded

of the

U. S. ARMY.

Census of 1860

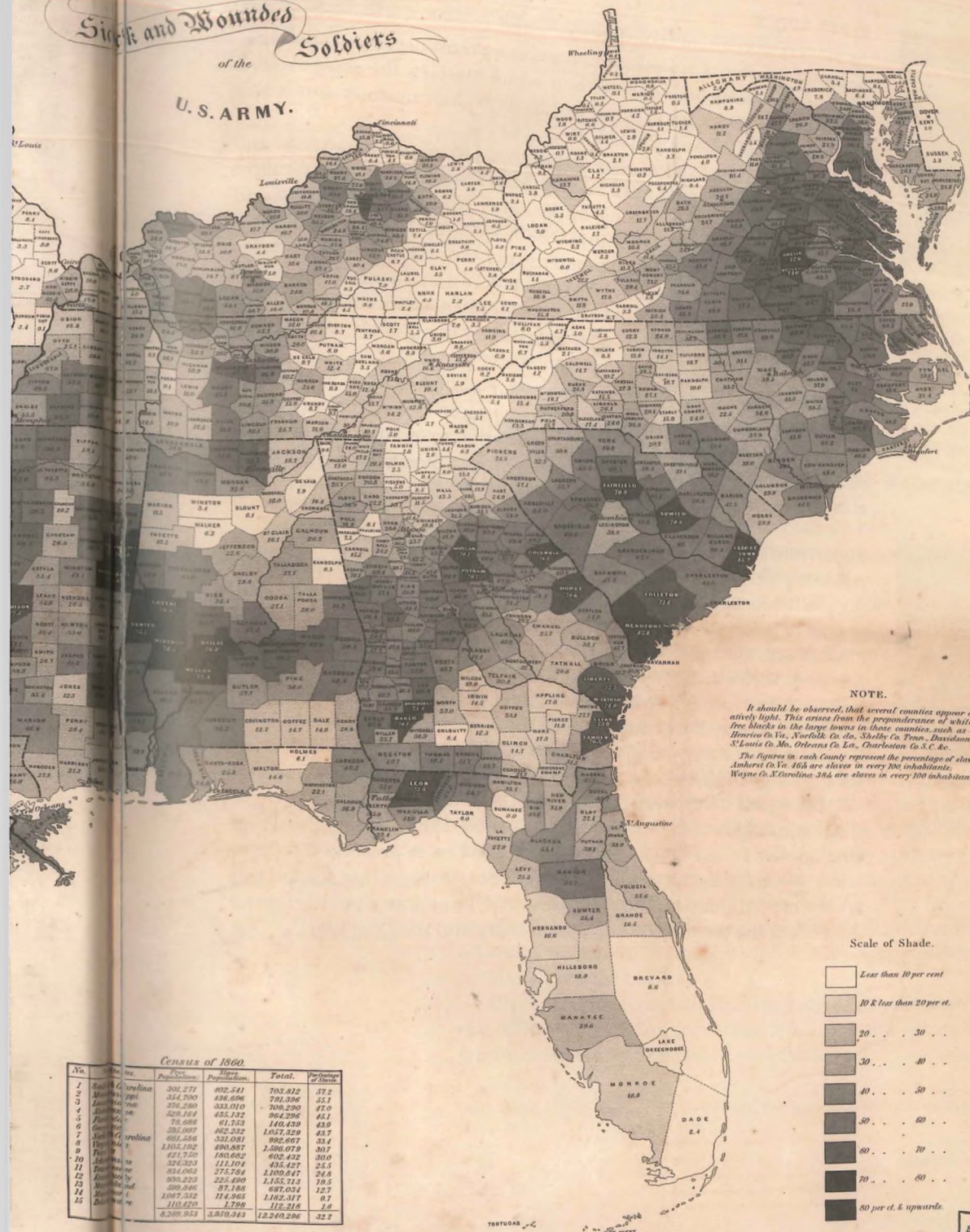
No.	State	Free Population	Slave Population	Total	Percentage of Slaves
1	Alabama	301,271	402,541	703,812	57.2
2	Arkansas	314,700	436,696	751,396	58.1
3	California	376,280	333,010	709,290	47.0
4	Florida	520,104	435,132	955,236	45.6
5	Georgia	78,686	61,723	140,409	43.9
6	Illinois	661,586	331,081	992,667	33.4
7	Indiana	1,105,192	490,887	1,596,079	30.8
8	Iowa	421,750	180,662	602,412	29.9
9	Kansas	324,323	111,104	435,427	25.5
10	Michigan	834,063	275,764	1,109,827	24.8
11	Minnesota	539,223	224,640	763,863	29.4
12	Mississippi	309,846	87,168	397,014	21.9
13	Missouri	1,067,352	114,965	1,182,317	9.7
14	Nebraska	110,420	1,796	112,216	1.6
15	Nevada	8,269,953	3,870,243	12,140,196	32.2

