



SLAVERY

by Another Name

TAKING A STAND

GRADE LEVEL: 9–12

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OVERVIEW

This activity guide focuses on the different faces of civic engagement by highlighting the many voices of protest against forced labor. Students will read and analyze primary source documents that argue against forced labor. They will also consider what is necessary to spark legislative change. Lastly, students are introduced to forms of modern-day slavery and given the opportunity to develop public awareness campaigns.

BACKGROUND

By 1883, the corruption and horror of forced labor had started to be known publicly, although it would still take decades to see its demise.

Though the profits from convict leasing brought much-needed funds to the states, the public (both Southerners and Northerners) became uncomfortable with the practice of convict leasing. Political kickbacks and corruption were common. Conditions in the convict camps were atrocious, and the illness and mortality rates were too high to ignore.

As part of a series of changes in convict leasing, Alabama created an office of prison inspections to oversee conditions for convict laborers. The inspectors described wretched conditions. New rules for leasing began to require minimum standards for treatment and rules for punishments. These reforms brought only modest improvements.

Meanwhile, a new social and political movement was growing in the North. In response to significant economic, social, and political inequalities, “progressivism” advocated for the government to lead efforts to change society’s ills. When President McKinley was assassinated and Theodore Roosevelt took office in 1901, progressivism became a powerful national movement that advocated for fair trade and pro-labor laws, including a decreased workweek, child labor restrictions, and workplace safety rules. Roosevelt appointed progressive judges and encouraged the prosecution of peonage, although he’d eventually retreat on the issue under political pressure.

While progressive leaders often focused on the needs of the poor and immigrants, they did not organize to promote black suffrage or equal rights. However, many progressive activists, journalists, and thinkers such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Mary White Ovington, William English Walling, Ray Stannard Baker, and the members of the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) fought for civil rights.

During this time, dramatic stories of the abuse and wretched conditions of convict laborers began to be publicized through trials and newspaper accounts. The egregiousness of the violence and corruption of the system began to turn public opinion against convict leasing. Public outrage over scandalous tales of abuse led Tennessee to stop leasing convicts to coal mines in 1893 and to stop all leasing to other industries by 1896. South Carolina (1897), Louisiana (1901), Mississippi (1907), Georgia (1908), Arkansas (1913) and Florida (1923) gradually followed suit. In many cases, the convicts were then transferred to prison-run chain gangs.

However, at the same time that state-run convict leasing was ending, new laws made private peonage — being forced to work to pay off a debt — even easier to establish. In Alabama, where convict leasing persisted, changes to contract labor laws ensnared more men into peonage.

Throughout the twenties, a series of sensational crimes and trials brought attention to the pockets of convict leasing and peonage that remained. Eventually, in 1928, Alabama became the final state to eliminate convict leasing by the state government.

Across the South, new technologies and shifting economic patterns decreased peonage. The dust bowl and Great Depression shifted many sharecroppers off their land. After Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected, he instituted his “New Deal,” a series of economic programs intended to offer relief to the unemployed and recovery of the national economy. Though blacks were not the intended audience for these programs, they benefited as many citizens did. However, peonage remained — generally hidden in the rural counties of Southern states. In 1940, with the help of the International Labor Defense (ILD), a group of people in New York and Chicago organized the Abolish Peonage Committee and began to pressure the Justice Department to try cases.

In 1941, in response to the outbreak of World War II, and fears that racial inequalities would be used as anti-United States propaganda, Attorney General Francis Biddle issued Circular No. 3591 to all federal prosecutors, instructing them to actively investigate and try more peonage cases. Finally, the federal government was willing to act aggressively to protect all its citizens from slavery.

For additional background, visit the following from the *Slavery by Another Name* Theme Gallery:

FDR and the New Deal:

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/fdr/>

Teddy Roosevelt and Progressivism:

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/progressivism/>

Voices of Protest:

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/voices-protest/>

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What role do citizen activists play in reform?
2. What methods and mediums of protest are available to citizens to address an issue of concern?
3. What was required to effectively end forced labor in the South during the twentieth century?
4. What can be done today to combat forced labor around the world?

