

Evolution of American Slavery American Exceptionalism?

Hereditary, Race-Based, Chattel Slavery

- ⊗ Differed from Ancient Slavery
 - ⊕ Not based on debt, conquest or religion;
 - ⊕ Race & definition of slaves as property unique to Americas;
 - ⊕ But system had to evolve over time.
- ⊗ American Slavery even differed from that in Caribbean
 - ⊕ Mortality rates extremely high in Caribbean;
 - ⊕ Yet some human rights protected;
 - ⊕ Demographically more diverse and self-sustaining in North America;
 - ⊕ But "Social Death" was the norm in North America.

Nature of Atlantic Slave Trade

- ⊗ Dominated by the Spanish, Portuguese & Dutch
- ⊗ ~7.5 million African slaves brought to New World from 1601-1810
- ⊗ Majority traded from Ivory & Gold Coasts, Bights of Benin & Biafra (Nigeria), and Central & Southeast Africa (Cameroon & North Angola)
- ⊗ Extension of ancient African Slave System
 - ⊕ Originally based on conquest;
 - ⊕ Arrival of European slave traders & construction of slave fortresses changed the system;
 - ⊕ Coastal African kingdoms entered into global trade network & became dependent on the trade;
 - ⊕ Decimated interior kingdoms.

Middle Passage & New World Slavery

- ⊗ High mortality rate
 - ⊕ 5% died before reached African coast
 - ⊕ 13% died on the Middle Passage
 - ⊕ 30% Died during "seasoning period" (1st three months in West Indies)
 - ⊕ Does not include those killed in African slave wars
 - ⊕ Does not account for destruction of families, tribes, languages, and religions
- ⊗ Transition from African population to Slave Population
 - ⊕ Only remnants of African culture survived;
 - ⊕ What did had to survive the Caribbean;
 - ⊕ Early slave populations in North America came from sugar plantations;
 - ⊕ Some exceptions, most significant in Louisiana.

Slavery in British North America

- ⊗ Shifts in Supply & Demand following Bacon's Rebellion
 - ⊕ End of monopoly for Royal African Company
 - ⊕ Rising wages in England ⇒ Decrease in labor pool
 - ⊕ Growing unrest among lower classes in Virginia
 - ⊕ Diminished impact of disease within the Chesapeake
- ⊗ Growing value of African slaves in British Colonies
 - ⊕ **Economic Value**—Lower mortality rate means slaves economically viable choice
 - ⊕ **Racial Value**—Permanent underclass, creates notion of white unity among diverse colonial interests (Masters of Small Worlds)

Evolution of Slavery in America

- ⊗ Societies with Slaves: The Charter Generations (To 1676)
 - ⊕ Emergence of Atlantic Creoles in the Chesapeake
 - ⊕ Expansion of Creole Society in the North
 - ⊕ Divergent Paths in the Lowcountry
 - ⊕ Devolution in the Mississippi Valley
- ⊗ Slave Societies: The Plantation Generations (1676 - 1780)
 - ⊕ Tobacco Revolution in the Chesapeake
 - ⊕ Rice Revolution in the Lowcountry
 - ⊕ Growth & Transformation of Black Life in the North
 - ⊕ Stagnation & Transformation in the Lower Mississippi Valley
- ⊗ Slave & Free: The Revolutionary Generations (1780 - 1865)
 - ⊕ Union of African-American Society in the Upper South
 - ⊕ Fragmentation in the Lower South
 - ⊕ Slow Death of Slavery in the North
 - ⊕ Slavery & Freedom in the Lower Mississippi Valley

Economic Realities & Slave Communities

- ⊗ Crops determined slave lives:
 - ⊕ Sugar production destroyed slaves;
 - ⊕ Tobacco & cotton used slaves;
 - ⊕ Rice & indigo production needed slaves.
- ⊗ Gang System--Slaves placed in groups carefully segregated by age & sex:
 - ⊕ Typically supervised by white overseers or African American slave drivers;
 - ⊕ Slaves lives defined from Sunup to Sundown;
 - ⊕ Only freedom came from Sundown to Sunup
- ⊗ Task System--Labor defined by work to be completed:
 - ⊕ More latitude afforded to slaves, often because their skills were so valued;
 - ⊕ Easily measured value of slaves;

- ⊕ Incentive for slaves to finish work quickly, as slaves' time became their own.

Legal Transition to Hereditary, Race-Based Chattel Slavery

- ⊗ Began by diminishing gender distinctions and human dignities:
 - ⊕ In Virginia, African women taxed (1643), while white women were not & rights of black women over their children disappeared;
 - ⊕ Removal of traditional male rights from black men, including property ownership, gun ownership, & right to marry.
- ⊗ Development of distinct slave classes:
 - ⊕ Distinctions between classes often based on race;
 - ⊕ Differences in treatment for house servants versus field hands.

Major Legal Milestones to Social Death for African Americans in Virginia

- ⊗ 1662—Status of children based on “condition” of mother
- ⊗ 1667—Conversion to Christianity provided no exemptions
- ⊗ 1668—Killing of slave no longer a felony, became a property crime
- ⊗ 1680—All Africans in Virginia were considered slaves
- ⊗ 1705—Fully formed slave code in place