

STUDENT VIDEOCONFERENCE GUIDE

26 March 2010

The United Nations Department of Public Information

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For Teachers

Things to Discuss before the Student Videoconference for the International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

*This resource has been developed as an aid for teachers to use to prepare their students for the upcoming International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade Video Conference. *Please note that slides have been marked as to whether they are "For Teachers" or to be used as Student Handouts.*

Why is prior preparation before the conference so important?

It gives students the opportunity to build a basic understanding of the topic they will be learning about, to think about how it relates to other content areas and how it connects to their own lives and circumstances. This will have a significant impact on students' ability to react to and contribute to a dialogue between peers from different countries around the world that will take place during the event.

Before participating in the global student videoconference, students should know about the origins of International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, why we observe it and what will be discussed during the videoconference this year (see slide on conference theme).

In addition, they should know the basic facts about the TST (e.g., what countries were involved, how many people were enslaved and what impact it has had on the social, cultural and economic development of the Americas, the Caribbean and Europe).

In preparation for the theme, *Expressing Freedom Through Culture*, students should reflect broadly on the role culture plays in our lives, the importance of cultural diversity, and why the right to participate in the cultural life of a community is a basic human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Then they should apply this knowledge to the study of slavery's impact on the culture of those who were enslaved, how those that were enslaved managed to preserve their African culture in spite of the hardships they faced, and how the slaves contributed to the development of the societies which enslaved them.

For Teachers

Things to Discuss before the Student Videoconference for the International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

- **Discuss the importance of observing the International Day of Remembrance** (see student handout 1).
 - How do those goals relate to what's happening in class?
 - This will help answer the age-old student question: "Why do we have to do this?"
 - Reviewing learning objectives with students helps them develop a vested interest in learning.
- **Combine whole class and small group discussions.**
 - The study guide contains questions for students to research, think about and discuss. Suggestions for discussion starters are included in the notes for teachers as well. You can use these ideas to help you lead whole class discussions or as activities for students to do in small groups.
- **Use of sources for background material.**

Resources are included at the end of the study guide. Whenever possible, work with primary documents. Most of the resources mentioned in this guide focus on learning about the slave trade. Some focus more generally the issue of racism and prejudice.

For Teachers

Pedagogical Tips

- Teaching about the Transatlantic Slave Trade should acknowledge the pain of the African slaves but celebrate the joys and achievements of Africans and people of African descent at the same time.
- The theme this year, *Expressing Our Freedom Through Culture*, encourages the study of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in a variety of disciplines. Using a multidisciplinary approach can help students to:
 - Make greater connections among several subjects
 - Have a greater variety of learning experiences
 - Make connections to their own cultural expressions
- Dramatic readings or presentations that combine music and theatre are often powerful tools to learn about historical events. Consider including the reading by one or more students of slave narratives as another alternative among the various types of presentations that can be used to illustrate this year's theme.

For Teachers

About the Student Videoconference at UN Headquarters in New York

- For the third year, high school students assembled at United Nations Headquarters in New York will have the opportunity to speak with fellow students in Africa, Europe and the Caribbean who have been studying the Transatlantic Slave Trade.
- These transcontinental discussions focus on the linkages students have uncovered between their local, regional or national communities and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Students will also address how the topics of slavery and its legacy are approached in their classroom work
- The entire videoconference will be web-cast. Students around the world can join in the event 'live' by sending comments and questions to the UN Cyberschoolbus website (www.cyberschoolbus.un.org).

For Teachers

Theme for the 2010 International Day of Remembrance: “Expressing Our Freedom Through Culture”

- The theme of this year’s International Day of Remembrance focuses on the expression of freedom through culture. Students should begin their preparation by exploring their understanding of culture -- what it is, how it is formed, why it is important to the development of each person and why participation in the cultural life of a community is considered a basic right.
- Here are some questions you can use as discussion starters on this topic:
 - What are the basic elements that define one’s culture?
 - How does our culture influence our actions?
 - What aspects of our culture are visible and which aspects are invisible? Why is it important to consider both aspects of culture?
 - How do people acquire their culture?
 - Why is the expression of our culture a fundamental part of our identity? Ask students to describe those aspects of their culture that they consider to be crucial to their identity.
- Have students read Article 27 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
 - Lead a discussion on why participation in the cultural life of a community is a fundamental human right.
- Discuss the following questions with your students:
 - How is the basic human right to participate in the cultural life of a community linked to the observance of the International Day of Remembrance?
 - How would it feel if you were prohibited from expressing your cultural beliefs and traditions?
 - The preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:
 - "Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed the highest aspiration of the common people,...."

