

REVISITING THE HISTORY
OF ENSLAVEMENT IN THE
UNITED STATES:

*A CURRICULUM GUIDE
FOR ENGAGEMENT AND
TRANSFORMATION*

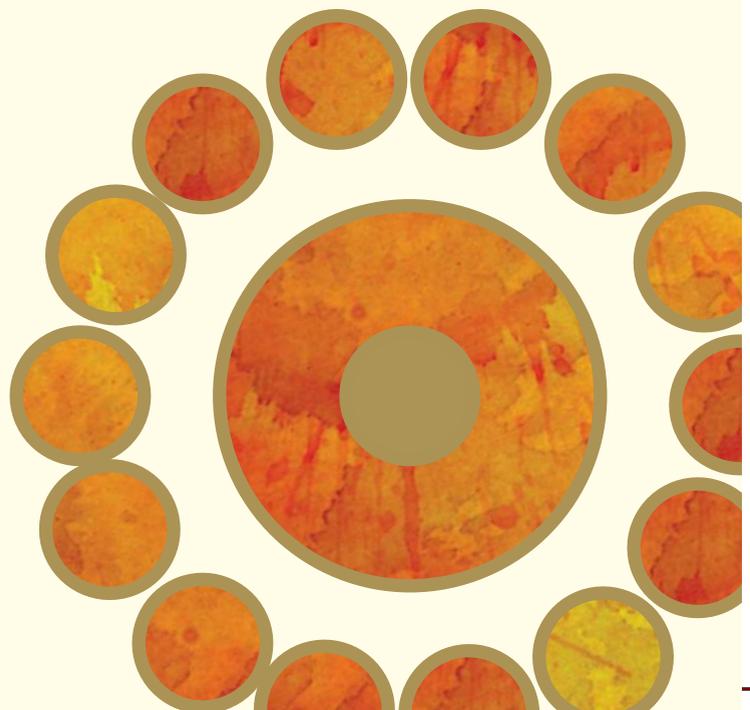
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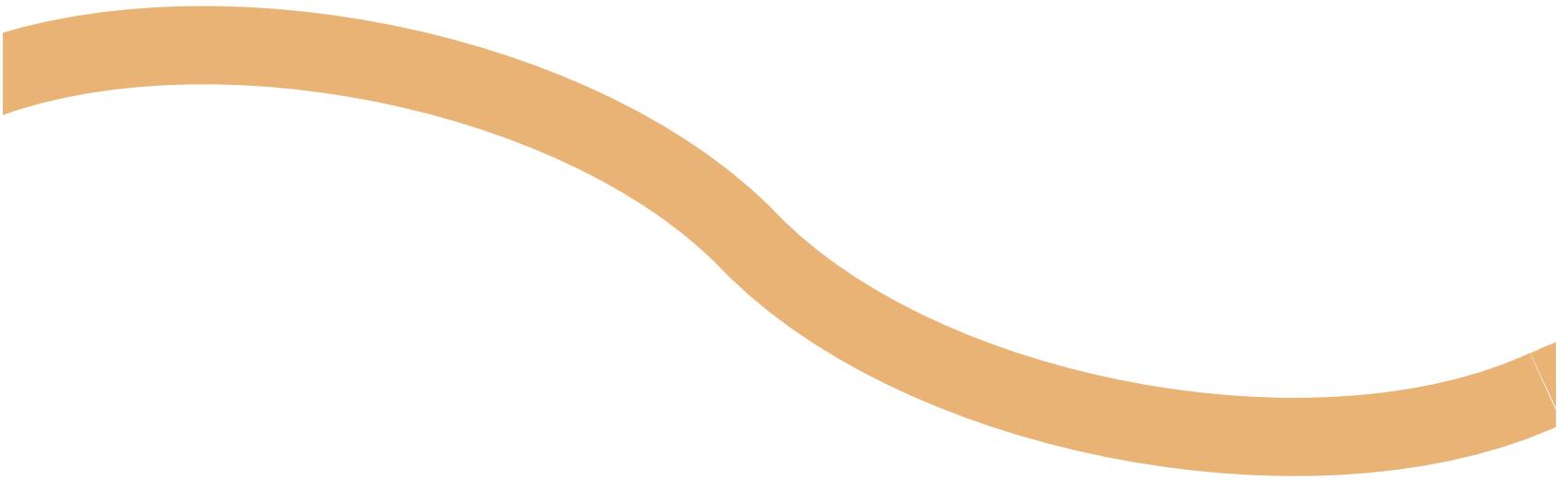
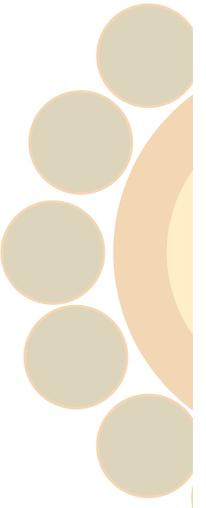


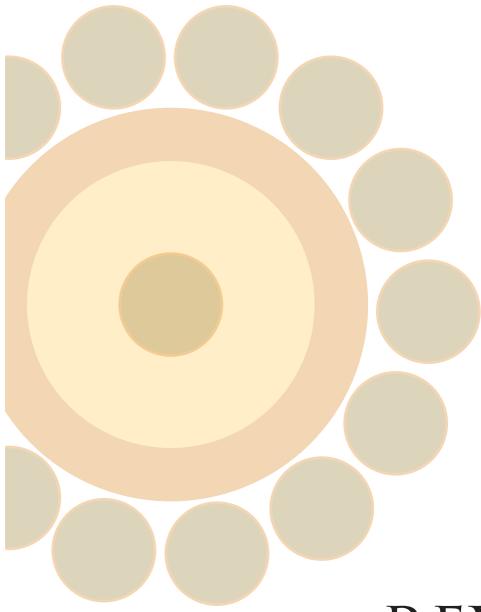
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COMING TO THE TABLE

