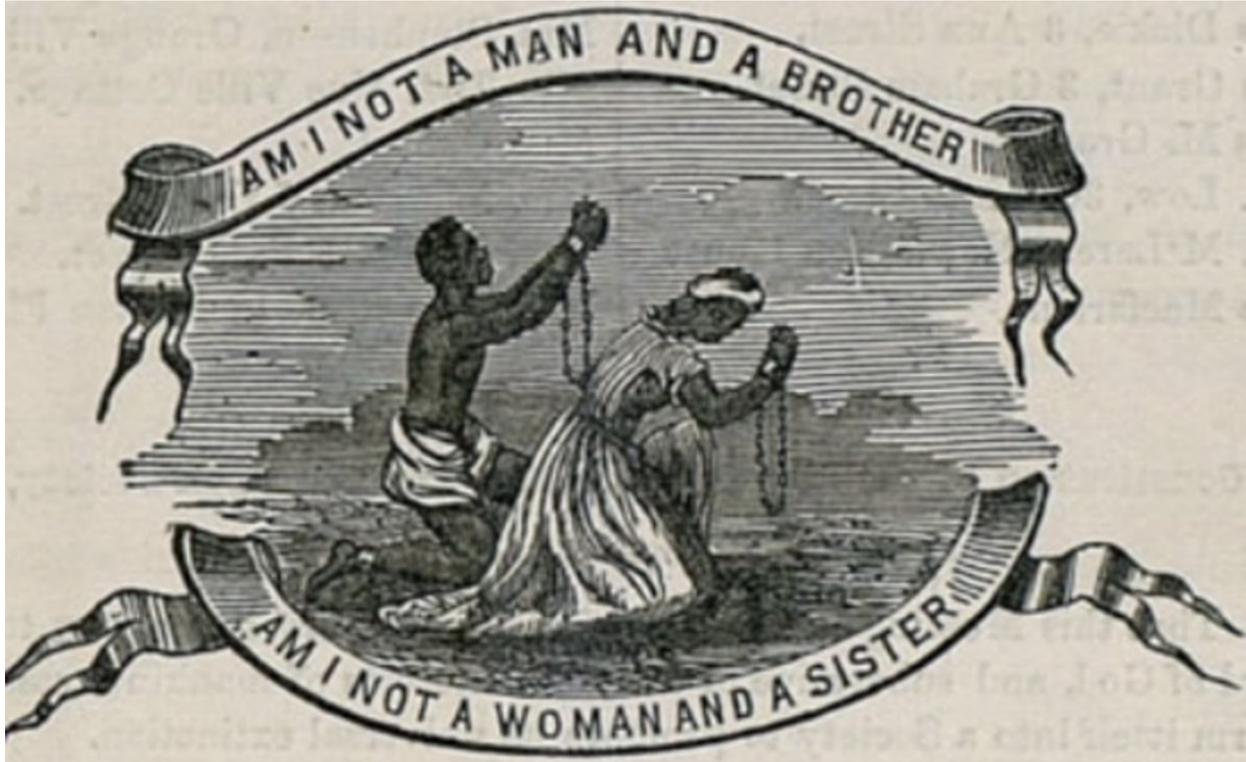


# Debunked: Eight Myths about American Slavery



Do you believe the United States was founded on the institution of chattel slavery? Do you think the U.S. Constitution enshrines that institution? If you do, you have been the victim of popular myths, born of long-standing suppression of the real history of the United States.

The facts show that Revolutionary America was the site of the first anti-slavery movement in the world.

The reality is that the existence of slavery in this country was always a matter of contention. The opponents were led by advocates of Alexander Hamilton's American System of Economics, which outlined the principles for economic

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growth by valuing human labor, and thus opposing slavery. My studies of Hamilton, which are summarized in my book [\*Hamilton Versus Wall Street: The Core Principles of the American System of Economics\*](#), convinced me that his intent was to **build an economy without slavery**. My studies of the history of slavery, especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, have shown there was a substantial base of public support for abolition.

Over the last three years, I have devoted considerable time and effort to studying the development of slavery in our country, and the efforts to extinguish it. My hope is to produce a book on this subject, which will underscore my hypothesis that it was **the abandonment of the American System of Economics** that allowed slavery to grow to the point that the Civil War became unavoidable.

In the meantime, I have been posting significant findings from my research on my blog. You can find them easily through the search function. The following items provide some teasers for what you will find.

