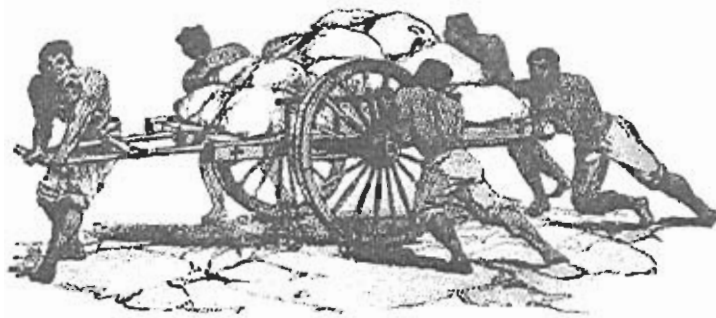


# Children of God's Fire

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A Documentary History of Black Slavery  
in Brazil



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they may recover their health and strength before coming into the market?—The reason of putting them into such a place is this: no owner of an establishment would permit a new cargo of slaves to be taken to his property, because a species of itch, or a disease of the skin which they have very much, would be propagated throughout the whole establishment; therefore no person would have them in a settled place. Those barracoons are in remote places by themselves, where there is no danger of the slaves running away; the object is to have a species of hospital where they are treated till those that get well do get well, and those that die there are buried.

4321. But as a matter of commercial policy, I presume that it is considered desirable to restore them to some degree of health and physical strength before they are exhibited in the market?—Yes. If you did not, when a purchaser took them, unless he had the convenience of taking them by water, he could not take them away; they could not walk; therefore the sooner you can get them into good condition the better; because a purchaser will take them as soon as he sees that they are able to walk, and not before.

### 1.6. “It Was the Same as Pigs in a Sty”: A Young African’s Account of Life on a Slave Ship (1849)

Two days after the ex-slavetrader, Joseph Cliffe, was interrogated, the Select Committee of the House of Lords questioned one Augustino, an African who in 1830, while still a child, had been included in a cargo of slaves transported to Brazil. Cliffe had told the committee that before the traffic had become illegal in March, 1830, conditions on slave ships had been comparatively comfortable. The questions put to Augustino, which were evidently intended to test whether or not this was true, partially refute this part of Cliffe’s testimony. Africans rarely had an opportunity to put their impressions of slavery into the written record, and so this brief document, like Baquaqua’s testimony (Doc. 1.4), is of unusual interest.

Source: *Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords, Appointed to Consider the Best Means which Great Britain Can Adopt for the Final Extinction of the African Slave Trade. Session 1849* (London, 1849), pp. 162-163.

☛ AUGUSTINO is called in, and examined as follows, through Mr. Herring, as Interpreter.

2353. How old are you?—I do not know

2354. When you were brought over from Brazil?—I do not know.

*Mr. Herring.* It was in 1830; I bought him myself in the month of July; we estimated his age at that time at about 12.

2355. (*To Augustino.*) Have you any recollection of your being brought over to Brazil?—I recollect when I arrived, and I recollect also when I came on board ship.

2356. Do you recollect anything which happened while you were on board ship?—I do.

2357. Can you remember whether, while you were so on board, your countrymen who were with you were brought over laid in packs, or in what way they were treated on board?—They were so closely packed together that there was no room to get anything at all in between them.

2358. Were you yourself, as a boy, brought on deck during the time that you were on board?—Yes, because I was so young.

2359. Were the grown slaves taken on deck?—No, they were not.

2360. They could not be, from the number which were packed together?—No; because they were chained down below to the sides of the vessel.

2361. Do you know whether many died on board ship?—When they were first put on board, they were so very thick together that a great many died in a day; five, six, ten, sometimes even a dozen died in a day, in consequence of the excessive heat and of the want of water. Their food was twice a week salt meat, and for the general meals of the day farina, a stuff like saw-dust—baked flour. In consequence of having a very insufficient supply of water, their thirst became so intense that many, from absolute suffocation, from the want of drink, died.

2362. Then, at that time they were not brought over in comfortable berths as emigrants were?—No.

2363. This was in 1830?—

*Mr. Herring.* It was before the expiration of the Treaty in 1830.

2364. But it was in 1830?—Yes.

*Augustino.* So far from there being cabins, if you call them cabins, it was the same as pigs in a sty, they were so thick.

2365. Do you know whether there was any difference between the state in which you were brought over and what had been the custom before?—As far as I know, it was the same thing.

*Mr. Herring.* But then he was up the country 30 leagues.

2366. (*To Augustino.*) Do you remember anything in Africa of your being made a prisoner before you were put on board?—Yes.

