

SENEGAL-AMERICA PROJECT

LESSON PLAN

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SUBJECT: History	DATE: February 6, 2006
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TOPIC: Goreé Slave Trade

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

After listening to Tony Vacca's song "Goreé" (link is on Middle and High School Activities Pages), students will be able to identify the issues surrounding slavery from several different points of view and draw conclusions about how slavery still affects American life today.

THINKING SKILL:

C-8: Students will learn to examine information from more than one point of view.

INTRODUCTION BY TONY VACCA:

Before you begin to consider the questions posed to you here, I want you to slow down. S l o w w a y d o w n.

Consider, even if for only five or ten minutes, your life as it is now. Imagine a picture of yourself, with those you love, and those who love you, and let yourself feel how that is. Consider your ancestors and their stories and how you have come to be here in America. Think about the activities that make your life enjoyable, challenging, difficult, and wonderful. Consider what opportunities you have, or don't have. Consider what dreams you have, and what plans you have to get to those dreams, and just how precious all this is...

Take your time.

Now, consider this:

You are kidnapped. You are put in chains and forced to walk in these chains for days or weeks all the way to the ocean, and then finally you are taken to the island of Goreé. You are put into overcrowded dungeons, in unthinkable conditions, and then you wait. You can't know it, but this is not the worst part of this nightmare.

This may seem like the beginning of a horror movie, but the real horror is that it happened. "IT" is the crime of enslavement. "IT" is a crime against humanity. And it happened not in this one way, but in many ways. Not just by one group of people, but by several. Not in one place, but in many places on the African continent. Not to 1 person or 100 people; not to 1,000 or 10,000 people; not to 100,000 or 1,000,000 people, but to between 40,000,000 and 100,000,000 people.

This is real. This really happened. I hope this horror is beyond what you can actually imagine. You and I didn't commit these crimes, and you and I were not sold into slavery by these crimes, but make no mistake, you and I carry the weight of these crimes until we work together to put this weight down.

As a point of reference, check out the words of UNESCO's Director General:

"Goreé island is the historic site on the West African coast where hundreds of thousands of captured men, women and children were rounded up in chains to be shipped to servitude in the New World.

This infamous spot is now a universal shrine where all of us, from every continent, may come and commemorate, in sorrow, the tragedy once inflicted by human beings like us on so many of our own kind.

This is why UNESCO has put Goreé Island on its World Heritage List ever since 1978, and now observes, on every August 23rd, an International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition. Goreé's significance and symbolism directly concern us all."

- Koichiro Matsuura

So now read, consider, and feel the words and the music of this song. They come from three very different people, each addressing their experiences and thoughts about such crimes against humanity while on the Island of Goreé, in the country of Senegal.

LESSON CONTENT:

The island of Goreé, near the coast of Dakar, Senegal, was the starting point for many Africans' journeys to the Americas as slaves. Africans were brought to Goreé to be held and processed there as slaves before they were shipped across the Atlantic. Goreé was one of the first places in Africa to be settled by Europeans, beginning with Portuguese in 1444, and passing through Dutch, French, and British control before it finally gained independence as part of Senegal in 1960.

Goreé is well known in the Western world, but it is actually just one of the many places from where slave trade was conducted, and in fact it was much smaller than the island of Zanzibar, off the coast of Tanzania, which was the largest center of the slave trade carried out by the Arabs. The slaves from Goreé were sent mostly to the French colonies in the Caribbean (especially Haiti) and in Louisiana, as well as to the Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas. African Americans who can trace their roots to Goreé are most often Creole Catholics from southern Louisiana.

TEACHER DIRECTIONS:

Read aloud the introduction on the first page by Tony Vacca and have your students do some visualization before embarking on the following directions.

STUDENT DIRECTIONS:

Listen to the song "Goreé" and read along with the lyrics. (Some are translated from Wolof.)

http://senegal-americanproject.org/Goree_song.htm

As you listen, try to identify an American point of view, an African point of view, and an African American point of view. Answer the questions below.

1. What does the song identify as an American view of Goreé? African? African American?
2. How does the slave trade continue to impact American life today?

