

Interdisciplinary Resource for Engagement with the History of Universities and Slavery

This project builds on research on Xavier University's ties to the American institution of slavery by Professor Walker Gollar, and available on Xavier University Library's "LibGuides: Fenwick History: Home."

A key reason for universities to study their relationship to slavery in America is to engage members of their communities in discussions about the implications of slavery for themselves and their institutions today. Xavier faculty members Norman Townsel (Counseling) and Christine Anderson (History) have created a tool to assist in teaching and reflection on their university and slavery. The result is a timeline with two threads that pair history (events in Xavier's development that reveal its links to enslavement and the local context of those events) with resources for reflection on that history (suggestions for personal, group and musical reflection linked to the history thread of the timeline).

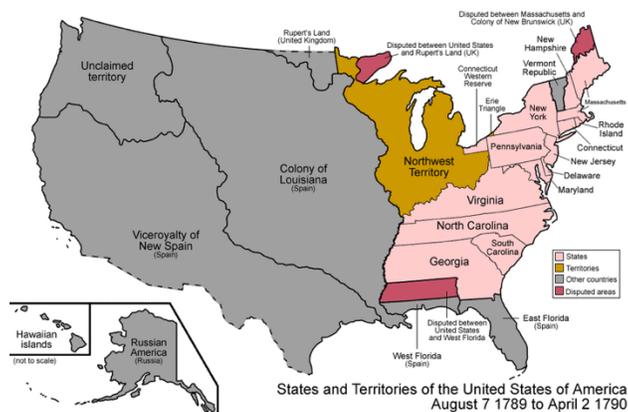
This interdisciplinary approach addresses some of the difficulties confronting us as we seek to encourage deeper and more complex encounters with the links between universities and enslavement. For example, historians are able to share information and analysis of the ways universities such as Xavier were and are implicated in racial slavery and the unresolved problems that are left to us. Yet it is often difficult for historians to explain *why* university communities should explore such a painful subject. Educators in the field of counseling, on the other hand, are skilled at facilitating constructive conversations about sensitive topics, including moral and psychological aspects of a society and institutions reliant on human bondage. But counselors and other faculty cannot always share historical facts and context necessary to understand contemporary connections to the experiences of the enslaved as well as enslavers and others who benefited from racial slavery. Townsel and Anderson's binary timeline will make such gaps in our knowledge and skills less of an impediment to difficult conversations on our campus and in our community.

We are making the timeline available so that it can be used as a basis for conversations in classrooms, faculty and staff learning communities, and student organizations. It might be especially useful as the basis for first year seminars, co-curricular programming, or presentations to community groups. Other universities could replace Xavier's history with examples of how they responded institutionally and individually to their own specific histories.

This remains a work in progress. At present the timeline only includes Xavier history until emancipation in 1865; it is essential, however, to trace the continuing involvement of the University in the systematic, national racial regime that underpinned slavery but did not end with emancipation.

Northwest Ordinance Prohibits slavery in the Northwest Territory, including Ohio. Located on the northern bank of the Ohio River, on the border between enslavement and freedom, Cincinnati was an important stop on the Underground Railroad as well as a site of conflict over human bondage.

Because of the Northwest Ordinance, Xavier College never owned enslaved persons. Edward Fenwick, a Dominican friar and the first bishop of Cincinnati, founded the Athenaeum (now St. Xavier High School and Xavier University). Before coming to Ohio, Bishop Fenwick owned, bought and sold enslaved people; even after coming to Ohio he proposed to sell people owned by the Dominicans in Kentucky to pay off their debts.



The prohibition of slavery in the Northwest Territory effectively established the Ohio River as the geographic border between slave states and free states, from the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River. The physical location of the Underground Railroad Museum in downtown Cincinnati on the banks of the Ohio River commemorates the river's historic involvement in the American institution of slavery. The museum seeks to, "illuminate the true meaning of inclusive freedom by presenting permanent and special exhibits that inspire, public programming that provoke dialogue and action, and educational resources that equip modern abolitionists".

<https://freedomcenter.org/>

Quote:

I never had anything good, no sweet, no sugar; and that sugar, right by me, did look so nice, and my mistress's back was turned to me while she was fighting with her husband, so I just put my fingers in the sugar bowl to take one lump, and maybe she heard me, for she turned and saw me. The next minute, she had the rawhide down.

I was the conductor of the Underground Railroad for eight years, and I can say what most conductors can't say; I never ran my train off the track and I never lost a passenger.

