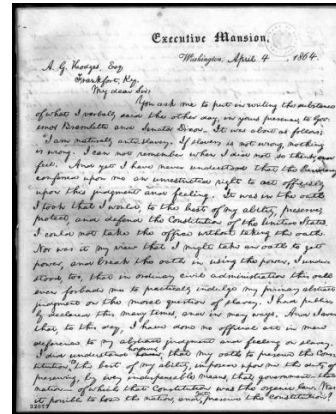


0. SLAVERY IS WRONG - Story Preface
1. FREEDOM DAY
2. EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION LIMITATIONS
- 3. SLAVERY IS WRONG**
4. THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION
5. THE SOUTH REJOINS THE UNION
6. BAD DECISIONS MAKE BAD LAW
7. WHAT WERE JIM CROW LAWS?
8. FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM
9. THE INFAMOUS LAWS
10. A SHAMEFUL LEGACY



On the 4th of April, in 1864, President Lincoln wrote a letter confirming a conversation he'd had about a week earlier with officials from Kentucky (then a "border state") about allowing runaway male slaves to gain their freedom by serving in the Federal Army. Near the beginning of the letter, which is now maintained by the Library of Congress, Lincoln wrote: "I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel. And yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling." This facsimile image depicts the first page of Lincoln's letter. [Click here](#) to read the rest of it.

On the momentous day Lincoln signed the Proclamation, he did the most that he, as President, could do. Slavery had been legal in America since 1619, when the first Jamestown settlers used slaves. But, for the 16th American president, "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong."

Here's what [Lincoln knew](#).

Africans had been "imported" (that word was used in contemporary flyers) and were "sold at private sale" for work on plantations in the South. What did "imported" mean? Just as it sounds: Africans were taken from one country (their own) and shipped as "cargo" to another (America).

Sadly, even "imported" is a euphemism which hardly comes close to the facts.

Africans were kidnapped against their will, forcibly placed in detention enclosures (a slave barracoon) while still in Africa, and then jammed into ships to travel to the "New World" as products to be sold at auction. Many captives didn't survive the journey. Those who did faced an oppressive life in a country where they couldn't even keep their own names. (Remember Roots - by Alex Haley - where Kunta Kinte became known as "Toby?")

Once sold to a plantation owner, Africans who had children provided the owner with more free labor.

Slaves, including young people, faced life in a land where a "Fugitive Slave Law" made escape a crime not just for runaways but for the people who helped them - and - authorized rewards for those who turned them in. (Scroll down to the last sentence of this flyer where the "owner" of a runaway offers a greater reward than "the law allows.")

As Lincoln said:

If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong.

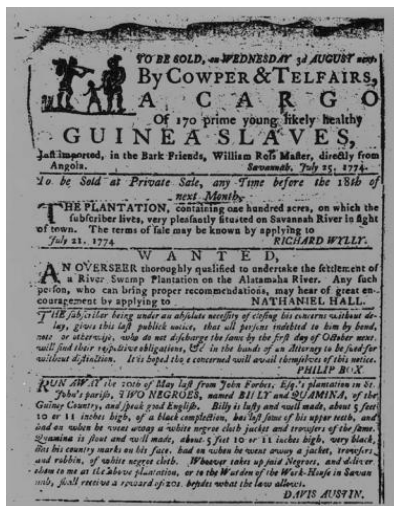
The 16th President did what even the Founding Fathers had not done. He took the first formal step to eliminate the "right" any man had to "own" another.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/SLAVERY-IS-WRONG-Jim-Crow-Laws>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/SLAVERY-IS-WRONG-Jim-Crow-Laws>



Auction Notice - Slave Sale

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Auction-Notice-Slave-Sale>

Method of Controlling Kidnapped Slaves

This drawing, created by Lt. Henry Hand of the British Navy, circa 1858, is based on his personal observations of incidents occurring after the abolition of the slave trade.

The caption reads:

A French Free Emigrant on his Way to the Barracoons of M. Regis.

Lt. Hand was stationed onboard the HMS Vesuvius. While cruising along the West African coast, he took a small vessel and went ashore. While ashore, he saw how "the 'French Free Emigrants' are conveyed to the Barracoons."

