III
Re-exportation: The Illegal Slave Trade From Cuba to the United States, 1808-1862

A. African Slavery

We trace slavery from its roots in African kingdoms to the “indissoluble link” it formed between the profits that financed modern capitalism not only in the United States but also in England and much of Europe. African leaders were integral to the slave trade. Without their active cooperation in capturing ever more slaves from the interior, slavery could not have thrived as it did. “The sad truth is that without complex business partnerships between African elites and European traders and commercial agents, the slave trade to the New World would have been impossible, at least on the scale that it occurred.” (Gates, 2010)

Slavery existed in West Africa before civilizations did. In fact, slavery is one of the hallmarks, albeit negative, of ancient civilizations everywhere, and West Africa is no exception. Because historians and archaeologists have been slower to grant the full status of “civilization” to West African monarchies until recently, perhaps through oversight but more likely due to racism, it may be that the regular and widespread existence of slavery there was not discussed.

Since at least the beginning of civilization, the rainforest south of the Sahel produced three items that the peoples to the north of the deserts wanted; ivory, gold, slaves. Egypt, blessed by the Nile, received these items easily and in great quantities since before the time
of the Great Pyramids. Kushites acted as intermediaries. Besides, across the relatively tranquil Red Sea, they could flow to the great civilizations of the Fertile Crescent. But West Africa lacked not only the Nile, but also the navigable sea, because the Atlantic was too rough.

Consequently, the first great civilization in West Africa, Carthage, had to import these indispensable items across the desert oases by Berbers, then much more numerous than now, but still today resisting civilization. After Carthage’s destruction in 146 B.C., the greatest Numidian monarch Jugurtha dominated large parts of what Carthage formerly had, namely Tripolitania, and he brought slaves from there. After his father-in-law betrayed him and expanded Mauretania, he and his successors began to import them from there as well. Julius Caesar re-founded Carthage, which traded as before. Naturally the trade to North Africa went from Timbuktu, the highest point accessible by water, and then with great difficulty across the deserts to what became Marrakesh in Morroco and Kairouan in Tunisia. In return for these luxuries, the advanced civilizations to the north supplied salt, metalwork (even though iron was made in the rainforest, other metals such as tin, copper and bronze had to be brought in), and the third major thing supplied to the rainforest was cloth which is true the Berbers could have manufactured, but the higher civilizations had better, fancier, and prettier dyed cloth just as they had better ironwares. Sources are so sparse and still relatively unstudied that we cannot go into detail about the sufferings of those poor slaves who had to walk across the Sahara to the north. But beginning with the Arab conquest we are much better informed. Good records explain the huge profits made from Marrakesh and Kairouan. Even then, “the midpassage” across the desert might have been more horrible than the middle passage across the Atlantic.
Before the Portuguese initiated Europe into the transatlantic slave trade from the African mainland in 1444, they took Sub-Saharan Africans to offshore islands like Madeira, the Azores, and Sao Tome and Principe. Until that time, Africans controlled the slave trade. The original capture or enslavement by judicial procedure was traumatic and small wonder that hardly anyone emancipated in the U.S. wanted to return to the tropical forest where they or their ancestors were first enslaved.

Djenne-Jeno, located in current Mali in the southern Niger delta is likely one of the oldest urban areas in sub-Saharan Africa but others followed. After the 9th century, Kanem Bornu in modern-day Nigeria and other centers began to flourish. With the possible exception of Djenne-Jeno, all the centers exhibited marked social stratification including craft specialists, royal courts, and griots as historians and counselors to the rulers, with responsibility for remembering laws and customs. Construction of monumental buildings typically entailed some form of forced labor. Preparation of grains constituting the major part of their diet, including indigenous pearl millet (*Pennisetum glaucum*) and African rice (*Oryza sativa, Oryza glaberrima*), required both arduous and tedious labor, of a kind typically assigned to slaves or women of lower status in the past. Growing, harvesting and preparing cotton for spinning and weaving are equally tedious tasks, also typically delegated to slaves in many cultures past and present. Urbanization increased when the Muslims came south of the Sahara. In fact West African Muslim empires flourished in Ghana, Mali, and Songhai from the 9th century on until an army led by a Moroccan eunuch defeated them in the 16th century.

By accepting the indisputable fact of widespread slavery in West Africa, before as well as after the Muslim intrusion, researchers are free to look at the different types of
slavery and the different conditions under which it existed, as a precursor to understanding how it interlocked with the Atlantic Slave Trade to the Americas. Motivated by profits, the Americas and Africa allowed and even promoted the continuation of slavery throughout most of the nineteenth century, even as the institution waned nearly everywhere else in the world. The following summary of their differences illuminates how paradoxically each continent enabled the continuation of the trade for quite different reasons.

West African settlement stretches back more than 8000 years and its major civilizations antedate white contact. Slavery existed and still exists in those civilizations as a regular part of the complex social organization of status, class and rigid hierarchy. Strict endogamy evolved within classes. Indeed, a bizarre scholar has recently labeled Mansa Musa, an emperor of Mali in the 1300’s as the richest man of all time. According to Ibn Battuta, his train of gold-bearing camels upset the gold market in Cairo and Medina for a decade as he passed through there on his way to Mecca in 1324, handing out lavish gifts of gold. In his retinue he reputedly had 12,000 slaves carrying gold bars. Yet the multiple and complex types of slavery, despite whatever cruelties and brutal enforcements accompanied them in Sub-Saharan West Africa, the slaves there suffered less than those exported across the desert or to the new world. Even those exported to the north were not normally persecuted because of their blackness. Even among the Spanish and Portuguese in the Americas, the Catholic Church insisted on their basic humanity as well as that of the Indians, however brutalized both might have been.

Like the Turks, the Arabs north of the Sahara hardly used slaves in agriculture. Agricultural labor was done either by poor Muslims or dhimmis or the “people of the book” as they were called. Females were normally used in harems, or low-cost textile
manufacturing. The male slaves suffered varying fates. Some were castrated as eunuchs to guard the harems or administrators because they were considered less likely to embezzle since they would have no children of their own. Others became galley slaves to row the war galleys that were used as late as the Battle of Navarino. Still others were used as mercenaries, called Mamluks in Egypt until the Turkish conquest in 1519, and Janissaries in Istanbul. Islam was the most color-blind of all the great religions whereas Hindus had their caste system and the Christians had the myth of Ham.

The psychological effects of denying the slaves their humanity were detrimental also to the slaveholders as the white dominant class gradually intensified racial discrimination to justify enslavement, a tendency that spread among the Spanish and Portuguese but reached its height under the Protestant Dutch and English, both of whom took the legend as fact that Ham was turned black because he saw his father naked or even came on to him. That could be far more damaging and long-lasting than the pattern of intense physical abuse, whether direct through tortuous transportation or deliberate punishment or indirectly through overwork and neglect. The dehumanization and infantilization of Africans in North America and to a lesser extent in Hispanic America (though slavery was more lethal there) did not occur when Africans enslaved their own. West African slavery resulted from capture in war, crime, indebtedness or “misbehavior” including witchcraft, insanity or disease, which cast the miscreant into slavery or banishment from the community.

In the years after Islam took root amongst groups such as the Fulani and Mande, Muslims could capture or buy animist West Africans as slaves and educate and convert them to Islam. Instilling the faith helped to control them and prevent rebellion, even as the
enslaved could take solace in the words of the Koran as justification for their status just as the Bible did for many plantation slaves in the antebellum south.

Slavery and servitude in pre-colonial West Africa contrasted greatly with the “Peculiar Institution” of the American South in that the slave's social status in Africa could drastically change in his or her lifetime, or the lifetime of their offspring. Islam most emphatically accepted the brotherhood of all believers and devotion could certainly help manumission. A handful of free blacks in the U.S. owned slaves themselves, but very few did where cotton was King.

Regarded as inferior because of their skin color, this rationale for slavery was fairly commonplace even before English colonists introduced Africans in Virginia. Thus even those who were manumitted were never perceived as social equals by whites. Denying full personhood or citizenship because of blackness was less of an issue among Roman Catholic Latins, than with Anglophonic and Dutch Protestants.

The rapid expansion of the sugar and cotton trades along with the rapid industrialization that accompanied them with the improvement of the steam engine, as elaborated with such forceful Marxist dialectics by Eric Williams, probably had as much to do with the change in perception that deemed Africans and others with black skin as less than human. This justified their permanent subordination, enabling the expanded forms of capitalism that followed on the heels of cotton and industry. W.E.B Du Bois, for all his brilliance, refused to accept that African slaves would have preferred to live anywhere else but their native land. As the number of freed slaves who repatriated to Africa after the Civil War attests, blacks were willing to endure endemic racism and an uphill battle for
individual rights, rather than return from whence they or their parents came. The following illustrates the paradox:

It became easy to say and easier to prove that these black men were not men in the sense that white men were, and could never be, in the same sense, free. Their slavery was a matter of both race and social condition, but the condition was limited and determined by race. They were congenital wards and children, to be well-treated and cared for, but far happier and safer here than in their own land. As the Richmond, Virginia, Examiner put it in 1854: *Let us not bother our brains about what Providence intends to do with our Negroes in the distant future, but glory in and profit to the utmost by what He has done for them in transplanting them here, and setting them to work on our plantations... True philanthropy to the Negro, begins, like charity, at home; and if Southern men would act as if the canopy of heaven were inscribed with a covenant, in letters of fire, that the Negro is here, and here forever; is our property, and ours forever; ... they would accomplish more good for the race in 5 years than they boast the institution itself to have accomplished in 7 centuries.* (Dubois, 1935)

In the minds of many, the biblical condemnation of Ham was more important than the genetic one. The view of racial inferiority of darker races was upheld and even described in detail by some popular social scientists like Samuel Morton and Josiah Nott, preceding social Darwinism. This farther justified slavery because it was a means of civilizing an inferior race. It is important to understand this conceptual bias, that allowed so many Americans, Yankees as well as Southerners, to disregard the law, because it would have been impossible to ignore the arrival of smuggled after slaves 1808; they would have arrived unable to speak English and unfamiliar with the American pidgins or Creolization of West African languages with English that existed in the United States. Recently arrived slaves might have spoken a Portuguese creole if they had spent time on Sao Tome or Principe, a Portuguese colony and slave trading port until late in the nineteenth century. They might have spoken a few words of Spanish or a Spanish creole if they had spent time in Cuba or Puerto Rico before arriving, but English would be a new language. Their
masters, their masters’ visitors, and anyone who spent time with them could not have missed their lack of familiarity with American English, and thus it has to be posited that there was general acceptance in the South (the Deep South at least) of an illegal slave trade bringing bozales to the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century.

In recent years, social scientists equipped with more information about genetics and the complete sequencing of the human genome have demonstrated that in fact race is a social rather than a biological reality, and that the superficial phenotypical differences assigned to different social “races” in fact represent less variation than some more important clines such as lactose tolerance and the sickle cell anemia/malaria continuum, both developments of the last seven-to-ten thousand years due to bio-cultural evolution. These last two traits are among a growing number that show that there is more genetic variability within identified social “races” than between them. Humans in fact show remarkably limited genetic variability as a species, due possibly to bottleneck events in our evolution some 70,000 years ago. Nevertheless, Americans in the nineteenth century knew none of this, and acted according to previous notions of racial difference and white superiority, thus enabling at least some to turn a blind eye to continuing illegal importation of slaves, while others actively participated in the trade itself.

The multiple types of slavery and reasons for it in West Africa provided a continuing source of slaves to kingdoms there even during the 19th century. After 1700 more slaves were marching south to the tropical ports to be shipped across the Atlantic than were going north across the Sahara. The Portuguese had brought guns and other incentives to persuade and organize the coastal animists and equip them for traveling further inland to capture and enslave others. Soon the Dutch controlled the trade, and then the English. The
numerous powerful rulers of these new Southern trading states, exporting ivory as well as gold but mainly slaves, had no particular reason or law to end slavery because their cultures did not regard the slaves within their boundaries as less than fully human. They were recognized as fully human, though often ethnically different. When the Europeans and Anglo-Americans arrived on the coast seeking to buy slaves increasingly more than ivory and gold, powerful rulers and traders exploiting the interior were glad to trade their slaves for commodities.

Seeing West African slavery in this light enables us to objectively examine the historical conditions and types of slavery still in existence in Africa during the nineteenth century that would have facilitated the continuation of the slave trade to the Americas, and specifically to the United States. It mattered little to African traders which country finally received the slaves they traded; only the value of the items they received in return was important. African rulers and traders could not have known that the exportation of so many human beings was sustaining an exploitative situation in a country where their very humanity was denied, as indeed it had been in Brazil where they were even more ruthlessly exterminated.

A brief review of the history of West African cultures on the Niger River that were involved in the slave trade lends insight into how so many slaves were shipped across the Atlantic. Flowing from the highlands of Futa Jalon in modern Guinea, the Niger descends through woodlands and then into the savanna, crossing into the drier Sahel region as it moves farther north. It flows on through grasslands dotted with thorny Acacia albida trees and studded with the baobab, the two ancestor trees of the Mande people. Acacia albida provided nitrogen through its roots for the millet crops, and fodder for animals, and
baobab provided the highest vegetal source of calcium in Africa through its leaves, used daily in sauces for the millet, and critical for health because most of the Mande population was and remains lactose intolerant, and thus cannot get calcium from dairy sources. Women raising the large numbers of children necessary for labor in millet farming, and the source of the population growth for these large empires, that later provided so many slaves to the Atlantic slave trade, relied on the calcium in the baobab leaf sauce to keep them healthy through an average of 8 to 10 pregnancies.

Once in the Sahel, the fast stream becomes a broad flat river, a source of fish for the Bozo-Somono and the Mande with whom they traded, and of water for flooded rice, irrigation for gardens, and drinking water for all the people along its course, finally making a huge southeastward turn, “the bend in the river”, near the city of Gao in Mali, and descending into modern Nigeria, all the way to the braided streams that make up the Niger delta. The river is swift, swollen with the rains during the rainy season from June to early September, too strong for most swimmers, and rife with crocodiles and hippos. But in the dry season, it dwindles to a few channels that can be waded in many places while still providing a transportation corridor for its entire length. The Niger has always been a trade route, and early on slaves became one of the principle trade items. Like the vast rivers of all ancient civilizations, the Nile, the Tigris and Euphrates, the Indus, and the Amazon, the Niger helped feed and found rich and complex civilizations.

