The Slave Route: 1994-2014
The road travelled

A crime against humanity

'We acknowledge that slavery and the slave trade, including the transatlantic slave trade, were appalling tragedies in the history of humanity not only because of their abhorrent barbarism but also in terms of their magnitude, organized nature and especially their negation of the essence of the victims, and further acknowledge that slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity'.

Declaration of the World Conference against Racism (Durban, 2001, Paragraph 13)

Development, human rights, cultural pluralism and intercultural dialogue: historically these critical global issues have been characterized by a total absence of awareness and understanding of the slave route and slavery.

However, this tragedy is not merely an unfortunate event of bygone days. It involved some of the worst records of horrors that humankind is capable of committing: the largest forced deportation of men, women and children; the most extensive and intensive trade in human beings; and the longest perpetuation of a crime against humanity and the last to have been recognized as such.

This major enterprise in dehumanization deprived Africa of millions of its active population. That is why acknowledgement of the slave trade and slavery as 'crimes against humanity' by the Durban Declaration of 2001, as well as the teaching of this tragedy in schools, commemoration of the memory of the victims, and celebration of acts of resistance and abolition, at the national and international level, are recognized as powerful symbols of the triumph over slavery.

▰ An international project

Inscription of the slave trade and slavery on the international agenda

1993 Adoption by the UNESCO General Conference of the Resolution presented by Haiti and Benin – with the support of African Union Organization – regarding the implementation of the Slave Route project.

1998 Proclamation by the UNESCO General Conference of 23 August as the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and of its Abolition, celebrated in most of the Member States of the Organization.

2001 Declaration of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Intolerance (Durban, South Africa) acknowledging the slave trade and slavery as 'crimes against humanity'.

2004 International Year for the Commemoration of the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition, marking the bicentenary of the first black republic (Haiti).

2007 Proclamation by the United Nations of 25 March as the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

2011 International Year for People of African Descent.

2013 Proclamation by the United Nations of the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024).

Why UNESCO?

The Preamble to UNESCO's Constitution recognizes that horrors such as the Second World War were allowed to take place '*by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races*'. In light of this, no other Organization is better positioned to break the silence on the subject of the slave trade and slavery. This was the objective that the Member States set for the interdisciplinary project, 'The Slave Route: Resistance, Liberty, Heritage', which was launched in 1994 at Ouidah in Benin. The project also constituted a response by UNESCO to the debate ignited among native and Afro-descendent populations of the Americas in 1992, by the celebration of the 'Five-hundredth Anniversary of the Encounter between Two Worlds (1492-1992)'. Moreover, it provided an opportunity to shed light on new, contemporary forms of slavery. Lastly, by appropriating the concept of 'the route', and by bringing together the various fields of competence of UNESCO (education, science, communication and culture), the intention of the project was not only to study the itineraries of inhumanity, but also to explore the indelible interweaving of new cultures and identities born

of the intercommunication of relations, admittedly shackled by chains, but nonetheless enriched by the links woven among people and individuals from one continent to another.

Ambitious objectives

- Break the silence on the slave trade and slavery in the various regions of the world

- Shed light on the traumas and consequences of those events and the multiple transformations they brought about, and explore the cultural interactions born of these forced encounters, which have given rise to great diversity within our societies.

- Contribute to reflection on new challenges and stakes that modern society needs to address.

Significant results

In the last 20 years, the project has had a significant impact at local, national, regional, interregional and international levels, and has helped to effect a change in attitudes. It has contributed substantially to fostering greater awareness of the ethical, political, socio-economic and cultural aspects of this chapter of history.

'My song, "The Door of No Return", is a song of pain and suffering, but also of transcendency and progress'

Marcus Miller, spokeperson for The Slave Route project

▰ Recognition

From the duty to remember

By shedding light on the deep-rooted causes and disastrous consequences of the slave trade, deconstructing the ideology of the underlying racial hierarchy in this system, and analysing how this heritage has fashioned our modern world, The Slave Route project has contributed substantially to 'de-racializing' this tragedy which, *de facto*, concerns humanity as a whole.

Thanks to the project, this matter has been inscribed on the international agenda, as well as on that of numerous countries, many of which have not only proclaimed days of memory and acknowledged the contribution of persons of African descent, but have also set up public policies to combat discrimination inherited from this era (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Senegal and the United Kingdom).

… to the right to historical memory

The citizens of different countries came together to demand of their governments the right to remember and to include this historical period in the national narrative. Discrimination, racism and social exclusion are assuredly the most enduring consequences of the slave trade and slavery. As unquestionable laboratories for intercultural intermixing, cities were chosen as the preferred space for analysing and bringing to light best practices in the fight against these afflictions. Accordingly, since 2004, the programme entitled '**International Coalition of Cities against Racism**' has established a network of partner cities (500 directly, 5,000 via other national or regional networks), which have committed themselves to strengthening the fight against racism and discrimination.

