

Africans in America | Judgment Day, 1831-1865

Segment One (approximately 10 minutes) | Starting image: Harpers Ferry at sunrise

- Two million African Americans are enslaved in the 1800s. The cotton industry brings wealth and power to plantation owners. Through ancillary businesses, hundreds of thousands of northerners' livelihoods depend directly on slavery.
- President Andrew Jackson displaces Cherokees, Choctaws, and other tribes from their ancestral lands. Twenty-five million acres are seized to make room for more cotton plantations.
- The story of the Butler family, owners of Butler Island and St. Simons, begins.
- Harriet Jacobs, a runaway slave, lives in a 9 by 7 foot garret for seven years rather than endure slavery.

Segment Two (approximately 10 minutes) Starting image: Scholar Wideman says, "Who better to define freedom than a slave?"

- In 1829 in Boston, David Walker's influential pamphlet, "Appeal To The Coloured Citizens of the World," calls for slaves to rise up against their masters. As a result, Georgia, Louisiana, and North Carolina pass legislation making it a crime to teach any African Americans, free or enslaved, to read or write.
- In 1831 a slave revolt led by Nat Turner in Virginia leaves more than 55 whites dead.
- William Lloyd Garrison, abolitionist and publisher of "The Liberator," believes that moral "suasion" (persuasion) will convince Southerners that slaveholding is a sin. "The Liberator" becomes an important voice of abolitionists.
- Garrison is dragged through the streets of Boston. Elijah Lovejoy, an anti-slavery publisher, is murdered in Alton, Illinois. In Philadelphia, an angry mob sets fire to the new Pennsylvania Hall, where the National Convention of American women gathers to speak out against slavery.
- Legislators insert the word "white" into the voting regulations and as a criteria for citizenship. Even free blacks are excluded from these privileges.

Segment Three (approximately 21 minutes) Starting image: Southern estate with mansion

- Pierce and John Butler inherit the family plantation in 1838, including 730 slaves, making them two of the richest men in America.
- Pierce Butler marries English-born actress Fanny Kemble. Kemble believes in abolition and tries to publish an anti-slavery tract, but Butler stops her, fearing a revolt among his own slaves.
- Kemble keeps a journal and documents the conditions of the Butler Island slaves.
- Kemble brings petitions from the slaves to her husband asking for better conditions for slaves, but Butler refuses.

Segment Four (approximately 8 minutes) Starting image: The garret of Harriet Jacobs

- Free blacks in the North create their own schools, orphanages, and churches. However, they are denied the right to vote, testify against whites, sign a binding contract, or attend white schools.
- In 1842 Harriet Jacobs finds freedom in Philadelphia.
- 1840s: anti-slavery societies, petitions to Congress, boycotts of slave-grown products, and anti-slavery slogans and emblems grow.
- In 1845, Frederick Douglass' Narrative becomes an international bestseller.
- Black abolitionists challenge the Constitution and ask for the same rights and privileges as whites.
- In 1847 Douglass publishes his anti-slavery newspaper, The North Star, in Rochester, New York.

Segment Five (approximately 5 minutes) | Starting image: Photo of a miner, with a pan full of gold nuggets

- In 1848 gold is discovered in California; westward expansion increases. By one estimate, black miners send home from California over three quarters of a million dollars to buy loved ones out of bondage.

- California successfully petitions to be a free state.
- Southern leaders threaten to quit the Union.
- A new Fugitive Slave law passes. No black person--slave or free-born--is safe from capture.

Segment Six (approximately 6 minutes) Starting image: Pictures of busy Boston streets

- The 1845 arrest of fugitive slave Anthony Burns triggers a showdown between Boston abolitionists and the federal government. Both black and white abolitionists attack the courthouse, attempting to free Burns. President Franklin Pierce enforces the Fugitive Slave Law.
- Despite the outcry, Anthony Burns is convicted of being a fugitive slave and sent back to Virginia.

Segment Seven (approximately 8 minutes) | Starting image: Photograph of trains

- In 1854 the continental railroad reaches Kansas and its status as a free or a slave state becomes crucial to the country.
- Thousands set out to settle Kansas--some ready to fight for a free Kansas and others eager to expand slavery.
- Two opposing territorial governments emerge, one pro-slavery, the other "free soil." Each faction outlaws the other and both push to exclude free African Americans.
- In 1856 abolitionist John Brown and his followers kill five pro-slavery men to avenge the burning of the free-soil town of Lawrence.
- In 1857 the Supreme Court argues the Dred Scott decision and declares that no black person can be a citizen of the United States. Furthermore, the South has a right, under the Constitution, to expand slavery into all territories of the United States.

Segment Eight (approximately 7 minutes) | Starting image: Footage of railroad tracks

- In 1857 a financial panic occurs.
- Fanny Kemble and Pierce Butler divorce in 1849. With the stock market collapse, Butler faces financial disaster. The Butler mansion in Philadelphia, along with over 1300 slaves from Butler Island and St. Simons are sold. It is the largest sale of human beings in the history of the United States and becomes known for generations as the "weeping time."

Segment Nine (approximately 10 minutes) | Starting image: Harpers Ferry Mountains and mist

- A group of abolitionists, led by John Brown, attempt to raid the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia. They plan to use the weapons to free slaves throughout Virginia.
- The revolt is discovered. Some of the abolitionists are killed; others are captured and tried, including John Copeland, Shields Green, and John Brown. Brown is convicted and executed. In churches, public meetings, and newspapers some proclaim him a Christian martyr.
- In 1860 South Carolina secedes from the Union and the next year civil war begins.

Segment Ten (approximately 10 minutes) | Starting image: Gettysburg painting

- Abraham Lincoln, fearing the loss of the support of Northern whites as well as border slave states who remain loyal to the Union, refuses to allow black soldiers in the Union army.
- In 1862 Congress outlaws slavery in the nation's capital.
- A year later, Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation. Although the document only frees slaves in states loyal to the Confederacy and millions within the Union remained enslaved, Douglass and others predict the end of slavery.
- In 1863 the Union army accepts free African Americans and runaway slaves into its ranks.
- When the Civil War ends, three new amendments to the Constitution outlaw slavery and promise that no American will be denied the rights of citizenship on the basis of race.
- Four million enslaved Americans are now freed. However, the struggle to be free is only beginning.