MARCH 2012



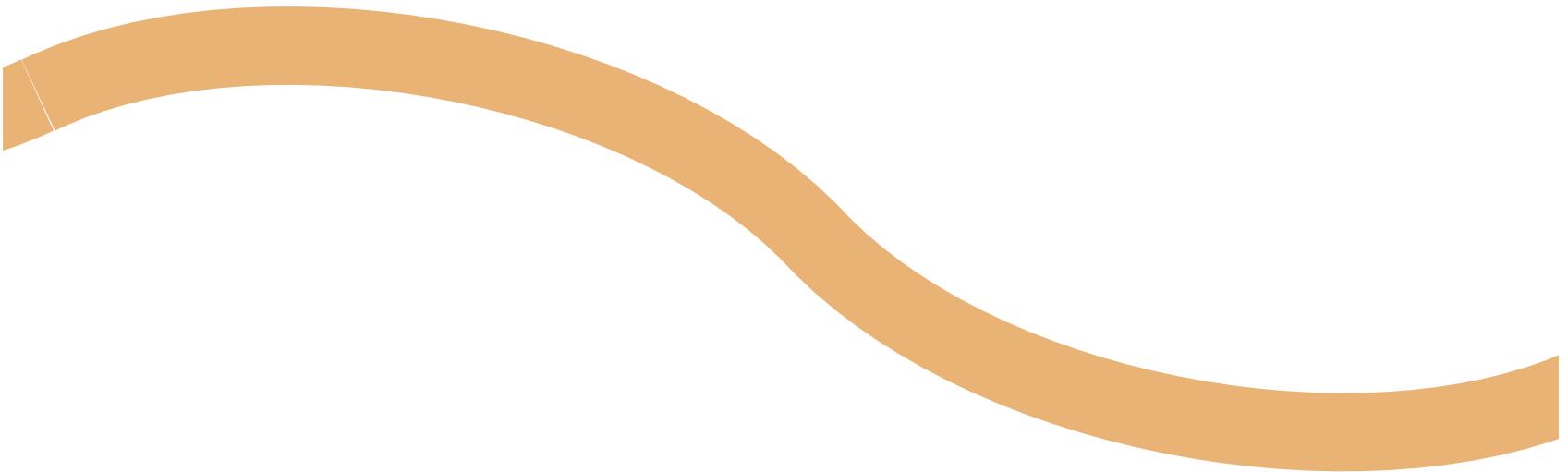




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by
Ann Holmes Redding, Ph.D.
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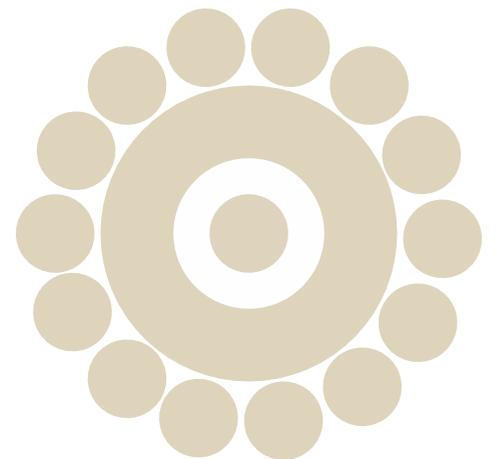


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INTRODUCTION

Why Another Curriculum on Enslavement? Why a Guide?

Even a brief online search yields many curricula and study guides for teaching the history of enslavement in the United States, so why another one? What makes this project different is that its aim is to facilitate the kind of engagement with the subject that will lead to transformation. The authors believe that it is not enough simply to recount this history because it continues powerfully to affect the present. We propose perspectives for linking the past to the present, strategies for interacting with the history today, and steps to take to create a new future informed by the past.

Relationships matter. The enslavement of Africans in America was a historical episode in our shared past that caused a rupture in the fabric of our national relationships on social, cultural, political, and economic level. It continues to be a point of contention among us. By re-examining this chapter in our history as though everyone mattered (because of course everyone does), it is our hope to foster the restoration of relationship, to help us all to become good and caring neighbors, and ultimately to heal the wound that was inflicted on this country.

We offer these pages as a guide, rather than a curriculum. We are thankful that there are so many other curricula available to provide the comprehensive information and resources for all levels of inquiry. This project is a starting point for looking at our history together, a place where we can begin to reach out to each other through honest discussion and reflection of our shared past. It also represents a starting point for the authors, who envisioned a more extensive project but whose reach was limited by time constraints. Stay tuned for more!

A Note about History, Historians, and Enslavement

As we have worked on this guide, the authors have had to reckon with an ironic reality: often the way in which the “official” history has been remembered and recorded reflects the legacy of the historical harm of the enslavement of Africans in the United States. For example, commonly used textbooks in the 1950’s and 1960’s presented as “facts” that the institution of slavery was actually beneficial to the enslaved Africans, permitting them needed exposure to the ways of the civilized world. Other examples of bias appear in accounts of African culture before the beginning of the slave trade.



Even less obvious and more complicated are the treatments of those early American heroes whose slaveholder status was downplayed or even ignored.

While we recognize that all historical writing has some kind of bias, in this curriculum we have tried to be aware and intentional about the choices we are making in light of our purpose. Here are some considerations and perspectives that have shaped our work.

1. We assume that the institution of enslavement was unjust and that it distorted right relationships among the human beings involved in it.
2. Everyone who was part of the slave society was adversely affected by it, no matter what the financial and other benefits gained by the enslavers. All descendants of the legacy, therefore, are in need of healing.
3. Undeniably, the slaveholders and traders made significant material gains from the institution and worked hard to keep it going, while those enslaved strove to resist the effects of the violation and loss of their most basic human rights, including “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Therefore, path of engagement and transformation varies from person to person, from community to community, depending upon the particular relationship of the person or community to the legacy of enslavement.

Theoretical Framework for the Curriculum

The framework of engagement and transformation used here is based on an approach called Transforming Historical Harms, developed at Eastern Mennonite University in partnership with Coming to the Table, an organization that addresses the legacy of enslavement. Transforming Historical Harms rest on four pillars: history, relevance (originally called connection), engagement (originally called healing), and action.

History: The process of transformation begins with an understanding of what happened or awareness; history provides us with that awareness, as we learn the multifaceted stories that have been told:

The history often has to be uncovered, inaccuracies, myths and lies need to be identified and because it relates to a societal event, a number of people from the different groups involved in the history are required to research and recount it. . .

Learning and understanding what actually happened from the perspectives of the dominant group and those on the “margin” is a vital step in dealing with the ramifications of historical events. . . When history from all perspectives is not conveyed, it leaves people out . .



. When stories of trauma are not conveyed, the silence and omission becomes an on-going hurt because the traumatic experience of a group of people remains unacknowledged. When two or more groups in a community hold different and conflicting histories, it keeps them apart. (Hooker & Potter Czajkowski, 2012)

Relevance: Once we have an understanding of the history, we need to understand the relevance that it holds for us today. Relevance is identifying the current cultural, political, social, and psychological manifestations of the history. Once those manifestations have been identified, connecting them to ourselves, our families, our communities, and ultimately our nation shows us just how pertinent they remain for us today:

In order to come together, it's often first important to connect one's own story (or group's story) with history. Many are unaware of how their lives, opportunities and outlook are impacted by history of trauma. One needs to move beyond "that's the way it was" or "that's just the way it is" thinking. When sufficient reflection has gone into one's story, there is more of a possibility of being understood by others and for people to find a common sense of humanity even if their lives and histories are different. (Hooker and Potter Czajkowski, 2012)

In the sections on relevance in this guide, we also ask about the "sacred stories" that relate to historical events. By "sacred stories," we mean the popular myths, beliefs, stories, images, characters, films, etc. that represent and interpret the historical episode in question and show attitudes and beliefs about that event. These "sacred stories" show how the history lives on in our cultures and communities. When we tell them across racial and ethnic groups, they allow us to understand and renegotiate our differences.

