

1619 Project Day 4

Name: _____

Students will be able to

Analyze the legacy of slavery and racism seen in Chicago's labor/employment practices.

PDN: Image Analysis

Directions: Analyze the image below. Then answer the questions that follow.



According to a report by the National Employment Law Project, Black, Latino, and female workers are overrepresented in the segment of the population that makes less than \$15 an hour, with more than half of Black Americans and almost 60 percent of Latinos making less than this amount. (Photo credit: Maha Ahmed)

1. UNDERSTAND: Why is this group of people protesting?

2. ANALYZE: How will this protest, if successful, help workers?

From Slave Labor to ... Slave Labor

Today we will examine the origin of labor practices in the U.S., focusing on how American slavery and racism influenced the development of labor laws. We will understand the experiences of Chicago workers post-civil war and how present-day labor laws impact our community.

Prompt: Analyze the legacy of slavery and racism seen in the Chicago's labor and employment practices.

Rewrite prompt in your own words

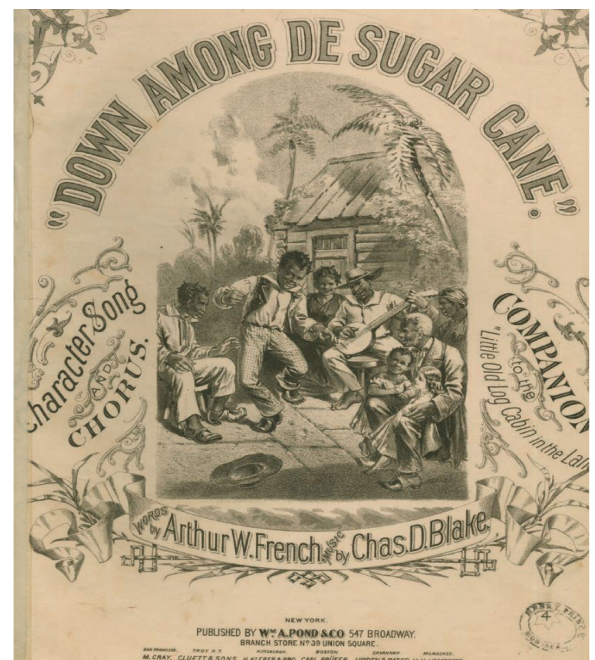
Historical Thinking Skill

REVIEW: Labor Practices on American Sugar Plantations

Examine the image to your right. Be sure to read ALL text in the image. Answer the questions below:

1. How does the picture contradict the reality of enslaved people?

2. If the picture contradicts the reality of slavery, why would someone create that picture?



Sheet music to an 1875 song romanticizing the painful, exhausted death of an enslaved sugar-plantation worker.

1619 Project Excerpt: Slave Labor on Sugar Plantations

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage below. Answer each question after reading the paragraph.

Text: [“Sugar” by Khalil Gibran Muhammad](#)

“The enslaved population soared, quadrupling over a 20-year period to 125,000 souls in the mid-19th century. New Orleans became the Walmart of people-selling. The number of enslaved labor crews doubled on sugar plantations. And in every sugar parish, black people outnumbered whites. These were some of the most skilled laborers, doing some of the most dangerous agricultural and industrial work in the United States. In the mill, alongside adults, children toiled like factory workers with assembly-line precision and discipline under the constant threat of boiling hot kettles, open furnaces and grinding rollers.

To achieve the highest efficiency, sugar houses operated night and day. “On cane plantations in sugar time, there is no distinction as to the days of the week,” Northup [former enslaved person] wrote. Fatigue might mean losing an arm to the grinding rollers or being fayed for failing to keep up. Resistance was often met with sadistic cruelty. A formerly enslaved black woman named Mrs. Webb described a torture chamber used by her owner, Valsin Marmillion. “One of his cruelties was to place a disobedient slave, standing in a box, in which there were nails placed in such a manner that the poor creature was unable to move,” she told a W.P.A. interviewer in 1940. “He was powerless even to chase the flies, or sometimes ants crawling on some parts of his body.”

Sheet music to an 1875 song romanticizing the painful, exhausted death of an enslaved sugar-plantation worker.



Men working among thousands of barrels of sugar in New Orleans in 1902.

1. UNDERSTAND: What work experiences did enslaved African Americans have on sugar-plantations? Provide at least TWO examples from the reading.

“Louisiana led the nation in destroying the lives of black people in the name of economic efficiency. The historian Michael Tadman found that Louisiana sugar parishes had a pattern of “deaths exceeding births.” Backbreaking labor and “inadequate net nutrition meant that slaves working on sugar plantations were ... far less able to resist the common and life-threatening diseases of dirt and poverty,” wrote Tadman in a 2000 study published in the *American Historical Review* ... the most overworked and abused could drop dead after

seven years. Most of these stories of brutality, torture and premature death have never been told in classroom textbooks or historical museums.”

2. UNDERSTAND: What happened to enslaved African Americans because of the conditions they worked in on sugar plantations?

