

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Tourism and Heritage Sites of the Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery

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Since the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a growing number of initiatives started highlighting slavery and the Atlantic slave trade in the public spaces of cities in Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Part of a broader interest in all issues related to past human atrocities, which was also visible in the memorialization of the Holocaust, this trend can be associated with the emergence of local identities that became more prominent as a reaction to an era when globalization interconnected societies and populations.

The dialogue between history and memory, which also orients public history initiatives, has shaped the phenomenon of memorialization of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade in former slave societies. On the one hand, collective memory is defined by Maurice Halbwachs (1950) as a mode of memory carried out by social groups and societies who associate their common remembrances with historical events. Conceived within particular social frameworks, this mode of memory becomes public memory when it is transformed into a political instrument to build, assert, and reinforce particular identities of social groups. In this context, public memory can be defined as the common way societies or groups recover, recreate, and represent the past to themselves and to others in the public sphere. On the other hand, in societies marked by traumatic events and human atrocities like the Atlantic slave trade, in which the transmission of past experiences was disrupted, collective memory gives way to historical memory that can take more permanent forms like monuments, memorials, and museums, in processes that have been defined as memorialization. Depending on whether or not these initiatives succeed in obtaining official recognition by governments and institutions, historical memory can become official memory.

The initiatives memorializing slavery and the Atlantic slave trade can be divided into four different categories. The first category includes the promotion of existing heritage sites associated with the Atlantic slave trade and slavery, found along the African coasts and in various parts of the Americas. In West Africa, West Central Africa, and East Africa,

among these sites are slave castles and dungeons, fortresses, and the ruins of old slave depots, while in the Americas these sites include slave wharfs, slave markets, and former plantations. The second category comprises newly built memorials and monuments paying homage to the victims of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade that resulted from the efforts of social actors and groups who fought to have their views recognized in the public space in processes that combined collective, public, and official memory. The third category, related to the two previous ones, includes festivals and commemoration activities aimed at promoting intangible heritage associated with slavery and the Atlantic slave trade, such as music, dance, food, and other forms of living traditions. Finally, the fourth category comprises state, private, and community museums that focus on slavery and museum exhibitions on slavery. Like in the previous categories, the existence of these initiatives usually results from the intervention of organized social actors, but in several cases these initiatives can be labeled public history projects. Having educational goals, their development often relied on the contribution of public historians.

This chapter discusses several kinds of ventures aimed at bringing to light slavery and the Atlantic slave trade in the public space, with a particular focus on heritage sites of the Atlantic slave trade. Depending on the geographical area, these sites attract greater or smaller numbers of tourists with various profiles. As an effective way of promoting economic development, slave trade tourism in African countries like Senegal, Ghana, and Republic of Benin has been conceived as a form of roots tourism that, although appealing for local populations, has traditionally attracted well-off tourists from the African diaspora. In Brazil and the United States, recently uncovered slave wharfs and cemeteries have interested a varied, but still limited, number of tourists, mainly composed of local and international black visitors.

Slave trade tourism in West Africa

Although the majority of enslaved Africans who were transported to the New World embarked from West Central African ports like Luanda, Benguela, and Cabinda, most initiatives to memorialize the slave trade were developed in West Africa (Schenck and Candido 2015). The first initiatives to preserve West African Coast slave trade tangible heritage sites started in the 1940s (Araujo 2010a; Araujo 2010b). This process intensified over the next two decades, especially in the 1960s, during the period of African decolonization. The promotion of Atlantic slave trade sites such as European castles and fortresses that served as slave depots was consolidated first with the addition of some of these sites to the national heritage lists and later with their addition to the UNESCO World Heritage List. The promotion of the Atlantic slave trade heritage sites contributed to the development of the West African tourism industry.

In 1972, the government of Ghana added 22 old fortresses and castles to its national heritage list, placing these sites under the protection of the law and under the authority of the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (Singleton 1999). In 1979, during the third session of the World Heritage Committee, UNESCO approved the addition of Elmina Castle, founded in the Gold Coast by the Portuguese in 1482, to the World Heritage List. Moreover, another 10 castles in the regions of Volta, Accra and its environs, and in central and western Ghana were also included on the list. Therefore, Ghana witnessed the development of African diaspora roots tourism.

