

The horrors of slavery, 1805

Introduction

Originally circulated in 1805 to educate the public about the treatment of slaves, this broadside, entitled “Injured Humanity,” continues to inform twenty-first-century audiences of the true horrors of slavery. As evidenced by this document, early abolitionists decried the slave trade before it was abolished by an 1807 act of Congress. “Injured Humanity” was intended to shock readers and called on the conscience of citizens to “reject, with horror, the smallest participation in such infernal transactions.” This broadside was printed in New York City by Samuel Wood, a prolific Quaker-reformist printer. The text refers to a the publication of *An Abstract of the Evidence Delivered before a Select Committee of the House of Commons in the Years 1790 and 1791; on the Part of the Petitioners for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade* (London: James Phillips, 1791). The descriptions of the slave trade and treatment of slaves are brought to life by seven strikingly vivid vignettes depicting slaves being whipped, sold, tortured, and separated from their families.

Questions for Discussion

Read the document introduction and transcript, closely examine the enlarged image, and apply your knowledge of American history in order to answer these questions.

1. Samuel Wood was a Quaker who lived in New York City and he was responsible for creating and distributing this document. Trace the role Quakers played in the movement to abolish slavery in the United States.
2. Select any one of the images on the page and then refer to the description of what is taking place. Why would the image you selected be particularly helpful in trying to depict the horrors of slavery? Create a title for the image you selected.
3. The document refers to those who kept slaves as “those who call themselves CHRISTIANS.” Why did the author use that phrase and why do you think he capitalized all the letters in the word Christians?
4. Note the date of the document. Why did abolitionists use this dramatic approach?

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Image

INJURED HUMANITY;
BEING
A Representation of what the unhappy Children of Africa endure from those who call themselves CHRISTIANS.

The husband and wife, after being sold to different purchasers, violently separated; probably never to see each other more.



When slaves are purchased by the planters, they are generally marked on the breast with a red hot iron.



A representation of a slave at work cruelly accoutred, with a Head-frame—with Mouth-piece to prevent his eating—with Boots and Spurs round his legs, and half a hundred weight chained to his body to prevent his absconding.



The manner of fixing the slaves on a ladder to be flogged, which is also occasionally laid flat on the ground for severer punishment.



THE respectable and increasing numbers of those who, from motives of humanity, have concurred in rejecting the produce of West-India slavery, cannot but afford a subject of the sincerest joy to every friend of mankind. Even those who, from motives of interest, still favour or engage in the trade, have been obliged to be silent upon the injustice of first procuring the Negroes, and have not had the hardness to excuse or palliate the horrors of the middle passage: but still they assert, that the treatment the slaves meet with in the West-Indies amply counterbalances their previous sufferings; say, they have not scrupled to extol a state of servitude as a happy asylum from African despotism, and calmly maintain that the condition of the labouring poor in England is much harder than that of the Negroes in the West-India islands. Upon this ground, the opposers of slavery are willing to meet its advocates, and the design of the following extracts is to enable the public to form an impartial and decisive judgment on the subject.

WHEN a ship arrives at the port in the West-Indies, the slaves are exposed to sale, (except those who are very ill, they being left in the yard to perish by disease or hunger.) The healthy are disposed of by public auction, the sickly by scramble. The sale by scramble is thus described; the ship being darkened by sails, the purchasers are admitted, who, rushing forward with the frenzy of brutes, seize as many slaves as they have occasion for. In some of the sales, is any care taken to prevent the separation of relatives or friends; but husbands and wives, parents and children, are parted with as little concern as sheep and lambs by the butcher. Abstract of the evidence, as laid before a committee of the British parliament, page 46 and 47.

With respect to the general treatment of the slaves, Mr. Woodrich says, that he never knew the best master in the West-Indies treat his slaves as well, as the worst master his servants in England. Abstract of the evidence, see page 83.

To come to a more particular description of their treatment, it will be proper to divide them into different classes, the first consisting of those brought for the use of the plantations: the second of the in and out-door slaves.

The field slaves are called out by daylight to their work: if they are not out in time, they are flogged. When put to their work, they perform it in rows, without exception, under the whip of drivers, a certain number of whom are allotted to each gang. Such is the mode of their labour, as to the time of it, they begin at daylight, and continue with two intermissions (one for half an hour in the morning, the other for two hours at noon) till sunset. Besides this, they are expected to range about and pick grass for the cattle, either during their two hours rest at noon, or after the fatigues of the day.

Sir G. Young adds, that women were, in general, considered to miscarry, from the cruel treatment they met with; and Captain Hall says, that he has seen a woman scolded to give suck to her child, roused from that situation by a severe blow from the cart-whip. Abstract of the evidence, see page 53, 54, 55.

