

RESPONSE:

1. Beckert, Sven and Seth Rockman. *Slaveyr's Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.
2. Karp, Matthew. *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders of American Foreign Policy*. Harvard University Press, 2016.

Let's Share the Blame

Like others of their ilk, these authors unfairly castigate the slave owners of the Deep South. Being descended from such people, I resent this. Enlightened and merciful slave owners often took good care of their most valuable possessions, that is, their house slaves, and even of their field hands. As the pre-Civil War apologist George Fitzhugh claimed, many treated their valuable chattel slaves better than Northern textile owners treated their mostly Irish factory workers. When financially squeezed, they laid off these workers with no compensation and no place to live. They often did not even bother to feed them.

The cruelest treatment occurred in Africa. They were first violently enslaved by other blacks who then in chains marched or canoed them down to the coast. There, they awaited in dungeons to be sold to British, and after 1808, mainly to Yankees under whom they experienced the unspeakable Middle Passage. After 1808, most landed in Cuba where they recuperated and were "broken in," i.e. taught a few words of English, and maybe taught to plow. Their arrival on Southern plantations, of which 250,000 were smuggled in after 1808, was a relative improvement over the two previous stages.