Four thousand years ago, populations across West Africa swelled because of the spread of agriculture. Saharan nomads who moved south to escape the worsening desertification interacted with the Niger-Congo speaking peoples. Soil fertility, water supply and distribution of diseases such as river blindness (onchercerciasis), sleeping
sickness (trypanosomiasis), and malaria, affected settlement locations, but farmers spread throughout, developing population centers “where many of the languages within the Atlantic, Mande, Gur, Kwa, Benue-Congo and Adamawa-Ubangi branches of Niger-Congo originated,” (Newman, 1995). Each depended on symbiotic trade relations between the different ethnic groups, the Mande farmers, the Fulani pastoralists, the Bozo-Somono fishermen, and the Tuaregs bringing salt from the desert, as well as others bringing goods they produced for trade to the marketplace.

Iron-making technologies spread within populations of different ethnic groups, with smiths eventually identified as a separate caste among the Mande and other groups, who passed on their knowledge from one generation to the next, within their families. Likewise, the poets in these societies without writing became the repositories of laws, history, folk stories, and songs, especially songs in praise of kings, chiefs, and noble families.

Among the Mande, as among the Tuareg from the north, and other groups, society by the early middle ages was stratified into nobles and warriors (and kings, who come from this class originally but have their own social strata), artisans, including smiths, potters, and oral poets, who were in a caste apart and did not marry outside the caste, and lower class farmers, as well as slaves. Mande people such as the Bambara called the slaves jon or wološo, the latter meaning, “one who is born to the house”. As late as the 1980’s, vestiges of slavery still existed in the heartland of the Mande country in Mali. Jon followed their masters home carrying goods on their heads. A slave identified as a wološo was done in hushed tones as most Malians recognized that slavery was no longer accepted by the general public.
Farther north along the Niger, in the modern-day region of Gao (containing the city of the same name), *bella* accompanying their Tuareg masters to market can still be seen acting as porters. Unlike among the Mande where slaves were not necessarily physically noticeably different from their masters, the Tuareg are Berbers but now Arabic-speaking and the *bella* are black Africans of an ethnic group from farther to the south. But the Tuareg have a wide range of skin colors and features and do not seem concerned with physical difference as much as with occupational difference; they despised farming in the past, and the *bella* were farmers and could do the agricultural tasks of raising grains, roots and other vegetables and fruits for the Tuareg. The Tuareg believed farming was demeaning and remained nomadic pastoralists through most of history.

Iron appeared between 700 and 400 BC with the best documentations at Taruga in central Nigeria. “The homeland of the Benue-Congo languages has been traced to near the confluence of the Benue and Niger rivers” (Newman, 1995). It appears that Mande blacksmiths may have started as slaves, and only later they became a caste in their own right, perhaps because of their specialized knowledge.

Social stratification and population growth are also evident at Dhar Tichett in Mauritania and Djenne-jeno in Mali. In Djenne-jeno, first settled about 250 B.C. when the Carthaginians were fighting the Romans for control of North Africa; fishers, farmers, and herders brought their produce to trade. It became an interregional trade center with a population estimated at 27,000 and may have been one of the first, but other centers of trade developed, some which were part of a trade network that stretched north to the Mediterranean and south to the Gulf of Guinea. These trade centers became the basis of
Salt was an important item of trade, as was gold which increased in trade value as the demand in the north exceeded the supply from traditional sources. “Two other commodities also figured prominently in Ghanaian prosperity. Slaves, captured in war and procured in trade with forest dwellers, who accompanied the caravans also laden with ivory across the desert. Kola nuts, also from the forest zone, were an important item of commerce within the drier parts of Western Africa, where chewing them helped to quench thirst and stay hunger. (Newman, 1995)

The demand for ivory from sub-Saharan Africa began in the 14th century BC. It was easier to reach Egypt through the Nile, and to Asia across the Red Sea but by the 6th century BC it was carried across the Sahara to Carthage and it remained an integral part of the desert trade after that along with gold and slaves which eventually predominated.

Based around the Niger River, slavery was common in all three empires: Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. Ghana flourished from approximately 400 to 1200 AD. The Mali Empire was founded by a Malinke clan known as the Keita. During the eleventh century, the Keita adopted Islam and brought the other chiefdoms under a single kingdom centered in southern Mali in the city-state of Niani. The Mali Empire grew to cover much of Western Sudan during the period from 1250 to 1400:

Situated in an area of considerable agricultural productivity and strategically placed along the routes to the goldfields, Mali grew strong enough to overthrow the Blacksmith kingdom of Soso in the 1330’s… by the end of the fourteenth century, Mali encompassed a huge area stretching from the Lower Senegal and Upper Niger Rivers eastward to the Niger bend and northward into the Sahel… the ethnic mix included Soninke, Wolof, Tukulor, Fulbe (Fulani), Bambara, Bozo, Songhai, Berbers, and Arabs. In addition, specialist trading groups – the Wangar, Djula, Marka and Yarre, in their commercial explorations established a Malinke presence across much of Western Africa. (Newman, 1995)
The Songhai Empire broke away from Mali around 1400 AD. Its forces moved upstream to take possession near what became Timbuktu and Djenne and the lands in between. Salt was still a key commodity, but the growing demand for gold and slaves from the Islamic world, which re-exported these to the Christian states and cities of Portugal, Genoa, Venice, Naples, and Sicily “fueled an intensified trans-Saharan trade from which Songhai profited hugely”. The Songhai Empire lasted from about 1450 to 1600, and would have probably interacted through trade with the later state of Kanem in Northern Nigeria from 1400-1700, which succeeded Bornu (1000-1400), and also with the Nilosaharans near Lake Chad. “The synthesis of Chadic and Nilosaharan speakers produced the Kanuri, founders of the Kanem State... [A]n ample supply of slaves, however, existed among the less-organized groups to the west and south, and they made up the exports for purchasing horses and other northern products” (Newman, 1995). The Songhai Empire bought and sold slaves to and from the Forest States of Benin, Oyo, Dahomey and Asante, also in Ghana, which flourished from 1500-1800.

Beginning in 1591 and lasting through three decades of fighting, a Moroccan invasion began the demise of the Songhai, which fragmented into many smaller and more ethnically homogenous kingdoms and chiefdoms, while the new transatlantic trade shifted the intense trade activity towards the southern coast.

The jihads and more generalized Muslim invasions, and the spread of Islam throughout West Africa impacted the slave trade because of the Fulani (Anglicized as Fulbe) jihadists and because of Muslim beliefs about slavery. In the eighteenth century, however, Muslim scholarship and practice had declined along with declining economic fortunes in the Western Sudan, and the area was ripe for new jihads. The first notable jihad
under Fulbe leadership occurred in 1725-26 in the Futa Djallon highlands of Guinea. “The Jihad turned into a Fulbe conquest of the region . . . many who could not escape entered slavery, either directly under the Fulbe or for sale at the coast. Additional Fulbe jihads occurred during the nineteenth century and each one extended their territorial range and control” (Newman, 1995). The lengthy period of jihad gave birth to the Sokoto Empire, and another jihad, 1818 through 1827, gave rise to the State of Macina, along the Niger River from Timbuktu to Segu. The Fulbe continued their practice of selling conquered ethnic groups and non-Muslims into slavery well into the nineteenth century.

Founded in the 1600’s after the Songhai Empire’s disintegration, the Bambara state of Segu, although previously animist, had become a major supplier of slaves. “Its first ruler, Kalajan Kulubali, attracted a following of young men who ravaged the countryside . . . Bands of men would waylay caravans, or kidnap children and the occasional farmer in his field . . . so many slaves were taken in these campaigns that Segu became a major source of slaves for the European slave ships in the Senegambia basin” (Lovejoy, 2011).

A final quote from Newman illuminates the reason why slavery began in West Africa, and continued for so long:

People always seem to have been a scarce commodity, and slavery became the way some chose to obtain workers when kinship no longer sufficed. Slaves could be captured, traded for, or obtained as payment from families needing to pay off debts or seeking courtly favors. Women had special value because of their contributions to both production and reproduction. . . Commodities like salt and kola nuts were in demand throughout Africa, but the real potential for wealth derived from foreign demands for the African triumvirate of gold, ivory, and slaves . . . Trade relations created a demand for manufactured items from Europe and Asia. Only the powerful could afford them, and possession enhanced their position of authority, often to the point where autocratic institutions replaced those based on consensus. Now Africans had to pay for the new luxuries, and in many instances the only commodity of value that those in power had to offer was other human beings, sold or exchanged into slavery (Newman, 1995).
B. Sugar Slavery: From Africa to the Caribbean and the Americas

“Just as the [Cuban] sugar statistics are fraudulent, so are those of the slave trade.”
- Manuel Moreno Fraginals (1964)

Once in the custody of white slave traders the circumstances of African slaves changed dramatically. Held in fortresses, normally controlled by Europeans, slaves were inspected, branded and re-chained after their long march to the coast, arriving in worse condition before beginning the passage to the western hemisphere. According to one slave’s personal account, “when a vessel arrived to conduct us away to the ship, it was the most horrible scene; there was nothing to be heard but the rattling of chains, smacking of whips, and the groans and cries of our fellow men. Some would not stir from the ground when they were lashed and beat in the most horrible manner” (Cugano, 1787).

Henry the Navigator introduced sugarcane on Madeira, that far-flung Portuguese outpost some 200 miles off the coast of Morocco, in 1425 and by the end of the century about 80 mills produced 1,500 tons of sugar that were annually exported from there to Flanders, the Italian city-states, and to Constantinople and elsewhere in Europe. However, the islands of Sao Tome and Principe in the Gulf of Guinea hosted the first important Portuguese sugar plantations to depend on African slave labor. About 150 miles offshore, the islands of Sao Tome and Principe were situated between the Niger and Congo River deltas, the Bights of Benin and Biafra respectively, in the Gulf of Guinea. First inhabited by deportees (mostly criminals and unwanted Jews), the slave trade became an incentive for colonists on those islands. By 1450, the Vatican granted Portuguese colonists there a trading monopoly on slaves and goods with African traders on the mainland. Over a
thousand Africans were brought in during the late 1480’s to work the cane fields and mills, these being numerous small-scale oxen-driven cane-grinder affairs with a train of kettles for boiling the cane juice (guarapo); each mill called for up to thirty slaves to operate it and some sugarmasters had even more for planting, cutting cane, and hauling off crates of dried sugar and barrels of molasses to the port-bound wagon. Sao Tome’s and Principe’s plantations presaged the kind of brutal slavery that would soon spread to Brazil and the Caribbean. After plantation sizes increased, especially in Brazil, slaves in sugar were often worked to an early death, forced until they collapsed from whippings and/or beatings. Dead slaves were cheaply and easily replaced, Cato the Elder would have approved. Sao Tome and Principe also developed into way stations for rounding up Africans who were taken up the coast and sold at Elmina. About 3,000 slaves were annually sent from there to Lisbon and Seville by 1520.

Spain’s Ferdinand II had authorized slaves to be shipped to Hispaniola in 1510, but it is unknown how many of these were Africans as most were likely Moors and aboriginals from the Canary Islands. The first Africans shipped as slaves to Spain’s new colonies in the Caribbean came from Sao Tome with permission from Portugal’s King Joao III. Indeed, those that were thereafter acquired by Spain from Lisbon and Seville came via Sao Tome. Concurrently, the Spanish had begun sugar plantations on the Canary Islands and Columbus had brought cane to Hispaniola, where enslaved Arawak natives first cultivated it. Within a generation, perhaps a million or many more of these unfortunates died off in great numbers due to European diseases, fruitless wars against their occupiers, and through toil and abuse in the mines. After Ferdinand II commanded African slaves to replace the hapless Arawaks, Spaniards came to consider one African’s labor equal to that
of four natives. Besides, the Africans resisted disease, and some of them could handle horses and were familiar with farm animals. With Hispaniola’s gold mines and sugar plantations yielding profits, African slaves began to pour into the Caribbean Sea, especially after Spain’s Charles I (Holy Roman Emperor Charles V) granted the *asiento*, exclusive rights to import Africans to Spanish colonies in the New World. At first the rights were sold to Genoese merchants who contracted Portuguese traders to carry the slaves. As stipulated by the contract with the Spanish, in 1595, these Portuguese merchants brought to the Caribbean, “slaves…fresh from Africa, and none could be mulatto, mestizo, Turkish, Moorish, or of any blood other than black African” (Thomas, 1997).

The latest estimates, conservative as ever by Eltis, et al., indicate that nearly three million were brought from Africa to islands in the Caribbean between 1501 and 1867. At least half a million were brought to Barbados alone (Eltis & Richardson, 2010). The locus of sugar production moved from Portuguese Madeira and Sao Tome from the mid 15th to the mid 17th centuries, and then crossed the Atlantic to British Barbados. By 1667, there were in tiny Barbados more than 80,000 slaves working nearly 800 sugar plantations and mills. Meanwhile, the Portuguese and Dutch prospered in Brazil with their sugar estates. Tobacco cultivation preceded sugar but cane plantations generally proved to be more lucrative by the 1640’s. Slaves were brought over to do the dirty work for both endeavors as well as for mining, more so after 1698 when the Minas Gerais gold rush in Brazil began and later diamond ventures there also multiplied. The English and French came to dominate the sugar trade, their distilleries and refineries in Bristol and Nantes were the main ingests for Caribbean sugar products. The meteoric rise of sugar had less to do with tea drinkers or the pastry-munching aristocrats of England and France, and more to do with demand from the
poorest quarters of society in Western Europe and North America who desired a break from their monotonous diets.

