

April 2018

Building Bridges Through Books: Responses from Chapters 1 - 3

Introductions: Write a short paragraph introducing yourself.

I'm a writer and organizer from San Francisco. I've been writing to my pen pal for 2.5 years, and have been involved in organizing against prisons, policing, and urban displacement in the Bay Area and New York City. I spend a lot of time reading and taking walks in Marin County, where I now live.

Hello, I'm an inmate doing a 70-to-life sentence. I am Hispanic and at the ripe age of 50 years. I love the 49ers and Giants and watching sports. I spend my time in here working out and chasing opportunities as such. Thank you all.

I'm a writer. Born in Hong Kong, raised in the Bay Area, living in NYC. Currently doing marketing and communications work at NYU, but my heart is in personal essays and socio-political non-fiction writing.

Raised in New Orleans, LA and living in Brooklyn, NY, I am a school librarian at an international school.

I am a mother of two who loves to read and learn. I was not raised in America and so am always interested in learning more about the history of this country I now call home.

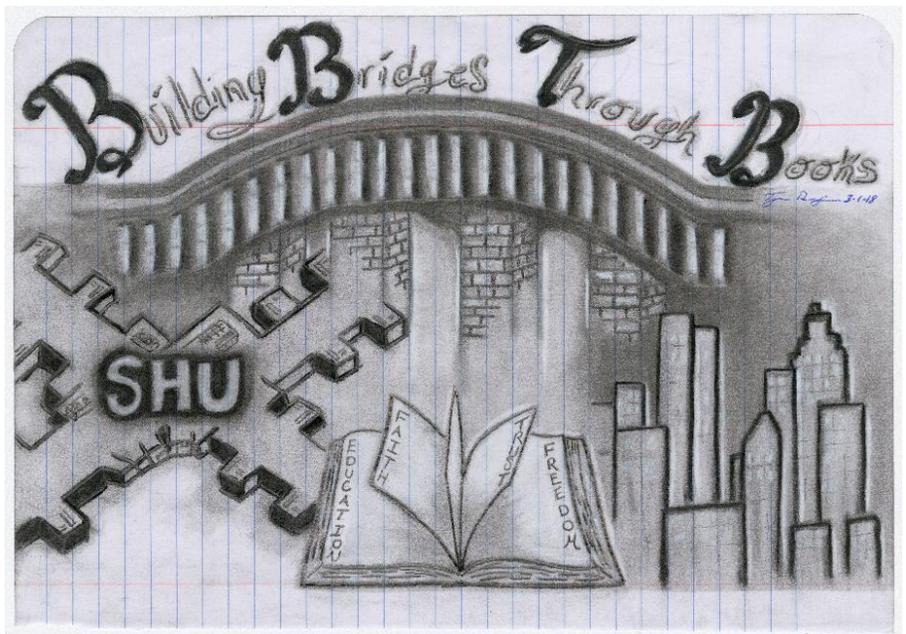
I'm a Bay Area native. I currently coordinate a literacy program for youth. I think books are powerful and reading stories/histories of people who aren't typically given voice has been a way that I have found validation and grounding of my own lived experiences. I've been a part of HRPP for about 3 years and I'm so grateful for my pen pal's insight, kindness, and openness.

My name means 'lasting friend'. My humanity and life spirit is defined as father, son, brother, nephew, activist, organizer, cousin, and Friend and never through the prism of a prison cage which holds my body.

Hello to everyone! I am very excited to be a part of this group and book club. I am outside the prison walls. I work in a non-profit graduate school in administration, and am also a psychotherapist-in-training, about a year away from being a licensed therapist.

I live in Portland, OR and my paid work is in healthcare, while my heart work is in political organizing. I am a white, queer, cis woman in my late 20s and I love to read books, so I'm stoked about this new book club!

I like reading drawing books and reading history books.



I've been a part of HRPP for over 2 years. I got involved through other organizing I was doing for worker rights and disability justice. I'm born and raised in SF, and I still live here. I work in healthcare and am eventually hope to go to nursing school. I'm excited to learn and grow with all of you this year!

I'm an outside pen pal who has been writing to my inside friend for about 15 months. I'm a 61-year-old Jewish woman, San Francisco native, happily retired social worker. I spent 16 years working with people with AIDS and 17 years with a private psychotherapy practice. I live alone with my cat, Rosie, and have a very elderly mom, a sister, a niece, and a 17-month-old great niece who is the cutest ever.

I was released to GP in 2013 after 15 years in Pelican Bay SHU. I am committed to the release and freedom for all political prisoners. I enjoy my youth outreach work with the PLEJ program of HRPP and also with the students in Satellite Academy.

I live in Canada and have been an HRPP since 2013. I have learned a lot about reality from my pen pal and I am glad to have this opportunity to read this book with him.

I'm from Fontana, a city in southern California. I'm 28 years old, I'm Mexican. I'm currently incarcerated and I use my time to educate myself, learning and opening my mind to different ideas. I'm an activist in my own right (unorthodox). I stand for the people who come from the bottom. My means to do so are limited due to circumstances but when opportunities present I push forward. I've never read this book before and so I have learned something from a different perspective. Much of my early schooling on these matters was based on biased teachings or falsehoods.

I grew up in a small rural town in Wisconsin. I'm a 41 yr old white woman, divorced and remarried, with one kid and three step kids. I study and teach sociology. I do lots of activism in my union and my local community, because I have hope that we can make the world a better place if we work together. I tried to read this book before but got so angry that I stopped in chapter 2. I will do my best to finish this time!

Let me introduce myself as a person from within. My journey has been a long one but I'm now coming to the end of my sentence with only about 1.5 left. I'm glad to have the opportunity to participate in this book club and spend my time in a productive way. My views on life have evolved much and I look forward to sharing some of this with all of you and reading and gaining different perspectives. Thank you and warm embracements extended to all from within and outside.

