



THE DOOR OF SLAVERY



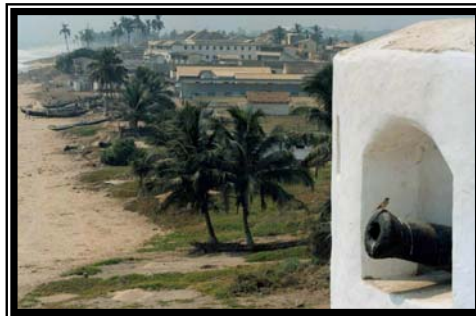
*A couple stands in the "Door of No Return" on Goree Island, July 23, 2003.
Photo © AP Images/Dina Kraft*

Imagine walking across the warm sand of a wide African beach, in the dazzling light of the Sun, into a ship ready to set sails, waiting for its cargo, into a nightmare of a new life.

On the West African Coast, in Ghana sits a picturesque old edifice right on the shore of the Atlantic. Elmina Castle was built in 1482 by the Portuguese to facilitate trade in spices, ivory and gold. These goods soon gave way to a different type of goods - human

beings - who were called slaves for the purpose of this once so profitable enterprise. By branding people and putting them in shackles they tried to deprive them of their humanity.

Elmina is one of more than 25 slave castles preserved to this day along the African coast (out of 60

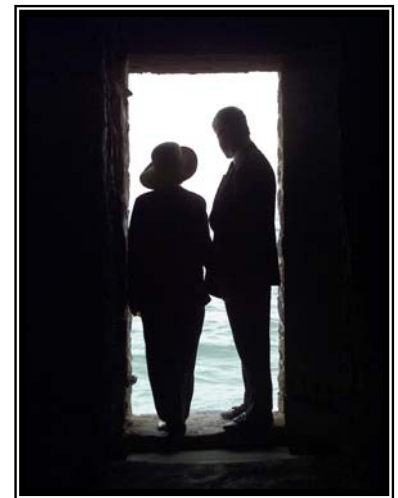


*A canon mounted in a 15 century slave castle is aimed out over the village of Elmina, Ghana
Photo © AP Images/David Guttenfelder*

forts built in colonial times). From the 15th to 19th century they were points of departure for millions of Africans captured inland and shipped to various destinations, mostly in Europe and the Americas. The whitewashed stone walls of the castle witnessed immeasurable suffering, anger and fear of those who were brutally deprived of their personal freedom and

home.

Today, people from all over the world, many of African descent, come to places such as Ghana's Elmina Castle or Senegal's Goree Island to reflect upon the fate of those long perished, nameless victims. Tourists and pilgrims walk silently through dark corridors that have kept the ominous atmosphere. Then, they pause on the threshold of a symbolic gate - the door of no return.



*Former U.S. President Bill Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton look out over the Atlantic Ocean from the infamous Door of No Return at the slave house on Goree Island, Senegal Thursday, April 2, 1998.
Photo © AP Images/Greg Gibson*

INFAMOUS SLAVERY

Slavery is said to have as long a history as the history of the human race. Prisoners of war, inhabitants of invaded and conquered territories, victims seized in raids, even debtors who were unable to repay their debts could all fall prey of the money-greedy slave hunters. The wealth of individuals, groups and

societies was often owed to the work of unpaid laborers, who would each have made their own little fortune, had they been able to retain what we now consider a basic human right: the right to be free.

THE ROLE OF THE SLAVE SHIP

Turning slavery into a profitable business was the result of growing

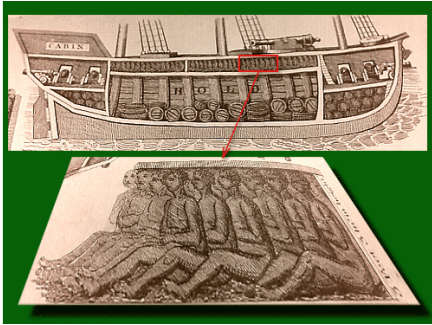
involvement of European policy in Africa, the accessibility of weapons and demand for a workforce on overseas plantations. Researchers estimate the number of slaves who were sent from Africa at about 13 million. In this huge-scale trafficking in persons (as we call it today), the slave ship played an invaluable, if infamous, role.