Portugal relinquished their *asiento* privileges to the French who retained the contract from 1702 to 1712. The French had begun shipping slaves to their plantations in Saint Domingue, the western half of Hispaniola ceded to them by Spain in 1697 after the War of the League of Augsburg. The British acquired the *asiento* from the French in 1713 upon conclusion of the War of the Spanish Succession. By that time, their Jamaican sugar mills out-produced those in Barbados. In 1746, Jamaica exported about 12,000 tons of sugar but French Saint-Domingue’s sugar production already exceeded that. During that same year, the Royal Havana Company (Real Compania Mercantil de la Habana), a group of Spanish Peninsulares in Cuba, received a contract to sell 500 slaves per year. Cuba’s production in 1799 surpassed Saint-Domingue’s peak year of some 33,000 tons in 1791, by which time production there had all but halted because of the Haitian Revolution.

In 1762, the British occupation of Havana had introduced for the first time unrestricted free trade to Cuban merchants and planters, who had previously been stifled by mercantilist monopolies in all exports and imports. Slaves were then introduced in greater numbers than ever before, more than 10,000 in ten months. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 restored Spanish sovereignty, but the enlightened despot Carlos III, realizing the economic potential of his most prized Caribbean possession, decided to end the *asiento* system in Cuba, thereby abolishing existing restrictions on the slave trade.

After the Haitians successfully revolted on Saint Domingue in 1791, formerly supplier for 40% of the world’s sugar and 60% of its coffee, sugar gradually became the principal export of Cuba. The bloody insurrection on that neighboring island, only 50 miles
to the west, drove many French planters to flee from the Haitian turmoil to Cuba between 1795 to 1805, and some brought their slaves with them. In reaction to Haiti’s successful revolution, Cubans imported fewer slaves from Africa for the following nine years until 1800, when the latest sugar mill technology and tools imported from British Jamaica began to spread across Cuba, strengthening the island’s sugar industry. Cuba was well placed to take the lead from Haiti as she had four times as much land and richer soil besides. Up until then, sugar refining on the islands was still a primitive process and most of that produced in the Caribbean was muscovado sugar, largely unrefined with a little molasses extracted.

The reforms of Captain General Luis De Las Casas in the 1790’s had liberalized the slave trade to Cuba, opening it to ships of all nations, while stimulating her economy by giving tax breaks to the coffee, cotton, and indigo industries. In addition, sugar planters were protected against debt foreclosure, remitted all export duties, and all taxes on Cuban sugar entering Spain, causing them to flourish for the first time. Las Casas’ reforms also included civic improvements: roads, bridges, schools, asylums, and offices constructed by slaves supplied by a growing number of Cuban merchants called negreros.

The Cuban sugarocracy, comprised of scions from noble families who controlled the administrative council of Havana as well as the church, was surefooted in its plan to surpass its Caribbean competitors as well as their tobacco-growing neighbors in Cuba. Aware of their advantage because of the unrest in Haiti, ruthless sugar barons, scornful of tobacco and covetous of the land it was grown on, used their influence to corrupt royal officials into allowing them to arbitrarily burn whatever tobacco fields they deemed spoiled. Indeed, to the eyes of the sugar barons, most of the tobacco in the “Havana Zone” which included the breadth of that narrow fifty mile region of Cuba southward from
Havana, seemed to them quite sub-standard and so up in flames it went. The sugarocracy desired the roads to Havana that the tobacco trade had already cut, as well as they wanted the fertile lands throughout with its dense virgin forests and abundant cattle. Thus, the tobacco growers were largely displaced around Havana. These farseeing sugar entrepreneurs also engineered their industry by meticulously studying slavery on the other Antilles and obtaining the latest technological information and innovations from abroad including a steam-engine, the first in the Caribbean, from Liverpool intending to utilize it for production. By 1800, Havana, with sugar progressively becoming its most lucrative export, had become the third largest city in the Americas behind Mexico City and Lima. Incidentally, Cuban landholders broke up the system of hereditary ownership of the large estates in 1800. Thenceforth individual ownership of these estates was allowed by royal permit and the lands were subdivided and sold to eager sugar planters.

The successful yet brutal suppression by Captain General Las Casas of a number of slave uprisings on several coffee and sugar plantations across Cuba roughly coincided with the Treaty of Amiens between Napoleonic France and Great Britain signed in early 1802. These factors resulted in a short period of international stability when Cuba began to import slaves from Africa with their own ships. An 1804 Royal Decree from Spain’s King Carlos IV, stipulated that Cuba grant twelve years of free trade to Spaniards importing Bozale or "saltwater" Africans, and six years to foreigners doing so.

Sugar prices rose in 1802 from about 11¢ a pound to about 14¢ in 1805, and exports were steadily rising annually even while slave prices in Cuba dropped sharply during a period of peace, from about 435 pesos in 1801 to about 300 pesos in 1804. The large influx of slaves during 1802 and 1803, at least 23,000, up from only 2,748 in 1801, saturated the
market for slaves in the ensuing years, and slave imports dwindled even further when European hostilities resumed in 1804, the year Napoleon declared himself Emperor of the French. In desperation, he decided to abandon attempts to restore his sovereignty over Saint Domingue, thereby losing three quarters of French colonial trade. Rapidly liquidating France’s colonial empire in the western hemisphere, in 1803 Napoleon agreed to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States for $15 million through a deal with President Jefferson negotiated by the diplomat Robert R. Livingston.

Following the Louisiana Purchase, slave prices in New Orleans exceeded those in Havana from 1805 until some months after the slave trade was prohibited on January 1st, 1808. Many extra slaves were brought into Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans before the ban, nearly 46,000 recorded from 1807 to 1808. From 1800 to 1810, the slave population in Georgia nearly doubled and it quadrupled in the Mississippi Territory. Traffickers took advantage of hundreds of miles of un-policed Gulf Coast and also maneuvered within the geo-political ambiguities that arose from the Louisiana Purchase, the inconclusive boundary of New Spain in Texas, the disputed territories of East and West Florida, and the Sabine Free State.

Unquestionably, Cuba imported slaves from Africa to labor mostly in sugar production. Yet, the demand for slaves in Cuba has been over-emphasized to the point where certain facts have been lost in a pervasive counterfactual paradigm holding true to the idea that Cuba’s supposedly inexhaustible demand for African slaves to work caused the influx of ever more slaves. True enough, sugar needed slaves but that industry saw technological improvements in the cane-grinding phase of production by 1820. The opposite was true for cotton production in the U.S. where slaves used only hoes and plows.
The cotton gin greatly accelerated production by 1800, but that was the extent of technical innovation until after Emancipation. In Cuba, by the 1820’s, semi-mechanized sugar mills with steam engine-driven horizontal grinders proliferated around Havana, and the 1840’s brought fully mechanized mills utilizing French vacuum-pan technology that perfectly dried the sugar. Few Africans worked in the mechanized mills except for those who cut and carried cane. Wageworkers as well as more technically proficient Chinese “coolies” came to work the latest apparatuses in the new mills starting in the late 1840’s. Even Mayan captives from the Yucatan were shipped in to do the same hard labor as the Africans. Cuba produced more sugar than ever before in 1861, 550,000 metric tons. Curiously, imports of African slaves waned precipitously thereafter but sugar production rocketed again by 1868 to more than 700,000 metric tons. Also, between 1854 and 1868, more women, about 54% were sold than men, an interesting statistic when one considers that mainly men worked the sugar plantations and mills. Perhaps that explains the explosion of prostitution across Cuba after 1868. The dearth of slaves in Cuba was not because of an overriding demand for slaves in sugar. The labor shortage was due to demand from the cotton planters of Dixie. Most significantly, the slave trade to Cuba died out at the same time the Confederacy capitulated to the Yankees. During the antebellum period, slaves to Cuba were landed in Havana, in Matanzas Bay to the east, in Santiago on the far corner of the south coast, and on islands like Isla de la Juventud about thirty miles south of the Havana Zone, as well as other innumerable islands and cays. We will show that approximately 250,000 slaves were re-exported from Cuba across the Gulf into the United States from 1808 to 1862.

The effects of war on global trade limited the influx of slaves into Cuba and the U.S. during the first decade after the American government outlawed the practice. Napoleon’s
invasion of Spain in 1808 all but halted trade between Cuba and Spain as the British blockade of Europe countered his Continental System. Barely a thousand slaves were landed at Havana in 1809. Meanwhile, Great Britain and the United States both ineffectively prohibited the importation of slaves from Africa, a small factor in the temporary reduction of imports to Cuba in 1808 and 1809. The Peninsular War raged in Spain until 1814, but slave ships arrived with more frequency in Cuba because the British blockade of Europe tasked most of the Royal Navy. Sugar prices in Havana spiked from about 12¢ per pound in 1811 to well over 20¢ per pound by 1815, and then dropped significantly after the Napoleonic wars ended with Wellington’s victory at Waterloo.

Later during the Napoleonic Wars, the number of slaves arriving in Cuba from Africa spiked dramatically from barely 1,000 in 1809, to about 7,000 in 1810, and to almost 14,000 by 1811, many of whom were to be re-exported to the cotton belt of the United States. Thus, Cuba’s slave business prospered just a year after the international disruption in commerce occasioned by the Napoleonic wars and only three years after the prohibition of the African slave trade and even after the 1811 panic and uncertainty among Cuba’s planters and merchants was communicated to the liberal Court in Spain following its proposal to abolish slavery in all the Spanish possessions. With imports of slaves totaling well over 8,000 by 1814, Cuba took advantage of the concession struck in Spain’s 1812 Constitution of Cadiz. The new constitution insured the continuance of slavery in Cuba while also enlarging the representation of colonial interests in Spain’s royal court. However, the position of that court regarding slavery changed frequently and the vacillating priorities of the Spanish crown, their unwilling obeisance to Great Britain’s stern Parliamentarians and the might of their Royal British Navy, made it a paramount issue for
Cuban planters as the contradictions and indecision of the Spanish Court regarding slavery embroiled Cuba in a series of financial panics. Peninsulares and Creole landholders saw any action that would suppress the slave trade as disastrous to their livelihood, leading to the financial ruin of the island itself. In their minds, their profits greatly outweighed the constant threat of slave insurrection. As the traffic to Cuba continued unabated, though harried by the whims of the Spanish Court, many planters and merchants who were invested in slavery looked to the United States as a potential guarantor for their interests. Spain's submission to anti-slavery pressures from Great Britain ignited a fervor that spread in Cuba as Creole planters clamored and conspired for annexation to the United States, putting their mother country in an uncompromising and sometimes dangerous diplomatic quandary.

A steady, though diminished, influx of slaves to Cuba continued from 1812 through 1814, despite the restrictions and hazards of shipping during the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812. Continued slave imports to Cuba during these years can be attributed mostly to American and Spanish smugglers who were largely indifferent to the consequences of the 1808 prohibition. They continued to ply their trade to Cuba and from it into the U.S. across the Gulf of Mexico with little to no hindrance from British or U.S authorities, whose presence in the Gulf was minimal and broadly ineffective.

Demand for sugar products surged even as prices fluctuated, peaking first as Napoleon’s Hundred Hours ran down in 1815 at more than 22¢ per pound, then falling to an abysmal 5¢ in 1842, rising gradually to 12¢ on the eve of the American Civil War, and then spiking back to surpass 1815 prices at 24¢ in 1865.
Slaves had surged into Cuba, more than 25,000 in 1817. Unfortunately for Cuban tobacco, coffee, and cattle merchants, Spain's loss of Mexico and Peru in 1813 and 1821 respectively, necessitated a heavier burden of Spanish taxes on all Cuban trade except for sugar, the production of which required far more slaves than all other commodities put together on that island. This imposition, along with the Anglo-Spanish Treaty, caused the price of slaves in Cuba to rise significantly in comparison to those in New Orleans from 1821 to 1832. [Roland T. Ely's The Economy of Cuba Between the Two Isabeles (tells how Spain's compliance with England caused ever more U.S. Slave Traders to move their offices to Cuba. (Ely, 1962). Slave smuggling was profitable regardless of the price on either side of the Gulf of Mexico, even if the price rise in Cuba somewhat decreased the profitability of the illegal slave trade to the U.S. for twelve years. The financial panic of 1819 had retarded U.S. agriculture and manufacturing growth until 1823, lowering prices for slaves in the U.S. Prices remained low until 1832, when cotton demand began to soar after Jackson's Indian Removal policy largely emptied the Deep South of its indigenous people.

Re-exporting slaves from Cuba became easier for the Americans after the Adams-Onis Treaty transferred Florida to the U.S. in 1821, thereby removing harried Spanish colonial administrators from the territory who may have compromised the illegal traffic with official complaints. Besides the minimal Spanish presence, Florida had been home only to a few thousand Creek and Seminole natives, and a small but growing contingent of runaway slaves from Georgia and the Carolinas. Twenty-six years lapsed between 1819 and 1845, when Florida was recognized as a state in the Union.

U.S. Consul to Havana in the early 1820's, Jack Warner, purchased Key West via a Spaniard, quickly re-selling it to American slave-ship captain Pardon C. Greene, the
wealthiest inhabitant of Key West until 1838. Greene’s salvage business warehouses on the island may well have camouflaged the storage of slaves from Cuba. Key West, only 90 miles north east of Cuba, was important in the early years of the illegal slave trade when piracy flourished in the Gulf. The scarcity of inhabitants in Florida was an incentive for smuggling slaves there from Cuba from 1808 to 1822 (when it was recognized as a U.S. territory), a tantalizing prospect for slave traffickers as the enormous profits involved were well worth the risk of encountering pirates who would often rob them. Florida’s total population numbered only 34,000 by 1830, when the first official census was conducted there.

In fact, after a steep decline beginning in 1817, the number of slave imports to Cuba rallied after Key West was solidly in American hands, rising from about 9,000 in 1821 to almost 12,000 in 1822. However, Commodore David Porter, arch-nemesis of piracy, returned to the Caribbean in 1822 and took command of the U.S. Navy’s Mosquito Squadron, prosecuting the illegal slave trade around Key West with unflagging vigor, often engaging in violent sea battles with pirates and smugglers. His enforcement of prohibition, however, put only a small and temporary dent in the overall trade, and posed no real threat to Cuba’s re-exportation of slaves to the U.S. from 1822 through 1825.