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

When just one voice speaks out, it can galvanize thousands. Throughout history, people have exercised their rights as citizens to protest peaceably, raise awareness about issues, and affect change, including at the legislative level. Young people can, and are in a position to, be civically engaged today.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY: IN THEIR SHOES

Materials

- Historic Image Slideshow
<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/slideshow/>
This is a collection of photographs that show inmates at work and being punished.

Note to Educators: Some of these images are graphic in nature. 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).

1. Prior to viewing “Letters Poured In,” facilitate a discussion using the pre-viewing questions. Provide background on the clip for students. After viewing, continue the discussion using the post-viewing questions.
2. Have students view “Historic Image Slideshow.” Then show the gallery a second time to allow students to develop their own captions for the photos.

3. Lead a classroom discussion where students share their captions and describe what they saw in each picture.
4. Ask student to theorize why there are so few protest letters written by prisoners such as the ones in the photos.
5. Based on one of the pictures, have students write a fictitious letter home from the point of view of an inmate in one of the pictures. Encourage students to include details about prison conditions as evidenced in the photos and to imagine how the inmate ended up in prison.
6. Allow students to read their letters aloud in class.
7. As an extension activity, have students research the conditions in prisons today and write a blog entry that compares and contrasts contemporary conditions with these historical conditions.

ACTIVITY: WRITING AS PROTEST

Materials

- Letter by Julia Tutwiler
In this letter, educator, prison reformer, and activist Julia Tutwiler argued that the practice of convict leasing was inhumane.

Note to Educators: Julia Tutwiler also lobbied for segregation of state prisons, so that black and white inmates did not share quarters. This may appear as a contradiction to students, and presents a good opportunity to talk about the conflicting, uneven or historical attitudes that we may encounter in primary source documents. Can we consider Tutwiler to be a “good” activist if she was a segregationist?
- Letter by R.N. McDonough
In this letter, R.N. McDonough writes to William Fort, chairperson of the Statewide Campaign Committee for the Abolishment of the Convict Lease System. In his letter he states that, despite working in the mining industry, he does not support the convict lease system. He adds that his letters of opposition to legislators have fallen on deaf ears.
- Letter by William Fort
In this letter, William Fort, the chairperson of the Statewide Campaign Committee for the Abolishment of the Convict Lease System, writes on behalf of the committee to members of the Alabama legislature.
- Letter to *The Crisis* about Peonage
In this letter, the anonymous author writes to describe the nature of peonage. *The Crisis* is the official communication vehicle of the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People, and the author sought its support to fight working conditions for blacks in the South.

- Letter by Carrie Kinsey Letter (Transcript)
In this letter, Carrie Kinsey wrote President Theodore Roosevelt to inquire about her fourteen-year-old brother who was promised a job, but instead was sold into forced labor. She asked for help to free her brother.
- Taking a Stand: Analysis
 1. Prepare to listen to “Warren Reese, Jr.” and “Sacrifices” by facilitating a discussion using the pre-listening questions. Provide background on the clips for students. After listening, continue the discussion using the post-listening questions.
 2. Prepare to view “Reflections on Family Legacies” by facilitating a discussion using the pre-viewing questions. Provide background on the clip for students. After viewing, continue the discussion using the post-viewing questions.
 3. Divide students into five groups. Distribute one of the following— “Letter by Julia Tutwiler”; “Letter by William Fort”; “Letter by R.N. McDonough;” “Letter on Debt Peonage;” and “Letter by Carrie Kinsey” — to each group. To each student, distribute “Taking A Stand: Analysis,” which students will use to analyze the documents. Circulate the letters so that each group reads all five letters.
 4. After this activity, facilitate a discussion about the documents, the different modes of communication used, and their effectiveness. Have students consider which were more effective and why, as well as the construction of each argument.
 5. Explain to students that taking a stand about an issue is one form of civic participation. Next, designate one side of the class as the “for” side of the room. Students who support an issue you present will stand on that side.
 6. Designate the other side of the room as the “against” side. Students who oppose the issue you present will stand there.
 7. After presenting each for and against statement, have students use persuasion skills to encourage students on the opposing side to join their side. Sample for/against prompts include:
 - a. Should prisoners be forced to work without pay?
 - b. Should prisoners be leased out to private industry by state governments?
 - c. Is prison reform that improves prison conditions necessary?

