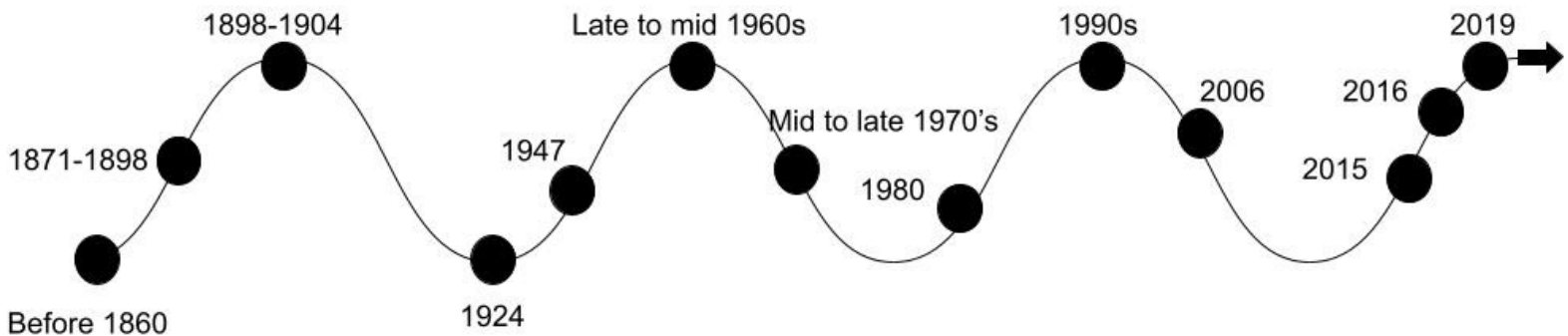


The Forgotten Lessons: The Teaching of Northern Slavery

Introduction Essay

Appearance of Northern Slavery in the classroom



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By Andrew Greenstein

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Rider University

In the winter of 2021, a dark discovery took Rider University by storm and sparked a revelation amongst many of the students in attendance. After over a century of being hidden in the darkness, the secret that Rider University was once a slave-owning plantation was revealed to the world. A place of advanced education and diversity was once an institution of oppression. The university has since changed the name of the building from the name of the slave owner, Van Cleve, to the Alumni House. It is important that history not be forgotten, but instead brought to the forefront. The university will not erase the history but rather use it as a way to teach about the complicated history of slavery in the state of New Jersey¹. To many of the students attending the University, this came as a surprise. The students who were history majors were astonished by the fact that slavery occurred in the state of New Jersey, let alone on Rider University's property. The reason for this lack of information stems from the collective lack of education on the subject.

¹ Pender, Tori, Slaveowner's name removed from campus' alumni house, The Rider News, Rider University, November 17th, 2021, Accessed October 31st, 2022, <https://www.theridernews.com/slaveowners-name-removed-from-campus-alumni-house/>

With a basic understanding of American history, one would be led to believe that slavery was a southern issue and continues to be a contentious history when taught in those states. The reality was that slavery was a nationwide institution. Though schools in the south are vocal about the unwillingness to teach the subject, schools in the north are silent. There is continuous hypocrisy in deflecting all discussions of the matter to the south while ignoring what happened in their own backyards. Walking through any school teaching U.S. history, one may hear a line like “The north were free states and the south were slave states”. Similarly, worded statements can be found within schools in New Jersey all across the state. It implies that Northern states had no slaves at the time of the civil war and were actively fighting the good fight. When the 14th Amendment comes into discussion, one may have the impression that it directly pertained to the freeing of enslaved people in the south, rather than the north as they were already free. This simplification of the issue is far from the truth. To this day, many students will never learn that slavery took place in the north at all, let alone that New Jersey was the last state to abolish the practice. The nation celebrates Juneteenth to “commemorate an effective end of slavery in the United States”². The stark reality is that slavery persisted after Juneteenth in the state of New Jersey legally for almost a full year, and illegally for another year. That dark history is often forgotten in classrooms throughout New Jersey and the nation.

The lack of national attention to this critical issue does beg the question of how it happened. Many historians argue that the lack of discussion on the institution of northern slavery was due to the racist beliefs of historians in the 19th and 20th centuries³. The voices of those early historians often get blamed for creating the view that slavery was only relevant when