Spanish reprisals against Cuban revolutionaries and restriction on their own Cuban trade, coinciding with the 1823 arrival in Havana of the despotic Captain General Vives, had reversed the surge of slave imports to that island, which fell precipitously from 12,000 to just over 4,000 that year. But, 7,000 more slaves were brought into Cuba in 1824, and at least another 13,000 in 1825. Commodore Porter was no longer a force to be reckoned with in the Caribbean or the Gulf of Mexico after 1825, having resigned his commission after
being reprimanded for invading Puerto Rico with 200 soldiers to jail-break one of his men wrongfully imprisoned for being a pirate.

Today, authors commonly don’t mention that many Caribbean pirates and freebooters were American seamen and frontiersmen, intent on appropriating slave cargoes from other slave smugglers, the latter traveling from Cuba en route to the U.S. What confusion and horror the slaves must have experienced after being seized by tribesmen in Africa, floated down or marched along the Congo to be stored in a barracoon at the river mouth, afterwards forced onto a slave ship, manacled for an agonizing Middle Passage to Cuba, and then led from an indifferent port or some obscure beach to be barracooned once again on a sugar estate where they were "seasoned and broken in" for an indeterminate period, and after having learned the back-breaking basics of plantation labor and a few words in Spanish and English, they were taken back to a port or beach to be loaded onto a slave dealer's ship for re-exportation, whereby pirates may or may not have later boarded the ship, forcing the slaves to transfer to yet another cargo hold. Regardless, a short journey across the Gulf of Mexico or up the Atlantic coast would follow, then a last disembarking and barracooning on the coasts of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, where they were finally sold and made to march overland through swamps and forests towards whatever cotton, sugar, or rice plantation awaited their labors in the Deep South. The duration of this journey, from Africa to the U.S. and all points between, may have lasted a few months or more.

On the east coast of Florida, Amelia Island, Mosquito Lagoon and the Indian River, were all strategic slave depots; Amelia Island until 1817, when the U.S. military occupied the island, forcing the smugglers and pirates to disband. Galveston Island, nominally a part
of the Spanish Empire until Mexico attained full independence in 1821, had become a port of ill-repute rife with American slave smugglers and pirates who transported slaves obtained from Cuba seventy miles north east to the Louisiana border for sale to indiscriminate cotton planters. Illegal trafficking was occurring also in New Orleans at this time, where corrupt customs inspectors, commanded to allow cargoes of slaves from Charleston, Savannah, Maryland and Georgia to land, were bribed into allowing the illegal re-exportation of slaves from Cuba. The Mexican ports of Matagorda Bay and Brazoria, and especially Galveston, Texas also became important way stations for slaves from Cuba by the early 1820’s. The trafficking of illegal slaves into the U.S. became entrenched and flourished even after the Monroe administration made it a capital offense punishable by death in 1820, though it was never enforced until Lincoln’s presidency.

In 1823, a European military coalition of conservative autocrats, the ‘Holy Alliance,’ destroyed liberalism in Spain, and with this expunging of constitutionalism, caused a new era of martial law in Cuba that lasted until 1878. The 1812 Constitution of Cadiz was repealed in Cuba and the military dictatorship of Captain General Vives and his army of 40,000 loyalist soldiers began to persecute and eradicate would-be reformers, abolitionists, and Cuban liberationists. Vives’ tyrannical methods in suppressing these groups were later praised even by U.S. President John Quincy Adams, who felt, as many others in Congress did, that the liberation of Africans in Cuba would surely cause a chaos of African insurrection on the cotton plantations of the South. Underscoring this sentiment was his resounding Monroe Doctrine of 1823, directly influenced by relations with Cuba, which emphatically communicated American unwillingness to meddle in the political affairs of European colonies in the Caribbean. Adams states,
"With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere...In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so."

Apart from its main protectionist theme against European meddling, the negative principles entailed by the Monroe Doctrine allowed that Cuba, and by extension Spain, could keep slavery as an institution and continue to import and re-export slaves with the blessing of the President of the United States.

From 1825 on, the Permanent Executive Military Commission under command of the Captain General Vives, governed Cuba with a heavy, intrusive hand. Vives quickly became principal overseer of the slave trade to Cuba, and thus he, along with a retinue of local governors, treasury employees, judges, lawyers, customs officers and inspectors, also became its most corrupt and handsomely bribed enabler of that trade and of the re-export to the U.S. Amusingly, the Wikipedia entry for Vives (culled from a dubious 1901 cycle of American biographies) portrays the fairly brutal Captain General as one who "managed to maintain order and preserve the island of Cuba for Spain without troubles or any sort of violence." This could not be farther from the truth. Vives' inquisitorial methods broke up corruption in the colonial administration of Cuba, but he reconstituted it for his own enrichment by condoning "flagrant administrative abuses," most egregious of which was profiting from the trade in illegal slaves from every port in Cuba. (Quiroz, 483) To crush slave insurrections planned by liberal Creoles who desired Cuban independence, Vives engineered covert assassination plots, and he condemned rebels, blacks and whites alike, to perish from firing squads. Out of twelve Captain Generals from 1823 until 1869, only two,
Captain Generals Valdes (1841-3) and Pezuela (1853-4), consciously attempted to curb slave trafficking in Cuba. (Quiroz, 487)

The flow of slaves to Cuba from Africa was consistently robust during Vives’s tenure, over 20,000 new slaves came in during his first two years (1823 to 1825), and thereafter never dropped lower than 12,000 slaves per annum, rising to over 20,000 in 1829, and down to around 15,000 in 1832, the year Vives’s tenure in Cuba ended. Remarkably, that year Cuban slave prices dropped lower than those in New Orleans, an American advantage that would last a decade. Cuban corruption that abetted slave trafficking was mirrored in maritime bureaucracies at U.S. ports, supported by federal diplomatic policy that helped to sustain a thriving trade in illegal slaves to Cuba and the United States.

President Andrew Jackson’s personal nominee for U.S. Consul to Havana, Nicolas P. Trist, arrived in Cuba in 1833. Trist, married to Thomas Jefferson’s granddaughter, was highly favorable towards slavery and deliberately aided slavers in disguising their ships and protecting their cargoes. His customs rubber-stamp approved fraudulent registration documents for slave ships that flew different flags, switching nationalities, to elude the anti-slave trade squadron ships. To avoid arrest if stopped by a British cruiser, slavers flew the American flag, and if stopped by an American cruiser, Spanish or Portuguese flags would be used. Consul Trist flagrantly refused to comply with the prohibition of slave trafficking in Cuba for eight years, 1833 to 1841. Coinciding with Trist’s arrival, there was a surge in the New Orleans slave price index compared to Cuban prices, an incredible escalation lasting until 1842. A prime-age male slave cost about $700 per slave in 1832, but more than $1,300 by 1837, falling to about $600 in 1842, when Consul Trist was finally officially
investigated and recalled to the U.S. for his illicit activities, though he was never demoted or punished for them.

In 1830, an independent Brazil, supported by Great Britain, agreed in principle to enforce a prohibition ending their slave imports. Therefore, Brazilian nationals conducting slaves from Africa were considered pirates along with the rest of Europe’s smugglers; after 1830 all flags except for the U.S. and the Portuguese (the latter had not updated an 1817 anti-slaving agreement with Britain) were technically susceptible to prosecution on the high seas by Britain’s Royal Navy. Portugal again abolished the transatlantic trade in 1836, but this was another dead letter until a Parliamentary decision in 1839, sanctioned by Queen Victoria, gave the British navy unilateral powers for the seizure of Portuguese slave ships. Thus, after 1839, the American flag became for slave traffickers the only remaining national flag that guaranteed some measure of immunity from British interference. This circumstance rendered American involvement in the slave trade more conspicuous than ever, and the situation became a source of international embarrassment for the federal government as American slavers caught red-handed with slaves began to stream into New York harbor escorted by British warships.

Even with continual slave uprisings occurring between 1832 and 1838, the volume of slave imports to Cuba leaped to over 25,000 slaves in 1835. Imports were sustained at levels no lower than 19,000 per annum until 1841. In 1835, Queen Regent Maria Cristina, entangled in a military contest with the Carlists because of the Bourbon argument over dynastic succession for the Spanish crown, reluctantly signed the Spanish Equipment Clause with Great Britain in exchange for their support against the Carlists. In fact, Queen Regent Maria Cristina personally received approximately a million pesos annually from the
largesse of profits plundered from the slave trade by Cuban treasury officials. The Clause allowed both the British and Spanish navies permission to board each other’s vessels and arrest their crews if any supplies or equipment for the purposes of furnishing a slave cargo were found onboard. Though the risk of apprehension by naval authorities increased for slave smugglers after 1835, the Equipment Clause had no appreciable effect on the volume of Africans landing in Cuba, where over 21,000 slaves per annum arrived from 1835 until 1838.

Meanwhile, fierce peninsular loyalist, Captain General Miguel Tacon, also trafficked in slaves for his own purposes from 1834 to 1838, taking "his half-ounce of gold for every slave landed on the island illicitly", netting him over 430,000 pesos during his tenure as Cuba’s colonial head of state.. Tacon made financial arrangements with bank directors and slave traffickers so that in exchange for "voluntary donations, private depositors were granted preference in the consignment of seized illegal slaves under established rules and responsibilities." (Foner,176; Quiroz, 485)

Smuggling from Cuba, as opposed to the legal "coast-wise" trade that emanated from Maryland and Virginia, was extremely lucrative for Americans who collaborated to sell slaves smuggled from Africa to Cuba, thenceforth into New Orleans and Galveston. By the 1840’s, a single smuggling operation could gross over $200,000, roughly equivalent to about $5,000,000 in 2009, what a drug smuggler can make today. After sailing from Baltimore, or from Newport, Providence, Boston, Portland, and other Yankee ports, slavers often first stopped in Cuba to re-register their ships under an assumed name, and then obtained "false bills of sale of vessels [and] a double set of papers" (Rees, 194) for fraudulent conversion of ownership when flying whatever flag suited their circumstance.
Sometimes, slavers burned or scuttled their ships after returning from Africa to cover their tracks. This was no great loss, especially since the sale of the slave cargo netted everybody more than a fortune, wealth shared by the slave dealer, the captain and his crew, the customs clerks, U.S. marshals, and district attorneys, etc. Bogus documentation issued by corrupt Cuban and American inspectors for the purpose of importing illegal slaves, poses sharp questions about the validity of census information regarding slaves who were transported in the "legal" domestic trade. The "coast-wise" trade was very often confused with the illegal trade. Ships from the Atlantic Coast traveling around the Florida peninsula were often indistinguishable from those traveling up from Cuba. Still, the logistical difficulties in ensuring the legality of any given slave that entered a U.S. port or crossed state lines were too easily bypassed by counterfeit certification of the slaves drawn up by the trafficker or purchaser and new owner of the slaves in question.

American and British laws for policing the slave trade were at cross-purposes. The hierarchical network of federal corruption in the U.S. gave slave smugglers a rather long leash from 1808 until 1862, when U.S. Captain Gordon was executed by the federal government for the crime, the first and only U.S. citizen prosecuted to the full extent of the forty-two year old law that had made slave smuggling a capital crime. The difference in policy was clear: slaves liberated by the British were "Recaptives" and became subjects and the responsibility of the British Empire, while slaves who were unlucky enough to be "liberated" by Americans were normally promptly re-sold as slaves in legal slave markets within the states. Captains in Britain's Africa Squadron found themselves entangled in protracted debates of international legalese concerning the property rights of American
slavers. Britain's right to search and seize American vessels suspected as slavers was repeatedly denied by the U.S. Congress until 1862.

In contrast to limited bureaucratic attempts to limit the illegal slave trade, its proponents often sought to expand the slave trade through military actions. Many slave-dealers and expansionist military adventurers defending themselves at the Alamo from the Mexican Army of Santa Anna - who threatened their right to import slaves, carried out the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836. At the very least, 5,000 slaves were in Texas at the time when Santa Anna was captured by Sam Houston's men in 1836. In 1837, the British Foreign Office recorded slavers departing Havana bound for the Republic of Texas. Mexican authorities in Havana corroborate these instances of slave transshipment from Cuba to Texas. (Starks, 136)

In 1837 a steep decline in the numbers of slaves arriving in Cuba began, from well over 21,000 per annum, dropping to about 4,000 by 1842, a turbulent year in Cuba, when British Consul to Havana, David Turnbull, was forced to sail from Cuba back to Britain, because of the commotion and "intense hatred" he had caused among elite Creole planters. With an eye towards emancipation, Turnbull, an ardent abolitionist acting on the directive of Lord Palmerston, had proposed a census of slaves in Cuba, an imposition that would have revealed the extent that smuggled slaves had added to the population. Creole slaveholders had always been granted ample discretion by the colonial government in securing their wares, as a

"conniving understanding between between planters, slave traffickers, and corrupt officials facilitated the clandestine and systematic arrival of bozales, who were swiftly taken to private estates where authorities seldom enforced their inquiries." (Quiroz, 481)
In 1842, because of the drastic U.S. Black Tariff, imposed on Cuban sugar and molasses, prices of slaves in Cuba exceeded those of New Orleans prices until 1844. The effect of that tariff caused Cuban sugar exports to drop from about 200,000 tons in 1842, to barely 100,000 tons in 1845. Before Cuba's African slave trade ended for good in 1867, the absolute nadir for Cuba's slave imports came in 1846, when only 432 slaves disembarked. The drop in slave imports was also effected in large part by the stringent abolitionist policies begun by the relentless British Consul Turner Who had gone to great lengths in stirring up slave revolts in Cuba, much to the chagrin of Captain General Valdes, one of only two Spanish governors who attempted to staunch the flow of illegal slaves.

