



P.O.V.

Facilitator's Guide

Season **21**

Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North

A film by Katrina Browne

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www.pbs.org/pov



Letter from the Filmmaker

BOSTON, MAY 2008

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you so much for helping your community hold a heart-to-heart dialogue around ***Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North***.

When, at age 28, I learned from my grandmother about our ancestors being slave traders in Bristol, Rhode Island, I was shocked, but then realized immediately that I already knew. So the bigger shock was the fact that I'd buried what I knew. I started reading the historical literature, and quickly discovered that the DeWolfs were just one part of a web of broad-based Northern complicity in slavery. With just a small amount of analysis, it becomes clear that slavery was the foundation of the U.S. economy, not merely a Southern anomaly. Historian Joanne Pope Melish had just released a book on how the North constructed an identity as heroic abolitionists to cover up this unsettling history. No one wants to be related to bad guys. I realized that our family story was a microcosm of this larger narrative.

So I decided to make a film that would ask: In what ways was my family shaped, formed, made by African slavery? What is the broader legacy of slavery for white Americans? And if I could come to understand more deeply these ties that bind, if I could connect the dots that are generally out of my view, then how would I be called to think differently about who I am today and about my responsibility to mend?

I spent the years of 1999 through 2008 making this documentary with a remarkable team of family members and filmmaking colleagues. I was determined to be out in the world with the material as we worked on it. We held numerous dialogues around trailers and rough cuts over the years. This gave me the chance to hear from many different Americans and make some observations.

The first of these was that most white Americans today have foresworn racism. We subscribe to the value of equal opportunity and find prejudice repugnant. We think racism is about personal attitudes and thereby define ourselves as "not racist." Meanwhile, any number of economic and social indicators suggest inarguably that equality has not, in fact, been achieved. So trainers and educators now speak about "institutional racism" in order to help white Americans understand structural barriers faced by black Americans. The term "white privilege" has been instrumental in helping us see that we benefit disproportionately from systems that were set up to serve us, even when we aren't intending to do harm.

But all of the above doesn't mean that there's nothing going on in the personal, attitudinal or psychological realm for many white Americans. There's a lot going on! Perhaps you could say we have within us a host of racial syndromes or complexes— or just plain baggage. The emotions can include, for example, all-consuming guilt, fear of saying/doing the wrong thing, and defensiveness and denial. They all bespeak a disquiet, a sense that we know things aren't quite right, even when we're busy trying to cover over that intuition with protestations: "My family didn't own slaves"; "My people suffered when we got here, but we found a way, we got



Director Katrina Browne
Photo courtesy of Katrina Browne



Letter from the Filmmaker

ahead”; “Why don’t they just get over it?”; “They just like playing victim, playing the race card.” Even in my family, of all families, there were relatives who wanted to know which DeWolf brother they were descended from, in hopes that they came from one who wasn’t as bad, so they wouldn’t have to feel as implicated.

Maybe, fundamentally, it is just that: None of us want to feel implicated. Because then we would have to feel responsible for problems we don’t want to feel responsible for — deep, old, intractable divides. And we’d feel subject to the deep well of black anger. Our spirits push back: “I don’t deserve it!” “I didn’t do anything.” “I’m a good person.”

So here we are. We all inherit a painful history and legacy not of our making. And we chafe against them in ways that put us at odds with each other. Senator Barack Obama spoke eloquently in his historic speech in Philadelphia about the “racial stalemate.” He spoke of both the justifiable basis for black anger and the understandable basis for resentment among some whites, especially in the working class.

Given the great wrong that was committed and the persistence of inequality for black Americans, I believe it is incumbent on white Americans to break the stalemate first, to ask ourselves how we can take initiative. And I suspect we won’t be convinced to do this with the help of statistics or more information regarding inequality. Instead, we need to be convinced to take a second look at some of our cherished myths — those that are often directly connected to stories about our families and ourselves and that thus carry a lot of emotional charge.

It’s a delicate process, that of taking stock of how our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents may have been helped or hurt by the policies and practices of this land and then determining our responsibility to contribute to repair and reconciliation. We will all take different measures. It’s easier to do when there is more air in the room, more space, more grace — which might either mean circling up with folks like ourselves for a time or, perhaps, looking for those who want to sort things out in the mix.

Then, when we’re less protective, we can realize that it doesn’t have to be so personal after all. Humans suffer, cause suffering, are brave, are lazy, are scared, are greedy, are in search of love and happiness and right relationships. In that shared awareness, we can shoulder up next to each other and apply ourselves to the challenges of this day.

Katrina Browne, Director/Producer



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Introduction

Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North chronicles a unique and disturbing journey into the history and legacy of the U.S. slave trade. The feature-length (86-minute) documentary tracks what happens as filmmaker Katrina Browne comes to grips with the discovery that her New England ancestors were the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history. Her film is a probing essay into divergent versions of a nation's history.

Browne invites 200 DeWolf descendants to join her in facing their shared past and its relationship to their own lives. Nine end up traveling with her to retrace the Triangle Trade, from Bristol, Rhode Island, to slave forts in Ghana to sugar plantations in Cuba and back. Theirs is an emotional trek, with each step raising important questions about culpability and compassion, hurt and healing.

The family confronts not only their own assumptions, but also America's depiction of slavery as a predominantly Southern institution. As the film reveals the North's vast complicity in slavery, it forces viewers to examine the mythology of Northern innocence and the repercussions for race relations.

Candid and compelling, ***Traces of the Trade*** challenges viewers to ask themselves the same contentious questions that Browne and her family ask: What is my family's relationship to slavery? What does it mean to accept responsibility for the "living consequences" of slavery? What would it take to repair black/white relationships and to move beyond the guilt, defensiveness, anger, and fear that often separate us and silence us? As a nation, how do we deal with what we inherited from our country's history?



DeWolf descendants walking to Narragansett Bay, Bristol, RI.
Photo courtesy of Laura Wulf

The DeWolf descendants' journey is at once deeply personal and also indicative of much larger social struggles. As an outreach tool, the film offers powerful new perspectives on the black/white divide. It will provide an excellent springboard for dialogue around how the legacy of slavery influences the lives of Americans of all colors and generations.



Potential Partners

Key Issues

Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North is well suited for use in a variety of settings and is especially recommended for use with:

- **Your local PBS station**
- **Interracial dialogue groups and especially groups that have discussed previous PBS and P.O.V. films relating to race relations, healing, and the legacy of slavery and privilege, including *Africans in America*, *Banished*, *Family Name*, *The Murder of Emmett Till*, *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*, *Twilight Los Angeles*, and *Two Towns of Jasper***
- **Groups focused on any of the issues listed in the “Key Issues” section**
- **High school students**
- **Faith-based organizations and institutions**
- **Museums and historical societies**
- **Academic departments and student groups of colleges, universities and high schools**
- **Community organizations with a mission to promote education and learning, such as P.O.V.’s national partner Elderhostel Learning in Retirement Centers, members of the Listen Up! Youth Media Network and your local library**

Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North is an excellent tool for outreach and will be of special interest to people interested in the topics below:

- **African American studies**
- **Diversity**
- **Economics**
- **Family legacy**
- **Human rights**
- **Privilege/inheritance**
- **Race relations**
- **Racism**
- **Reconciliation**
- **Religion/ethics**
- **Reparations**
- **Slave trade**
- **Social justice**
- **U.S. history**

Event Ideas

Use a screening of *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North* to:

- **Host an observance of the bicentennial of the U.S. abolition of the slave trade.**
- **Open a museum or library exhibit on the history of the slave trade and/or slavery in your community that includes the less immediately obvious history.**
- **Kick off a series of small group meetings designed to help community members engage in interracial dialogue. Multipart sessions provide an effective**

springboard for in-depth dialogue on the many aspects of the black/white divide and how they connect to your community's issues.

