



SLAVERY by Another Name

Systems

GRADE LEVEL: 9–12

OVERVIEW: This activity guide focuses on two specific types of forced labor systems — peonage (debt slavery) and convict leasing — that were used in the South after the Civil War. Students will define peonage (debt slavery) and critically examine the convict leasing system. Students will analyze a convict labor contract and compare/contrast convict leasing and contemporary prison labor issues. Students will also research the juvenile justice system and outline recommendations for reform. At the end of this session, students will understand how the forced labor systems —debt slavery and convict leasing — operated.

ESTIMATED LENGTH: Three class periods, plus, if necessary, additional time to complete assignments.

MATERIALS

- Video: Reflections on Peonage (1:26 minutes)
<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/peonage/video-reflections-peonage/>
- Handout: John Davis Excerpt (included within this guide)
- Video: Arriving in Goodwater (around 2 minutes; located under Law & Order within the Civics & Social Justice unit)
<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/classrooms/civics-social-justice/>
- Video: Convict Leasing (1:33 minutes)
<http://video.pbs.org/video/2178305185/>
- Audio: Big Business (1:23 minutes)
<http://video.pbs.org/widget/partnerplayer/2195244112/?w=400&h=224&chapterbar=false&autoplay=true>
- Handout: Convict Labor Contract (included within this guide)
- Worksheet: Written Document Analysis | National Archives
http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet.pdf
- Article: Young Blacks More Likely to Be Arrested for Non-Violent Crimes
Bet.com | Kellee Terrell | April 25, 2014
http://www.bet.com/news/national/2014/04/25/young-blacks-more-likely-to-be-arrested-for-non-violent-crimes.html?cid=socialMusicCeleb_20140429_22884064

- Article: 21st-Century Slaves: How Corporations Exploit Prison Labor
Altnet | Rania Khalek | July 21, 2011 [first two pages]
http://www.altnet.org/story/151732/21st-century_slaves%3A_how_corporations_exploit_prison_labor
- Article: Prison Economics Help Drive Ariz. Immigration Law | NPR | Laura Sullivan | October 28, 2010
<http://www.npr.org/2010/10/28/130833741/prison-economics-help-drive-ariz-immigration-law>
- Computers with Internet access

OPENING ACTIVITY

1. Project this quote:

“And this [convict leasing] system is one that I think in many ways needs to be understood as brutal in a social sense, but fiendishly rational in an economic sense. Because where else could one take a black worker and work them literally to death, after slavery? And when that worker died, one simply had to go and get another convict.” — Adam Green, historian

Facilitate a discussion about the quote. Possible questions to guide the conversation include:

- a. What does Green mean by “fiendishly rational in an economic sense”?
- b. Do you agree or disagree with this opinion? Why or why not?

By the end of this discussion, students should understand that forced labor systems like convict leasing and debt slavery were used to fuel cheap labor after the Civil War.

MULTIMEDIA MODULES + DISCUSSION (Phase 1)

1. View Video: Reflections on Peonage.
2. Facilitate a discussion about the video. Possible questions to guide the conversation include:
 - a. In your own words, what is debt slavery? How did it operate?
 - b. What factors contributed to its existence?
 - c. What are impacts of this practice?

By the end of this discussion, students should understand that debt slavery is a system where an employer compelled a worker to pay off a debt with work. Often, these debts were not legitimate. Mention that debt slavery operated in the South after the Civil War for a period of eighty years.

3. Distribute Handout: John Davis Excerpt. Read aloud as a class. After reading, ask students to write a six-word essay describing John Davis’ journey. Have

students share their short essays.

4. Facilitate a discussion about Davis. Possible questions to guide the conversation include:
 - a. How old was he?
 - b. Where was he traveling? Why?
 - c. What was his life like?
5. View Video: Arriving in Goodwater.
6. Note to Educators: This clip contains offensive language. Educators are encouraged to review “Ten Tips for Facilitating Classroom Discussions on Sensitive Topics” from the *Slavery by Another Name in the Classroom* homepage (www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/classrooms).
7. Continue the discussion about John Davis. Possible questions to guide the conversation include:
 - a. What options were available to John Davis when he was stopped by Robert Franklin?
 - b. What role did laws play in the imprisonment of blacks like John Davis?
 - c. How was freedom limited for blacks during this time?
 - d. What role did public officials play in forced labor?
 - e. What role did power or being in positions of power play in forced labor systems?