2367. Will you state anything that you remember?—A merchant sold my uncle some merchandise, and, before it was paid for, my uncle died;

the merchant came and seized us all, and made us all prisoners, and took us down to the coast; we were there about a week or 10 days, when we were put on board ship. The clothes of all the negroes going on board ship were stripped off them, even to the last rag.

2368. To what country in Africa did you belong?—Sefala.

2369. How far from the coast?—About a fortnight; at about three leagues a day.

*Mr. Herring.* Those leagues of which he speaks are Brazilian leagues, of four miles, very nearly.

*Augustino.* We always travelled by night, because they were afraid to travel by day.

2370. Why?—They were afraid that the relations of those who were taken prisoners might come, perhaps to the rescue. When we were on board ship, several had the liberty of coming on deck, in consequence of their youth; I was one, but the powerful ones were fastened below. The young ones had the right of coming on deck, but several of those jumped overboard, for fear they were being fattened to be eaten. The greater part of those that died on board died from thirst.

2371. What put the idea into their heads of being eaten; are they eaten in their own country?—They do not know for what object they are taken, and the idea comes into their head that it is from being made food of. Sometimes, when they are very ill indeed, and perhaps the white man thinks that one of them is dead, he comes and pinches his ear, to see if he feels the pain, and he finds that he is not dead; and then a man will take hold of his rope's end, and give him a good basting with it, and say, "There is nothing at all the matter with you; get up, get up."

Augustino is directed to withdraw.

## 1.7. A Slave Revolt at Sea and Brutal Reprisals (1845)

The previous documents show that traders in Africans feared revolts among their slaves both on land and at sea, and at times, of course, rebellions occurred. When such revolts were successful there was obviously little chance that anyone involved would have had an opportunity to record what he had seen. As a result, those slave uprisings about which we are informed, whether they happened in Africa, at sea, or in Brazil, were generally without success.

The following sworn testimony of William Page, a British sailor, given before the American consul in Rio de Janeiro, concerns the violent events that occurred aboard an American ship, the *Kentucky*, in 1845.

Under the protection of the American flag, the *Kentucky* had sailed from Rio de Janeiro in 1844 equipped for the slave trade. Reaching Inhambane on the coast of Mozambique, it took on a cargo of slaves and a Brazilian crew. Then, with the original crew members, including Page, traveling as passengers, it returned to Brazil where it landed its surviving cargo. The following section of Page's testimony deals mainly with the revolt and the Brazilian crew's fierce response to it, but it also includes some valuable details on the more normal daily routine of a slave ship in the final phase of the Brazilian traffic.

Source: *Class A. Correspondence with the British Commissioners at Sierra Leone, Havana, Rio de Janeiro, Surinam, Cape of Good Hope, Jamaica, Loanda, and Boa Vista, Relating to the Slave Trade. From January 1 to December 31, 1845. Inclusive* (London, 1846), pp. 517-518.

Deponent . . . said, that a majority of the slaves were brought on board during the night in launches, near the fort at Inhambane. There were about 500 in all that came on board. About a dozen died on the passage, and 46 men and one woman were hung and shot during the passage; and 440 or about, were landed at Cape Frio. When the slaves came on board they were put down on the slave deck, all in irons. Across the vessel, aft, a bulkhead was run, aft of which, and in the cabin, the women, 150 to 200 in number, were put, and the men and boys forward of the bulkhead. When it was good weather, a good many of the negroes were on deck during the night and day. In stormy weather, only those that were kept at work were on deck, but all the others below. The vessel had not a full cargo. It was intended to have 700, but they could not get them. The negroes slept scattered about the slave-deck, as they chose. They were fed twice a day with beans, farina, rice, and dried beef, all boiled together. At the first meal they had beans, farina, and rice together, and at the second meal dried beef and farina. They eat in messes, as on board of a man-of-war, having their food in their dishes. All were provided with wooden spoons, made on board by the seamen, at Inhambane. The cooking apparatus was rigged in the galley, and so arranged and painted that it could not be discovered without coming on board. The cooking was going on all the time, excepting when near a sail, when the fires were damped, and all the negroes put below.

And deponent further said, that the next day after the vessel crossed the bar on leaving Inhambane, as aforesaid, the negroes rose upon the officers and crew; a majority of the men, all of whom were in irons, got their irons off, broke through the bulkhead in the females department,

and likewise into the fore-castle. Upon this, the Captain armed the crew with cutlasses, and got all the muskets and pistols, and loaded them, and the crew were firing down amongst the slaves for half an hour or more. In the meantime deponent was nailing the hatches down, and used no musket or pistol; and there was no occasion, as the Brazilian sailors seemed to like the sport. In about half an hour they were subdued, and became quiet again.