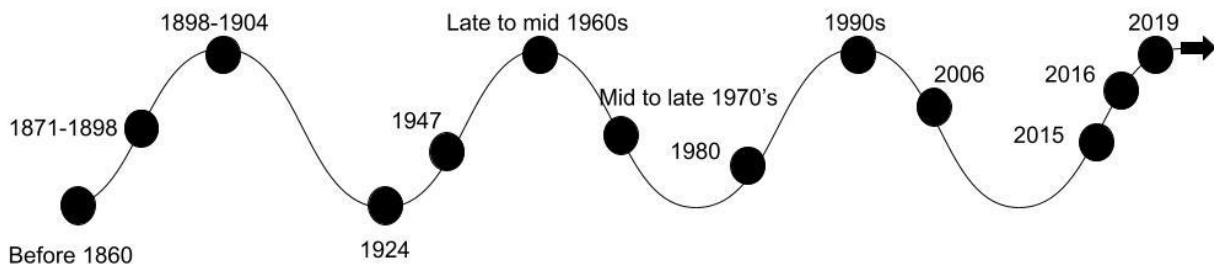
² Nix, Elizabeth, What Is Juneteenth?, History.com, A&E Television Networks, June 19th, 2015, Accessed October 31st, 2022, <https://www.history.com/news/what-is-juneteenth>

³ Wolinetz, Gary K., When Slavery Wasn't a Dirty Word in NJ, New Jersey Lawyer, February 15th, 1999

discussing the civil war as it was undeniably a major cause⁴. As time progressed, one would assume the material on northern slavery would become more prevalent, however, that is not the case. As the discussion both in the classroom and by historians on the institution of slavery has expanded, northern slavery still remains for the most part absent. The question remains: did this critical part of the establishment of the nation go untaught? The only way to answer that question is by examining the teaching of slavery in New Jersey and the Tri-state area. This will open that gateway to a deeper understanding of how this history could be erased from the collective memory.

Analyzing textbooks from the 1870s to now indicate a disturbing trend of periodically increasing and decreasing the teaching of northern slavery in the northern states. There are large and periodic appearances of this under-discussed material and it appears to almost be predictable.

Appearance of Northern Slavery in the classroom



With these trends highlighted, it's important to note that there has never been a steady teaching of the material. Teachers have struggled with finding ways to get the material across without creating unnecessary confusion. The importance of this subject is unparalleled as its atrocities have never truly been righted⁵. The perpetuation of these trends creates a lost history of the

⁴ Wolinetz, When Slavery Wasn't a Dirty Word in NJ

⁵ Jay, Bethany, and Cynthia Lynn Lyerly. Understanding and Teaching American Slavery. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2016. p.9

horrifying events that unfolded beneath the feet of students. They can adequately describe the atrocities that happened in distant states but are oblivious to the same atrocities that happened only a few miles away. The lack of a focus or understanding of what happened in the backyards of both teachers and students alike truly creates and perpetuates the “the amnesia of slavery”⁶. There is hope however that this continuous issue does get brought to light in the classroom. The awareness on the part of the students and teachers alike can see an end to its repetition. Teachers bringing this issue to the forefront and explaining to students that slavery happened here and that it goes undiscussed may inspire students to speak up when this topic is left out. Activism on this issue is key to maintaining its presence in the classroom and that these forgotten lessons never become forgotten again.

⁶ Gigantino II, James J. “The Curious Memory of Slavery in New Jersey, 1865-1941.” *New Jersey Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 6 (1): 35–55. 2020, Academic Search Premier doi:10.14713/njs.v6i1.188. Accessed 9/28/22.p.36

Primary Sources

Here are 7 primary sources to use as resources when teaching or exploring the topic of the teaching of northern slavery.

1904 New Jersey History Book

1924 New Jersey History Book

United Daughters of the Confederacy confession of alteration of textbooks 1917 (page 326 digital/317...

U.S History Textbook 1947

U.S History Textbook 1973

U.S. History book 1997

U.S History Textbook 2014

Guiding Questions

Provided here is a series of guided questions to structure lessons on the topic of the teaching of northern slavery.

Was slavery present in the north?

What may have caused northern slavery to be not taught in schools?

What was going on between 1904 and 1924 to see a decline in the teaching of northern slavery?

How did the "Lost Cause" impact the classroom?

What could cause northern slavery to re-enter the classroom in the late 1940s and into the 1960s?

What could be a reason for the decline of northern slavery in the classroom during late 70s and into the 80s?

What could cause the discussion of northern slavery to increase in the 1990s?

Why does northern slavery decline in the classroom during Obama's presidency?

Are we discussing northern slavery now?