I live in Brooklyn, New York. I'm currently studying nursing and will graduate in August. I enjoy reading, the outdoors, and spending time with family and friends. This is my second time reading this book, and I'm really looking forward to reading it with all the people in this book club!

I am a mother - doctor - artist. Very excited to merge my love for reading and discussing books with my love for pen pal activism.

Chapter 1

1. How would you define history?

History is past experiences that teach you how to correct mistakes and build off political actions in the struggle in order to have a sustainable future.

History is often one version of a story that takes root and becomes canonized - it's not truth and needs to be continually reevaluated.

I would say history is a repeated pattern, the underlying factors are ever present, hatred, fear, greed, thirst for power, twisting of religion and ignorance, plus other acts. As humans we just don't learn from our mistakes. History is a rearview mirror, when you look at the facts without bias.

It's so hard to know what really happened long ago. I don't think we can ever truly know the complete truth. It's important to look at the source of the history - who is telling the story will have an impact on how the story is told. I want to learn more about history from the perspective of the oppressed.

History is a series of events that take place over a period of time, that if accurately told can be used to educate those individuals who came after those previous generations. History can be used to give people self-determination.

I think history is one version of what happened in the past and why it happened. The person who creates a history has a certain outlook and shapes the story to meet certain goals.

The story of the past filtered through the lens of our identities (ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, political, educational, etc.), our experiences, our world views, and our sources of facts.

History is the series of events that have led us up to the current moment. Knowing our history gives us opportunities to learn and grow from past events.

I truly appreciated the way Zinn described how he approaches the study of history in this book. I have always found history interesting, but highly suspect. Whoever is telling the story of history is choosing a narrator, picking certain themes, electing to leave out some details/characters/plot points. The same is true in this book, but he is at least clear about whose history he is striving to tell, including what point of view he is coming from and why. That doesn't answer the question of a definition of history, but it is some of my thoughts on the matter :)

I would define history as a powerful tool. The historian must be seen as a subjective being, and their perspective of what lens to interpret the events of a nation and people are influenced by many things. Some of these influences are privilege, power, past experiences, and awareness and insight into their own positionality in the world. We must know the historian's position to better understand what history is being told, what voices are amplified and which ones are silenced.

History is that which came before us.

I now define history as an entire time made up of hardship and hurt for masses and undeserving gains for a few.

History is the story of man and/or events, wrote by man, interpreted by him.

It's a story with a variety of viewpoints.

2. What economic forces drove the colonial expansion into the Americas? Who benefited from the expansion, and who were its main victims?

The economic forces that drove expansion initially was to seek wealth and power, later religious freedom. People of European descent benefited while the natives suffered greatly.

European nations were scrambling for wealth, in particular GOLD. They were crazy for gold! It was the ruling class of these nations that benefited. The indigenous people of the New World, starting with the Arawak in the Caribbean, were the main victims of this horrible greed.

The quest of rich and powerful Europeans for gold drove colonial expansion in the Americas. The people who were already living in the Americas were its main victims.

The quest for gold, and the race among European nations to have increased wealth drove the expansion. Wealthy Europeans benefited from the expansion. It's main victims were enslaved Africans and those who died or otherwise resisted enslavement; Indigenous people in the Americas, including in the so-called United States, the Taino people of Puerto Rico, and Aztec and Mayan people in current Mexico and Central America. Poor whites were also enslaved, and faced extreme poverty and exploitation, but had opportunities to move up and had more rights.

The economic drive was a need for more gold and slaves in order for the colonial expansion project to continue under capitalism. I loved the description of this as: "the frenzy in the early capitalist states of Europe for gold, for slaves, for products of the soil... to spur the growth of the new money economy." The beneficiaries were the wealthy owners and rulers in Europe (and those in the colonies as well) while the victims were indigenous people as well as the enslaved and poor folks who were needed to maintain this accumulation of wealth for the few.

The Spaniards, Portuguese, French, and English were motivated by gold, land, spices. The only people that benefited from this expansion into the Americas were the empire builders. We know all of the victims of butchery and savagery were the inhabitants of these areas.

Gold was the economic force. Slaves also. Spain's upper class benefited (royalty and wealthy); Columbus benefited. He was given a glorified title, governorship over places he "discovered", and a percentage of the profits. The victims: Cortez's victims were the Aztecs; Columbus's victims were the Arawaks; Pizarro's victims were the Incas and; the English victims were the Powhatans and Pequots.

Wealth is a governed body's main objective. The victims are all the Indians.

3. Zinn asks if "all this bloodshed and deceit— from Columbus to Cortes, Pizarro and the Puritans" was necessary "for the human race to progress from savagery to civilization." What do you think? How would you define "progress," "savagery," and "civilization" as historical terms?

Individuals like Columbus, Cortez, Pizarro, and Puritana, all of which are noted in history as the first to discover and colonize the new world, are acknowledged as heroes and actions glorified. We were first taught in school that these events were good and necessary for the expansion of human civilization in the Americas. How distorted and poisonous are these false teachings? It's enraging when murderous acts and attempts of extinction of a people are covered up and justified as a necessary means. It's one thing for people to acknowledge the wrongs of the past and learn from them, but to participate in a mass cover up by spreading

false information is not only wrong but can be seen as condoning acts of oppression and genocide. The justification for murder and theft of land and property as a necessary means "for the human race to progress from savagery to civilization" is nothing more than words of hate and intolerance. Much like Hitler on his campaign or the racist acts of black slavery. Bottom line, it was completely unnecessary and criminal. To view it any other way is a falsification of facts.

