

CHAPTER FOURTEEN AMERICAN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS - Ed Sebesta 11/30/2017
Web version

I wrote at the beginning of this book that it would not be primarily about history, but neo-Confederate ideas are communicated to new generations and are given legitimacy when they are transmitted through history textbooks. Consciously or not, white nationalism often becomes the curriculum of public schools. In a review of a history textbook there will be some discussion of history.

It should not be surprising that a great portion of the public are banal white nationalists, that is persons for whom black lives don't matter or don't matter much. The public school systems in their American history classes have taught children banal white nationalism and not so banal white nationalism for generations with banal to not so banal white nationalistic American history textbooks.

The author has purchased American history textbooks both for the public schools and the private Christian schools at various times over the last 20 years to review them. The school books written for the private Christian schools have been abysmal and won't be reviewed here.

Though there has been some progress in American history textbooks in recent years, the improvement has been relative from a low level. When the author reviewed the new notorious Texas teaching standards regarding the Civil War and Reconstruction for *Politics and the History Curriculum: The Struggle Over Standards in Texas and the Nation*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), he told the editor that though the new standards were really bad, the prior standards weren't very good either. (The author purchased all the new Texas teaching standards American history textbooks and hopes to review them some day.)

In reading these new textbooks, it is clear that even with their substantial improvements over their predecessors, the newer texts still incorporate a banal white nationalist message, in particular, of those banal white nationalists who want to have a nice guest house for minorities.

So for this section two of the better American history textbooks were selected and read for review. One book is the Teacher' Edition, for the AP Edition for the 16th edition of *The American Pageant: History of the American People*, by David M. Kennedy of Stanford University and Lizabeth Cohen of Harvard University and Thomas A. Bailey, now deceased, who wrote the original editions which Kennedy and Cohen have updated. It is published by Cengage Learning headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts in 2015.

The other is *The American Journey: A History of the United States*, Vol. 1 which is to 1877, and Vol. 2 which is since 1865, 8th edition by David Goldfield of the Univ. of North

Carolina, Charlotte, Carl Abbott of Portland State University, Virginia DeJohn Anderson of Univ. of Colorado, Boulder, Jo Ann E. Argersinger of Southern Illinois University, Peter H. Argersinger of Southern Illinois University, and William L. Barney of Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. It is published by Pearson Education Inc., of Hoboken, New Jersey, copyright 2017. The Library of Congress listing has David R. Goldfield as the author. Unfortunately, given that the review of *American Pageant* has made this section over 9,000 words, *American Journey* will need to be reviewed elsewhere and at a later time no matter how richly it deserves criticism.

Before *American Pageant* can be reviewed, three concepts need to be understood.

1. What slavery really was in the antebellum South.
2. White nationalism, banal and not, and African slavery.
3. The historical lateness of emancipation of slavery in America.

SLAVERY

The appalling nature of slavery is often not deeply and fully understood. This is revealed when people compare slavery to a low wage industrial jobs in the same historical period. Indeed these comparisons when made reveal the mentality of the person doing the comparisons regarding race. Being a slave is more than about no pay. Too many history textbooks discuss this or that particular aspect of slavery without giving a total picture.

As Harvard professor Orlando Patterson, explains in his book, "Slavery and Social Death," to be a slave is to not exist as a person. As a slave you exist as if you are cattle, a horse, a thing.¹

You will work in the fields from sunup to sundown and you will work grueling hard days to the limits of your endurance. You won't be able to slack off. That is why slave owners have the lash. You will toil six days a week and you might get Sunday off only because otherwise you might collapse. Sunday will be the time to clean your hovel and mend your clothes and recuperate from six days of grinding work. (12 x 6 = 84 hours a week minimum.) You will have no retirement, no pay, no expectations of being able to change your life or to advance yourself. All your tomorrows will be grinding labor and recuperation from exhaustion. You have no future, and you can expect that neither will your children, grandchildren and the generations that come after for all time to come them will have a future. All your tomorrows will be the same grinding labor.

You will die having spent your entire life doing grinding labor under the fear of the lash.

It is likely you will die early.

An example would be the mortality of the slaves on Jefferson Davis's Brierfield plantation in Mississippi; many were worked to and early death. As William J. Cooper explains in *Jefferson Davis, American*, "The Continuing imbalance towards younger slaves on Brierfield strongly indicates that only a small percentage of Davis's bondspople lived past forty," and "This rarity of the elderly also helps explain why the master of Brierfield evinced such affection for the ancient slave known as Uncle Bob. He had practically no peers." Cooper explains that Davis was a steady purchaser of young slaves. His plantation was a slow death camp.² Jefferson Davis was the one and only president of the Confederate States of America.

As a slave you will have no choice in food. It will be what the owner thinks is the most economical choice between cost and providing enough food calories so the owner can work you as hard as possible. Your clothes will be economical, the minimum needed to keep you alive and avoid complaints regarding community standards of modesty. (Yes there were occasions of such complaints.)

Each of your child's births will mark the beginning of another appalling life of slavery, where they will have no life of their own either, where they will be worked to the limits of their endurance for the rest of the days of their life, where they won't get an education, might be forbidden to learn to read and write, where you won't be able to protect them from cruelty, physical abuse, and rape. There will be the constant risk of you children being sold away from you, or you being sold away from them. In the 19th century having a relative sold away often meant you would never hear from them again. Slave owners didn't care.

If you are a woman you will run the risk of rape since you don't have any real rights. Teenage sons of slave owners as well as the slave owners themselves may want to use you for their sexual purposes. A child you give birth to might well be a child whose father was a rapist and the child will know as well as anyone else that they were conceived as a result of a rape.

As for some shallow talk that is heard in the media about African Americans being descendants from famous white people who owned slaves, it needs to be asked whether a slave can truly give consent to a person who might whip them or whip a brother or sister, a parent or child. The slave owner could whip to death or permanent injury a relative or sell away a relative or reassign a relative who is a house slave into the harsher labor in the fields. Can consent be freely given to a person who also controls all the possible rewards in your life, perhaps a little more for your children, perhaps a reassignment of a relative to a job out of the fields, perhaps leniency from the lash for a brother, a child, a parent? Can you freely give consent to the man who demands sex from you when he controls your entire universe and is the master of a system of terror?³ Slavery in the antebellum South was often sex slavery.

Slavery is a system of terror using violence and other means of terror. How else do you get people to work at the limits of their endurance for their entire lives for nothing and not have any life and to endure the endless suffering and to dissuade these slaves from running away?

The system of terror doesn't necessarily have to involve physical punishment, though it frequently was. There can be the threat to sell a child or a spouse away, or you away from them. Imagine having your 4 year old child being sold away with the likelihood that you would never seeing that child again.

Much blather is said about the frequency of whipping or how many masters where "cruel" or "kind." Slavery is cruelty and some masters were crueler than others. I think though a detailed description of a whipping removes whipping from the realm of abstraction into a felt reality. The following is an eye witness account of a slave whipping using salt quoted from the book *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865*, by Randolph B. Campbell.