Among the most important sites visited by tourists in Ghana are Cape Coast and Elmina castles (Macgonagle 2006). Tourists from around the world, including many

African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans, visit Ghana castles to mourn and to celebrate the memory of their ancestors (Hartman 2008; Richards 2008). In Ghana, as in other slavery sites in West Africa, tourist guides provide accounts of the Atlantic slave trade to satisfy an international audience. Usually, they emphasize “the suffering of Africans at the hands of Europeans,” often by omitting African participation in the slave trade enterprise (Macgonagle 2006: 252). The goal of these simplified narratives is twofold. On the one hand, they prevent the emergence of conflict among local communities that still today include descendants of enslaved individuals who were brought from the North and remain in the region (Holsey 2008). On the other hand, they fulfill the specific demands of the tourism industry, offering quick visits to the castles. Since the early 1990s, during the government of Jerry Rawlings, Elmina and Cape Coast castles received prestigious visitors, including the former US presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, President Barack Obama and his family, as well as Mich elle Jean, former Governor General of Canada (Bruner 1996; Macgonagle 2006; Schramm 2010). Moreover, since 1998, August 1, the date of slave emancipation in the British colonies, is officially commemorated in Ghana (Holsey 2008), in a clear attempt to promote and reinforce the connections with the African diaspora.

Since the 1960s, Gor e Island and its Slave House began acquiring notoriety among international visitors, including African American tourists and political and religious authorities. The promotion of Gor e as a slave trade site of remembrance started when L opold Sedar Senghor was president of Senegal. In 1966, the First World Festival of Black Arts was held in the country. By developing and promoting African arts, Senegal called the public’s attention to African heritage and to the importance of Gor e Island in the history of West Africa. The festival had significant effects in Europe and the Americas, contributing to the development and promotion of Gor e Island and its Slave House not only as a site of memory of the Atlantic slave trade, but also as a tourist destination.

In the early 1960s, Senegal created the BAMH (Office of Historical Monuments Architecture). In 1972, the country ratified the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO during the 17th session of its general conference. Three years later, the country included Gor e Island in its inventory of historical monuments. In 1978, during the second session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage held in Washington, D.C., UNESCO added Gor e Island to the list of World Heritage sites. In the 1980s, Amadou-Mahtar M’Bow, UNESCO’s general director, launched an appeal to the international community to help finance and safeguard Gor e Island, by emphasizing its role in the shared imagination of Africa and the Americas. After this initiative, at least eight postal stamps were created to promote Gor e’s future. During the 1990s, as part of the same trend already observed in Ghana and The Gambia, the Slave House, as well as other buildings, were rehabilitated.

A contested slave trade heritage site, the Slave House became internationally known thanks to the narrative developed by its curator, the late Boubacar Joseph N’Diaye. His convincing story describing the tragic experience of enslaved men and women during their passage through the slave warehouse touched the hearts of thousands of tourists who visited the island each year. According to N’Diaye, between ten and fifteen million enslaved Africans passed through the Slave House before leaving for the New World, an estimate higher than the volume of slave imports for all the Americas. According to the most recent estimates established by Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database about 12,521,000 enslaved Africans crossed the Atlantic Ocean during the Atlantic slave

trade. In addition, the latest estimates provided by the database indicate that between 1514 and 1866 the slave exports from Gorée Island were approximately 33,562. The Slave House remains a major place of memory of the Atlantic slave trade, attracting 200,000 tourists each year.

Although evidence confirms that the owner of the Slave House was not a European slave merchant, but an Afro-European woman slave trader (*signare*), several factors allowed the Slave House to become a successful slave trade tourist site; primarily N'Diaye's ability to transmit the experiences of the victims of the Atlantic slave trade (Araujo 2010a). Regardless of whether N'Diaye's narrative is accurate or not, he was able to bring the slave past to life by describing and narrating in detail the sufferings of those men, women, and children who were deported from West African shores to the Americas.