d. Should the Thirteenth Amendment be amended so that it completely abolishes slavery including as a punishment for crime?

8. Facilitate a post-activity discussion about persuasion and what's required to take a stand about an issue. Ask students about steps that they can take to raise awareness about issues of importance to them.

ACTIVITY: TOWARD AN END

1. Prepare to view "An End in Sight?" by facilitating a discussion using the pre-viewing questions. Provide background on the clip for students. Continue the discussion using the post-viewing questions.
2. Continue the discussion by asking students to consider what's required to effect legislative change or legislative enforcement. Inquire if there is a connection between citizen pressure and government response. Ask students if they know of instances where public pressure prompted a government response to change policy.
3. Instruct students to identify an issue of importance to them that's related to human rights. Have students research their issue in efforts to find out what type of policy change could improve conditions surrounding their issue.
4. Have students develop a recommended action plan to influence the local or federal government to implement policy change for their issue. Provide an opportunity for students to share their action plans with the class.

ACTIVITY: MODERN DAY SLAVERY

Materials

- What Is Modern Slavery? | U.S. Department of State
<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/what/index.htm>
1. Explain to students that while the federal government took measures to aggressively prosecute forced labor in the 1940s, various forms of modern day slavery continue to occur to this day. These practices often subjugate children and teens.
 2. Ask students to identify ways that they believe that slavery continues to exist to this day. Develop a list on the board.
 3. Distribute "U.S. Department of State's Classification of Modern Day Slavery." Review each type of enslavement.

4. As a class, explore the different campaigns aimed at ending human trafficking. Possibilities include Against Our Will (www.againstourwill.org) and Free the Slaves (www.freetheslaves.net). Instruct students to record facts that they didn't know.
5. Instruct students to conduct additional research about human trafficking. They can be encouraged to use the U.S. Department of State website (www.state.gov/g/tip) and the CNN Freedom Project (www.thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com). From their research, have students develop a public awareness campaign for human trafficking that includes a slogan, a public service announcement, and other components that they believe would engage their peers around the issue.
6. If technology is available, consider posting student work in an online classroom space such as a blog platform like Tumblr (www.tumblr.com) or WordPress (www.wordpress.com) or share their campaigns around the school or community to spread awareness.

MULTIMEDIA CLIPS

Letters Poured In

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/classrooms/civics-social-justice/>

This film clip from *Slavery by Another Name* discusses the thousands of ordinary citizens who wrote letters speaking out against peonage and convict leasing.

Pre-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever protested against something? If so, what form of protest did you use?
2. What forms of protest are available to us? What forms were available to people in the early 1900s? Were all of those forms available to everyone?
3. If you were protesting peonage and convict leasing in the early 1900s, what methods would you use?

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. What was the impact of these citizen letters?
2. How did government officials react to the thousands of letters that called for the end of peonage?
3. Are there any social issues today that would make you want to write a letter of protest? To whom would you send your letter? Are other methods of protest more effective today?

Warren Reese, Jr.

