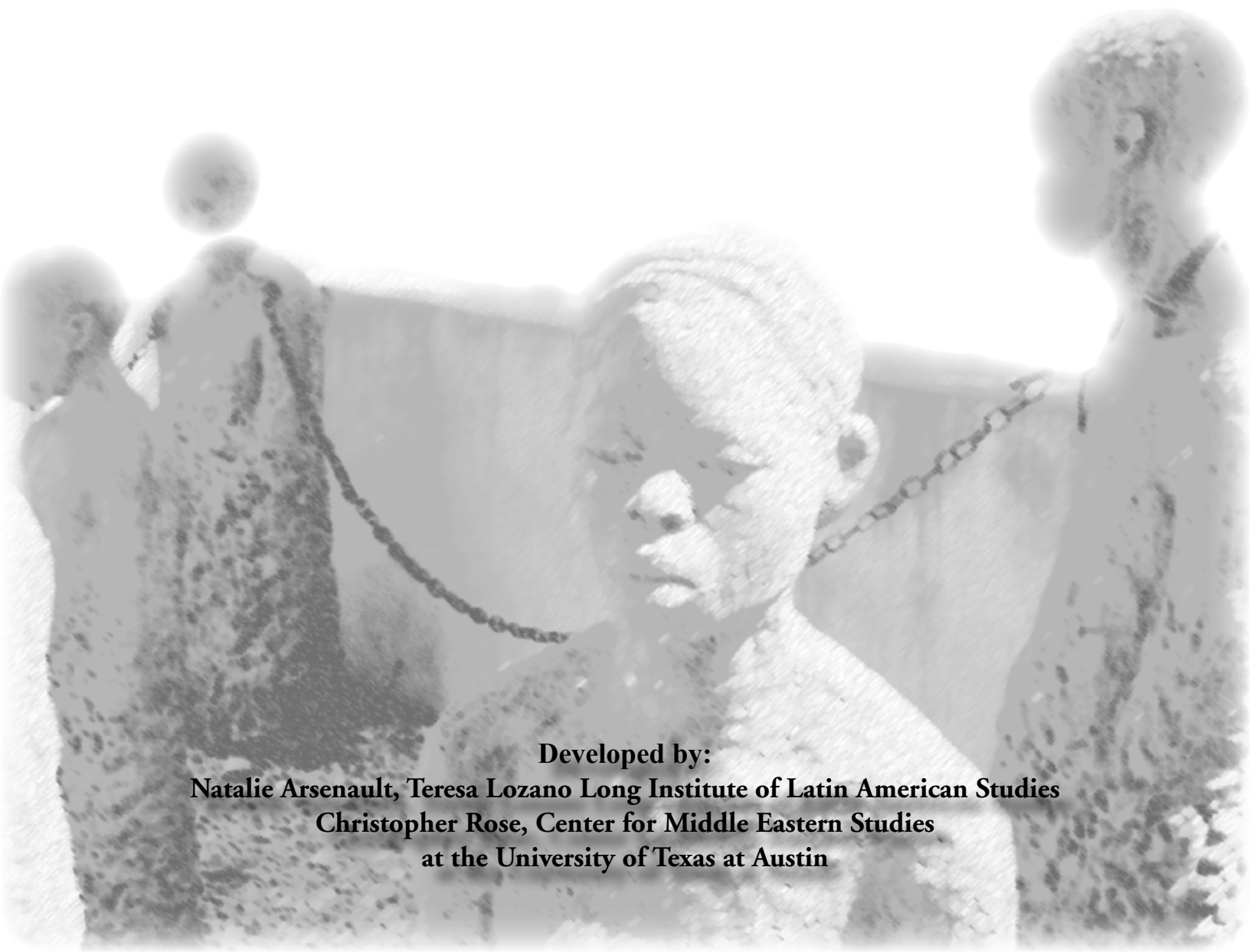


# **Africa Enslaved**

**A Curriculum Unit on Comparative Slave Systems  
for Grades 9-12**



**Developed by:**

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CIA World Factbook, 1994.

## SLAVERY IN BRAZIL

Although the Portuguese arrived in Brazil in 1500, it took over half a century for them to establish an economy. Portugal's other dominions in Africa and Asia were more profitable and garnered more attention. The crown only established a strict bureaucracy in 1549, to fight off French and British incursions into Brazil. But by the mid-1500s sugar plantations began to spring up in the Northeast, where sugar grew well. The colonists looked to the Indians to provide the necessary work force for this labor-intensive crop. However, the enslaved Indians quickly fell victim to European diseases or fled to the un navigated interior of the country. The Portuguese decided that the Indians were too fragile for plantation labor and, having been active in the Atlantic slave trade since the 1450s, they began to import African slaves. Soon, the sugar plantation system became entirely dependent on African slave labor.