Harriet Tubman



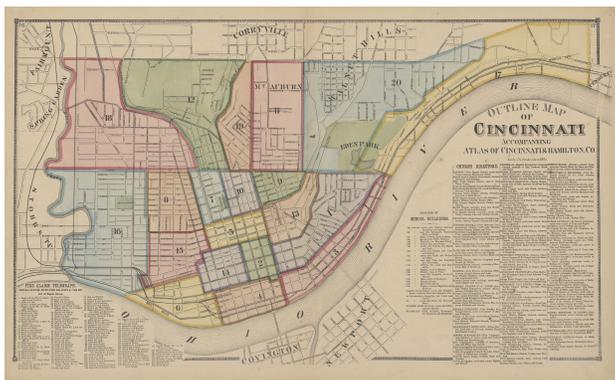
Personal Reflections: Physically imagine what Harriet Tubman means by the term "rawhide down". What political dynamics in the newly formed federal government likely resulted in the Northwest Territory designation of "slave-free"? How are those dynamics relevant to today's political climate?

Pedagogical Reflection: How can Xavier University professors partner with the museum to facilitate critical learning experiences for our students?

Musical background: "Down by the Riverside" Etta James
<https://youtu.be/6i3ZSCbp0a4>

1831

Bishop Edward Dominic Fenwick founds the Atheneum in the Diocese of Cincinnati to educate laymen and future priests.



St. Xavier College was located on Sycamore Street between 6th and 7th Streets in the city's low-lying downtown basin near the river. Students must have witnessed or experienced the violence against African-American communities that was prevalent in this area on the border between freedom and enslavement.

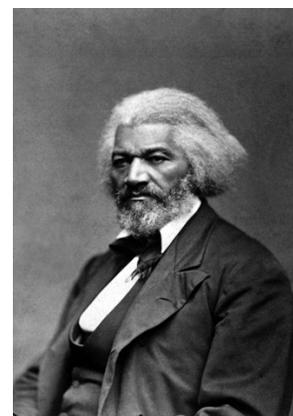


Between 1830 and 1850, the number of slave owning families became increasingly concentrated. By 1860, 2.7% of White families owned 93% of southern wealth, and 1/4th of all slaves. Between 1830 and 1860, the price of the average field hand almost doubled, from \$650 to \$1200. In the midst of this misery, many slaves turned to religion as a buffer against the cruelty they were being subjected to on a daily basis.

Quote:

"I never saw my mother, to know her as such, more than four or five times in my life; and each of these times was very short in duration, and at night. She made her journeys to see me in the night, traveling the distance on foot, after performing her day's work. She was a field hand, and a whipping is the penalty of not being in the field at sunrise. She would lie down with me and get me to sleep, but long before I waked she was gone. Death soon ended what little we could have while she lived, and with it her hardships and suffering."

Frederick Douglass



Due to laws prohibiting open assembly, slaves established religious activities that were often held in secret. These meetings frequently focused on scriptures of deliverance – Moses and Exodus, David and Goliath, Joshua and the Battle of Jericho. At the core of these meetings were the songs, the Negro Spirituals.

Personal Reflection: What is the power of spirituality in the face of human cruelty?

Pedagogical reflection: How do we increase understanding among faculty of the lived experience of students of color at Xavier University?

Musical Reflection:

"Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" Odetta Holmes
<https://youtu.be/ZXg9UFUXFXU>



1829-34

Well known slave insurrections were planned by Gabriel Prosser in 1800 and in 1822 under the leadership of Denmark Vesey. In 1831 Nat Turner led slaves in Southampton County, Virginia to revolt, killing at least 60 white people, and in 1839 Cinque led enslaved Africans aboard the slave ship Amistad in a successful mutiny. During this period, the Abolitionist Movement grew substantially in the north. One of the most influential works of the period was Uncle Tom's Cabin, written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Lyman Beecher's daughter. The book remains controversial to this day.

Lane Theological Seminary founded in Walnut Hills neighborhood. Headed by Presbyterian minister Lyman Beecher, a vocal advocate of anti-Catholicism, the seminary's purpose was to educate Protestant clergy to serve western territories. In 1834 Lane students organized a debate on immediate abolition [a movement that labeled slavery a sin and called for its immediate end without compensation to slaveholders] in the absence of Beecher. When Beecher returned to find that the school's board of trustees opposed what they saw as the radical doctrine of immediatism, the "Lane Rebels" left the school and went to Oberlin College, the first interracial, coeducational institution of higher learning in the United States.

"I am a believer in that portion of the Declaration of American Independence in which it is set forth, as among self-evident truths, 'that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' Hence, I am an abolitionist. Hence, I cannot but regard oppression in every form – and most of all, that which turns a man into a thing – with indignation and abhorrence."

William Lloyd Garrison



Personal Reflection: Recall, if you can, the emotions associated with your efforts toward an objective, goal, or cause that led to a defeat. How did it feel? How did you move forward?

Group Discussion: In your experience, what are the common factors that facilitate meaningful motivation, engagement, fidelity, and measurable progress for large political movements?