The slaves were then brought on deck, eight or ten at a time, and ironed afresh. They were all re-ironed that afternoon, and put below, excepting about seven, who remained on deck. None were killed on this occasion, and but eight or ten more or less wounded. They fired with balls in the pistols and shot in the muskets. Supposes the reason none were killed is, that they had to fire through the grates of the hatches, and the slaves got out of the way as much as they could.

On the next day they were brought upon deck two or three dozens at a time, all being well ironed, and tried by Captain Fonseca and officers; and within two or three days afterwards forty-six men and one woman were hung and shot, and thrown overboard. They were ironed or chained two together, and when they were hung a rope was put round their necks, and they were drawn up to the yard-arm clear of the sail. This did not kill them, but only choked or strangled them. They were then shot in the breast, and the bodies thrown overboard. If only one or two that were ironed together was to be hung, a rope was put round his neck and he was drawn up clear of the deck, beside of the bulwarks, and his leg laid across the rail and chopped off, to save the irons and release him from his companion, who, at the same time, lifted up his leg till the other's was chopped off as aforesaid, and he released. The bleeding negro was then drawn up, shot in the breast, and thrown overboard as aforesaid. The legs of about one dozen were chopped off in this way. When the feet fell on deck, they were picked up by the Brazilian crew and thrown overboard, and sometimes at the body, while it still hung living; and all kinds of sport was made of the business. When two that were chained together were both to be hung, they were hung up together by their necks, shot, and thrown overboard, irons and all. When the woman was hung up and shot, the ball did not take effect, and she was thrown overboard living, and was seen to struggle some time in the water before she sunk.

And deponent further said that, after this was over, they brought up and flogged about twenty men and six women. When they were flogged they were laid flat upon the deck, and their hands tied, and secured to one ring bolt, and their feet to another. They were then whipped by two

men at a time—by the one with a stick about 2 feet long, with five or six strands of raw hide secured to the end of it (the hide was dry and hard and about 2 feet long); and by the other with a piece of the hide of a sea-horse; this was a strip about 4 feet long, from half an inch to an inch wide, as thick as one's finger or thicker, and hard as whalebone, but more flexible. The flogging was very severe. Deponent and another Englishman on board, named Edward Blake, were obliged to assist in the flogging, as the Brazilians got tired. Deponent flogged four, but he got clear of the hanging and shooting business. All the women that were flogged at this time died, but none of the men. Many of them, however, were sick all the passage, and were obliged to lie on their bellies during the remainder of the voyage, and some of them could hardly get on shore on arrival at Cape Frio. The flesh of some of them where they were flogged (which was not generally on their backs, but on their posteriors) purrified and came off, in some cases 6 or 8 inches in diameter, and in places half an inch thick. Their wounds were dressed and filled up by the Contramestre with farina and cachaça [rum] made into poultice, and sometimes with a salve made on board. When the farina and cachaça were applied to the poor creatures, they would shiver and tremble for half an hour, and groan and sob with the most intense agony. They were a shocking and horrible sight during the whole passage. There was no disturbance on board after this, and no flogging, excepting of the boys for stealing water, farina, and so forth, when it was not allowed them.

Deponent further said that the ages of the negroes were from nine or ten up to thirty years. They were generally healthy, as sickly ones were not bought. Most of them were generally entirely without any article of clothes or covering, though at times they had strips of cloths around their loins, and some had handkerchiefs tied around them. The women were not so frequently naked as the men. Both the men and women frequently would get lousy, and be obliged to take off their strips of cloth to cleanse themselves. They were all brought on deck at different times during the voyage, say fifty at a time, and washed, by having water thrown over them, &c. They were washed four or five times each, and twice they had vinegar given to them to wash their mouths, and scrub their gums with brushes. In good weather the negroes themselves were obliged to sweep and wash down the slave deck every day, and thus kept it clean; but at night, and in hot weather, the hold of the vessel smelt very badly. But a few of them were sick during the passage, excepting those that were so badly flogged. The sick were doctored by the Contramestre, and the wounds of those that were flogged were dressed with aguardiente and farina, and a salve that was made on board.

### 1.8. A British Physician Describes the State of Africans upon Their Arrival in Brazil (1841-1843)

From the early years of the nineteenth century until after 1850 the British Royal Navy captured hundreds of slave ships at sea as part of Britain's long campaign to stop the international slave trade. The Africans found aboard those ships were taken either to a British colony or, when seized near Brazil or Cuba, delivered over to the doubtful protection of the government in those countries.