African slaves were brought into Brazil as early as 1530, with abolition in 1888. During those three centuries, Brazil received 4,000,000 Africans, over four times as many as any other American destination. Comparatively speaking, Brazil received 40% of the total number of Africans brought to the Americas, while the US received approximately 10%. Due to this huge influx of Africans, today Brazil's African-descended population is larger than the population of most African countries.

Beginning in the 1530s, slaves entered through the port of Salvador and stayed in the state of Bahia, where sugar plantations rose to prominence during the colony's early years. The sugar trade then diminished and, although slaves were distributed to other parts of Brazil, many remained in Bahia and worked in the capital of Salvador. In the 1690s, gold was found in Minas Gerais, tripling the demand for slaves; of the estimated 1.7 million slaves brought into Brazil in the late 17th and early 18th century, about 1 million went to the gold mines and diamond fields. By 1760, the slowdown in gold and diamonds coincided with sugar's second wind, causing a renewed influx of slaves to the Northeast. In the 1830s, coffee came to prominence in southern Brazil: 1.3 million slaves eventually made their way to the coffee plantations. Slaves were also sent to major cities and, by the late 18th century, 40-50% of households in São Paulo, Ouro Preto (in the state of Minas Gerais), and Salvador held slaves.

Over the centuries, Portugal exploited different parts of Africa. In the 16th century, Senegambia provided most of Brazil's slaves; in the 17th century, Angola and the Congo rose to dominance; and in the 18th century, slaves were coming from the Mina Coast and Benin. "Without Angola no slaves, without slaves no sugar, without sugar no Brazil" was a common expression during the 17th century. During the last 50 years of the slave trade, large numbers of Yoruba people (from the area that is currently Nigeria and Benin) were brought to cities in Northeastern Brazil, resulting in a lasting impact on the culture of that region.

The slave trade lasted longer in Brazil than in almost any other country in the Americas. Slavery was abolished in the British and French Caribbean, the United States, and Spanish America a generation or more before it was abolished in Brazil. When Brazil gained independence, in 1822, slavery was such an entrenched part of the system that the elites who structured the new nation never seriously debated the issue. Brazilians believed that the prosperity of their country depended on the institution of slavery, since they so desperately needed the labor, but slavery was rarely defended on racial grounds.

The slave trade was not only continuing, but accelerating: the same number of Africans (1.7 million) entered Brazil between 1800 and 1850 as during the entire 18th century. Brazil ended the legal slave trade in 1850, due to pressure from Great Britain. Britain had outlawed slavery in the British colonies in 1833, and rising labor costs in the colonies made it very difficult to compete with the slave economies of Brazil and Cuba. Beginning in the 1830s, Britain's Royal Navy began to intercept slave ships headed for Brazil, in order to free the enslaved Africans. While the British were not very successful at first, increased efforts between 1845 and 1850 allowed them to seize almost four hundred ships. Brazil was forced to close down the slave trade.

The abolitionist movement in Brazil began to gain widespread support in the late 1860s, due in part to pressure from the outside world. Also, after the end of the legal slave trade, Brazil experienced a labor shortage because slavery had been sustained by continued imports of slaves rather than reproduction among the slave population. And, finally, the slaves were getting harder to control, and slave owners feared revolts. In 1871, Brazil passed the "Law of the Free Womb," freeing from that time forward the children born of slaves. In 1885, Brazil passed the Sexagenarian Law, freeing slaves over sixty-five years of age, though few slaves reached that age. Finally, on May 13, 1888, the "Golden Law" abolished slavery with these simple words: "From the date of this law slavery is declared extinct in Brazil."

**Comprehension Exercises:**

1. Create a time line of slavery in Brazil from 1450-1888 based on the overview.
2. Slaves served in every form of manual labor in the colony, but what three industries utilized the greatest number of slaves?
3. Discussion question: Why would the outside world have pressured Brazil to abolish slavery? Consider abolition dates and how abolition was defended in other parts of the world.



## LEGAL STATUS

Neither our constitution nor any of our laws regard the *slave* as belonging to the mass of the *citizens* for any purpose involving social, political, or public life, even if he was born in the Empire [of Brazil]. Only *freedmen*, if they are Brazilian citizens, enjoy certain political rights and can exercise political responsibilities....

From the moment a man is reduced to the condition of a *thing*, from the moment he becomes the property of another person subject to his *power* and *authority*, he is regarded as legally *dead*, deprived of every *right* and possessing *no representation whatsoever*, as Roman Law previously established. Therefore, he cannot claim political rights ... nor can he perform public functions. This is expressly laid down in various old Portuguese laws....

So complete is this incapacity that slaves among us are not even allowed to serve as recruits in the army or navy; nor can they exercise ecclesiastical responsibilities, either of a mixed nature such as those of a curate, or one of a purely spiritual character; on this point Canon and Civil Law are in full agreement. This legal principle, which *excludes slaves from the political community, from the exercise of any political right, from all participation in national sovereignty or public authority*, has been followed invariably in every ancient and modern nation where slavery has been introduced....