Pedagogy: How do we encourage our students to move beyond the learned connections between xenophobia and their early childhood education?

Musical Reflection:

"John Brown's Body," Paul Robeson

<https://youtu.be/FTS2b2-JmW8>

1829, 1836, 1841

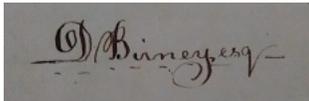
In 1829, 1836, and 1841, Anti Black riots in Cincinnati revealed deep hostility to people of African descent. Most African Americans in Cincinnati had been born in southern states or were descendants of those who had.

Born in Ohio, but raised in Kentucky, brothers Courtland and Calhoun Benham attended the Atheneum in 1836. Calhoun fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Benham recalled: "While I was in the military service of the South. I have the happy satisfaction of knowing that my individual and official action was always in accordance with humanity and I venture to say magnanimity."



Major Harry Innes Thornton, Major Calhoun Benham, Major Horace A. Higley and Major Samuel B. Flowers of General Bragg's staff, C.S.A.

In the same year that the Benham brothers attended the Atheneum, former slaveowner James Gillespie Birney began publishing an abolitionist newspaper, *The Philanthropist*, in Cincinnati. Twice in that year white mobs destroyed his press. Undeterred, Birney continued to publish *The Philanthropist* in Cincinnati, until October 1843.



James Birney's son Dion attended Xavier in 1842 and 1843. On July 4, 1843 Dion Birney gave an abolitionist address to the student body on "[The Progress of Freedom](#)."

Cincinnati also harbored anti-Catholic prejudice. In 1853, German immigrants, some of whom had participated in the 1848 Revolutions, protested a visit to the city by papal emissary Cardinal Gaetano Bedini. They marched to the home of Cincinnati Bishop John Purcell carrying a scaffold with an effigy of Bedini and signs reading "No Priests! No Kings!" While the anti-Catholic riot was smaller than the anti-Black riots of the same era, Xavier students were certainly aware of both.



Cardinal Bedini

Mob violence against African Americans and white abolitionists in the 1830's was quite prevalent. In 1833, Professor Charles Follen of Harvard University was the vice president of the New England Anti-Slavery Society. Follen rejected the argument that abolitionism had encouraged mob violence, and oversaw the publication of "An Address to the People of the United States" confronting the defenders of slavery. Due to its ties to slave transport shipping, Harvard's governing body terminated Follen's professorship in 1835,

Quote:

"There is no easy way to create a world where men and women can live together, where each has his own job and house, where all children receive as much education as their minds can absorb. But, if such a world is created in our lifetime, it will be done by people of good will. It will be accomplished by persons who have the courage to put an end to suffering by willingly suffering themselves rather than inflict suffering on others."
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Personal Reflection: Reflect on a time when you or someone you know encountered the threat of violence, or the aftermath of violent actions.

Group Discussion: How do we successfully deescalate the threat of violence in our relationships, families, neighborhoods, and society at large?

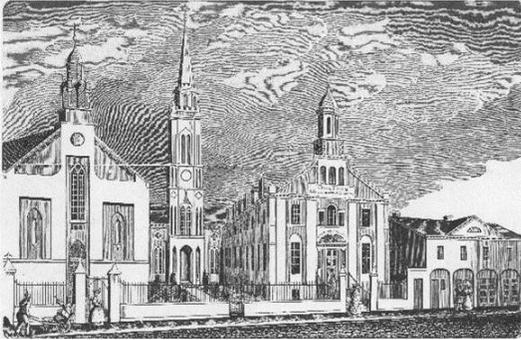
Pedagogical Reflection: How do teachers provide opportunities for students to go beyond the mastery of course content and experience a transformative understanding of the world and their place in it.

Musical Reflection: "A Change Gonna Come" Sam Cooke
<https://youtu.be/fPr3yvkhYsE>

1843

1853

In 1842 St. Xavier College was incorporated by the Ohio legislature as “an institution for the education of white youth in the various branches of useful knowledge.” The College, however, had knowingly admitted students of “mixed blood” from Louisiana, probably the sons of white men and African-American women either enslaved or free.



Between 1840 and 1854, under Jesuit leadership, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the school’s revenues came from students who boarded at the school. Because almost all of the boarders came from slaveholding families, the school depended in large part on tuition derived from the labor of enslaved people.

St. Xavier closed the boarding school for financial reasons in 1854. Students who had boarded at the school were urged to attend Jesuit schools in St. Louis and Bardstown, Kentucky. This would not be possible for mixed race students because, as William Stack Murphy, S.J., the Missouri vice provincial wrote to the father general of the province, “being in a State where slavery does not exist and where the blacks are better received a number of Louisianans sent thither their children of mixed blood. Bardstown and St. Louis could not receive them without offense. Moreover, all the white pupils [at these schools] would leave at once.”