Obviously, after their hard journeys, the rescued slaves required assistance of every kind, especially food, quartering, and medical care. To meet these needs locally, in 1840 the British government stationed a frigate, the *Crescent*, in the harbor of Rio de Janeiro, and during the next five or six years eight shiploads of slaves seized off the Brazilian coast, some 3,000 Africans, received help aboard the *Crescent*.

Assigned to this arduous and dangerous duty was a British medical doctor, Thomas Nelson, who kept a written account of what he saw, with an emphasis on the physical conditions of the Africans and their diseases. The following descriptions of Africans who came under Nelson's professional care in 1841 and 1843 are taken from his sensitive account of the Brazilian slave trade published in 1846. The sections within quotation marks are of particular importance, since they were written on the scene while Nelson's impressions were still fresh.

Source: Thomas Nelson, *Remarks on the Slavery and Slave Trade of the Brazils* (London: J. Halchard and Son, 1846), pp. 43-56.

☛ "A few minutes after the vessel dropped her anchor, I went on board of her, and although somewhat prepared by the previous inspection of two full slavers to encounter a scene of disease and wretchedness, still my experience, aided by my imagination, fell short of the loathsome spectacle which met my eyes on stepping over the side. Huddled closely together on deck, and blocking up the gangways on either side, cowered, or rather squatted, three hundred and sixty-two negroes, with disease, want, and misery stamped upon them with such painful intensity as utterly beggars all powers of description. In one corner, apart from the rest, a group of wretched beings lay stretched, many in the last stage of exhaustion, and all covered with the pustules of small-pox. Several of these I noticed had crawled to the spot where the water had been served out, in the hope of procuring a mouthful more of the precious liquid; but unable to return to their proper places, lay prostrate around the

empty tub. Here and there, amid the throng, were isolated cases of the same loathsome disease in its confluent or worst form, and cases of extreme emaciation and exhaustion, some in a state of perfect stupor, others looking piteously around, and pointing with their fingers to their parched mouths whenever they caught an eye whom they thought would relieve them. On every side, squalid and sunken visages were rendered still more hideous by the swollen eyelids and the puriform discharge of a virulent ophthalmia [a dangerous eye inflammation], with which the majority appeared to be afflicted; added to this were figures shrivelled to absolute skin and bone, and doubled up in a posture which originally want of space had compelled them to adopt, and which debility and stiffness of the joints compelled them to retain.

"On looking more leisurely around, after the first paroxysm of horror and disgust had subsided, I remarked on the poop another wretched group, composed entirely of females. Some were mothers with infants who were vainly endeavouring to suck a few drops of moisture from the lank, withered, and skinny breasts of their wretched mothers; others were of every intermediate age. The most of them destitute even of the decency of a rag, and all presenting as woeful a spectacle of misery as it is possible to conceive. . . ."

"While employed in examining the negroes individually, and separating and classifying the sick, who constituted by far the majority, I obtained a closer insight into their actual condition. Many I found afflicted with confluent small-pox, still more with purulent ophthalmia, and the majority of what remained, with dysentery, ulcers, emaciation, and exhaustion. In several, two or three of these were met. Not the least distressing sight on that pest-laden deck was the negroes whom the ophthalmia had struck blind, and who cowered in seeming apathy to all that was going on around. This was indeed the ultimatum of wretchedness, the last drops in the cup of bitterness. Deprived of liberty, and torn from their native country, there was nothing more left of human misery but to make them the victims of a physical darkness as deep as they had already been made of a moral one.

"The stench on board was nearly overwhelming. The odour of the negroes themselves, rendered still stronger by their filthy and crowded condition, the sickening smell of the suppurative stage of small-pox, and the far more disgusting effluvia of dysenteric discharge, combined with bilge water, putrid jerked beef, and numerous other matters to form a stench, it required no little exertion of fortitude to withstand. To all this, hunger and thirst lent their aid to finish the scene; and so poignant were they, that the struggles to obtain the means of satisfying them were occasionally so great as to require the interference of the prize crew. The