As part of the discussion, explain to students that John Davis was falsely accused of a crime, quickly convicted, then sentenced and charged fines and court fees. Because he couldn't pay, he was forced into labor — sold for a profit by a local businessman to a plantation owner. He was forced to sign a contract to work for ten months — which gave his employer the right to whip, confine and trade him as long as his debt was unpaid. He was eventually able to testify in court against John W. Pace, the man who forced him into labor. Davis' brave testimony helped to convict Pace of debt slavery.

MULTIMEDIA MODULES + DISCUSSION (Phase 2)

1. View Video: Convict Leasing.
2. Facilitate a discussion about convict leasing. Possible questions to guide the conversation include:
 - a. How did convict leasing work?
 - b. What role did convict leasing play in the South after emancipation?
 - c. How was convict leasing in conflict with the promises of emancipation and Reconstruction?

- d. What impact do you think convict leasing had on blacks in the South?
 - e. Should states be able to make money from leasing those who are imprisoned to private companies for labor?
3. Listen to Audio: Big Business.
 4. Facilitate a discussion about convict leasing. Possible questions to guide the conversation include:
 - a. Who benefited from convict leasing?
 - b. How was it, as the author writes, “lucrative”?
 - c. What role did some sheriffs play in convict leasing?
 - d. What impact do you think the involvement of law enforcement and judicial servants in convict leasing and debt slavery have on communities?
 - e. What are some ways that citizens can hold public officials accountable for wrongdoings?

As part of the discussion, explain to students that Southern states and counties leased “convicts” to commercial enterprises, but realized they could lease out their convicts to local planters or industrialists who would pay minimal rates for the workers and be responsible for their housing and feeding, thereby eliminating costs and increasing revenue. Soon, markets for convict laborers developed, with entrepreneurs buying and selling convict labor leases. The convict lease system became highly profitable for the states. To employers and industrialists, these men represented cheap, disposable labor.

MAIN ACTIVITY

1. Distribute Handout: Convict Labor Contract and Worksheet: Written Document Analysis. Divide students into small groups. Have students work together to analyze the contract using the analysis worksheet. Then as a class, facilitate a class discussion about the impact that these agreements, enforced by some public officials, and coupled with oppressive laws like the vagrancy statutes, had on John Davis and others like him who were forced into labor.
2. Distribute Article: Young Blacks More Likely to Be Arrested for Non-Violent Crimes. Read the article as a class. Have students consider what the basis of the article means to them. Make connections between these arrests and the increase of arrests made of black men after slavery.
3. Next, distribute the first two pages of Article: 21st-Century Slaves: How Corporations Exploit Prison Labor to half of the class. Distribute Article: Prison Economics Help Drive Ariz. Immigration Law to the other half of the class. Have students read their assigned article and highlight important points. Then have students write a paragraph summary of their article. Tell students that they are going to summarize their article to a partner. Match up students in pairs where each has read a different article. Have students who read 21st Century Slaves to

summarize their article to their partner first. Then have the students who read Prison Economics Help Drive Ariz. Immigration Law summarize their article to their partners. Next have students discuss in their pairs, the connections between their articles. Then open the discussion to the entire class where connections are explored between the articles and the history of forced labor.

4. Project this quote again:

“And this [convict leasing] system is one that I think in many ways needs to be understood as brutal in a social sense, but fiendishly rational in an economic sense. Because where else could one take a black worker and work them literally to death, after slavery? And when that worker died, one simply had to go and get another convict.” — Adam Green, historian

5. Facilitate a discussion that explores connections between the convict leasing system, the prison industrial complex, the prison pipeline, and contemporary forms of prisoner exploitation.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

1. Divide students into groups. In their groups, have students compose a three- to five-minute oral argument that advocates for juvenile justice system reform. Students should conduct research to help form their arguments and should provide attribution for their sources. Their arguments should provide facts about juvenile justice systems and arrests, address the problems associated with the systems, and outline recommendations for reform. Students will present their arguments to the class.
2. Have groups summarize their arguments in three to five paragraphs, post their summaries on the class blog, and invite peer-to-peer commenting and online discussion.
3. Using a web-based service like Piktochart (www.picktochart.com), have students create an infographic or digital poster that combines data, statistics and their reform recommendations. Have students post their infographics / digital posters on the class blog and invite peer-to-peer commenting and online discussion.

STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards (Grades 11–12)

English Language Arts Standards - Reading: Literature

- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging or beautiful.
- Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant.