As I read my pen-pal's answer to this question, it struck me how similar the prison industrial complex is to the "discovery" of America. We justify prisons by saying that they are necessary for the population's safety, while in reality our society locks up people at an alarming rate/without justification/erroneously/etc. But it is for "progress" and "safety." Similarly, our national narrative is that Europeans "discovered" America and had to "tame" the native and slave populations for "progress" and "civilization." Also - words matter! These narratives sound good if you don't know what's actually going on, because we are using words that prop up the injustice. If we tear down these words and start to examine what they really mean...another story emerges.

I don't think it's justifiable. Most of the bloodshed and violence was un-provoked by the natives. Savagery was what the settlers initiated towards the natives, civilization I think would be people coexisting together under peaceful conditions while expanding under a system that benefits all, and therefore true progress.

It seems to me that colonizers have gone around the world and set it back, rather than moving it forward. Civilization, to me, is kindness and love for other human beings. Savagery is what Columbus and the Spaniards did to everyone they encountered. Brutal savagery.

I would define progress as when you improve and enhance your conditions as an individual or community, coming from inhumane conditions to humane. I would define savagery as treating people cruelly with no regard for human life, forcing people to live under harsh, uncultured, primitive conditions.

I don't think the human race progressed from savagery to civilization. Deep down, humanity itself has not changed at all – only the technology available. So all that bloodshed and deceit was not necessary. I would say that true human progress is a process by which people care more and more for one another and develop tools for making this possible and for making life better for EVERYONE. Savagery is a state in which humans engage in horrifying acts of violence against other human beings. Even the most terrifying wild animals rarely act out of pure savagery; when they do so it is for survival. Human beings were created to be above this. Civilization is how a permanent group of humans decide to co-exist with one another for the benefit of all. It has little to do with technological advancement.

It doesn't seem like progress to me to slaughter the very people who were attempting to welcome the "discoverers."

"Progress" would be if all members of society truly took care of each other and left no one behind; if all citizens strove to make peace, universal health care, income equality, acceptance of differences, etc. realities. "Savagery" has been incorrectly used to demonize less "advanced" cultures and justify their annihilation or enslavement. "Civilization" can be any organized group of people with their customs, beliefs, and moral code, but too often has been used to imply progress and modernity.

I think that the Western idea of progress doesn't make sense. It's based a lot on racism and white supremacy. Progress in that sense meant stealing land from people of color, and stealing people and resources in order for white people to increase their wealth. The terms savagery and civilization also come from a racist context. Savagery usually applies to people of color, even though they had very sophisticated civilizations. Despite this

they are viewed as savage by Western European eyes. Given my own definitions of these terms I'd say that colonization is savagery.

I would define progress as an increased ability to access resources needed for survival and a higher quality of life for at least more than half of the population. Savagery I would define as what has been historically deemed "progress", a mass murdering of people and destruction of land and natural resources for the economic empowerment of the privileged few. Unfortunately, I do not have a working definition of civilization as I have yet to live in a society which I feel is actually civilized. Our civilization has far too great a divide amongst the haves and the have-nots, an insistence on punishment rather than rehabilitation, and an obsessive accumulation of materials without any consideration of the finite amount of natural resources. In light of all these factors, I cannot call our current civilization civilized, and hope that we can all engage in reverie as a community to come up with a new definition of civilization.

I do not agree with the basic premise that progress is measured or justifiable by the extinction and enslavement of people. How can we measure progress when three-fourths of the planet lives in poverty. These conditions are caused by the greed of the west. It is not a matter of limited resources but rather how resources are distributed throughout the world. Progress, savagery and civilization are connected through violence and is a reflection of conquerors and mass murderers. I call all of those responsible savages. They hid behind the belief that they were ordained by God to bring civilization. This is why in creating new prism that we understand how language is a tool of oppression.

None of it was necessary for progress. The progress would have been for Columbus, Cortez, Pizarro and the Puritans to follow the wonderful and kind examples of courtesy, kindness, hospitality, fellowship and selflessness of the people who welcomed them. Those people were civilized. The human race needs the spirit and behavior of those people. My definition of progress would have been to adopt the goodness of the victims. Savagery has the oppressor's face next to the definition. I can't define civilization. Nature's course is the lane we are all in.

Progress is both subjective and relative. It is defined by where you think you were and where you want to go. Civilization can mean a way of life and it can also mean the idea of a more advanced way of life or social structure, but 'advanced' is again subjective. In my opinion, there was rich civilization in the Americas before Europeans came. The bloodshed and deceit was not necessary for progress. It was only necessary in the eyes of those looking to profit from it and who were blind to the merits of the people they encountered and decimated.

Depending on what side you stand on, due to the fact that Indians were flourishing already, in historical terms, the Indians were civilized. Spain was in a time of growth, wealth, and in the King's mind was to rule everything.

I don't think that linear progress is an accurate description of the colonization of the Americas. Likewise, I think that "savagery" and "civilization" are racist words rooted in dehumanizing indigenous people in order to extract their land. Looking at the United States today-- the nation with the highest rate of incarceration in the world, with extreme poverty and extreme wealth, rampant police shootings, no universal healthcare-- it's hard to see any "civilization" that would legitimate colonialism. Instead, the colonization of the Americas is in many ways the cause and antecedent of a lot of the violence and inequality we see around the world, especially in terms of U.S. imperialism and environmental destruction.

4. In your view what were the motives that lead to the genocide of Indians? What was its justification?

I believe the motives that lead to the Indian's genocide were greed and wealth. Columbus had to make due on his promises so he justified it with slaves who could do all the labor.

In my strong views, there is no justification for the genocide of Indians. However, in trying to view this act from the perspective of the perpetrators, I assume their justification was based on their "godly" complex. From the beginning, these so called conquerors\explorers landed in the new world and proclaimed ownership. When they encountered the Indian people, they perceived them as wild people, savages, and inferior so it was only natural for them to feel superior and carry on with a false sense of duty to cleanse the land of these people. I also believe that fear and ignorance was a big factor. They eventually started perceiving the Indians as a threat and felt the need to neutralize this threat.