- **Connect with and promote the work of organizations in your community that focus on race relations and racial justice. Determine a policy area in which your group can have an impact based on your new understandings, new hope, and new relationships.**
- **Engage faith communities in dialogue and action, including preaching, liturgies, and rituals of atonement and healing. See the *Traces of the Trade* website (www.tracesofthetrade.org) for further suggestions.**



Using this Guide

This guide is designed to help you use *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North* as the centerpiece of a community event. It contains suggestions for organizing an event as well as ideas for how to help participants think more deeply about the issues in the film. The discussion questions are designed for a very wide range of audiences. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose one or two that best meet the needs and interests of your group.*

Planning an Event

Not only do screenings of P.O.V. films showcase documentary film as an art form, but they can also be used to present information, get people interested in taking action on an issue, provide opportunities for people from different groups or perspectives to exchange views, and create space for reflection. Using the questions below as a planning checklist will help you create a high-quality, high-impact event.

- **Have you defined your goals?** Set realistic goals with your partners — what do you want to happen as a result of your event? Are you hoping to increase awareness or knowledge? Change attitudes or behavior? Help people network in ways that spark energy and ongoing connection? Keep in mind that some goals are easier to accomplish than others: Adding to a person's knowledge base is easier than changing beliefs and behaviors, for example. Being clear about your goals will make it easier to decide how to structure the event (whether as a single meeting or an ongoing project, for example), target publicity and evaluate results.
- **Does the way you are planning to structure the event fit your goals?** Do you need an outside facilitator, translator or sign language interpreter? If your goal is to share information, are there local experts on the topic who should be present? How large an audience do you want? (Large groups are appropriate for information exchanges. Small groups allow for more intensive dialogue.)

*Heading Toward Healing

Several models exist to help societies create justice and healing in the wake of atrocities committed by one group against another. Many recommend the following steps: (1) truth-telling; (2) apology; (3) action to repair the damage; (4) forgiveness; and (5) reconciliation. The headings in the Discussion Prompts section roughly follow this outline. To take advantage of this design, you might want to choose one or two from each section in sequence and make the group aware of their location on this healing pathway at each stage of the journey.

- **Have you arranged to involve all stakeholders?** It is especially important that people be allowed to speak for themselves. If your group is planning to take action that affects people other than those present, how will you give voice to those not in the room? If you are seeking a diverse audience, be sure to include representatives from a range of communities in the goal setting and planning process.
- **Is the event being held in a space where all participants will feel comfortable?** Is it wheelchair accessible? Is it in a part of town that's easy to reach by various kinds of transportation? If you are bringing together different constituencies, is it neutral territory? Does the physical configuration allow for the kind of discussion you hope to have?
- **Will the way that the room is set up help you meet your goals?** Is it comfortable? If you intend to have a discussion, will people be able to see one another? Are there spaces to use for small breakout groups? Will everyone be able to easily see the screen and hear the film?
- **Have you scheduled time to plan for action?** Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even if the discussion has been difficult. Action steps are especially important for people who already have a good deal of experience talking about the issues on the table. For those who are new to the issues, just engaging in public discussion serves as an action step.



Facilitating a Discussion

Finding a Facilitator

Controversial topics often make for excellent discussions. But by their nature, those same topics can also give rise to deep emotions and strongly held beliefs. As a facilitator, you can create an atmosphere in which people feel safe, encouraged and respected, making it more likely that they will be willing to share their ideas openly and honestly. Here's how:

Preparing Yourself

Identify your own hot-button issues.

View the film before your event and give yourself time to reflect. You will be a much more effective facilitator if you are not trying to sort through your own emotions while also trying to guide others in dealing with theirs.

Be knowledgeable.

You don't need to be an expert on the North's role in the slave trade, the status of reparations proposals, or the processes used in truth and reconciliation efforts, but knowing the basics can help you keep a discussion on track and gently correct misstatements of fact. In addition to the "Background Information" section that follows, you may want to take a look at the suggested websites and books in the "Resources" section on p. 36.

Be clear about your role.

You may find yourself taking on several roles for an event, including host, organizer, even projectionist. If you are also planning to serve as facilitator, be sure that you can focus on that responsibility and avoid distractions during the discussion. Keep in mind that being a facilitator is not the same as being a teacher. A teacher's job is to convey specific information. In contrast, a facilitator remains neutral, helping to move the discussion along without imposing his or her views on the dialogue.

Who Should Facilitate?

You may or may not be the best person to facilitate, especially if you have multiple responsibilities for your event. Also, if you are particularly invested in a topic, it might be wise to ask someone more neutral to guide the dialogue.

Because of the challenging content in *Traces of the Trade*, we strongly recommend using a facilitator or team of facilitators who are experienced in helping groups examine race and racism or in guiding interracial dialogue. The tips that follow assume that facilitators have such expertise.

If you need to find someone else to facilitate, some university professors, human resource professionals, clergy and youth leaders may be specially trained in facilitation skills. In addition to these local resources, groups such as the Center for the Healing of Racism, the National Conference for Community and Justice, the National Coalition Building Institute and the National Association for Community Mediation may be able to provide or help you locate skilled facilitators. Be sure that your facilitator receives a copy of this guide well in advance of your event.

Know your group.

Issues can play out very differently for different groups of people. Are the people attending your event new to the issue or have they dealt with it before? Factors like geography, age, race, religion and socioeconomic class can all have an impact on comfort levels, speaking styles and prior experience with speaking publicly about race, racism or privilege. Take care not to assume that all members of a particular group share the same point of view.



Facilitating a Discussion

Anticipate key obstacles and determine how to move through them.

Prior to your event, think about how you will respond to comments that offend without shutting down dialogue or allowing the discussion to escalate into an argument. The language and tone of voice that you use will serve as a model for the entire group.

Expect to encounter emotions like guilt, defensiveness and anger — they are common in discussions about race, racism and slavery. It will be important to give space for these emotions, but also to not get stuck there. Without assuming the role of a counselor or therapist, you can do a lot to help people move through their feelings:

1. Allow people time and space to express emotions and assist them in understanding the source of their reactions. It might help to acknowledge that intense feelings of one group can sometimes trigger intense reactions in another. In this discussion you may encounter a “feedback loop” in which guilt, defensiveness and anger amplify each other. Invite people to notice their reactivity and to “try on” the opposite response. Learning how to openly receive one another’s anger, guilt and defensiveness can be transformative.
2. Affirm people’s feelings by acknowledging that emotions are never right or wrong. Encourage those who might be focused on proving people either right or wrong to instead focus on understanding what others are saying. Make room for multiple perspectives to coexist.
3. Think about using breakout groups to allow people to vent away from the larger group, or consider the possibility of journal-writing or dyads.
4. Remind people of the obvious: No one can change the past. So if the focus remains exclusively on history, change can never happen. At the same time, our understanding of the past shapes our interpretation of the present, so accuracy and the inclusion of multiple perspectives are important. Help participants see how they are remembering the past and identify any gaps or misinformation. Encourage them to make connections between the way they see history and their current ideas or feelings.
5. Talk about the difference between blame and responsibility. Blame is only useful in the context of determining whom to punish. Since your event is not about exacting punishment, blame is irrelevant. Instead, guide the group to consider ways that everyone might feel inspired to create a more just society.
6. In addition, point out that shared responsibility does not necessarily mean shared or identical tasks. The tasks of those who have benefited from past events may differ from the tasks of those who have been disadvantaged. Steer the discussion toward helping people identify work they or their group might need and want to do.
7. Be sure to leave time to plan for action. When issues of race, racism and socioeconomic class are presented as powerfully as is done in **Traces of the Trade**, it can be easy for some people to slip into “compassion fatigue,” that is, the sense of helplessness that can come from seeing or experiencing repeated instances of injustice. People in the underprivileged group may also slip into fatigue with those in the privileged group. The best way to combat these fatigues is to name them and then take action. You can increase the chances that people will leave your event feeling energized and hopeful by brainstorming action items and planning specific next steps.



Facilitating a Discussion

Preparing the Group

Consider how well group members know one another.

If you are bringing together people who have never met, you may want to devote some time to introductions at the beginning of the event.

Agree to ground rules regarding language.

Involve the group in establishing some basic ground rules. To ensure clarity, ask people to speak in the first person ("I think ...") rather than generalizing for others ("Everyone knows that ..."). In addition, recognize that there are significant debates about the meaning of key terms like "race" and "racism." You might invite participants to share their definitions so that when the words are used, people aren't misconstruing the speaker's meaning.