This white man was whipping him and the blood was all over this nigger and he was saying "o, master, o, master, I pray you not to hit me anymore. Oh, Lordy, oh, Lordy, has mercy on me. Master, please has mercy on me, please has mercy." But this man wouldn't stop a minute and spits tobacco juice and cuss him and then starts in whipping him again. This nigger was jumping around on the ground all tied up, just like a chicken when you chops his head off when this man was whipping him and when the white folks would stop awhile this nigger would lay there and roll from side to side and beg for mercy.

... Then he tells some of the slaves to wash him off and put salt in the cut places and he stood there to watch them to see that they did. He was chewing his tobacco, spitting and cussing that nigger and when they gets him washed off and puts salt in the raw places he sure did scream and groan.

But when he groaned they just keeping putting the salt in to the wounds on his poor old beat up body.⁴

Sometimes it wasn't salt but brine. This is an account of the whippings Confederate General Robert E. Lee gave to his runaway slaves Wesley Norris who, in an interview, in 1866 described the event:

I was born a slave on the plantation of George Parke Custis; after the death of Mr. Custis, Gen. Lee, had been made the executor of the estate, assumed control of the slaves of Mr. Custis, in number about seventy; it was the general impression among the slaves of Mr. Custis that on his death they should be forever free; in fact this statement had been made to them by Mr. C years before; at his death we

were informed by Gen. Lee that by the conditions of the will we must remain slaves for five years; I remained with Gen. Lee for about seventeen months, when my sister Mary, a cousin of ours, and I determined to run away, which we did in the year 1859; we had already reached Westminster, in Maryland, on our way to the North, when we were apprehended and thrown into prison, and Gen. Lee notified of our arrest; we remained in prison fifteen days, when we were sent back to Arlington, we were immediately taken before Gen. Lee, who demanded the reason why we ran away; we frankly told him that we considered ourselves free; he then told us he would teach us a lesson we never would forget; he then ordered us to the barn, where, in his presence, we were tied firmly to posts by a Mr. Gwin, our overseer, who was ordered by Gen. Lee to strip us to the waist and give us fifty lashes each, excepting my sister, who received but twenty; we were accordingly stripped to the skin by the overseer, who, however had sufficient humanity to decline whipping us; accordingly Dick Williams, a county constable, was called in, who gave us the number of lashes ordered; Gen. Lee, in the meantime, stood by, and frequently enjoined Williams to 'lay it on well,' an injunction which he did not fail to heed; not satisfied with simply lacerating our naked flesh, Gen. Lee then ordered the overseer to thoroughly wash our backs with brine which was done.

At the end of this interview, Norris states that there were at least a dozen witnesses to substantiate his statements.⁵ Anyone who has ever had even a small cut come into contact with vinegar, salt or lemon juice knows how much it burns for just a tiny cut. Imagine your body cut up all over and getting brine washed over the cuts. It must have been like suffering in a burning hell.

Robert E. Lee was a man who had people tortured by having them tied up, whipped, and left in agony with brine poured on their wounds. On page 424 Kennedy and Cohen write, "Most conspicuous among a dozen or so first-rate commanders was grey-haired General Robert E. Lee, whose knightly bearing and chivalric sense of honor embodied the Southern ideal."

You can bet that the slaves on Robert E. Lee's plantation and those on the plantation in Texas where salt was packed into the wounds of a whipped slave made really sure that they didn't get their owners angry or give them reason or rage to whip them. A lot of blather is said about whipping wasn't that frequent to minimize the horror of slavery, it doesn't need to be to have a system of terror. What risk would you be willing to take of a whipping such as these two here described?

Above all this, you are exploited, brutalized, abuse and raped by those who have contempt for your human worth and frequently and publically make racist statements that you are inferior and degraded and not fully a human being or having human capacities even though they are the monsters.

BANAL AND NOT SO BANAL WHITE NATIONALISM

There are those in history who found African slavery intolerable and those today who find African slavery in history appalling. These people had and are sicken about African slavery as if it could or could have happen to them or their families or friends or neighbors. They imagine the African slave as a fellow human being.

Then there are those who don't really care that much. There are those who think slavery was bad and are glad it is gone, but it is just another progressive agenda item in American history like building the highway system or establishing public schools. They might celebrate Black History Month. However, deep down, they don't see the abolition of slavery as an imperative, that every year it persisted as a horror. They certainly don't consider any means necessary to liberate the slaves. To these banal white nationalists freeing the slaves is good as long as it doesn't cause too much trouble.

It comes down to who is really part your "us" or who is part of your "them" or "others."

LATE

As it was, slavery was only abolished in the United States of America in 1865 with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. In 1860 there was no official plan to abolish slavery in the United States. At the time the question was how much slavery was **not** going to expand into the spoils of the Mexican American War or by conquest of Latin America.

Without the Civil War, perhaps, and only perhaps, sometime, eventually slavery would have been abolished, perhaps in the 21st century or later. What trends there might be at that time leading to the eventual abolition of slavery were not moving quickly or at much speed at all and facing the opposition of slave owners every step of the way.

As the world changed with the increase of education and the improvement of communication such the development and spread of newspapers, radio, and later television and travel, what would happen if slavery had lasted into the modern world? It would have to be a very dark world in which America would still have slavery in a world of phones, television, and jet travel. It would have to be a dark world in which world public opinion would not see a modern slave America as deserving the enmity of all humanity. In such a world, talk of the president of the United States as being the leader of the free world would be laughable.

In such a world to be a patriotic American would have meant that you were a vicious person, and to have a moral sense a person would have to be unpatriotic.

Slavery is a system of terror by violence and as the anti-slavery movement moved forward the slave owners were ready to be violent at all hazards and consequences to defend slavery and were violent from the very beginning towards abolitionists and violently suppressing slave revolts.

THE AMERICAN PAGEANT

The *American Pageant*, textbook communicates the old “blundering generation” idea of the Civil War which sees the Civil War as resulting from the lack of compromise and political leadership. This is the idea that abolitionists and fire-eaters (radical slave owners) drove the nation to the Civil War and that there were supposedly no great compromisers in the late 1850s and in 1860 to make compromises to prevent civil war, such as those who made the Compromise of 1850 which is supposedly was a great compromise. It is essentially dismissive of the humanity of African Americans since it is their humanity which is compromised, nullified, and ignored by these so-called white negotiators and their supposedly great compromises. Basically it is an idea that abolitionists needlessly were troublemakers by making a big fuss about slavery.

This book, like so many American history text books, ahistorically uses the term “North” and “South” as if they were homogenous blocks, particularly in reference to the Federal government and the Confederacy. By treating the term “South” as identical with “Confederacy” this textbook instructs students in the “South,” however that might be defined, that the South and the Confederacy are the same thing and instruct white students in Southern nationalism. Instead of the Confederacy being a regime that happened in the history of the former slave states, it is embedded into Southern identity. The consequences of the repetitious use of South instead of Confederacy might not be apparent to the everyday public but surely it should be understood by anyone with any understanding of the educational process.

It can be immediately seen how some might think the Confederate flag is a symbol of the South with a textbook that confuses the Confederacy with the South.

The textbook minimizes slavery.

It is not difficult to see who David M. Kennedy and Lizabeth Cohen identify with. In their chapter “The South and the Slavery Controversy” the authors say the following about the slave owners, “... and this select group provided the cream of the political and social leadership of the section and the nation.” The percent of butterfat isn’t given by the authors, but a more historically competent description would be “this small group formed the dominating political and social elite of the section and the nation.”