There was no justification, settlers probably feared them and also wanted all the land and resources to themselves.

Columbus wanted fame and fortune in Spain. Genocide was his means to an end.

In my opinion their motives were set on greed and exploitation of those people who welcomed them to their country, when all the while they were hell bent on enslaving the people who only wanted to befriend them. Its justification was to emphasize the heroism of Columbus and his success as a navigator and discoverer, and to de-emphasize their genocide. It is not a technical necessity but an ideological choice. It serves unwittingly to justify what they had done to those kind people.

Pure greed and power-seeking by the Europeans led to the genocide of Indians. If justification means "making something just," there is absolutely no justification for what happened. If it means "what excuse was used", these were: they were "inferior" and did not deserve to live; we conquered them and that's what happens to conquered people.

Economic expansion. A belief in the superiority of the white man and a fear and hatred of "the other."

Greed and fear of the other.

They wanted the gold and the rich land. I think that the reason genocide happened with the Indians was that the Indians did not know that they had something good.

The motives that led to genocide of Indigenous people was the European colonists desire for land and resources. They also wanted to make sure that Indigenous people didn't join forces with poor whites or enslaved Africans and take over power from wealthy whites in power. The justification was racist-- that Indigenous people were "savages", that they weren't using the land (even though they were) and that it was manifest destiny- the false belief that God had given white people the land and power.

My view that lead to the genocide of the Indians mainly was for their work. They were used as slaves. Also for their gold. I'm not sure if its justification for it, but from how history teaches us that lead us to progress in the U.S. History. But one could say that it was wrong what was done to the Indians.

I believe that the motives that lead to genocide of (native Americans) Indians was to strike fear to the point of submission and cooperation and possible flee from potential resistance. The so-called justification was

because they claimed that they were saving them from savagery and un-civilization, plus they always used death of their own to execute mass savagery upon them to the point of near extinction.

The justification was that the Indians killed first, but the genocide was to wipe out a race. There is no justice.

Land, especially to grow cash crops, and later to build factories and industry.

5. After reading the first chapter, can you think of any examples of how today's realities/events/ideologies reflect the past?

In my opinion, today's realities are within the prison system - we are treated like slaves for our labor. We're not even compensated enough to live off of and the states makes thousands of dollars off of us.

Like I've stated, the underlying factors are still there and views haven't changed only morphed into our present day. Atrocities are still being carried out based on these views so deeply rooted. Mankind has dominated man to his injury! You could see this just by watching the news.

We still think it's ok to steal, hurt, murder, and destroy people for profit and wealth. We have not learned from our horrible past.

It is unfathomable to me that many non-Indians still think of Indians as inferior. Their incarceration rate here in Canada is way out of proportion. Also the failure of law enforcement to investigate when indigenous people are murdered or "go missing".

Continuing discrimination toward and devaluation of those who are different at all levels of society - those who look or love or worship or speak differently. Profit continues to be the primary motive underpinning political and societal decision making.

An example that today will almost reflect yesterday because if I had a bad day I would not want to have one more bad day again. I know that they had enslaved Africans in the 50s but I don't know why.

I think of here in the Bay Area, where the Ohlone Shellmound, a sacred burial ground for Ohlone people, is being threatened again with the proposal to build on top of it (there's already a parking lot there). Once again, there's this racist, colonialist idea that what mainstream white culture wants-- a parking lot so people can go shopping more easily-- is more important than the sacred site of the Ohlone people, the original inhabitants of this land.

SO MANY! I thought a lot about the erasure of Indian peoples in our contemporary politics and the ways that the history we are told allows this to continue. If we don't know any particulars, we are left with this romanticized notion based in the past that allows for a lack of real grappling with current realities. The specific descriptions Zinn included in this chapter taught me a lot, from how the Iroquois society at that time taught their children to be independent but collaborative thinkers, to the way the Arawaks treated women with respect (shocking to the colonizers!) and shared many possessions communally. Reading these specific examples made me realize how few details I know about particular tribes or indigenous populations, which makes it so much easier to willfully ignore or passively look away.

I think that some of today's thinking are the same of the past. There is still racism today. There's still killing of minorities and the rich getting richer and the poor stays where they're at. Just as the slaves did back then.

Something that struck me is the similarity between colonizers' responses to indigenous peoples and police officers' response to citizens and the tendency to jump to extreme uses of force and destruction as a method of overcoming obstacles, not striving for communication or compromise just total annihilation.

We continue to rely on characterizing oppressed minorities as somehow less human, less deserving, more threatening - "savages" - in order to justify incarcerating them/us at higher rates with harsher and longer sentences, deporting them/us inhumanely, killing or harming them/us in situations where a person of another race might have been treated with respect.

It makes me think about our current immigration issues and environmental and noise pollution in impoverished, minority neighborhoods. Our current administration has made it socially acceptable to be racist, nationalist and closed-minded.

I am Mexican and I believe in the customs of my people: those Indians who remain today. The government now recognizes its doing and pays the Indians monthly.

Chapter 2

1. How much did you know about resistance and rebellion of enslaved African Americans before reading these two chapters? Why do you think these voices are typically missing from our textbooks?

I learned about resistance and rebellion of enslaved African Americans a great deal as I studied African history for 3 years. Basil Davidson and WEB Dubois are both authors that I was already familiar with. These voices, along with countless others are missing from the text books because imperialists want you to believe American history is correct in its teaching, as well as not wanting you to learn the truth about what they did to other cultures.

I knew some but am constantly reminded how many layers there are.

I've known there were slave rebellions and resistance, but I didn't know the details in fact there's much I didn't know. The reason(s) why is not in textbooks and if they are, why not discussed at length. In my opinion is because it's not good for people in power to be viewed as tyrants, plus our ignorance serves them well. The powerful must be seen as heroes.

