

Understanding and Interrogating Dominant Culture

Unit by Friendship Public Charter School team,
part of the 2021 cohort of *The 1619 Project* Education Network

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[Before cotton, sugar established American reliance on slave labor](#) is a 7-minute interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad, author of the sugar article in *The 1619 Project*. Muhammad explains how American sugar production cemented slavery within the U.S. economy -- and how its legacy endures. Text-dependent questions:

1. According to Khalil Gibran Muhammad, why is it impossible to tell the story of Europeans colonizing America without describing sugar?
2. Why were enslaved Africans and their descendants used to cultivate sugar?
3. How did the free labor of enslaved persons benefit Southern states like Louisiana?
4. According to Professor Muhammad, did Northern states where sugar was not cultivated and the United States as a whole benefit from the work of enslaved persons on sugar and cotton plantations? How?
5. What does Professor Muhammad mean when he says that our [the US] economy was built on profit instead of personhood? How does the country's history of slavery impact how we treat workers today?
6. Why does Professor Muhammad think it's so important for all Americans to learn the true history of the link between sugar production and slavery in America?