The Ivy league is defined as “a group of long-established colleges in the eastern United States having high academic and social prestige.”¹ Examples of such schools are Harvard University, Princeton University, Columbia University, and Dartmouth College. What can be added to the above definition is that all of these colleges were created during the era of African enslavement in the United States. All of the schools were physically built by enslaved persons, utilized enslaved people on their campuses, or were endowed (given income or property) by wealthy families who held Africans in labor captivity.

The author and historian Craig Steven Wilder has written the seminal book on this subject matter. In Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities, Wilder makes it clear that “slavery was the precondition for the rise of higher education in the Americas.”² These colleges were strategically created to extend European cultural and political domination. Thus, a short thirty years after the English settlers first arrived in colonial America, in 1636 a college was chartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and named in honor of a local minister, John Harvard. Wilder notes that the first documented enslaved African in the English colonies served Harvard University’s earliest students around the year 1638.

One should not make the mistake of thinking that slavery in the Northern colonies was more tolerable or even benign for African people. Indeed, “Massachusetts required the whipping of slaves found on the street at night or away from their owner’s home without consent. . . . The colonist burned enslaved people at the stake, hanged them and sold them out of region for actions deemed threatening.”³

Not only did Harvard University utilize the labor of enslaved people, it also sent emissaries to the Caribbean, where British citizens were holding and profiting from thousands of Africans in bondage. There the college’s representative homed in on wealthy plantation owners, imploring them to donate to their growing schools and to send their offspring to the American colonies for education. Representatives of Harvard and other Ivy League schools made the case that colleges on mainland America were

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¹ Oxford Dictionary.
² Wilder, Ebony and Ivy, 114.
³ Ibid., 31–32.
close enough that families could periodically pay a visit. Harvard was clearly seeking to cash in on the staggering financial returns of the Caribbean slave economy and to make itself a viable option to Oxford University in Oxford, England, the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and the other leading schools of the time.

- In a similar manner, the **College of William and Mary** was chartered in 1639, and named after King William III and Queen Mary II. The trustees of the school were mostly from "leading land holding and slaveholding families." Funds to support the president and professors came from profits made on tobacco that was planted, tended, and harvested by captive Africans in Virginia and Maryland. Enslaved persons held by William and Mary College were also leased out to earn money for the school.

- Queen’s College (**Rutgers University**) had among its trustees “the most prominent slaveholding and slave trading families in the region.” Its founding president, Jacob Hardenbergh, was himself an “owner” of enslaved persons.

- In 1732, the Rev. George Berkeley, resident of Rhode Island and owner of the plantation named Whitehall, donated his ninety-six-acre plantation to **Yale University**. The money made from renting the property to a series of slaveholding families funded Yale’s first scholarship “for the best students in Greek and Latin and its first graduate-level courses.” The first recipient of the scholarship, Eleazar Wheelock, would go on to found Dartmouth College.

- In the same vein, Governor Thomas Penn donated his 2,500 acre estate, on which enslaved persons had toiled for decades, to the College of Philadelphia (today the **University of Pennsylvania**). He ordered that the property should never be sold.

- In the first seventy-five years of the College of New Jersey (today **Princeton University**), the college hired a record eight slaveholders as presidents. It was not uncommon for slaveholding presidents to bring enslaved persons with them to campus.

As the wealth of colonial Americans increased from their involvement with human bondage, they funneled that money into schools for their children.

- "Between the period of 1746 and 1769, a period of less than a quarter century, the number of colleges in the British mainland colonies tripled to nine . . . College of New Jersey (**Princeton**, 1746), the College of Philadelphia (**University of Pennsylvania**, 1749), King’s College (**Columbia University**, 1754), College of

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4 Ibid., 42.
5 Ibid., 74.
6 Ibid., 95.
Rhode Island (Brown University, 1764), and Queen’s College (Rutgers, 1766).”