I did not learn these things in school or college or even graduate school. But since I started to discover how little I know, I've been reading as many books as I can. I think it is so important to amplify these stories. These voices are missing because history is written by those in power, and it is written in a way that flatters them. It makes it hard to learn from history when history is incorrect.

Other than the fact that many slaves ran away, I did not know anything. Even then, I was so naïve that I would not have identified running away as resistance or rebellion. These voices do not appear in textbooks because we have not yet owned up to how horrible chattel slavery was. We don't want to know.

Not very much. Their voices have been silenced, both at the time through violence and in an ongoing way through dominant culture's inability to own up to its complicity.

I knew very little. These voices are silenced by a power structure that favors white Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

I didn't know very much beyond the most famous people who resisted, like Harriet Tubman. This was the first time that I'd learned more about mass resistance. I think these voices are missing because people in power don't want us to know that it's possible to resist in this way. They benefit from us continuing to believe that there were only a few people who led the resistance, rather than many people coming together and organizing in larger numbers against the wealthy white slave owners.

I really appreciated reading the details that Zinn includes in this chapter about what resistance and rebellion among enslaved African Americans looked like at that time. While I did know some things about this resistance, I certainly did not learn much about it in my public high school history classes. The reason for that, in my mind, is point of view. History textbooks tend to be, as Zinn writes, from the "point of view of governments, conquerors, diplomats, leaders" (pg.9). Because of this, the real conditions and the marked resistance of enslaved people is written out of these narratives, which also serves to remove the humanity of those living under slavery from the story as well.

These voices have been missing from our textbooks because we continue to choose to leave them out.

I knew very little, and what little I knew was abstract. Textbooks are literally whitewashed to avoid the descendants of oppressors (themselves oppressors now unwittingly or otherwise) having to confront their ugly history.

I've read plenty, so I've viewed a lot of different angles/perspectives, since I am a descendent of enslaved Africans. I'm still reading and learning. My belief is that resistance & rebellion has taken an almost futile stance because the distractions are great. The voices are muffled, missing, and suppressed to keep the people blind, deaf, and dumb to the truth to avoid awakening of mass injustice.

I read in The Underground Railroad which would be a wide vast of people who would help runaways get connected to where there was no slavery. The cry for freedom is loud. It's up to us to listen and who is willing to partake in the struggle.

I studied history in college and therefore know more than many about slave rebellions, especially in Haiti and the Caribbean more generally. However, I learned almost nothing in K-12 school about slave rebellions aside from mentions of Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. I think these stories are missing for a couple reasons, the first being lack of written documentation (which is the privileged source material in historical study) and the second being political. Until the 1970s and 80s, the predominant scholarship argued that slaves didn't rebel and largely accepted their condition, which had to be argued against by many scholars. I think that slave rebellions didn't always leave records or look like resistance that historians knew how to recognize, including everyday acts like stealing food, working slowly, sabotaging crops, poisoning slave-masters, using birth control to avoid having more children who would be enslaved, etc. I also think that acknowledging that oppressed people fighting militantly for their freedom (as W.E.B. DuBois wrote about in Black Reconstruction) ended slavery would have political implications for the present that most historians don't support.

2. What is the "color line"? How does Howard Zinn describe the way this color line was drawn in early America? Do you think the drawing of this line was intentional or unintentional?

The color line was intentional no doubt. It just became more elaborated and intricate over the centuries. that color line keeps one color in a position of leverage and advantage while, the other color at a disadvantage left with few ways to react.

What we know as "race" was invented by whites as a justification for oppressing non-whites. The concept did not exist before the Atlantic Slave Trade. Scientists have proven that there is no biological concept of "race" - the differences in skin color do not differentiate us in any real biological way. This was a very intentional social creation, as whites needed to justify their domination as "moral" and civilized - in opposition to the "immoral" savages.

The "colour line" is the consciousness of human difference based on skin colour. It seems a natural human tendency to notice and given negative meaning to differences between ourselves and others. The colour line is one strong case of this. Once we draw a line, it is easier to assign negative qualities to anyone who is not on our side of that line. Zinn begins with the Europeans' definition of indigenous people as inferior, but too well organized and too knowledgeable of the environment to enslave. Kidnapped Africans were too ill, demoralized and disoriented upon arrival here in North America to resist and were more easily kept in slavery. Of course the drawing of these lines was intentional: it sorted people according to who was useful to the economy and who was dangerous to the privileged class.

The color line is segregation between white and Black people. According to Zinn, this line was drawn in order to maintain power in the hands of wealthy white land and slave owners. Indentured white servants were beginning to join forces with enslaved Africans, so in order to keep the two groups from joining together and resisting, they gave the poor white people certain privileges so that they wouldn't be as upset about the injustice of classism. These were small concessions like being released from servitude after a certain amount of time, and having access to land, some money and some corn, when they were released. I think that this was intentional, since it seems like slave owners strategized in order to maintain power. It definitely wasn't something that happened spontaneously or naturally.

The color line is black and white, upper class and slavery. This was the line drawn to provide identity and purpose on both sides.

3. What do you believe are the short- and long-term repercussions of the deliberate steps that were taken to destroy the family structure of enslaved African Americans?

A part of our American history is that we have ignored what was systematically taken from certain people and instead allowed ourselves to believe that they were somehow unfit or unable to benefit from the American dream. Many of us allowed ourselves to believe that version (implicitly perhaps) and now are having to reckon with a different history than we are comfortable with.

African American families had to find their own ways to create and maintain kin groups. No matter how hard the slave owners tried, they couldn't completely break those bonds. Today we see different patterns of marriage and family among African Americans as opposed to other groups. White scholars still try to pathologize and demonize African American family forms, but I think these families show amazing resiliency.