Our ancient and modern laws formally denied and still deny to masters the power of life and death over the slaves; they grant them the right only *to punish them moderately*, as fathers may punish their children and teachers their students. If this punishment is not moderate, there is an excess which the law castigates as if the offended person were not a slave, and with very good reason.

Since the slave is looked upon as a *thing*, subject to the authority (*dominium*) of his master, through a legal fiction he is subordinated to the general laws of property. Although he is a *man* or a *person* (in the broad sense), he is subject to his master's power (*potestas*) with its several consequences. This has been the case in every country. The Romans supply us with an abundant source of decisions in this respect.

Agostinho Marques Perdigão Malheiro, "This Dark Blotch on our Social System," (1866) in *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, by Robert Edgar Conrad (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 237-245.

### Comprehension Exercises:

1. This article was written in 1866, after the slave trade had ended, and only 22 years before abolition. Based on the title of the piece, what can one assume are the author's feelings about slavery?
2. To what legal traditions does the author attribute Brazilian slave practices?
3. Cite examples of how slaves were seen as *objects* or *things*.

## SLAVE LABOR

### Reading 1: Plantation Labor in the North

On the plantations there is no law but the absolute will of the master, which is rudely delegated to the overseer, usually a trusted slave.

At six o'clock in the morning the overseer forces the poor slave, still exhausted from the evening's labors, to rise from his rude bed and proceed to his work. The first assignment of the season is the chopping down of the forests for the next year's planting, using a scythe to hack down the smaller trees. This work normally goes on for two months, depending on the type of jungle being cut and the stamina of the slaves.

The next step is the destruction of the large trees, and this, like the previous work, continues for twelve hours each day. At night the slaves return home, where evening work of two or more hours awaits them, depending upon the character of the master. They set fire to the devastated jungle....

Centuries-old tree trunks which two months before had produced a cool, crisp atmosphere over a broad stretch of land, lie on the surface of a field ravaged by fire and covered with ashes, where the slaves are compelled to spend twelve hours under the hot sun of the equator, without a single tree to give them shelter....

When it finally rains toward the end of December or early January, the slaves begin to seed the devastated fields, and the only tool they use in planting cotton is a small hoe, and for the rice and millet they use nothing but a stick with an iron point to hollow out the ground.

After this comes the weeding. This is painful labor for the slaves, who, with nothing to work with but a weeding-hook, are forced to stand in a stooped position during the entire day, cutting the shoots or other native plants, and enduring a temperature in the sun of 40 degrees Celsius. This work, which is the most arduous, continues as long as it takes for the plants to fully establish themselves.

The next step is the rice cutting in May or June, which each slave accomplishes with a small knife, cutting the stems one by one, and at night beating them with a branch to loosen the grains. During this phase of their labor the overseers demand a certain number of *alqueires* of rice from each slave, and if the unfortunate person does not produce what is demanded of him, the tragedy is brought to an end with *the daily bread of the slave*, that is, the lash.

F. A. Brandão, Júnior, "A escravatura no Brasil precedido d'um artigo sobre a agricultura e colonização no Maranhão," (1865) in *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, by Robert Edgar Conrad (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 97-99.

### Comprehension Exercises:

1. What types of tools are given to the slaves to complete their tasks? Do they seem adequate for the work?
2. Why would plantation work in the tropics be especially difficult? Cite details from the article that address conditions in the tropics.

**Reading 2: Mine Labor in the South**

All the slaves occupied in the various *serviços* [places where diamonds are extracted] belong to private owners who rent them to the administration. . . . The owners of the slaves dress them and treat them when they are sick, and the administration feeds them and supplies the tools that they need for their work.

Forced to stand constantly in water during the time when they are panning for diamonds and consuming foods of little nutritive value, their intestinal tract is weakened and they become morose and apathetic. Aside from this, they often run the risk of being crushed by rocks which, undermined from the mineral beds by digging, loosen themselves and fall. Their work is constant and agonizing. Ever under the watchful eye of the overseers, they cannot enjoy a moment of rest. Nevertheless, almost all of them prefer the extraction of diamonds to working for their masters. The money they acquire by stealing diamonds and the hope they nourish of acquiring their freedom if they find stones of great value are undoubtedly the main reasons for this preference, and yet there are others. . . . Whereas in the houses of their masters they are subjected to all of their masters' whims, here they obey a fixed set of rules, and if they adapt themselves to those rules, they need not fear punishment.

Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, "Viagem pelo distrito dos diamantes e litoral do Brasil," (1816-1822) in *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, by Robert Edgar Conrad (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 141-143.

**Comprehension Exercises:**

1. Why did some slaves prefer to work in the mines rather than in the homes of their masters?
2. What risks did slaves run by working in the mines?