- “By the early eighteenth century, North Carolinians were using slavery to fund education, and leaving money, rents, and whole plantations to endow schools. . . . In 1767, the Revered David Caldwell opened a ‘log college’ . . . in Greensboro. Presbyterian slaveholders and missionaries combined to charter the **University of North Carolina (1789), the nation’s first public university.***”

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Oxford University in London

8 Ibid., 100.
Colleges and Universities with Ties to the United States Era of Enslavement

- Harvard University
- William and Mary College
- Columbia University
- Princeton University (College of New Jersey)
- University of Pennsylvania (College of Philadelphia)
- Brown University (King’s College)
- Rutgers University (Queen’s College)
- Dartmouth College
- Yale University
- Bowdoin College (Maine)
- University of Delaware
- University of North Carolina
- Hampden-Sydney College (Virginia)
- University of Virginia

Activities for “Built on Bondage”: American Ivy League Schools and Slavery

Activity One — Historical Recall

1. After students have completed the reading, they should be able to answer the following questions:
   a. What is the definition of an Ivy League school?
   b. In what ways are Ivy League schools tied to the period of enslavement in America?
   c. How is the history of African enslavement in the Caribbean woven into the history of American Ivy League schools?

Activity Two — Social Justice Research

Many of the Ivy League schools listed at the end of the lesson have publicly acknowledged and tried to foster reconciliation for their school’s involvement in one of the most brutal enslavement episodes in human history. An example of these efforts is the Lemon Project (named after an enslaved human being) launched by William and Mary College
As research, students should choose the name of any school on the list and find out what that school is doing to address its involvement with the enslavement of African people.

- If students do not feel enough is being done by the institution that they researched, they should be encouraged to write a letter to the president of those institutions and make inquiries about what further steps the institutions are willing to take.

Activity Three — Service Learning

From the beginning, higher education in the United States was primarily the domain of wealthy European American men and, to a lesser degree, women. To a large extent, those disparities still exist. To combat that imbalance, scholars in Chicago created the Communiversity, a higher-education setting where people of all ages, and education levels were welcomed. The goal of the Communiversity was to teach people to understand the world around them so that they could make better choices as community leaders and so that could make a contribution to the betterment of their community. Anyone who had knowledge could be a teacher or facilitator of a Communiversity course.

- Students should organize a one-day teach-in or Communiversity for the community where their school is located. The focus of the Communiversity should be any part of the Amistad Curriculum that students decide on. Student responsibilities include securing the venue for the Communiversity class, advertising the class to the community, creating the lesson plan, and facilitating the after-lesson discussion or activity.

Activity Four — Science

One of the most vicious and enduring legacies of the intellectual community in America during the 1700s and 1800s is the scientific creation of racism. Dr. Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the person for whom Chicago’s prestigious Rush University Medical Center is named, made the claim that Africans had a mild form of leprosy that caused their skin to blacken, their lips to swell, and their hair to turn woolly. Rush also speculated that this form of leprosy made them less sensitive to pain. Dr. Samuel George Morton, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania’s medical school, would measure in excess of 140 human skulls of all races and conclude that the fact that African skulls were the smallest on average meant that Africans were inferior. Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jenifer Frank argue that the problem with such pseudoscientific claims is that they have never been fully discredited.

a. Students should review closely the experiment of Dr. Morton. A complete overview of his study is in appendix.
b. Students should construct a scientific study with a hypothesis, background research, and an experiment that could possibly fully debunk the cranial research of Dr. Morton.