On page 342 there is a Currier & Ives print of slaves harvesting cotton giving the past an idealized glow. The authors state:

Unhappily, the moonlight-and-magnolia tradition concealed much that was worrisome, distasteful, and sordid.

A better term than “unhappily” is “dishonestly” “Unhappily” might be a term I would use for a dinner party that ended badly with perhaps a loud argument or a collapsed soufflé. Similarly “worrisome,” and “distasteful” are rather minimizing terms. If by some chance of fate Kennedy and Cohen were kidnapped, perhaps by the “cream” of some criminal group, and one was whipped and the other was next in line to be whipped, perhaps the authors would find the experience “distasteful” and “worrisome” while the whipped one was shrieking. A note to Kennedy and Cohen: next edition try words like “brutal,” “horrible,” and “dehumanizing.”

“Distasteful” is also mentioned on page 392 in which there is reference to the “distasteful Fugitive Slave Law.” This is the law which drove African Americans to flee to Canada, resulted in free African Americans kidnapped into slavery, and drove African American communities to form groups in their own defense. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was “distasteful” indeed, probably much worse than a burnt pop tart though.

Rather obliquely the authors state, “The natural reproduction of enslaved African Americans also distinguished North American slavery from slavery in more southerly New World societies and implied much about the tenor of the slave regime and the condition of family life under slavery in the United States.”

It is true that in many slave societies to the south of the United States the life spans of slaves was very short. However, what is “implied” isn’t clearly stated by Kennedy and Cohen, but this could be interpreted to mean that slave life in the United States was not so bad.

From what follows in their textbook does tend to indicate that this is was their intention. Their statements resemble those in a neo-Confederate text in defense of slavery. For example, on page 347 they state, “Slaves where the primary form of wealth in the South, and as such they were cared for as any asset is cared for by a prudent capitalist.”

Kennedy and Cohen on pages 348 and 349 state some of the horrors of slavery and mention that, “Floggings were common, for the whip was the substitute for the wage-incentive system and the most visible symbol of the planter’s mastery.” How symbolic this is when a person is flogged I leave to the reader to decide.

Kennedy and Cohen also pose the question, “How did the slaves actually live?” They answer this as follows:

There is no simple answer to this question. Conditions varied from region to region, from large plantation to small plantation, and from master to master.

No doubt there was variation from plantation to plantation, from region to region, and from master to master. I am sure that this is a very useful sentence to have when someone on the textbook selection committee has an ancestor that owned slaves or in a region where there was slavery. There a problem with the historical memory of slavery of people being told that these or those slave owners were better than average. It is discussed among professional historians. As persons with some claim to be historically educated Kennedy and Cohen should know better.

What these statements are leading to is the statement minimizing slavery:

But savage beatings made sullen laborers, and lash marks hurt resale value. There are, to be sure, sadistic monsters in any population, and the planter class contained its share. But the typical planter had too much of his own prosperity riding on the backs of his slaves to beat them bloody on a regular basis.

I am not sure what an “unsavage” beating is, but I suspect every beating is “savage” or otherwise don’t make happy individuals. More interesting question is whether Kennedy and Cohen think there were “unsullen” slaves, for what is the antonym of “sullen?” It is cheerful. Were the owners of slaves really concerned with their slaves’ happiness? If they were why didn’t they set them free?

In any case, anyone who beats even one person with a whip, even briefly, for personal enrichment is a monster. Furthermore, a typical slave owner had all or nearly all of his prosperity extracted through the exploitation of the slaves, and using the term “exploitation” would be vastly better than the phrase “riding on the backs.” This is slavery and not horse racing though Kennedy and Cohen may be revealing something of themselves here in this comparison of slaves to horses.

However, the most outrageous thing about this paragraph is the clever wording, “beat them bloody on a regular basis.” It is a misdirection of sorts (strawman) and somewhat confusing. Did Kennedy and Cohen think that people might believe some owners would actually schedule beatings on a “regular basis?” Was that a real possibility? Were they trying to avoid the term frequently? Either way what frequency of beatings do Kennedy and Cohen think would acceptable? As discussed earlier slave owners needed to terrorize their slaves, and whippings were very effective to do this, but there would be no need to whip just for whipping itself and it is not likely too many whippings would be necessary to terrorize the slaves.

This reference to the frequency of whippings by Kennedy and Cohen leads the reader to consider the question of the frequency of whippings rather than the horror of

having to live a life in fear of whippings and the horror that a person could just whip you when they wanted to.

There are likely students who think slave whippings were done all the time. A better explanation is that slavery as a system of terror, not that some slave owners were “prudent capitalists.”

Finally this argument that the self-interest of slave owners somehow protects the slaves is a classic element of the neo-Confederate/Lost Cause defense of antebellum slavery.

Are Kennedy and Cohen thinking about the message they are sending with their use of some of these 19th century prints? Are they even aware that there can be a sub-text in such a picture?

The authors state on page 350 that, “Slavery was intolerably degrading to the victims. They were deprived of their dignity and sense of responsibility that comes from independence and the right to make choices,” and then moves to discuss briefly the laws against instructing slaves.

Of course slavery does deny a person dignity and under it you don’t get a chance to make choices and this is degrading. However, this really avoids discussing the horrors of slavery. Later the authors mention “the inhumanity of slavery.” I think some concrete descriptive graphic examples of what “creamy” slave owners did to the slaves would be useful in an American textbook if the goal is to actually instruct students and not sell bound wads of paper.

It also seems that a few statements are thrown in that the authors can point to if someone questions their textbook. Slavery is bad, but not too bad, but bad, but not too bad, goes the book.

One rather bizarre statement that the authors make is, “But most Blacks had no wish to be transplanted into a strange civilization after having become partially Americanized.” By what measure or reference standard were Blacks partially Americanized as opposed to other Americans?

However, what is most noteworthy is how Kennedy and Cohen refer to abolitionists who found slavery intolerable.

Kennedy and Cohen constantly snipe at the anti-slavery figures in American history and also blame the abolitionists for the Civil War. They suggest that abolitionists caused a lot of trouble over the issue of African Americans freedom because they were fanatics.

On page 352 we learn that abolitionist Theodore Dwight Weld is, “Humorless and deadly earnest,” rather than serious and dedicated. Weld’s pamphlet, “Slavery as It Is,” is referred to as a “potent propaganda pamphlet.” “Propaganda” has a stigmatized

meaning. Though technically correct, a better statement might be that, “with this pamphlet he communicated effectively to the American public the horrors of slavery.”

On page 353 we learn that Garrison is, “The emotionally high strung son of a drunken father and a spiritual child of the Second Great Awakening.” On the same page, readers are told regarding Garrison with his publication, *The Liberator*,” was:

Stern and uncompromising, Garrison nailed his colors to the masthead of his weekly. He proclaimed in strident tones that under no circumstances would he tolerate the poisonous weed of slavery but would stamp it out at once, root and branch.

They quote his masthead, “I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as Justice,” and that Garrison won’t “equivocate – I will not excuse.”

Here, Kennedy and Cohen are painting Garrison as a fanatic. Was Garrison “stern” and “uncompromising” or just serious and not willing to accept rationalizations for slavery? Were his tones “strident” or forthright and just stating things as they are? What his masthead a statement of his philosophy of not accepting rationalizations or are we to believe that Garrison was “harsh” and “uncompromising” personally, that maybe he shouted “no butter on my toast you moron” at breakfast sometimes.