Example Lesson

Here is an example lesson for teaching the teaching of northern slavery

INQUIRY ACTIVITY/LESSON FRAMEWORK: LET'S GO FISHIN!	
WHAT ARE WE FISHING FOR? (WHAT IS THE CONTENT/BIG IDEA?)	An understanding that the teaching of northern slavery has been inconsistent in the classroom
WHERE'S THE FISHING SPOT? (STANDARDS)	6.1.5.History CC.7: Evaluate the initial and lasting impact of slavery using sources that represent multiple perspectives.
WHAT BAIT ARE WE USING? (WHY DOES THIS MATTER?)	<div style="display: flex;"> <div style="flex: 1; background-color: #cccccc; padding: 5px;">Describe here the justification for teaching this lesson—is this worth your time?</div> <div style="flex: 2; padding: 5px;">Slavery was a horrific institution of forced labor used within the nation. In many classrooms even to this day slavery is taught exclusively existing in the south. Many students and even teachers are unaware that slavery not only happened within the north but in the very backyards of many new jersey citizens.</div> </div>
WHAT'S THE HOOK? (ENGAGING, COMPELLING QUESTION)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Begin the class with the questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Was there slavery in the state of New Jersey? ○ If there was, when did it end? ● Reveal to the class that slavery was indeed present in New Jersey and was abolished on January 23rd, 1866 ● The holiday of Juneteenth being the day we celebrate the official ending of slavery was June 19th, 1865 ● ask the class about their opinion on this fact and how they feel about it ● transition into the teaching of northern slavery has been inconsistent and risen and fallen due to social issues of the time
ALL OUR FISHING GEAR (MATERIALS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● two or more textbooks for the assessment at the end ● Teaching of Northern Slavery graphic organizer

**REEL 'EM IN (SEQUENCE OF INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES)
WHAT'S ACTUALLY GOING TO HAPPEN IN CLASS?**

- Begin the lesson with a short history of New Jersey slavery
 - Started with the first Dutch settlers in 1614
 - After the English takeover of the Dutch colonies, enslaved individuals were not granted freedom
 - After the American revolution slavery would remain in the state despite many enslaved revolutionaries from the state fought alongside the colonists for freedom
 - three-fifths compromise would spark a legal debate in the state on whether or not enslaved individuals were people
 - 1804 gradual abolition bill or free womb act
 - abolition upon one 21st birthday
 - slavery lasting until 1866 due to resistance of the federal government by NJ's state government to abolish
- Would appear in textbooks during the reconstruction period
 - slavery was wrong and northern states wanted to instill that idea
- early 1900's saw competition with a growing Klan
 - Books at this point actually had a detailed telling of northern slavery and that of slavery in the state
 - Klan members infiltrating school administrations and departments of education
 - attempts to alter the material taught in schools
- 1920's the Klan successfully takes over the education system
 - This was largely due to the lost cause movement
 - this was the idea that black history is unimportant as reconstruction failed
 - starts the narrative that the civil war was fought for states rights and not slavery
 - textbooks at this time omit slavery entirely
- growing civil rights movement in the late 40s
 - following world war 2, the civil rights movement began to grow in the nation
 - expanded the teaching of slavery and began to relearn the lost history of northern slavery along with the entire institution of slavery
 - textbooks in this time in the north begin to villainise the Klan of the reconstruction era
- the late 60s high and the decline into the 70s
 - the civil rights movements increased attention brought with it new discussions of the material
 - actively taught in textbooks and in classroom
 - northern slavery would become a focus point of the discussion of slavery
 - after the death of MLK, the talk of slavery died down and it became once again relegated to exclusively the south

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● rebirth in the 90s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After the discovery of a massive enslaved burial site in Manhattan, attention was once again put on the topic. ○ NYC schools created an initiative to get northern slavery in the classroom ○ the push was there but the material was not connecting with students ● decline in the Obama years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ following the 2008 election, the nation began to slowly think civil rights was coming to a close ○ decrease in focus about teaching northern slavery and shifted to the south ○ returned to early thinking of the 1840s and 50s that slavery was a southern problem ○ would change as the nation approached the 2016 election ● the modern high <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the nation would see a dramatic upswing in the discussion following the election ○ focus on the lost histories and untaught lessons of the past ○ this included northern slavery and a detailed revisiting of reconstruction ○ this is where we are today, but only time will tell if we stay at this level of understanding
<p>WEIGH THE CATCH (ASSESSMENT) HOW DO YOU KNOW THE KIDS ACCOMPLISHED ANYTHING?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● use two or more U.S history textbooks of different years, this can include the same authors ● have students broken into groups or individually based on the abundance of the materials ● Have students analyze the textbooks and tellings of northern slavery ● have them outline the provided graphic organizer
<p>CATCH OR RELEASE (REFLECTION)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Has not been tried in a classroom yet so its engagement and success in teaching the students about the teaching of northern slavery in the state is unknown.

Name:

Date:

The Teaching of Northern Slavery Activity

Analyse two different textbooks tellings of the history of slavery in the nation. Focus on what they say about northern slavery if anything at all. Think about the significance this would have on the classroom.

Textbook Name	Year	What does it say about northern slavery?

Was there an increase or decrease in the coverage of northern slavery? How large of a change?

If there was any change, what could have been happening at this time to influence the textbook?