In 1842, a slave of mixed heritage named Harriet Jacobs fled north to escape the sexual pursuits of her owner. Her brother, John S. Jacobs, also escaped and became part of the anti-slavery movement in Rochester. It was later suggested to Harriet, who was well educated, that she should write her life story. The resulting book, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, became popular among abolitionists, as it was among the first to address the experiences of life as a female slave.

Quote:

“That little man in black there, he says women can’t have as much rights as men, because Christ wasn’t a woman. Where did Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with him. If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to get it right side up again! And now they are asking to do it, the men better let them.”

Sojourner Truth

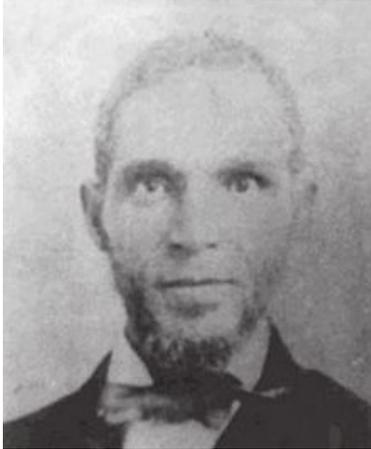


I Sell the Shadow to Support the Substance.
SOJOURNER TRUTH.

Unknown Photographer, Sojourner Truth, 1864.
Carte de visite (seated).
Source: Gladstone Collection, Prints and Photographs Division,
Library of Congress. Reproduction Number: LC-USZC4-6165 (3-11b)

1850

The Compromise of 1850 includes Fugitive Slave Law required the United States government to assist slaveholders capture fugitive slaves. Under this harsh new law African Americans had no right to a jury trial or to testify in their own defense; federal commissioners who determined the fate of captured individuals were paid \$10 if they decided in favor of the slaveholder and only \$5 if they decided in favor of the fugitive.



Reverend William P. Newman

Many fugitives fled to Canada fearing re-enslavement under the law. For example, from 1848 to 1850, William P. Newman, who had escaped enslavement in Virginia was pastor of Union Baptist Church. He and his family fled to Canada with passage of the Fugitive Slave Law. He returned to Cincinnati and the pastorate from 1864 until his death from cholera in 1866.

In 1856, Robert and Margaret Garner, their four children, and Robert's parents attempted to escape slavery in Boone County, Kentucky, just 17 miles from Cincinnati. They crossed the frozen Ohio river with nine other slaves. However, a fugitive slave patrol located the family hiding in the Mill Creek area of Cincinnati. Margaret killed her two-year-old daughter with a knife, rather than allow her to be returned to slavery. The other nine slaves escaped.

1856

By 1850, runaway slaves numbered in the thousands, affecting the stability and viability of slavery in many southern areas. For the slave, the success of running away often depended on the decision to keep numbers low, thereby increasing the likelihood of avoiding detection. For this reason, many attempts were solitary endeavors. This meant leaving behind family and friends, adding to the sense of loss, guilt, and fear. To be caught meant immediate punishment, and harsher conditions. Dogs were often allowed to attack and savage cornered runaways. Yet one southern official estimated that by 1855, more than 60,000 slaves had been lost through escape to the north.

Margaret Garner's story was the inspiration for the novel Beloved by Ohio native, Toni Morrison.

"In this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they'd just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face 'cause they don't love that either. You got to love it, you! And no, they ain't in love with your mouth. Yonder, out there, they will see it broken and break it again. What you say out of it they will not heed. What you scream from it they do not hear. What you put into it to nourish your body they will snatch away and give you leavins instead. No, they don't love your mouth. You got to love it. This is flesh I'm talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved. Feet that need to rest and to dance; backs that need support; shoulders that need arms, strong arms I'm telling you. And O my people, out yonder, hear me, they do not love your neck unnoosed and straight. So love your neck; put a hand on it, grace it, stroke it and hold it up. and all your inside parts that they'd just as soon slop for hogs, you got to love them. The dark, dark liver--love it, love it and the beat and beating heart, love that too. More than eyes or feet. More than lungs that have yet to draw free air. More than your life-holding womb and your life-giving private parts, hear me now, love your heart. For this is the prize."

Personal Reflection: Reflect on a time when you took uncharacteristic, heroic, or extreme action. What was the catalyst? How do you feel about the outcome?

Group Discussion: Are there universal right/wrongs, or are all things relative?

Pedagogical Reflection: How do teachers partner with local advocacy groups and other organizations to engage in activities with students that encourage ethical growth and social justice?

Musical Reflection: "Trouble of the World," Mahalia Jackson
<https://youtu.be/qNoxoUX2vqQ>