Engagement: After identifying the relevance of the history today, we must then acknowledge the significance of its impacts and our responsibility to engage in transformation. Engagement means dialogue and discussion, which can often be a challenge when the topic is race, one of the most difficult topics to raise in this country. The emotions of guilt, anger, shame, often with accompanying denial we must construct a nurturing environment, a safe container for that engagement. In the sections for each unit of the guide are frameworks and exercise to use for these purposes.

[Historical events impact] people on emotional, cognitive, behavioral, physical, and spiritual levels. People continue to be self destructive and/or harm others in all of these areas, sometimes unaware of the genesis of their behaviors and reactions. Efforts for groups that have been historically divided to work together in any capacity are limited . . . Distrust, suspicion, fear and not knowing how to act or what to say can limit potentially constructive projects.



Finding ways to face [history] and work toward healing is important. However, the challenge is that bringing up the topics related to the historic trauma will usually spark the . . . reactions of flight, fight or freeze. Intentional spaces, processes and rituals need to be created to support a person or group in facing the trauma. In the case of historic harm, because it has been buried for some time, there is often a need for groups to come together and support one another because the larger society creates a pull to ignore the harms. (Hooker and Potter Czajkowski, 2012)

Action: Finally, we must take action to be full participants in real transformation. By taking action we are, either literally or in spirit, beginning to right the wrong. Choosing an appropriate action will depend largely on the particulars of your circumstances, including the make-up and focus of your group.

Identifying [the appropriate] people, building trust and identifying barriers to working together are all part of building a team that can take action. With representation from different groups and honest conversation, the group can avoid pitfalls common to people who have grown up in divided societies. When issues do come up that threaten to get in the way of the groups' ability to work together and progress, reflection about unhealed trauma is helpful and can often identify that the problem is not the other person or people in the room but on-going patterns that have been passed down for generations.

This curriculum guideline will assist you and your group in getting beyond the "facts" of history, in order to both identify the scars left and provide you with a way to address and redress our common past.

Who Should Use this Guide

This guide was intended for use by groups whose commitment, mission, and/or a perspective that prepares them to embrace an approach that will move them beyond study to action or will support them in actions they are already taking. Often such groups will be constituencies with focused tasks within larger organizations or institutions. We envision its use by:

- College-aged people and up
- Universities: undergraduate and graduate classes, student advocacy groups, boards, faculty, administration, and staff
- Community Groups: Coming to the Table local and regional groups, anti-racism coalitions, social justice initiatives

- Religious Groups: leadership bodies, search committees, anti-racism facilitation teams, local congregations

It is our hope that future adaptations of this curriculum guide will be tailored for a variety of groups and age levels, including corporations and middle and high schools.

How to Use this Guide

Keep in mind that this guide is a place to start, not an entire curriculum. It will provide you with an outline that can be adapted to fit your constituency, giving you the framework you can use to identify the material that is best suited to your needs. Use your creativity to tailor it to your situation.

When using this guide to create your specific curriculum keep the following questions and considerations in mind:

- What is the vision/mission of the institution, organization, or group?
- How would this best support your vision/mission?
- What is the history of the organization?
- What are the ages and stages of life of your constituencies?
- What is the racial/ethnic mix of the participants?
- What is the time frame for conducting the group and/or using the curriculum guide?
- What is the geographical location?
- Any other challenges or constraints that the group may have?

Each unit will identify concrete exercises to help you with engagement, along with suggestions and guidelines when developing lesson plans for history, relevance and action.

An Overview of the Units

Each unit contains four sections: History, Relevance, Engagement and Action. The History sections point users toward the necessary information and background for the task of mending of the tears of the social fabric that are the results of this troubled past.

Our lens leads us to introduce and emphasize such issues as:

- Ethnic and racial identity development
- Development of construct of racism
- Effects of enslavement on social relationships among and between people of African and European descent
- Resistance, resilience, and opposition in response to oppression

The section on Relevance provides a list of possible areas for consideration and discussion related to the historical material presented, as well as a question about “Sacred Stories.” As was mentioned in an earlier section, by “sacred stories,” we mean the popular myths, beliefs, stories, images, characters, films, etc. that represent and interpret the historical episode in question and show attitudes and beliefs about that event. The Engagement section is distinct in providing a series of exercises, sometimes in combination with short presentations, that are designed to shape an environment that will sustain probing and deepening encounters among people of differing backgrounds and experiences. Note that for the most part the exercises for Engagement are *not* directly tied to the content of their respective units. The activities of the Action section are suggestions to spur your own imagination so that you come up with effective strategies for change in your own situation. Please adapt all the material freely, keeping in mind the goal of facilitating discussion, dialogue, and action that will lead to engagement and transformation.

- History:
 - Narrative overview
 - Major themes (bullet points)
- Relevance:
 - How the history shows up today
 - “Sacred stories”
- Engagement : Exercises for going deeper
- Action: Steps to take for transformation

UNIT I: IN THE BEGINNING— AFRICAN SOCIETIES AND CULTURES BEFORE THE TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