Additional Resources for Teachers

- *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery* by Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jenifer Frank (chapter 9 deals with scientific racism)
- *Reproducing Racism: How Everyday Choices Lock In White Advantage* by Daria Roithm
- "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Backpack" by Peggy McIntosh
  http://www.isr.umich.edu/home/diversity/resources/white-privilege.pdf

Additional Resources for Students

- “Basic Black: Exploring Slavery and Ivy League Schools”
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MFjJJZ4AOug
# Lesson Plan

## Built on Bondage:

### Built on Bondage: American Ivy League Schools and Slavery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level(s)</th>
<th>11–12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit and Time Frame</td>
<td>Three 60-minute periods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Core State Standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- CCSS. ELA-Literacy. CCRA. R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- CCSS. ELA-Literacy. CCRA. R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively as well as in words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- CCSS. ELA-Literacy. CCRA. W.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- CCSS. Math Practice. MP.1: Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson Goals</td>
<td>After completing this lesson, students should demonstrate an understanding of the connection of American Ivy League schools and enslavement by doing the following:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Identify some of the economic and social advantages of being involved with the slave trade.</td>
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<td>- Research the American educational institutions that directly or indirectly trace their wealth to the slave trade era.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Research the current status of the reparations movement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materials/Resources:</td>
<td>For Teachers:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- computer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- smart board/projector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- handouts (attached to lesson plan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- videos (Traces of the Trade)</td>
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<tr>
<td>For Students:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- pen/pencil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- handouts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Terms and Concepts</td>
<td><strong>Ivy League schools</strong>: a group of long-established colleges in the eastern United States having high academic and social prestige.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <strong>emissary (ies)</strong>: a person sent on a special mission, usually as a diplomatic representative.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**endow**: to give or bequeath an income or property (to a person or institution).

**indigenous**: originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native.

**commodity**: something that is bought and sold; something or someone that is useful or valued.

**textile**: any cloth or goods produced by weaving, knitting, or felting.

**capitalism**: an economic system in which trade, industry and the means of production are controlled by private owners with the goal of making profits in a market economy.

**reparations**: repair; amends for a wrong that was done; atonement.

**internal reparations**: all actions taken by victims of the system of slavery and their descendants to in any way grant themselves a greater sense of humanity than that which was/is offered to them by an unjust system.

**external reparations**: redress that people receive from governments or corporations.

**repatriation**: the process of returning a person to his or her place of origin or citizenship.

### Interdisciplinary Connections

- **Geography/History**: Have the students research different ethnic groups and what they receive as reparations and compare/contrast with African Americans.
- **Writing**: Students can write a letter to their local congressman/senator asking for the passage of the bill H.R. 40 (Commission to Study Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act).
- **Math**: Students can use their research to calculate how much the descendants of a slave should be compensated monetarily. They can also research educational institutions that can trace their wealth to the slave era and try to estimate how much money they made from the slave trade.

### Discussion

1. **Opening**: Teacher can use a PowerPoint presentation showing the companies that have benefited from slavery and Ivy League colleges and ask the students: “What do all of these companies and institutions have in common?” Get some responses from the students; then let them know that all of these companies/institutions have directly benefited from slavery.

2. **Introduction to New Material**: Have the students discuss what happens to them when they do something wrong, or when someone does something wrong to them. They can talk about how they apologize and whether they have to compensate for the wrong that they committed. Let them discuss whether that is the right way to handle an issue. Teacher can then segue into the concept of reparations.

### KEY CONCEPTS:

- Americans made huge amounts of money from the transatlantic slave trade.
- Many of the financial advantages gained from slavery are still evident in America’s social classes and economy today.
- Have the students debate whether the descendants of slave should receive reparations. Also, they should discuss what type of reparations would be appropriate and how much they should be disbursed (ex. free education, land, money, or a combination of those items).
- Students can research and discuss the effects of slavery on African Americans today.

4. Critical Reflection: Students can conduct research on their own. Have them interview three to five people to see if they are in favor of reparations. They can come back to class to discuss their findings, or compile their research into a paper.

5. Closing: Have the students do an exit slip or the 3-2-1 activity. (After the lesson, have each student record three things he or she learned from the lesson. Next, have the students record two things that they found interesting and that they’d like to learn more about. Then have students record one question they still have about the material.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Observation, critical reflection activity, class discussion/participation, writing, geography, and math activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extensions (Homework, Projects)</td>
<td>Observation, critical reflection activity, class discussion/participation, writing, geography, and math activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>