To ensure respect, declare that certain kinds of language and behaviors, such as put-downs, yelling and intentional insults, are off-limits. Because the discussion will likely include references to racial groups and because there isn't universal agreement on which labels for those groups are acceptable (e.g., black, African American, Afro-American, white, European American), you might also want to take a few minutes to create and post a list of which terms will be okay for this event, accepting all suggestions with the exception of slurs. Keep in mind that well-intentioned people disagree about terminology and that variables like age, geography and politics can lead some people to use labels that others find offensive or hurtful. You can use such disagreements to explore why people accept some terms and reject others.

Try to give everyone an opportunity to be heard.

Be clear about how people will take turns or indicate that they want to speak. If the group is large, are there plans to break into small groups or pairs? Or should attendance be limited? Plan strategies to make sure that everyone who wishes to speak can do so, that one or two people do not dominate the discussion, that no one is attacked and that no one is forced to reveal things they do not want to talk about. Be sure to clarify that your role is not to cut people off, but that you do have a responsibility to

We recommend that you invite people to use the term "enslaved people" or "enslaved Africans" instead of "slaves." Language has power, and the term "slave" may reinforce objectification. By making the status of enslavement an adjective and making "people" the noun, some dignity and humanity can be restored.

keep things moving, so occasionally you may ask a participant to wrap up remarks so that others might have an opportunity to speak.

Talk about the difference between dialogue and debate.

In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively. Remind people that they are engaged in a dialogue. This will be especially important in preventing a discussion from dissolving into a repetitive, rhetorical debate.

Encourage active listening.

Ask the group to think of the event as being about listening as well as discussing. Participants can be encouraged to listen for things that challenge as well as reinforce their own ideas. You may also consider asking people to practice formal "active listening," in which participants listen without interrupting the speaker, then rephrase what was said to make sure they have heard it correctly.

Remind participants that everyone sees through the lens of their own experience.

Who we are influences how we interpret what we see. Everyone in the group may have a different view about the content and meaning of the film they have just seen, and each of them may be accurate. Ask speakers to identify the evidence on which they base their opinions. This can help participants understand one another's perspectives.



Facilitating a Discussion

Take care of yourself and group members.

For some people, *Traces of the Trade* will challenge long and deeply held beliefs or assumptions. People react to such challenges differently. Some will be inspired. Others may be disturbed or angry. Either way, the power of the film can infuse discussions with emotion.

If the intensity level rises, pause to let everyone take a deep breath. You might consider establishing a preplanned “time-out” strategy or providing a safe space away from the full group for participants to “vent,” perhaps staffed by preassigned “listeners.” If you are leading an interracial dialogue, you may want to plan for opportunities for the group to separate by race in order to process events with people who may share similar experiences with respect to racism.

A key word or a nonverbal cue (like putting a hand over your heart to signal that you really empathize with what was just said) can also be helpful. Agree on signals that anyone can use to pause the discussion or indicate that they have been hurt or offended by another’s comment. Let everyone take a deep breath before moving on to deal with the situation.

Finally, think carefully about what you ask people to share publicly, and explain things like confidentiality and whether or not press or a videographer will be present.



Director of Photography, Liz Dory,
with crew and family on location in Bristol, RI.
Photo courtesy of Laura Wulf



Background Information



The DeWolf Family

Filmmaker Katrina Browne is descended from the DeWolf family (also spelled D'Wolf and DeWolfe) of Bristol, Rhode Island. The most prominent member of this family, James DeWolf (1764–1837), was a U.S. senator and a wealthy merchant who was reportedly the second-richest person in the country when he died. In the 1790s and early 1800s, DeWolf and his brothers virtually built the economy of Bristol: Many of the buildings they funded still stand, and the stained glass windows at St. Michael's Episcopal Church bear DeWolf names to this day. Across the generations, their family has included state legislators, philanthropists, writers, scholars, and Episcopal bishops and priests.

The DeWolf family fortune was built in part on buying and selling human beings. Over the course of 50 years and three

The Family of Ten at Cape Coast Castle, Ghana, July 2001
(top, l to r) Dain Perry, Elizabeth Sturges Llerena, Katrina Browne,
Jim Perry, Holly Fulton, Ledlie Laughlin, Keila DePoorter
(bottom, l to r) Tom DeWolf, Elly Hale, James Perry.

Photo courtesy of Katrina Browne

generations, from 1769 to 1820, the DeWolfs were the nation's leading slave traders. They brought approximately 10,000 Africans from the west coast of Africa to auction blocks in Charleston, South Carolina, and other southern U.S. ports; to Havana, Cuba, and other ports in the Caribbean; to their own sugar plantations in Cuba; and into their own homes. The family continued in the trade despite state and federal laws prohibiting many of their activities in the late 1700s. Their efforts to circumvent those laws eventually led them to arrange a political favor with President Thomas Jefferson, who agreed to



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split the federal customs district based in Newport, Rhode Island. This maneuver permitted the appointment of a customs inspector just for Bristol, and the choice was Charles Collins, the brother-in-law of James DeWolf, who conveniently ignored the slave ships moving in and out of harbor. One member of the family, George DeWolf, even continued in the trade after 1808, when Congress banned the importation of slaves into the United States, until 1820, when Congress made slave trading a hanging offense. Their complicity in slavery continued even after that, however — the family maintained slave plantations in Cuba, and James DeWolf invested his slave trade profits in textile mills that used slave-produced cotton. Today, there are as many as half a million living descendants of the people traded as chattel by the DeWolfs.

DeWolf descendants looking at family records from the slave trade at the Bristol Historical and Preservation Society, Bristol, RI.

Photo courtesy of Holly Fulton

Sources:

Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700–1807* (Philadelphia: Temple Press, 1981); David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson and Herbert S. Klein, eds., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge, 1999); George Howe, Mount Hope: *A New England Chronicle* (New York: Viking Press, 1959); M.A. DeWolfe Howe, *Bristol, Rhode Island: A Town Biography* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1930).



Background Information



Fishing canoe, Cape Coast, Ghana.
Photo courtesy of Katrina Browne

The Slave Trade Business

Slave traders like the DeWolfs took part in what is often known as the “Triangle Trade,” which, in the case of the U.S. trade, included New England, Africa, and slave markets in North America and the Caribbean. New England traders would send ships loaded with rum and other goods to the coast of Africa, to trade for enslaved Africans. Those ships would then take their human cargos across the Middle Passage to ports in Caribbean islands or the southern U.S. states. There, they would sell the slaves and often buy cargos of sugar cane, molasses and other goods produced with slave labor to bring north to markets in New England. Distillers in the northeast would then make rum from the sugar cane, which in turn could be sold in Africa for more slaves.

The DeWolf family found many ways to increase their profits from the slave trade. In Havana, Cuba, their ship captains could sell their cargoes in one of the largest slave markets in the world. If, however, prices were low when ships arrived, the captains could send the enslaved Africans to sugar plantations owned by the DeWolfs, where the slaves would be worked,

producing the raw materials for northern rum distilleries, until prices in the slave market had risen again.

The DeWolfs also used the wealth gained in trading slaves to diversify their holdings and establish other, related businesses. Members of the DeWolf family eventually owned a bank, an insurance company and rum distilleries. Eventually, James DeWolf invested in textile mills where — in an early example of industrialization — cotton grown and harvested on southern slave plantations using inexpensive slave labor was spun into fabric.

The slave trade helped to build the growing economies of northern seaports like Bristol and supported the economies of many towns along the New England coast and farther inland. Slave traders paid shipbuilders, insurers, blacksmiths, and a wide variety of other tradesmen, merchants and farmers. New York financial institutions were heavily invested in slavery. Almost every business and industry in the region traded or did



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business with merchants or shippers whose wealth was generated by slavery. In addition, those who invested in slaving voyages came from almost all walks of life: although wealthy families such as the DeWolfs were often significant investors, smaller shares in voyages were owned by ordinary tradesmen and artisans, such as blacksmiths, masons, bakers, rope-makers, painters and those engaged in various other forms of manual labor.