HISTORY

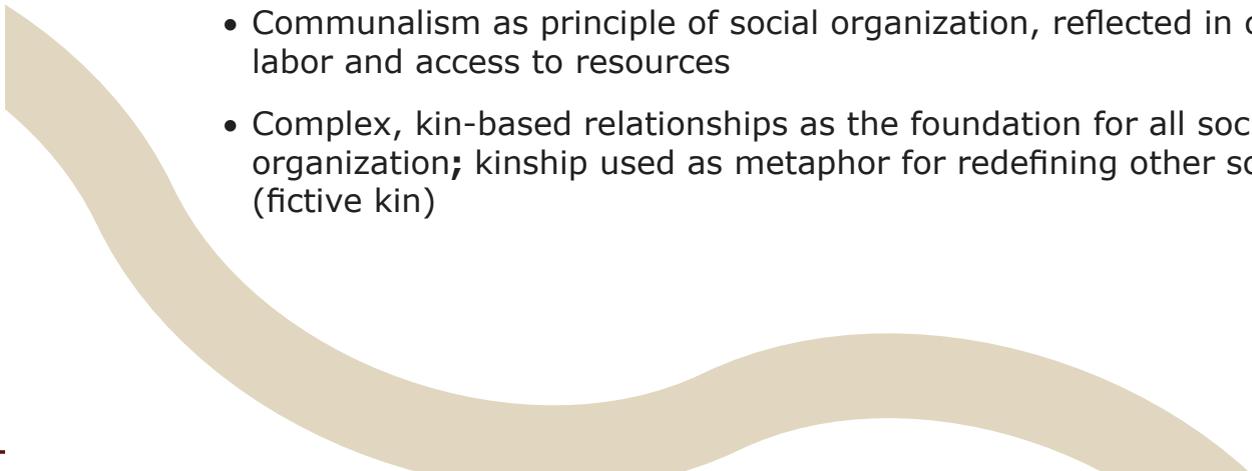
Narrative Overview

Anthropological findings of fossilized human remains in recent decades point to the conclusion that all humans are, in a sense, children of Africa. Predating the trans-Atlantic societies of West and Central Africa to which most African Americans trace their particular roots were distinguished by beliefs, perspectives, behaviors, and institutions that revolved around the interdependence and interconnections of all of life. Social communalism, the centrality of kinship relationships, holistic religious and spiritual practices, and the integration of art into all aspects of human life are some of the features societies.

West African Roots

- African ancestors of most Americans of African descent from area of West and Central Africa, south of the Sahara and extending east to the Congo River basin
- Area home to a variety of communities and cultures, ranging from tribal groupings to complex dynastic systems, including kingdoms of Ghana (4th – 13th centuries), Mali (7th – 14th centuries), and Songhai (7th – 16th centuries)

Social Organization

- Communalism as principle of social organization, reflected in cooperative labor and access to resources
 - Complex, kin-based relationships as the foundation for all social organization; kinship used as metaphor for redefining other social ties (fictive kin)
- 

- Lineage, age, and gender important factors in definition of roles, status, rights, and obligations in society
- Important roles for women in society: producer-traders, traders, agricultural workers, political advisors and leaders

Cultural Features

- Integration of the arts, especially music and dance, into all facets of life
- Holistic spirituality interweaving all life—human and beyond—and time
- Islam also present in parts of West Africa
- Aesthetic value of African handicrafts--including ironworking, weaving, wood carving, basketry, pottery making, and bronze casting—widely recognized

Economics and Labor

- Economic needs met by membership in kinship group; access to land shared based on family groupings
- Agriculture as primary activity
- Trade also important and expanding from 10th to 15th centuries, especially trans-Saharan, in gold, spices, dyes, and other commodities
- Importance of women in agricultural production, as planters and tenders, and in trade
- Slavery in Africa usually consequence of intermittent warfare, not basis for production, and included limited rights and protections

African Social and Cultural Distinctions

- Africa as strongest contender for birthplace of humanity based on discoveries there of fossilized human remains
- Communalism (African) vs. Feudalism (European)
- Integration of religion and arts in all of society (African) vs. restriction of religious and artistic activities according to status (European)
- Important roles for women
- Slavery not fundamental mode of production

RELEVANCE

In contemporary society, where and how do we see the legacy of African social and cultural practices?

- Consider, explore, and discuss the following areas:
 - Music
 - Art
 - Dance
 - Spirituality and religion
 - Behavioral and psychological traits
 - Other practices: naming, recreation

- What are the “sacred stories” we have grown up with about Africa itself, its peoples, its cultures, its place in the larger world? (“Sacred stories” here refers to popular stories, images, characters films that represent and interpret the historical episode in question and show attitudes and beliefs about that event.) What attitudes and beliefs do they express?

ENGAGEMENT

Engagement entails acknowledgment both of the impact of the history of enslavement and of our responsibility to take action for the transformation of that history. This section of the guide offers perspectives and activities to help create a nurturing environment that will be a safe container for this challenging work.

- *Touchstones*: The *Touchstones* are agreements that set the tone for group interaction. Suggested procedure:
 - Distribute copies of the *Touchstones*. (See next page for sample list.)
 - Invite group members each to read aloud one Touchstone apiece, going around the circle.
 - Ask people to identify and repeat any of the Touchstones that they recognized as particularly important to them.
 - Ask for additions to the list.
 - Ask for agreement to observe the Touchstones in the interactions of the group. Mention that anyone in the group may ask to revisit them.
 - If there are additions to the Touchstones, draw up a revised list for distribution at the next class meeting.



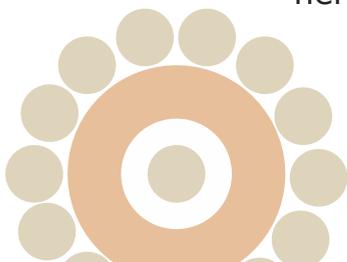
TOUCHSTONES

- **Be 100% present, extending and presuming welcome.** Set aside the usual distractions of things undone, things to do. Bring all of yourself to the experience. We all learn most effectively in welcoming spaces. Welcome others here, and presume that you are welcomed.
- **Listen deeply.** Listen intently to what is said; listen to the feelings beneath the words. “To ‘listen’ another’s soul into life, into a condition of disclosure and discovery—may be almost the greatest service that any human being ever performs for another” (Douglas Steere). Listen to yourself also. Strive to achieve a balance between listening and reflecting, speaking and acting.
- **Try it on.** Make an opening for new ideas by trying them on for size. Give yourself the time to get to know them, to consider how they fit you.
- **Always by invitation.** It is never “share or die.” You will be invited to share in pairs, small groups, and in the large group. The invitation is exactly that. You will determine the extent to which you want to participate in our discussions or activities.
- **No fixing.** Each of us is here to discover his or her own truths. We are *not* here to set someone else straight, or to help right another’s wrong, to “fix” or “correct” what we perceive as broken or incorrect in another member of the group.
- **Identify assumptions; suspend judgments.** Our assumptions, although usually invisible to us, often undergird our worldview; our judgments, frequently automatic, can block our growth. By pausing to identify assumptions and suspend judgments, we can listen to the other, and to ourselves, more fully.
- **Speak your truth.** Say what is in your heart, trusting that your voice will be heard and your contribution respected, even if it is different from or even opposite of what another has said. *Own* your truth by speaking only for yourself, using “I” statements.
- **Be aware of and allow for the difference between intention and impact.** Give yourself and others the grace of assuming that no one present *intends* to harm others, even though the *impact* of another’s speech or behavior sometimes may be discomfort or pain.
- **Whenever possible, acknowledge uncomfortable responses: say “ouch!” or “whoops!”; then explain.** Let others know when you are responding with pain to remarks in the group, either from others (“ouch!”) or yourself (“whoops!”), especially when your feelings are impeding your ability to stay connected to others. Help them understand the reason for your reaction.