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## Myth #1: The United States was founded on the basis of slavery.



*The arrival of the first slaves in Virginia*

This is an **outright lie** spread by the *New York Times*' 1619 project, based on the arrival of 20 slaves on a Portuguese ship captured by a British merchant vessel in Virginia in 1619.

In reality, only two colonies featured and codified slavery as an institution from the outset. One was South Carolina, which [some historians have labelled a colony of the British slave outpost of Barbados](#). The other was New York, which was a slave colony under the Dutch before the English took it over in 1664.

It took Virginia decades to officially legislate racial, chattel slavery. The slaves who were delivered to its shores on the Portuguese ship captured by British pirates in 1619 did not create institutionalized slavery; at least two were treated as indentured servants and became free men.

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Georgia [banned slavery](#) at the time of its founding.

## **Myth #2: The U.S. Constitution enshrines the right to hold slaves.**



*Frederick Douglass*

As many prominent historians and the renowned formerly enslaved abolitionist Frederick Douglass have asserted, the Constitution does no such thing.

In fact, efforts to explicitly condone slavery, by name, were **voted down at the constitutional convention**. As James Madison put it in his notes, the founding document was [not to admit to a human being as property](#) - his term was "property in man."

What the Constitution does is acknowledge and accommodate to slavery in the states where it existed. The right to hold slaves existed in state law, not Federal, where the presumption was freedom.

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**Myth #3: The U.S. Constitution is a pro-slavery document, describing Blacks as only 3/5 of a man, and permitting the slave trade to continue.**



*The slave trade was expected to be banned*

In truth, the Constitution specifies the 3/5 ratio in terms of representation in the Congress, in the face of the demand by the Southern states that the enslaved be counted as full persons in such representation. Notice the hypocrisy. On the one hand, the South denied slaves were human beings at all, and insisted they were merely property. On the other hand, when it came to a census that determined how many Congressmen they had in the U.S. House of Representatives, they wanted slaves to be counted as full persons!

Thus, as Frederick Douglass argued in 1860, the compromise behind the three-fifths law was that the Southern states

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would only gain if they gave Blacks their freedom and were penalized for not doing so.

As for permitting the slave trade to continue for 20 years, [Douglass emphasized the anti-slavery thrust](#) of the document. The Constitution looked forward to the end of the trade, which most individuals at the time saw as a death knell for this evil, he said.

### **Myth #4: The Declaration of Independence did not include Blacks in the statement “All men are created equal.”**



*The signing of the Declaration*

Abraham Lincoln, among others, [disagreed](#).

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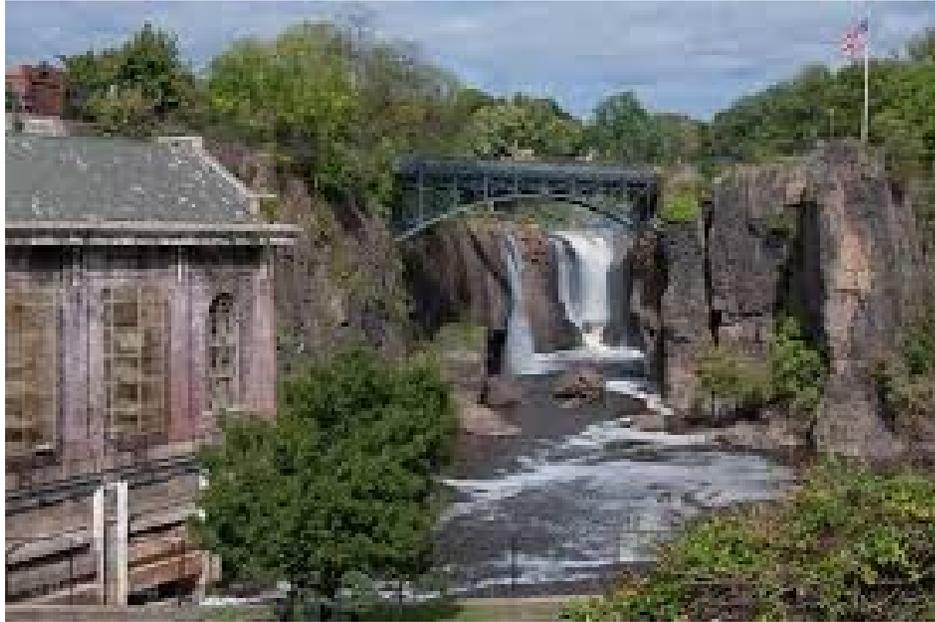
As he put it in his Alton debate with Senator Stephen Douglas,

