A CLOSER LOOK AT MYTHS ABOUT SLAVERY

Contrary to popular belief:

• **Slavery was a northern institution**
  • The North held slaves for over two centuries
  • The North didn’t abolish slavery until shortly before the Civil War
  • The North dominated the slave trade
  • The North built its economy around slavery
  • The North industrialized with slave-picked cotton and the profits from slavery

• **Slavery was a national institution**
  • Slavery was practiced by all thirteen colonies
  • Slavery was enshrined in the U.S. Constitution and found in all the “free” states, “from sea to shining sea”
  • The slave trade was permitted by the federal government until 1808
  • Federal laws protected slavery and assisted slave owners in retrieving runaway slaves
  • The Union was deeply divided over emancipation until the end of the Civil War

• **Slavery benefited middle-class families**
  • Slavery dominated the economies of both North and South during the colonial era and up to the Civil War
  • Ordinary people built ships, produced trade goods, and invested in slave voyages
  • Workers in all regions, including the Midwest and the West, benefited economically from slavery and slavery-related businesses
  • Consumers benefited from lower prices on goods like coffee, sugar, tobacco, and cotton

• **Slavery benefited immigrant families**
  • Immigrants found hard work connected to slavery in port cities, on small farms, and in textile mills
  • Immigrants and other white people were often indentured for a term of bound labor, but there were never any “white slaves” (Irish or otherwise)
  • Immigrants flocking to the “land of opportunity” after the Civil War still benefited from what enslaved labor made possible
  • Immigrants pursued routes to prosperity which were closed to the families of former slaves for a century after slavery
  • Federal programs in the 20th century provided white families with aid for education, home ownership, and small businesses
Bibliography