The popularity of the Slave House on Gorée Island can be explained by other factors as well. Its location, dungeons, and door opening to the sea function as architectural elements that incarnate the memory of the Atlantic slave trade (Singleton 1999). These elements allowed N'Diaye to construct a convincing and moving narrative illustrating the experience of enslaved men, women, and children. This context allowed the controversial Slave House to become not only a slave trade tourist site, but also a site of repentance that attracted important political, religious, and artistic personalities such as Pope John Paul II, US President George W. Bush, and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, whose visits to the site received great media coverage.

Like Ghana and Senegal, the Republic of Benin (former Kingdom of Dahomey) also developed a significant tourism industry associated with the Atlantic slave trade. Since the early eighteenth century, Dahomey dominated the slave trade in the Bight of Benin. The high degree of militarization and the introduction of firearms by the Europeans allowed the kingdom to expand its territory. Most of Dahomey's war captives were sold to European slave merchants, while others remained in the kingdom performing several kinds of agricultural and domestic activities, or were sacrificed to honor the ancestors.

Dahomey became a French colony at the end of the nineteenth century. The conservation and promotion of built heritage sites associated with the Atlantic slave trade began during World War II. In 1943, the French administration created the Abomey Historical Museum at the site of the old royal palaces of Abomey. The colored bas-reliefs decorating the walls of the palaces constitute a visual narrative illustrating events that marked the history of the Dahomean dynasties. The representations of Dahomean female and male warriors and decapitated prisoners evoke the military campaigns waged by Dahomey against its neighboring kingdoms.

In 1985, after a tornado damaged the royal palaces, the buildings were placed simultaneously on UNESCO's World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger. The project of restoration and conservation of the royal palaces, included in the program of PREMA (Prevention in Museums in Africa), started in 1992 and received the support of Benin's government. On June 25, 2007, the palaces were eventually removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger (Araujo 2010a).

The promotion of and investment in the restoration of the palaces in which bas-reliefs celebrate military campaigns convey a complex and sometimes contradictory message because it occurred during the same period that other projects developing the public memory of Atlantic slave trade victims were also in progress in southern Benin. Eventually, the promotion of the royal palaces contributed to highlight Dahomey's slave trade past from the point of view of the perpetrators, instead of the victims. Although the palaces

are visited by hundreds of tourists every year, its location, about 82 miles from the coast, prevents it from becoming a major tourist destination in the country.

In the early 1990s, Benin's military dictatorship ended, and an agitated period of redemocratization began. In 1991, Nicéphore Soglo was elected president of the country and claimed a new Marshall Plan for Africa in order to renegotiate or release the external debt of African countries. As the country started requesting financial aid from the World Bank and the IMF, cultural tourism became a viable alternative for promoting the region's economic development.

The end of the dictatorship encouraged public debate regarding Benin's slave past. However, there were sensitive elements involved in this discussion, because even today Benin's population includes descendants of Abomey's royal family, who captured and sold prisoners into slavery; descendants of slave merchants; and descendants of former slaves, who were either sent to the Americas (especially Brazil) and returned to Dahomey, or who remained on Dahomean soil. Moreover, among the Brazilian returnees, several became slave merchants and others, who married Portuguese and Brazilian slave merchants established in the region, became slave owners. Because slavery still carries a heavy stigma in Africa, some descendants of slaves prefer not to claim this ancestry publicly. In this context of plural and conflictive memories of slavery, the government of Benin, UNESCO, and the Embassy of France encouraged the development of official projects focusing on the region's Atlantic slave past, whose main goal was stimulating cultural tourism (Araujo 2010a; Forte 2010). As a result of these efforts, in 1994, UNESCO launched The Slave Route Project during an international scientific conference held in Ouidah.