"I think the authors of that notable instrument intended to include *all* men, but they did not mean to declare all men equal *in all respects*. They did not mean to say all men were equal in color, size, intellect, moral development, or social capacity. They defined with tolerable distinctness in what they did consider all men created equal-equal in certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

"This they said, and this they meant. They did not mean to assert the obvious untruth, that all were then actually enjoying that equality, or yet, that they were about to confer it immediately upon them. In fact, they had no power to confer such a boon. They meant simply to declare the *right*, so that the *enforcement* of it might follow as fast as circumstances should permit. ..."

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## **Myth #5: The American Founding Fathers never had a serious plan to end slavery**



*The Great Falls of the Passaic River in New Jersey - the site of Hamilton's Society for Useful Manufactures*

Alexander Hamilton, the most outspoken opponent of slavery among the inner core of Founding Fathers, proposed a political-economic system that was antithetical to slavery.

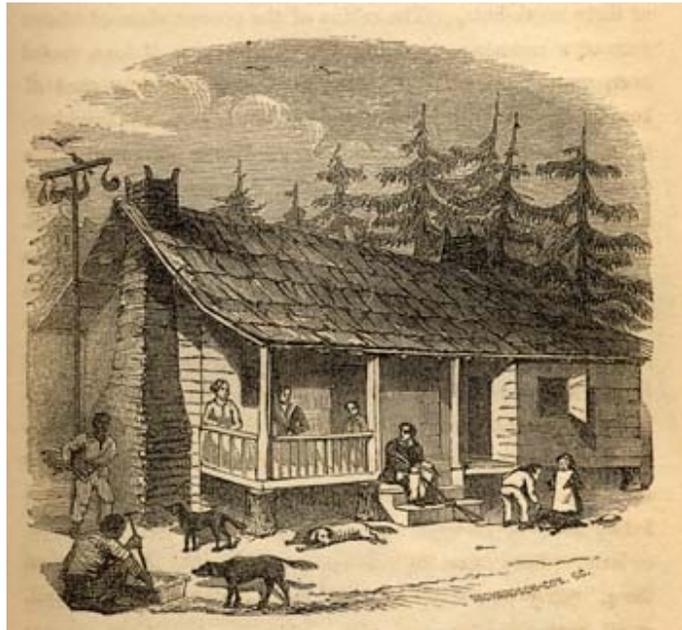
Hamilton explicitly considered slavery to be destructive to commerce and industry because it debased the creative powers of the human mind, which are crucial for economic progress.

While Hamilton's vision was sabotaged in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, his followers, such as Henry C. Carey explicitly elaborated economic plans aimed at extinguishing slavery.

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[Carey's plans](#), shared by President Lincoln, called for bringing industry and modern transportation into the South, and beginning to provide an alternative to the slave economy.

## **Myth #6: Slavery was the basis for American economic success.**



*An image of poverty in the pre-bellum South*

This false assertion has become increasingly popular over recent decades, based upon evidence of the great financial wealth of the Southern slave-owners, of the alleged efficiency of huge plantation production, and of the integral role of Northern merchants in supporting and profiting from the slave trade.

But the realities of the impoverishment of the slave states and the actual sponsorship of the technological and

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infrastructural advances which built the United States into an industrial giant give the lie to this claim.

[Testimony abounds](#) from contemporaries such as Hinton Helper, Cassius Clay, and many others that the **South was largely a center of backwardness**, without decent roads, schools, housing, and cities. And major advances in economic development did not come from merchants making money in the cotton trade, most of whom were tied, dollar for dollar, to Britain, which imported 80% of the American cotton crop.

## **Myth #7: The worldwide anti-slavery movement was headquartered in Great Britain**



*Anthony Benezet, founder of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society*

In reality, the British anti-slavery movement developed under the impetus of the **first serious abolitionist agitation in the world**, which **arose in the American colonies** during the Revolution.