The short term repercussions were that slaves were willing to run away and risk their lives to see their families. Many rebelled with violence. The long term repercussions, that I do not know.

In part because of the destruction of family structures, enslaved African Americans were demoralized, discouraged from considering the possibility of freedom or any other way of life. It also prevented the passing on of African culture. Another result is that many African Americans do not know any details of their African heritage except that it exists.

Loss of identity, culture, language, familial and community support leading to alienation and despair.

I think some of the repercussions were that there was a lot of instability in the relationships people had, which makes it hard for people to build with each other, have emotional, spiritual and physical support, and feel secure at all. It makes people a lot more vulnerable and depressed. They also were always on edge, waiting for something bad to happen. In the long term this means that people don't have ways to pass on traditions and culture. They would be less likely to take the risk of forming relationships because of the high risk that they'll be destroyed.

I believe that the main short-and long-term repercussions are soul murdering of enslaved African Americans as well as their future generations. In order to keep whites in power and African Americans subservient, African Americans had to be seen as not human by everyone, destroying their will to live and creativity and desire for life. This had to be done not only on a physical and political level, but also on a psychological level individually and on a group level. I would argue that these psychological tactics used to enslave African Americans can still be seen today in the culture of Blacks in American. I am reminded of a story told by Dr. Joy DeGruy which illustrates this point. Dr. DeGruy, an African American woman was in conversation with a white mother, and their sons attend school together in the same grade and are friends. Dr. DeGruy was complimenting the white mother on her son and his accomplishments. The white mother accepted these compliments, and also remarked that Dr. DeGruy's son was top in the class and had a bright future in front of him. Dr. DeGruy did not accept these compliments, even though they were facts, and instead talked about how lazy her son was at home and that he wasn't athletic.

Why do you think this was Dr. DeGruy's reaction? Dr. DeGruy links her reaction back to slavery, saying that especially in conversation with a white person, she did not want to acknowledge her child as smart or accomplished for a long-seated historical fear of her child being taken from the family. Presently, the slave master will not steal Dr. DeGruy's son and sell him into slavery. But the police may take him because of the color of his skin, and he is more likely to be incarcerated because he is Black. The intergenerational pain of slavery is still felt today, in the fabric of American society and culture.

The terror and brutality inflicted on the minds, souls and bodies of African people and their descendants as they were torn from families, beginning the long voyages across the Atlantic ocean. Can you imagine the horrors of the men, women and children? Here began the physical, social, psychological destruction and damage of human being. With the blessings of the catholic church and ordained by God, Africans were to become the hewers of wood for Europeans and those fleeing colonial oppression. Men who boasted of natural rights excluded Africans brought across the Atlantic ocean in chains. A racial narrative was created to give moral justification for the horrors of slavery by telling a story that these victims worth as human beings were no more valuable than farm animals or flora. Today we still deal with the psychological damage sowed by inferior complexes, color complexes, dependency, complexes, fear, division. In order to create a mechanism of control, mistrust and distrust were sown among slaves. This led to the internalization of all the complexes mentioned earlier. The damaging effects are still experienced today. Racism has been codified in so many ways.

I believe the short term repercussions are just what is asked in the question. It destroys family. If it was death, separation, etc. For long term repercussions, I believe racism is still alive, because of what happened in the past that people can't let go of what happened to their people.

To detach loyalty and love between family causes a disrupted family which can't do nothing. This method is a tactic to make those to be obedient to the boss man.

4. What justifications, besides economic, are there for enslaving fellow human beings?

There are political justifications. The American 1% class is fascist and want to keep you subordinated to their practices and will justify their military actions upon you to keep you in subordination if you break a rule or law.

There is a poem by Rudyard Kipling called "The White Man's Burden," written in 1899. In it, he describes the responsibility of "civilized" Europeans to spread knowledge and technology to the people of the "dark continents." This thinking was very common (and still is!) - that it is white people's job to civilize the rest of the world. Enslavement was justified as a way to bring civilization to "savages" - by bringing them to a new land of opportunity and progress. They honestly thought it was better to be a slave in America than a free person in Africa.

There isn't a justification for it, but reasons could vary, depending on the circumstances people could try to "clean it up" but is it really justifiable?

Although "justifications" are really simply excuses for doing wrong, another "justification" used in the United States is punishment for crime. For this reason there is a growing outcry for change in the 13th amendment.

Dehumanizing others by enslavement props up those in power to believe they are more special, divinely chosen, and entitled to all types of rewards.

In this case, slave owners made false justifications using racist reasoning. They said that Africans had inferior intelligence and inferior culture, and that God had given white people enslaved Africans to help white people to do God's will.

The only reason to enslave any human being is for complete control as well as servitude.

As a Mexican with Aztec bloodline, the more I learn about the past, the more I see how it concurs where out to be the only race. Life is for free choice, not to be enslaved or tortured.

Enslaving people makes small people feel big and powerful.

5. Why was solidarity amongst the slaves and servants, both black and white, punished?

The oppressors don't want the oppressed to be united on all fronts because they can overthrow them with that unity.

If oppressed peoples (at any time or context) realize their power and unity rather than their differences they could have the power to overthrow their oppressors. Keeping people down and separate is a vital part of an oppressive ruler.

If all the oppressed unite across racial lines, they could easily overpower the ruling class. Divide and conquer. It still works today.

It was punished because it was a threat to the upperclassmen and women. They feared that an uncontrollable insurrection might ensue, so they had to punish it severely to act as a deterrent, and also to give white

servants "gifts" after completing their time of servitude, to further draw the color line keeping them from collaborating with the blacks.

Solidarity among slaves and servants (both black and white) was punished out of white fear – fear that together they could organize and overthrow the chattel slavery system as well as the general mistreatment of the servant class.