The Slave Route Project was entrusted to an international scientific committee composed of some twenty members from different disciplines and geographical areas, whose responsibility was to guarantee an objective and consensual approach to the main issues of the Project. National committees were created in order to promote the objectives of the Project in various countries involved in the Atlantic slave trade. The Project relied on a scientific research program; an educational and academic program; a program on the contribution of the African diaspora aimed at promoting the living cultures and artistic and spiritual expression that resulted from the slave trade and slavery; a program aimed at collecting and preserving the written archives and oral traditions related to the slave trade; and a program to identify and preserve the tangible and intangible heritage of the slave trade and slavery, especially through memory tourism. When the Project was initiated, the need to emphasize the importance and the estimated volume of the trans-Saharan and internal slave trades was discussed. However, the Atlantic slave trade became the actual focus of the Project. UNESCO's choice to keep the main focus on the Atlantic slave trade and to neglect the other trades that strongly affected West African populations reinforced the idea that The Slave Route Project was intended for an international audience and not for the local population, which includes descendants of slaves who remained living on African soil.

In the early 1990s, parallel to the debates aimed at developing The Slave Route Project, Beninese government authorities proposed the creation of a Vodun festival in Ouidah. Both the Vodun festival and The Slave Route Project aimed at promoting cultural tourism in Benin and as a result stimulating the local economy. As Dahomey is the cradle of Vodun, a religion characterized by trance, possession, and the belief in a great number of deities (Blier 1995), the choice of a Vodun festival was justified because enslaved Dahomeans brought this West African religion to Brazil, Cuba, and Haiti,

contributing to the emergence of religions such as Candomblé, Santería, and Voodoo in the Americas. Yet, debates about the Vodun festival were surrounded by controversy, because some social actors perceived the festival as an attempt to diminish the importance accorded to The Slave Route Project. In a context of conflicting memories of slavery, the descendants of slaves and slave merchants would better accept celebrating the intangible heritage of the Atlantic slave trade represented by the religions and cultures derived from Vodun. Moreover, as Vodun worshippers were denounced, persecuted, and sent to prison as “sorcerers” who opposed the goals of the “revolution” in the years of military dictatorship, the Vodun festival could underscore the emerging religious freedom (Rush 2013; Tall 1995).

Unlike The Slave Route Project, the Vodun festival, Ouidah 92, was perceived as a project that unified different groups. This initiative was seen as one that could eventually allow the descendants of the Dahomean royal family to obtain political gains without emphasizing debate about the Atlantic slave trade past (Tall 1995). Following these debates, the festival Ouidah 92: Festival mondial des cultures vaudou: retrouvailles Amériques-Afriques (Ouidah 92: World Festival of Vodun Cultures: Reunion Americas-Africas) and The Slave Route Project were finally linked.

The Vodun festival was held in February 1993 in Ouidah, Porto-Novo, and Cotonou, one year before the launching of The Slave Route Project. Among the most visible initiatives of the festival was the creation of The Slaves’ Route, a two-mile road that starts at Ouidah’s downtown, close to a former slave market, along which enslaved men, women, and children allegedly walked until arriving at the beach, where they boarded pirogues that brought them to the slave ships. Because the coastal lagoon separated the town from the shore, it is likely that captives covered part of the way to the outer shore by canoe as well (Law 2004).

About one hundred monuments and memorials especially created for the occasion mark various stations along the road. Passing through several neighborhoods, The Slaves’ Route highlights the existing historical sites and Vodun temples, decorated with paintings during the preparations for the festival. Whereas some of the monuments and memorials mark actual historical sites, other statues do not mark any specific point of reference but were placed along the route just to emphasize the idea of continuity. The number of foreign guests who attended the festival, the financial support of the United States government, and the brochure translated into English show the extent to which the festival was designed to be a meeting place for the African diaspora, especially African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans.

Situated in the western half of the coast of Benin, during the eighteenth century Ouidah became the most important African slave port, second only to Luanda in present-day Angola. After the end of the Atlantic slave trade and the beginning of French colonization, the city’s economic life declined dramatically. During the twentieth century, the lack of economic opportunities led the children of elite families to leave Ouidah and move to Cotonou, Benin’s economic capital. But after the festival and the launching of The Slave Route Project, Ouidah started attracting more national and international tourists, who came to the city to visit its built heritage attractions such as the former Portuguese fortress that houses the Ouidah Museum of History, as well as the monuments and memorials unveiled during the early 1990s. Moreover, after the launching of the official projects, a number of hotels were opened on Ouidah’s beach.