The textbook authors tell us that Garrison with *The Liberator*, “... triggered a thirty-year war of words and in a sense fired one of the opening barrages of the Civil War.”

On page 353 there are more criticisms of Garrison being, “... more interested in his own self-righteousness than in the substance of the slavery evil itself.” An example of Garrison’s “self-righteousness” is given, that he burned a copy of the Constitution on the 4th of July in 1854 saying it was a pact with hell. Given that the Constitution supported slavery wasn’t it?

At the Constitutional Convention in 1787 the issue of slavery was discussed. Delegates rationalized Constitutional provisions for slavery, but one voice was raised against bondage.

Col. George Mason [VA]. This infernal traffic originated in the avarice of British merchants. The British government constantly checked the attempts of Virginia to put a stop to it. The present question concerns not the importing states alone, but the whole Union. The evil of having slaves was experienced during the late war. Had slaves been treated as they might have been by the enemy, they would have proved dangerous instruments in their hands. But their folly dealt by the slaves as it did by the Tories. He mentioned the dangerous insurrections of the

slaves in Greece and Sicily; and the instructions given by Cromwell, to the commissioners sent to Virginia, to arm the servants and slaves, in case other means of obtaining its submission should fail. Maryland and Virginia, he said, had already prohibited the importation of slaves expressly. North Carolina had done the same in substance. All this would be in vain, if South Carolina and Georgia be at liberty to import. The western people are already calling out for slaves for their new lands, and will fill that country with slaves, if they can be got through South Carolina and Georgia. Slavery discourages arts and manufactures. The poor despise labor when performed by slaves. They prevent the emigration of whites, who really enrich and strengthen a county. They produce the most pernicious effect on manners. Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant. They bring the judgment of Heaven on a country. **As nations cannot be rewarded or punished in the next world, they must be in this. By an inevitable chain of causes and effects, Providence punishes national sins by national calamities.** He lamented that some of our eastern brethren had, from a lust of gain, embarked in this nefarious traffic. As to the state being in possession of the right to import, this was the case with many other rights, now to be properly given up. He held it essential, in every point of view, that the general government should have power to prevent the increase of slavery.⁶ [Boldface added by author.]

Yes, one of the American founders thought the Constitutional provisions for slavery were a national sin for which America would be punished by God. How radical is Garrison's statement that the Constitution was a "pact with hell?"

There is reference to "extreme Garrisonians" on page 359 and "extreme anti-slavery" on page 373. There is reference to abolitionists as "zealots" or "zealous" on pages 359, 375, and 381.

The abolitionists are held to be responsible to their own beatings by anti-abolitionists mobs. On page 359 Kennedy and Cohen write:

Repeated tongue-lashings by the extreme abolitionists provoked many mob outbursts in the North, some lead by respectable gentlemen.

The textbook has an underlying message that the Civil War being started by fanatical abolitionists, not by rapacious, ruthless slave owners. This is the historical narrative of the neo-Confederates.

Astoundingly on page 360 the authors recommend the writings of two neo-Confederates, Eugene Genovese, a contributor to *Southern Partisan* magazine and a defender of pro-slavery theologians and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese for the issue of gender

and slavery, and whose interview in *Southern Partisan* about gender is reviewed earlier in this book. On page 419 Eugene Genovese is again cited as a credible source.

On page 400 Harriet Beecher Stowe's book, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," is called a "trouble brewing book," and public enthusiasm for the book is dismissively referred to as "Tommania," and on page 399 the book is called a "literary incendiary."

On page 402 John Brown is called a "fanatical figure" and the book informs us that he had "glittering gray eyes," but evidently was not a vampire in the *Twilight* movie and his attack in Kansas called "terroristic." On pages 410 & 411, in a passage about John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, Virginia, which was intended to ignite a slave rebellion he is further denounced. We are told that "... thirteen of his near relations were regarded as insane, including his mother and grandmother" and "Though perhaps of unsound mind, he was clever enough to see that he was worth much more to the abolitionist cause dangling from a rope than in any other way." "Dangling from a rope" instead of "hanged" is another way for the authors to dismissively mock Brown.

The reader of this book might consider the book, *Allies for Freedom & Blacks on John Brown*, by the distinguished 20th century African American historian Benjamin Quarles published in 1974 by Oxford University Press and republished since. African Americans have regarded Brown as a hero for generations. In this book you can read Harlem Renaissance writer Langston Hughes praise for John Brown on the centennial of Harper's Ferry and Malcolm X's exhortation to liberals that they need to be like John Brown.⁷

Distinguished professors Ira Berlin of the University of Maryland, Barbara J. Fields of Columbia University, Joseph P. Reidy of Howard University, and Leslie S. Rowland of the University of Maryland dedicated their book, *Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War*, published by Cambridge University press every member of John Brown's party, listing their names and making the statement, "Who Risked All at Harper's Ferry." To some academics African lives matter.

When we imagine white people being enslaved violence is considered very acceptable. In the movie *The Ten Commandments* we see the Red Sea drowning Pharaoh's army as right. We cheer on Errol Flynn in *Captain Blood* and applaud his fellow pirates who have escaped slavery. We are glad to see the Philistines get theirs when Victor Mature as the title hero pulls down pillars in *Samson and Delilah*. And who would admit to being against the slaves in *Spartacus* when Kirk Douglas leads them in a rebellion against the Roman army?

If someone came into your neighborhood and kidnapped members of your family the loved ones of friends and neighbors, which you knew they were being beaten and raped, would you use a machine gun to free them if one became available to you?

Imagine this. You and your mother got up early in the morning before sunrise and are making a run for it. You are running through the woods and miles away from

the plantation. However, one of the house slaves has betrayed you. You are running as fast as you can but your mother, worn down by years of bondage, is moving as fast as she can. But she just isn't fast enough and you can hear the dogs in the distance. "Mother," you cry, "You need to go faster!" And then, oh my God, oh my God, you can hear that they are getting very close and that they will soon be upon you. Your mother is crying in fear and urging you to run and leave her behind. But you were lucky and foresighted enough to have stolen a gun. You are not going to be a slave anymore at all cost and hazards. Suddenly around the bend, right there with snarling dogs is Thomas Jefferson, he is shouting, "I see them, I see them!" What would you do? I propose to every student of American history everywhere and every reader of this book an assignment to write what you would do next and why. You have permission to quote this narrative as part of this assignment and to change the name from Thomas Jefferson to another slave owner.

Kennedy and Cohen strongly imply that abolitionist U.S. Senator Charles Sumner's infamous canning by South Carolina U.S. Rep. Preston Brooks, an 1856 near-fatal sneak attack Brooks made while he was sitting in the U.S. Senate chambers, and beat him unconscious and nearly killed him as somehow Sumner's own fault for his famous speech "The Crime Against Kansas," given on May 19, 1856 in the U.S. Senate.

