

SLAVERY FACT SHEET

GEOGRAPHY

1. Enslaved Africans came primarily from a region stretching from the Senegal River in northern Africa to Angola in the South.
2. The Angolan coast supplied nearly half the slaves sent to the Americas.

RELIGION

1. Religious practice focused on contact between this world and the other world, typically through augury, divination, prophecy, and spirit mediumship.

ORGANIZATION

1. The notion of tribes, combining a common language and customs with a political structure is mistaken. Atlantic Africa was divided into states (political units) and nations (cultural units).
2. Unlike the rich and powerful of Europe and Asia, those in Africa were not landowners, since African law did not recognize the right to own, sell, or rent land as property.

AFRICAN SLAVERY

1. Although African slavery was not a benign institution, slaves in Africa were used in a wider variety of ways than in the New World: they were employed as agricultural workers, soldiers, servants, and officials.
2. The great majority of slaves sold to Europeans were not slaves in Africa; they were usually recent war captives or victims of banditry and judicial proceedings.
3. Multi-generational slavery was uncommon; in part this reflected the fact that most African slaves were women.

SLAVE TRADE

1. During the era of the Atlantic slave trade, many of those enslaved, perhaps a majority, were kept in Africa.

2. The Atlantic slave trade carried about two to three men for every woman.
 3. The slave trade reduced the adult male population by about 20 percent, dramatically altering the ratio of working adults to dependents and of adult men to women
 4. About 14 percent of slaves sent to the New World were children under 14; 56 percent were male adults; and 30 percent were female adults.
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MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

SLAVERY AND WORLD HISTORY

Myth: Slavery is a product of Western Civilization.

Fact: Slavery is virtually a universal institution.

Myth: Slavery was always based on race.

Fact: Not until the 15th century was slavery associated primarily with people of African descent.

ENSLAVEMENT AND THE SLAVE TRADE

Myth: New World slaves came exclusively from West Africa.

Fact: Half of all New World slaves came from central Africa.

Myth: Kidnapping was the usual means of enslavement.

Fact: War was the most important source of enslavement; it would be incorrect to reduce all of these wars to slave raids.

Myth: The Middle Passage stripped enslaved Africans of their cultural heritage and transformed them into docile, passive figures wholly receptive to the cultural inputs of their masters.

Fact: Slaves engaged in at least 250 shipboard rebellions.

SLAVERY IN THE AMERICAS

Myth: Most slaves were imported into what is now the United States

Fact: Well over 90 percent of slaves from Africa were imported into the Caribbean and South America