Sold for the benefit of the

Sick and Wounded Soldiers

of the

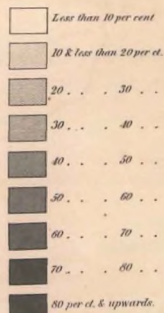
U.S. ARMY.



NOTE.

It should be observed, that several counties appear comparatively light. This arises from the preponderance of whites and free blacks in the large towns in those counties, such as Benning Co. Va., Norfolk Co. Va., Shelby Co. Tenn., Davidson Co. Mo., St. Louis Co. Mo., Orleans Co. La., Charleston Co. S.C. &c. The figures in each County represent the percentage of slaves viz: Amherst Co. Va. 46% are slaves in every 100 inhabitants; Wayne Co. N. Carolina 34% are slaves in every 100 inhabitants &c.

Scale of Shade.



Map drawn
5 - AUG 1863
Library of Congress

Drawn by E. Hergesheimer

Census of 1860

No.	State	Population	Total	Percentage of Slaves
1	Alabama	301,271	707,812	57.2
2	Arkansas	354,700	791,036	51.1
3	California	376,280	709,290	47.0
4	Florida	229,161	494,296	46.1
5	Georgia	76,688	140,439	49.0
6	Illinois	285,097	1,057,329	41.7
7	Indiana	661,686	992,667	33.4
8	Iowa	1,105,192	1,586,079	30.7
9	Kansas	121,720	602,432	30.0
10	Kentucky	324,323	616,427	25.5
11	Louisiana	614,063	1,109,647	24.6
12	Mississippi	390,223	1,153,713	19.5
13	Missouri	589,846	987,034	12.7
14	North Carolina	1,067,352	1,182,317	9.7
15	South Carolina	110,620	216,218	1.6
	Total	8,289,953	12,240,206	32.5



Peter, a slave from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, ca. 1863. The scars are a result of a whipping by his overseer Artayou Carrier, who was later fired by the master. It took two months to recover from the beating. These photographs were widely distributed in the North during the Civil War



Harriet Beecher Stowe, one of North America's first best-selling authors, in her home

code lov
excite opildne
insurrection oprør
whipping pisk
public display offentlig
skue
sentence dom
assembled (for)samlet
unruly uregerlig
lash pisk
brand brændmærke
abolish afskaffe
abolitionist tilhænger
af slaveriets afskaffelse
(abolition)
civil war borgerkrig
presume antage, formode

SLAVE CODES

As slavery spread, all US states adopted so-called slave codes; laws defining the status of slaves and regulating most aspects of slave life. First of all, slaves had to obey their white masters, the slave owners. Some slaves had a good relationship with their masters, but it was never an equal relationship.

In many states, slaves were not allowed to learn how to read and write because slave owners believed that the ability to read might "excite dissatisfaction in their minds, and produce insurrection and rebellion" (Law of North Carolina, 1830, see p. 13). Also, most masters punished their slaves physically, and the most common punishment was whipping. A whipping could be a formal occasion – a public display in which a sentence was carried out in front of an assembled group – or it could be a casual affair in which an owner impulsively whipped an 'unruly' slave.

When slaves tried to escape, they were punished. This would usually be by 'the lash' or by branding them on the face in order to make the entire world see that they had attempted to escape. Slaves could also get shot at or killed trying to escape to the Northern states where slavery was abolished in the years between 1777-1804.