Like other anti-slavery figures in *American Pageant*, Sumner is labeled as being personally aberrant. Kennedy and Cohen calls him "cold, humorless, intolerant, and egotistical," and "the most disliked men in the Senate." In contrast, we are informed that Brooks is "Ordinarily gracious and gallant ..." Readers are given an explanation, or perhaps rationalization is a better term, of why Preston canned Sumner. We are informed one of the reasons is that Sumner had insulted South Carolina U.S. Senator Andrew Butler, "... one of the best liked members of the Senate." Other popularity rankings of U.S. Senators at the time are not provided by Kennedy and Cohen.

Sumner's "The Crime Against Kansas," speech is denounced by Kennedy and Cohen, and on page 403 they refer to its "coarse language." On page 404 they call it an "abusive speech" and "intemperate speech." It isn't referred to as direct and forthright.

What reveals Kennedy's and Cohen's attitudes, and is simply outrageous, is their use of the terms "merciless nagging of abolitionists" on page 358, and "abolitionist nagging" on page 418. According to Kennedy and Cohen "sensitive" (page 359) slave holders had to bear "nagging," and not just "nagging" but "nagging" that was "merciless" by abolitionists who we are to assume are merciless because they engaged in "merciless nagging." It is telling that this adjective, "merciless," is applied to denunciations of slavery, but not to slavery itself. The use of "nagging" entirely trivializes the value of the lives of the African American slaves as well as trivializing the enormity of the crime of slavery. It mocks the abolitionists and reinforces the idea that abolitionists, and not the slaveholders were extremists.

In discussing the Underground Railroad on page 386 Kennedy and Cohen write:

Unlike cattle thieves, the abolitionists who ran the Underground Railroad did not gain personally from their lawlessness.

African American slaves are compared to cattle and the abolitionists to thieves by Kennedy and Cohen. The abolitionists aren't rescuers.

Then there is this statement on page 386 regarding the anger of the slave owners about the Underground Railroad and the assistance rendered escaping slaves by abolitionists:

But to the slaveowners, the loss was infuriating, whatever the motives. The moral judgements of the abolitionists seemed, in some ways, more galling than outright theft. They reflected not only a holier-than-thou attitude but a refusal to obey the laws solemnly passed by Congress.

The authors could claim that the last sentence in this quote from their textbook simply represents the attitudes of the slave owners, but, in fact, the sentence is a comment on the abolitionists by the authors themselves. It is the "moral judgements of the abolitionists" which "reflected" a "holier-than-thou attitude." The "they" in the sentence is the "moral judgements of the abolitionists."

Reading "American Pageant" you might get the impression that the slave owners were shoved out of the Union by the harassment of abolitionists.

On page 354, in the discussions about the beginnings of abolitionism Kennedy and Cohen construct false opposites as follows:

High-minded and courageous, the abolitionists were men and women of good will and various colors who faced the cruel choice that people of good conscious in many ages have had thrust upon them: when is evil so enormous that it must be denounced even at the risk of precipitating bloodshed and butchery?

The abolitionists here are made responsible for the choices made by the slave owners to defend slavery at all costs including "bloodshed and butchery."

On page 357, a neo-Confederate interpretation again appears, "Elsewhere in the Americas, enslaved peoples secured their freedoms gradually and in stark contrast to the United States, peacefully." This is an assertion is contrary to the historical record as will be discussed.

We are told on page 419 that “looming over” the debate as to the causes of the Civil War is the “... stark fact that the United States was the only state to fight a war to rid itself of slavery.”

This latter is a very clever statement which implies that the United States’ Civil War was a unique political failing in which violence being needed to abolish bondage. This statement would exclude the revolt of the slaves in Haiti since they weren’t technically a state until after the slave revolution succeeded. The successful Haitian revolt inspired other slave revolts. As Manisha Sinha explains in her book, *The Slaves’ Cause: A History of Abolition*, published by Yale University Press:

The Haitian Revolution stimulated black assertiveness throughout the Western hemisphere. In the 1790s black Jacobinism spread to Rio de la Plata in Uruguay and to Maracaibo, Cartagena, Demerara, and Caro in Venezuela, and the Second Maroon War broke out in Jamaica. In 1812 the Aponte uprising of slaves and free people of color in Cuba came on the heels of the institution of a liberal constitution and the debate over abolition in the Spanish Cortes at Cádiz.

... Christophe of the northern kingdom of Haiti helped rebels in neighboring Santo Domingo against Spanish rule. In 1821 Haiti conquered Santo Domingo and enacted abolition there.⁸

Maroons are Africans who escaped slavery in the Americas and formed independent settlements. They didn’t wait for “gradual freedom.” Of course a Second Maroon War indicates that there was a First Maroon War.

The Texan revolt over Mexican prohibition against slavery would be excluded since in that case state violence prevented the abolition of slavery. In fact their account of the Mexican American War is somewhat astounding but won’t be dealt with in this review.

It was violence that precipitated the British abolition of slavery. As Manisha Sinha explains in her book, *The Slaves’ Cause*:

While slave resistance prompted debates over emancipation in America, it precipitated British abolition. In December 1831 the charismatic Samuel “Daddy” Sharpe led the so-called Baptist War or Christmas Rebellion in Jamaica, which involved nearly sixty thousand slaves. It was preceded by a wave of slave resistance and free black activism in the West Indies. ... One week after Sharpe’s execution in 1832, Parliament appointed a select committee to explore the expediency of “effecting” the Extinction of Slavery throughout the British Dominions.” The Reform Act, which democratized parliamentary elections, and abolitionist petitions ensured the passage of emancipation in 1833.⁹

Sharpe's sixty thousand didn't constitute a state so this violence wouldn't fall under the author's careful wording. Kennedy's and Cohen's phrasing cleverly excludes the revolts of Africans outside the United States and erases them. Of course the Baptist War was not peaceful nor was the British Emancipation gradual.

The abolition of slavery in Latin America is part of the revolutions of independence from Spain. To quote Hugh Thomas in his book, *The Slave Trade*:

Bolívar thought that the abolition of slavery was the key to Spanish American independence, and liberated his own slaves. The Supreme Junta of Caracas, the first government of an independent Venezuela, abolished the trade in slaves in 1811; and in New Granada (Columbia) in 1812 ..."¹⁰

As Sinha explains in "The Slaves Cause":

Latin American revolutionaries like José San Martín and Simón Bolívar turned to Haiti for assistance in their anticolonial struggle against Spain. Petition sent aid to them on the condition that abolition and black rights be part of their revolutionary agenda. ... The Haitian Revolution was an important precedent for slave runaways and free black soldiers who demanded emancipation during the Latin American Wars of Independence. ... By the 1820s nearly all the former Spanish colonies in Latin America where abolition was expedited by warfare had decreed a gradual end to slavery.¹¹

In Brazil there were revolts and brutality. Thomas states:

There had been a Hausa rising in Brazil in 1807, a more general Islamic one in 1809, and less easily identifiable rebellions in 1814, 1816, 1822, and 1826; and thereafter an upheaval almost every year. Many whites were killed before the rebellions were at last crushed.¹²

Thomas in talking about the anxiousness of slave owners there in the 1830s explains:

For another serious rebellion of slaves, the "revolt of Male," with strong Islamic undercurrent, broke out in 1835. It was repressed with brutality: whippings with five hundred or more strokes were common punishments for mullahs accused merely of teaching friends to read the Koran in Arabic.¹³

It seems that abolition in the Americas wasn't so peaceful and war had something to do with it. Kennedy and Cohen in their textbooks erase the heroic struggles of Africans in the Americas, which is atrocious.