The above account of their labour is confined to that season of the year which is termed *wet* or *crop*. In the crop season, the labour is of much longer duration. Mr. Dalrymple says, they are obliged to work as long as they can, that is, as long as they can keep awake or stand. Sometimes, through excess of fatigue, they fall asleep, when it has happened to those who feed the mills, that their arms have been caught therein and torn off. Mr. Cook, on the same subject, states, that they work, in general, eighteen hours out of the twenty-four: he knew a girl lose her hand by the mill while feeding it, being overcome with sleep, she dropped against the rollers. Abstract of the evidence, page 55, 56.

To this account of their labour, it should be added, that it appears, that on some estates, the slaves have Sunday and Saturday afternoons to themselves; on others, Sunday only, and on others, only Sunday in part. It appears again, that in crop, on no estate have they more than Sunday for the cultivation of their own lands. Abstract of the evidence, page 56.

The point next to be considered is the *food* of the slaves, which appears to be subject to no rule; on some estates, they are allowed land; on others, provisions; and some are allowed provisions and land jointly. The best allowance is at Barbadoes, of which the following is the account. The slaves, in general, says Gen. Tottenham, appeared to be ill fed: each slave had one pint of grain for 24 hours, and sometimes half a rotten herring. When the herring was *soft* for the winter, they were bought up for the slaves. Nine pints of corn, and one pound of salt-fish a week, are, in general, the utmost allowance. As a proof that some have not food enough, Mr. Cook says, that he has known both Africans and Creoles eat the putrid carcases of animals *elephant* meat. Abstract of the evidence, page 57 and 58.

As to the accusation of their being *starved*, all the evidences maintain, that it was on account of their being *half starved*. Abstract of the evidence, p. 58.

Concerning the *property* of the field-slaves, all the evidences agree in asserting, that they never heard of a field-slave amassing such a sum as enabled him to purchase his freedom. Abstract of the evidence, page 60.

Having now described the state of the plantation, it will be proper to say a few words on that of the *in and out-door* slaves.

The *in-door* slaves are allowed to be better clothed and fed, and less worked, than the plantation; on account, however, of being constantly exposed to the cruelty and caprice of their masters and mistresses, their lives are rendered as wretched, that they not unfrequently wish to be sent to the field: the *out-door* slaves are porters, carpenters, &c. who are obliged to bring to their masters a certain sum every day.

The ordinary punishments of the slaves are inflicted by the whip and cow-skin. This, says Mr. Woodrich, is generally made of plaited cow-skin, with a thick strong lash, it is so formidable an instrument, that some of the overseers are enabled by means of it to take skin off a horse's back, he has seen them lay the marks of it into a dead board: the incisions (according to Dr. Harrison and the Dean of Middleham) are sometimes so deep that you may lay your finger into the wounds, and are such as to cure. As a further proof of the severity of the punishments, the following facts are adduced. Mr. Fitzmaurice has known pregnant women so severely whipped, as to have miscarried in consequence of it. Davidson knew a negro girl die of a mortification of her wounds two days after whipping. Dr. Jackson recollects a negro dying under the lash, or soon after. Abstract of the evidence, see page 66 and 67.

We now proceed to the *extraordinary* punishments, in the infliction of which, malice, fury, and all the worst passions of the human mind, rage with unbridled licence. Benevolence recoils at the dreadful perspective, and can scarce collect composure to disclose the bloody catalogue.

Captain Raper has known slaves severely punished, then put into the stocks, a cattle chain of sixty or seventy pounds weight put on them, and a large collar round their necks, each a weight of fifty pounds fastened to the chain, when they were driven off to the fields, the collars are furnished with two, three or four projections, which hinder them from lying down to sleep.

A negro man, in Jamaica, (says Dr. Harrison) was put on the picket *long*, as to cause a mortification of his foot and hand, on suspicion of robbing his master, a public officer, of a sum of money, which it afterwards appeared the master had stolen himself. Yet the master was privy to the punishment, and the slave had no compensation. Abstract of the evidence, page 69.

Mr. Fitzmaurice mentions the practice of dropping hot lead upon the slaves, which he saw performed by a planter of the name of Rukie in Jamaica, this same man, in three years, destroyed by severity *forty* negroes out of *slaves*. The rest of the conduct of this planter was suppressed by the house of commons, as containing circumstances *not* *deserving* to be given to the world.

An interesting instance where Mr. J. Terry was, in Granada, threw a slave into the boiling *cane* *juice* who died in four days.

