



# Planters, Yeomen and Slaves

- Planters owning over 50 slaves numbered about 350,000 in 1850
- Middle class also owned 1-5 slaves, including urban dwellers
- Many slaves owned by transplanted northerners, including doctors and lawyers moving south to make their fortunes
- The median slaveholding rarely strayed far from four to six bondsmen per master. In 1850 half the slaveholders owned five bondsmen or fewer.
- In some of the most heavily populated slave states—South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia—between thirty-five and fifty percent of the white families held slaves in 1860



The ownership of slaves became for many immigrants the single most important symbol of their success in the New World, although few of them ever participated in the economy of the large plantation

To own twenty slaves in 1860 was to be among the wealthiest men in America, easily within the top five percent of southern white families.

It was the rare master who ceased his quest for more land and slaves

Slave owners tended to be well educated; they frequently were trained in the professions or began their careers as businessmen.



- In the early 19th century, most enslaved men and women worked on large agricultural plantations as house servants or field hands.
- Urban slaves worked as laborers and Artisans.
- Life for enslaved men and women was brutal; they were subject to repression, harsh punishments, Rape, family separation, and strict racial policing such as curfews by prototype KKK groups.
- not all slaves had similar African heritages.



- Enslaved people slavery through work slow-downs, machinery and animal sabotage, & occasionally plotting larger-scale revolts.
- Enslaved men and women created their own unique religious culture in the US South, combining elements of Christianity and West African traditions and spiritual beliefs.





By 1850, only 400,000 enslaved people lived in urban areas—where many engaged in skilled labor such as carpentry, blacksmithing, and pottery. Freemen lived in both the north and south



## Slave Life

Almost three million slaves worked on farms and plantations in 1835.

most of the agricultural output by value of the South was produced on large cotton plantations

More than half of all enslaved men and women lived on plantations that had more than 20 enslaved laborers; about a quarter lived on plantations that had more than 50.

Slave populations grew by reproduction as opposed to Caribbean slave populations.





House servants performed tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and driving

field hands labored for up to 20 hours a day clearing land, planting seed, and harvesting crops.

rice plantations slaves exercised some degree of autonomy in their work, such as in South Carolina, due to owner absence

Cotton field hands typically worked in a **gang-labor system** under a white or black slave overseer.

## Brutality and resistance

enslaved men and women were frequently separated from their family members because most, but not all, slaveowners had no compunction against splitting up families in order to generate cash when production was down or when luxurious goods called



Sale codes governing the behavior of enslaved men and women became more harsh.

Enslaved people were not allowed to defend themselves against violence from whites, nor did they have any legal standing in the courts.



Punishments for infractions were severe.  
Slave manuals were published providing advice on  
“slave management”



Whipping was prescribed for minor offenses, and branding, mutilation, and even death were employed as punishment for more serious transgressions.

Such strict racial policing was designed partly to ensure that enslaved people would never be able to revolt against those who held them in bondage.

Slave uprisings and revolts were the top fear of the Southern slave society.



Despite all the precautions that white Southerners took to prevent slave rebellions, they did sometimes occur.

Late 18<sup>th</sup> slave rebellions in the Caribbean were known throughout the south and considered the ultimate threat to white southerners and some northerners too.

In 1820 Charleston a slave rebellion plot was discovered and brutally suppressed.



In 1831, **Nat Turner**, an enslaved Virginia man whose owner had taught him to read and who was viewed as a prophet by the other enslaved men and women, organized an insurrection.

The uprising began with the killing of Turner's owner, and within 24 hours, the enslaved rebels managed to kill 60 white people.

The revolt was ultimately crushed by local whites, and Turner and 13 other slaves were executed along with other non-participating slaves.



the Virginia legislature began studying manumission relief that was never enacted but which gave rise to tensions between slave dense eastern Virginia and slave sparse Western Virginia.



Slaves sought escape to freedom in the North. If caught punishment was severe, including being “sold down river.”

Fleeing slaves was the major reason slaveowners wanted to have contiguous slave states and Fugitive Slave Laws



## Southern “Civilization of Slavery”

Steadily, a near-feudal society emerged in the South.