As demonstrated at the round table '**The Humanism of Human Rights and the Barbarity of the Slave Trade**', organized by UNESCO in 2004, resistance against slavery constituted one of the major founding pillars of human rights. It is important to recall that it was enslaved

Aapravasi Ghat, Mauritius, © UNESCO/Barbara Blanchard

The House of Slaves (Gorée Island, Senegal). © UNESCO/Dominique Roger

Africans who first and foremost took part in the struggle, engaging in revolts and insurrections that culminated in the Haitian revolution and the independence of Haiti in 1804. The resistance of these victims together with the commitment of abolitionists must be remembered.

Knowledge

There can be no awareness without knowledge. In recognition of this, the project has set up a framework for interdisciplinary research to shed light on the various aspects of the slave trade, slavery and their consequences. This analytical approach was necessary to transcend the emotions, feelings of guilt and shame, and the reactions of anger and denial aroused by this tragedy.

The duty of truth

Starting in 1994, a vast programme of **scientific research** was conducted throughout most of the world. Initially, the historical approach to the transatlantic trade was given priority, on account of the availability of data and written evidence. Research subsequently extended to relatively little-known themes such as resistance, the contributions of slaves and the role of women in slavery, together with relatively unexplored areas (the slave trade in the Indian Ocean, and the trans-Saharan trade which affected the Middle East and Asia). This effort gave rise to more than 100 meetings of experts, colloquia and seminars, and led to the setting up of networks of thematic scientific institutions to encourage cooperation and exchange among researchers in various countries. Among the most active networks, mention should be made of: Land-based and underwater archaeological research (slavery and archaeology); Slavery and Afro-American religion; The slave trade in the 'Nigerian Hinterland' (1650-1900); The ideological and legal foundations of the slave trade; Diaspora: languages, forms and artistic expressions; Slavery, economy and work; Marronnage and forms of resistance; Slavery in the Mediterranean; Bantu cultures in the Americas and the Caribbean: languages, religions and society; Slavery and interculturality; Women and slavery; Places of memory of slavery in the Portuguese-speaking territories; and Places of memory of slavery in the Caribbean.

Education

The duty to teach

Education requires the transformation of results from scientific research into appropriate pedagogic and didactic materials. Efforts must also be undertaken to build mutual comprehension, in order to encourage teaching of the history of this tragedy, and to avoid the loss of collective memory, particularly among young people. UNESCO therefore decided to set up a vast educational project entitled **'Breaking the Silence'** to teach children about the slave trade. The project was undertaken through the Network of Associated Schools (ASPnet), which comprises 9,900 schools in 180 countries. It mobilized more than 100 schools in 22 countries (Angola, Barbados, Benin, Brazil, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, France, Gambia, Ghana, Haiti, Jamaica, Mozambique, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Senegal, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Kingdom and the United States of America). It led to improvements in the training of teachers, the organization of forums for young people, the exchange of views on good practice, and the development of digital and printed pedagogical materials (*Voices of Slaves, Visions of Slaves*, *Voyages of Slaves*, *Tell us about… the Slave Trade, Del olvido a la memoria*, etc.). Furthermore, the project involved advocacy work to convince Member States to undertake a **review of curricula**, and to integrate teaching of the slave trade and slavery into school programmes. These topics had long been neglected in the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe, and even Africa itself. Accordingly, Brazil was one of the first countries to adopt a law mandating the teaching of African history at all levels of education, using the *General History of Africa* published by UNESCO.

Fostering awareness

There can be no awareness without relevant information. The project has worked continuously to foster awareness among various audiences and to facilitate the widest possible access to knowledge of the history of the slave trade and slavery.

Reference books

New insights born from meetings of specialists of various disciplines and regions, as well as the work of reputable researchers, have enabled the publication of reference works, which have assisted studies conducted in universities and various research centres throughout the world. They have also made possible the completion of some of UNESCO's General and Regional Histories series (*History of Humanity, General History of Africa, General History of Latin America, General History of the Caribbean*).

The project created a collection dedicated to the memory of peoples, so as to enable researchers to publish works on sensitive subjects for which there were few publishers in the countries and regions concerned.

