

DOCUMENT #2

Slavery made America (The case for reparations: a narrative bibliography)

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About five years ago, I began a deep dive into the Civil War... The Civil War revealed to me the price, and the bounty, of enslavement in this country....

Before I took the dive into the Civil War, I understood the enslavement as a moral catastrophe. I also had some vague sense that that enslavement had helped shepherd America into being. Finally I knew that the Civil War was somehow related to slavery...

That enslavement in America was somehow more than a moral problem became apparent while reading the grandfather of all Civil War histories, James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom*... The first 200 pages or so show that the War was about not only the perpetuation of "African slavery," but its expansion. McPherson quotes directly from the mouths of secessionists who have no problem laying out bondage as their primary [cause and interest]. McPherson shows the essential place enslavement held in the economy of the South and in America at large...

Conservatively speaking, 600,000 soldiers lost their lives in [the fight over slavery during] the Civil War, two percent of the American population at the time. Twenty percent of all Southern white men of military age died in the War. Until [the Vietnam War], more people had died in the Civil War than all other American wars combined...

While I was reading McPherson, I was listening to recordings of David Blight's course at Yale, *The Civil War and Reconstruction*... Blight helps me put the economic portions that McPherson's work talks about in perspective. This stunning quote, for instance, blew me away:

...by 1860, there were more millionaires (slaveholders all) living in the lower Mississippi Valley than anywhere else in the United States. In the same year, the nearly 4 million American slaves were worth some \$3.5 billion, making them the largest single financial asset in the entire U.S. economy, worth more than all manufacturing and railroads combined...

I quote that a lot, because it contradicts this idea of enslavement as ancillary to American history, and establishes it as foundational.