“From slavery to freedom, many black Louisianans found that the crushing work of sugar cane remained mostly the same. Even with Reconstruction delivering civil rights for the first time, white planters continued to dominate land ownership. Freedmen and freedwomen had little choice but to live in somebody’s old slave quarters. As new wage earners, they negotiated the best terms they could, signed labor contracts for up to a year and moved frequently from one plantation to another in search of a life whose daily rhythms beat differently than before.

Sometimes black cane workers resisted collectively by striking during planting and harvesting time — threatening to ruin the crop. Wages and working conditions occasionally improved. But other times workers met swift and violent reprisals. After a major labor insurgency in 1887, led by the Knights of Labor, a national union, at least 30 black people — some estimated hundreds — were killed in their homes and on the streets of Thibodaux, La. “I think this will settle the question of who is to rule, the nigger or the white man, for the next 50 years,” a local white planter’s widow, Mary Pugh, wrote, rejoicing, to her son.”

3. UNDERSTAND: What did newly freed African Americans workers experience during the Reconstruction period?

4. ANALYZE: How did racism continue to affect newly freed black workers? Provide specific examples from the paragraphs above to support your response.

The experience of black workers at sugar plantations in Louisiana represent a common experience many African Americans across America endured. After the civil war, communities began to establish Unions to help protect the rights of workers. In 1896, The Chicago Federation of Labor was created as a way to strengthen the efforts of individual local unions advocating for fair labor rights.

REVIEW: Race “WARS” Ignite Between Chicago Workers

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage below. Answer each question after reading the paragraph.

TEXT: *The Ordeal of the Jungle: Race and the Chicago Federation of Labor, 1903-1922* by David Bates
(pg. 11, par. 1 - 2; pg. 12, par. 2)

“Labor Unions had built a long and infamous history of racial exclusion by the time of the CFL (Chicago Federation of Labor) Campaign ... historians largely concluded that racial conflicts within the working class were produced by racist union structures and divide-and-conquer tactics of employers. Whereas [white] immigrant workers, even those introduced as strikebreakers, quickly achieved promotions and were assimilated into native white working class culture, black workers saw few gains at the workplace. Relegated to the lowest-paying and most unpleasant jobs, African Americans remained outside the traditional scope of unions, allowing employers to capitalize on a divided workplace and reserve black workers as a captive “strike insurance” force ...”

“... the waiters’ strike of 1903, the stockyards strike of 1904, and the teamsters’ strike of 1905 ... In each of the three cases, African American workers were violently expelled from the labor movement and the workplace. In each case, white workers rallied around one another, through their unions - and, in the latter two cases, their communities - further closing ranks against black labor ... black workers displayed a high degree of class militancy, and in each case, it was ignored, as class anger turned to race anger and black workers were forced to defend themselves from whites ... each conflict bequeathed to Chicago’s labor movement a legacy of racial hatred and helped inexorably connect Chicago’s labor movement to its racial dynamics.”

1. UNDERSTAND: What experiences did African Americans have with local labor unions in Chicago?

2. ANALYZE: How did racism affect labor unions in Chicago?

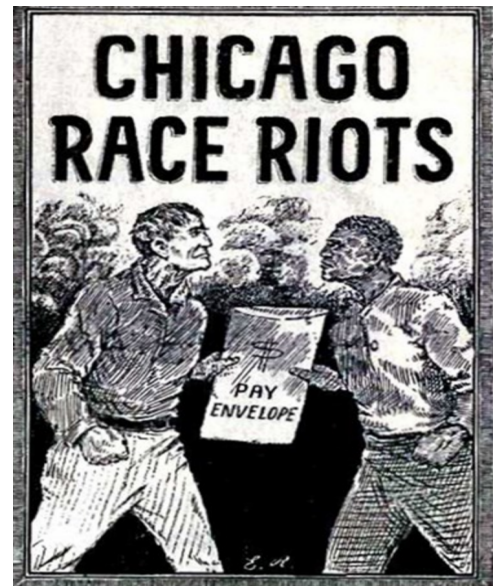
“Sometimes It Took Many Police to Protect A Few Wagons,” in Stanley Powekrs, “Chicago’s Strike Ordeal,” *World’s Work* 10, no. 3 (July 1905): 6381

Strikebreakers were guarded by police during the 1905 teamsters’ strike. Though the presence of black strikebreakers was itself provocative, the Employers Association [provides support and advice to employers] actively sought to inflame tensions by parading the strikebreakers through the streets with a full police guard.



Special Collections, Daley Library, University of Illinois at Chicago

Chicago Race Riots. The cover of a pamphlet edited by communist activist Harrison George - and containing statements from CFL (Chicago Federation of Labor) leaders J.W. Johnstone and John Fitzpatrick - dramatizes the CFL’s view of the riot as the product of racial resentment manufactured by the greed and mendacity of packing bosses [employers].



3. ANALYZE: Why would employers want to use strikebreakers (specifically black strikebreakers) to create tensions among its workers?

The Legacy of Slavery in Chicago and Beyond

Unit by KIPP Chicago, part of the 2021 cohort of *The 1619 Project*

Education Network

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1619 Project Day 3

Date: _____

Name: _____

Students will be able to:

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EXIT TICKET

In 3 to 5 sentences, explain how racism has impacted the work experience of African Americans in the U.S.? **Be sure to include evidence from the text above to support your answer.**