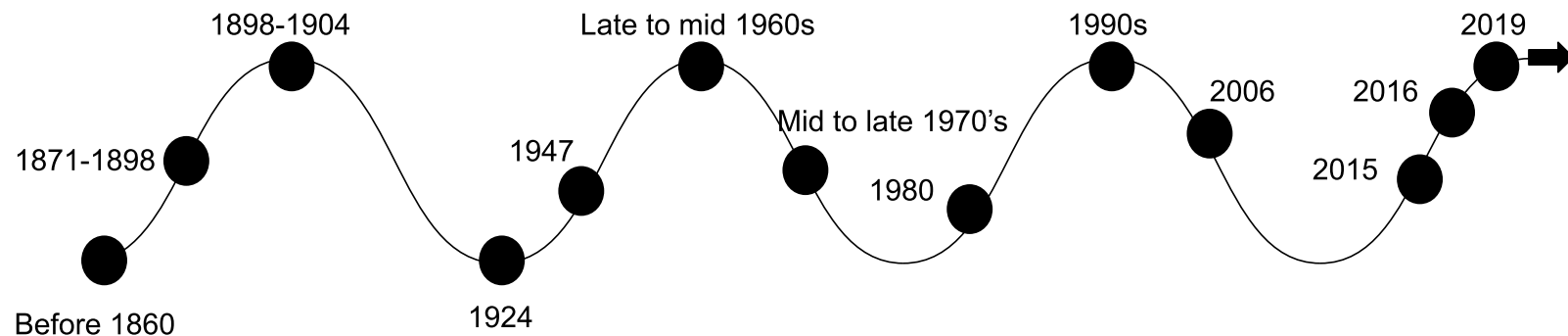
How could this have affected the classroom?

Document Based Question

Here is an example DBQ on the teaching of northern slavery

Examine the graph below and the points of time northern slavery is discussed in the classroom. After analyzing the primary sources attached, is this graph correct in its claims of what was taught in the classroom? If not, how would you change the graph? In your argument use three of the primary sources to support your claim.

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U.S History Textbook 2014

Steps to analyzing these sources:

1. Take a glance at the table of contents of each textbook. Note the sections the history book possesses. Does it have a section dedicated to slavery? Does it have a section for the civil war? Does it have a section on American industry or life prior to the civil war? What about early American settlements?
2. Take a look at the sections the book possesses that may discuss slavery. What does it say about slavery as a whole if it does discuss it? Is there a difference between northern slavery and southern slavery? When does the book indicate northern slavery ended?
3. What impact could this telling of slavery, if there is a telling at all, have on the classroom?

Bibliography

Here are resources to further explore and understand the teaching of northern slavery.

Library of Congress

The Library of Congress has a vast digital catalog of primary sources free to access. This includes history textbooks that have been archived within the library of congress. These textbooks can be used to further examine the teaching of northern slavery in the classroom.

Internet Archive

The Internet Archive provides a vast amount of free digitally archived books. these books include many from the modern-day but a collection of far older ones as well. This source can be used to find new and additional textbooks to further explore the teaching of northern slavery.

Smithsonian Digital Archive

This digital collection from the Smithsonian features over 1.5 million books and manuscripts free to access. This includes a variety of U.S history textbooks and other educational materials from the past to further study the teaching of northern slavery.

University of Pittsburgh's digital collection of 19th century schoolbooks

The University of Pittsburgh has an online and free to access a library of archived books. The online archive possesses collections including one explicitly labeled for 19th-century educational material. this source would help anyone furthering the research on this topic access educational material present in classrooms before the 20th century.

Open Textbook Library

The open textbook library features thousands of free online textbooks for anyone to access. These textbooks are more modern in publishing, ranging from the early 2000s to the modern day. These books can give an insight into what has been taught on the subject of northern slavery in the last few years and even in the classroom today.

The 1619 Project

The 1619 project from the New York Times aims to teach the American story of the first enslaved individuals to set foot on American soil in 1619. the project analyzes how slavery was a large part of this nation's history, including that of the northern states.

The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition ...

This book shows the rise of the Klan in the 1920s. The book features a section dedicated to the Klan's involvement in the education system and their attempt to influence the next generation.

This book illustrates how the very teaching of slavery within the classroom is commonly taught incorrectly. Slavery was a long and persistent institution that resulted in the nation entering a civil war. The teaching of the institution should reflect and be alongside traditional American history.

Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in Northern America by Ira Berlin

This book details the history of slavery in North America. A detailed section illustrates northern slavery and its perpetuation within those states. Its telling outlines the hypocrisy of these northern states and their lack of concern for the practice within their borders while condemning the south for the practice.

The Ragged Road to Abolition: Slavery and Freedom in New Jersey, 1775-1865 by James J. Gigantino...

This book illustrates slavery in New Jersey from the American Revolution to the thirteenth amendment. The book highlights the prevalence of the institution in the state and what made this northern state unique in its support of the practice and its abolition. It will help anyone looking to further the research on the teaching of northern slavery an insight into how the state began to forget its slave-owning past while slavery was still practiced in the state.

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