- **Respect silence.** Silence is a rare gift. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect and fully listen, without immediately filling the space with words.
- **Maintain confidentiality.** Create a safe space by respecting the confidential nature and content of discussions in the circle. What is said in the circle remains here.
- **When things get difficult, turn to wonder; try “both/and”, rather than “either/or.”** When someone else’s truth challenges your own, try turning to wonder: “I wonder what brought her to this place?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me?” Also, allow for the possibility of multiple experiences and perspectives: let “both/and” create a larger, shared space.
- **Expect “non-closure.”** Stay in the present. We probably won’t get to the end of the road today.

(These Touchstones are adapted from ideas, concepts, and practices used in a Circle of Trust. The **Circle of Trust®** approach is a Registered Trademark and can only be used by trained facilitators. Other sources include: The Welcome Table of Mississippi 2010 and Visions, Inc. Version for *Revisiting the History of Enslavement in the United States: A Curriculum Guide for Engagement and Transformation*, Ann Holmes Redding, Ph.D., and Pat Russell, Psy.D.)

- *Expectations, Fears, Hopes:* This exercise helps people feel more connected by providing a safe way to express their honest concerns about the class. It can also alleviate the tension that comes from unspoken anxieties in the room and let people know that they are not alone in their anticipations.
 - Distribute an index card to each participant.
 - Explain the purpose and process of exercise before beginning.
 - Have each person write the headings **expectation**, **fear**, and **hope** on the card and then list in one personal expectation, fear, and hope about the class. Important points to emphasize: (1) Write legibly so that someone else can read your comments. (2) Do *not* sign the card. (3) Label the expectation, the fear, and the hope.
 - Circulate a basket (or other container) to collect the cards.
 - Circulate the basket a second time and have each person pulls a card out from the basket, returning it if it happens to be his or her own and selecting another.



- Going around the circle the first time, have each person read out an expectation. Pause at the end of the go-round so that the group can absorb what they've heard. Repeat the process with the fears and then the hopes.
- Give the group a brief time for discussion of any feelings, surprises, reliefs that arose from expressing and hearing the expectations, fears, and hopes.

ACTION

- Locate and support a local institution or organization that focuses on people of African descent and their history and culture.
- Participate in an African or African American cultural event.
- Attend a service at a black church, mosque, or other religious institution .

UNIT II: AFRICA MEETS EUROPE: THE TRANS-ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

HISTORY

Narrative Overview

The trans-Atlantic slave trade beginning in the late 15th century was driven by the social and commercial needs for expansion in Europe, which it benefited greatly. In contrast, the impact on the African continent of this venture was devastating, including the decimation of the population, social destabilization, and a halt and reversal of economic development. In the face of the brutal conditions of their capture, transport, and sale, Africans rebelled and resisted in a variety of ways.

Background of the trans-Atlantic slave trade

- Precedent set for practices of enslavement in earlier slave societies of Europe, especially under the Roman Empire, and by feudalism
- Terms of trade set by Europeans and later European Americans
- Shift in 15th century to mercantile and manufacturing economy with needs for raw materials, new markets, and labor force
- European edge over Africa in overseas navigation, weaponry, and scale of production
- Trade brings unprecedented wealth to European countries and to European peoples in the Americas

Conditions for captives of trans-Atlantic slave trade (15th century – beginning of 19th century, known in Swahili as the *Maafa*, or “great disaster”)

- March of up to 1000 miles from inland to coast
- Internment before voyage for as long as several weeks: stripped, branded, separated from own groups, caged

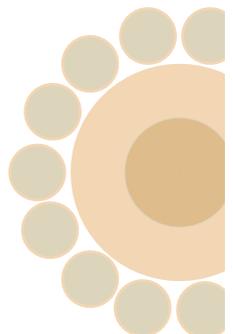
- Ocean voyage from Africa to Americas, known as Middle Passage, one leg of complex enterprise sometimes called Triangular or Triangle Trade, also involving cotton, sugar, tobacco, rum, and manufactured goods
- Estimated mortality rate of during overseas trip from malnutrition, suffocation, and disease: 13 – 33% (also high for crew and passengers)

Opposition and Resistance to Slave Trade

- Opposition to European conquest and slave trade from various African leaders, including Nzenga Meremba (Congo), Queen Nzinga (Angola) and Tomba (Guinea), over 16th – 18th centuries
- Shipboard resistance in many forms from insurrections to suicides
- Building momentum in late 17th century in Europe and the United States against slave trade resulting in eventual prohibition (1807 in England and the United States), although illegal trade continues well into 19th century

Consequences for African Continent

- Pre-conditions for colonization and underdevelopment set by slave trade in West and Central Africa
- Populations decimated: estimated 10,000,000 to 100,000,000 Africans either brought to the Americas or killed in process, largest migration in human history
- Disruption of relationships among tribal and ethnic groups
- Undermining of economic, social, and cultural relations, institutions, and practices



RELEVANCE

In contemporary society, where and how do we see the legacy of the trans-Atlantic slave trade?

- Consider, explore, and discuss the following areas:
 - Current American institutions with roots in slave trade:
 - universities
 - corporations and businesses
 - foundations
 - banks
 - religious institutions
 - Violence
 - Consumerism
 - Rugged individualism
 - Private ownership
 - Challenges in African nation-building
 - Creative adaptive strengths of people of African descent

- What are the “sacred stories” we have grown up with about the trans-Atlantic slave trade? (“Sacred stories” here refers to popular stories, images, characters, films, etc. that represent and interpret the historical episode in question and show attitudes and beliefs about that event.) What attitudes and beliefs do they express?

ENGAGEMENT

Addressing this history can raise powerful feelings that make it difficult to interact across racial and ethnic lines. A theory can help put these strong emotions into perspective and enable group participants to continue to engage one another. Present, discuss, and ask group to adopt this theory as a foundation for working with one another.

- *Mutual Engagement Theory*: This four-point theory was developed in the course of facilitating groups who are addressing the legacy of enslavement.

1. Acknowledgement of one another's humanity and of the need to be in positive relationships:

Every human being has an innate need for mutuality, specifically for mutual positive affirmation. Holding one another in positive regard is an essential ingredient in doing this work together. Equal acknowledgment and weight are given to the difficult feelings that arise for most, if not all, participants.