Sources:

Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700–1807* (Philadelphia: Temple Press, 1981); David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson and Herbert S. Klein, eds., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge, 1999); Rachel Chernos Lin, "The Rhode Island Slave-Traders: Butchers, Bakers and Candlestick-Makers," *Slavery and Abolition*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Dec. 2002), pp. 21–38; James Pope-Hennessy, *Sins of the Fathers: A Study of the Atlantic Slave Traders, 1441–1807* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1998); Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998).

Northern Involvement in the Slave Trade

A central fact obscured by post-Civil War mythologies is that the northern U.S. states were deeply implicated in slavery and the slave trade right up to the war.

The slave trade in particular was dominated by the northern maritime industry. Rhode Island alone was responsible for half of all U.S. slave voyages. The DeWolfs may have been the biggest slavers in U.S. history, but there were many others involved. For example, some members of the Brown family of Providence were prominent in the slave trade; the Brown family gave substantial gifts to Rhode Island College, which was later renamed Brown University.

Although local townspeople thought of the DeWolfs and other prominent families primarily as general merchants, distillers and traders who supported ship-building, warehousing, insurance businesses, and other trades and businesses, it was common knowledge that one source of this business was the cheap labor and huge profits reaped from trafficking in human beings.

The North imported slaves, as well as transporting and selling them in the South and abroad. Although the majority of enslaved Africans arrived in southern ports — Charleston, South Carolina, was the largest market for slave traders, including the DeWolfs — most large colonial ports served as points of entry, and Africans were sold in northern ports that included Philadelphia, New York, Boston and Newport, Rhode Island.

The southern coastal states of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland were home to the vast majority of enslaved persons. But there were slaves in each of the 13 original colonies, and slavery was legal in the North for more than 200 years. Even though the northern states gradually began abolishing slavery by law starting in the 1780s, many of them did not take action against those who broke the laws until well into the 19th century; in addition, their laws generally provided only for gradual abolition, allowing slave owners to keep their existing slaves and often their children. As a result, New Jersey, for example, still had thousands of persons legally enslaved in the 1830s, and did not finally abolish slavery by law until 1846. As late as the outbreak of the Civil War, in fact, there were northern slaves listed on the federal census.

In the South, men, women and children were often forced to work on large plantations, which could employ the labor of hundreds or even thousands of enslaved Africans. In the North, farms were smaller, and those farmers who owned slaves generally had only a small number. And it was fairly common during slavery in the North to find one or two slaves in the households of farmers, merchants, ministers and others.

Sources:

"Africans in America Part Two: Revolution," WGBH Interactive, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2narr1.html>; David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson and Herbert S. Klein, eds., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge, 1999); Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998).



Background Information



Ghana and the Slave Trade

For almost 150 years, Ghana, on Africa's west coast, was the center of the British slave trade. Western traders arrived in ships loaded with manufactured goods to barter or trade for slaves. Those who were sold had often been captured in tribal warfare; some had simply been kidnapped to sell to European slave traders.

Slavery existed in Africa prior to the transatlantic trade, and in fact the earlier, trans-Saharan slave trade sent more enslaved Africans east to the Muslim world, over many centuries, than would be transported west to the Americas. However, the

Katrina Browne and a Ghanaian child on the ramparts of Cape Coast Castle slave fort.

Photo courtesy of Katrina Browne

large-scale organization of European slave trading and the development of industry and massive plantations dependent on slave labor gave rise to a trade in humans that was staggering in its scale. Approximately 10 million enslaved people were transported in the transatlantic slave trade, at rates of up to 100,000 persons per year.

The remnants of the trade in Ghana are still visible today in dozens of forts and castles built by Europeans between 1482



Background Information



and 1786. American traders did business at trading posts run by the British, French, Dutch, Germans, Spanish, Portuguese and others. Among these trading posts were Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castle, which the DeWolff descendants visited in Ghana. Many of these sites have been preserved, and they attract thousands of visitors as part of the Slave Route Project of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In addition to preservation efforts, Ghana has also made efforts to encourage descendants of enslaved Africans to learn more about their history. Descendants may be eligible for special visas, and the government has instituted programs to encourage Ghanaians to welcome people from the African Diaspora.

Sources:

David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson and Herbert S. Klein, eds., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge, 1999); Roger S. Gocking, *The History of Ghana* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2005); William St. Clair, *The Door of No Return: The History of Cape Coast Castle and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Blue Bridge, 2007); Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440–1870* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

DeWolff descendants meeting with Ghanaians, African-Americans, and others at the Town Hall, Cape Coast, Ghana.

Photo courtesy of Katrina Browne

Cuba and the Slave Trade

In the 18th and 19th centuries, Cuba was dependent on an economy based on the sugar cane and coffee crops and on slaves imported from Africa to work on the sugar and coffee plantations. It is estimated that more than 600,000 Africans were taken from West Africa and shipped to Cuba over the course of three centuries, with tens of thousands dying during the brutal Atlantic Crossing.

Most of these people were brought to Cuba between the 1780s and the 1860s, when the slave population rose from 39,000 to 400,000. Despite the fact that the U.S. slave trade to Cuba was illegal after 1794, U.S. traders, including the DeWolff family, frequently made slave voyages to Havana and profited from their own Cuban plantations. At the peak of the slave-based economy, enslaved people comprised nearly one-third of the Cuban population.



Background Information



There were a number of antislavery movements in the early 1800s, but those were violently suppressed and leaders of the revolts were executed. Although Britain and the United States abolished their slave trades in 1807 and 1808 and Britain pressured Spain into formally ending the trade to Cuba in the 1820s, Cuba remained one of the most common destinations for slave ships through the 1860s. Slavery itself was not abolished in Cuba until 1886.

DeWolf descendants discovering the ruins of George DeWolf's "Noah's Ark," one of five plantations owned by DeWolfs in Cuba.

Photo courtesy of Katrina Browne

Sources:

David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson and Herbert S. Klein, eds., *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on CD-ROM* (Cambridge, 1999); Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440–1870* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997); Eric Williams, *From Columbus to Castro: The History of the Caribbean, 1492–1969* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970).



Background Information

Reconstruction, Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Era

The United States officially ended slavery with the passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865. There were various proposals to grant freed black slaves compensation or at least assistance in establishing themselves as free citizens. Most prominent was General William T. Sherman's field order granting land to black families near the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, which became known as "40 acres and a mule." Sherman's order was rescinded, however, after President Lincoln was assassinated, and the Reconstruction Era left formerly enslaved blacks to fend for themselves. In many cases, former slaves simply remained on plantations as sharecroppers under conditions similar to slavery.

In the hundred years following the end of slavery, blacks faced formidable barriers to political, economic and social equality. In the South, Jim Crow laws enforced a rigid racial segregation, consigning black citizens to inferior schools and other public services, imposing poll taxes and literacy tests aimed at preventing blacks from voting, and providing official support for a culture of segregation and discrimination. In other regions of the country, there were fewer legal barriers, but widespread, often blatant discrimination in employment, housing, schools, churches and most other aspects of life. Government policies, although not always based formally on race, were frequently designed in ways that benefited whites at the expense of black and other citizens of color. Race-based violence was also common, and thousands of blacks, and sympathetic whites, were lynched in the South and elsewhere, in waves that occurred from the 1870s until the 1960s.

Meanwhile, these were years of unparalleled social and economic progress for whites, including many whose families arrived as immigrants after the Civil War. The G.I. Bill, the Federal Housing Authority and other programs helped to provide citizens with access to education, home ownership, jobs and business loans, raising many whites into the middle class. Meanwhile, these programs were often unavailable to blacks, and unofficial policies such as redlining further restricted black

citizens from access to banking, insurance, health care, jobs and home ownership.

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was dramatic progress toward official acceptance of equality for those of all races. The Supreme Court struck down many laws that legalized discrimination, including those that permitted school segregation (*Brown v. Board of Education*) and that disallowed interracial marriage (*Loving v. Virginia*). Following a series of popular protests lead by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others, the federal government enacted civil rights legislation designed to end all legalized discrimination and to ensure equal access, in practice, to schools, voting booths, housing and jobs. The Civil Rights Movement resulted in changing laws and reshaping public attitudes, and new policies, such as affirmative action, began to significantly change circumstances for black Americans.