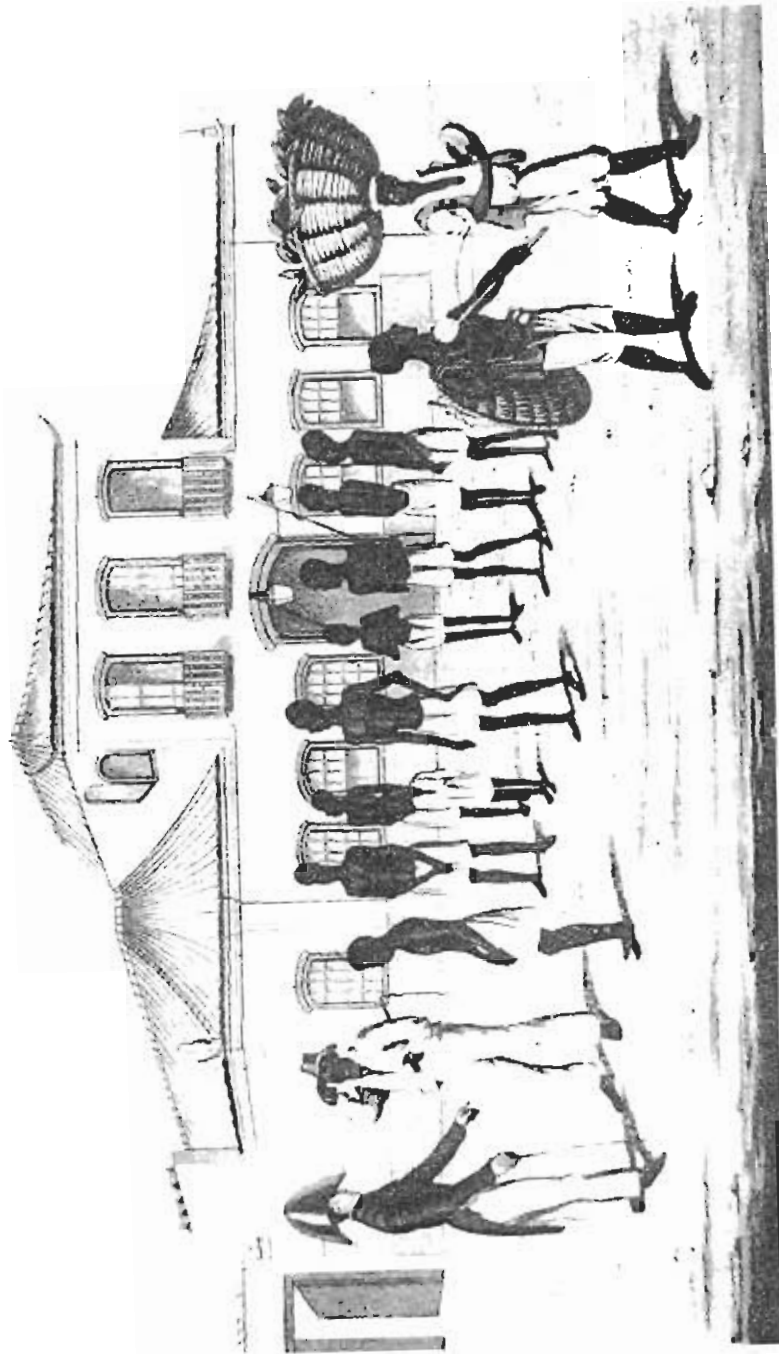
moment it could be done, water in abundance and a meal was provided them; and none but an eye-witness could form an idea of the eagerness with which the former luxury was covered and enjoyed. For many days, it seems, the water had not only been reduced in quantity, but so filled with impurities, and so putrid, that nothing but the most stringent necessity could have induced the use of it. . . ."

Of another, called the "Vencedora," the following are the notes which are taken.

"Early yesterday morning (11th of September, 1843) the decks of the Crescent were again thronged by a miserable crowd of liberated Africans. The vessel in which they had been conveyed from the 'coast' was captured a few days ago by one of the boats belonging to H.M.S. Frolic, a little to the northward of Rio.

"Previously to the removal of the negroes, Dr. Gunn (the surgeon of the Crescent) and myself went on board the slaver, and on stepping over the side, were astonished at the smallness of the vessel, and the number of wretched negroes who had been thrust on board of her. Below, the hold was crowded to excess; and above, the deck was so closely packed with the poor creatures, that we had to walk along the top of the low bulwarks in order to get aft. Of the appearance of the negroes, no pen can give an adequate idea. In numbers, the different protuberances and anatomical peculiarities of the bones can be distinctly traced by the eye, and appear, on every motion, ready to start through the skin, which is, in fact, all that covers them. Nor has this been confined to appearance; in many, at the bend of the elbows and knee-joints, over the hip-joints and lower part of the spine, the integuments have given way, and caused the most distressing and ill-conditioned sores. A great number of the Africans, especially the younger, cannot stand upright even when assisted, and the moment they are left to themselves, they double up their knees under their chins, and draw their legs so closely to their bodies, that they scarcely retain the form of humanity. So weak and so cramped are the most of them that they had to be carried in the arms of the seamen, one by one, up the Crescent's ladder. All those not affected with contagious diseases are now on board the Crescent, and the most of them look like animated skeletons. From one of the Portuguese crew, who is at present under treatment for small-pox, I learn that the name of the vessel is the Vencedora, and that she left Benguela on the coast of Africa with four hundred and sixty slaves on board. But of this number only three hundred and thirty-eight have been counted over the side, a circumstance which will appear the less surprising when the space in which they were stowed comes to be considered. . . ."