The power of the image in the service of the message

In addition to decision-makers, scientific communities and young people, the project has endeavoured to disseminate its message to a wider public through the use of innovative popularization and promotional campaigns. Information tools were produced – including brochures, posters and **documentaries**. Films, supplemented by pedagogical content, were disseminated in different countries via television, cinema and DVD, and uploaded to UNESCO's website. Examples include *The Slave Routes: A Global Vision* (2010) and *The Slave Route: The Instinct for Resistance* (2012). The project also organized cultural events, including travelling exhibitions, concerts, television and radio programmes.

Furthermore, two significant **prizes** were awarded within the context of The Slave Route project. In 2004, the UNESCO-Toussaint Louverture prize was awarded to two eminent writers, Abdias do Nascimento (Brazil) and Aimé Césaire (Martinique), on the occasion of the celebration of the bicentenary of the Haitian revolution. And in 2007, the 'Break the chains' prize was awarded on the occasion of the international film festival at Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery by the United Kingdom.

The project also encouraged the creation of **museums** of slavery and established partnerships with the International Museum of Slavery in Liverpool (United Kingdom), the National Museum of Slavery (Cuba) and the Doha Museum of Slavery (Qatar).

Works published by or with the cooperation of UNESCO

- *The African Slave Trade from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century,* 1979.
- *L'Afrique entre l'Europe et l'Amérique: le rôle de l'Afrique dans la rencontre de deux mondes (1492-1992),* 1995.
- *La Société des amis des Noirs (1788-1799),* 1998.
- *La traite négrière du XVe au XIXe siècle,* 1999.
- *La Traite et l'esclavage dans le monde lusophone,* 2001.
- *From Chains to Bonds. The Slave Trade Revisited,* 2001.
- *Tradition orale et archives de la traite négrière,* 2001.
- *Déraison, esclavage et droit,* 2002.
- *Montesquieu, Rousseau, Diderot: du genre humain au bois d'ébène,* 2002.
- *Les sources orales de la traite négrière en Guinée et en Sénégambie,* 2003.
- *The Abolitions of Slavery: From L.F. Sonthonax to Victor Schoelcher (1793-1794-1848),* 2003.
- *Tradition orale liée à la traite négrière et à l'esclavage en Afrique centrale,* 2003.
- *Mémoire orale et esclavage dans les îles du Sud-Ouest de l'Océan indien: silences, oublis, reconnaissance,* 2004.
- *Les codes hispaniques,* 2005.
- *L'Or et les esclaves. Histoire des forts du Ghana du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle,* 2005.
- *Sites liés à la traite négrière et à l'esclavage en Sénégambie. Pour un tourisme de mémoire,* 2005.
- *African Diaspora in Asia,* 2008.
- *Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery,* 2009.
- *Savoir de femmes : médecine traditionnelle et nature (Maurice, Rodrigues, Réunion),* 2011.
- *The Slave Trade and Transatlantic Slavery: New Directions for Teaching and Learning,* 2013.