**Reading 3: Abusive Labor Practices**

If idleness is harmful, the abuse of labor is even more so. We are so convinced of the truth of this principle that we do not hesitate to affirm that a third of the slaves in Brazil die as a result of the excessive labor that they are forced to endure... When I asked a planter why the death rate among his slaves was so exaggerated, and pointed out that this obviously did him great harm, he quickly replied that, on the contrary, it brought him no injury at all, since when he purchases a slave it was with the purpose of using him for only a single year, after which very few could survive; but that nevertheless he made them work in such a way that he not only recovered the capital employed in their purchase, but also made a considerable profit! And besides, what does it matter if the life of a black man is destroyed by one year of unbearable toil if from this we derive the same advantages which we would have if he worked at a slower pace for a long period of time? This is how many people reason.

The slaves, going off to work at five o'clock in the morning, exposed during the entire day to the effects of sun and rain, are vulnerable to the kinds of fevers which result from too much exposure to the sun. They also get violent headaches, mainly when the sun is at its zenith, and apoplexies, which also quite frequently occur at this time of the day. This we would particularly like to prevent, and therefore we strongly recommend that on very hot days slaves be allowed a little time to rest.

It is customary to force the slaves to work for some hours at night. I have seen the terrible results of this... After their daytime labors, it is only right that the evening be devoted to recuperating their lost strength. We therefore protest again the conduct of those persons who, denying their slaves their necessary rest, force them to perform evening work, which consists of digging trenches, leveling terraces, preparing coffee and sugar, etc. This evening work almost always causes illnesses of the kind that arise from suppressed perspiration.

Once more, owners of slaves, stop these practices. Regulate the labor of your slaves according to each one's strength. Give them their needed rest, and you will see that the observance of simple rules of personal conduct can go far toward preserving the lives of your slaves.

David Gomes Jardim, "There Are Plantations Where the Slaves Are Numb with Hunger," (1847) in *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, by Robert Edgar Conrad (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 95-96.

**Comprehension Exercises:**

1. What was a typical attitude of the planter toward his slaves?
2. What suggestions does this article make to improve slave health?

## RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

### Reading 1: Rights & Responsibilities of the Slaveholders

The master has the right to obtain from the slave every possible advantage; that is, he can demand his services gratuitously in any way that appears most convenient to him. In recompense, he has the obligation to feed, clothe, and cure the slave, and may never be allowed to forget that in him there exists a human being.

Nevertheless, the master may not require criminal, illicit, or immoral acts from the slave....

Through the property right which he has in his slaves the master can rent them, lend them, sell them, give them away, transfer them, bequeath them, use them as collateral, dispose of their services, and remove the fruits of slave property in cases in which he is not the unrestricted possessor. In short, he can exercise all the legitimate rights of an owner or proprietor....

Today only slaves belonging to agricultural establishments can be mortgaged, and only if this is specified in the contract, and this can be done only in conjunction with other real estate to which slaves are looked upon as accessories, in the same way that animals are....

Agostinho Marques Perdigão Malheiro, "This Dark Blotch on our Social System," (1866) in *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, by Robert Edgar Conrad (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 243.

### Comprehension Exercises:

1. What were the responsibilities of the slaveholders towards slaves? What were the slaveholders not allowed to do?
2. Cite examples of how slaves were seen and could be used as *things*.

**Reading 2: Declaration from the King on Treatment of Slaves**

To Dom João de Lencastro, Friend. I the King send you greetings. Having consulted with my Overseas Council concerning the suggestion of the Council of Missions that the sugar-mill owners give Saturday free to their slaves for the cultivation of their gardens, Sundays and saints' days thus being unencumbered so that they might take part in Christian doctrine and divine services, and recognizing that this matter is of the greatest importance and that every effort ought to be made to remedy it, because the slaves are being obliged as they are to serve their masters, the masters are also obliged to give them the necessary sustenance so that they will not die. I have therefore decided to order you to force the mill owners either to give their slaves the required sustenance, or a free day in the [work] week, so that they can themselves cultivate the ground, in the event that mill owners should choose this alternative. Written in Lisbon on January 31, 1701.

THE KING

Robert Edgar Conrad, *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 60.

**Comprehension Exercises:**

1. What did the King establish in this declaration, and why did he do so?
2. What were the choices given to the slaveholders?
3. Why does the King want slaves to be free on Sundays and saints' days?
4. Why might it have been necessary to issue a royal declaration on this subject?

**Reading 3: Observations on Treatment of Slaves**

It is only just and charitable that I say something about the barbaric, cruel, and bizarre way that the majority of masters treat their unfortunate working slaves.

There are some who provide them with no food at all, merely allowing them to work on Sundays or on a holy day on a tiny plot of ground called a *roça*. From this work they are supposed to supply themselves with food during the entire week, their masters contributing only a drop of molasses of the worst kind during milling time. If it is discovered that one of these miserable people has stolen something from him, the master has him tied to a wagon, and, bound in this way, he is given at least two hundred strokes on the buttocks with a whip of two or three strands of coarse twisted leather, which amounts in reality to four hundred or six hundred individual blows....

