Delve Deeper into “Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North”
A film by Katrina Browne

This multi-media resource list, compiled by Susan Conlon and Martha Perry of the Princeton Public Library provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the upcoming P.O.V. documentary “Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North” that premieres on June 24th, 2008 at 10 PM (check local listings at www.pbs.org/pov/).

First-time filmmaker Katrina Browne makes a troubling discovery — her New England ancestors were the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history. She and nine fellow descendants set off to retrace the Triangle Trade: from their old hometown in Rhode Island to slave forts in Ghana to sugar plantation ruins in Cuba. Step by step, they uncover the vast extent of Northern complicity in slavery while also stumbling through the minefield of contemporary race relations. In this bicentennial year of the U.S. abolition of the slave trade, “Traces of the Trade” offers powerful new perspectives on the black/white divide.

ADULT NONFICTION

Bailey, Anne C. African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame. Boston: Beacon Press, 2005. Bailey provides a previously unheard perspective on the slave trade by focusing on the few stories that have been remembered in the Anlo Ewe community, residents of an area in southeastern Ghana once famously called the old Slave Coast.


Farrow, Anne, Joel Lang, and Jenifer Frank of The Hartford Courant. Complicit: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery in America. New York: Ballantine Books, 2005. Three veteran New England journalists demythologize the region of America known for tolerance and liberation, revealing a place where thousands of people were held in bondage and how slavery was both an economically lucrative and necessary way of life.


Henry, Charles P. Long Overdue: The Politics of Racial Reparations. New York: New York University Press, 2007. Ever since the unfulfilled promise of “Forty Acres and a mule,” America has consistently failed to confront the issue of racial injustice. Exploring why America has failed to compensate black Americans for the wrongs of slavery, Henry provides a history of the racial reparations movement and shows why it is an idea whose time has come.

Henry, Neil. Pearl’s Secret: A Black Man’s Search for His White Family. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. A black professor of journalism and award-winning correspondent takes an investigative look into his family’s past in this autobiography, as he pieces together the murky details of his family’s past in search of the white branch of his family tree.


Ogletree, Jr., Charles. All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half Century of Brown v. Board of Education. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004. While the Supreme Court’s Brown ruling historically signified the official end of racial segregation in the United States, a critical flaw was contained in the decision by the calculated instruction that desegregation should proceed with “all deliberate speed,” argues Ogletree (Harvard Law School). Ogletree combines discussion of the legal battles leading up to and following Brown.

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Rappleye, Charles. Sons of Providence: The Brown Brothers, the Slave Trade, and the American Revolution. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006. Set against a colonial backdrop teeming with radicals and reactionaries, visionaries, spies, and salty sea captains, this is the biography of John and Moses Brown, two classic American archetypes bound by blood yet divided by the specter of more than half a million Africans enslaved throughout the colonies.


St Clair, William. The Door of No Return: The History of Cape Coast Castle and the Atlantic Slave Trade. New York: BlueBridge, 2007. By telling the grim story of the castle and of some of the people who lived, worked, or were imprisoned within its walls, St Clair illuminates a vast panorama of modern history.


Wiencek, Henry. The Hairstons: An American Family in Black and White. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999. Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award, this is the extraordinary story of the largest family in America, the Hairston clan. With several thousand black and white members, the Hairstons share a complex and compelling history: divided in the time of slavery, they have come to embrace their past as one family.


ADULT FICTION


Morrison, Toni. Beloved. New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1987. Proud and beautiful, Sethe escaped from slavery but is haunted by its heritage--from the fires of the flesh to the heartbreaking challenges to the spirit. Set in rural Ohio several years after the Civil War, this profoundly affecting chronicle of slavery and its aftermath is considered one of Morrison’s greatest works.


NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

Grant, R.G. The African-American Slave Trade. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 2002. Grades 6 and up. The history of slavery in America, from its origins in the 1500s to its abolition in 1860s, is detailed in the book, including the conditions slaves endured when transported from Africa, their role in the Southern economy, the restrictions imposed on their lives, the political struggle, the slave rebellions and the end of American slavery with the American Civil War.

Lester, Julius; Paintings by Tom Feelings. To Be a Slave. New York: Dial Books, 1968. Grades 3-6. The words of former slaves are accompanied by Lester's historical commentary and the powerful, muted paintings by Feelings. This Newbery Honor Book has been a touchstone in children's literature for over 30 years.


Thomas, Velma Maia. Lest We Forget: The Passage from Africa to Slavery and Emancipation. New York: Crown Trade Paperback, 1997. Grades 6 and up. Richly designed, this historical document is an ingenious, interactive, three-dimensional experience that dramatically addresses the painful history of America and the slave trade. This is the first title of a trilogy that also includes Freedom's Children and We Shall Not Be Moved.

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FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

Hansen, Joyce. The Captive. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1994. Grades 4-8. When Kofi’s father, an Ashanti chief, is killed, Kofi is sold as a slave and ends up in Massachusetts, where his fate is in the hands of Paul Cuffe, an African American shipbuilder who works to return slaves to their homeland in Africa.


FILMS/DOCUMENTARIES

“Amazing Grace.” A film by Michael Apted. Bristol Bay Productions in association with Ingenious Film Partners, 2007. (118 min.) Based on the life of William Wilberforce, the film chronicles his passion and perseverance to pass a law ending the slave trade.

“Amistad.” A film by Steven Spielberg. DreamWorks, 1999. (155 min.) Portrays the 1839 revolt on board the slave ship Amistad bound for America. Much of the story involves the court-room drama about the slave who led the revolt.