English Language Arts Standards - Reading: Informational Text

- Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.
- Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.
- Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

English Language Arts Standards - Writing

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

English Language Arts Standards - Speaking and Listening

- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9 through 12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- Present information, findings and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience and a range of formal and informal tasks.

English Language Arts Standards – Language

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

English Language Arts Standards - History/Social Studies

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to understanding of the text as a whole.
- Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social or economic aspects of history/social science.

CREDITS

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Excerpt: John Davis
Excerpted from *Slavery by Another Name* by Douglas A. Blackmon

The last thing John Davis should have been doing in the second week of September 1901 was a long hike across the parched fields of cotton stretching endlessly along the Central of Georgia Railway line running from the Georgia state line to the notorious town of Goodwater. Millions of crisp brown cotton bolls, fat and cracking at the seams with bulging white fiber, waited in the fields and river flatlands of central Alabama calling out to be picked. The task would take weeks and demand the labor of virtually every available man, woman, and child for hundreds of miles.

Davis needed to be in his own patch of cotton — the lifeline of his tiny farm near Nixburg, a wisp of a town twenty miles south of Goodwater. For him to maintain any glimmer of independence in the South's terrifying racial regime, Davis had to produce his single bale of cotton — the limit of the physical capacities of one farmer and a mule and just enough to pay a share to the owner of the land he farmed and supply his family with enough food and warmth to pass the cold months soon to set in.

But as he struggled to reach the tight bend in the rails more than ten miles from his farm, where freight trains were forced to slow and itinerant travelers knew there was a chance to leap aboard empty freight cars, John knew he needed just as badly to see his wife, Nora. She was ill — so sick it had become impossible for him to care for her and the young couple's two children — especially at the very time of the season when he, like hundreds of thousands of men working small farms across the South, had no choice but to remain in his fields from dawn to dusk.

John and Nora had been married for only three years. At twenty-five, she was two years older. She came to the marriage with two children born when Nora was little more than a child herself. John treated the youngsters as his own. The husband and wife had come of age just miles apart on the outskirts of the rough-edged railroad town of Goodwater and married there in 1898. Eleven-year-old Albert certainly was already John's most important helpmate in the fields. At harvest time, he would have also needed ten-year-old Alice and Nora picking the rows. Sending them all to Nora's parents' house meant John would have to pull every boll himself. But it must have seemed the only way.

John stayed behind working furiously to bring in the crop. But Nora remained desperately ill. Her husband had to see her now. So Davis made his way on September 10, 1901, to the big railroad curve outside Alexander City and waited with the other men wandering the rails for the No. 1 train. The fall sun was just beginning to falter as the train eased out of the little mill town at 5:31 p.m. each day. Half an hour later, he would be on the outskirts of Goodwater.

As the train ambled forward, Davis must have felt a contradictory set of worry and relief as panoramas of cotton fields flashed by in a gentle blur on each side of the tracks, bobbing across the low foothills at the southernmost base of the Appalachian range. He

would have to hurry to see Nora and the children, and still return to Nixburg in time to save his cotton. He prayed he was not going to Goodwater to bury his wife. He had to know he might not make it home before his fields were ruined.

Still, the dust-choked freight car rattling across the landscape was in its own way a respite from the torturous tasks of the harvest. Gathering a season's cotton was excruciating work. Davis, like nearly every black man and woman in Alabama, had spent most of his waking life pawing through such fields. The passing crop rows soon would be choked with laborers: strapping young men coursing through the rows with swift, nimble expertise; young mothers with babies towed atop long sacks of cotton dragging behind them; nearly feeble old men and women — African Americans whose lives were grounded immutably in the seasonal rhythm of growing, tending, and picking cotton for other men.

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Convict Labor Contract between John W. Pace, Goodwater, Alabama and a man named Patterson, April 28, 1902

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“I further agree to be locked up in the cell at night and that I will be obedient and faithful in the discharge of every duty required of me by said Pace or his agents, and that should the said Pace advance me anything over and above what he had already furnished me, I agree to work for him under this contract until I have paid for same in full, working at the rate of five dollars per month. I agree that if I fail to comply fully with all the obligations on my part under the contract that I will pay the said Pace for all cost and trouble he is put to in forcing to comply with the same, including a reasonable attorneys fee for prosecuting or making me company with this contract. I agree that should I fail to comply with all requirements of this contract on my part that said Pace is hereby authorized to hire me out to any person, firm or corporation in the state of Alabama — at such sum as he may be able to hire me at for a term sufficient to pay all that I may owe him, including all cost and expense in making me do the work or apprehending and arresting me if I escape.”

Signature

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