Ultimately, slave trade tourism helped intensify Ouidah's economic activity. At the same time, the city became not only an intriguing example of the impact of UNESCO's influence in the region, but also an interesting case of the commodification of the Atlantic slave trade for tourism purposes. Today, the monuments, memorials, and museums created during the establishment of the Vodun festival and The Slave Route Project share the public space with other projects such as the Gate of Return and the Door of Return Museum, as well as the memorial for the Great Jubilee of the Catholic Church of the Year 2000. These different initiatives provide a revealing image of the national and international political issues associated with the recovery and promotion of the memory and heritage of the Atlantic slave trade.

Slave trade and slavery tourism in Brazil and the United States

Some of the largest slave ports in the Americas were situated in Brazil and the United States, although the volume of the Atlantic slave trade greatly varied in these two countries. According to the latest estimates made available in the *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (2013), between 1601 and 1866, the number of enslaved Africans who disembarked for the United States was 252,653, whereas between 1501 and 1866, the number of slaves who arrived in Brazilian ports was 5,099,816. Unlike West Africa, The Slave Route Project launched by UNESCO in 1994 was not very visible in these two countries. Although neither Brazil nor the United States oriented the memorialization of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade toward the development of tourism initiatives as was done in West Africa, in both countries slave trade heritage sites are receiving growing attention and attracting an important number of tourists.

Despite the importance of slavery and the presence of traces of the slave past in the urban and rural landscapes of Brazil and the United States, the promotion of slavery heritage and the development of projects to memorialize slavery have encountered many obstacles. Starting in the 1990s, a small number of monuments, memorials, and museum exhibitions were gradually unveiled in both countries. This interest in the Atlantic slave past was favored by the new context that emerged at the end of the Cold War, which benefited the assertion of national identities and collective identities of historically oppressed groups. Additionally, the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus in the Americas made visible the crucial role of the Atlantic slave trade in the construction of the American continent. In Brazil, the end of the Cold War coincided with the end of the military dictatorship that ruled the country from 1964 to 1985. The end of military rule allowed Afro-Brazilian activism to resurface in the public sphere, demanding affirmative actions and calling for the official recognition of the role played by black historical actors in the construction of the nation (Araujo 2014).

In the United States, the largest part of the tourism industry associated with slavery is concentrated around former plantations, several of which are officially listed in national heritage registers. These heritage sites, most of which are located in southern states, include the plantations and homes of the founding fathers of the United States, such as George Washington (Mount Vernon), Thomas Jefferson (Monticello), and James Madison (Montpelier), all located in the state of Virginia. Although thousands of local, national, and international tourists visit these sites each year, the motivation of most guests is to learn more about the history and sophisticated lifestyles of these founding

fathers. Yet, over the last ten years, public historians have made important efforts to finally highlight the importance of slavery and enslaved populations at these sites.

In Brazil, despite the increasing number of monuments and initiatives highlighting Afro-Brazilian history, the projects aimed at developing cultural tourism on sites related to slavery are still incipient and scattered. In the former coffee industry zone in the Paraíba Valley, some estates were restored and transformed into hotels. In the Fazenda Ponte Alta (Barra do Pirai, Rio de Janeiro), the original slave quarters were preserved. The Fazenda Santa Clara (Valença, Rio de Janeiro), one of the largest coffee producers of the region, once held 2,800 slaves and is visited by hundreds of tourists each year. However, these privately owned initiatives do not aim to emphasize the slave past of the region and are still perceived as rural tourism (Araujo 2010b).