I doubt that the Moors are so cruel to their slaves.

Robert Edgar Conrad, *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 61-62.

**Comprehension Exercises:**

1. Does this piece, written after the declaration made in 1701, contradict the King's order?
2. Why would the writer compare Brazilian slaveholders to Moors?

## SLAVES & RELIGION

### Reading 1: Regulations from the Catholic Church on Evangelization (1707)

We order all persons ... to teach or have taught the Christian doctrine to their families, and especially to their slaves, who because of their ignorance are those most in need of this instruction, sending them to church so that the priest may teach them the Articles of Faith, so that they may know what to believe; the Pater Noster and Ave Maria, so that they may know how to pray; the Commandments of the Law of God and of the Holy Mother Church, and the moral sins, so that they will know how to behave; the virtues, so that they may recognize good values; and the seven Sacraments, so that they may receive them with dignity, and with them the grace which they give, and the other prayers of Christian doctrine, so that they may be instructed in everything which is important to their salvation....

We order all our subjects who are being served by infidel slaves that they labor hard to convert them to our Holy Catholic Faith, and to receive the Sacrament of Baptism, coming to a knowledge of the errors of their ways, and the state of perdition in which they walk, and that for this purpose they should be sent frequently to learned and virtuous persons, who will point out their errors to them and teach them what is required for their salvation....

Excerpt from “Constituições Primeiras do Arcebispado da Bahia feitas e ordinadas pelo Illustrissimo e Reverendissimo Senhor D. Sebastião Monteiro da Vide,” in *Children of God’s Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, by Robert Edgar Conrad (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 154-155.

### Comprehension Exercises:

1. What should the slaves learn?
2. If the Catholic Church saw slaves as “infidels,” what do you think their attitude would have been toward African religions?

### Research topic:

1. Look up Candomblé, a religion that blends Catholicism with African religions.

**Reading 2: Sermon by Father Antônio Vieira to the Black Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary**

One of the remarkable things witnessed in the world today, and which we, because of our daily habits, do not see as strange, is the immense transmigration of Ethiopian peoples and nations who are constantly crossing over from Africa to this America ... we can say that the ships which one after the other are entering our ports are carrying Africa to Brazil....

There is not a slave in Brazil—and especially when I gaze upon the most miserable among them—who for me is not an object of profound meditation. When I compare the present with the future, time with eternity, that which I see with that which I believe, I cannot accept the idea that God, who created these people as much in His own image as He did the rest of us, would have predestined them for two hells, one in this life and another in the next.

You are the brothers of God's preparation and the children of God's fire. The children of God's fire of the present transmigration of slavery, because in this condition God's fire impressed the mark of slavery upon you; and, granted that this is the mark of oppression, it has also, like fire, illuminated you, because it has brought you the light of the Faith and the knowledge of Christ's mysteries, which are those which you solemnly profess on the rosary. But in this same condition of this first transmigration, which is that of the temporal slavery, God and His Most Holy Mother are preparing you for the second transmigration, that of eternal freedom.

Father Antônio Vieira, "Obras completas do Padre Antônio Vieira, Sermões," in *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, by Robert Edgar Conrad (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 164-165.

**Comprehension Exercises:**

1. In Father Vieira's mind, why would slavery serve a good purpose? Where would slaves end up after death?
2. Using this logic, do you think that Father Vieira would think slavery a good thing?



## REBELLIONS, RUNAWAYS & EMANCIPATION

### Reading 1: Muslim Uprising in the State of Bahia

*The Malê (as Muslims were known in Bahia) slave uprising in 1835 was the only slave rebellion in the Americas in which Islam played a central role. Armed revolts were not as common as runaways, due to the difficulty in organizing groups of slaves and the small chance of success. The Muslim uprising was ultimately defeated.*

When Malês met privately and, less often, publicly to carry out the precepts of their religion or just to share other aspects of their lives, they used those occasions to envision a better world. They did not, however, rule out the use of force to attain this better world... But for a long time Malê warriors' battles were ... [only an] angry expression of their desire for reparation rather than the conceiving of an actual revolt....

The very fact that African slaves opted for Islam proclaimed a schism.... In the 1824 Constitution, Catholicism had been declared the official state religion, and the only one allowed public ceremonies and clearly marked temples. *European* foreigners were conceded the right to religious freedom, provided they worshipped in private. Slave religions were illegal.... The Malês were outlaws.

The Malê ranks were growing. The rush to Islam did not necessarily mean a rush into revolution. It was, at its beginning, a search for channels of solidarity in the crisis that slavery itself represented, for spiritual security, and possibly for upward mobility and social prestige within the African community itself... To be known as a Malê was an honor. It meant being respected for Malês' written culture and magical powers, or merely for membership in a group known to express strong African identity....

The chasm between Islam and Bahian society was especially wide because Islam was an exclusively African religion that brought together slaves and freedmen. Besides, like Catholicism, Islam was a universal religion. And since it was not an ethnic religion, Islam could possibly unite diverse ethnic groups, nullifying the slaveholders' political advantages derived from Africans' diverse ethnicities....