Another coincidental development, the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842, renewed U.S. cooperation with Britain to suppress the slave trade, and so the African Squadron returned to patrolling the West African coastline, this time with four ships instead of five, commanded by a succession of disinterested commanders who in following the example of Naval Secretary Abel Upshur, did "not regard the success of their efforts [in suppressing the slave trade] as their paramount interest." (Sooldalter, 35) Rather, protecting the commercial interests of the U.S. from the British was more important than stopping slave ships. The U.S. African Squadron's arrest record was abysmal until the very end of President Buchanan's presidency. [replace]

The most sinister of all the Cuban Captain Generals, Leopoldo O'Donnell, reported for duty in 1843, bringing with him a savage intolerance for abolitionists like David Turnbull. O'Donnell employed his army in massacring slaves who rebelled numerous times at Matanzas sugar mills during 1843. In 1844, word leaked out of a large-scale conspiracy led by liberal Creoles, free blacks, and slaves. O'Donnell brutally nipped the revolution in
the bud, by arresting over 3,000 people, condemning hundreds to death, imprisoning nearly two thousand, and exiling many others. His zero-tolerance purges of Cuban liberalism lasted throughout his tenure, spanning a time when the fewest slaves were landed in Cuba, about 31,000 total, from 1843 to 1848. International reactions to O'Donnell’s methods were not approving, provoking Foreign Minister Lord Aberdeen to threaten Spain with naval force. The Spanish court capitulated somewhat, recalling O'Donnell and renewing Spain’s commitment to stop the trade in 1845 with a treaty, promising to incarcerate anyone involved for up to eight years. Still, the Cuban slavocracy largely ignored the treaty after considering the wording in Article 9 of the treaty, which restricted officials in

"proceed[ing] against or disturbing slave proprietors in their possession of slaves under pretext of their origin, [meaning that] once the slaves had been introduced illegally into the plantations, there was no legal way to recover them or proceed against their owners." (Foner, 212, 221)

Though slave-imports during O'Donnell’s Captaincy were generally lower, he still received bribes from slave-holders and dealers alike, netting him over $500,000 by the time he left in 1839. O' Donnell's successor, Captain General Roncali (1848-1850), also "feigned ignorance of the slave trade...but was engaged in protecting it all the same [by] pocketing 51 pesos a head" (Thomas, 752)

Great Britain passed landmark economic legislation in 1846, directly influencing the slave trade thereafter. The Sugar Duties Act of 1846 was a liberal experiment that wholly embraced free trade, or at least tariffs on foreign-grown sugar were reduced and phased out by 1851. It created a higher demand for slaves in Cuba and importations were back up to over 8,000 by 1849. The Sugar Duties Act also incurred a demand for sugar throughout
Europe despite the best intentions of the Anti-Saccharines, and prices rose accordingly from about 5¢ per pound in 1845 to over 8¢ in 1846. This measure put a spotlight on the perceived morality of importing slave-grown produce, igniting abolitionist fervor, even as some opponents of it were understandably afraid that free trade would bankrupt the West Indies, as it did, especially since free-labor British sugar production in the Caribbean, inefficient and inconsistent since 1834, had to compete with slave-intensive sugar cultivation in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Brazil. There were about 150,000 slaves involved in Cuban sugar production by 1846. From 1844 to 1856, New Orleans slave prices exceeded those at Havana, a period in which nearly 84,000 slaves are recorded arriving in Cuba.

Incentives for re-exporting slaves to the U.S were especially high as a prime-age male slave cost about 1300$ by 1855.

In 1846, the year when slave imports to Cuba ebbed to their lowest, the Great Havana Hurricane destroyed almost every building in the city and wrecked over a hundred merchant ships. The disastrous hurricane also wiped out over 90% of Key West’s buildings, including its’ light houses, and much of the naval establishment. These circumstances afforded slave smugglers easier egress from Cuba, across the Gulf and into the U.S.

Remarkably, nearly 127,000 slaves arrived in Cuba during the 1850's. Journalist William Henry Fry commented at the time,

"The Cuba trade affords it is said a retail business with the southern States, the fishermen carrying fish to Cuba bringing return cargoes of two or three slaves in their smacks." (Tenzer, 5)

By this time, Brazil’s slave trade had largely died out, and only 5,500 slaves were shipped there between 1851 and 1856, and virtually none thereafter. Therefore, after 1851, the volume of transatlantic illegal slave trafficking winnowed to just Cuba and the United
States. There were two dramatic spikes in slave imports to Cuba during the 1850’s, the first in 1853, when about 16,000 slaves arrived, and in 1859 over 26,000. The 1853 surge occurred in the midst of a cholera epidemic in Cuba, where 20,000 slave deaths were reported. Despite the death toll, slave imports to Cuba tumbled after 1853 to just over 6,000 slaves in 1855. (Bergad, et al, 35)

U.S. Consul to Havana, Charles Helm, who upon assuming his duties immediately gave confiscated slave ships clearance to leave the harbor, encouraged the 1859 surge. Helm, along with Secretary of State Lewis Cass and Attorney General Jeremiah Black, all ardent supporters of slavery, succeeded in bringing about legislation that relieved the United States "from all responsibility on account of the slave trade from Cuba...and that the U.S. Consulate in Havana would henceforth refrain from holding any American vessel that had been cleared by the Spanish customs house."(Sooldalter, 31-32)

The Untold Tide: Unveiling the True Scale of Illegal Slave Imports

Philip Curtin estimated that Cuba imported almost 550,000 slaves from Africa between 1811 and 1870 (The Atlantic Slave Trade,1969), but he drastically underestimated the number of those re-exported from that grand island, so close to the shores of the United States and the blooming cotton fields of Dixie. The peak year for the importation of slaves to Cuba in 1859, and the sharp drop-off after 1860 highlight this research's central conclusion: U.S. slave importation remained robust for more than fifty years after it became illegal until the American civil war forced an end to the slave trade in the United States.

This research is primarily concerned with the illegal re-export of slaves into the United
States, which began almost immediately after New Year's Day, 1808, after which the U.S. Constitution prohibited further importation of slaves.

**CUBAN CENSUSES 1775-1877**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Slave</th>
<th>Free Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1775</td>
<td>96,440</td>
<td>44,333</td>
<td>30,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1792</td>
<td>153,559</td>
<td>64,590</td>
<td>54,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>257,380</td>
<td>199,292</td>
<td>115,691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1827</td>
<td>311,051</td>
<td>286,942</td>
<td>106,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>418,291</td>
<td>436,495</td>
<td>152,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>793,484</td>
<td>377,203</td>
<td>225,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>1,023,394</td>
<td>199,094</td>
<td>272,478</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table data from Gannett, Olmsted. *Oficina Nacional del Censo/Cuba: Population, History and Resources*, U.S. Bureau of the Census 1907, p131,143,147)

Cuban censuses of 1775 and 1792 show that the slave population comprised about 20% of the total population, but sugar production surged after 1792 when Haiti revolted, and increased more after the British stopped importing slaves to their own colonies in the West Indies. The number of slaves increased 300% to 199,000 by 1817. In grudging deference to the abolitionists of Great Britain, Spanish authorities ostensibly outlawed the slave trade to Cuba in that year, but the planters, with Spanish complicity, ignored this prohibition and amassed 286,942 slaves by 1827. Around 436,500 slaves, most of them from the Niger and Congo river valleys, outnumbered white Creoles and Peninsulares by 1841, accounting for nearly 40% of Cuba's total population (1,007,624) and 74% of the total "colored" population, excluding Chinese laborers. By the 1840's, almost half of Cuba's
slave population, over 200,000, labored an average of twenty hours a day in the cane fields, the produce of which amounted to nearly 83% of the island's total exports, weighing in at about 368,000 metric tons for the decade.


Strange as it seems, if we consider the censuses and slave import estimates, despite sharply increasing importation of African slaves to Cuba throughout the 1850's, its' slave population dropped to about 377,400 by 1861, only about 27% of the total population (1,396,530). That drop is best explained by re-export to the U.S. In 1877, the last census conducted before Cuban slavery finally ended in 1886, fewer than 200,000 slaves were

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**Slave Imports to Cuba**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Slave Imports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1791-1800</td>
<td>41,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1801-1810</td>
<td>54,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811-1820</td>
<td>115,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821-1830</td>
<td>136,381</td>
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<tr>
<td>1831-1840</td>
<td>186,179</td>
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<tr>
<td>1841-1850</td>
<td>54,309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851-1860</td>
<td>126,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861-1866</td>
<td>37,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>754,613</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table data from the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, accessed online 4/10/10, http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces)
counted there, barely 13% of the total population (1,509,291). This diminution is best explained by Emancipation.

(Gannett, Olmsted. Oficina Nacional del Censo/Cuba: Population, History and Resources, 1907, p131,143,147)

(Table data from the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, accessed online 4/10/10, http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces)

The outbreak of our Civil War ended re-exportation to the South, and by war’s end slave imports to Cuba were nearly eliminated. The Union blockade of the Confederacy in
1861 and the 1862 Anglo-American agreement allowing the British to search and seize suspected slave ships flying the American flag, both quashed imports of African slaves to Cuba to nothing by 1867, when the Spanish themselves very belatedly effected a final prohibition of the trade, legislation that was easy to enforce since this was the last year in which an instance of a slave ship arriving in Cuba was recorded. Though many historians have stressed that Spanish colonial administrators finally ended the trade because they were "压urced" and "brow-beaten" by the abolitionist diplomats of the U.S. and Great Britain, these are exaggerations. Formerly this had been the case in regard to Britain's foreign ministers, but by 1866, Spain needed no coercion to prohibit a non-existent practice. Since American involvement in slave trafficking had ended, the trade itself virtually disappeared. In *Odius Commerce* (1980), David Murray asks,

"How effective was the last Spanish law [prohibiting] the slave trade? Since it was never really tested, the answer is unknown. The law was never tested because no confirmed slave landings occurred after its promulgation in Cuba and no slave traders were captured to be tried under its provisions."

In fact, Britain's West Africa Squadron was significantly reduced in 1867, clear evidence that the illegal slave trade no longer needed policing. Slavery lingered on in Cuba and Brazil for over twenty years after Appomattox, but *bozales* were no longer introduced onto those shores. By 1870, Spain's Moret Law began gradual emancipation, freeing Cuba's unborn slaves, while current slaves were allowed to retire after reaching 60 years. Even so, the institution did not officially end until 1886, even surviving after Cuba's Ten Years War for independence from Spain (1868 to 1878).

The insatiable demand of America's cotton growers for slaves had perpetuated the illegal traffic through Cuba for over half a century, and without that impetus the
transatlantic slave trade suddenly collapsed in 1861, ending for good in 1867. There had been so many slaves in transit and destined for America that Cuba had enough on hand to supply its own labor needs thereafter. These are interrelated phenomena that have not been properly investigated and addressed in the

(Murray, David. Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain, and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade, 1980, p320, 325)

whitewashed scholarship of African slave demographics in the antebellum South. For example, Philip Curtin’s, allegedly authoritative online Transatlantic Slave Trade Database did not account for at least 114,000 slaves whom the database lists as having arrived in Cuba. Curtin’s numbers were significantly lower in calculating imports to Cuba during the 19th century. The Database lists an estimated 664,000 slaves arrived in Cuba between 1808 and 1867, the duration of the illegal trade to the island. Though Curtin’s omissions are revealed by the database, his assiduous yet stringently conservative scholarship has halted inquiries into the numbers of illegal slaves landed in Cuba, and his legacy has inspired current leading historians to do the same. Yet, in 1971, two years after Curtin published his magnum opus, a critic remarked that,

"Professor Curtin... rejects a viewpoint put forward in 1842 by James Bandinel, an official at the British Foreign Office, that the Havana customs house figures ought to be doubled on account of illicit trade. Curtin states... 'Illicit trade may have existed but no evidence is available to show its level'. Curtin fall[s] into the trap of accepting the Havana customs house figures as representing the total number of slaves imported into Cuba, when at best they represent the minimum importation. But an even more basic problem with Curtin’s argument is the uncertainty of the accuracy of Cuban population statistics in the nineteenth century. The Consulado of Havana in 1811 was aware of the inadequacies of the early censuses... The hacendados in 1827 were loath to admit how many slaves they held because they feared the imposition of a new tax on planters to help Spain pay for the expenses of her military forces then in Cuba... [I]n 1841 there were political motives for not revealing the exact number of slaves in the island. David Turnbull, the British Consul in Havana and an avowed abolitionist, had persuaded Palmerston to propose to Spain that the powers of the Mixed Commission Court in Havana be
increased in order to enable it to ferret out slaves who had been illegally imported into Cuba since 1820. Since most of the slaves on the plantations in 1841 had entered the island illegally after 1820, the Cuban planters, faced with this threat, had good reason not to reveal how many slaves they actually owned. [T]he Cuban government itself had political reasons for distorting the population figures. It feared a reaction from the Creole population if it were known how rapidly Cuba’s slave population was increasing and thereby continuing to worsen the disproportion between the races in the island. And the published figures, of course, were ammunition for Britain in her campaign to wipe out the illegal slave-trade to Cuba."

(Murray, D.R. *Statistics of the Slave Trade to Cuba 1790-1867*, 1971,133)

David Eltis, a principal investigator for the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, corrects Curtin by showing more were imported to Cuba but makes a much greater error by severely undercounting the number of slaves re-exported to America. Curtin had suggested with questionable acumen, that a maximum of 54,000 illegal slaves had made it into the U.S. in the fifty-two years between prohibition of the slave trade and the Civil War, allowing for barely a thousand slaves a year. Eltis, whose estimates inform almost all recent scholarship on transatlantic slave demographics, has minimized the numbers of illegal slaves even more than Curtin, citing only a total of 6,100 slaves entering the U.S. from 1808 to 1865, further confounding demographers of the antebellum south. Eltis is comfortable with the assertion that few more than six thousand Africans were imported, 117 per year, because it is the total number of slaves recorded on the register of documented slave voyages to the U.S. after 1808. As if slave smugglers or their customers kept records. Eltis went further, attacking the scholarship of Obadele Starks (*Freebooters and Smugglers*, 2007), which draws on the research and writings of W.E.B. DuBois, shipping documents and court records to update estimates from the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database to argue that a total of 786,000 slaves were imported to the United States illegally. (Starks,
**Freebooters**, 10) However, with such disagreements, no one has yet remotely come close to persuasively estimating the number of slaves re-exported to cotton fields in the American south and setting the record straight.