Just as the negroes who remained of the Vencedora had entirely re-



3. Sick Slaves

covered their wonted health and vigour, and were fit to be sent to one of our colonies, H.M.S. Dolphin, on the 15th of November, 1843, brought into harbour a full slaver, which she had captured a day or two before, a little to the northward of Rio. The crew of the slaver had actually run her ashore, and had begun to throw the negroes overboard into the sea, in order that they might be induced to swim for the land, when the boats of the Dolphin came up and obliged them to stop and effect their own escape.

This vessel is the largest I have yet seen employed in this traffic, and is better fitted and found than the common run of slavers; she is American built, and several of her fittings bear the name of American tradesmen. But, as usual, the Africans benefit nothing from the greater size of the vessel. The additional room has not been devoted to give increased accommodation, but to carry a greater number from the coast. The hold, instead of being fitted with one slave-deck, has two; so that, in fact, the negroes have been as badly off, if not worse, than they would have been in a smaller vessel.

On attempting to go down into the hold, and satisfy myself with an examination before the Africans were removed, I was forced, after one or two unsuccessful attempts, to give it up;—the effluvia was perfectly overwhelming, and the heat so great, that the moment I left the square of the hatchway, the sensation approached suffocation. . . . The decks furnish a melancholy spectacle of disease and wretchedness; but the most prominent and widely-spread scourge is purulent ophthalmia. Numbers of poor creatures are squatting down in corners or groping about the deck, deprived of all sight. Their immensely swollen eyelids, contrasting with their haggard and wasted features, and the discharge which keeps constantly trickling down their cheeks, and which they have not even a rag to wipe away, gives them an appearance of ghastly murky misery which it is impossible for me to describe.

Many eyes, I am afraid, are irretrievably lost, and several poor wretches must remain forever totally blind. Dysentery, too, that fellest of all diseases in the negro race, is at work amongst them, and will doubtless commit fearful ravages. Five hundred and seventy-two Africans were found on board. What the number was at starting there is no means of ascertaining. One of the crew, a slave, who acted on board in the capacity of a cook, and who preferred being captured by Englishmen to escaping with his master, told me that many had died and were thrown overboard during the passage. The exact number taken on board, however, he could not tell. In all probability, it was not under seven hundred; but of course this is only mere conjecture. The cargo, he told me, was shipped at

Angola, and is composed of five distinct tribes, who converse in dialects differing entirely from each other. . . .

"21st Nov. The eyes of the negroes afflicted with the ophthalmia are beginning to take on a more favourable aspect generally. We have been highly delighted with the magical effects of the nitrate of silver in these cases. Under its influence, the profuse discharge is rapidly disappearing, and the numerous ulcers on the cornea assuming a healthier and healing appearance. Our hopes are considerable, that we shall not have many totally blind after all. Several eyes are irretrievably lost; but, thanks be to Heaven, this disaster has seldom visited both eyes in the same person.

"It is astonishing to witness the sagacity, if I may so call it, and fortitude with which the poor creatures submit, nay, press to be treated with the different remedies. Not only do they appear perfectly aware that their interest is consulted, and give no trouble, but exhort each other to stand firm while the necessary painful operations of scarifying and of touching the inflamed and ulcerated parts are performed. I could not help being struck, on more than one occasion, while a dingy group of some hundred and more surrounded me on the lower deck of the hulk, which had been hired for their accommodation, all waiting eagerly yet patiently to have their eyes attended to. Children not more than five or six years old will go down on their knees, and opening their swollen eyelids with their own fingers, will remain firm and unflinching whilst the pungent remedies are applied to their eyes."

But while the local affection was thus yielding to the remedies employed, dysentery, in spite of every effort and precaution, continued to spread. Unlike the acute complaint in the white man, in the negro its approach is insidious, and attended with so little pain, that its poor victims, ignorant of its nature, often do not complain until the most fatal lesions have taken place. Day after day fresh cases would present themselves, or be selected where the disease was suspected to exist; but it mattered comparatively little whether they were got early or late: the disease once established clung to the wasted bodies of the wretched sufferers. Apathetic, from exhaustion, to acute suffering, and with scarce any rallying powers of constitution left—and seldom indeed did it quit its hold until death closed the scene.