Text by AIRC Krakow

The Slave Ship & The Story of the Amistad

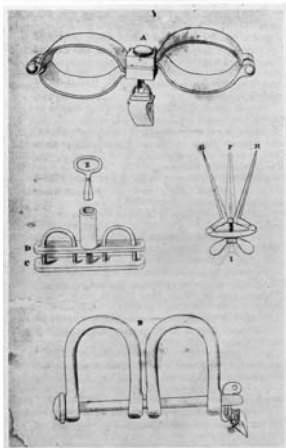
Triangular Trade

The slave ship was a means of transport in the so called "triangular trade" or three-continent trade. It departed from a harbor in a European country that



The inside of a slave ship
Photo from Wikipedia

had a colony overseas. Loaded with provisions and articles needed by the staff in the forts on the Gold Coast, and for barter trade, the ship made a stop in Africa. There, the purchased cargo of slaves, ivory and gold was put on board and the ship embarked on the "middle passage" across the Atlantic to the Americas. This was the most



An illustration from Thomas Clarkson's investigation into the methods of slaving. At the top and bottom are hand-cuffs and leg shackles. In the center are thumb screws, left, and on the right is the speculum oris, which was inserted in the mouth to pry the jaws open so food could be forced into the mouths of slaves who wouldn't eat.
Photo © AP Images

strenuous part of the journey both for the crew, who lived in constant fear of tropical diseases and a rebellion on board, and the captives, many of whom perished along the way.

Similar but not the Same

A slave ship was different from a regular one. It had to be fitted for

the purpose. For example, it was necessary to install a "slave stove" so that the cook might prepare food for several hundred additional "passengers". Foot irons and bolts were used to control the slaves. The ship was equipped with cannons that sat on the gun deck. Often, in order to increase the number of slaves a ship could carry, another level was added between decks in the hull. As a result slaves did not have enough space to stand up. Unhygienic, claustrophobic conditions resulted in high mortality rates of the captives during the passage. Only the strongest and healthiest survived the journey across the Atlantic.

Before a Storm Comes a Calm

After the hardships of the crossing, there was a week or so to rest, eat, and heal the sores that resulted from chafing against the slave platforms on board the ship. This period of relief had economic, not humanitarian, grounds. When the slaves' stomachs were full with cooked porridge and meat, their skin looked healthy and shone from the rubbed-in palm oil, and their spirits heightened with some rest and even a little rum, they were likely to bring more money in the auction, for which they had been brought all the way from the African continent.

A Story with a Difference

The Amistad was not built to be a slave ship. It was a Spanish cargo schooner, which took a cargo of 53 Africans destined for slavery. The captives had more space and freedom of movement than on a typical slave ship. They also had a born leader among them, a person named Cinqué, who managed to free himself and the others. In the rebellion the ship's captain and cook were killed, but the mutineers spared the slave owners in the hope that they would bring the ship back to Africa.

Arrest of the Ship

As can easily be imagined, the owners had no intention of sailing to Africa. Instead, they brought the ship to the American coast, where it was taken into custody near Long Island, NY, by the U.S. Navy. This



Captive Africans kill Captain Ferrer and take control of the Amistad in 1839.

An illustration from *A History of the Amistad Captives* by John W. Barber, 1840. The illustration depicts captive Africans killing Captain Ferrer and taking control of the Amistad
Photo © AP Images

led to a famous federal trial in 1840, which passed a momentous verdict. Considering the initial transport of the Africans as illegal, the court ordered the return of the Africans to their homeland. In 1842 they traveled back as free men.

Today's Mission of the Amistad

The cherished story of the Amistad became a symbol of resistance and triumph of justice. In Talladega College's library in Alabama the image of the Amistad is embedded in the floor and it has been a tradition never to step on the depiction. Steven Spielberg made a movie about the ship. Most importantly, a replica of the Amistad was launched in 2000 in Mystic, Connecticut. Its mission is to educate the public on the history of slavery.

Visitors line up to tour the Freedom Schooner Amistad on Tuesday, Aug. 26, 2003 at Hart Plaza in Detroit, as part of the schooner's 2003 Great Lakes Friendship Tour.
Photo © AP Images/
Paul Warner



Lucky Escapes from Slavery

HARRIET TUBMAN (1822-1913)



Harriet Tubman: American abolitionist, civil rights leader, scout, spy, nurse and feminist; a woman who had a full military burial and whose name was given to a U.S. ship. Born a slave, in her teenage years Harriet Tubman received a severe blow in the head bestowed by an overseer. The blow was meant for another slave and though it did not kill her, it was responsible for epileptic seizures from which she suffered in her later life. Fearing that she might be sold into the Deep South following her master's death, she escaped north and soon joined the abolitionist movement and the so called Underground Railway. From then on she took on the mission of assisting slaves in their escape to freedom. She managed to rescue most of her family, whom she brought to Canada. All in all she saved some 70 persons and assisted in another 70 successful escapes from slavery. During the American Civil War Tubman was working as a spy for the North. She led the so called raid at Combahee Ferry, a military operation in which more than 750 slaves were freed.

HENRY BOX BROWN (1815-1878)



The lithograph (above) by Samuel Rowse (1850) is entitled *The Resurrection of Henry Box Brown* and shows his ingenious idea, which earned Henry Brown his freedom and his middle name. With the help of some friends, he had himself shipped to a free state in a box, as if he were a container of dry goods. The lithograph shows Henry Brown emerging to his freedom in Philadelphia after the 442 km journey by wagon, steamboat and railroad.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS (1818-1895)



Washington). Born a slave in Talbot County, Maryland, he escaped to his freedom in 1838 in a sailor's uniform.