The enthusiastic celebration of Lailat al-Miraj [Mohammed's ascension into Heaven] in November [1834] was a watershed ... the feast was interrupted and dissolved [by well-known enemy] Inspector Marques.... This episode was sealed shut by the later destruction of [their mosque], which produced discord and distress in the Malê community. Its pride was hurt, and its weakness exposed to the entire city. The Muslims need to act immediately.... Two other incidents must have influenced the political reasoning: the imprisonment of [Malê leader] Alufá Pacífico Licutan ... and the imprisonment and public humiliation of another important preacher, alufá Ahuna. The decision to revolt on 25 January 1835 was quite likely made in November 1834. It was a calm, calculated political decision designed to harness the high-strung emotions of the crisis. The twenty-fifth of January coincided with a propitious date in the Islamic calendar.

João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil*, trans. Arthur Brakel (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 112-115.

### Comprehension Exercises:

1. Why would Africans have been attracted to Islam, despite the fact that it was illegal?
2. Why was Islam, as a universal religion, threatening to the slaveholders?
3. What were the defining events that led to the January 1835 uprising? Do you think that Inspector Marques and other Brazilian leaders were trying to disband Muslim groups by interrupting festivities and arresting leaders?

**Reading 2: Description of *Quilombos* by João Saldana da Gama, Governor of Bahia (1807)**

*Runaway slave colonies called quilombos were found throughout the Brazilian countryside for the duration of slavery. The most famous of these was the Republic of Palmares, a network of settlements in northeastern Brazil that survived for over sixty years despite repeated attacks by the Portuguese. Palmares was dismantled in 1694.*

Seeing that slaves frequently and repeatedly escaped from masters in whose service they had been engaged for years... I became curious (an important trait in this land) about where it was they went. I soon learned that in the outskirts of this capital and in the thickets that surround it, there were innumerable assemblages of these people, who, led by the hand of some industrious charlatans, enticed the credulous, the lazy, the superstitious, those given to thievery, criminals, and the sickly to join them. They lived in absolute liberty, dancing, wearing extravagant dress, phoney amulets, uttering fanatical prayers and blessings. They lay around eating and indulging themselves, violating all privilege, law, order, public demeanor.

João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil*, trans. Arthur Brakel (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 42.

**Comprehension Exercise:**

1. How does Governor da Gama characterize the leaders of these groups? And the members? Does his description of the *quilombo* seem to reveal any prejudice?

**Reading 3: Unconditional and Conditional Grants of Freedom**

We the undersigned, Dr. Joaquim Caetano da Silva, a Brazilian citizen, and his wife Dona Clotilde Moinac da Silva, give freedom to our good slave Manoel, of the Angola nation, to enjoy all the rights and guarantees which the laws of our country bestow upon him. And so that it may be verified, documented and entirely clear, we grant him the present Letter, which will be registered in two of the notary offices of this Court, to be manifest for all time. Rio de Janeiro, first of December of eighteen hundred and fifty-one.

{Signed;} Dr. Joaquim Caetano da Silva  
Clotilde Moinac da Silva

Witnesses {Signed;}  
Dr. Francisco da Paula Menezes  
Ignacio José Caetano da Silva  
Dr. Fernando Francisco {illegible}

*Conditional grants of freedom, such as that below, were more common than unconditional grants. A letter written after the death of Cândido's master revoked his freedom due to his "ingratitude."*

I, Antonio Pereira Freitas, state that among the properties which I possess is a Mulatto Slave by the name of Cândido, of more or less nine years of age, which slave I liberate and possess in a liberated condition from this day forward forever, with the declaration that he serve me while I live [and] that during this entire period of my life he not attempt to free himself by legal means, even if he possesses the money, since he is already free as a result of this my decision, and if at some time he should disobey me or show some ingratitude toward me of the kind stated in the laws, he will lose the freedom which I am granting him and will remain subject to enslavement to my person and heirs whom I may have, and I request His Majesty's justices to comply fully and rigorously with [what is contained herein]. Apiahy, 23 of August, 1827.

Robert Edgar Conrad, *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 319-320.

**Comprehension Exercises:**

1. How did Dr. Caetano da Silva seek to ensure that his grant of freedom would be registered and upheld?
2. How could Cândido's freedom be revoked? Does the second letter seem to give a lot of leverage to the owner?

## TRANSITION TO FREEDOM

### Reading 1: Legal Status as Freed Slaves

Slave status may be ended in the following ways: 1) through the natural death of the slave; 2) by manumission or enfranchisement; 3) by provisions of the law....

