

“HIDDEN HISTORY”

RESOURCES:

RACE & SLAVERY

ReclaimingKin.com

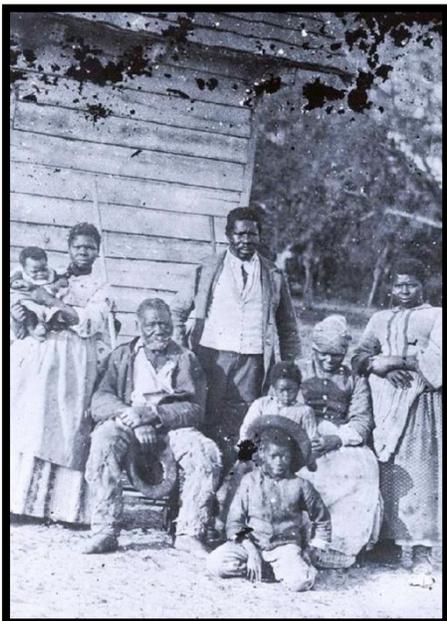


I have heard from hundreds of white Americans in response to my posts on white descendants of slaveholders and various posts about race. It has given me hope, and the emails encouraged me to create this document.

My intention for [my blog post to descendants of slaveholders](#) was to provide a *guidepost* to help us begin this difficult dialogue. One of the goals of my blog *Reclaiming Kin* is to introduce genealogists and others [to the history of slavery and race in America](#).

Many people are missing essential facts about this history because they never learned it in the first place. That’s why I refer to it as “hidden history.”

Most teachers in past decades, and many today, are not adequately equipped to teach about race, slavery, reconstruction, housing discrimination, racial inequality and the long history of lynching and racial terror in America. Think about what you learned while growing up. Do you have knowledge gaps? The topics make so many people uncomfortable they’d rather not discuss them at all. People are relying on popular culture to get their information.



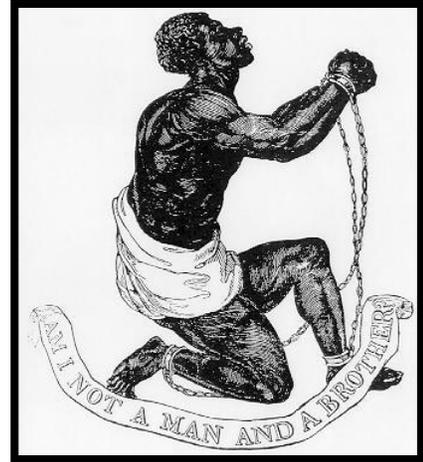
Of course, there are some Americans who are not interested in this history. They willfully ignore it and choose to believe fictions for their own purposes. My blog, and this document, is not for them.

I wholeheartedly believe [all Americans](#) have inherited this mess. We can never confront it unless we start by educating ourselves.

I have created this list of suggested articles, websites, films and books to help do just that.

I'd like to humbly also suggest *action*. Speak up behind closed doors with friends and family. Encourage them to learn the truths of American history. Give them references. Learn the difference between being non-racist and *practicing anti-racism*.

Oftentimes people won't admit we've made a point that they've never considered or did not know, but I think of it as *planting seeds* in their minds.



Connect the history you learn to what is happening today. As Faulkner famously said, "The past is never dead. In fact, its not even past." We are dealing with many of the same issues our country fought over during Reconstruction: Who is a citizen? Who gets to vote? What is the proper balance between state power & federal power? Who decides what rights people have and how are those rights protected?

As Eric historian Foner said, we can draw *a straight line* in American history from the Black Lives Matter movement of today, to the "I Am A Man" signs carried in the 1968 Memphis civil rights marches, to the symbols of the Abolitionist movement in the early 1800s, which said "Am I Not a Man and a Brother?" They share a common thread: African-Americans are not being afforded the same dignity, protections and rights as other Americans.

I would also ask you to have thoughtful, honest conversation with your children--maybe you can learn about this history together. Ask what they have learned about these topics in school or from their peers. What information are they missing and need to know more about? How can they engage in positive ways to advance our society? Can you learn anti-racist behaviors together? Above all, it's OK to not know what to say! Seek to grow in *understanding*.

Ask yourself this: are you willing to *feel uncomfortable* and push through that feeling to learn new information?

If you only learn three things, let it be:

1) that the beliefs that undergirded racial slavery in the U.S. *did not end in 1865*. They continued, unabated, and even grew stronger. Slavery and racism exacted not just a physical and psychological cost, but an *economic* cost on an entire group of people.

2) race is an invention. It was invented to serve the purposes of the planter elite in the 17th century colony of Virginia. Though race is not real, racism is in fact, very real, and

3) Slavery was not just a side-show or a brief hiccup in American history. It was the central defining factor that shaped our economic, political and social fabric. Slavery *created* the United States.

We continue to struggle in our country because we are so unwilling to have honest and difficult, but necessary conversations. I thank you for your interest in taking this journey!