The advances of the 1950s and 1960s, however, were not enough to reverse the failures of Reconstruction or the discrimination of the Jim Crow era. Black Americans made little progress during the hundred years following slavery, falling further behind white Americans, and progress since that time has been glacially slow by most social and economic indicators. The median net worth of white families has risen to about \$121,000, whereas for black families, the figure is only \$19,000. Following the dramatic, government-supported rise in home ownership for whites during the 20th century, it would now take black families, at the current rate, more than 5,400 years to close the gap in homeownership.

Sources:

Jonathan Kaplan and Andrew Valls, "Housing Discrimination As a Basis for Black Reparations," *Public Affairs Quarterly* (July 2007); Amaad Rivera, Brenda Cotto-Escalera, Anisha Desai, Jeannette Huezo and Dedrick Muhammad, *Foreclosed: State of the Dream 2008* (United for a Fair Economy, 2008).



Background Information

The 2008 Bicentennial of U.S. Abolition of the Slave Trade

A key compromise between northern and southern states in the U.S. Constitution is found in Article I, Section 9:

"The Migration or Importation of such Persons ... shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight."

In 1794, Congress prohibited the U.S. slave trade to foreign destinations, but was powerless under the Constitution to end the slave trade into southern U.S. ports.

In his annual message to Congress, one year before the constitutional prohibition was to expire, President Thomas Jefferson proposed a total ban on the slave trade. The bill he signed months later would outlaw the importation of slaves into the United States as of January 1, 1808, just as the constitutional compromise expired. The legislation also prohibited U.S. involvement in slave trading throughout the world.

But the legal abolition of the U.S. slave trade did not end that trade: For example, although most of the DeWolf family ceased their slave trading, James DeWolf's nephew, George DeWolf, continued to finance slave voyages for another 12 years, until Congress imposed the death penalty for slave trading. Even then, an illegal trade in slaves into the southern U.S. persisted until the Civil War, with substantial numbers of slaves being imported in the 1840s and 1850s as demand rose.

The action of the United States to outlaw the slave trade, however, coupled with Great Britain's similar action months earlier, was a key step in gradually ending the transatlantic slave trade and in spurring the emancipation of slaves throughout the Atlantic world in the coming decades.

In 2007, the United Kingdom commemorated the 200th anniversary of the abolition of its slave trade with ceremonies at Westminster Abbey featuring the queen and the prime minister and with £20 million (\$40 million) for public exhibits and events, conferences, school programs, stamps, and coins. The public commemoration of the bicentennial of the abolition of the U.S. slave trade has been, by contrast, understated.

Although Congress has passed and President Bush has signed legislation to commemorate the anniversary, no funding was authorized, and there has been little public or private observance.

Sources:

Eric Foner, "A Forgotten Step Toward Freedom," *New York Times* (December 30, 2007); Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440–1870* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997).

Current Legislative Action

Beginning early in 2007, the legislatures of seven states have officially expressed regret for their involvement in slavery: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina and Virginia. Similar measures are pending or have been proposed in other states, including Georgia, Missouri, New York, Nebraska and Tennessee.

In the U.S. Congress, there is a similar apology resolution pending in the House of Representatives, introduced by Rep. Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.) and co-sponsored by 120 representatives. Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.) and Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) have announced plans to introduce an apology resolution into the Senate, and their measure has already attracted 14 Senate co-sponsors, including Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

A bill to form a commission to study the history and legacy of slavery and its aftermath and possible reparations or other remedies has been introduced by Rep. John Conyers (D Mich.) into the House in each Congress since 1989. This bill, known as H.R. 40 (for the promised "40 acres and a mule"), was the subject of a hearing before a House Judiciary subcommittee in December 2007, and further proceedings are expected in the near future.

Sources:

Congressman John Conyers Jr. official website, http://www.house.gov/conyers/news_reparations.shtml; Wendy Koch, "Lawmakers to Push for U.S. Apology for Slavery," *USA Today* (Feb. 27, 2008); Martha Stoddard, "Slavery Apology's Fate Unclear," *Omaha World-Herald* (April 8, 2008).



Background Information

Selected People Featured in *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*

DEWOLF DESCENDANTS



Katrina Browne



Keila DePoorter



Tom DeWolf



Holly Fulton



Elly DeWolfe Hale



Ledlie Laughlin



Background Information

Selected People Featured in *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*

DEWOLF DESCENDANTS



Dain Perry



James DeWolf Perry VI



Jim DeWolf Perry V



Elizabeth Sturges Llerena



Background Information

Selected People Featured in *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*

SCHOLARS/EXPERTS, IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE



Bonnie Warren: Principal Historic Preservation Specialist (retired), Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission



Kevin E. Jordan: Architectural historian; Professor of Historic Preservation (retired), Roger Williams University



Joanne Pope Melish: Associate Professor of History, University of Kentucky



Ron Bailey: Professor, African American Studies, Northeastern University



Kofi Anyidoho: Professor of Literature, University of Ghana; award-winning poet



Robert Addo-Fening: Professor of History, University of Ghana



Background Information

Selected People Featured in *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*

SCHOLARS/EXPERTS, IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE



Juanita Brown: Co-Producer, *Traces of the Trade*; Assistant Director of Development, Coalition of Essential Schools



Harold Fields: Interracial Dialogue Facilitator



Glenn Loury: Merton P. Stoltz Professor of the Social Sciences in the Department of Economics, Brown University



Charles Ogletree: Executive Director, Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice and Jesse Climenko Professor of Law, Harvard University; Co-Chair, Reparations Coordinating Committee



General Discussion Questions

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen. If the mood seems tense, you can pose a general question and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion. You might also ask people to share in dyads, taking turns speaking and listening (without interrupting) to share what is most on their hearts/minds.

Unless you think participants are so uncomfortable that they can't engage until they have had a break, don't encourage people to leave the room between the film and the discussion. If you save your break for an appropriate moment during the discussion, you won't lose the feeling of the film as you begin your dialogue.

One way to get a discussion going is to pose a general question such as:

- **If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, whom would you ask and what would you ask him or her?**
- **What did you learn from this film? What insights did it provide?**
- **If friends asked you what this film was about, what would you tell them?**
- **Describe a moment or scene in the film that you found particularly disturbing or moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling for you?**



Discussion Prompts



Whip and manacles reportedly found at The Mount, the mansion originally built by James DeWolf.

Photo courtesy of Tom DeWolf

History

- In your view, what is the significance of the film's subtitle, "A Story from the Deep North"?
- Prior to viewing the film, what did you know about the role of the North in slavery and the slave trade? What did you learn from the film? In your view, why is the history of the North's relationship to slavery less well-known than the South's?
- Slavery was a common practice in the New World when the DeWolfs established their slave trading business. Yet Tom rejects the argument that his ancestors were merely a product of their time, saying, "It was an evil thing, and they knew it was an evil thing — and they did it anyway." How would you respond to the argument that the actions of slave traders and owners

need to be understood in the context of the time in which they live? What difference does it make to our current understanding if we agree with Tom or if we believe that slave traders/owners did not believe that what they were doing was wrong?

- The scholars in the first part of the film talk about how "everyone in town lived off slavery" and "all of the North was involved." Later, Katrina notes that Northern textile mills and other factories that employed waves of European immigrants were dependent on inexpensive raw materials harvested by



Discussion Prompts



Old DeWolf warehouse on the Bristol waterfront, built in 1818.

Sugar and rum came and went here.

Photo courtesy of Tom DeWolf

enslaved Africans and their descendants in the South and the Caribbean islands. In Cuba, she talks about realizing the role of consumers. How does this widespread, indirect, more mundane complicity inform your understanding of slavery and its “living consequences”?

- The Spanish and the Portuguese brought slavery to Latin America and parts of the West Indies. Consider the relationship to the slave trade of Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The film hints at the connection between Native American history and the history of African slavery. What do you know about this connection? How have all communities of color affected and been affected by the American practice of race-based discrimination? How does the dialogue change when it

expands beyond black and white voices to include the voices of other people of color and those who identify as biracial or multiracial?