The slaveholders knew they were greatly outnumbered, and destroying alliances was important to holding on to their power.

The slave owners were greatly outnumbered by enslaved Africans and poor white people, so they were terrified that if these two groups joined together, there would be a huge rebellion and people would take back the land and resources that the land owners had amassed.

Solidarity between disadvantaged peoples is, and consistently has been, a clear threat to those in power. Therefore, those in power have actively worked to avoid the possibility of this solidarity. In colonial times, solidarity between slaves and servants would have been a true threat to the ruling system as they had the numbers and the desire needed to make real change. So, they were punished. The intentional use of racism to build these divisions has had devastating and lasting implications.

I think that both black and whites were punished cause the fear that the whites would join the blacks to overthrow the existing order. And they didn't want to see the blacks equal to the whites.

To prevent them from joining forces against their masters.

Well, it's the oldest war tactic..."Divide and conquer." Punishment of any kind is a great motivator, so that's what they used to make sure that no solidarity could occur, which for them meant continuous control.

The heart works the same in the righteous as in the wicked and wrong. Life hurts people and when unjust is done, these people come together and make a stance.

Chapter 3

1. How does Howard Zinn describe the development of “a white middle class” servitude and rebellion? Do you agree with his statement that the middle class would provide a “solid buffer” for the elite? Why, or why not? Do you think this was a deliberate action by the elite? Why, or why not?

This is actually very interesting to think about. It's possible that the ruling elite internationally and deliberately put this into action, but I also think this happened by chance due to social developments of the time and the elite seized the opportunity and ran with it helping establish the white middle class as a "solid buffer".

The existence of the middle class gives poor people something to aspire to - it helps them believe that, with hard work and careful investment, one can rise out of poverty. It was definitely done intentionally by the elite. They wrote the laws to support the organization of society in a way that would protect their own interests.

Zinn writes that wealthy land owners gave white servants certain privileges in order to keep them from joining with enslaved Africans against them. White servants were given smaller punishments for crimes, and were recruited for slave patrols, which not only pitted them against enslaved Africans but also gave them a way to

gain money and status. I think this was a deliberate action based on quotations from concerned landowners who recognized the risk of white servants and enslaved Africans joining forces. This seemed effective, because white people did become caught up in gaining their own individual advantages, rather than fighting for freedom for all people.

I don't know how deliberate it was by all elites. It seems there are always some that do not participate deliberately but do not oppose the forces at play, whether ignorant to the outcomes or blinded by privilege.

Of small planters, independent farmers and city artisans, who were given small rewards for joining forces, would be a solid buffer against black slaves. The rich would get richer and pull themselves away from the middle class to form their own society. Middle class will tend to their needs by providing the product/service for them. The elite would find ways to keep their people in a wealthy community.

2. What was the relationship between the development of commerce and capitalism, the enclosure of common land, and the production of a class of vagrant poor in 15th and 16th century England? How did the law respond to this new class of poor, homeless people? Can we use incarceration rates as a marker to chart economic developments throughout history? (compare to U.S. from 1970--2000).

This is of interest because, we do see a parallel in today's society, pretty much the same method applied just modernized to be up to date. If it's not up to their standards it's simply criminalized, and therefore making it more difficult for the "lower class".

It all boils down to private property and profit. Putting fences around land and saying you own it means that people can no longer use the resources of the land, or travel through the land. Those people became trespassers. They started to punish people who couldn't find work or whose work didn't pay enough. They put them in jail and then sent them to work as white servants in the colonies. Now we have mass incarceration, a system that targets poor people and people of color. Incarceration is so profitable for the private prison industry.

The law responded to the growing numbers of poor, homeless people by creating new laws which criminalized the conditions which made them poor and homeless. Then they built poorhouses and prisons to contain and control them. The powerful could not afford to have large numbers of discontented individuals at large and able to unite. I have no resources to make historical comparisons, but it seems obvious that the easiest way to reduce employment and poverty statistics is to create new crimes, increase punishment and hid the poor and unemployed in prisons.

Capitalism required privatization of land, which left many people homeless and without a way to make a living. Those in power in England then created laws that said people without jobs and homes were breaking the law, and either incarcerated, put them into forced labor houses, punished harshly, or sent to what would become the united states.

Cash was truly solidified as king during this period in history. The class lines became distinct and rigid, you either had the land and money or you did not. It is also important to remember that if you didn't own land (and of course weren't a white male), you couldn't vote. The wealth became concentrated to a few people. By the late 1600s in New York, about 75% of the land was owned by 30 people. This trend of concentrated wealth in the hands of the few is still present today. In 2016, the richest 1% of families controlled 38.6% of the country's wealth, while the bottom 90% of families hold just 22.8% of the wealth.

We saw how intimately tied wealth was to class privilege in the 1730s with the 'Poor House, Work House, and House of Correction'. Money could buy you privileges, provide you with housing, food and a get out of jail card. This is very similar to today where our jails and prisons are filled with those who could not afford to buy their way out by making bail or affording a competent attorney.

Reign of Elizabeth onward, laws were passed to punish, imprison them in workhouse or exile them (definition of rogues/vagabonds.) Any prisoner facility to imprison humans is a market to all the value they bring to it, owners will give budget, P/A, labor, etc.

The development of commerce and capitalism meant that capital needed a workforce to exploit, and this workforce was produced through enclosure. As long as people had common land to live and farm on, why would they need to work in miserable conditions in factories for low pay? By kicking peasants off of the land, and jailing or fining vagrants, they could ensure that they would have a workforce. I think that throughout history, incarceration has often paved the way for new phases of capitalist growth. In the U.S., the peak of incarceration from 1970 to 2000 coincided with deindustrialization and the loss of jobs for working-class people, especially Black men in rustbelt cities. It seems to me that incarceration is not only a tool of political repression but also a means through which to contain and generate capital from a "surplus" population that is no longer needed as a workforce.