Perhaps in the Spanish Americas there was “persistencia implacable” and in Brazil “irritante impiedosa” by “abolicionistas” which accounts for all this violence over slavery that occurred there.¹⁴

I recommend reading Hugh Thomas *The Slave Trade*, in particular for persons who were taught world or “Western” history it shows that the whole idea that European exploration was for spices is a myth, but instead Europe's voracious appetite for slaves drove the exploration. Yes, if the explorers could make a profit bring back spices or other goods they were willing to do so, but it is clear that the demand for slaves was, if not the primary, one of the leading driving forces behind exploration. Prince Henry the Navigator should be renamed Prince Henry the Kidnapper.

The fact that in some places abolition comes more easily without war and others it takes war is likely due to particular circumstances. The slave owners in the British Caribbean could hardly mount a secession movement when they were entirely dependent on the British government to sustain them against slave revolts on islands where they were vastly outnumbered. They would have miniscule resources to mount a revolt against the British Empire. Additionally, these slave owners were to be compensated.

The populations of slaves in other countries like Mexico, Chile and Argentina were very small and the slave owners were hardly in a position to stage any revolt against the leaders of the revolution for independence from Spain.

And what did peace bring to localities that did have politically powerful slave owners? Delayed freedom, Cuba didn't abolish slavery until 1886 and in Brazil in 1888. In the accomplishment of abolition in these two countries it has to be considered that one of the factors was that there were no major slave powers remaining. Slavery had been abolished in America and American ships were no longer illegally engaged in the Atlantic slave trade under the American flag thus through legal technicalities evading and undermining the African Squadron.

There was a proposal in the U.S. Congress to use the sale of federal lands to pay slave holders for their slaves and relocate them back to Africa. It was introduced into the U.S. Senate on Feb. 18, 1825. It enraged slaveholders. This is an extract from the, “Message of Governor Troup of Georgia on May 25, 1825,” regarding the proposal:

Since your last meeting, our feelings have been again outraged by officious and impertinent intermeddlings with our domestic concerns. Beside the resolution presented for the consideration of the Senate by Mr. King, of New York, it is

understood that the Attorney General of the United States, who may be presumed to represent his Government faithfully, and to speak as its mouth piece, has recently maintained, before the Supreme Court, doctrines on this subject, which, if sanctioned by that tribunal, will make it quite easy for the Congress, by a short decree, to divest this entire interest, without cost to themselves of one dollar, or of one acre of public land. This is the uniform practice of the Government of the United States; if it wishes a principle established which it dare not establish for itself, a case is made before the Supreme Court, and the principle once settled, the act of Congress follows of course. Soon, very soon, therefore, the United States' Government, discarding the mask, will openly lend itself to a combination of fanatics for the destruction of everything valuable in the Southern country ; one movement of the Congress unresisted by you, and all is lost. Temporize no longer—make known your resolution that this subject shall not be touched by them, but at their peril; but for its sacred guaranty by the constitution, we never would have become parties to that instrument; at this moment you would not make yourselves parties to any constitution without it; of course you will not be a party to it, from the moment the General Government shall make that movement

If this matter be an evil, it is our own—if it be a sin, we can implore the forgiveness of it—to remove it we ask not even their sympathy or assistance: it may be our physical weakness—it is our moral strength. ... I entreat you, therefore, most earnestly, now that it is not too late, to step forth, and, having exhausted the argument, to stand by your arms.¹⁵

This document is from one of the document collections edited by Herman Ames that the Univ. of Pennsylvania published in the early 20th century. They can be downloaded free from the Internet Archive and are quite illuminating as to the motives of the slave owners.

Even then in 1825, thirty-five years before secession, when the accumulative “merciless nagging” of abolitionists must have been much less, an offer to pay for the slaves and relocate them enrages slave owners and brings threats of violent secession.

In 1785 Methodist Bishop Thomas Coke took a tour from New York to North Carolina to defend the Methodist rules against slaveholding and in Virginia encountered threats of violence against his anti-slavery message. Quoting from H. Shelton Smith's, “In His Image, But ...: Racism in Southern Religion, 1780-1910:”

But two days later he ran into a hornet's nest, when he preached against slavery at Martin's barn. “A high-headed lady ... told the rioters (as I was afterwards informed) that she would give fifty pounds, if they would give that little doctor one hundred lashes.” The angry mob might well have flogged the preacher if a friendly justice of the peace had not intervened. Yet on April 11 another mob

showed up for his sermon at “brother Baker’s,” armed “with staves and clubs.” Their attack was frustrated only because the “little doctor” did not touch on the offensive subject.

Indeed for the rest of his visit Bishop Coke did not bring up the topic of slavery.¹⁶ This is somewhat puzzling though, how much accumulated “merciless nagging” by abolitionists could there have been in 1785 to make slave holders violent? Slave owners are violent when their exploitation is threatened.

On pages 415-416 Kennedy and Cohen in a section titled “Collapse of Compromise” they discuss the Crittenden Amendments, which were six constitutional amendments and four resolutions for the U.S. Congress to prevent secession. Kennedy and Cohen state:

President-elect Lincoln flatly rejected the Crittenden scheme which offered some slight prospect of success, and all hopes of compromise evaporated. For this refusal Lincoln must bear a heavy responsibility.

The Crittenden amendments were monstrous and if Lincoln accepted them it would have been an outrage against humanity.

The authors minimize and obscure what the Crittenden amendments were.

The textbook explains that below a latitude of 36° 30” slavery would be permitted in the territories but a state formed from there could be slave or free and further states, “Federal protection in a territory south of 36° 30” might conceivably, though improbably, turn the entire area permanently towards slavery.” The use of “improbably” is to indicate to the reader that this provision wasn’t likely to result in a new slave state.

The authors argue that Lincoln rejected them based on the principle of his platform “even though gains for slavery in the territories might be only temporary.” They then state:

Larger gains might come later in Cuba and Mexico. Crittenden’s proposal, said Lincoln, “would amount to a perpetual covenant of war against every people, tribe, and state owning a foot of land between here and Tierra del Fuego.”

Lincoln was quite right since all territories south of the United States would be slave territories per the Crittenden Amendments and irresistible temptation to the slave holders. Even before the Civil War slave owners were organizing military expeditions, “filibusters,” they called them to seize territories in Latin America for slavery. Vice

President of the Confederacy in his speeches talked about the need to acquire territories in Latin America for slavery.

However, the Crittenden amendments were about much more than a latitude and slavery. If adopted it would have fasten slavery upon the U.S. Constitution for all time and would have made total violent revolution the only solution for the abolition of slavery in the United States. Indeed what were these compromises in American history which Kennedy and Cohen find great, but were just a kicking the can down the road, leaving emancipation for a future generation to accomplish.

As stated, the Crittenden Amendments were six articles and four resolutions for the U.S. Congress.

Article II states that Congress will have no power to abolish slavery in areas of which it is in control of and which is within a slave state. That is Congress couldn't forbid slavery in a fort or national park if it was within a slave state.

Article III states that Congress will have no power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia as long as it is between Maryland and Virginia.

Article IV states that Congress will have no power to prohibit or hinder the interstate transportation of slaves between slave states.