- Does your family fit into the history covered in the film? If yes, how so? Many of us have our own cherished family myths that are difficult to examine. Does thinking about this history in personal terms shift your thinking about race or racism in any way?



Discussion Prompts

Confronting Hard Truths and Emotions

- Katrina says that it can seem as if white people like her have only two choices: “Either listen to African American calls to deal with the history, which can make us feel guilty and bad about ourselves, or shut it all out so we don’t have to feel bad.” What is a third way? How can acknowledging the full truth about American involvement in slave trading help the process of reconciliation and racial healing? In what ways does our knowledge of history influence our current beliefs and actions?
- Holly finds looking at the manacles upsetting. How did it make you feel?
- Before traveling to Ghana, Ledlie articulates his fear that upon seeing where enslaved Africans were imprisoned, “it won’t come alive for me” or, worse, “it will come alive for me.” Later, Jim talks about feelings of numbness. What did you notice about your own emotions and perhaps your own numbness in thinking about the horrors of slavery?
- In a meeting with the group, a Ghanaian schoolchild asks, “Are you not ashamed of coming here?” Imagine you are writing a letter to this girl. How would you answer her question if you were a DeWolf descendant?
- James muses, “If we were there at that time, some of us may well have been involved in the slave trade.” Hannah Arendt’s notion of the “banality of evil” says that under the right conditions, ordinary people are likely to participate in or tolerate evil actions. What kinds of circumstances make it likely that ordinary people will do evil things — directly or indirectly — or that they will look the other way? What kinds of circumstances make it less likely? What kinds of circumstances make it more likely that people will actively challenge evil and do good?



Juanita Brown and Holly Fulton.
Photo courtesy of Tom DeWolf

- Dain wryly observes that the DeWolfs “called themselves Christians” while committing acts that he sees as wholly un-Christian. In Ghana, Kofi Anyidoho points to the church above the slave dungeon and explains that for a certain period, some Europeans, notably the Portuguese, baptized Africans before transporting them to the Americas. If you are Christian, how do you reconcile this history with your religious identity? If you are not, what does your own religious or cultural history teach about slavery and how does that teaching compare with historical practice?
- Katrina is nervous about sharing her experiences and insights with St. Michael’s Church in Bristol, but describes a shift in the congregation when she does so. What is the power of speaking hard truths? What could you do to create a safe space for people who want or need to speak hard truths in your community?



Discussion Prompts

- In the film, Katrina and her relatives experience a range of emotions, including guilt, shame, anger, frustration and grief. What is the difference between emotions like guilt and grief, especially in terms of equipping people to engage in a process of reconciliation? What emotions did you experience as you viewed the film? How might you use those emotions to address the legacy of slavery and reduce racial inequity? For emotions that are perhaps less productive, how might you honor them and move through them?

- Katrina talks in Ghana about being glad that Dain was on the “hot seat,” not her. What are the everyday ways in which you find racial dynamics challenging? In which situations do you get stuck or tongue-tied? Make a list of experiences from your last month. Explore dynamics of carrying “baggage” that comes from generations of racial divides.



Dain, Jim and James Perry at James DeWolf's family cemetery in Bristol.

Photo courtesy of Katrina Browne

Difficult Conversations

- In your view, why is it so difficult for Americans to have a conversation about the legacy of slavery and racism? Do you think blacks and whites tend to differ in the ways that they view and experience conversations about race or racism? If so, how? What actions or events might make such conversations easier in your community, neighborhood, workplace, school or group?
- Katrina and her family debate whether they should be more focused on talking with white people or black people. What are the pros and cons of both kinds of conversations? Why does Katrina suggest that talking exclusively with white people is an important first step for her? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

- Consider the following dialogue from the film:

Dain: The two races must be able to cry together. For true redemption to take place, for true peace to take place, if the hurt or the abused is unable to forgive the perpetrator, there will never be the kind of peace or redemption that we need to have ... in the world.

Jim: Whites don't even talk about race! How can we ask for forgiveness from black people ...?

Dain: I'm not asking for forgiveness today. I'm saying down the road.

Holly: We can't have any expectations.

What kinds of opportunities exist in your community for blacks and whites to grieve together? What could you do to create such opportunities? Should the conversation be free of expectations? If yes, how so? If no, why not?



Discussion Prompts

- It was difficult and scary for some family members to hear blacks express anger directed at them, yet they sought contact anyway. How did their willingness to listen change them? How might it have changed those who were able to express their anger?
- When asked by Elly to weigh in on their conversation, Juanita says, "I think white people have been cowards and have chosen to give up their integrity and their humanity." In your view, what is the relationship between blinders, silence, integrity and humanity? How might the slave trade and subsequent discrimination have dehumanized both blacks and whites? What can people today do to reclaim their humanity?
- Keila jokingly refers to her family's "No Talk Rule." The subjects that were taboo included sex, religion, politics and "the Negroes." Why might those particular topics have been taboo? Are there topics that are taboo in your family? If so, what is the impact of maintaining those taboos?

Privilege

- There is a moment in the film when the 10 DeWolf descendants, ranging from siblings to seventh cousins, come together and discover that their fathers are all Ivy League graduates except Tom's father. Also, five of the 10 family members themselves went to elite schools. What did you learn about privilege from this scene? Where have you seen examples of white or class privilege at work in your own life or in your community?
- One of Katrina's relatives refuses her invitation for the trip, indicating that he is worried that he will be held responsible to pay reparations. He sees that possibility as unfair because he, personally, did not do anything wrong. Neither Katrina nor her cousins inherited money from the slave trade, and they have a broad range of financial statuses in terms of how they were raised and their circumstances today. But arguably they all inherited "social capital." How would you define the responsibility of descendants to heal wounds caused by their ancestors? Do you think descendants should be held accountable for the privileges they inherited as a result of their

ancestors' actions? Why or why not? How can people of privilege use their advantages to help society become more equitable?

- In the United States, even after slavery, official policies and common practices prevented African American families from taking advantage of the same opportunities that were available to many whites. The examples range from Jim Crow laws to discriminatory implementation of government programs, like the G.I. Bill, to sundown laws and redlining by banks, all of which made it easier for poor whites to move into the middle class than for poor African Americans to do so. Where does your family history intersect with these or other policies and practices? How were your family members advantaged or disadvantaged? How can white people value their own hard work while also recognizing how they have benefited from white privilege?

"Repair" and Reconciliation

- Katrina asks, "What could we do as DeWolf descendants to help repair the enormous harm that our ancestors caused?" What answers do family members consider? If you were a family friend, what advice would you offer in answer to Katrina's question?
- In a discussion about next steps for white people, Katrina says, "I think it's not for us to say [we need forgiveness] until we've done everything in our power to apologize in word and deed. And then step two is for black Americans to decide what they want to do with that." What do you think of her statement? What is the value of individual apologies or acknowledgments versus collective/institutional apologies?
- Brainstorm all the possible actions that could be taken to heal the wounds and persistent inequality caused by the U.S. practice of slavery. Do you notice any patterns in your list? What kinds of actions contribute to healing? To justice? Do actions that meet the needs of one demographic group create potential conflict with another group or groups? If so, how would you address this?



Discussion Prompts



Katrina Browne visiting Linden Place in Bristol, RI.
Photo courtesy of Katrina Browne

- Juanita tells the group, “It’s important for me that white people take responsibility and that ultimately it’s about human liberation, and also it’s liberation of my people and also about your liberation.” Later, Katrina asks, “What will create wholeness for people of African descent and for people of European descent?” What “scars and legacies” does each group bear? How are they different? What would create wholeness for your group?
- At Panafest, an African American woman refuses Dain’s outstretched hand. He expresses guilt at having “invaded space” that she considered “very precious and valuable.” What is the function of separate space? In a healing process, what is the value of segregating by race or class? What are the risks? What are the benefits and/or limits of meeting only with people who share a common trait, such as a shared racial identity?

- If you are white, how might you find out more about black people’s experiences and points of view without expecting them to educate you? What healing actions could you take on your own? If you are a person of African descent, how could you communicate the things that you would like to see happen as part of the healing process? What healing actions might you need to take?
- There is great diversity of opinion in the black community regarding what responses might be appropriate from the white community and from the nation as a whole. For example, some



Discussion Prompts

feel that apologies are meaningful, whereas others think that apologies are symbolic and don't make a real difference, and that they distract attention from more concrete problems. Some feel that money would solve problems and that talk is cheap; others think that money can't create real transformation and would be insulting, even counter-productive. What do you think? How can this diversity of opinion be honored and addressed?