Among the most visible initiatives memorializing slavery in the United States is the African Burial Ground in New York City. The site, which includes the remains of thousands of men, women, and children either African-born or of African descent, was discovered in 1991 during an excavation to construct a new federal building at 290 Broadway. After protests led by African American activists, the work stopped. A report examining the history of the burial ground as well as the recovered remains and artifacts was assigned to scholars based at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Research concluded that the site was a former burial ground containing the remains of about 15,000 enslaved and free African individuals buried during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Located in a port city that imported about 8,500 slaves, the New York African Burial Ground, as it became known in the following years, is the largest of its kind in the United States.

The discovery of the burial ground occurred in a context that favored the promotion of black history in New York City: the mayoralty of David Norman Dinkins, the city's first African American mayor, who took office in 1990. His intervention was crucial to the development of the African Burial Ground. But the controversies among members of the federal government, politicians, scholars, and activists (who identified themselves as descendants of the men and women buried at the site) regarding the future of the site continued in the following years. This context shows how the public memory of slavery is shaped by the disputes of various social groups that attempt to occupy public space.

The unearthing of the burial ground brought to light the importance of slavery in New York City. As a result, debates emerged involving questions of how to make the city's slave past visible as well as how to memorialize African American ancestors in the city's public space. In 1998, the General Service Administration (GSA) launched a design competition for the memorial that would occupy the site, receiving 61 proposals. By the end of September 2003, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture organized a series of ceremonies that began at Howard University, where the remains were examined, and that culminated on October 4, 2003, with the reinterment of 419 bone remains in New York's financial district, the same site where they were discovered.

Since 2003, October 4 has been marked by annual commemorative ceremonies held in the African Burial Ground to pay homage to the men, women, and children who were buried there. Also in 2003, the United States Congress appropriated funds for the construction of the memorial. But the debates regarding how these Africans and African Americans would be memorialized continued and became highly politicized along racial lines. Central to the debate led by African American activists was whether a memorial would be placed on top of the African Burial Ground. The National Park Service (NPS) and the GSA organized a series of public forums to discuss the final decision, but activists

contested the initiative. Representatives of the Committee of Descendants of the African Ancestral Burial Ground maintained that no structure should be placed on the sacred site. Another controversial issue was the possible hiring of white architects to design the memorial. The African Burial Ground thus illustrates well the contentious issues surrounding a site of memory of slavery. The unearthing of the burial ground and its interpretation were closely associated with issues of race and identity that were not directly related to the historical past of the site but to the total lack of public visibility of the city's slave past in the present. Although not all the issues raised by African American activists were addressed, eventually, in June 2004, two Haitian American architects, Rodney Leon and Nicole Hollant-Denis (AARIS Architects), won the competition to design the memorial.

After being officially proclaimed a National Monument in 2006, the memorial was dedicated on October 5, 2007. Built with granite, the memorial is divided into two sections, the Circle of the Diaspora and the Ancestral Chamber. Through a ramp, the visitor is led to the interior of a circular wall on which various Akan symbols are depicted. In the interior of the court, a map of the Atlantic world evoking the Middle Passage is depicted on the ground. The Ancestral Chamber, placed next to the ancestral reinternment ground and symbolizing the interior of a slave ship, was conceived as a place for contemplation and prayer. As in other monuments, memorials, and heritage sites of the Atlantic slave trade, the idea of return is evoked by a Sankofa symbol carved on the chamber's external wall, which became the memorial's central element and was dedicated as follows: "For all those who were lost; For all those who were stolen; For all those who were left behind; For all those who were not forgotten." In the various official descriptions of the memorial, the symbol is translated as "learn from the past," but a more accurate translation is "go back to fetch it," referring to a proverb that states: "It is not a taboo to return and fetch it when you forget," evoking the links between the spiritual and material world (Seeman 2010: 109). The symbol's choice was further justified because the coffins recovered during the archaeological excavation displayed a heart-shaped pictogram identified as an Akan symbol associated with present-day Akan mortuary practices (although some scholars contested this interpretation).