2. Recognition of diverse responses to legacy of historical oppression,
 - a. manifest in personal attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors, and
 - b. depending on relationship to legacy
 - i. as targets (victims)
 - ii. as perpetrators (oppressors)
 - iii. as witnesses (bystanders):

Oppression produces a legacy of dysfunction in all of us. However, it creates different expressions of that dysfunction in different groups. We recognize and honor the differences in manifestation of the dysfunction between the inheritors of different portions of the legacy.

3. Setting the goal of transformation, rather than coping:

To right the wrongs left by the legacy of enslavement, the goal of this work must be transformation, rather than adjustment to existing circumstances. The commitment to transformation takes sustained work and may force us out of our comfort zone, but it facilitates true reconciliation.

4. Commitment to forming mutually accountable and respectful relationships across all lines of identity and legacy:

Because this history has harmed our connections with one another, we share in the responsibility of working for transformation. In our relationships we sustain a vision of the common good by making a commitment to work together, not to retreat into conflicting parties.

ACTION

- Investigate local institutions that have connections to the slave trade. Consider options for accountability.
- Host a public viewing and discussion of the film, "Traces of the Trade" (see resource list).
- Check out and participate in Maafa commemorations in your area.
- Spend one day without using violent words or behaviors.
- See how long a period you can go without making a purchase.

UNIT III: AFRICAN ENSLAVEMENT AND THE CHARACTER OF THE UNITED STATES

HISTORY

Narrative Overview

The enslavement of Africans—beginning in colonial days and persisting through the successful war for independence from England—was a contradiction to the fundamental values of the fledgling “free” nation of the United States of America. The necessity for labor to clear and develop the land, the challenges in subduing the indigenous populations, and the physical distinctiveness and strength of Africans were among the foundational factors in the formation of the so-called “peculiar institution” of slavery. The ideology and practices of racism were developed to justify the inhumane institution. Although conditions varied depending upon geography, climate, the kind of labor needed, and other circumstances, slavery was generally characterized by restrictions or absence of most human rights and privileges. The enslaved people resisted in a variety of ways to maintain their self-understanding of their own humanity, while people of European descent often lived in some measure of fear of uprisings and retaliation.

Background for enslavement of Africans in the U. S.

- Labor shortage, particularly in agriculture, threat to physical and economic survival of early European settlers
- Inability of settlers to enslave native population
- Prior importation of Africans as slaves in Europe and in the Caribbean and South America

Paradox of enslavement of Africans and the freedom of the United States

- Central contradiction in national values between freedom, democracy, and equality on one hand and slavery, exploitation, and injustice on the other – hypocrisy, denial, guilt, anger

- First person to die fighting for independence of the American colonies man of African descent
- Unequal status of enslaved Africans implicit in the Constitution of the newly liberated country and enshrined in later national and state laws
- Triumph of utilitarianism
- Meritocracy as myth

Statistics and dates

- First Africans brought to U. S. to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619; trade outlawed in 1802, but continued illegally into mid-19th century
- Resurgence in institution after 1793 invention of cotton gin increases demand for labor, especially in deep South
- 500,000 African survivors of voyage to American colonies, later the United States (out of 13,000,000 total to North and South America and the Caribbean)
- 4,000, 000 enslaved in southern U. S. in 1860
- 13% of slaveholders owned 60% of enslaved population

Features of enslavement in the U. S.

- Considerable variance in circumstances depending upon location, time, and kind of labor: for example, tobacco farming in Virginia, rice fields in low-country Georgia and South Carolina, sugar plantations in Louisiana, and cotton plantations in Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas
- Deterrents to formation of families: emphasis on breeding; strict restrictions of rights and obligations of kinship; little or no resources or opportunity to form marital or parental relationships; men unable to protect partners from abuse; constant possibility of separation and resulting instability
- Desire for maximal yield from labor often meant physical exploitation
- Limitations on movement, education, and association of enslaved population
- Those in bondage pitted against one another on basis of kind of labor
- Religion used as means of subjugation – Christianity taught as form of social control, with emphasis on duties of the enslaved to be obedient to slave masters

- Strict sanctions for any behaviors that threatened continuation of system, including punishments ranging from severe whipping, branding, and castration to death for violence of enslaved people against whites or attempted escape
- In North, enslaved people often artisans or crafts persons living as the only or one of two or three enslaved people in a close quarters with whites in household

Evidence of resilience and resistance among enslaved population

- Formation of strong ties despite efforts to destroy families: chief reason given for escape to find kin
- Creation of distinctive forms of religion, music, and art that enabled resistance and strengthened sense of humanity
- Continued resistance in the forms of rebellion, escape, and sabotage

Effects of enslavement on European Americans

- Slaveholders in constant fear of rebellion and resistance; great need to control
- Working-class whites, especially in the South, given privileges to distinguish them from enslaved Africans
- Northern working-class whites resentful of competition of slave labor
- Political power of southern states strengthened by numbers of slaves (counted for representation as 3/5 of person)

Development of ideology of racism

- Needed initially to justify the exploitation of native Americans and Africans; once established, becomes reason to maintain unequal status even after end of legal enslavement
- Encoded in laws, particularly slave codes, that institutionalize racially-based differentiation of status
- Reinforced in development of attitude and beliefs
- Science and religion employed as supports
- Whites given racially based privileges and divided from blacks in order to prevent solidarity among workers

RELEVANCE

In contemporary society, where and how do we see the legacy of the institution of the enslavement of Africans?

- Consider the following areas:
 1. Local institutions connected to the history of enslavement:
 - Plantations
 - Businesses that used slave labor
 - Religious institutions
 2. Family genealogies
 3. Restrictive covenants still in effect
 4. “The New Jim Crow” movement
 5. Current legislation and practices that involve the control of the human body and/or labor (examples: women’s reproductive rights, the prison industrial complex, intellectual property laws, etc.).
- What are the “sacred stories” we have grown up with about the institution of enslavement and its relationship to the character of America? (“Sacred stories” here refers to popular stories, images, characters, films, etc. that represent and interpret the historical episode in question and show attitudes and beliefs about that event.) What attitudes and beliefs do they express?