- Harold Fields suggests, "Perhaps reparations is a process, not necessarily an event." What do you think he meant?
- Dain suggests that there needs to be a presidential and congressional apology. What might be the symbolic value of an apology? Do you agree or disagree with those who argue that because the U.S. government has been in existence since slavery it inherits responsibilities even if individuals alive today weren't alive then?
- Dain and other family members are also in favor of the creation of a South African-style truth and reconciliation commission. What role could a truth, repair and reconciliation commission play? What comparisons and contrasts can be drawn between the United States and South Africa? What kinds of deeds could accompany government truth-telling and apology that would help convince people that the apology was genuine and not merely political rhetoric? What is the link between reconciliation and reparations?
- Charles Ogletree believes that reparations should take the form of a trust fund that would meet the needs of the "bottom-stuck." Other reparations leaders talk about the need for congressional investment in social programs, from housing to health care to education and so on. These views are more common than the way reparations are often portrayed in the media: as being about the government writing a check to every individual descendant of enslaved Africans. How is this media portrayal influencing the debate? What do you think could be the appropriate approach to reparations in terms of whom it should benefit and how?
- Ron Bailey quotes John Quincy Adams: "I don't know why we should blush to confess that molasses was an essential

ingredient in our independence." Since slavery was central to the economic foundation of the nation then what kind of responsibility might be borne by the U.S. government (i.e., taxpayers) in leveling the playing field? What is the role of collective responsibility? What do we inherit as citizens, and what should we not have to inherit? Note: Many believe that the playing field has already been leveled. See additional materials on the P.O.V. and **Traces of the Trade** websites for information that suggests this is not yet true.

- Given that "all of the North was involved" and that many institutions were built directly and indirectly on profits from slavery, in your view should groups such as those listed here be required to pay reparations? Why or why not?

Current corporations and businesses that once benefited from the slave trade or slave labor

Congregations whose churches and endowments were built with donations funded by the slave trade

Towns and universities in which major buildings or infrastructures were constructed with slave trade profit

- Discuss the pros and cons of lawsuits, federal legislation, local or state legislation, and voluntary community or institutional action.
- This film raises some fundamental questions: Do you believe we all share the capacity to harm, the capacity to be victims, the capacity to do good? Why or why not? What happens when those different capacities are attached to or associated with certain groups as opposed to seen as within all of us?
- In the closing of the film, Katrina says: "It can seem like we are so far from making things right. But in my heart I have a strange feeling, as if we're already here, right here, just waiting for each other." What are *you* waiting for? Someone else to say or do something? What would signal to you that the time for waiting is over? How might you send that signal to others?



Discussion Prompts

Other Lessons for Modern Life

- Elly asks Juanita what it was like for her to listen to the family's conversation. Juanita's response includes the statement that anyone who understood the daily experiences of "her people" would be "pissed off," and if people aren't, it means that they aren't paying attention. Who is and isn't paying attention in your community? What could you do that would let others know that you notice and object to injustice?
- Elizabeth draws a parallel between people who accepted the fruits of the slave trade to her own life today, saying, "I buy stuff that's made by people that aren't getting paid what they're worth at all, all the time." Imagine people looking at your community 200 years from now. What local, national or global practices might they object to? What will they say about your complicity in injustice or your role as a bystander? What could you do to ensure that they describe you as contributing to the well-being of your community and a more just world?
- The DeWolfs had political power and used it to continue trading slaves despite laws against many of their activities. How is this like or unlike the relationship of business and wealth to political power in today's world?
- Jim hopes that Katrina will depict the family "as we really are," rather than "caricature us." They both recognize the power of filmmaking to craft stories in particular ways. In your experience, how have media makers crafted stories about race, race relations and privilege? What sources have you encountered that have honored the complexity of issues of race/racism and that have shared stories of good news, not just stereotypes and negatives/conflict? What could you do to increase the number of media outlets that report about race and racism in honest and healing ways?



Taking Action



Tom DeWolf speaking with an African-American woman during a candlelight procession that was part of Panafest in Cape Coast, Ghana.

Photo courtesy of Amishadai Sackitey

- Engage your local school district and textbook publishers in a dialogue about how to teach the history of slavery and the slave trade in ways that include the role of the North as well as the South and that describe the centrality of slavery to the political, economic and social development of the United States.
- What could you do in your community to honor the memory of those who were enslaved? Research your local history of slavery/slave trade and ancillary businesses. Engage local historic sites and museums in conversations about how to tell this history in their tours and exhibits (if it is not already being conveyed). Consider bringing a coalition of people together to create appropriate plaques and memorials.

- In the film, Josephine Watts suggests that white people make a point of attending a black play or concert in order to experience — even briefly — what she experiences regularly as the only black person at a conference. If you have not had the experience of being part of a visible minority, make plans to attend an event where you are the only person of your race, ethnicity or gender in the room. After the event, talk with others about what that experience was like for you and what lessons it had to offer about the daily experiences of racial and ethnic minorities.



Taking Action

- Form a task force in your church, synagogue, mosque, school, civic group or fraternal order to examine the organization's historic relationship to slavery. Develop suggestions for action that your group or institution might take to support the healing of past and present wounds arising from race and racism. Find ways to help the group act on the task force's suggestions.
- Drawing on what you concluded from holding dialogue on the question of repair and reconciliation, determine what next steps you and others in your community can take to make a difference in the broader local or national discourse. Join in the democratic process by contacting policy makers with your views.
- Read about the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 at the Library of Congress's website (<http://www.civics-online.org/library/-formatted/texts/civilact1988.html>). The act granted reparations to Japanese Americans who had been interned by the U.S. government during World War II. Compare the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 with H.R. 40 (<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/-bill.xpd?bill=h110-40>), which seeks to commission a study of reparation proposals for African Americans.
- Tom DeWolf is one of the family members featured in the film. He has written a book that shares more about the family journey: *Inheriting the Trade: A Northern Family Confronts Its Legacy As the Largest Slave-Trading Dynasty in U.S. History* (Beacon Press, 2008). Create a study group to read and discuss the book. Compare his perspective with Katrina's point of view in the film.
- Read and discuss the articles on white privilege listed in the "Resources" section of this guide. Use the essays as a prompt to develop your own description of how white privilege manifests in your life. If you reap the benefits of white privilege, consider how you might use that advantage to work for social justice or greater equity in your community.
- Research connections between Native American history, Latino history, Asian American history and the history of black slavery in the United States and its aftermath. Use what you learn to expand the dialogue so that it is not exclusively focused on black/white issues. Think about ways to include in your discussions the perspectives of those who identify as being of more than one race.
- Research modern-day slavery and join with efforts to help abolish the practice.



Resources

FILM-RELATED WEB SITES

Original Online Content on P.O.V. Interactive (www.pbs.org/pov)

Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North

www.pbs.org/pov/traces

P.O.V.'s companion website to ***Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*** offers exclusive streaming video clips from the film, a podcast version of the filmmaker interview and a wealth of additional resources, including a Q&A with filmmaker Katrina Browne, ample opportunities for viewers to "talk back" and talk to each other about the film, and the following special features:

EXCERPT FROM INHERITING THE TRADE BY TOM DEWOLF

Read a deeply personal memoir by a family member who went on the journey. DeWolf struggles with issues of white privilege and what the legacy of slavery is in American society today. We'll also have a conversation with DeWolf on the blog.

FAITH COMMUNITIES AND APOLOGIES

In 2006, the Episcopal Church issued a formal apology for its complicity in the institution of slavery. In this video, Rev. Frank T. Griswold, the 25th presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, discusses the role of faith and healing.

MAKING AMENDS FOR SLAVERY: A PRIMER ON REPARATIONS

Seven states have recently passed resolutions acknowledging and regretting their participation in the slave trade. Learn more about these resolutions and the ongoing debate surrounding reparations in the United States, and compare these remedies with what other countries with similar legacies have done to make amends.