### 1.9. A British Clergyman's Impressions of the Valongo Slave Market in Rio de Janeiro (1828)

Most of the foreign travelers who wrote accounts of life in Brazil during the early decades of the nineteenth century devoted at least a few para-

graphs to that intriguing commercial phenomenon, the Valongo slave market in Rio de Janeiro. One of the most valuable of these descriptions was written by Robert Walsh, a British clergyman who traveled widely in Brazil in 1828 and 1829 and wrote sympathetically and intelligently about many aspects of the nation's social life. Like many Europeans with little previous acquaintance with black Africans, Walsh revealed some underlying racist attitudes. However, his Christian humanism was also well developed, and so in this description of conditions in the Valongo market Walsh compassionately revealed the human dignity which the slaves maintained despite the hardships and humiliation that they were made to endure day after day in a new and hostile environment.

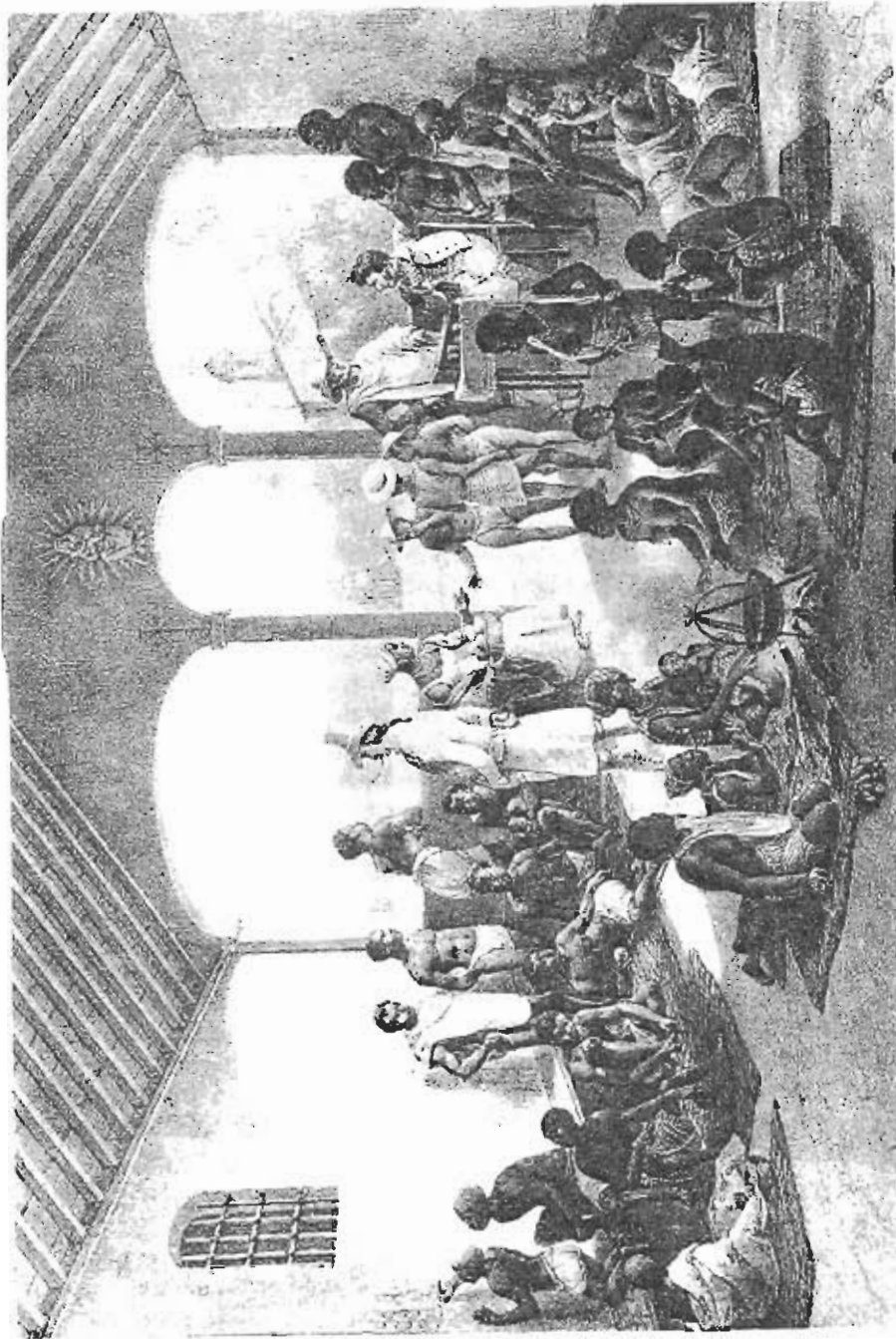
Source: Robert Walsh, *Notices of Brazil in 1828 and 1829*, 2 vols. (London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davis, 1830), II, 323-328.