Discuss the link between freedom and human rights and how it relates to this year’s theme.

Student Handout 1

What is the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade?

- On 8 February 2008, the United Nations General Assembly designated 25 March as an International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.
- The purpose of this day is to:
 - Honour the memory of those who died as a result of slavery, the horrors of the Middle Passage and in the struggles for freedom from enslavement.
 - Teach future generations about “the causes, consequences and lessons of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.
 - Communicate the dangers of racism and prejudice.
- Participating in events on this day contributes:
 - To eliminating the world-wide ‘knowledge gap’ about the Transatlantic Slave Trade.
 - Draws attention to the modern-day consequences of the slave trade.
- Activity:
 - Read and discuss the General Assembly Resolution that established the day of remembrance, link - http://www.un.org/en/slavery/pdf/RES62_122.pdf

Student Handout 2

“Lest We Forget – The Triumph Over Slavery”

“The story of the end of the slave trade deserves to be told here at the United Nations. Indeed, the defense of human rights is at the heart of this organization’s global mission. Our Charter proclaims equal rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that ‘no one shall be held in slavery or servitude.’”

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Remarks at the opening “Lest We Forget – The Triumph Over Slavery”

United Nations Headquarters, New York, 1 March 2007.

Student Handout 3

Why does the United Nations encourage the observance of the International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade?

- In the 60 years since the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations remains dedicated to the increase of dignity and justice for all through knowledge and awareness of human rights.
- Slavery and the slave trade are among the worst violations of human rights in the history of humanity. The Transatlantic Slave Trade was unique within the entire history of slavery due to its duration (approximately 500 years), its scale (more than 17 million people) and the body of laws that sheltered the practice.
- The Transatlantic Slave Trade is a major element of global history, yet little is known about it and the lasting consequences it has had on societies throughout the world. It is therefore important to break the silence about the enslavement of Africans in order to examine how it has shaped our society today. It is also important to use this as an opportunity to acknowledge the contribution that slaves and their descendants have made to the societies that enslaved them. Examining the lives of enslaved Africans, in the Americas and the Caribbean illustrates the capacity of human beings to overcome diversity as well as the many ways in which human beings confront and transcend oppression. The observance of this International Day of Remembrance aims to highlight the dangers of racism and prejudice.

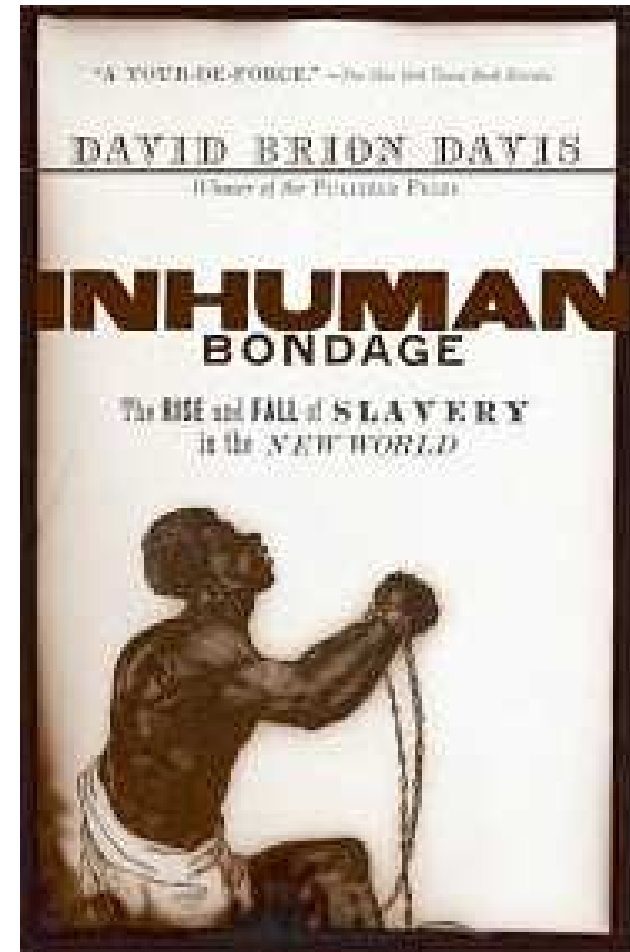
Student Handout 4

Learning about the Transatlantic Slave Trade: Linking it to where you live

Dr. David Brion Davis, Pulitzer-prize winning scholar and Yale historian wrote:

‘The peoples of West Africa, as well as those of **every** maritime nation in Western Europe and **every** colony in the New World, played a part in the creation of the...first system of multinational production...a system powered by slave labor...’

