

Enslaved Africans to the Western Hemisphere

1450–1900

An estimated eleven million Africans were brought to the Western Hemisphere as slaves during nearly five hundred years of European colonialism. The chart below traces the growth of the slave trade over these years.

Period	Number of people	Percentage of total number of slaves who traveled to the Western Hemisphere
1450–1600	367,000	3.1%
1601–1700	1,868,000	16%
1701–1800	6,133,000	52.4%
1801–1900	3,330,000	28.5%
Total	11,698,000	100%

Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Volume of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Synthesis," *Journal of African History* 23, no. 4 (1982): 473–501.

PRACTICING Historical Thinking

Identify: What was the greatest period of growth in the number of slaves who traveled to the Western Hemisphere between 1450 and 1900?

Analyze: What economic and political factors could have accounted for this growth?

Evaluate: How might the expansion of the slave economy in colonial North America have influenced colonies like Virginia and Barbados?

1739

The Stono Rebellion of 1739, which took place in the British colony of South Carolina, was led by enslaved Africans who were captured in the Kongo region of West Africa and forcibly transported to the Western Hemisphere. This excerpt was taken from a recording made in 1937 as part of the Works Progress Administration's Federal Writers' Project. The speaker is George Cato, great-great-grandson of the Stono Rebellion leader, Cato.

How it all start? Dat what I ask but nobody ever tell me how 100 slaves between de Combahee and Edisto rivers come to meet in de woods not far from de Stono River on September 9, 1739. And how they elect a leader, my kinsman, Cato, and late dat day march to Stono town, break in a warehouse, kill two white men in charge, and take all de guns and ammunition they wants. But they do it. Wid dis start, they turn south and march on.

They work fast, coverin' 15 miles, passin' many fine plantations, and in every single case, stop, and break in de house and kill men, women, and children. Then they take what they want, 'cludin' arms, clothes, liquor and food. Near de Combahee swamp, Lieutenant Governor Bull, drivin' from Beaufort to Charleston, see them and he smell a rat. Befo' he was seen by de army he detour into de big woods and stay 'til de slave rebels pass.

Governor Bull and some planters, between de Combahee and Edisto [rivers], ride fast and spread de alarm and it wasn't long 'til de militiamen was on de trail in pursuit of de slave army. When found, many of de slaves was singin' and dancin' and Cap. Cato and some of de other leaders was cussin' at them sumpin awful. From dat day to dis, no Cato has tasted whiskey, 'less he go 'gainst his daddy's warnin'. Dis war last less than two days but it sho' was pow'ful hot while it last.

I reckons it was hot, 'cause in less than two days, 21 white men, women, and chillun, and 44 Negroes, was slain. My granddaddy say dat in de woods and at Stono, where de war start, dere was more than 100 Negroes in line. When de militia come in sight of them at Combahee swamp, de drinkin' dancin' Negroes scatter in de brush and only 44 stand deir ground.

Commander Cato speak for de crowd. He say: "We don't lak slavery. We start to jine de Spanish in Florida. We surrender but we not whipped yet and we 'is not converted." De other 43 say: "Amen." They was taken, unarmed, and hanged by de militia. Long befo' dis uprisin', de Cato slave wrote passes for slaves and do all he can to send them to freedom. He die but he die for doin' de right, as he see it.

Mark M. Smith, *Stono: Documenting and Interpreting a Southern Slave Revolt* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 56.

PRACTICING Historical Thinking

Identify: Name three actions that the Stono rebels undertook as part of their rebellion. What actions of the slaves led Cato to become angry with the people he led? How might their actions have weakened their ability to be successful against the colonists?

Analyze: Based on these three actions, determine the likely causes and goals of the rebellion.

Evaluate: In what ways did the Stono rebels take actions that negated their status as slaves and promoted their self-conception as free people? What might be the limitations of an oral or recorded history?

DOCUMENT 2.16

South Carolina Slave Code

1740

The colonial legislature of South Carolina instituted these laws in the aftermath of the Stono Rebellion. Note that the term *mulatto* referred to a person of European and African descent and that *mustizo* was used to describe a person of Indian and African descent.

And be it enacted, . . . That all negroes and Indians, (free Indians in amity with this government, and negroes, mulattoes and mustizoes, who are now free, excepted), mulattoes or mustizoes who now are, or shall hereafter be, in this Province, and all their issue and offspring, born or to be born, shall be, and they are hereby declared to be, and remain forever hereafter, absolute slaves, and shall follow the condition of the mother, and shall be deemed, held, taken, reputed and adjudged in law, to be chattels personal, in the hands of their owners and possessors, and their executors, administrators and assigns, to all intents, constructions and purposes whatsoever. . . .

. . . Be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That no person whatsoever shall permit or suffer any slave under his or their care or management, and who lives or is employed in Charlestown, or any other town in this Province, to go out of the limits of the said town, or any such slave who lives in the country, to go out of the plantation to which such slave belongs, or in which plantation such slave is usually employed, without a letter . . . which . . . shall be signed by the master or other person having the care or charge of such slave, or by some other [person] by his or their order, directions and consent; and every slave who shall be found out of Charlestown, or any other town, (if such slave lives or is usually employed there,) or out of the plantation to which such slave belongs, or in which [such] slave is usually employed, if such slave lives in this country, without such letter . . . , or without a white person in his company, shall be punished with whipping on the bare back, not exceeding twenty lashes. . . .

... And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, That if any slave who shall be out of the house or plantation where such slave shall live, or shall be usually employed, or without some white person in company with such slave, shall refuse to submit to or undergo the examination of any white person, it shall be lawful for any such white person to pursue, apprehend, and moderately correct such slave; and if any such slave shall assault and strike such white person, such slave may be lawfully killed.

The Statutes at Large of South Carolina, vol. 7, Containing the Acts Relating to Charleston, Courts, Slaves, and Rivers, ed. Thomas Cooper and David James McCord (Columbia, SC: A. S. Johnson, 1840), 397–399.

PRACTICING Historical Thinking

Identify: What parts of this statute strengthen social controls over enslaved Africans?

Analyze: How does this document seek to regulate the ambiguities of racial differences in the colony?

Evaluate: Compare this document to the Virginia slave laws excerpted in Document 2.13. What do the similarities and differences between them tell us about slave-based economies of Virginia and South Carolina?

APPLYING AP HISTORICAL THINKING SKILL

REVIEW | Historical Causation

Using your knowledge of the time period and relevant documents from this chapter and Chapter 1, in what ways did European colonialism give rise to the racial caste system in the colonies?

NEW SKILL | Contextualization

When historians practice **contextualization**, they consider the ways in which particular historical events connect to broader regional or global processes or changes. For example, if your friend is anxious about applying for college one weekend, her anxiety fits into the broader context of a high school career that is coming to an end and a new phase of her life that is relatively unknown.

Contextualization helps historians analyze a particular event by giving them a broader view of forces that frame an event. In Document 2.9, the author fears that Catholic priests encourage natives to attack the English population. This fear fits within the broader context of the religious wars between Protestant and Catholic nations in Europe during the seventeenth century. Likewise, a historian might connect an event like Opechankanough's war on Jamestown in 1622 (Docs. 2.5 and 2.6) to the growing English population in the Virginia colony and the relative success of tobacco as a cash crop (Doc. 2.2) and then contextualize Opechankanough's attacks within these broader processes of European peopling of North America.