Captain Cook relates, that he saw a woman named Rachel Lauder, beat a slave most unmercifully, and would have murdered her, had she not been prevented; the girl's crime was, the not bringing money enough from on board of a ship, *whether she had been sent by her mistress, for the purpose of prostitution*. Lieutenant Davidson relates, that the wife of the clergyman at Port-Royal, used to drop hot sealings on her negroes after flogging; he was sent for as surgeon to one of them whose breast was terribly burnt.

If it should be asked, for what offences the punishments cited have taken place, the following answer may be given:

Under the head of *ordinary* punishments, the slaves appear to have been sent for not coming to the field in time, not picking a sufficient quantity of grass, for staying too long of an errand, and theft, to which they were often driven by hunger.

Under the head of *extraordinary* punishments, the following have been alleged as reasons: for running away, for breaking a plate, or to extort confusion in the moments of passion, and one on a diabolical pretence, which the master held out to the world to conceal his own villainy, and which he knew *to be false*. Women punish their slaves for being found pregnant, for not bringing home the *full* *weight* of *provisions*, and others, without even the *allegation* of a *fault*.

All the facts that have been now adduced are of unquestionable authority, having been extracted from the evidence laid before the house of commons by eye-witnesses of the facts. Let now every honest man lay his hand on his breast, and seriously reflect, whether he is justifiable in countenancing such barbarities; or whether he ought not to reject, with horror, the smallest participation in such infernal transactions. To the weaker sex, whose amiable characteristic it is, to be "tremblingly alive" to every tale of woe, the friends of the abolition return their warmest acknowledgments for the zeal with which many of them have exposed the cause of humanity, and for the noble example they have shewn, in rejecting the produce of slavery and misery.

The manner of yoking the slaves by the Mandingoes, or African slave merchants, who usually march annually in eight or ten parties, from the river Gambia to Bambarra; each party having from one hundred to one hundred and fifty slaves.

The Log-Yokes are made of the roots of trees, so heavy as to make it extremely difficult for the persons who wear them to walk, much more to escape or run away.



A front and profile view of an African's head, with the mouth-piece and necklace, the hooks round which are placed to prevent an escape when pursued in the woods, and to hinder them from laying down the head to procure rest.—At A is a flat iron which goes into the mouth, and so effectually keeps down the tongue, that nothing can be swallowed, not even the saliva, a passage for which is made through holes in the mouth-plate.



An enlarged view of the mouth-piece, which, when long worn, becomes so heated, as frequently to bring off the skin along with it.

A view of the leg-bolts or shackles, as put upon the legs of the slaves on ship-board, in the middle passage.



An enlarged view of the boots and spurs, as used at some plantations in Antigua.



Another method in which the poor victims are placed to be flogged.



PRINTED AND SOLD BY SAMUEL WOOD, NO. 362, PEARL-STREET.

Samuel Wood, Injured Humanity; Being A Representation of What the Unhappy Children of Africa Endure from Those Who Call Themselves Christians, 1805. (Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC05113)

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Transcript

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INJURED HUMANITY ;

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A Representation of what the unhappy Children of Africa endure from those who call themselves

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knew the *best* master in the West-Indies use his slaves so well, as the *worst* master his servants in England. Abstract of the evidence, see page 53.

To come to a more *particular* description of their treatment, it will be proper to divide them into different classes: the first consisting of those bought for the use of the *plantations* : the second of the *in* and *out-door* slaves.

The field slaves are called out by daylight to their work: if they are not out in time, they are flogged. When put to their work, they perform it in rows, and, without exception, under the whip of drivers, a certain number of whom are allotted to each gang. Such is the *mode* of their labour: as to the time of it, they begin at daylight, and continue with two intermissions (one for half an hour in the morning, the other for two hours at noon) till sunset. Besides this, they are expected to range about and pick grass for the cattle, either during their two hours *rest* at noon, or after the fatigues of the day.

Sir G. Young adds, that women were, in general, considered to miscarry, from the cruel treatment they met with; and Captain Hall says, that he has seen a woman seated to give suck to her child, roused from that situation by a severe blow from the cart-whip. Abstract of the evidence, see page 53, 54, 55.

The above account of their labour is confined to that season of the year which is termed *out of crop*.

In the crop season, the labour is of much longer duration. Mr. Dalrymple says, they are obliged to work as long as they can, that is, as long as they can keep awake or stand. Sometimes, through excess of fatigue, they fall asleep, when it has happened to those who feed the mills, that their arms have been caught therein and torn off. Mr. Cook, on the same subject, states, that they work, in general, eighteen hours out of the twenty-four: he knew a girl lose her hand by the mill while feeding it, being overcome with sleep, she dropped against the rollers. Abstract of the evidence, page 55, 56.

