



ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM
& EDUCATION CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Illinois Holocaust Museum Opens its First Exhibition on Slavery:
Purchased Lives: The American Slave Trade from 1808 to 1865
February 10 - August 25, 2019**



Slave collar with bells; between 1800 and 1865; iron and brass; courtesy of the Holden Family Collection

- ***Purchased Lives*, curated by The Historic New Orleans Collection, reveals slavery's machinations and widespread persistence in America, long after the importation of slaves was made illegal in 1808**
- **Exhibition conveys the inhumanity of slavery through original artifacts, personal stories, and interactive displays**

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In 1808, the United States abolished the international slave trade. From that date through the end of the Civil War in 1865, the domestic slave trade continued at a cruel and brisk pace. Slave owners bought and sold people, moving their human property from one location to another, often at great distances, while separating husbands from wives and children from parents. Historians estimate that nearly two million people were displaced in this way.

Opening at Illinois Holocaust Museum in February 2019, the exhibition *Purchased Lives: The American Slave Trade from 1808 to 1865* illustrates the pain and injustice of the American domestic slave trade. The exhibition illuminates just how widespread the practice of slavery was in American life, as well as its impact on enslaved families across the country.

During this period of domestic slavery, owners in the Upper South—Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia and Washington, DC—sold and shipped surplus laborers to the expanding Lower South. For many enslaved people, their long and difficult journeys led them to New Orleans, the largest slave market in antebellum America. There, they were treated as property, rather than human beings, often held in outdoor pens before being auctioned and scattered to points across Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.

Through interactive displays, *Purchased Lives* allows visitors to engage directly with the historical record by tracking the shipment of more than 70,000 people to New Orleans. It showcases **more than 75 original artifacts**, including period paintings and first-person accounts from slave narratives and oral histories. The exhibit also includes a collection of “Lost Friends” ads placed after the Civil War by newly freed people attempting to locate family members specifically in Illinois.

“The exhibition is powerful not only for the subject matter, but because of the incredible and rare artifacts that are included,” said **Arielle Weininger, Chief Curator of Illinois Holocaust Museum**. “In addition, the interactive ‘Lost Friends’ database helps the visitor understand that this is not a southern issue – its ramifications were felt throughout the country and are still evident today.”



Slave Auction; ca. 1831; ink and watercolor

Illinois Holocaust Museum consistently uses special exhibitions to tell stories of inhumanity and resilience, both historical and present-day. *Purchased Lives*, combined with its related programming, facilitates a broader conversation about the legacies of the American slave trade and their manifestations in today’s world.

For the last three Saturdays in February, including February 9, 16, and 23, visitors to the Museum will enjoy free admission in honor of Black History Month, due to generous funding from Bank of America. On February 16 and 23, the Museum will have public docent tours of *Purchased Lives* at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

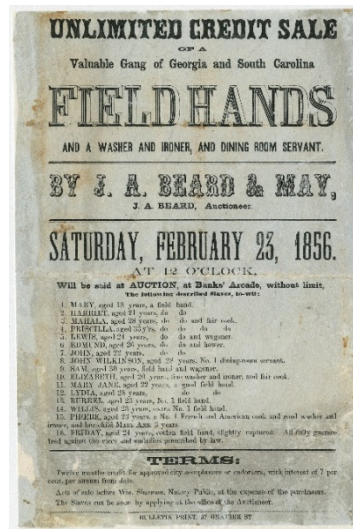
Purchased Lives was curated and originally hosted by The Historic New Orleans Collection. The objects on view represent items from The Historic New Orleans Collection as well as artifacts from the Belmont Mansion in Nashville; Evergreen Plantation in Edgard, Louisiana; the Louisiana State Museum; the Midlo Center for New Orleans Studies at the University of New Orleans; the New Orleans Notarial Archives; the Touro Infirmary Archives, and private collections.

“The power of this story and the platform it provides for contemporary discussion transcends the geographic borders of New Orleans as a center of the domestic slave trade,” said John H. Lawrence, director of museum programs at The Historic New Orleans Collection.

Opening Event:

When: Sunday, February 10, 2019, 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

What: The opening program features a powerful conversation about the long-lasting impact of the domestic slave trade with **Erin Greenwald**, Curator of *Purchased Lives*; **Nancy Bercauw**, Chair, Division of Political History, National Museum of American History; and **Dr. Christopher Reed**, Professor Emeritus of History, Roosevelt University and General Secretary of the Black Chicago History Forum. Moderated by **Morgan Elise Johnson**, an award-winning filmmaker, publisher and co-founder of thetribe.com, a digital publication re-shaping the narrative of Black Chicago.



Above images:

Left: *Hoeing Young Cotton; between 1865 and 1895*; albumen stereograph photoprints mounted on board by Samuel Tobias Blessing, photographer; *The Historic New Orleans Collection, 1979.221.14*

Right: *J. A. Beard and May auction notice for “a Valuable Gang of Georgia and South Carolina Field Hands”*; New Orleans: Bulletin Print, 1856; *The Historic New Orleans Collection, 2014.0371*

All photographs courtesy of The Historic New Orleans Collection. Exhibition by The Historic New Orleans Collection.



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About Illinois Holocaust Museum

Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center honors the Survivors and victims of the Holocaust and transforms history into current, relevant, and universal lessons in humanity. Through world-class exhibitions and programs, the Museum inspires individuals and organizations and provides a universal wake-up call to action: Take history to heart. Take a stand for humanity. The Museum is open daily from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. and Thursday evenings until 8:00 p.m. For more information, visit www.ilholocaustmuseum.org or call 847-967-4800.

About The Historic New Orleans Collection

Founded in 1966, The Historic New Orleans Collection is a museum, research center and publisher dedicated to the study and preservation of the history and culture of New Orleans and the Gulf South. Its original exhibitions, award-winning publications, innovative programming, and robust holdings offer multiple entry points for those eager to learn more about the people, places, and events that have helped define the unique culture of this area. For more information, visit www.hnoc.org, call (504) 523-4662, or follow THNOC on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

About the DuSable Museum of African American History

The DuSable Museum of African American History is the oldest independent black history museum in the nation. Our mission is to promote understanding and inspire appreciation of the achievements, contributions and experiences of African Americans through exhibits, programs and activities that illustrate African and African American history, culture and art. The DuSable Museum is a Smithsonian Institution Affiliate. For more information on the Museum and its programs, please call 773-947-0600 or visit us at www.dusablemuseum.org. The DuSable Museum of African American History gratefully acknowledges the Chicago Park District's partnership and also thanks United Airlines, the official airline of the DuSable Museum for its support.