☛ The place where the great slave mart is held, is a long winding street called the Vallongo, which runs from the sea, at the northern extremity of the city. Almost every house in this place is a large ware-room, where the slaves are deposited, and customers go to purchase. These ware-rooms stand at each side of the street, and the poor creatures are exposed for sale like any other commodity. When a customer comes in, they are turned up before him; such as he wishes are handled by the purchaser in different parts, exactly as I have seen butchers feeling a calf; and the whole examination is the mere animal capability, without the remotest inquiry as to the moral quality, which a man no more thinks of, than if he was buying a dog or mule. I have frequently seen Brazilian ladies at these sales. They go dressed, sit down, handle and examine their purchases, and bring them away with the most perfect indifference. I sometimes saw groups of well-dressed females here, shopping for slaves, exactly as I have seen English ladies amusing themselves at our bazaars.

There was no circumstance which struck me with more melancholy reflections than this market, which I felt a kind of morbid curiosity in seeing, as a man looks at objects which excite his strongest interests, while they shock his best feelings. The ware-rooms are spacious apartments, where sometimes three or four hundred slaves, of all ages and both sexes, are exhibited together. Round the room are benches on which the elder generally sit, and the middle is occupied by the younger, particularly females, who squat on the ground stowed close together, with their hands and chins resting on their knees. Their only covering is a small girdle of cross-barred cotton, tied round the waist.

The first time I passed through this street, I stood at the bars of the window looking through, when a cigano [gypsy] came and pressed me to enter. I was particularly attracted by a group of children, one of





4. New Africans Waiting to Be Sold

whom, a young girl, had something very pensive and engaging in her countenance. The cigano observing me look at her, whipped her up with a long rod, and bade her with a rough voice to come forward. It was quite affecting to see the poor timid shrinking child standing before me, in a state the most helpless and forlorn, that ever a being, endowed, like myself, with a reasonable mind and an immortal soul, could be reduced to. Some of these girls have remarkably sweet and engaging countenances. Notwithstanding their dusky hue, they look so modest, gentle and sensible, that you could not for a moment hesitate to acknowledge, that they are endowed with a like feeling and a common nature with your own daughters. The seller was about to put the child into all the attitudes, and display her person in the same way, as he would a man; but I declined the exhibition, and she shrunk timidly back to her place, and seemed glad to hide herself in the group that surrounded her.

The men were generally less interesting objects than the women; their countenances and hues were very varied, according to the part of the African coast from which they came; some were soot black, having a certain ferocity of aspect that indicated strong and fierce passions, like men who were darkly brooding over some deep-felt wrongs, and meditating revenge. When any one was ordered, he came forward with a sullen indifference, threw his arms over his head, stamped with his feet, shouted to show the soundness of his lungs, ran up and down the room, and was treated exactly like a horse, put through his paces at a repository; and when done, he was whipped to his stall.

The heads of the slaves, both male and female, were generally half shaved; the hair being left only on the fore part. A few of the females had cotton handkerchiefs tied round their heads, which, with some little ornaments of native seeds or shells, gave them a very engaging appearance. A number, particularly the males, were affected with eruptions of a white scurf, which had a loathsome appearance, like a leprosy. It was considered, however, a wholesome effort of nature, to throw off the effects of the salt provisions used during the voyage; and, in fact, it resembles exactly a saline concretion.

Many of them were lying stretched on the bare boards; and among the rest, mothers with young children at their breasts, of which they seemed passionately fond. They were all doomed to remain on the spot, like sheep in a pen, till they were sold; they have no apartment to retire to, no bed to repose on, no covering to protect them; they sit naked all day, and lie naked all night, on the bare boards, or benches, where we saw them exhibited.

Among the objects that attracted my attention in this place were some young boys, who seemed to have formed a society together. I observed

several times in passing by, that the same little group was collected near a barred window; they seemed very fond of each other, and their kindly feelings were never interrupted by peevishness; indeed, the temperament of a negro child is generally so sound, that he is not affected by those little morbid sensations, which are the frequent cause of crossness and ill-temper in our children. I do not remember, that I ever saw a young black fretful, or out of humour; certainly never displaying those ferocious fits of petty passion, in which the superior nature of infant whites indulges. I sometimes brought cakes and fruit in my pocket, and handed them in to the group. It was quite delightful to observe the generous and disinterested manner in which they distributed them. There was no scrambling with one another; no selfish reservation to themselves. The child to whom I happened to give them, took them so gently, looked so thankfully, and distributed them so generously, that I could not help thinking that God had compensated their dusky hue, by a more than usual human portion of amiable qualities.