ENGAGEMENT

- *Feelings as Compass*: This presentation and exercise provides a strategy for groups to address together the difficult feelings, including anger, shame, guilt, embarrassment, and hopelessness that can arise. (The basic concepts of this approach come from the work of Visions, Inc.) Suggested procedure:
 - Presentation:
 - This work on slavery brings up difficult feelings, feelings that we would like to avoid or that can push us away from the conversation.
 - These same feelings can be seen as resources, if we understand two-part approach for dealing with them.
 - Part 1: Expression of the feelings – we need to provide each other with “safe-enough” space to let the feelings out, so that the energy bound up in them can be released and discharged.
 - Part 2: Use of feelings as compass points, from which we can take readings to help us orient ourselves and better understand the differing legacies of slavery.
 - Second part of approach actually helps us get perspective on our feelings so that we can give each other space to express them.
 - Feelings as compass points:
 - Three “families” of painful feelings point to three different kinds of experiences or perceptions.
 - *Sad* family points to experience or perception of loss.
 - *Scared* family points to experience or perception of danger.
 - *Mad* family points to experience or perception of violation.
 - Exercise
 - On newsprint, write headings for each of the families of feelings “Sad: points to loss”; “Scared: points to danger”; “Mad: points to violation.”

- Taking each family in turn, ask for examples of feelings that would fit under the category and list them under the appropriate heading.
- Ask class what kinds of feelings have surfaced for them in dealing with their familial relationship to enslavement.
- Discussion questions:
 - What historical or current experiences or perceptions of loss, danger, or violation do the feelings point toward? What did your people lose in slavery? What were the dangers? What were the violations? Ask people for concrete examples and stories, if possible.
 - What differences and similarities are there in the patterns of feelings among people of African descent? among people of European descent?
 - What do we need from each other in order to express and heal from these feelings?
- Closing: Invite the group to reflect on their experience of doing this exercise.
- *Earliest Awareness of Race:* This exercise allows participants to explore their own introduction to racial difference. Suggested procedure:
 - In groups of two, have participants take equal turns of two to three minutes describing their earliest awareness of race.
 - The listener lets the speaker use the time as he or she wants without interruption or comment.
 - Remind the group of confidentiality
 - The facilitator times the turns.
 - Possible questions:
 - What is your earliest memory having to do with race, even if you did not know the word at the time?
 - Who was involved?
 - How did you feel?
 - What did you do?
 - In the larger group, invite participants to reflect about:
 - Their feelings in sharing their memories
 - The relationship of their story to the legacy of slavery

ACTION

- Organize a public event or series for sharing about legacy of enslavement.
- Start a dialogue with representatives of local institutions that have historical ties to slavery.
- Do an oral history project with descendants of slaveholders and/or enslaved persons.

UNIT IV: EMANCIPATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

HISTORY

Narrative Overview

From colonial days on the issue of the enslavement of Africans in the United States posed social, political, economic, and moral challenges and ongoing conflict. Although there has been debate over its causes, the Civil War between the Northern and Southern states (1861 – 1865) can be seen as the eruption of that foundational dispute. In the midst of the conflict, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and efforts collectively known as Reconstruction began to transform the status of the enslaved population into that of free women and men. For the first decade after the war, African Americans made significant inroads in the political, educational, and economic life of the South. However, these gains were reversed when in the late 1870's, Reconstruction came to an end.

Controversy about Slavery

- Political compromise over slavery between North and South in legislation including the U. S. Constitution (1787) and Fugitive Slave Acts (1793 and 1850)
- Northern efforts in opposition to slavery among whites and free blacks beginning in late 17th century
- U. S. participation in slave trade outlawed in early 19th century
- Disputes over social, ethical, and economic impact of institution

The Civil War

- Slavery underlying all factors leading to war: Southern vs. Northern economic dominance, states' vs. federal rights, the election of Abraham Lincoln
- Deadliest war in U. S. history: over 600,000 combatant deaths (2% of the population)

- Secession of Southern states beginning after November 1860 election of Abraham Lincoln as U. S. president
- Significant participation of African Americans: 85% of eligible African American men enlisted
- Duration of Civil War: April 1861 to April 1865

Process of Emancipation

- Emancipation Proclamation issued by Lincoln applicable to all enslaved in Confederate territories, January 1, 1863
- Delay of news of emancipation because of war – “Juneteenth” holiday commemorating announcement of freedom in Texas, June 19, 1865

Reconstruction

- Reconstruction starting before end of Civil War as blacks begin to take on rights and responsibilities of citizenship, including military service
- Citizenship and black men’s suffrage established through constitutional amendments
- Shift in political power in Southern states as African Americans and white allies take public office
- Educational institutions established for African Americans
- End of Reconstruction in late 1870’s as result of violent opposition to Reconstruction from white Southerners and political compromise from the North
- Reversal of Reconstruction: dismantling of laws and institutions supporting rights of African Americans; loss of property and life through violence
- Reconstruction succeeded by Jim Crow Era, which was marked by legalized racial segregation and inequality
- Jim Crow practices challenged by Civil Rights Movement of 1950’s and 1960’s, although prejudice and structural inequities persist to today

RELEVANCE

In contemporary society, where and how do we see the legacy of emancipation and Reconstruction?

- Consider the following areas:
 - Impact of movements toward racial justice and equality for African Americans
 - Civil Rights and Black Empowerment movements
 - Legal efforts to end discrimination
 - Persistence of construct of race and racial disparities in the United States:
 - Politics
 - Housing
 - Education
 - Health care
 - Prison-industrial complex
 - Religion
 - Art and Culture
 - Regionalism in America
- What are the “sacred stories” we have grown up with about emancipation, the Civil War, and Reconstruction? (“Sacred stories” here refers to popular stories, images, characters, films, etc. that represent and interpret the historical episode in question and show attitudes and beliefs about that event.) What attitudes and beliefs do they express?



ENGAGEMENT

The exercises described in this section give frameworks for moving into and out of the time and space dedicated to addressing this history and a strategy for building capacity for persistence in deeper engagement of the issues.

- *Opening and Closing Circles:* The simple practice of “bookending” sessions with opening and closing circles provides transitions into the shared space at the beginning of a session and then back out into the wider world at the end. Transition rituals are also important at the beginning and end of series of classes or dialogues. For more detailed guidance, see *The Little Book of Circle Processes* in the Resources section. Suggested procedures:
 - *Opening Circles*
 - Welcome: Remind group of purpose and challenge of the task. Applaud them for coming back.
 - Check-in: Allow brief updating and sharing to refocus on task at end and to report on developments that give reason for hope and encouragement.
 - *Closing Circles*
 - Take-Away: Ask each participant for one insight or question he or she will take away for further reflection.
 - Anticipation: Invite them to share something they are looking forward to.
- *The Slinky Effect:* This presentation and exercise provide an effective way to deal with the “ricochet” dynamic in groups who work together across racial lines to confront and transform historical harms.
 - Presentation
 - If you’ve ever played with a Slinky, you know that once you put it in motion you have to give it a little push to keep it moving from side to side. When we work with complex emotions that can cause us “dis-ease,” we can use a similar approach to keep the interaction moving forward, rather than getting bogged down or locked into a conflict.
 - When someone else in the group expresses an uncomfortable emotion—such as anger, shame or guilt, we feel a little emotional push. This sense of “dis-ease” is a normal and healthy reaction to what we perceive as



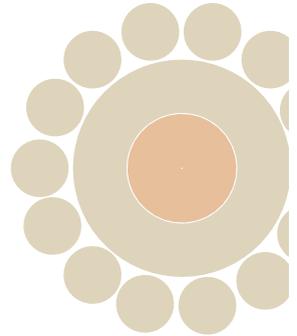
a negative emotion. However, we must move beyond the automatic reaction in order to make a space to receive and respond to the heartfelt experiences of others in the group in an empathetic and useful way.