Through manumission the slave is restored to his natural condition and state of manhood, to that of a *person*. He enters the social community without any indication of his former slave status. It is then that he appears in society and before the law as a person, being able under the law, properly speaking, to freely exercise his rights and activities like other citizens. He may establish a family, acquire a full right to property for himself, pass on a *legacy* even when dying intestate, make contracts, dispose of property through sale or trade or through his last will and testament; in other words, like the minor child who upon reaching adulthood acquires his *full freedom*, he can practice every act of civil life.

However, the law, responding to prejudices of our society, deprives the freedman of some of his rights in regard to *political and public life*. Those prejudices had their origin not so much in the former vile and miserable condition of the slave or in his ignorance, bad habits, and degradation, or because that status generally corrupted his spirit and morality. Rather it is the result of the more general prejudice against the African race, from which the slaves of Brazil are descended. Thus the freed Brazilian citizen may vote only in primary elections.... Thus he cannot become an elector, and he cannot hold any other position for which only persons having an elector's qualifications can be chosen. These include the office of general or provincial deputy, senator, juror, justice of the peace, police delegate, public prosecutor, Counselor of State, Minister of Government, Magistrate, member of the Diplomatic Corps, Bishop, and similar positions....

In the churches the slave or person of color, among us, is at the side of the free man without distinction.... In public vehicles no distinction is made for the landmarks of slavery, or for color....

In the United States this generally did not occur. But there the reason was not just slavery, but also race; this being a question in which Brazil is not taken into consideration by laws or customs. To be a person of *color*, even a black African, is no reason for not being somebody in our country, to be admitted into society, into families, into public vehicles, into churches, into employments, etc.; moreover, the man of color enjoys as much consideration in the Empire as any other person to whom he may be equal; some have even occupied and now occupy the highest offices of the State, in provincial government, in the Council of State, in the Senate, in the Chamber of Deputies, in the Diplomatic Corps, in a word, in every kind of position; others have been and are now distinguished doctors, lawyers, illustrious professors in the highest scientific fields; to sum up, every area of human activity is completely open and free to him. It may perhaps be said that there are indications that he has had an exceptional degree of influence.

In the North American union public customs and even the laws concurred toward exclusion. People of *color* were not admitted into the schools. It was necessary to institute and create public conveyances especially for people of *color*. In hotels and inns and similar places people of color were rejected with loathing and contempt.... Marriages between whites and persons of color were condemned.... There was a profound separation, arising from a profound contempt for the African race and all their descendants, however light they might have been.

Agostinho Marques Perdigão Malheiro, "This Dark Blotch on our Social System," (1866) in *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, by Robert Edgar Conrad (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 243.

**Comprehension Exercises:**

1. What limits were placed on the freed slave? What rights did the freed slave have and what rights did he not have in Brazilian society?
2. The article refers to a lack of distinction made for slaves or people of color in “public vehicles.” What does this mean? How does this contrast with what you know about laws or customs in the United States? [Think about Rosa Parks.]
3. The final paragraph contradicts earlier statements by pointing out the high status achieved by people of color in Brazil. If freedmen were not allowed to hold certain positions, where did the author find examples of members of the Senate, the Diplomatic Corps, etc? [Think about the distinction between freedman and person of color.]
4. What difference is the author pointing out between Brazil and the United States?

**Reading 2: Consignment of Freedmen to Involuntary Servitude**

*Slaves found with illegal traffickers were taken into government custody, so that they could be freed. This decree, however, indicates the elusiveness of this “freedom.”*

Since it would not be correct simply to abandon them, they will be destined to serve as freedmen [*libertos*] for a period of 14 years in some public service, either for the navy, at the forts, in agriculture, or in the mechanical trades, whichever may be most convenient... Or they may be publicly rented out to private persons of recognized integrity, who will sign a pledge to feed and clothe them and to teach them Christian doctrine and a craft or other suitable work. For the time stipulated [one year], these terms and conditions may be renewed as often as necessary until the above-stated period of 14 years is completed. However, this period may be reduced by two or more years for those freedmen who, by their fitness and good conduct, prove themselves worthy sooner of enjoying their complete right to freedom.

“Collecção das leis do Brasil,” (1818) in *Children of God’s Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, by Robert Edgar Conrad (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 333.

**Comprehension Exercise:**

1. Does the description above seem significantly different from slave status? Why, or why not?

**Reading 3: Royal Proclamation on Clothing and Ornaments**

Having been informed of the great inconveniences which result in my conquests from the freedom of the blacks and mulattoes, the children of blacks or mulattoes or of black mothers, to dress in the same way as white persons, I prohibit the above, regardless of sex, and even if they have been liberated, or were born free, the use not only of all kinds of silk, but also of cloth of fine wool, of fine Dutch linen, and such fine cloth either of linen or cotton; and much less will it be legal for them to wear on their persons ornaments of jewelry, gold or silver, however minimal.

*O Americano*. Rio de Janeiro (1749) in *Children of God’s Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, by Robert Edgar Conrad (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 248.

**Comprehension Exercises:**

1. What did this Royal Proclamation establish?
2. Why do you think the King would have made it illegal for former slaves and free Africans to wear the same clothing and jewelry as other citizens?



