

TELLING THE STORY:

Enslavement of African People in the United States

Buffalo & Erie County
Public Library



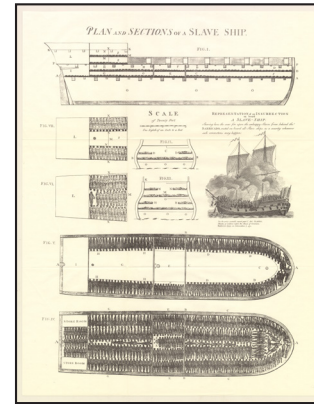
On display through July 2020

Downtown Central Library
1 Lafayette Square

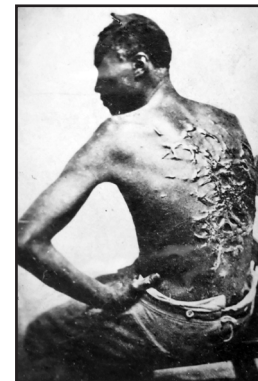
Grosvenor Room
Rare Book Display Room
Ring of Knowledge
Main floor

Buffalo & Erie County Public
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The great American abolitionist, writer and orator Frederick Douglass once said, “Slavery is the great test question of our age and nation.” Now, 400 years after the first African people were captured, enslaved and transported to the United States, the repercussions of this horrific practice remain with us today. This Library exhibit highlights its

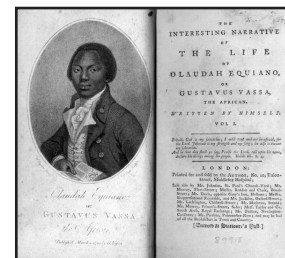


Slave Ship Diagram

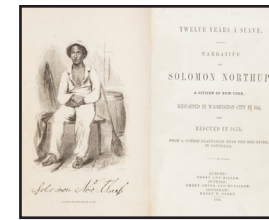


History of Slavery Collection and, perhaps more ambitiously, to provoke community conversations about our country’s history of enslavement and its continuing aftermath.

From antiquity to modern day, enslavement has existed in one form or another. Institutionalized slavery—mostly for agricultural labor—thrived in the American English colonies and was central to the development and economic growth of the United States.



Olaudah Equiano -
The Life of Olaudah Equiano



Solomon Northup
Twelve Years a Slave

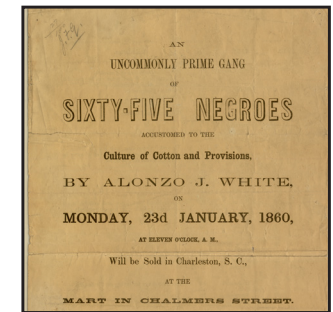
Those enslaved suffered greatly during the Middle Passage, or transatlantic crossing, and upon arrival, endured unimaginable physical, cultural, and intellectual brutality by their enslavers. This inhumanity is well documented in shipping records, bills of sale, Slave Auction advertisements and personal accounts of the enslaved.

Supporters of slavery were typically enslavers themselves.

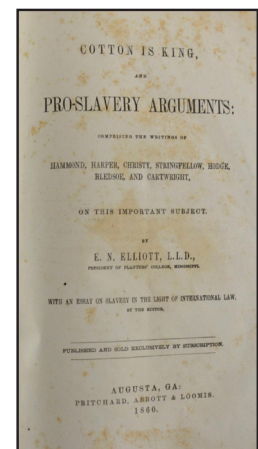
Early arguments for slavery were simplistic and merely to defend against attacks made against the practice. Later arguments or rationalizations were protective, religious and racist. Slavery was an institution of power and the powerful people who protected it to protect their own profits.

Protections for slavery were embedded in America’s founding documents; enslavers

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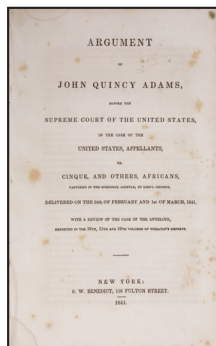


Notice of Slave Auction



Cotton is King and Pro-Slavery Arguments,
1860

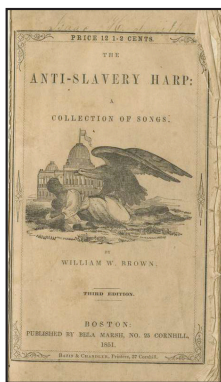
dominated the federal government, Supreme Court and Senate from 1787 through 1860. Laws and court cases were varied and numerous, including the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and the Dred Scott decision of 1857. Former President John Quincy Adams, on the other hand, successfully argued the case defending Cinque and the Africans of the Amistad uprising.



Argument of John Quincy Adams, 1841

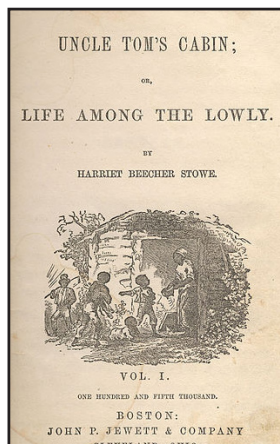
Resistance to enslavement was frequent in both subtle and revolutionary ways. Captured Africans would starve themselves or jump overboard during the Middle Passage, rather than endure enslavement. Maintaining one's original cultural practices was, in itself, a form of resistance. There were many examples of organized rebellion as well, such as those led by Denmark Vesey in 1822 and Nat Turner in 1831.

Many creative works were written in response to slavery, including poetry and music. Books of anti-slavery songs were published to fulfill demand for use at rallies, spirituals, marches and conventions. Some of the lyrics are based upon the anti-slavery poetry of the day.



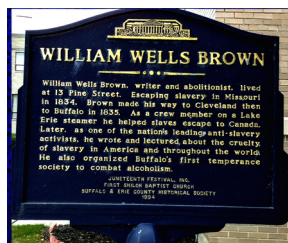
William Wells Brown
The Anti Slavery Harp: A Collection of Songs

One of the most famous anti-slavery works was *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life Among the Lowly*, written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, and was intended to evoke empathy. The South viewed the work as abolitionist snobbery.



Harriet Beecher Stowe,
Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life among the Lowly

Additional display material in the Library's Ring of Knowledge highlights the local stories of individuals who were among the first settlers and builders of Buffalo, who strived for civil rights and assisted freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad.



A variety of FREE programs, including public and classroom tours are available. Visit www.BuffaloLib.org or call 716-858-8900 for details.

The *Telling the Story* exhibit would not have been possible without support from members of the local community and the following generous sponsors: Raymond M. Melancon Annuity Fund, Julian R. & Varue W. Oishei Foundation, Rand Capital Corporation, Mr. Patrick Martin, Esq., The Challenger, Buffalo Criterion, Greyline Outdoor Advertising, WBLK Radio and WUFO Radio.

For more information on the exhibits and collections of the Grosvenor Rare Book Room, visit <http://bit.ly/1ap3LHE>

Free & open to the public.

Exhibit Hours:

Monday	8:30 am - 6 pm
Tuesday	8:30 am - 6 pm
Wednesday	8:30 am - 6 pm
Thursday	8:30 am - 8 pm
Friday	8:30 am - 6 pm
Saturday	8:30 am - 6 pm
Sunday	12 noon - 5 pm*

*Closed on Sundays in the summer

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