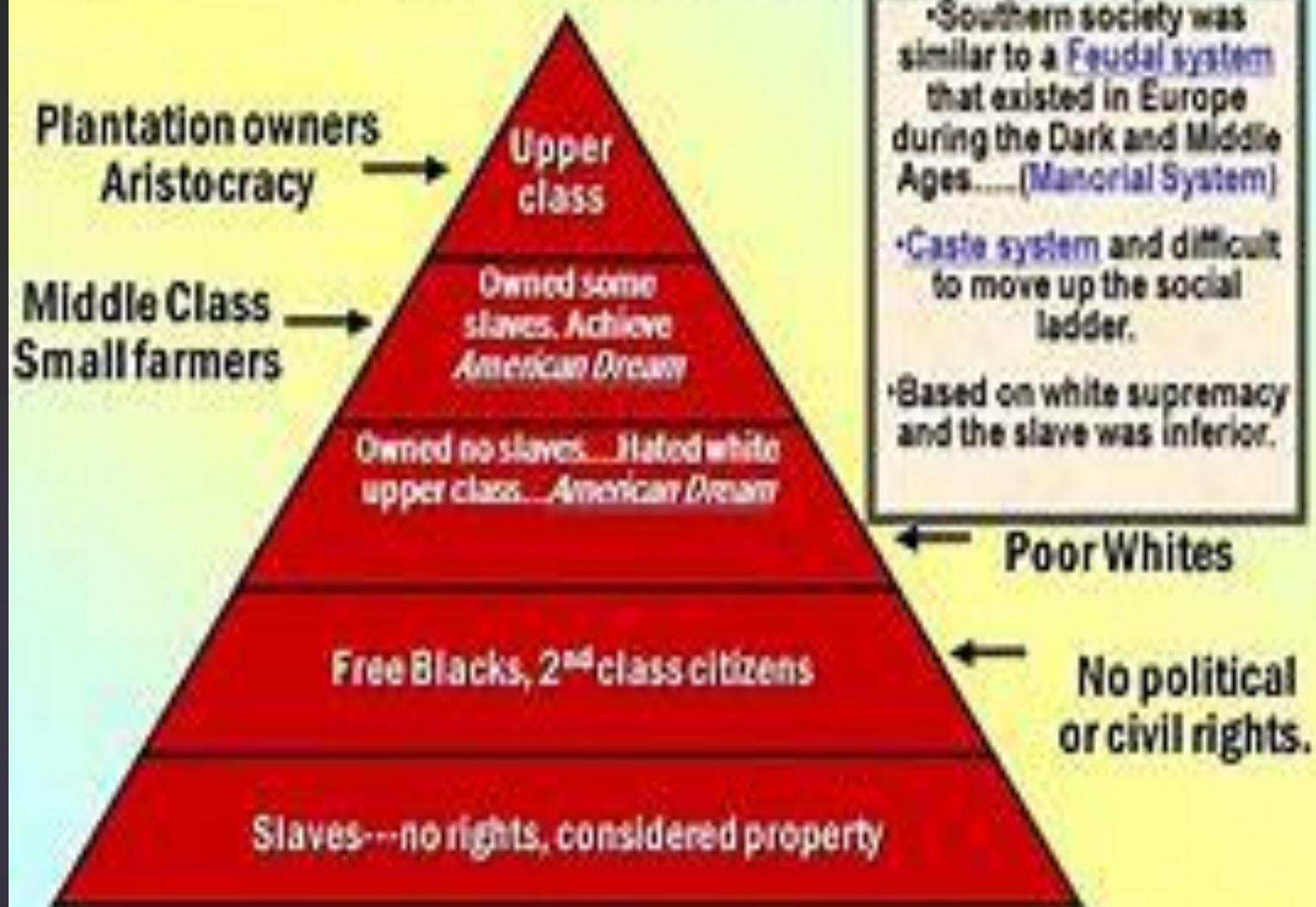
At the top was the aristocratic slave owning and landowning elite, who wielded much of the economic and political power.

Some plantations spanned upward of a thousand acres, controlling hundreds of slaves. A culture of gentility and high-minded codes of honor emerged.

Below the elite class were the small planters and Urban dwellers who owned a handful of slaves. These were self-made and fiercely independent.



# SOUTHERN SOCIETY



Slaveless small farmers and landless whites were at the bottom, making up three-quarters of the white population—and dreaming of the day when they, too, might own slaves.

No matter how wide the gap between rich and poor, class tensions among whites were eased by the belief they all belonged to the “superior race.”



## The “mind of the south” and the Irony of Liberty

Slave owners saw themselves building and leading a new civilization free from European dominance and corruption

The model was Greek and Roman civilization and 18<sup>th</sup> century English country squire civilization

Large Aristocratic slaveowners saw themselves as patriarchs caring for slaves and the entire downstream southern culture – a “Great Chain of Being”

Many convinced themselves they were actually doing God’s work taking care of what they believed was an inferior people.



Slaves were seen as helpless, mentally challenged children in need of Christian civilization to whom a duty was owed

The American slave was seen as being in a better circumstance than his African ancestors or contemporaries due to Christian influence

Southern society fiercely independent seeing themselves as heirs of the American Revolution



Southern civilization was superior to that of the north avoiding the pollution and depressing labor conditions of the cities and promoting the idyllic agrarian life





How serious were Southerners in their arguments?

750,000 to 850,000 men from across Southern society served in the Confederate armies in the American Civil War defending the Southern way of life

These represented 75 to 85 percent of draft eligible men (age 18-35)

258,000 perished on the battlefield or from disease

Southern men and women substantially supported the war effort with blood and treasure for 4 year



# Parts of the North React to Slavery

## Abolitionists and Neo Colonialists

by 1820, political and economic pressure on the South began placing a wedge between the North and South.

The Abolitionist movement, which called for an elimination of the institution of slavery, gradually became popular but only for about 5% of the Northern population.

Politicians and Platforms shunned the Abolitionist title.



By 1831 the most famous Abolitionist was William Lloyd Garrison of Massachusetts who advocated abolition of slavery with no overseas expulsion.

Garrison and other Abolitionists engaged in propaganda campaign that included mailing materials to Southern addresses. The southern postmasters censored such material regardless of US law and 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment claims





Frederick Douglass



Harriet Beecher Stowe



Susan B Anthony



Elizabeth Cady Stanton

For several years in the late 1830s- early 1840s  
Congress implemented the SC James Henry  
Hammond's proposed gag rule for petitions  
submitted to Congress addressing slavery.

Opposition led by John Quincy Adams.

Not taken well in the North.



## Neo-Colonialists

Favored forced emigration of slaves (and sometimes black non-slaves) to foreign countries. Henry Clay and Abraham Lincoln were neo-colonialists at times.

Emigration never materialized in scope due to expense.



Despite this well known brutality and public resistance, the North was not yet energized to strike down slavery at the beginning of 1860.



Next Week

The Politics of Slavery