- The exact number of people taken from Africa from 16th to the 19th Century and shipped across the notorious “Middle Passage” of the Atlantic - mainly to colonies in North America, South America, and the West Indies - is still hotly debated but estimates range up to as many as 28 million. What is not in dispute is the extent of the cruelty that many African men, women and children endured in chains, and the fact that many died before they could reach their destination. Those who made it were sold for huge profit into a life of slavery, enduring the worst indignities at the hands of slave masters.
- Learn more about the slave trade by exploring the “Lest We Forget: Triumph over Slavery” website (<http://digital.nypl.org/lwf/english/site/flash.html>).



Student Handout 5

Learning about the Transatlantic Slave Trade: Linking it to where you live

- **Get a map of the world.** Locate your hometown. Then identify the continents of Europe and Africa. Find the Caribbean. Mark all of the countries that were involved in some way in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. How far are these places from your hometown?
- **Read background information.** *If you live in a country that sold slaves:* What were the local attitudes and legal policies of your community regarding the enslavement of people of African descent? What do the documents in your local archives, churches, libraries, and courts reveal about slavery in our area? What part did your country play in supporting the Transatlantic Slave Trade?
- *If you live in country that lost people to the slave trade:* What do the documents in your local archives reveal about what happened? What part did people in your country play in supporting or resisting the Transatlantic Slave Trade?

Student Handout 6

The Impact of Slavery On African Culture

- From the seventeenth century on, millions of Africans were enslaved to exploit African labour for the development of colonial economies in the Americas. For the victims of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, as well as their future generations, the implications of these actions on African culture and heritage are vast. It is impossible to argue that the capture, distribution and containment of immense numbers of slaves did not have a major effect upon the development and preservation of African culture.
- The people who enslaved Africans forced them to engage in cultural practices when they thought it would benefit them and prohibited it when they thought the Africans were using it to encourage resistance to slavery. Discuss the following two questions:
- Why did slave captains bring slaves up from the hold of the ship and force them to dance? What was the unintended result of this practice?
- Why did the slave “masters” in the United States outlaw the use of drums which was an important part of the slaves’ culture? How did slaves get around these restrictions to keep their culture alive?
- Africans from a wide range of cultures were enslaved. The slave trade brought many of these cultures face-to-face for the first time. Discuss the following question:
- To what extent did the slave trade result in the transformation of African heritages that resulted in new cultural expressions and new cultural identities?
- Learn about impact of slavery on African culture on the “Lest We Forget: Triumph over Slavery” website (<http://digital.nypl.org/lwf/english/site/flash.html>).

Student Handout 7

The Impact of African Culture on the Societies that Enslaved Africans

- Often missing in study of the Transatlantic Slave Trade is the enormous contribution that enslaved made to societies that held them in bondage.
- Consider the following quote:
“...One of the great challenges of our time must now surely be to ensure that our rich cultural diversity makes us more secure – not less. For peace to endure, individuals, groups and nations must come to respect and understand each other...”
UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, November 12, 2008.
- Discuss the following question:
 - What impact did the culture of the African slaves who were brought to the Americas have on the slaveholding societies in which they lived?
 - What new forms of culture have evolved as a result (e.g., religious practices, music, etc.)?
 - What are some examples from your own country that highlight the contribution that slaves or their descendants made to enrich the cultural diversity of the society in which you live?
 - Is this contribution adequately acknowledged? Do school textbooks and curricula highlight these contributions? Who are the people that are remembered with monuments in your town? Are there monuments to anyone of African descent in your community? Are there any locations - ‘sites of memory’- connected to stories of citizens of African descent in your town?

Student Handout 8

Thinking about Racism and Prejudice

- One of the reasons for observing the International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is to communicate the dangers of racism and prejudice. In preparation for the videoconference discuss the following questions with others in your class:
 - What role did racism and prejudice play in the Transatlantic Slave Trade?
 - What impact did it have on the slaves after they were emancipated and how does its legacy continue to affect the lives of their descendants?
 - Have you ever been a victim of racism or prejudice?
 - If so, how did it impact you? How did you respond?
 - What is being done to combat it in your community?
 - What do you think needs to be done to address this issue?