In 2010, as part of the development and promotion of the site, a visitor center housing a permanent exhibition was created in the federal building adjacent to the memorial. Unlike the memorial, a site whose sacred dimension was emphasized, the visitor center is a public history initiative, with the goal of celebrating African presence in New York City and disseminating the history of the most important archaeological project ever undertaken in the United States (Kardux 2009). African American tourists, scholars, and members of the African diaspora are the most frequent visitors to the memorial. During the year, especially in October, various ceremonies are held at the memorial to honor African ancestors.

Its location at the heart of New York City's downtown meant that the promotion of the African Burial Ground was affected by the events of September 11, 2001. The two towers of the World Trade Center, destroyed by the terrorist attacks that killed thousands of individuals, were located just over half a mile from the burial ground. This tragedy created another mass grave near the site and imprinted the collective memory of New York City's population with a more recent traumatic event. When visitors to the area, whether they are whites or African Americans, ask where the African Burial Ground is, they will often be redirected toward Ground Zero, where the National September 11 Memorial and Museum, dedicated on September 11, 2011, is located. In spite of these

hindrances, the unearthing of the site brought to light the existence of slavery as a central institution in New York until its abolition in 1827. This largely unknown chapter of American history was absent from official narratives presented in textbooks and museum exhibitions, where slavery is usually described as existing only in the southern United States (Berlin and Harris 2005; Wilson 2005). The discovery also led to the development of several other ventures focusing on the existence of slavery in New York City. Among these initiatives was the exhibit *Slavery in New York* held by the New York Historical Society in 2005, which was followed by a series of other exhibitions problematizing slavery in the United States (Hulser 2012).

Unlike New York City, whose slave past was a forgotten chapter of American history, slavery was a central element in Rio de Janeiro's daily life until the end of the nineteenth century. Between 1758 and 1831, and especially after 1811, about one million Africans came ashore in the Valongo Wharf. But the area of disembarkation of Africans was gradually erased from the urban space after the slave trade was banned in 1831. Following the chaotic process of modernization and urbanization of the early twentieth century, the old port zone of Rio de Janeiro, close to the city's downtown area, remained nearly abandoned. Not only had the underprivileged black populations who were resident in the port zone been totally neglected by public authorities, but also the buildings and heritage sites located in the area were in an advanced state of decay (Cicalo 2015).

Similar to what occurred in New York City in 1991, in 1996 an archaeological excavation on a private property at 36 Pedro Ernesto Street (formerly Cemitério Street) in the Gamboa neighborhood revealed a burial ground containing bone fragments of dozens of enslaved African men, women, and children. The site was identified as being the Cemitério dos Pretos Novos (Cemetery of New Blacks), a common grave where newly arrived Africans who died before being sold in the Valongo market were buried. Scholars estimate that more than 6,000 Africans were buried at the site. But following this important and unprecedented discovery, the cemetery and the port area continued to be neglected for a long period of time. Unlike the African Burial Ground in New York City, the site was private property and not a federal building. As a result, the Brazilian federal government had no jurisdiction over the site, whose preservation was the responsibility of City Hall. Although the couple who owned the property where the cemetery was uncovered embraced the cause of protecting the site with the great support of Rio de Janeiro's black activist movement, they received little public or official assistance (Saillant and Simonard 2012). Yet this situation drastically changed in March 2011 when drainage works started in the Rio de Janeiro port region, as part of the project *Rio de Janeiro: Porto Maravilha* (Rio de Janeiro: Wonderful Port), which aimed to recuperate the city's old port in anticipation of the 2014 FIFA World Cup and 2016 Olympic Games. During the work, the ruins of Valongo Wharf were eventually rediscovered. The excavations also recovered numerous African artifacts, including ceramic pipes, cowries employed in religious practices, and buttons made of animal bones.

Following this second discovery, black activists, scholars, and politicians intensively debated the project that would be developed on the wharf. If until recently Rio de Janeiro's authorities rarely expressed interest in promoting the slavery heritage of the city's downtown area, there was now an urgent need to find an urban solution to a site associated with the forthcoming Olympic Games. As expected, the discussion about strategies to preserve the site became politically contentious. Politicians, real estate companies, scholars, and black organizations quickly understood its tangible and symbolic importance; both locally and internationally, the wharf embodies the connections

between Brazil, Africa, and the African diaspora. With different interests at play, each of these groups attempted to appropriate the site and orient the ways that the history of the Atlantic slave trade would be exposed or concealed. Moreover, the possibility of nominating the newly discovered site for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List raised the interest of various companies and organizations as well.