## ABOLITION

### Reading 1: Comments from Brazilian Abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco

When slavery penetrates modern societies, it destroys a large portion of their moral justification... Only one looking at these societies blinded by passion or ignorance will fail to see how slavery has brought degradation to many modern populations, to the point that they are no better than corrupted populations of past times. The use of slave labor not only hinders to the point of stagnation material development, but it deadens the moral progress of civilizations, including knowledge, the arts, science, letters, costumes, government, people—in all, progress....

Every dimension of our social existence is contaminated by this crime: we grow with it, and it forms the basis of our society. From where does our fortune come? From profits produced by slaves. Our state of liberty was rooted in this criminal activity, and now, when we want to free ourselves from it, it holds us fast... Slavery corrupts everything, robbing working people of their former virtues: diligence, thrift, charity, patriotism, fear of death, love of liberty....

Robert M. Levine and John J. Crocitti, eds., *The Brazil Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 143.

### Comprehension Exercise:

1. Brazil had always defended slavery on the grounds that it was necessary to support the plantation economy. On what grounds did Nabuco condemn slavery?

**Reading 2: Law No. 3353**

The Princess Imperial Regent, in the name of His majesty the Emperor Dom Pedro II, makes known to all subjects of the Empire that the General Assembly has decreed, and she has sanctioned, the following law:

Art. 1. From the date of this law slavery is declared extinct in Brazil.

Art. 2. All provisions to the contrary are revoked.

She orders, therefore, all the authorities to whom the knowledge and execution of this Law belong to carry it out, and cause it to be fully and exactly executed and observed.

The Secretary of State for the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works, and *ad interim* for Foreign Affairs, Bachelor Rodrigo Augusto da Silva, of the Council of His Majesty the Emperor, will have it printed, published, and circulated.

Give in the Palace of Rio de Janeiro on May 13, 1888, the 67<sup>th</sup> year of Independence and of the Empire.

PRINCESS IMPERIAL REGENT  
Rodrigo Augusto da Silva

Robert Edgar Conrad, *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 480-481.

**Comprehension Exercise:**

1. Did this declaration leave anything unclear about the status of slavery in the Empire? Cite phrases from the text that support your answer.

## GLOSSARY

An **alqueire** (al-kay-ree) is a traditional unit of volume for dry goods in Portugal and Brazil. This is about 13.8 liters or 12.5 U.S. dry quarts.

A **curate** is a cleric, especially one who has charge of a parish.

**Ecclesiastical** pertains to the church and relates to the organization or government of the church; not secular.

To **enfranchise** is to bestow the rights of citizenship, especially the right to vote.

**Intestate** describes a person who has died without leaving a legal will.

**Manumission** is the formal act of freeing an individual slave. Its Latin root, *manumissio*, meant the freeing of a Roman slave.

**Perdition** means eternal damnation, hell, absolute ruin.

A **quilombo** (kee-lom-bow) is a hinterland settlement originally created by runaway slaves in Brazil and sometimes including a minority of marginalized Portuguese and other non-black, non-slave Brazilians. Some of these settlements were near Portuguese settlements and quite active both in defending against *capitães do mato* (bounty hunters) commissioned to recapture slaves and in facilitating the escape of even more slaves. Consequently, they were actively fought by the Portuguese and, later, by the Brazilian state and slaveowners. All the same, *quilombos* that were further from the Portuguese settlements and the later Brazilian cities were effectively tolerated and still exist, to the point of having their own African-Portuguese creole languages. The most famous of the *quilombos*, Palmares, was led by the legendary hero Zumbi, who eventually died defending it.

**Reparation** refers to compensation or remuneration used to make amends for a past injustice.

A **roça** (ho-sah) is a plot of land.

A **schism** is a separation or division into factions.

**Transmigration** can mean to migrate or the passing of a soul into the next world at death.

## **About Hemispheres**

Created in 1996, Hemispheres is the international area studies outreach consortium at the University of Texas at Austin. Hemispheres utilizes University resources to promote and assist with world studies education for K-12 and postsecondary schools, businesses, civic and non-profit organizations, the media, governmental agencies, and the general public.

Comprised of UT's four federally funded National Resource Centers (NRCs) dedicated to the study and teaching of Latin America; the Middle East; Russia, East Europe & Eurasia; and South Asia, Hemispheres offers a variety of free and low-cost services to these groups and more. Each center coordinates its own outreach programming, including management of its lending library, speakers bureau, public lectures, and conferences, all of which are reinforced by collaborative promotion of our resources to an ever-widening audience in the educational community and beyond.

Hemispheres fulfills its mission through: coordination of pre-service and in-service training and resource workshops for educators; promotion of outreach resources and activities via exhibits at appropriate state- and nation-wide educator conferences; participation in public outreach events as organized by the consortium as well as by other organizations; and consultation on appropriate methods for implementing world studies content in school, business, and community initiatives.