ABOLITIONISM

In some places in the North, slavery was abolished in the years following the revolution. In fact, many people from the Northern states were strongly against slavery and believed slavery to be a sin against God and a racist act. Through the 19th century, anti-slavery movements flourished in the Northern states. One of the most well-known abolitionists was Harriet Beecher Stowe, a white American from the North and the author of the anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe tells the story of the fictional character Uncle Tom, a long-suffering black slave.

This moral battle between the Southern states and the Northern states ultimately led to the Civil War (1861-1865). When President Lincoln met Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1862 he is presumed to have said: "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that started this great war." Whether the story is true or not is unknown, but the legend underlines the connection between slavery and the Civil War.

Slaves Are Prohibited to Read and Write by Law

1830-1831

statute vedtægt, lov

In the US, individual states make their own laws which only apply in that particular state and which the rest of the country does not have to follow. The statute below was passed by the State of North Carolina in 1830.

An act to prevent all persons from teaching slaves to read or write, the use of figures excepted

figure tal
except (vb.) undtage
insurrection oprør
excite opildne
dissatisfaction utilfreds-
hed
manifest (adj.) åbenlys,
klar
injury skade, overlast
enact vedtage
General Assembly general-
forsamling
liable stå til ansvar
indictment anklage, tiltale
court of record (am.) ret
jurisdiction myndigheds-
område
conviction dom
at the discretion of the
court op til retten at
afgøre
be fined få en bøde
whip (vb.) piske
exceed overstige
lash piskeslag
justice of the peace freds-
dommer (lokal dommer
uden jury)
grand jury anklagejury

Whereas the teaching of slaves to read and write has a tendency to excite dissatisfaction in their minds, and to produce insurrection and rebellion, to the manifest injury of the citizens of this State: Therefore,

I. *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same,* That any free person who shall hereafter teach, or attempt to teach, any slave within the State to read or write, the use of figures excepted, or shall give or sell to such slave or slaves any books or pamphlets, shall be liable to indictment in any court of record in this State having jurisdiction thereof, and upon conviction, shall, at the discretion of the court, if a white man or woman, be fined not less than one hundred dollars, nor more than two hundred dollars, or imprisoned; and if a free person of color, shall be fined, imprisoned, or whipped, at the discretion of the court, not exceeding thirty nine lashes, nor less than twenty lashes.

II. *Be it further enacted,* That if any slave shall hereafter teach, or attempt to teach, any other slave to read or write, the use of figures excepted, he or she may be carried before any justice of the peace, and on conviction thereof, shall be sentenced to receive thirty nine lashes on his or her bare back.

III. *Be it further enacted,* That the judges of the Superior Courts and the justices of the County Courts shall give this act in charge to the grand juries of their respective counties.

"Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina at the Session of 1830-1831"

INTRODUCTORY WORK

Reasons for this law

1. Who made this law?
2. According to the law, why is it a problem for slaves to be able to read and write?

Penalties

Answer questions 3-5 and fill in the blanks in the chart below.

1. What is the penalty for a white person to teach a slave to read and write?
2. What is the penalty for a free person of colour to teach a slave to read and write?
3. What is the penalty for a slave to teach another slave to read and write?

Punishment	Free white person	Free black person	Slave
Corporal punishment			
Fine			

FURTHER ANALYSIS

Obeying the law?

1. Debate whether you think the slave masters obeyed this law. Why/why not?
2. Discuss whether you think slaves or coloured people who were able to read and write obeyed this law? Why/why not?

POST-READING

The class should split in two. One half of the class answers A and the other half answers B (10 minutes). Afterwards, you should get into pairs consisting of one student who has answered A and one who has answered B. Then, read your answers aloud to each other. You may argue freely.

A

Imagine that you are in court as a free coloured person. You have taught your slave friend to read and write. Prepare some reasons for your criminal offence in case a judge wants to hear them (about 100 words).

B

Imagine that you are the judge in a case where a coloured person has taught his/her slave friend to read and write. Prepare a written verdict (about 100 words).