

Slavery in the North

In 1806, 9-year-old Isabella Baumfree and her family lived on the property of Charles Ardinburgh of Ulster County in New York. When Ardinburgh died, Isabella found her mother in tears.

"Mau-mau, what makes you cry?" Isabella asked.

"Oh, my child, I am thinking of your brothers and sisters that have been sold away from me," her mother replied.

Soon after, Isabella too was separated from her mother. She was **auctioned**¹—along with other slaves, horses, and cattle—and purchased for \$100. She was sold again and again, from master to master, until she was **emancipated**² in 1828.

Students of history know Isabella better by the name she chose as an adult—Sojourner Truth. Truth was an **abolitionist**. She spoke out against slavery. But what some people may not know is that Truth was one of thousands of slaves who were bought, sold, and forced to do labor in the North.

"Many people are surprised when you talk about slavery in the North," Alan Singer, a professor of education at Hofstra University, told *Senior Edition*. "We associate slavery with the South, even though the biggest importer of slaves—after South Carolina—was New York City."

Historians are beginning to bring slavery in the North into the spotlight. The New York Historical Society recently [2006] presented an exhibition on slavery in that state. Singer, who travels the country to talk to students about slavery in the North, wants people to remember that slavery was a national institution.

The slave trade helped finance the **Industrial Revolution** in many major Northern cities, such as Boston and New York City. The

1 auctioned: sold to the person willing to pay the highest price

2 emancipate: to free from slavery

Reading Passage

Industrial Revolution was a period of rapid growth in the use of machinery in the early 1800s. Many U.S. businesses got their start with profits from slave-produced goods and the slave trade.

It's important to understand how slavery affected the entire country, because its effects linger through discrimination, Singer says. "Kids see slavery as something that happened in the deep past," he told *Senior Edition*. "I want children to know that we still live with the effects of that slavery society."