To this account of their labour, it should be added, that it appears, that on some estates, the slaves have Sunday and Saturday afternoon to themselves; on others, Sunday only, and on others, only Sunday in part. It appears again, that *in crop*, on no estate have they more than Sunday for the cultivation of their own lands. Abstract of the evidence, page 56.

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The ordinary punishments of the slaves are inflicted by the whip and cow-skin. This, says Mr. Woolrich, is generally made of plaited cow-skin, with a thick strong lash, it is so formidable an instrument, that some of the overseers can by means of it take skin off a horse's back, he has seen them lay the marks of it into a deal board: the incisions (according to Dr. Harrison and the Dean of Middleham) are sometimes so deep that you can lay your finger into the wounds, and are such as no time can erase. As a farther proof of the *severity* of the punishments, the following facts are adduced. Mr. Fitzmaurice has known pregnant women so severely whipped, as to have miscarried in consequence of it. Davidson knew a negro girl die of a mortification of her wounds two days after whipping. Dr. Jackson recollects a negro dying under the lash, or soon after. Abstract of the evidence, see page 66 and 67.

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Captain Rap has known slaves severely punished, then put into the stocks, a cattle chain of sixty or seventy pounds weight put on them, and a large collar round their necks, and a weight of fifty-six pounds fastened to the chain, when they were driven afield: the collars are formed with two, three, or four projections, which hinder them from lying down to sleep.

A *negro* man, in Jamaica, (says Dr. Harrison) was put on the picket so long, as to cause a mortification of his foot and hand, on suspicion of robbing his master, a public officer, of a sum of money, which it afterwards appeared *the master had taken himself*. Yet the master was privy to the punishment, and the slave had no compensation. Abstract of the evidence, page 69.

Mr. Fitzmaurice mentions the practice of dropping hot lead upon the slaves, which he saw performed by a planter of the name of Rushie in Jamaica, this same man, in three years, destroyed by severity *forty negroes out of sixty*. The rest of the conduct of this planter was suppressed by the house of commons, as containing circumstances *too horrible to be given to the world*.

An overseer on the estate where Mr. J. Turry was, in Granada, threw a slave *into the boiling cane juice*, who died in four days.

Captain Cook relates, that he saw a woman named Rachel Lauder, beat a slave most unmercifully, and would have murdered her, had she not been prevented; the girl's crime was, the not bringing money enough from on board of a ship, *whither she had been sent by her mistress, for the purpose of prostitution*.

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If it should be asked, for what offences the punishments cited have taken place, the following answer may be given:

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[left hand margin]

The husband and wife, after being sold to different purchasers, violently separated; probably never to see each other more.

[*illustration*: husband and wife hugging while violently being separated by a slave owner]

When slaves are purchased by the planters, they are generally marked on the breast with a red hot iron.

[*illustration*: slaves being marked by a slave owner with a red hot iron]

A representation of a slave at work cruelly accoutred, with a Head-frame and Mouth-piece to prevent his eating—with Boots and Spurs round his legs, and half a hundred weight chained to his body to prevent his absconding.

[*illustration*: a slave working in the field wearing a head frame, mouth piece, boots, and chains]

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The manner of fixing the slaves on a ladder to be flogged, which is also occasionally laid flat on the ground for severer punishment.

[*illustration*: a slave fixed on a ladder being whipped by another slave while the slave owner observes]

[*right hand margin*]

The manner of yoking the slaves by the Mandingoes, or African slave merchants, who usually march annually in eight or ten parties, from the river Gambia to Bambarra; each party having from one hundred to one hundred and fifty slaves.

The Log-Yokes are made of the roots of trees, so heavy as to make it extremely difficult for the persons who wear them to walk, much more to escape or run away.

[*illustration*: slaves wearing long yokes]

A front and profile view of an African's head, with the mouth-piece and necklace, the hooks round which are placed to prevent an escape when pursued in the woods, and to hinder them from laying down the head to procure rest.—At A is a flat iron which goes into the mouth, and so effectually keeps down the tongue, that nothing can be swallowed, not even the saliva, a passage for which is made through holes in the mouth-plate.

An enlarged view of the mouth-piece, which, when long worn, becomes so heated, as frequently to bring off the skin along with it.

A view of the leg-bolts or shackles, as put upon the legs of the slaves on shipboard, in the middle passage.

An enlarged view of the boots and spurs, as used at some plantations in Antigua.

[*illustration*: front and profile view of a slave wearing a mouth piece, shackles and spurs; enlarged view of shackles, spurs and mouth piece.]

Another method in which the poor victims are placed to be flogged.

[*illustration*: a slave being whipped on the ground by another slave while the slave owner observes]