3. Zinn writes “The mechanism of control was formidable. Strangers had to show passports or certificates to prove they were free men” (p. 46). Zinn is referring to the late 1600s in the American colonies, What similarities do you see in our current political climate to what was happening during the late 1600s?

What I see now is the same practices with the so called " Muslim Ban" and DACA and with us in prison who are punished with Ad Seg placement, loss of privileges and good time credits for refusing to work

This reminds me of the laws that require everyone to have their "papers" - their State ID, their immigration status - they are required to show it to authorities when requested. It keeps people in fear. It naturalizes social divisions.

The first thing that comes to mind are I.D.s, passports, and that one legally resides in the states. In today's political climate, the pretext is immigration, antiterrorism and if one is on parole or probation etc.

The mechanisms of control – passports and certificates – are directly related to the current crisis over immigration.

This reminds me the way that undocumented people and immigrants are policed in this country. In order to not be incarcerated, deported and separated from their families, homes and livelihoods, someone needs to be able to have the “right” documents and prove that they have a “right” to be here. This also reminds me of the intense ways Black people are often kept from voting because they don't have certain documents, or are constantly policed just for looking or dressing a certain way.

Connections to contemporary America definitely stood out to me in my reading of this chapter. "The mechanism of control was formidable" clearly rings true today. The ways that stopping folks and asking for their papers is now normalized in this country and proving one's citizenship is routine harkens back to times when people had to prove whether or not they were "free men" in colonial times. It is interesting to me, as well, the ways in which narratives around class division have strengthened recently, especially after the 2016

election and the ways that working class white people have been painted with this broad brush, especially in liberal urban spaces, of anti-immigrant sentiments and misogyny.

What was happening during the late 1600s with people having to show passports to prove they were free men sounds very similar to the US immigration situation happening now, and the worldwide refugee crisis. Politicians are prioritizing nationalism over people's lives and are completely devoid of historical context as to why this is happening. Due to US meddling and imperialism on the world stage, we have depleted other countries of resources needed to survive and backed governments that served US capitalist interests at the cost of people's lives. After making a mess in other countries, then those people are not allowed to enter or live in this country as fully recognized citizens.

Racism and class socio-economics are utilized as repressive tools for racial/gender oppression and exploitation at particular junctures in humankind. Ideologically driven, both were used as mechanisms of control. The rulers of empire devise a strategy that sows seeds of discord, division, and disunity between individuals who shared a common identity.

The basic character of these 'thought processes' interconnected and was to have a devastating effect in unifying people across racial lines. Racism and class arrangements were decisive and worked to the benefit of the elite who manufactured artificial differences. The poorest of whites came to accept in their minds and practices the belief system of white supremacy which proved detrimental to blacks. Blacks became victims to contempt, scorn, and hatred based solely on the color of one's skin. It was racism that prevented class unity or slaves uniting with servants.....

During the 15/1600s and Elizabethan law, people were forced to leave. The shipping yards profited enforcing policies and fees for everything. These people see profit at the expense of other people's miseries.

4. What was more divisive, racism or classism?

I think they feed off of each other -and people use the semantics of classifying things as one or the other to distract from the point.

Racism is even more divisive because it separates people even of the same social class, one could be virtually similar in all aspects of life, living in the same conditions and yet be divided due to race. This was effective for the ruling class of those times to keep slaves and poor whites from becoming a united front against the tyrant who subjected them to the same vile treatment. Something that is still prevalent but in a wider range.

I think they are very much tied together. Classism depended on racism to thrive. Racism was created through classism. Society was divided by class, and then the ruling class used racism to divide the working class. Very much connected.

I'm not sure which is more divisive, but certainly racism made classism more possible and protected it. With race as a division marker, it was easier to see if someone was "stepping out of line." Racism certainly helped mask classism among whites.

Classism.

I think racism was more divisive, because poor white people sided with wealthy white people, over poor and enslaved Africans. They chose to put up with class oppression versus come together with other poor and oppressed people across racial lines.

What an impossible and juicy question, which is hard for me to parse out, especially in a historical context. One interesting difference to me between the classism and racism was that the particular way that racism was used in the American colonies seemed, according to Zinn, rather new. The classism at play in the colonies was at least somewhat similar to the ways that societies at the time were already set up; the racism and anti-Blackness was newly being used in the American colonies as a central core of how the economy and modes of operating were being set up. Americans: always innovating, right? The combination of the two is where the real divisions and complexities arise and remain...

If classism were truly more divisive the poor white servant class along with black slaves AND native populations could have easily overthrown the wealthy controlling class. I think that throughout history ruling classes have strategically emphasized racial hierarchies as a way to ensure that oppressed peoples could not come together to take power away from their oppressors.

Racism.

5. Would you like to share anything else?

- This is such a great experience, I'm honored to share it with you all!
- I never realized that keeping racialized people out of certain jobs not only kept them in poverty, but also protected the wealth and livelihood of middle class whites. It's a two-sided thing.
- I just want to mention (especially to organizers) that I'm sorry that my pen pal's answers were not able to be recorded in time this time around, but I think we are set up for making it happen for the next round!
- Typically a fast reader, I was surprised to see how my pace changed reading Zinn's book. I found it painful to read and feel it is my duty as a citizen to learn the real history of our nation. On a positive note, the Zinn Education Project (zinnedproject.org) teaches and promotes teaching the people's history in middle and high school classrooms across the country. Also, there is a children's Young Reader's edition of the book.
- This is my first feedback. Allow me to grow. Thank you all for allowing me this opportunity.
- Seeing the responses in the google form helps me imagine all of you who I haven't met reading and thinking about the same topics. I am happy to be participating in this liberatory education project with you all.