The initial project of Rio de Janeiro's City Hall was to create a huge memorial with portals that, according to black activists, would divert attention from the archaeological site. Additionally, because the wharf is located next to Morro da Providência, the first Brazilian favela, most of whose residents are Afro-Brazilians, black organizations were concerned about how an architectural intervention on the wharf would affect the neighboring community. Finally, by keeping the simple original structure of the wharf, during this first stage of the process of memorialization black activists rejected the creation of a memorial structure that would compete with the archaeological site.

Gradually, both the Valongo Wharf and the Cemetery of New Blacks are being incorporated into Rio de Janeiro's urban landscape and becoming part of the country's official national narrative that now recognizes the importance of the Atlantic slave trade and Brazil's crucial role in it. Through the municipal decree number 34.803 of November 29, 2011, the Circuito Histórico e Arqueológico da Celebração da Herança Africana (Historical and Archaeological Trail of African Heritage Celebration) was created to highlight several heritage buildings and sites of memory associated with the Atlantic slave trade and African presence in the port area of Rio de Janeiro.

In 2012, the site of the Cemetery of New Blacks was transformed into a memorial. The main exhibition was reshaped, with the inclusion of explanatory panels with text and images reconstituting the history of the site, large photographs of Africans and Afro-Brazilians, and a huge panel wall with the names of enslaved individuals who were brought to Brazil. Moreover, glass pyramids were installed on the memorial's floor, allowing visitors to see the archaeological findings discovered at the site. As a sacred site, the memorial's unveiling ceremony had the participation of Candomblé priests, who paid homage to the African ancestors who died without ever receiving a proper burial. The community of Gamboa and different black organizations are slowly appropriating the Valongo area, organizing black heritage tours, public religious ceremonies, and spectacles of capoeira (an Afro-Brazilian martial art, combining dance and music).

Regardless of this appropriation by local actors, the Valongo area remains negligible in comparison with most other Rio de Janeiro tourist sites, and even many locals are unaware of its historical importance. Its visitors are mainly Afro-Brazilians or international tourists with a particular interest in the history of African diaspora. In addition, because until recently no memorial was constructed on the Valongo Wharf (only the ruins were preserved), the visit to the site becomes meaningful only if oriented by the few Afro-Brazilian guides associated with local black organizations.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how heritage sites of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade in Senegal, Ghana, Republic of Benin, Brazil, and the United States have been memorialized and gradually transformed into sites to attract local, national, and international tourists. Despite the hindrances to make the Atlantic slave trade past visible within public space, especially after the 1990s, these initiatives have been successful in developing cultural tourism and attracting visitors to West African countries. Although tourism in sites of

suffering have traditionally been labeled as dark tourism or grief tourism, slave trade tourism in West Africa has other crucial dimensions. For African tourists and white tourists, especially Europeans, visiting slave trade heritage sites may be associated with a process of repentance and also with self-awareness of human atrocities. For black tourists from the Americas, the central dimension of slave trade tourism in West Africa is still associated with the search for their ancestors' roots.

In Brazil and the United States, slavery and the Atlantic slave trade are not central elements of tourism ventures. However, over the last two decades, the recovery of a number of slave trade heritage sites has led to the development of important initiatives, even though they do not yet attract a significant number of tourists. Although the preservation and promotion of these heritage sites face various political and economic obstacles, Brazilian and American black populations are appropriating these sites and transforming them into sacred spaces and public shrines to mourn and celebrate their African ancestors. Gradually, black social actors, often supported by scholars who lend their expertise to the study of the newly uncovered wharfs and burial grounds, are forcing the governments of Brazil and the United States to officially recognize the Atlantic slave trade as a central element of an uncomfortable chapter in the histories of these two countries.