So many slaves were re-exported to the U.S. that there were apparently not enough slaves to go around in Cuba during the 1850's, even though at least 127,000 came in from Africa during that decade. To augment labor demands in Cuba, Chinese contract workers (treated little better and often worse than the Africans) had begun arriving with appreciable frequency, a total of about 67,000 between 1848 and 1865. A few supplemental laborers were also imported from the Yucatan after the Caste War there complicated Polk's Mexican War, prompting him to aid European Yucatenos in retaining their dominance by supplying 938 American soldiers to annihilate the Mayas at the Port of Sistal in 1848. The next year, the Yucatan government began the practice of expelling Mayan men between the age of 12 and 30 to Cuba as slaves to work in the sugarcane plantations. Most of the Yucatans and Chinese, subjected to brutalization by plantation overseers, never left the island and died off within a decade. The traffic from the Yucatan yielded only 743 Mayan slaves by 1862. However, imports of Chinese "coolies" to Cuba doubled from about 6,400 in 1865 to over 12,000 in 1866.


Sugar production became increasingly labor efficient, rapidly expanding after the successful advent of the steam engine for grinding cane in 1817, and this spike in production perpetuated the illegal slave trade to Cuba (1820 to 1867), but the volume of the trade to Cuba arose more because the island became a convenient way station for the
illegal re-export of slaves to the American Deep South, principally to South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas, where cotton planters had amassed over three million slaves by 1860, and sugar planters half a million. Given that the southern slave population, between 1830 and 1860, increased by 23% each decade in the face of staggering mortality rates, the barest interpretation of circumstantial evidence reveals a continuous influx of slaves illegally trafficked into the U.S. from Cuba from 1808 to 1861.

Bergad, Garcia, and Barcia (The Cuban Slave Market, 1995) suggested that the high price of slaves in Cuba during the 1850’s (breaking the 400 peso mark in 1854 for the first time since the early 1820’s when Spain first prohibited the slave trade) was because "demand for workers in the late 1850’s significantly exceeded available supplies [on that island]." However, these historians didn’t consider the sizeable pool of slave labor secreted away in ingenio barracoons, many that were not recorded even in the manifests and other extant records tabulated (but underestimated) for the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database. Many of these slaves, though disembarked in Cuba, were intended for slave markets in The United States’ Cotton Kingdom, not to mention the burgeoning sugar plantations of Louisiana. Bergad, et al, suggested that labor market saturation from the elevated imports of 1858 and 1859 is the reason for the drop off in Cuban slave imports thereafter. This glutting of the slave market in Cuba occurred because the flow of re-exports to the U.S. suddenly stopped due to the naval blockade. In 1859, over 27,000 slaves disembarked in Cuba. In 1866, only 722 Africans landed there. Many of today’s scholars have employed their ingenuity to discuss the precipitous drop in the numbers of slaves going to Cuba after
1860 without addressing the dramatic decline with the end of re-exports to the American south after it was blockaded by the U.S. Navy.

Cuban plantation owners, called *Hacendados*, undoubtedly wanted more slaves to work their ever-expanding sugar mills or *ingenios*, but immediate accessibility to slave cargoes arriving in Cuba from Africa was not the exclusive privilege of Cubans only. Plantation *mayorales* (top overseer of the slaves), *majordomos* (head plantation clerk) and other overseers may have been continually misinformed about the availability of slaves from local dealers, especially when so many had been in transit to the U.S. The American presence in Cuba has been overlooked in terms of facilitating the import of slaves from Africa and their subsequent re-export across the Gulf to the U.S. Not only did American slave traders set up shop in Cuba's sugar districts, but Southern planters also owned and operated some of the most productive sugar operations on the island, including the Saratoga and Carlotta estates, among others. Some of these Southern capitalists owned plantations and slaves in the U.S. and Cuba simultaneously. Americans also filled other lesser roles in Cuba's sugar industry; by 1850 over 1,500 U.S. machinists were employed in the mills. ([Fraginals, *Sugarmills*, 152]

Previously, Spain's *asiento* system had granted Cuban tobacco merchants a monopoly on slaves arriving there. The British occupation of Havana in 1762 resulted in the introduction of more slaves than ever before, and the Haitian Revolution during the 1790's inspired Cuban sugar *hacendados* to engage in what Cuban historian Manuel Fraginals calls "the first dance of the millions". Yet, even after the *asiento* was broken up in anticipation of profits from sugar, the acquisition of African slaves was transacted through mostly foreign intermediaries, usually English slave traders from the Liverpool market. By
1819, Cuba's sugarocracy had pervaded and usurped foreign influence over their market for slaves, ironically just after the Anglo-Spanish Agreement prohibited the trade. American slave merchants then came to the aid of Cuba's sugar elite, moving their offices from the U.S. to Havana. American influence on Cuba's trade in sugar and slaves should not be underestimated.

"There is no doubt that, beginning in the 1780's, enormous U.S. investment and loan capital was poured into [Cuban] sugarmills... And so the United States businessman came to roost in Havana... U.S. manufacturers and shrewd slave dealers channeled Negroes and implements into Cuba at low prices, extending generous credit, and accepting sugar and molasses in payment."


In all diplomatic conversations where Cuba was concerned, slavery was the raison d'etre of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Spain in the first half of the 19th century. It was assumed by some Cuban slave interests, Creole planters and Peninsular bureaucrats alike, that if Cuba were annexed to the U.S., islanders could participate more freely in the slave trade, protected by the British inability to board suspected slave ships flying the American flag. Meanwhile, to maintain slavery in Cuba in opposition to native liberal reformers, the U.S. federal government actively worked with Cuban slaveholders, aiding the suppression of political agitators for Cuban independence from Spain. Cuba's wealthy sugar planters and the American slavocracy worked towards annexing Cuba as a protectorate of the United States in order to "prevent the abolition of slavery on the island, acquire new land suitable to the slave plantation system, to increase the South's political power in the Union", and also to facilitate re-export slaves to the U.S. In 1822, a liberal deputy in the Spanish Cortes Generales who advocated ending slavery in Cuba sparked threats from Cuban slave interests who suggested that "the deputy who would ask for the abolition of
slavery in Cuba ought to have his tongue cut out." (Foner, 31,103) Meanwhile, the U.S. government sought to retain the status quo, which was keeping Cuba submissive to a weak Spain and keeping open the re-export of slaves to the U.S. while buying time to annex the island opportuneely when that was less likely to cause a major war. The "Spread-Eagle Doctrine" of annexation was an important prerogative and sometimes a dangerous obsession with every American president from Jefferson down to Buchanan.

Cuba, which relied upon the U.S. for flour, rice, fish, pork, lumber, and manufactures benefited both nations' fledgling economies. Despite heavy Spanish taxes on those American exports to Cuba, Cuba's trade with the United States was incredibly profitable. The volume of its trade with the U.S. surpassed that with Spain as early as 1798. Though constantly harried by jealous Spaniards, and often by the loyalist colonial government at Havana, this lucrative commercial relationship expanded prodigiously during the 19th century, especially so after 1820 when both American cotton and Cuban sugar simultaneously became their dominant exports, and re-exports of slaves soared.

For Cuban slave holders, the sugar-derived wealth and free trading privileges garnered by 1818 had come with an ominous precedent, namely the Anglo-Spanish Treaty of 1817, which immediately accorded an end to the slave trade for all Spanish possessions above the equator, and all below by 1820. The anguish felt by Cuban sugar planters, whose labor was threatened at the very moment production was becoming profitable beyond belief, is remarkably similar to the situation American cotton planters found themselves in after 1808, when the importation of African slaves was prohibited just as Eli Whitney's cotton gin, along with technological improvements in cotton manufacturing and the soaring demand for good cotton cloth, was beginning to make crops tremendously profitable.
However, these were momentary distractions. The traders of both Cuba and the U.S. circumvented the restrictions on African imports by influencing and infiltrating the bureaucracies that policed those laws. Thus, after 1817 the, a sometimes triangular trade in slaves from Africa flourished in Cuba, and the United States. The trade was facilitated by Cuban exports of sugar, molasses, and slaves to the United States, which intern sold slave smugglers some of the trinkets and weapons, in addition to Cuban rum, used to pay African slave traders for captives who were shipped back to Cuba completing the triangle. American slave smugglers had already been collaborating with slave dealers in Cuba since 1808. The Anglo-Spanish Treaty, while allowing Britain's Navy to apprehend, board, and arrest slavers flying the Spanish flag, ironically, because ships flying the American flag were still inviolate.

As calculated by the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, that treaty seemed to have some effect because slave imports to Cuba seemed to have dropped significantly from 1818 to 1821. In fact, however, Havana had then become the central terminus for that traffic in both the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, and that port contains the most documents concerning slave demographics in Cuba. Because that trade was technically illegal, many of the cargoes that docked at Havana and other Cuban ports such as Matanzas, Santiago, Cienfuegos, Cardenas, and other outliers, weren't documented at all, many slaves even being unloaded inconspicuously at coves and bayous directly on the beach. From 1816 to 1821, slaves costed a lot more in New Orleans than in Havana, $800 for a prime-age male in 1816, cresting to almost $1100 by 1817, while Cuban prices fell to under 400 pesos in 1820. These five years saw the second largest uninterrupted influx of slaves to Cuba during 1808 to 1865, though the numbers fell from over 25,000 in 1817, dropping almost 5,000
slaves per annum from 1817 to 1821 when it fell below 9,000. It was during this time that former Governor of Georgia, David B. Mitchell, abused his post as President Madison's agent to the Creek Indians by establishing a way station for slaves smuggled in to Fernandina (on the border between Georgia and Florida) from Cuba and brought overland to the newer cotton plantations in Alabama. Meanwhile, maritime smuggling continued undeterred. The customs collector at Mobile complained in 1820,

"From the Chandalier Islands to the Perdido River, including the coast, and numerous other islands, we have only a small boat with four men and an inspector to oppose the whole confederation of smugglers and pirates." (Stafford, 131)

Slave ships ferrying Africans from Cuba to the U.S. were intercepted off of the Florida Keys, Pensacola, and Tampa Bay, among other points of egress. With 2,316 miles of Cuban coastline to patrol, and countless more miles of other isles and mainland, it is not surprising that the 30 or so British Royal Navy ships stationed in the West Indies captured only 65 slavers from 1821 to 1838.

In 1846, Ezra Seaman, prominent economist and theorist, estimated that over 100,000 slaves were illegally imported to the U.S. from 1830 to 1840. (Tenzer, 6) In that decade, according to the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, 186,179 slaves arrived in Cuba, more than ever before. These imports coincided with higher New Orleans slave prices than in Cuba from 1832 to 1842. There were many factors for the increased importance of slavery after 1830, not the least of which was Andrew Jackson’s Indian Removal policies that resulted in the mass exodus of Chickasaws, Creeks, and Cherokees from Mississippi, Alabama, and the Tennessee Valley by 1835. Speculative land ventures in these emptied-out areas, often contingent upon future cotton profits, was a major reason behind the Panic of 1837, the year that New Orleans slave prices shot to their highest level,
over $1,300 for a prime-age male slave. Not until 1859 did U.S. slave prices top those of 1837. Slave prices rose in contrast to U.S. cotton prices, which fell from 16¢ per pound in 1834 to only 9¢ per pound in 1837.

The numbers in the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database don’t allow for eyewitness observations of the illegal slave trade in action. Even estimates of the slave traffic prepared by the British Foreign Officers in Cuba between 1808 and 1865 are disregarded or erroneously revised by historians such as Curtin and Eltis. The Database does calculate, however, that slave imports to Cuba never reached a higher number than 26,290 in 1859, while estimates provided by the British Foreign Office tally over 30,000 in the same year.

The reports of many contemporaries suggest greater numbers. For example, in 1838, Royal Navy Commander Alexander Milne of Britain's West India Squadron reported from Havana that,

"40,000 Slaves are landed yearly in Cuba...the risk of landing [them] is not great. Our current cruise has been a very stupid one, not having caught any slavers, having seen one a long way off which escaped by the aid of a dark night. [W]e are blockading a Harbour near Havanah on a dead lee shore, it becomes somewhat tiresome. The three harbours are Mariel, Cabanas & Bahia Honda, which I suppose to be the places where the slaves are landed[,] The villains are so cunning & so cautious that they are rather difficult to find, but more difficult to capture." (Beeler. 9,15,17)

[See table above]

A narrowing of destinations for African slaves became obvious as Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, and Peru, all Spanish possessions, declared independence from Spain between 1811 and 1821. Except for Peru, all of these countries abolished slavery before 1830. This left Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Brazil anomalies, all still steadily welcoming illegal slavers and their African contraband in the face of a professed
international commitment to halt the trade altogether. Brazil’s declaration of independence from Portugal in 1825 and Britain’s support of it resulted in Brazil officially relinquishing the slave trade in 1830, though it was only effective for two years before illegal slave trafficking began to surge there. Britain’s policing of the slave trade after 1808 was not forcefully applied in the West Indies until after 1834, when slavery itself was abolished throughout the empire (except in India and South Africa). Until then, Jamaica, Barbados, Dominica, Trinidad, and Demerara, all remained part of an intra-colonial slave trade. Nonetheless, after 1830, Cuba, Brazil, and the United States remained the principal destinations for African slaves in the western hemisphere.

Furthering the unique relationship between proponents of slavery in the United States and Cuba, the prices of land and slaves were much lower in Cuba than in the U.S., an advantage that many Southerners availed themselves of by migrating to Cuba to become plantation owners. New York merchant Joseph J. Dimock, whose wife’s family, the Dewolfs, owned a Cuban sugar plantation, published his observations of Cuba in the New York Times in 1859,

“I learn that there are Americans in all parts of the island, and the number permanently located here last year was estimated at twenty-five hundred, mostly employed as machinists and mechanics, though there are quite a number of planters and administrators on estates who are Americans... I notice the cars and locomotives are all of American manufacture and the engineers are Yankees... Cuba has been called the hot-bed of slavery, and it is in a certain sense true, but I claim as a general thing, the slaves have more privileges than in the States. The slave trade still flourishes, and if reports may be believed it does also in the United States in 1859!”