Article V is more ominous. If a slave was aided in his escape by intimidation or violence or rescued by force, the owner of the escaping slave could sue the county in federal court for damages equal to the value of the slave, losses they might suffer in the attempted recapture, with interest. The county in which the slave evaded capture could then sue the persons aiding the slave's escape for what the county had to pay the slave owner. This would have made every abolitionist aiding a slave's escape by force by necessity a revolutionary against the national government. It would set every county against the abolitionist.

Article VI establishes that there can be no amendment to these five articles proposed by Crittenden and no amendment would be permitted to give Congress the power to abolish slavery or interfere with it in any slave state.

Further this article VI establishes that the sections of the Constitution that were already protecting slavery could not be amended: the third paragraph of the second section of the first article of the Constitution in which slaves were to be counted as $\frac{3}{5}$ th of a person, which insured the overrepresentation of slave states in the Congress; and the third paragraph of the second section of the fourth article, which required that slaves that escaped into another state had to be returned.

In the four resolutions there is a call upon the U.S. House and Senate that federal laws be passed to punish those who help slaves escape and nullify state liberty laws protecting African Americans in the non-slave holding states.

The Crittenden amendments are only a possibility if you think that complete capitulation to the interest of slavery is acceptable. These proposed amendments would have bolted down slavery on to the Constitution for all time.

As for the impossibility of slavery in the Southwest territories, Jefferson Davis didn't see it that way. In the U.S. Senate, on Feb. 14, 1850 he stated:

One of the positions laid down by the honorable Senator from Kentucky, and which he denominated as one of his two truths, was, that slavery was excluded from the Territories of California and New Mexico by a decree of Nature. From that opinion I dissent. I hold that the pursuit of gold-washing and milling is better adapted to slave labor than to any other species of labor recognized among us, and is likely to be found in that new country for many years to come. I also maintain that it is particularly adapted to an agriculture which depends upon irrigation. Till the canals are cut, ditches and dams made, no person can reclaim the soil from Nature; an individual pioneer cannot settle upon it with his family, and support them by the product of his own exertion, as in the old possessions of the United States, where rain and dew unite with a prolific soil to reward freely and readily the toil of man. It is only by associated labor that such a country can be reduced to cultivation. They have this associated labor in Mexico under a system of peonage. That kind of involuntary servitude, for debt I suppose, cannot long continue to exist under American institutions; therefore the only species of labor that can readily supply its place under our Government would, I think, be the domestic servitude of African slavery; and therefore I believe it is essential, on account of the climate, productions, soil, and the peculiar character of cultivation, that we should during its first settlement have that slavery in at least a portion of California and New Mexico. It is also true, that in certain climates only the African race are adapted to work in the sun. It is from this cause perhaps more than all others that the products of Mexico, once so important and extensive, have dwindled into comparative insignificance since the abolition of slavery. And it is also on that account that the prosperity of Central and Southern America generally has declined, and that it has been sustained in Brazil, where slavery has continued; that Jamaica and St. Domingo have now, from being among the most productive and profitable colonies, sunk into decay, and are relapsing to desert and barbarism; and yet Cuba and Porto Rico continue to maintain; I might say to increase, their prosperity. I therefore deny what is affirmed by the Senator from Kentucky to be his second truth, and in support of that denial call attention to the wealth and productiveness of Mexico when slavery existed there, and invite a comparison between that and its condition at present.¹⁷

Historically mining has used slave labor and there is no reason that irrigated land could not be worked by slave labor and irrigation projects prior to modern technology did require large amounts of manual labor.

On page 418 Kennedy and Cohen write:

Worldwide impulses of nationalism – then stirring in Italy, Germany, Poland, and elsewhere – where fermenting in the South. This huge area, with its distinctive culture, was not so much a section as a subnation.

This is a key neo-Confederate nationalist concept and makes the Confederacy integral to Southern identity.

I would like to contrast what Kennedy's and Cohen's world historical view of the Civil War with what Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Steven F. Miller, Joseph P. Reidy and Leslie S. Rowland say in *Slaves No More*:

With emancipation in the South, the United States enacted its part in a world-wide drama. Throughout the western world and beyond, the forces released by the American and French revolutions and by the industrial revolution worked to undermine the political regimes based upon hereditary privilege and economic systems based upon bound labor. ... Almost simultaneously with the great struggle in the United States, the vestiges of serfdom in central and eastern Europe yielded to the pressure of the age. Only small pockets in Africa and Asia remained immune, and their immunity was temporary. The fateful lightning announced by the victorious Union army was soon to strike, if had not already struck, wherever men and women remained in bonds of personal servitude.¹⁸

Berlin et al see a great world struggle for freedom, Kennedy and Cohen see Confederate-Americans.

On pages 444 & 445 the authors of bring up another neo-Confederate talking point in a section titled, "A Proclamation without Emancipation," in which the authors explain, "The presidential pen did not formally strike the shackles from a single slave." Further they state, "In short where he *could* he would not, and where he *would* he could not." [Italics in the original.]

The Emancipation Proclamation converted the American armies into armies of liberation and with every future advance slaves would be liberated and in the end the system of slavery in the seceded states was destroyed. The authors' logic is like saying roads don't transport things, which is true. Whether gravel or concrete or asphalt a package put on a road will not be moved by the road.

The authors do state that the Emancipation Proclamation did inspire some slaves to run away to the American armies, but this misses the entire point of the importance of the Emancipation Proclamation. Perhaps it is some concession to which they can point.

On page 458 Kennedy and Cohen state:

Lincoln expired in the arms of victory, at the very pinnacle of his fame. From the standpoint of his reputation, his death could not have been better timed if he had hired the assassin. A large number of his countrymen had not suspected his greatness, and many others had even doubted his ability. His dramatic death helped erase the memory of his short comings and caused his nobler qualities to stand out in sharper relief.

A standard neo-Confederate talking point is that Lincoln wasn't great and was a villain and that his assassination caused him to be seen as a hero. This is the assertion of persons who hate Abraham Lincoln from the notorious racist M.E. Bradford to the writings of Thomas D. Lorenzo at Loyola University in Baltimore.

It is profoundly disrespectful and really creepy.

The book's treatment of Reconstruction has the well-worn ideas that Reconstruction was oppressive to the seceded states. On page 459 the authors argue that Lincoln would have been moderate and kindly shielding the South from "vindictive" treatment implying the old idea that Radical Republicans were vindictive. Thaddeus Steven's a leader of the Radical Republicans who campaigned for the rights of African Americans and on page 475 is called "crusty and vindictive." On page 471 we are told Radical Republicans "believed that the South should atone more painfully for its sins." On page 483 Reconstruction is characterized as harsh with the authors writing, "the wonder is that Reconstruction was not far harsher than it was."

The reason the Radical Republicans were called radical and after the fall of Reconstruction have been subject to so much abuse is because they worked very hard for the human rights of African Americans.

President Andrew Johnson during Reconstruction acted to undermine the rights of African Americans. He was a slave holder. He was racist. He became president upon the assassination of Lincoln. Johnson opposed the Fourteenth Amendment giving citizenship to African Americans. He vetoed a civil rights bill in 1865. He was selected to be on the vice-presidential candidate running with Lincoln during the 1864 presidential election to get the votes of some Democrats, a party that was at that time controlled by white supremacists.