26 March Programme

- 9 am Students in New York arrive at UN Headquarters
- 9:30 am Link to all videoconference sites
- Students in the United Kingdom, the United States, Ghana, The Gambia, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Cuba will make presentations on this year's theme: Expressing Our Freedom Through Culture. Students traveling along the slave trade route aboard a replica of the Amistad will be participating from the deck of the ship.
- 12 pm Event concludes

During the Videoconference:

- **Ask questions.** This is the chance you've been waiting for! Students at each site will be making short presentations on this year's theme. After each presentation, you will be given an opportunity to ask questions or make comments on what has been said. Share some of the things you've learned about or talked about while preparing for this event.
- **Listen carefully.** This is an opportunity to practice being a thoughtful student, a good discussant and a 'world citizen'. Hear what's being said.
- **Look for similarities in the other students.** You will have at least two things in common with the students at other videoconference sites - You are all intermediate or secondary school students and you are all human beings! Find the similarities in their stories to the stories you know about slavery and its legacy in your national community.

For Teachers

During the Videoconference

- **Help your students to focus on the topic.**
Make a list with your students (prior to the 26 March event) of questions they might like to ask during the videoconference.
- **Take notes on what's being said.** During the conference make a note of statements that you think would be good to discuss further when you return to school.

After the Videoconference:

- After you return to school following the 26 March event spend some time answering the following questions:
 - What did you learn?
 - What topics related to slavery and its legacy do you think should be discussed further?
 - What can you do to help combat racism and prejudice?

For Teachers

After the Videoconference:

- After you return to school following the 26 March event spend some time answering the following questions:
 - What did you learn?
 - Lead a class discussion on the questions in "*Student Handout 10*".
 - What guidelines can you suggest that will help students to talk more openly in class about topics related to slavery, racism, stereotyping, etc?

RESOURCES

Use these resources to learn more about the Transatlantic Slave Trade in preparation for the videoconference.

WEBSITES:

- [Lest We Forget: The Triumph Over Slavery](#) - It provides a history of the Transatlantic Slave Trade including coverage of the origins of the slave trade, the life of the slaves, the struggle for emancipation and black slave culture.
- [Slave Routes Project](#) – This site was initiated to contribute to a better understanding of the causes, forms of operation, issues and consequences of slavery in the world (Africa, Europe, the Americas, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, Middle East and Asia). It includes information on the Slave Route, Transatlantic Slave Trade, Resistance to and the abolition of slavery, modern forms of slavery as well as other useful educational information.
- [Amistad Case](#) – This site links to primary documents related to the famous Amistad case which was sent to the U.S. Supreme Court to decide the fate of a slave ship that was seized by a U.S. warship off the coast of Long Island after the African slaves seized the ship on its way to a Caribbean plantation. The slaves were accused of mutiny and murder in a case that was finally decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. Students voyaging along the slave trade route on a replica of the Amistad will be participating in the videoconference this year.
- [The Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition](#) – A part of the Yale Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies, this site is dedicated to the investigation and dissemination of knowledge concerning all aspects of chattel slavery and its abolition.
- [Traces Of The Trade, A Story from the Deep North](#) – This website was created following the release of the film “Traces Of The Trade, A Story from the Deep North” by Katrina Browne (see below ‘film’ synopsis). It includes information on the background of the Slave Trade as well as useful links to educational and advocacy links.
- [United Nations Cyberschoolbus](#) – This educational site managed by the United Nations for schools around the world offers a number of practical lesson plans and activity ideas that can be used to explore the issue of racism and prejudice. One of these explores [racial discrimination](#) and another examines [ethnic discrimination](#).

RESOURCES

Use these resources to learn more about the Transatlantic Slave Trade in preparation for as well as following the Videoconference.

BOOKS:

- Inhuman Bondage (David Brion Davis)
- Slavery and Public History (James O. Horton)
- Africans In America (Website companion book)

FILMS:

- Traces Of The Trade, A Story from the Deep North
In the feature documentary **Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North**, filmmaker Katrina Browne discovers that her New England ancestors were the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history. She and nine cousins retrace the Triangle Trade and gain a powerful new perspective on the black/white divide.

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