Lewis C. Gray, the foremost authority on antebellum agriculture, stated "that a greater labor supply was more necessary to the Lower South than acquisitions of land."
To this end the cotton plutocrats tried to corner the slave market by investing in political and military actions, their object being both the re-opening of the slave trade, and the liberation of Cuba from Spain for annexation to the United States. To wrest Cuba from Spain, Southern slave interests along with their partisan Northern merchants, funded military expedition, called filibusters. Leaders of these invasions include Narcisco Lopez in 1849 through 1851, John Quitman in 1854, and William Walker, whose primary aim was the conquest of Cuba after his forces occupied Nicaragua in 1856. While these extra-legal adventures were being conducted throughout the 1850's, the Southern constituency in Congress lobbied on behalf of the cotton planters to repeal prohibition of the slave trade. Between 1854 and 1859, commercial conventions backed by Southern legislatures appointed committees for this purpose in New Orleans, Savannah, Knoxville, Montgomery, and Vicksburg. Predictably, most Northerners, except for ship owners, did not support reopening the slave trade, refusing to compete with slave laborers. However, the border states of Virginia and Maryland, possessing half a million slaves in 1850, also objected to reopening the trade, afraid that their monopoly on the legal interstate slave trade would be endangered. Likewise, opponents of the Cuban annexation schemes turned out to be Louisiana sugar interests who feared their produce would be devalued by Cuba's output.

However, by 1860, the majority of members of the Southern slavocracy, fifty of whom owned more than 500 slaves, fittingly feared the violent new abolitionism represented by John Brown, and having failed in their endeavors to re-open the slave trade or to annex Cuba, turned to secession as their only avenue for retaining livelihoods dependent on slave labor. Jefferson Davis, after prolonged discussion with these same
Southern constituents who desired an open slave trade and a Latin-American slave empire, suggested an end to the slave trade as part of the platform of the Confederacy. However, this was just political posturing as Davis hoped to placate abolitionists in Great Britain from opposing support of the Confederacy. In any case,

"[T]he foreign ministers of the Confederate states were assured that while the Confederate government had no power to reopen the slave trade, the states could, if they wanted to, and that the ministers were not to discuss any treaties to prohibit the trade."
(Dubois, W.E.B. *Black Reconstruction*, 1935, p51)

As it happened, the same usurious pattern that Northern U.S. bankers and merchants used to mire the Southern cotton planters was also used to trap the sugar planters of Cuba who were charged a minimum of 12% interest on their loans. Many hacendados desperately attempted to maximize their profits by reducing the cost of transporting cane to the grinders and then to port with hogsheads packed with sugar and molasses, but the ever-increasing volume of cane produce intensified this bottle-neck. Another problem was keeping a constant supply of firewood for the continuous boiling of sugar in the kettles. Driving their slaves to new heights of mortal exhaustion was often the only solution planters had for these predicaments. The result of this vicious cycle was that Cuban planters found themselves,

"heavily indebted not only to the merchants in Havana and Matanzas but also to the large consortiums in New York and Boston. As the debts increased, there was little recourse left to the American interests but to continue subsidizing the planters until an unusually large harvest enabled them to recover some of their money. Unfortunately, the only way some U.S. interests could salvage anything was by taking a personal interest in Cuban estates, sometimes foreclosing against the planter's crops."
(Knight, W. Franklin. *Slave Society In Cuba During the 19th Century*, 1970, p119)
During the 1850’s, the production of U.S. cotton (and to a considerable degree Louisiana’s sugar output) and Cuban sugar reached new peaks. In Havana, slave prices had escalated dramatically from 432 pesos in 1855 to 696 pesos in 1858, while sugar production in the latter half of the decade fluctuated wildly. In 1855 an exceptional harvest produced almost 463,000 metric tons of sugar, dropping by 46,000 metric tons or about 10% to 416,000 metric tons in 1856. These figures showed a modest production increase of 20,000 metric tons in 1857, adding up to a total of 436,000 metric tons for that year. Sugar production declined 10,000 metric tons to 426,000 metric tons in 1858. Production totals regained ground in 1859, the peak year of slave imports to the island, when about 469,000 metric tons were produced. Revealingly, profits from the re-export of slaves to U.S. factored into the socioeconomic conditions in Cuba during this period. Slave prices in Cuba dropped to 650 pesos in 1859, falling further to 517 pesos by 1862, after re-exports to the U.S. had definitely ended. Interestingly, slave prices fell along with slave imports even while sugar production surged: 469,000 metric tons in 1859 to 547,000 in 1865. As re-exporting the slaves to the U.S. was no longer profitable, the surplus of slaves in Cuba lost their market value. It is especially telling that an unprecedented 585,814 metric tons of Cuban sugar were produced in 1867, the year that slave imports from Africa to Cuba stopped altogether.
Throughout the 1850’s the sugar parishes of Louisiana, each plantation with about 75 slaves, produced an average of 136,000 metric tons annually throughout decade. By 1860, 514 metric tons of this domestic sugar was exported. Over 314,000 metric tons of Cuban sugar was exported to the U.S. in the same year. There was a growing demand, especially in Northern cities, for the varying qualities of Cuba’s refined sugar, and molasses also was crucial for the rum distilleries of Boston and New York. In 1860, the U.S. re-exported 13,663 metric tons of Cuban sugar products.

After 1827, Cuba had surpassed Jamaica as the world’s largest cane sugar supplier, accounting for 19% of the world’s supply of all sugar by 1840, 25% by 1850, and roughly 33% by 1860 (the British West Indies, Brazil, the East Indies, and the Mediterranean also...
contained myriad of sources for sugar cane). Cuba’s biggest customer was the United States, which imported over 40% of that island’s total sugar production in 1860, and over 65% by the end of the Civil War.

(Scott, Emancipation, 1985, p12, 22, 36; Schmitz, Transformation of the Southern Cane Sugar Sector: 1860-1930, 270-271)

Preeminent Cuban historians state that the Cuban slave population "did not experience natural demographic expansion." (Bergad, et al. 38) A proper census, one that included an inventory of all the plantations on the island was not, however, forced upon the slaveholders of Cuba until after 1866. For the duration of the slave trade to Cuba (illegal after 1820 by Spanish law) calculating an approximate number of slaves depends upon how many of them were smuggled in clandestinely, bypassing port authorities and taken directly to the privacy of sugar estates in the western counties of Havana, Matanzas, Santa Clara, Trinidad and Cienfuegos, among others, and in the less cultivated eastern counties of Guantanamo and Santiago. Given the scarcity of historical records for Cuba’s slave demography, historians have postulated high mortality rates for the consistent decline in the Cuban slave population. Another contributing factor, ignored by most scholars, is the certainty that many slaves in Cuba were not registered by their owners or counted either by the census takers or customs clerks. Many of those slaves corralled secretly were undoubtedly under the control of slave-trading agents and sugar factors in Havana and New York, who arranged for their re-exportation to the United States. Death rates exceeded birth rates for the slaves in Cuba, as was true throughout the Americas, but significantly, an observable differential between slave fertility and mortality on American plantations is altogether skewed by the presence of illegally imported slaves from Cuba, the number of
which if ascertained judiciously could expose American and Cuban slave mortality rates for what they actually were.

Determining the approximate number of slaves that were siphoned from Cuba to the U.S. depends on another unknown, the number of slaves involved with sugar production on the island. Specific information about the occupation of slaves is largely absent in the censuses because few inventories of plantation slaves were kept and extant plantation records for slave births and deaths are scarce. Therefore, at present, except for the estimates made for years after 1860, it is difficult to calculate an average number for slaves employed at any given sugar plantation or mill for the preceding years. Especially since the number of ingenios or sugar mills increased from 400 in 1800, to 1,318 in 1860.

Complicating the calculation for the numbers of slaves working on ingenios is the fact there were four basic types of mills, animal-powered, water-powered, semi-mechanized, and mechanized; all of which generated varying demands for labor and operated simultaneously throughout the 19th century. Productivity at mills accelerated with the introduction of steam engines, vacuum technology, and railroads built exclusively for sugar production.

The first animal-driven sugar mills in Cuba, stocked with about 100 slaves, required the produce of 300 to 400 acres, but by 1860 the average sugar mill processed about 1500 acres. In 1860, 889 Semi-mechanized sugar mills using steam engines to grind the cane and fire the kettles, accounted for about 67% of Cuba’s mills, and processed 395,273 tons of sugar, an average of 444 tons for each mill, over 75% of total production. In the same year, 64 fully mechanized steam-powered mills with vacuum pans had been implemented, processing about 1,192 metric tons of sugar each, 76,276 metric tons total. By 1862, when
455,000 metric tons of sugar were produced, and after Cuban slave imports began a drastic decline, approximately 172,671 slaves, 47% of the slave population, were working 1,365 sugar mills, 949 of which were steam powered. In that year 196,000 slaves also toiled as domestic servants, cattle ranchers, and plantation laborers for coffee and tobacco. In 1862, the year in which re-exports of slaves to the U.S. from Cuba ended, an average of 113 slaves worked on the island’s 1,365 ingenios.

(Fraginals, 84-85; Tomich, 306; Scott, 22)

There were almost 400 miles of railroads in Cuba by 1850, for the sole purpose of carrying white sugar and molasses to port and returning carrying new machinery for the sugar mills. By 1860, there was almost 800 miles of track laid primarily for sugar production. Sugar exports went from under 300,000 tons in 1850, to well over 500,000 tons in 1862, the same year that the Anglo-American Agreement (Seward-Lyons Treaty) took effect, thereby allowing the British to board and arrest American slavers. As mentioned previously, Cuba’s peak year for slave imports was 1859, with over 26,000 documented arrivals in that year. If the slaves landed in Cuba had worked mainly in the Cuban sugar industry it would follow that Cuba’s sugar exports would swell in the year when the most slaves were landed on the island. Yet, shining a light on the slaves actual destination – The United States, Cuba reported a decrease in sugar exports, roughly 25,000 tons, for the year of their peak slave imports, 1859. (Tomich, 308)

**Production of Raw Cotton in the U.S.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bales</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bales</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bales</th>
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<td>1814</td>
<td>146,290</td>
<td>1838</td>
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<td>1815</td>
<td>208,896</td>
<td>1839</td>
<td>1,651,995</td>
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(Tomich, 308)
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<tr>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Value 2</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value 3</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Value 4</th>
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<td>1817</td>
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<td>261,233</td>
<td>1842</td>
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<td>1819</td>
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<td>1843</td>
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<td>1822</td>
<td>438,871</td>
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<td>1799</td>
<td>41,797</td>
<td>1823</td>
<td>386,625</td>
<td>1847</td>
<td>2,126,208</td>
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<td>73,145</td>
<td>1824</td>
<td>449,321</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>2,612,299</td>
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<td>564,263</td>
<td>1851</td>
<td>2,796,365</td>
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<td>679,206</td>
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<td>1829</td>
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<td>1830</td>
<td>731,542</td>
<td>1854</td>
<td>2,705,252</td>
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<td>167,189</td>
<td>1831</td>
<td>804,598</td>
<td>1855</td>
<td>3,217,417</td>
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<td>156,740</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>815,047</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>2,870,678</td>
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<td>1809</td>
<td>171,369</td>
<td>1833</td>
<td>929,990</td>
<td>1857</td>
<td>3,008,869</td>
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<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>177,638</td>
<td>1834</td>
<td>961,338</td>
<td>1858</td>
<td>3,754,346</td>
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<td>1811</td>
<td>167,189</td>
<td>1835</td>
<td>1,060,711</td>
<td>1859</td>
<td>4,541,285</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812</td>
<td>156,740</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>1,127,836</td>
<td>1860</td>
<td>3,837,402</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1813</td>
<td>156,740</td>
<td>1837</td>
<td>1,426,891</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>4,485,893</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For over fifty years (1808 to 1861) Cuba was the central artery, north of the equator, for an illegal slave trade from Africa, partly because of their rapidly expanding sugar industry but perhaps more so because of exploding cotton production in the U.S. After 1815, with the Napoleonic Wars and Anglo-American hostilities ended and the Jeffersonian embargoes repealed, the U.S. began to supply the bulk of Great Britain's cotton imports, consistently exporting at least 2/3rds of U.S. cotton as raw materials, shipping well over 13,000,000,000 tons by 1860. From 1826 on, when reliable records of the trade begin, American consumption of its own raw cotton was consistently lower than the amount it exported to France, Northern Europe, and other ports. U.S. commodities are examined in greater detail in chapter one.

