

A Note for Educators
Discussing Enslavement in the Classroom

~~It is challenging to discuss t~~The subject of enslavement ~~is challenging to discuss. Regardless, But~~ it should be ~~and needs to be~~ discussed. Educators ~~who teaching~~ North Carolina history work to share the rich and varied lives of people ~~who have contributed to that history—some~~ whose names we know and ~~even recognize, but also~~ the many ~~more others~~ whose names ~~and faces~~ and actions ~~are have been~~ lost, ~~but even though they have~~ ~~all of whom made~~ contributions to our ~~state's~~ histories.

Commented [ES1]: CHELSEA: headings and titles, etc, will need to be formatted once a location is determined; let me see it one last time after that, please . . .

Commented [ES2]: ??? for emphasis ???

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Commented [ES3]: ??? or just “story” ???

Commented [ES4]: . . . see what you think about some of this wording-- it’s sort of flowery, but I think the concept needs to be drawn out a bit so that it --and its importance-- has time to sink in; work with what you like and rework what you think is overboard . . .

When discussing the institution of slavery, it is important to help students understand not only the horrors of subjugation and ownership as chattel and bondage or the opportunities of the Underground Railroad and the Emancipation Proclamation, but to also understand the courageous, everyday experiences of enslaved people as they worked to build and maintain community and sought to retain and express their own history and culture. ~~We should and to~~ acknowledge the perseverance of enslaved people to live meaningfully and to oppose enslavement, as best they could, in their day-to-day lives.

Commented [ES5]: ... so that we use the term ourselves ...

Commented [ES6]: ??? too much the same thing? can you think of other terms for other parts of the "horror"? for the same reasoning as above ...

Commented [ES7]: ??? okay to italicize this, too ???

Commented [ES8]: ??? or would "fought" be better ???

Commented [ES9]: ... a part of the experience, too, I believe ???

Commented [ES10]: ??? to connect back to the overall theme ???

Commented [ES11]: ??? OR, "sought to *retain their own history* and *fought to express their own culture*" ???

Commented [ES12]: ??? okay to add ???

Commented [ES13]: ... page break added JUST so that all comments will show in total ...

When covering this topic, remember, too, that words matter. Calling or labelling a person a "slave," as had become commonplace until recent years, indicates that the entirety of that person was about slavery, when, in fact, such a person was as much a multi-dimensional and complete human as you or I or your students. Enslavement "Slavery" was a-but one part of a person's lives, a piece of culture during a historical time in our state's story, but the situation of being enslaved did not define them any person as a whole. So, today, we preference is for use of the term "enslaved" or "enslavement" to describe an-that one aspect of that person's life, but does not to label him or her in totality.

Commented [ES14]: ... or some other segue that matches your introductory words in the preceding and following paragraphs ...

Commented [ES15]: ... just to call more attention to the term ???

Commented [ES16]: ??? too direct ???

Commented [ES17]: ... to keep your "outdated" terminology together ...

Commented [ES18]: ... to keep the label more personal, and to agree with your use of "person" earlier in the paragraph ...

Commented [ES19]: ??? to more fully encompass the concept as a time and a place when it was acceptable and even expected ???

Commented [ES20]: ... as reinforcement ...

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Commented [ES21]: ??? needed, do you think, for emphasis ???

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Self-awareness is ~~also another~~ important consideration when discussing the enslavement of individuals. ~~The subject is, and should be, an emotional topic, so creating a space where students AND educators are feel comfortable and supported with the discussion is essential to learning about it. To start that process, it helps for educators to should take some time to do a self-review, to seeking out any biases they may have themselves and to acknowledge and diminish them before working with students on this topic.~~

The Southern Poverty Law Center's ~~project~~ "Teaching Tolerance" project has ~~a~~ issued the following list* to help guide educators when teaching about enslavement:-

Don't

- Use role-plays. They can induce trauma and minimization, and are almost certain to provoke parental concerns.
- Focus only on brutality. Horrific things happened to enslaved people, but there are also stories of hope, survival and resistance.
- Separate children by race.
- Treat kids as modern-day proxies for enslaved people or owners of enslaved people.
- Make race-based assumptions about a child's relationship to slavery.

Do

- Use primary sources and oral histories. ...
- Underscore enslaved people's contributions. Roads, towns, buildings and crops wouldn't have been possible without them.
- Use photographs that reflect activism, family life and other daily activities.
- Choose texts that illustrate enslaved people as whole individuals. Try -Henry's Freedom Box- by Ellen Levine or -Minty: A Story of Young Harriet Tubman- by Alan Schroeder.
- Organize field trips to historic sites that reflect enslaved people in a human and courageous light as well as to places that reflect the lives of black people beyond slavery.
- Introduce stories about black and white abolitionists. Black abolitionists were present, from the beginning, as vocal and courageous advocates for their people.

*Published in "Tongue-Tied," *Teaching Tolerance*, Spring 2014, no. 46, and available online at <http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-46-spring-2014/feature/tongue-tied>.

Commented [ES23]: ??? or "enslaved people" if you prefer ...

Commented [ES24]: ??? "creating" better than "having" ???

Commented [ES25]: ??? would "common ground" be better than "space" ???

Commented [ES26]: ??? "feel" better than "are" ???

Commented [ES27]: ... you don't really go into why "supported" is essential to the feeling of students and educators-- either expand on that or delete ...

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Commented [ES28]: ??? I think this is what you meant, right ???

Commented [ES29]: ??? what do you think of this? I wanted a one-word term for "deal with", and I also like the inferences and connotations this carries; you ???