"Goreé" from the CD, Zen Rant

Composition: Tony Vacca. **English Lyrics** by Tony Vacca & Abiodun Oyewole. **Wolof Lyrics** by Mamadou Ndiaye of Gokh-Bi System. **Chant** composed by Gokh-Bi System. **Tony Vacca:** balafon, djun-djun, djembe-snare, rattles, shakere, spoken word, background vocals. **Gokh-Bi System (Mamadou Ndiaye, Backa Niang, Bathie Pouye, Diasse Pouye, Sana Ndiaye)** spoken word, chorus. **Abiodun Oyewole:** spoken word. **Massamba Diop:** tama drum

(In Wolof, Mamadou Ndiaye)

How can I forget Goreé? My ancestors came to America from Goreé. It was on the island of Goreé that they first said no to slavery, and then died for their resistance. The soil of Goreé is red with the blood of our ancestors. So many good people wore the chains and suffered the horrors of slavery: a boat took them from Goreé to America, to a land and a future that they didn't know.

From the moment they were taken from their families, from their villages, from their lives, from that moment on it was as if their lives held no hope for a future in freedom, and no chance to fulfill their African destiny.

Sooner death than slavery. Better to die than to live like that. This was the philosophy of the people on Goreé, and of the people of Senegal. Even now, we can only imagine, and give honor to their terrible suffering. You'd have to be them to know what they endured. You'd have to see and live through this horror to believe it.

Goreé. You'd have to see it to believe it.

Goreé. You'd have to see it to believe it.

Goreé.

(Tony Vacca)

I hear the prayers emanate from these walls,
I feel the nightmare and the calls to God and man to consider their fate,
to do what could have been done, but it was too late.

The ships come in, no warriors turn them around, where they've been, where they're going is a long way down, far beyond hell, to the depths of desolation, and from this hell a consecration, a sacred ground, strangely holy and pure by virtue of misery beyond human endurance.

So many lives to pass through a door of no return, two centuries pass, your African ass still getting burned.

Didn't have to take a nightmare to see we could be cool with each other; only a fool pretends we're all brothers and sisters. We earn that gift and I'm pissed if you missed how bad the Brothers and Sisters been dissed and dismissed.

How loud would your last desperate scream echo? How deep into the dungeon walls would it go? How long would it be there before it was gone? How loud, how deep, how long, long, long to the peace from the violence of being betrayed, when if you don't die at sea you live enslaved, never to reclaim who you are, bound and gagged, never to reach the far horizon of your home.

There's no dishonor in being the slave,

Dishonor will follow the slave owner to the grave.

From Goreé to America they brought the jewel, and those who didn't die getting there had to survive the cruel twist of fate, the race hate, three centuries to a dream lost and found, now penitentiaries too full with the sons, too full with the daughters, twelve generations after crossing the waters beyond the door of no return, beyond the point of having been burned. Now you've got the power, and have returned in your own boat, Suunugal...In your own boat, Suunugal.

(Abiodun Oyewole)

Goreé! Home of just one of the slave dungeons where Africans were herded like cattle into caves of stone, to await the arrival of the ships...the ships to take them to another world, across the waters of time and of space, into a place of cotton and cane, of no humanity, without their names.

Goreé: An island where tourists go and throw coins off the ferry boat just to watch the chocolate children dive like dolphins for loose change, like a fish catching crumbs. These human fish return to the surface with coins in their hands, smiles in their faces and tourists throw more coins while the ancestors of these children dove overboard to escape the horror, to escape the pain, the chains and the misery that left a blood trail across the waters.

Goreé: Looking out to sea, this vastness, this universe of water carrying this human cargo chained together on a ship. There was no turning back now. The ocean is calling you...it's trying to pull you into her womb...she says you must be born again. You can hear the voices screaming in the middle of the night, piecing the blackness all around, ripping through the souls of those who cherish freedom. You can smell the stench of people struggling to survive amidst the bile and puke of humans being treated like slaves. Goreé! A dark dungeon of a dark time must become a lighthouse for a new day.

(Mamadou Ndiaye)

I will never forget slavery.

(Abiodun Oyewole)

Goreé! Goreé! A demented destiny that would devour the customs and the beliefs of a people. Ripped and stripped of a world they had come to know, only to be replaced with someone else's name, and forced to live intimately with the pain of families lost forever; of traditions

tossed overboard, left only with a soul drowning in an ocean of blues, cursed by a caste of greed. Goreé still lives in the heart of every African who hates the color of his skin, and those who refuse to recognize their kin.

Goreé lives in the mouths perverted with words polluting the air with dreams unfulfilled. And hope hangs from a tree dripping blood from its branches. Goreé lives while humanity dies. And now the so-called slave needs no master, he enslaves himself...and rattles his chains as if we're a game. Goreé remains...Goreé remains.
Goreé remains.