<http://video.pbs.org/widget/partnerplayer/2195265064/?w=400&h=224&chapterbar=false&autoplay=true>

In this excerpt from the book *Slavery by Another Name*, author Douglas A. Blackmon writes about Warren Reese, Jr., a federal prosecutor who indicted a number of Southern businessmen who practiced peonage and convict leasing. Although Reese was ultimately unsuccessful in effectively prosecuting the businessmen as he deemed fit, his determination and sacrifices are noteworthy. In this clip, Blackmon characterizes Reese and why he was in a good position to fight peonage.

Note to Educators: It is most effective to listen to “Warren Reese” and “Sacrifices” in succession.

Sacrifices

<http://video.pbs.org/widget/partnerplayer/2195250200/?w=400&h=224&chapterbar=false&autoplay=true>

In this excerpt from *Slavery by Another Name*, author Douglas A. Blackmon writes about the challenges of Warren Reese, Jr., a federal prosecutor who indicted a number of Southern businessmen who practiced peonage and convict leasing. Although Reese was ultimately unsuccessful in effectively prosecuting the businessmen as he deemed fit, his determination and sacrifices are noteworthy. In this clip, Blackmon writes about the backlash that Reese faced going up against Southern businessmen and elite.

Pre-Listening Discussion Questions for “Warren Reese, Jr.” and “Sacrifices”

1. Have you ever been the only one in a large group to speak out against something that you thought was wrong? If so, what happened and what did you do?
2. How can people build an argument successfully if their opinion is unpopular?

Post-Listening Discussion Questions for “Warren Reese, Jr.” and “Sacrifices”

1. How does Blackmon characterize Warren Reese, Jr.?
2. What does it mean to “choose one’s battles wisely” when it comes to protesting? Did Warren Reese choose his battle wisely?
3. Why did Blackmon think Reese was a good advocate for abolishing convict leasing?
4. What resistance do you think Warren Reese faced from his opponents? What options did he have? Did he do the right thing?

Reflections on Family Legacies

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/descendant-stories/video-reflections-family-legacies/>

The following excerpt is from a StoryCorps oral history that features Kate Willis, a descendant of John Williams, a plantation owner who practiced peonage. After being questioned on his farm by two federal agents, Williams, possibly afraid that he might be charged with peonage, had eleven forced laborers murdered who worked on his farm. He was put on trial for murder and became the first white man, since Reconstruction, to be convicted of first-degree murder of a black person. In this clip, Willis discusses the high school paper that she wrote about peonage and Williams' role in it.

Pre-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever written or presented anything for school that brought awareness to an issue that concerned you? Why or why not? What was the outcome?
2. How can knowing about history be used to help individuals and communities progress?
3. What qualities does it take for a person to be an activist?

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. In what ways could Kate Willis be considered an activist? Does she have the characteristics you expect in an activist or protester?
2. What do you think Willis learned from the experience?
3. Why do you think forced labor isn't normally taught in schools?

An End in Sight?

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/classrooms/civics-social-justice/>

This film clip from *Slavery by Another Name* highlights what it took — a mix of internal and external governmental pressure — for the federal government to issue anti-peonage legislation and aggressively prosecute cases of forced labor.

Pre-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. What does it take to affect change on the federal level?
2. What are ways to put pressure on the federal government to change policy?

Post-Viewing Discussion Questions

1. What factors contributed to the federal government’s decision to aggressively prosecute peonage?
2. What role, if any, did public pressure play in the federal government’s response?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“Human Trafficking” | Teaching Tolerance

<http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-39-spring-2011/human-trafficking>

STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards

Reading Standards for Literacy in History and the Social Studies

Standards 1 to 3: Key Ideas and Details

Standards 7 to 9: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

<http://www.corestandards.org/>

IRA/NCTE National Standards for English Language Arts:

Standard 1; Standard 3; Standard 4; Standard 5; Standard 6; Standard 7; Standard 8

<http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Books/Sample/StandardsDoc.pdf>

National Standards for Social Studies:

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme 3: People, Places, and Environments

Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards>

National Standards for History

ERA 6: The Development of the Industrial United States (1870–1900)

Standard 2B; Standard 3A; Standard 3B

ERA 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890–1930)

Standard 1A; Standard 1B

<http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/>

Historical Thinking Standards

Standard 3; Standard 5

<http://nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/historical-thinking-standards-1/overview>

LETTER TO *THE CRISIS* ABOUT PEONAGE

The following letter first appeared in The Crisis, August 1911.

