12 Years a Slave



0. 12 Years a Slave - Story Preface

1. Slave Pens in Washington

2. Platt's Journey to Slavery in Louisiana

3. Life as a Louisiana Slave

4. Life as the Slave of John Tibeats

5. Life as a Slave of Edwin Epps

6. The Beating of Patsey, the Slave

7. Platt Meets Bass

8. Bass Helps Platt (Solomon Northup)

9. A Plan for Freedom

10. Solomon Northup Goes Home

11. Not-Guilty Verdicts at Trial

In this still from "12 Years a Slave," we see Edwin Epps (plantation-owner and "Master") threatening Patsey (an extremely hard-working slave) in the presence of Solomon Northup (whose slave name was "Platt"). Image, copyright, Summit Entertainment, Regency Enterprises, River Road Entertainment, Film4 and Plan B, all rights reserved. Provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with the film.

> *The hope of rescue*
> *was the only light*
> *that cast a ray of comfort*
> *on my heart.*
>
> Solomon Northup
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Once, not that long ago, America's capital had slave pens. Then known as Washington City, the place featured a line of sight between slave pens and the country's Capitol Building.

Washington was also a place where free blacks could be sold, as slaves, to pay for outstanding costs, like jail fees. A handbill, published in 1836, called the city "Slave Market of America."

In 1841, a black freeman named Solomon Northup passed through Washington City, on his way to slavery in the South. He did not walk through town along Pennsylvania Avenue, like so many other black people who marched there, single file, in slave coffles.

A violinist, among other things, Solomon had been duped by two white men who offered him the promise of employment with a circus.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/12-Years-a-Slave0

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/12-Years-a-Slave0

Questions 2 Ponder

Why Were Slave Pens Allowed to Exist in America's Capital?

The buying-and-selling of people occurred near the U.S. Capitol Building, the place where U.S. legislators debated and passed laws impacting enslaved people.

Do you think that fact influenced, or did not influence, nineteenth-century American lawmakers who enacted laws such as the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act?

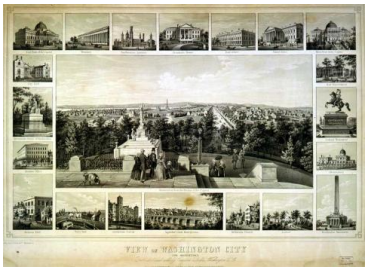
If legislators routinely saw Washington City slave pens, making them directly aware of the impact of slavery on people, what may have caused them to become hardened to the plight of such individuals?

How Do We Remain Hopeful When the Odds are Stacked against Us?

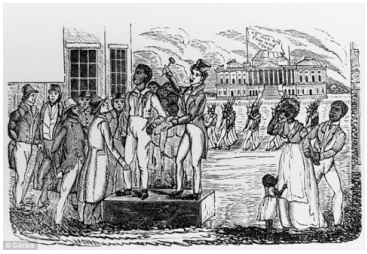
What does Northup mean when he says: “The hope of rescue was the only light that cast a ray of comfort on my heart?”

What is it, about the human spirit, which helps us to be hopeful even when the odds are overwhelmingly stacked against us?

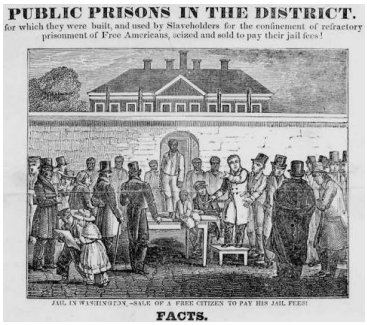
Media Stream



Washington City in the 1840s
Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.
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Washington Slave Pen in Sight of the Capitol
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Free Blacks Sold as Slaves in Washington City
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Washington City as the Slave Market of America
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Slave Coffel in Washington City, 1819

Image, described above, online courtesy Library of Congress.

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