Online Posts, Websites and Articles

Ta-Nehisi Coates 5 minute opening statement earlier in 2019 is the best summary I have ever heard about the racial history in America. It should be required listening for every American:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcCnQ3iRkys>

I also suggest reading *The Case For Reparations* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. It is a *very* long article that you will need to print out to read. But *please* stick with it. It will surprise you and enrich your understanding.

Two young women created *Justice in June* which I highly recommend; it contains links to podcasts, webinars and books set up as daily learning:

<https://justiceinjune.org/>

I loved this article about how white parents are [learning how to talk to their kids about race](#).

I've written several posts relating to race and slavery, three "must reads" are:

[The Invention of Race](#)

[Africans Enslaved Other Africans: NOT](#)

[There Were No Good Slaveowners](#)

I think [this pdf about anti-racism](#) at the [Racial Equity Tools](#) website is particularly useful for white Americans. In fact, their entire website is valuable.

Another worthwhile article/interview is [How Race is Conjured](#) by Dr. Barbara Jeanne Fields and her sister Dr. Karen Fields. A longer version of Dr. Fields' argument is [Ideology and Race in American History](#).

Learn what is meant by the term white privilege. Every American should read Peggy McIntosh's epic article on ["Unpacking White Privilege."](#) It contains useful examples.

Everyone has privilege of one kind or another. I have privilege, as a light-skinned African-American woman reared in a middle class home with multiple generations of family with college educations. Recognizing your privilege helps you to "see" when you have a belief system or viewpoint rooted in that privilege.

Ira Berlin's article on [Slavery in American History and Memory](#) remains a colossal work.

Learn about what [white supremacy is](#) and how it shaped American culture.

Learn something about the painful legacy of lynching. Start by learning the stories behind some of the people who were lynched:

[Lynching in America](#)

[Teaching the Hard History of Slavery](#) covers some of why and how school systems are still not properly teaching this subject to students.

I recommend the group, Coming to the Table:

<http://comingtothetable.org/>

and their companion blog, Bittersweet:

<https://linkedthroughslavery.com/>

They offer resources and community, opportunities to share and learn and do something (social justice).

Films

While I ultimately believe there's no substitution for reading books, the films below are educational and perhaps more accessible. Watch them with your children.

- [13th](#)
(avl on Netflix, trailer at <http://www.avaduvernay.com/13th/>)
Now available in full at Youtube.com!
- [Reconstruction: American after the Civil War](#)
(excellent! Avl for purchase at Amazon or PBS, also check your library for the DVDs)
- [Slavery and the Making of America](#)
(avl on Amazon Prime, on DVD, and through Kanopy.com, which is avl through some libraries freely, so logon to your library's website and check to see if you have access)
- [Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans form the Civil War to World War II](#)
(<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/home/> the entire film can be watched here, and I also recommend the book)
- [Ethnic Notions](#) and [Race: The Power of an Illusion](#)
(both can be watched through Kanopy.com)
- [Africans in America: America's journey through Slavery](#)
(4 episodes, can all be watched on You Tube)
- [The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow](#)
(4 episodes-all can be watched at You Tube)
- [The African-Americans: Many Rivers to Cross](#)
(available at many libraries on DVD)

- *[Freedom Riders](#)*
(available on DVD)
- *[Banished: The Ethnic Cleansing of Blacks in America](#)*
(available on DVD and on You Tube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FayMoKwyoO4>)
- *[Eyes on the Prize](#)*
(the single *best film* on the civil rights movement. Available on DVD, some episodes on You Tube, also avl on Amazon Prime)

Books

There are several books written by slaveholder descendants. Three I like are:

- *[Slaves in the Family](#)*, by Edward Ball
- *[Inheriting the Trade](#)*, by Thomas DeWolf
- *[Gather at the Table: The Healing Journey of a Daughter of Slavery and a Son of the Slave Trade](#)*, by Thomas DeWolf and Sharon Morgan

Other books I recommend are:

- *[The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America](#)*, by Richard Rothstein
- *[Myths of the Lost Cause](#)*, by Edward Bonekemper
(see a [video of Bonekemper discussing this book](#) at C-span)
- *[The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism](#)*, by Edward E. Baptist
- *[The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color-Blindness](#)*
by Michelle Alexander
- *[Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in America](#)*
By Ira Berlin
- *[The Fall of the House of Dixie: The Civil War and the Social Revolution that Transformed the South](#)*, by Bruce Levine

- *Reconstruction (Updated Edition, 2014): America's Unfinished Revolution* by Eric Foner
- *The History of White People*, by Nell Irvin Painter
- *Working Towards Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White*, by David R. Roediger
- *Everyone is African*, by Daniel Fairbanks
- *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African-Americans (9th editon)* by John Hope Franklin and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham

Know this: every genocide in history started with language. It started with **how we talk about another group of people.**

Once the language starts to dehumanize them...well, now you can do *anything* to them because they aren't human beings. There is a level of dignity that all human beings deserve, regardless of external circumstance.

There is no better time than the present to emphasize this point.

Thank you for choosing to invest your time in learning more about this history. If everyone did that, imagine the possibilities.

Kindest regards, and with hope for us all,

Robyn