In "My Escape from Slavery" he remembers the day he became a free man:

I have often been asked how I felt when first I found myself on free soil. There is scarcely anything in my experience about which I could not give a more satisfactory answer. A new world had

opened upon me. If life is more than breath and "the quick round of blood," I lived more in that one day than in a year of my slave life.

He then writes how he had to work as a free man and how he was earning his education:

Hard work, night and day, over a furnace hot enough to keep the metal running like water, was more favorable to action than thought; yet here I often nailed a newspaper to the post near my bellows, and read while I was performing the up and down motion of the heavy beam by which the bellows was inflated and discharged. It was the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties, and I look back to it now, after so many years, with some complacency and a little wonder that I could have been so earnest and persevering in any pursuit other than for my daily bread.

The lucky escapes from slavery would not have been as frequent, had it not been for the people, who at the risk of their own lives helped the runaway slaves. **The Underground Railroad** was the name used for a network of clandestine routes, transportation, safe havens, and meeting points through which slaves escaped to the North. It was operated by a network of people who helped hide, feed, and move the runaways on their journey to freedom.

The road towards the **abolition of slavery** was long and difficult. The Emancipation Proclamation put into effect on January 1, 1863 was an important step, while the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution issued in 1865 put an official end to slavery in the United States.

The abolition of slavery, however, did not mean the proclamation of the equality of races. For this we had to wait another 100 years.

You can read the text of Amendment XIII, Section 1 at:

<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=40&page=transcript>

Activity Page

Win a Prize!

FEBRUARY 2007
CONTEST

When did the American Civil War break out and when did it end?

Send the answer (with your home address) to:
zoom@usinfo.pl

Deadline: March 8

Win a Prize!

The answer in the January 2007 Contest was:

- **generous** -

Thank you for participating

The winners are:
Sebastian from

Poczesna, Anna from
Krakow and Marek from
Wielun

CONGRATULATIONS



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■ Exercise 1

The numbers given below have been released by the U.S. Census Bureau and they relate to population distribution of Black Americans. Match the numbers with the descriptions:

- a) 39.7 million;
- b) 61.4 million;
- c) 18;
- d) 1.4 million;
- e) 31%;

- 1. Number of states with an estimated black population of at least 1 million.
- 2. The number of blacks in Cook County (July 1, 2005).
- 3. The projected single-race black population of the U.S. as of July 1, 2050.
- 4. The estimated population of black residents in the U.S.
- 5. The proportion of the black population under 18 (July 1, 2005).

■ Exercise 2

Each February we celebrate Black History Month. The theme for 2007 is: "From Slavery to Freedom: Africans in the Americas". Read the fragment of the text "On the Road from Slavery to Freedom" that appears on the U.S. Department of State website "infoUSA" (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/>). Nine words have been removed from the fragment. Put them back in appropriate places:

In the 1870s, black men and women might have been expected to look forward to a bright future. But the false (1) immediately after the Civil War soon gave way to nearly a century of legal, economic and social discrimination. Whatever the Fourteenth Amendment may have said about equal protection and citizenship, blacks in America enjoyed few of the blessings of liberty; they remained (2), condemned by the white majority as inferior.

By the 1890s, the South had erected a system of legally (3) segregation in which blacks were relegated to a (4) inferior status, and the Supreme Court had endorsed the notion of "separate but equal," claiming that the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause had never been intended to promote social equality between the races. The separate facilities were far from equal, and beyond that, were designed to keep African Americans in a (5) position.

Civil rights groups never accepted segregation, and began a long and slow campaign in the courts to do (6) with it. World War II gave their struggle a new impetus. The fight against Nazi racism made many Americans take a closer look at racism at home, and the nation as a whole finally began (7) measures to give African Americans their full legal and civil rights.

It has been a slow struggle, with progress often measured in small (8), but there has been progress, and the position of black Americans today has markedly improved over that of a half-century ago. Moreover, legal racism of the type that kept southern blacks from voting and relegated to separate and inferior schools is gone, wiped (9) by both court decisions and civil rights legislation.

outsiders; away; increments; enforced; out; taking; subordinate; decidedly; dawn.

■ Glossary -

(in the order of appearance)

- shackles** - two metal rings joined by a chain, fastened around wrists or ankles
fall prey (to something bad) - be taken over or affected by it
barter trade - exchanging goods for other goods, rather than for money
strenuous - involving a lot of energy or effort
chafe - become sore as a result of something rubbing against it
mutineer - a person who takes part in a rebellion against a person in authority
embed - become firmly and deeply fixed in a substance or thing
resurrection - an act of being brought back to life
clandestine - hidden or kept secret (often because it is illegal)

Find answers to activities on this page at www.usinfo.pl/zoom/