Enclosing his drawing with a letter, which he wrote to his commanding officer on 8 September 1858, Hand also provided more details:

...you will observe, sir, by the manner in which he is made fast to the end of a pole that there is little probability of his being permitted to change his mind without incurring considerable risk of breaking his neck ...

This observation is significant because the tethered person was supposed to be "free."

Captains of French ships purchased slaves, from African locals, then declared them "free." These "free" people were then shipped to French-owned islands in the Caribbean to serve as indentured servants.

The period of indenture was usually six years.

Lt. Hand was reporting this because, among other things, the British government found this practice to be another form of illegal slave trading. See *Freedom and Indentured Labor in the French Caribbean, 1949-1900*, by David Northrup, included in David Eltis, ed., *Coerced and Free Migrations: Global Perspectives* (Sanford University Press, 2002, at pages 204-28).

Click on the image for a better view.

The original of this image is maintained in London: Public Record Office, London (FO 84/1070).

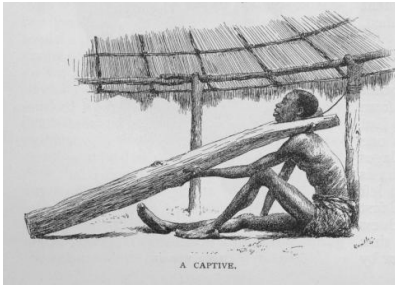
Online, courtesy "Slavery Images" sponsored by Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library; compiled by Jerome Handler and Michael Tuite. Image Reference: PRO-4.

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Captive Slave - Example of Control

Image - entitled "A Captive" - from E.J. Glave, *The Slave-Trade in the Congo Basin*. Illustrated after sketches from life by the author (*The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, 1889-1890), vol. 39, pp. 824-838. Online, as shown at [Slavery Images](#) (image reference C011) compiled by Jerome Handler and Michael Tuite, and sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library.

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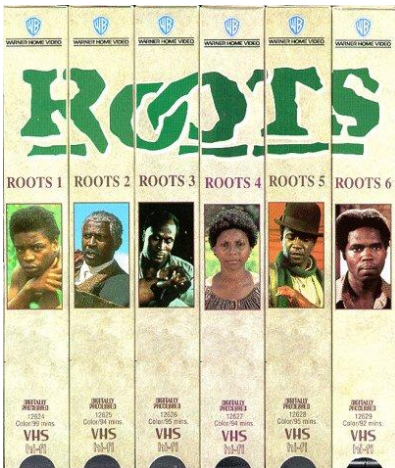
Barracoon - A Slave Shed

Image - entitled "Slave-Shed" - from E.J. Glave, *The Slave-Trade in the Congo Basin*. Illustrated after sketches from life by the author (*The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, 1889-1890), vol. 39, pp. 824-838. Online, as shown at [Slavery Images](#) (image reference C009) compiled by Jerome Handler and Michael Tuite, and sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library.

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View this asset at:

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Roots - the Mini-Series by Alex Haley

Image online, courtesy [amazon.com](#) website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Roots-the-Mini-Series-by-Alex-Haley>



"Am I not a Man and a Brother?"

Image, courtesy Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/-Am-I-not-a-Man-and-a-Brother->

Washington April 4, 1864.

A. G. Kersey, Esq.
Baltimore, Md.
My dear Sir:

You ask me to put in writing the positions of what I verbally said the other day, on your journey to Fort Sumter and Sumter River. It was about as follows: I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think or feel. And yet I have never understood that the binding conscience upon me was insufficient right to act offensively upon this pigment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I swore to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath in using the power, I never stood so, that in ordinary civil administration the oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. I had rather be declared the many times, and in my words. And I have that to this day, I have done no official act in more reference to my abstract judgment and feeling on slavery. I did understand, however, that my oath to preserve the Union, the best of my ability, required upon me the duty of preserving, by every means possible, those that government, the nature of which that Constitution was the organ, have. Nor it possible to keep the nation, and preserve the Constitution?

SLAVERY IS WRONG

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/>