What's Your P.O.V.?

*P.O.V.'s online Talking Back Tapestry is a colorful, interactive representation of your feelings about **Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North**. Listen to other P.O.V. viewers talk about the film and add your thoughts by calling 1-800-688-4768. www.pbs.org/pov/talkingback.html*

ASK THE FILMMAKER

Katrina Browne will respond to viewer questions on the blog for a few days around broadcast.

KATRINA BROWNE'S SERMON

Read the full text of the sermon that Katrina Browne delivered at St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Bristol, Rhode Island.

Additional resources and discussion opportunities are available at the film's official website, www.tracesofthetrade.org.



Resources

Wrestling with Race and Racism

INHERITING THE TRADE

www.inheritingthetrade.com

Tom DeWolf (featured in the film) has written his own account of wrestling with the family legacy and what he learned from the trip retracing the Triangle Trade. The book's website includes Tom's blog and chances to engage in discussion with the author.

BEYOND INTRACTABILITY

www.beyondintractability.org

Beyond Intractability is a conflict resolution project at the University of Colorado. The website has amassed a collection of hundreds of essays, handbooks, interviews and organizational links related to the process of reconciliation and various approaches to conflict resolution around the world.

History

SLAVERY IN THE NORTH

www.slavenorth.com

Historian Douglas Harper provides a state-by-state overview of slavery in the North. His footnotes provide a good bibliography of major historical works that have focused on the North's role in the U.S. slave trade and practice of slavery.

THE UNRIGHTEOUS TRAFFICK

<http://www.projo.com/extra/2006/slavery/>

This interactive series by the Providence Journal explores the history of slavery and the slave trade in Rhode Island, including information on the DeWolf family and the town of Bristol.

CITIZENS ALL: AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CONNECTICUT

1700-1850

<http://www.yale.edu/glc/citizens/stories/index.html>

The website, created by the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition and the Center for Media and Instructional Innovation at Yale University, provides a scholarly introduction to the history of slavery in Connecticut, the process of gradual emancipation, and the struggle for citizenship rights by free blacks and abolitionists both within and beyond the state's boundaries.

Joanne Pope Melish, who is featured in the film, has written *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and Race in New England, 1780-1860* (Cornell University Press, 1998).

Anne Farrow, Joel Lange and Jenifer Frank are the editors of *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged and Profited from Slavery* (Ballantine Books, 2005).

For a seminal article on the importance of slavery to the development of the U.S. economy, read Ronald Bailey's "The Slave(ry) Trade and the Development of Capitalism in the United States: The Textile Industry in New England," *Social Science History* 14:3 (Autumn, 1990), pp. 373-414.



Resources

Privilege

PEGGY MCINTOSH ARTICLE

www.nymbp.org/reference/WhitePrivilege.pdf

Peggy McIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" is a classic article describing white privilege and a good starting point for those who are new to the concept. At this link you can read part of the article for free.

"WHITE PRIVILEGE SHAPES THE U.S."

BY ROBERT JENSEN

<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~rjensen/freelance/whiteprivilege.htm>

In this essay, journalism professor Robert Jensen expands on McIntosh's ideas and describes how he experiences white privilege in his life.

TIM WISE ARTICLE

http://www.tolerance.org/news/article_tol.jsp?id=722

In his brief article "White Privilege: Swimming in Racial Preference," antiracist activist Tim Wise gives a selected historical overview of common practices that have favored whites.

ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/PublicationsSeries/RaceMatters.aspx

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's "Race Matters" toolkit includes materials and strategies to help people from a wide range of professions and perspectives examine privilege.

Repair

CHARLES OGLETREE ARTICLE

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3843/is_200301/ai_n9233895?tag=rel.res1

This link takes you to a 2003 speech by legal scholar Charles Ogletree Jr. (available in print and reprinted on the website from the *University of Memphis Law Review*), "Reparations for the Children of Slaves: Litigating the Issues."

"REPARATIONS FOR THE CHILDREN OF SLAVES: LITIGATING THE ISSUES" BY CHARLES OGLETREE

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3843/is_200301/ai_n9233895?tag=rel.res1

Legal scholar Charles Ogletree, Jr. specializes in the study of reparations for African Americans. Available in print and reprinted on the website from the *University of Memphis Law Review*, 2003.

BROWN UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON SLAVERY AND JUSTICE www.brown.edu/Research/Slavery_Justice

In the light of historical revelations, many institutions are only now attempting to come to terms with a terrible past. Brown University appointed a steering committee, whose findings and resources are available on this site.



Resources

ON PBS & NPR

PBS

TWO TOWNS OF JASPER COMPANION WEBSITE

www.pbs.org/pov/pov2002/twotownsofjasper/resources02.html

The website for *Two Towns of Jasper*, featured on P.O.V. in 2002, provides an excellent set of links related to race, racism, privilege, dialogue and healing.

HAROLD DEAN TRULEAR:

DISAFFECTION, RECONCILIATION, AND THE BLACK CHURCH TRADITION - RELIGION AND ETHICS NEWSWEEKLY

www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/blog/2008/05/harold-dean-trulear-disaffecti.html

Faith, race and reconciliation have become important topics in the 2008 Presidential election after the controversy involving Reverend Jeremiah Wright. Professor Harold Dean Trulear speaks on black church history and reconciliation.

PBS: AFRICANS IN AMERICA

www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/home.html

A companion website to PBS's "Africans in America" television series, this site presents a series of articles on the American experiences of Africans before the Civil War.

ONLINE NEWSHOUR: CONSIDERING REPARATIONS

www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/race_relations/july-dec00/reparations.html

In September 2000, Chicago City Council members decided it was time for a national discussion on reparations. The NewsHour reports on the conversation around apologies, the legacy of slavery, and what's at stake in this debate.

NPR

NPR: WHAT'S BEHIND APOLOGIES FOR SLAVERY?

www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11828362

Learn more about how some governments, corporations and institutions are attempting to repair the damages of slavery in this discussion with New York assemblyman Keith Wright.

NPR: SLAVE REPARATIONS

www.npr.org/programs/specials/racism/010827.reparations.html

As Americans question the best way to heal the wounds of slavery, some suggest salve might come in some form of "slavery reparations". A 2001 series explores the history and nuances of the slave reparation debate in the United States.



How to Buy the Film

To order the DVD of *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*, please go to www.tracesofthetrade.org



Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and entering its 21st season on PBS, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running series on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. Airing Tuesdays at 10 p.m., June through October, with primetime specials during the year, P.O.V. has brought more than 250 award-winning documentaries to millions nationwide and now has a Webby Award-winning online series, P.O.V.'s Borders. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation around today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V. is available online at www.pbs.org/pov.

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Educational Foundation of America, The Fledgling Fund, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The September 11th Fund, and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s Diverse Voices Project is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston and Thirteen/WNET New York.

P.O.V. Community Engagement and Education

P.O.V. provides Discussion Guides for all films as well as curriculum-based P.O.V. Lesson Plans for select films to promote the use of independent media among varied constituencies. Available free online, these originally produced materials ensure the ongoing use of P.O.V.'s documentaries with educators, community workers, opinion leaders, and general audiences nationally. P.O.V. also works closely with local public-television stations to partner with local museums, libraries, schools, and community-based organizations to raise awareness of the issues in P.O.V.'s films.

P.O.V. Interactive

www.pbs.org/pov

P.O.V.'s award-winning Web department produces a Web-only showcase for interactive storytelling, P.O.V.'s Borders. It also produces a Web site for every P.O.V. presentation, extending the life of P.O.V. films through community-based and educational applications, focusing on involving viewers in activities, information and feedback on the issues. In addition, www.pbs.org/pov houses our unique Talking Back feature, filmmaker interviews, viewer resources and information on the P.O.V. archives as well as myriad special sites for previous P.O.V. broadcasts.

American Documentary, Inc.

www.americandocumentary.org

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream-media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic-engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation.

Front cover: DeWolf family members and Ghanaian Beatrice Manu at a river ceremony in Ghana where captured Africans were brought for a last bath.

Photo courtesy of Amishadai Sackitey