Demand for slaves in the cotton growing regions of the American South and Southwest diverted many slaves from the Cuban ingenios to the United States. These African bozales, also called "salt-water" slaves or "the muzzled ones", had been "seasoned" (or returned to health after the horrors of the middle passage and acclimated to their new environment) and "broken in" (trained for slavery). The sugar plantations of Matanzas, Santa Clara, Havana, Santiago, and others, served as halfway houses for slaves that were eventually re-exported across the Gulf into New Orleans, Galveston, and Florida, as well as through many other minor ports of call, bayous, shoals, and cays along the Gulf Coast. An often hidden corollary to this profitable scheme was an understanding between corrupt U.S. and Cuban officials that allowed slavers relatively easy egress into Havana and other Cuban ports and thenceforth into the U.S.
Therefore, one missing factor, call it X, is the number of slaves illegally imported to the U.S. from 1808 to 1861 with its corresponding proportional increases as reflected in the U.S. Censuses including that of 1860, is a percentage, call it Y, of the total number of slaves imported to Cuba in the same period, and that is dependent on another variable, call it Z: the average number of slaves needed for labor on *ingenios*, factoring in the increased productivity of the three basic types of sugar mills in Cuba in their respective phases of technological development; a number arrived at by dividing the total number of slaves imported to Cuba after subtracting the aggregate of slaves necessary for tobacco and coffee production, and for domestic service. The peak periods of slave imports to Cuba occurred exactly when the New Orleans Price index for slaves indicate higher prices in America than those in Cuba: from 1815 to 1820, 1832 to 1842, 1845 to 1855, and 1858 to 1860. Traffickers and dealers who purchased slaves from Cuba during these periods made larger profits when they resold the slaves in the U.S. Even though Cuban prices sometimes exceeded those in the U.S., incentives for re-export remained because demand for slaves soared in the Deep South and Texas and they could still be brought in from directly Africa and re-exported at a great profit. From 1808 to 1850, the price for a slave on the Atlantic coast of Africa averaged about 13.4£

**Real Slave Prices on the Atlantic Coast of Africa in Pounds Sterling 1808-1850**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Prices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1808-1814</td>
<td>13.9£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815-1820</td>
<td>9.4£</td>
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<tr>
<td>1821-1825</td>
<td>12.9£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826-1830</td>
<td>18.3£</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1831-1835 12.9£
1836-1840 18.5£
1841-1845 16.7£
1846-1850 23.1£


During the 1850's slave trafficking from Africa was carried often on swift Baltimore-built clippers, carrying up to 500 slaves, but also increasingly on steam-powered vessels that could hold over 1,000 slaves. Enforcement of the prohibition along the African coast and in the Caribbean, despite the honest efforts of the British squadrons, was sporadic at best even before the U.S. devoted a concerted effort to stop the trade after Lincoln was elected. Even with the touted success of British naval attempts to stop the trade, more slaves landed in Cuba in 1859 than in any year previous. The failure to prohibit the slave trade was endemic, on both sea and land. Just before the Civil War, between Washington and Charleston,

"...not a single federal soldier was stationed and over the lower South there was only a handful of tiny garrisons: Key West, Pensacola, Baton Rouge. On the western frontier there were 14,000 soldiers; but in the East the militia defended the country, and these citizen soldiers were under the absolute control of the separate states. Federal marshals had no mounted troops to help them look for smuggled slaves. United States naval cruisers were everywhere but at home—unless they were in the dockyard for repairs—and there were hardly fifteen revenue cutters to guard the entire coastline of the United States." (Howard, 148)

It is no wonder that slave imports to Cuba dried up after 1859, especially as those who were carrying on the illicit traffic, Americans foremost, had largely vanished from the seas after the Union blockade and the Anglo-American Treaty of 1862 (Lyons-Seward
Treaty) that finally ended the inviolability of slave ships flying under the protection of the American flag. Robert Wilson Shufeldt, U.S. Consul General at Havana during the first two years of the Civil War, wrote at the beginning of 1861,

"However humiliating may be the confession, the fact nevertheless is beyond question that nine-tenths of the vessels engaged in the slave trade are American...the main reason why American vessels are employed is the immunity which our National flag gives...the diplomatic dogma that the flag 'covers the vessel' is inconsistent..." (Drake, Shufeldt, 229)

Before Lincoln appointed him Consul General, Shufeldt had been a naval officer (1839-1854), then a merchant ship captain operating between Havana, New Orleans, and New York. (1854-1860). He daily witnessed the volume of the illegal slave trade and its inner workings amongst the ports. He later described in intricate detail how slaver expeditions were carried out.

Slave merchants, belonging to a slave-trade organization based in Havana, with offices in Manhattan, would contact each other through agents, for the acquisition of a vessel by way of Baltimore or New England through a Manhattan slave ship broker who might also provide a ship captain. The slave-ship captain, informed as to the particulars of the agreement between the New York and Havana merchants, thereby signs into ownership of the ship with a co-signatory, usually a Yankee slave trade investor. After bribing the U.S. Marshal, ships would load a false cargo in which slave provisions were stowed, then clear customs and head to Havana, where lumber and tools for constructing a slave deck were loaded on along with extra provisions for the slaves. Next, the ship's crew was selected from among the riff raff of Havana; hardened sailors, sea-borne vagrants, and other unscrupulous smugglers. The most important member of this group of contractors was the "sobrecargo", who agreed to impersonate a Spanish ship captain if boarded by a
cruiser from the American anti-slave trade squadron. Before clearing Havana for the Congo, more perquisites were exacted by the corrupt bureaucrats of the U.S. Consulate. After taking on slaves in Africa, the ship would usually return to Cuba and unload them to a slave dealer there. (Frederick, Shufeldt, 220-225) One of these dealers remarked,

"It was frequently necessary...to try to confuse the British navy about where slaves would be landed...As soon as the vessel [was] driven close to the beach and anchored, her boats [were] packed with slaves, while the craft [was] quickly dismantled to avoid detection from sea or land. The busy skiffs [were] hurried to and fro incessantly till the cargo [was] entirely ashore, when the secured gangs [of slaves], led by the captain, and escorted by armed sailors, is rapidly marched to the nearest plantation...A messenger would be sent to Havana or Matanzas or Santiago, where the owners would send clothes and money for the crew. Preparations would be made through the brokers for the sale. The ship, if small, would be sent under a coasting flag to a port of clearance. If the craft was large, she might well be sunk or burned where she lay at anchor." (Thomas, The Slave Trade, 724)

The recent scholarship about the high incidence of American owned, operated, and financed slave ships sailing from Africa bound for Cuba and the few documented instances of American slavers voyaging from Cuba into Gulf ports and bayous from Texas to Florida documents only the shadow of the illegal slave trade in the United States. The American complicity with the illegal slave trade and the Cuban slave market is now more easily seen than ever. Indeed, the very authorities on the slave trade that have minimized the importance and size of the illegal slave trade to the United States after 1808 are being undermined by their own resources, especially since 19th century slave manifests and cargos are now being continually added to the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database.

Challenges to the consensus about the illegal slave trade, which coalesced around Philip Curtin’s now outdated findings in late twentieth century, should have been encouraged by the scholarly fortitude of W.E.B. Dubois in his irrefutable Suppression of the
African Slave Trade to the United States of America 1638-1870 (1896), who lived on to regret that he’d not spent more time and effort on the illegal imports. Scholars ever since, who have veered away from Du Bois’ meticulous research, and for whatever reason, be it revisionist visions of American history or overt racism, continue to trivialize the illegal slave trade into the United States from 1808 to 1861. Token reminders of this folly are futile academic attempts to explain the 4.4 million Africans in the U.S. Census of 1860. How could the approximately one million Africans enslaved in the United States in 1807 have, under such debilitating and lethal conditions, quadruple in population to nearly 4,000,000 by 1860? Such a population growth rate would equal or exceed the fastest national population growth rates in the world today, according to the United Nations. Considering the epidemic nature of disease and early death in U.S. slave populations between 1807 and 1863 it is blatantly self-evident that far more slaves were illegally imported to the United States than scholars like Curtin are willing to admit.

In 1972, extrapolating from Curtin, Jack Eblen opined in his demographic study, Black Population In Antebellum America 1820-1860, amazing as it sounds, that "the amount of illegal importation cannot have exceeded by much the amount of population loss attributable to escape and emigration." That "authority" deduced that "the average black woman in the antebellum U.S. bore seven children", even while conceding "very high, perhaps unreasonably extreme, infant mortality levels", and that the crude death rate of the American slave population was "approximately treble the rate general to present day Africa." Eblen could hardly have read, much less understood Kenneth Staamp’s Peculiar Institution (1956), because by implication and virtual documentation it uncovers a high mortality rate but a very low fertility rate among U.S. slave populations.
Other authorities, such as British historians Kenneth Morgan and Michael Tadman, both vociferously disallow any significance of an illegal slave trade into the United States. In the United States the torch of denial is held highest by David Eltis, discussed earlier in this chapter, and considered by many to be the foremost transatlantic slave trade authority in the U.S. today. Eltis uses as his trump card is a peremptory statement that the U.S. Census of 1870 shows "less than one tenth of 1\% of the black population of the United States was African born," (Eltis, U.S. Transatlantic Slave Trade, 352). Eltis’ skewed findings are questioned by Stark’s more recent scholarship in Freebooters and Smugglers, 2007 claiming over 700,000 slaves were illegal sold in the U.S. While Starks’ numbers may be overly grandiose, Eltis fails to mention that the status of Africans was completely different in the 9th Census (1870), when they became free individuals ostensibly protected by the Constitution, than in the 8th (1860), where they had virtually no legal rights and counted as 3/5ths of a human being in determining the population per congressional district in the South. African-born former slaves had a reason to describe themselves as native-born in 1870, especially with the memory of emancipation still fresh in their minds. The 14th Amendment guaranteed citizenship rights to "all persons born or naturalized within the United States."

"...not to those who had been smuggled in by stealth. Inasmuch as ex-slaves who were born in Africa and smuggled into the United States could not be counted in a state’s population of citizens on which congressional representation for the state was based, the Southern states had motivation to show as few African-born blacks as possible in the 1870 census." (Tenzer, 17)

With the promise of "forty acres and a mule", well known to the millions of dispossessed Africans in the Deep South, it stands to reason that many Africans were
disingenuous about their origins to ensure their status as landholders and citizens of the United States. *It remains unclear* whether Southern blacks were *regularly* informed by the census takers, or whether they *became aware otherwise* that the 14th Amendment, literally interpreted would require that they be sent back to Africa, as the clause quoted above implies. *It is also possible that the radical Republicans in charge of the census and Southern state governments encouraged former slaves* *not* to say they weren’t smuggled in. *And since* the 1870 census shows that the overwhelming majority of emancipated slaves and their family members took on the surnames of their former plantation masters, vestiges of African heritage *were not widely documented by the census.*

The 1870 Census took place during Reconstruction of the post-bellum South, an era of almost unbelievable sociopolitical chaos and confusion.

"Congressman James A. Garfield helped to nominate Francis Amasa Walker as superintendent for the U.S. Census of 1870. Walker was confirmed, but he had to work within the confines of the census act of 1850, which had been modified only slightly to reflect the abolition of slavery and to eliminate some of the ambiguities in the 1850 and 1860 enumerations. In spite of Walker’s preparations, the Census of 1870 suffered from an undercount of unprecedented proportions in the South. Given the limits imposed by the act of 1850, very little could be done from Washington to prevent the fiasco. The politics of Reconstruction dictated that marshals in the South, often non-residents of their districts, had to appoint loyal Republicans. The liberal use of census patronage to attract freedmen to the Party led to the appointment of illiterates as enumerators. Even when the enumerators were capable people, they had to contend with white hostility and black fear. Sometimes the work was illegally subcontracted, and sometimes, as Henry Gannett reported, census data were gathered at "court sessions, musters, public meetings, etc." Walker initially estimated the undercount of Southern blacks to be about 350 to 400 thousand but he later conceded that it probably ran as high as 510,000." *(Davis, Robert C. *Confidentiality and the Census, 1790-1929*,1973, Appendix C)*

A suspicious precursor to the questionable census information reported in the 1860 and 1870 censuses was an 1859 report prepared by Benjamin Slocumb for the Buchanan Administration, which prompted the president to state that "not a single slave has been imported into the United States in violation of the laws prohibiting the African slave trade."
"Slocumb was sent [to the South] by Jacob Thompson, Secretary of the Interior—the same Jacob Thompson who was a slaveholder and a personal friend of Jefferson Davis, and who later resigned from the administration to organize Confederate army troops in Mississippi and become a secret agent for the Confederacy." (Tenzer, 17)

The notoriety of the slave ship *Wanderer*, seized by federal marshals near Savannah in late 1858, prompted the Buchanan Administration’s appointment of Slocumb, whose investigation reported the *Wanderer* incident as an anomaly in an otherwise solidly enforced prohibition of the slave trade. Detractors of the existence of the illegal slave trade to the U.S. often cite the *Wanderer* as prima facie evidence that the traffic was practically non-existent since the fervor caused by the *Wanderer* was such a unique event. However, the *Wanderer* was one of the few slave ships that came directly from Africa to the U.S., and conspicuously, it was owned by ardent anti-abolitionists, particularly Charles Lamar from Georgia who actively lobbied the U.S. Congress to re-open the slave trade. It can be assumed that experienced slave traffickers would not have made the mistake of landing an entire schooner with a cargo of almost 500 slaves directly onto the American mainland in 1858. Also, it should not surprise anyone that Slocumb, whose efficacy as a secret agent is highly suspect, claimed there was virtually no evidence of slave trading activity.

Professor Eltis, along with a retinue of historical revisionists, asserted that no official correspondence from British consuls and ministers ever once indicated that any slaves they intercepted were headed to the mainland of the United States. This is certainly preposterous and Sian Rees’ book about the British Navy’s African Squadron (*The Ships That Stopped the Slave Trade*, 2009) clearly dispels such nonsense. Eltis’ hubris became even more self-evident.
when apparently suggesting that his personal research into some, surely not all, of the 1,100 volumes of correspondence kept in Britain's Slave Trade Department of the Foreign Office, was conclusive and warrants no further inquiry.

In the final assessment of the populations of slaves illegally imported to the U.S., numbering as many as 200,000, uncovering the full truth is vital for the same reasons that slave traders and their enablers concealed it. Because, as Du Bois argued, it accurately reflects the dehumanizing lengths to which some went to procure forced labor to sustain continual economic growth. The corroborating evidence linking the illegal slave trade to the American mainland is clear. Diplomatic posturing in the era of the illegal transatlantic slave trade had little effect on the illegal importation of slaves from Africa. one of the most convincing pieces evidence of the re-export of many, if not most, of the African imported to Cuba after 1808 is that the African percentage of the Cuban population decreased from 58% in 1841 to 43% in 1861, even though far fewer Europeans than Africans arrived there during that period. Furthermore, the dramatic decline in the arrivals from Africa after 1859, when over 26,000 slaves per annum dwindled to 722 in 1866 blatantly points to the ultimate abolition of slavery in the United States as the prime motive in the reduction of documented Cuban slave imports. Of course it took awhile for the slavers to even learn about the outbreak of war and the blockade in 1861, which many may have expected to end soon. In any case there were doubtless so many slaves on hand in Cuba in 1860, being seasoned and broken in that the they were more than enough to supply the needs of Cuban plantations for almost a decade however high the mortality rate and low the reproduction rate was for that number of years. The detailed accounts of the Cuban sugar industry are vital to understanding the economic dynamics that illuminate the untold tide of slaves
smuggled into the Untied States With the rapid improvement of productivity in Cuba’s sugar industry, a much smaller labor force could produce much more molasses, raw sugar, and refined sugar, so that the need for new African slaves steadily diminished. Yet, even after these technological advances become commonplace in Cuba’s sugar industry, Cuba’s documented import of slaves did not reach its peak for another thirty years. Unflinching accuracy in revealing the numbers of people whose lives are lost to revisionist histories is essential to societies’ struggle to evolve and “form a more perfect union.” (Lincoln, Gettysburg)