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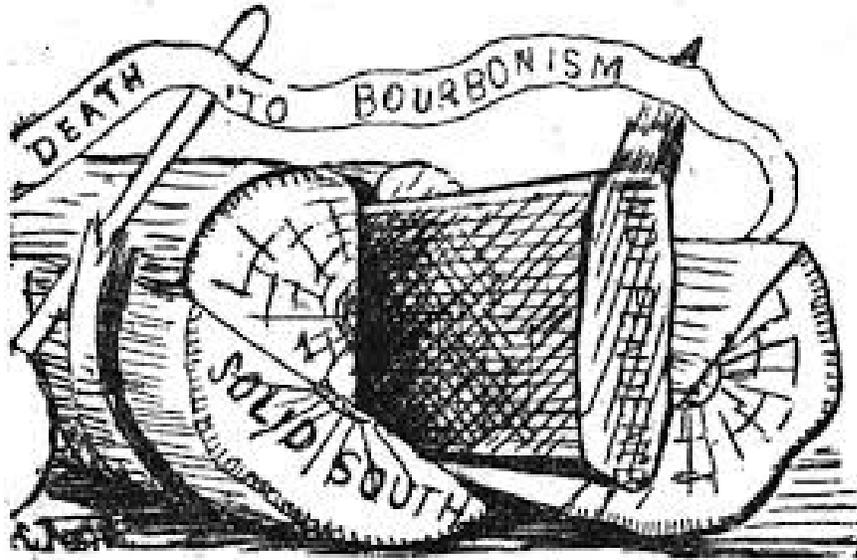
The first abolitionist society [was established in Pennsylvania in 1775](#), 12 years before the first in Great Britain. The banning of slavery in the states, beginning in 1777, far preceded that in Britain, which officially banned it in 1833. However, the British made an exception - they allowed slavery to continue in India until 1843.

The British government used its nominal opposition to slavery as a political and propaganda weapon, while reducing vast populations under its control - such as Ireland and India - to de facto slavery.

The British even provided material support for the Confederacy in the Civil War, including building two warships for the states in rebellion. Don't believe it? After the Civil War was over, America demanded the British pay compensation for the damage to U.S. ships and property caused by British-constructed Confederate war vessels. [Britain paid \\$15 million restitution](#) to the U.S. after the war, for the destruction caused by the ship called the *Alabama*.

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## **Myth #8: Opposition to slavery in the buildup toward the Civil War was based on defense of the white population, not Blacks.**



*A cartoon depicting the Black-White Readjuster alliance*

Only those who subscribe to the **British System of economics**, based on **maintaining scarcity and constantly cheapening labor**, would see protection of the living standard of the white working population as antithetical to that of blacks.

The American System's promotion of technological progress envisions prosperity for all, and so did the American System opponents of slavery, such as Abraham Lincoln.

There are many historical examples of multi-racial collaboration - as in the [Readjuster Movement](#) in Virginia - in promotion of policies for economic development. These were generally smashed by powerful financial elites with

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appeals to racial stereotypes and prejudices, to the detriment of both populations.

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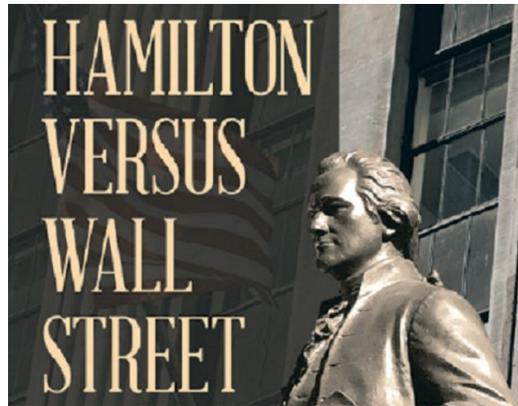
## Conclusion

The only way we are going to end the ugly legacy of slavery in the United States is by understanding the actual struggle that went on between those anti-slavery advocates of the American System of Economics, and the pro-slavery proponents of the British System of economic misery. As American System giant Mathew Carey argued, to avoid society's ills requires having the correct political economy—specifically, that laid out by Hamiltonian economics. That economic system is based on principles which demand the elevation of man, the promotion of his intellectual powers, and constant technological progress. It is desperately needed in our time.

If we deny the noble struggle which American System advocates like Lincoln waged against slavery, we doom our nation to endless conflict, or worse.

On my blog [www.americansystemnow](http://www.americansystemnow), you will find the history you need to both set the record straight and move toward a solution. The key is to learn about the *American System of Economics*.

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[Purchase "Hamilton versus Wall Street" on iUniverse](#)

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