- When we feel dis-ease, we tend to react immediately in ways in one (or some combination) of four ways, by trying to:
 - Soothe: In soothing, we may dismiss or comfort the person thereby comforting ourselves and others in the room. Often this reaction leads to shutting down or diverting the conversation.
 - Fight back: When we fight back, we are usually responding with anger, which again can close down communication.
 - Run: We run in various ways: physically, emotionally (numbing out, spacing out, joking), or cognitively (diverting). In order to continue engaging one another, people need to be at the table – not running from it.
 - Freeze: When we freeze we try to become invisible by not moving. We want to blend into the scenery to stop the interaction. Physically, we can stop breathing or moving, become very quiet, and try to shrink.
- Practices for self-awareness
 - Listen to your body – note physical changes.
 - Listen to your emotions – if it feels a little askew, it probably is; don't intellectually override what you're feeling.
 - Do use your intellect to analyze what you're feeling and to think about next steps.
 - At an appropriate time, check in with another person.
- To use the Slinky Effect to keep the group moving forward, we have to learn to recognize our reactions, contain them, and then give a gentle but firm, push-back. Just like a Slinky. Guidelines for pushing back:

- Use a calm, gentle tone.
- Check in with the person or persons: “I’m sensing a little _____ with you. Is that right?”
- Ask permission to explore the feeling: “Are you willing to talk more about what’s going on with me? In front of the group?”
- Ask about the cause: “What’s happening?”
- Reframe what you hear.
- Take a break when:
 - You need to check in with someone one-on-one
 - Folks are very slow to respond
 - Only a few folks are talking
 - You reach an impasse
 - People need time to evaluate a new topic
 - You need a fresh perspective
 - Folks seem just too tired to move on
- Exercise
 - In dyads, have group members take turns answering the following questions:
 - What are the physical and emotional signs in your body and mind when you experience “dis-ease”?
 - What do you do when triggered? Do you characteristically
 - Soothe
 - Fight back
 - Run away
 - Freeze?
 - How do you see yourself gently pushing back?

ACTION

- Host film screening and discussion of *Glory*.
- Research and visit local monuments and sites commemorating the Civil War. Assess their portrayal of the conflict in terms of the history of enslavement and participation of African Americans.
- Form or join advocacy group addressing racial disparities in public policies.



RESOURCES

Websites

Unit I:

"African Timelines – Part II: African Empires AD/CE 1st – 15th centuries"
<http://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum211/timelines/htimeline2.htm>

Unit II:

Traces of the Trade
<http://www.tracesofthetrade.org/guides-and-materials/>

Holloway, Joseph E. "Insurrection On Board Slave Ships." http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_es_insurrection.htm

Visual records of the Atlantic Trade:
<http://hitchcock.itc.virginia.edu/Slavery/index.php>

"Overview," *Understanding Slavery Initiative*.
<http://www.understandingslavery.com/>

Unit III

Wahl, Jenny B. "Slavery in the United States." <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/wahl.slavery.us> (web site of Economic History Association)

"South Carolina Slave Laws Summary and Record," http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/geography/slave_laws_SC.htm

Units II – III

Davis, Ronald L. F. "Slavery in America: Historical Overview."
http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_es_overview.htm

Units III – IV

"American Anti-Slavery and Civil Rights Timeline," <http://www.ushistory.org/more/timeline.htm>

"American Anti-Slavery and Civil Rights Timeline," <http://www.ushistory.org/more/timeline.htm>

The History Channel – great short video clips surrounding enslavement & the Civil War, <http://www.history.com/topics/s>

African-American Slave Testimonies and Photographs (includes WPA interviews)
http://www.paperlessarchives.com/african-american_slave_testimo.html

History of slavery with prominent historical white figures mentioned
Philadelphia: The Great Experiment - "Civil Rights" RT: 9:44
<http://www.historyofphilly.com/media.html>

Units II - IV:

"American Anti-Slavery and Civil Rights Timeline," <http://www.ushistory.org/more/timeline.htm>

History of slavery with prominent historical white figures mentioned
Philadelphia: The Great Experiment - "Civil Rights" RT: 9:44
<http://www.historyofphilly.com/media.html>

About.com's resource page to enslavement in the US
<http://civilliberty.about.com/od/raceequalopportunity/ig/History-of-Black-Civil-Rights/Slavery-in-the-United-States.htm>

Lesson plans, links, and objectives
http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/history/hs_es_overview.htm

Units III-IV:

Info Please: African-American History Timeline
<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/bhmtimeline.html>

The Library of Congress: African American Odyssey
<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/aaohhtml/exhibit/aointro.html>

Images of African-American Slavery and Freedom
From the Collections of the Library of Congress
http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/082_slave.html

Africans in America: PBS series & resources
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/home.html>

You Tube – one of a series on enslavement
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jc1RbUxQv4E&noredirect=1>



Wahl, Jenny B. "Slavery in the United States." <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/wahl.slavery.us> (web site of Economic History Association)

African-American Slave Testimonies and Photographs (includes WPA interviews)
http://www.paperlessarchives.com/african-american_slave_testimo.html

The History Channel – great short video clips surrounding enslavement & the Civil War
<http://www.history.com/topics/s>

Units I-IV:

"African Timeline – Table of Contents."
<http://web.cocc.edu/cagatucci/classes/hum211/timelines/htimelinetoc.htm>
<http://www.kurahulanda.com/slavery/slavery-a-abolition-in-the-usa>

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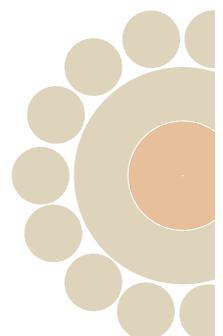
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 Read more: <http://www.answers.com/topic/john-wesley-blassingame#ixzz1ox9E54Ov>

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Films

Unit II:

"Traces of the Trade"

"Amistad"

Unit III:

"Sankofa"

Unit IV

"Glory"