The Radical Republicans attempting to advance the rights of African Americans and prevent Johnson from undermining their efforts passed the Tenure of Office Act. Johnson violated it and Congress acted to impeach him.

On page 482 Kennedy and Cohen comment on the failure to impeach Johnson, “The nation thus narrowly avoided a dangerous precedent that would have gravely weakened one of the three branches of government.” If Johnson had been impeached there was a fighting chance that Reconstruction could have succeeded and Civil Rights would have come to African Americans much earlier. However, Kennedy and Cohen write, “From the standpoint of the radicals, the greatest crime had been to stand inflexibly in their path,” obscuring the fact that the path of the Radical Republicans had fought for civil rights for African Americans.

Finally on page 483 Kennedy and Cohen state:

The Republicans acted from a mixture of idealism and political expediency. They wanted both to protect the freed slaves and to promote the fortunes of the Republican party [sic]. In the end their efforts backfired badly.

The term “backfired” implies that the Reconstruction policies of the Radical Republicans were a mistake and had consequences that were opposite then were intended, which would be that the Radical Republican policies contributed to racism in the South. The Radical Republicans did fail, but they were defeated by the disaster of Andrew Johnson becoming president and the violent campaign of terror in the former slave states. However, their efforts weren’t a mistake and our nation would be so much better today if they had succeeded. Perhaps the author’s read seriously Hodding Carter’s book, *The Angry Scar: The Story of Reconstructions*, where racism in the South is blamed on the attempts of Radical Republicans to secure civil rights for African Americans.

As for the reference of “political expediency” doesn’t every political party work to insure its fortunes by working for the interests of its supporters and insuring that they can vote? Isn’t that how democracy works? I am sure efforts in 2015 and 2016 to defeat voter suppression of minorities is based on idealism and expediency. It seems that the spirit of William Archibald Dunning one of major racist historians in American history whose writings portrayed Reconstruction as a mistake haunts the pages of “American Pageant.”

Finally on page 482 we learn that Thaddeus Stevens was crippled. In discussing the anger of “Diehard Radicals,” those who were really committed to the rights of African Americans and not willing to give it up, Kennedy and Cohen write “‘The Country is going to the Devil!’ cried the crippled Stevens as he was carried from the hall,” when the effort to impeach Johnson failed. Upon reading this the author decided to Google and see if Stevens also had a hunchback. He didn’t.

In contrast to the comments regarding Stevens, Sumner, and the abolitionists this is what Kennedy and Cohen write in their section about the creamy slave owners on page 341 in describing their aristocratic lives:

Their money provided the leisure for study, reflection, and statecraft, as notably true of men like John C. Calhoun (a Yale graduate) and Jefferson Davis (a West Point graduate.) They felt a keen sense of obligation to serve the public.

The money of the slave owners gave them the power and time to dominate society and work for the preservation of slavery. The “statecraft” of both of these men was to fight for slavery and to serve their own interests.

This review is already too long, and not every aspect of this textbook will be reviewed. It should be enough however to demonstrate the nature of this specific textbook and make the reader aware of the problems with public school American history textbooks in 2016.

W.E.B. DuBois wrote in “The Lie of History as It Is Taught Today,” in 1960:

Thus we train generations of men who do not know the past, or believe a false picture of the past, to have no trustworthy guide for living and to stumble doggedly on, through mistake after mistake, to fatal ends. Our history becomes "lies agreed upon" and stark ignorance guides our future.¹⁹

Yet it is 56 years later and we are still teaching a banal white nationalist history. When will this stop?

¹ Peterson, Orlando, “Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study,” Harvard University Press, 1982. Actually the author read “Freedom: Freedom in the Making of Western Culture,” Vol. 1, Basic Books, 1991 to learn the same concept.

² Cooper, William J., “Jefferson Davis, American,” Alfred A. Knopf, 2000, page 248. Cooper tries to excuse the mortality of Davis’s slaves by reporting average life spans. Reported average life spans in history are greatly influenced by infant mortality and the mortality of children. It is a common place in high school history classes for teachers to explain that just because the average life span was very low, that didn’t mean there weren’t old people around in the past. Even in the past, if you made it to be 15 years old you had a fairly good chance to make it to be 60 years old. To have a mortality curve truncate around the age of 40 years, is indicative of something morbid and is sinister. Cooper’s rationalizations and excuses for this truncation on Brierfield are appalling. As Cooper explains in his book, Jefferson Davis was a steady purchaser of slaves, most whom would have been at least in their teenage years if not young adults. With this in mind it can be assumed that the Brierfield worked its slaves to an early death. Cooper discusses Davis’ purchase of slaves on pages 248-250.

³ I normally avoid vulgarities, but sometimes they are necessary to shout through all the chattering rationalizations.

⁴ The primary reference is Am. Slave, Supp. Ser. 2 IV, 1120-21 (Mollie Dawson), I read quote on page 147, in “An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821-1865,” by Randolph B. Campbell, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, 1991.

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- ⁵ Norris, Wesley, Interview circa 1866, in John W. Blassingame's "Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies," Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1977, pages 467-68.
- ⁶ From Elliot's Debates, Vol. 5, pages 457-61, the text quoted here was modified to give Mason his full name. Also, the complete debate is online at www.confederatepastpresent.org.
- ⁷ Quarles, Benjamin, "Allies for Freedom & Blacks on John Brown," Oxford Univ. Press, 1974, Oxford, reprinted De Capo edition, 2001.
- ⁸ Sinha, Minisha, "The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition," Yale University Press, 2016, New Haven, pp. 57.
- ⁹ Sinha, Minisha, "The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition," Yale University Press, 2016, New Haven, pp. 213.
- ¹⁰ Thomas, Hugh, "The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870," Simon & Schuster, 1997, New York City, pp. 577.
- ¹¹ Sinha, Minisha, "The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition," Yale University Press, 2016, New Haven, pp. 57.
- ¹² Thomas, Hugh, "The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870," Simon & Schuster, 1997, New York City, pp. 611.
- ¹³ Thomas, Hugh, "The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870," Simon & Schuster, 1997, New York City, pp. 635.
- ¹⁴ Hopefully Google translation has done a good job on the Portuguese translation of "merciless nagging."
- ¹⁵ "State Documents on Federal Relations: The States and the United States," Vol. 5, "Slavery and the Constitution," edited by Herman V. Ames, published by the Dept. of History, Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1904, Pp. 16-17.
- ¹⁶ Smith, H. Shelton, "In His Image, But ...: Racism in Southern Religion, 1780-1919, Duke Univ. Press, 1872, pp. 39-40.
- ¹⁷ *Congressional Globe*, 31st Congress, 1st Session, Appendix, 149-157, February 13-14, 1850, page 79. I would like to thank T. Lloyd Benson in the Dept. of History at Furman Univ. for providing this text online so I didn't have to type it in from the small print of the *Congressional Globe*.
<http://history.furman.edu/benson/docs/davis13feb1850.html>.
- ¹⁸ Berlin, Ira, Fields Barbara J., Miller, Steven F., Reidy, Joseph P., Rowland, Leslie S., "Slaves No More: Three Essays on Emancipation and the Civil War," Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp. ix, x.
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