**CHAPTER 4**

**The Development of Dominant–Minority Group Relations**

**in Preindustrial America: The Origins of Slavery**

**Classroom Activities and Suggestions for Discussion**

1. Have students locate and read several slave narratives and discuss them, relating what they have read in the narratives to concepts and theories offered in the text. Online sources vary but one currently useful source that offers sound files and useful links can be found at the University of Virginia. See <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/wpa/wpahome.html>. The Library of Congress (http://www.loc.gov/) also offers online slave narratives (as well as information about other topics relevant to the text such as immigration).
2. Have students look up information on Bacon’s Rebellion from 1676. Ask them to explain how Bacon’s Rebellion is the beginning of what W.E.B. DuBois called the color line. How did black and white servants and workers live before the rebellion, and what changed afterward? How does this suggest that race is a proxy, or place holder, for class?
3. Have students investigate contemporary slavery around the globe, perhaps assigning each student or group of students a different country to study. What societal dynamics do these situations have in common with slavery in the United States?
4. If you’re located in an area of the United States that is the site of an existing plantation, suggest that students tour the facilities (or take them on a field trip). Or you might see if someone from the plantation will speak to your class. Find out about the labor-intensive work on the plantations as well as other aspects of plantation. Does your tour guide discuss slave life? If not, raise relevant issues. It might be interesting to see how this is handled.
5. Have students watch the film *Amistad* and relate what they see to what they’ve learned in the text about stereotypes, the dynamics of slavery, the Noel and Blauner hypotheses, etc. Have them investigate the real *Amistad*, possibly using information from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration web site (http://www.archives.gov/). How does reality stack up with the film version?
6. Watch and discuss *Africans in America: America’s Journey Through Slavery* (PBS). How does this film series illustrate the horror of slavery? How do they explain the[ok?]importance of kinship, religion, and culture in shaping African Americans’ lives under slavery?
7. Watch *The Color Purple*, paying particular attention to issues of gender and race. How do Celie’s, Alfonso’s, Shugg’s, Albert’s, Nettie’s, and Pa’s experiences relate to the text? In what ways does the film appear to be accurate? How does it seem distorted? How is what Nettie saw in the Olinka tribe similar to what she witnessed in the U.S.? How do Pa and Albert treat women in the film and how does this relate to what students learned concerning the treatment of women at that time?
8. Read “Ain’t I a Woman?” delivered by Sojourner Truth in 1851 at the Women’s

Convention in Akron, Ohio. Why did she need to ask, “Ain’t I a Woman?” Discuss her ideas about the intersection of gender and race and how they created unique positions for women and men. What were the effects of gendered, racialized thinking on work, families, policy, and so on? It is reported that some suffragists didn’t want Sojourner Truth to speak for fear that the abolitionist ideas could hinder the success of the suffragist movement. Why might that be? Do we see parallels today of social movement organizations maintaining distance from one another rather than coming together to fight oppression? Is this effective? Why or why not? [NOTE: You may want to revisit this idea later in the text. For example, how do current stereotypes of black and white women, and black and white men differ from one another? How do they create a sense of multiple femininities and masculinities? What are the effects of this type of thinking at work, in families, in policy, and so on?]

1. Examine newspaper articles and websites about migrant laborers. Discuss their contact situation and current dominant-minority relations in terms of the Noel and Blauner hypotheses and compare their situation to that of African Americans, Mexican Americans, and American Indians.
2. Ask students what the term “slavery” brings to their minds. Do they think countries built on slavery should pay compensation to the descendants of the slaves? Do they agree or disagree with the idea that families that are rich now because their ancestors had slaves owe something to the descendants of the slaves? Why or why not?
3. Ask students what they know about contemporary slavery or human trafficking. Have students discuss where and who might be involved in these kinds of activities. What are the dominant forms of contemporary slavery? After an initial discussion, provide them with some statistical resources about contemporary human trafficking. A good source can be found at <https://www.freetheslaves.net> or at <http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com>.
4. Ask students if they believe that slavery is fundamentally wrong and to explain their reasoning. Make sure to point out that many commodities would be considerably more expensive without the people who work for near to nothing around the world. Would they be willing to pay higher prices if it meant an end to such poor wages and conditions for labor? Would this affect prices around the world? What segments of the global population do they think might resist efforts to end global labor abuses and human trafficking?
5. There are some critical differences between people who are trafficked today and slaves in the past, particularly in the United States. Have students research these differences and discuss how conditions are better/worse now as compared to in the past?.
6. Throughout history, some countries have addressed the issue of individual freedom in their governing documents. Have students discuss the priority that nations put on freedom after researching national constitutions or laws. As a class, examine some of these documents and identify how each addresses human freedom. Was slavery allowed when this document was first issued? Is it allowed now? To what degree, if any, is freedom portrayed as a basic, guaranteed right? Conclude with an examination of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and discuss its focus. Ask students why they think that slavery still exists, in spite of national and international declarations that promote individual freedom?
7. The film *12 Years a Slave* is a cinematic adaptation of the book of the same name written by Solomon Northup, a free African American man kidnapped in Washington DC in 1841 and sold into slavery. Have students watch this film and use it as a springboard to discuss the common-sense notion that slavery was a thing of “the South.” Where else in the United States was slavery practiced? When was it outlawed in some Northern states? ] What happened to people like Northup once they were enslaved?
8. For many African Americans, the end of slavery did not bring about economic prosperity or social equality. Discuss with students the Freedman’s Bureau as it operated for approximately 10 years after the end of the Civil War. What was it designed to do? Where does the phrase (still used in the South today) “forty acres and a mule” come from? Why was the Freedman’s Bureau dissolved? What parts of American society agitated for its dissolution and why?