I am not an educated man. I will give you the peonage system as it is practiced here in the name of the law. If a colored man is arrested here and hasn't any money, whether he is guilty or not, he has to pay just the same. A man of color is never tried in this country. It is simply a farce.

Everything is fixed before he enters the courtroom. I will try to give you an illustration of how it is done:

I am brought in a prisoner, go through the farce of being tried. The whole of my fine may amount to fifty dollars. A kindly appearing man will come up and pay my fine and take me to his farm to allow me to work it out. At the end of a month I find that I owe him more than I did when I went there. The debt is increasing year in and year out. You would ask. "How is that?" It is simply that he is charging you more for your board, lodging and washing than they allow you for your work, and you can't help yourself either, nor can anyone else help you, because you are still a prisoner and never get your fine worked out. If you do as they say and be a good Negro, you are allowed to marry, provided you can get someone to have you, and of course the debt increases. This is in the United States, where it is supposed that every man has equal rights before the law, and we are held in bondage by this same outfit.

Of course we can't prove anything. Our word is nothing. If we state things as they are, the powers that be make a different statement, and that sets ours aside at Washington and, I suppose, in Heaven, too.

Now, I have tried to tell you how we are made servants here according to law, I will tell you in my next letter how the lawmakers keep the colored children out of schools, how that pressure is brought to bear on their parents in such a manner they cannot help themselves. The cheapest way we can borrow money here is at the rate of twenty five cents on the dollar per year....

What I have told you is strictly confidential. If you publish it, don't put my name to it. I would be dead in a short time after the news reached here. One word more about the peonage. The court and the man you work for are always partners. One makes the fine and the other one works you and holds you, and if you leave you are tracked up with bloodhounds and brought back.

Letter by Carrie Kinsey Letter (Transcript)

Bainbridge, Georgia, July 26, 1903.

Mr. President, I have a brother about 14 years old. A colored man came here and hired him from me, and said that he would take good care of him, and pay me five dollars a month for him—and I heard of him no more. He went and sold him to McRee, and they has been working him in prison for 12 months and I has tried to get them to send him to me and they won't let him go. He has no mother and no father. They are both dead, and I am his only friend and they won't let me have him. He has not done nothing for them to have him in chains, so I write to you for you to help me get my poor brother. His name is James Robinson. And the man that carried him off, his name is Dan Cal. He sold him to McCree at Valdosta, Georgia. Please let me hear from you at once.

Carrie Kinsey

[Note: This transcript has been edited slightly.]

Taking a Stand: Analysis

NAME: _____

DATE: _____ SECTION: _____

As a group, read each document and summarize its contents aloud. Then answer the following questions below.

Letter by Julia Tutwiler

1. What evidence does Tutwiler give to support her stance?

2. Do you agree or disagree with Tutwiler's arguments? Why or why not?

Letter by R.N. McDonough

3. What words does McDonough use in his letter to indicate his stance?

Letter by William Fort

4. What might have been the relationship between William Fort and R.N. McDonough?

5. Is William Fort for or against convict leasing? How do you know?

6. What facts does Fort use to support his opinion?

Letter to *The Crisis* about Debt Peonage

7. Why wouldn't the writer want to be identified? What do you believe is his/her intent?

8. Why do you think he began his letter, "I am not an educated man"?

Letter by Carrie Kinsey

9. Why do you think Carrie Kinsey chose to write the President?

10. What options were available to Kinsey to help her brother?

Overall

11. Which of these documents do you find most effective? Why?