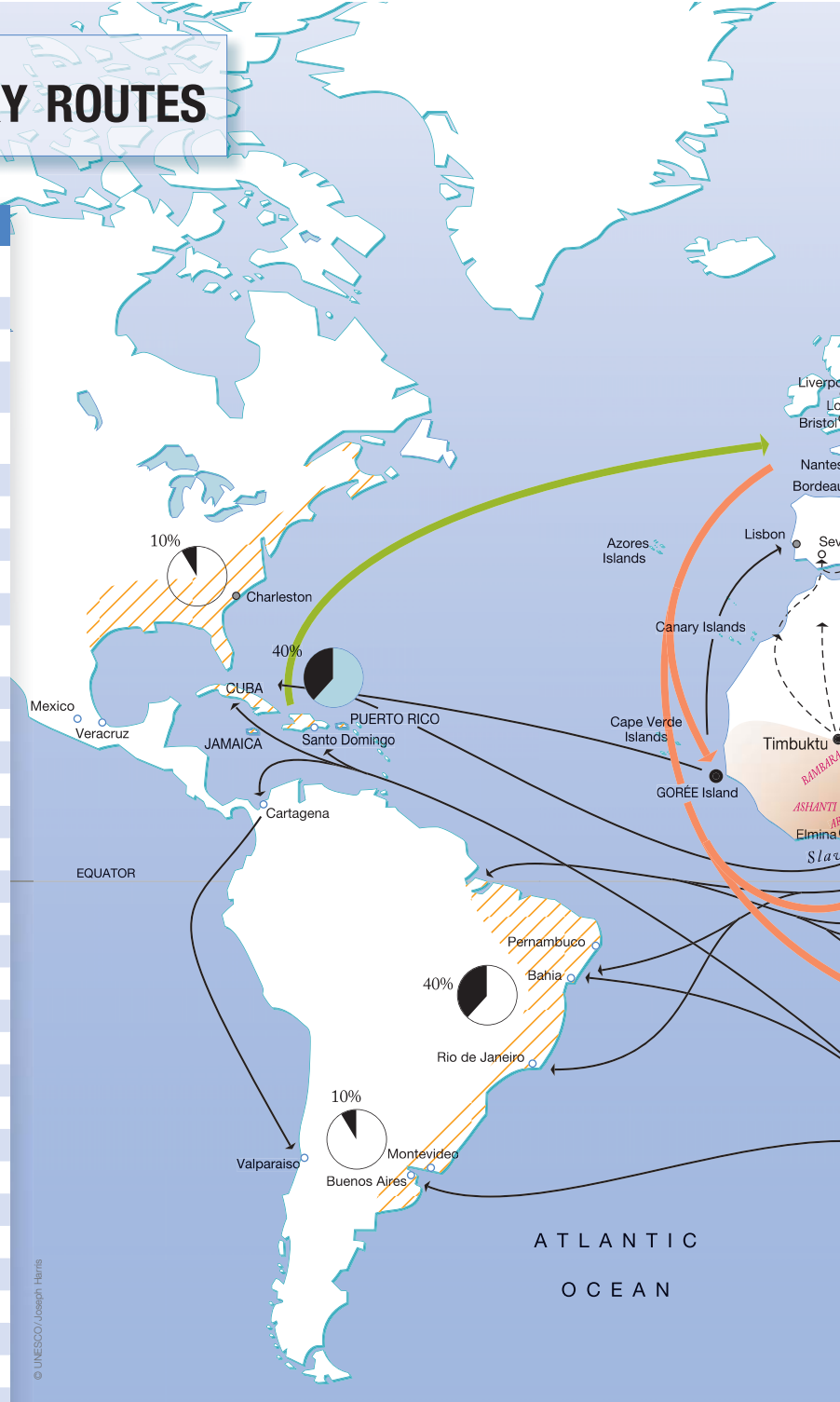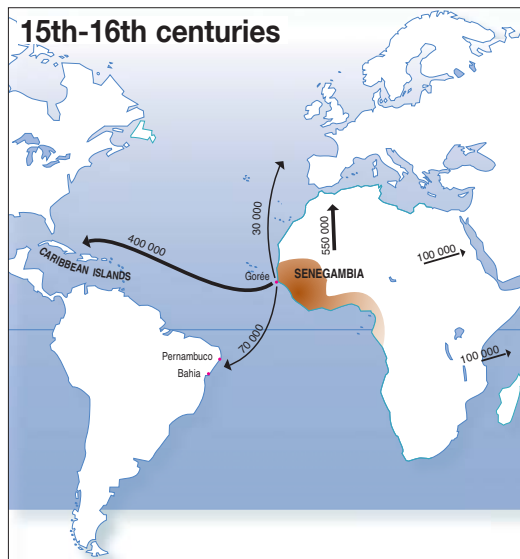Public transportation in Cartagena (Colombia). © UNESCO / Sabine Le Nechet

SLAVE TRADE AND SLAVERY ROUTES MAP

SLAVE TRADE AND SLAVERY ROUTES

Chronology

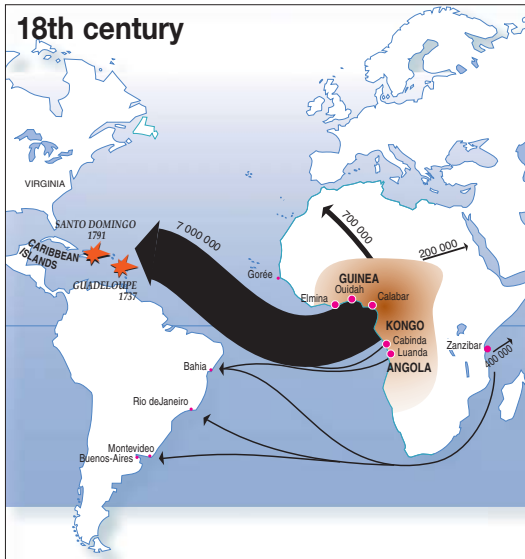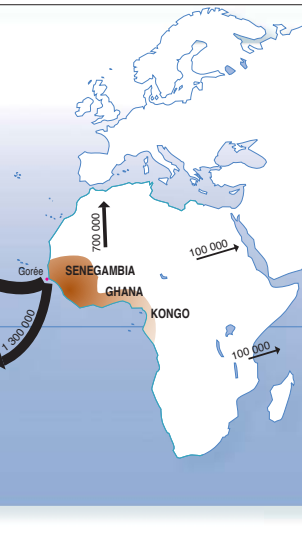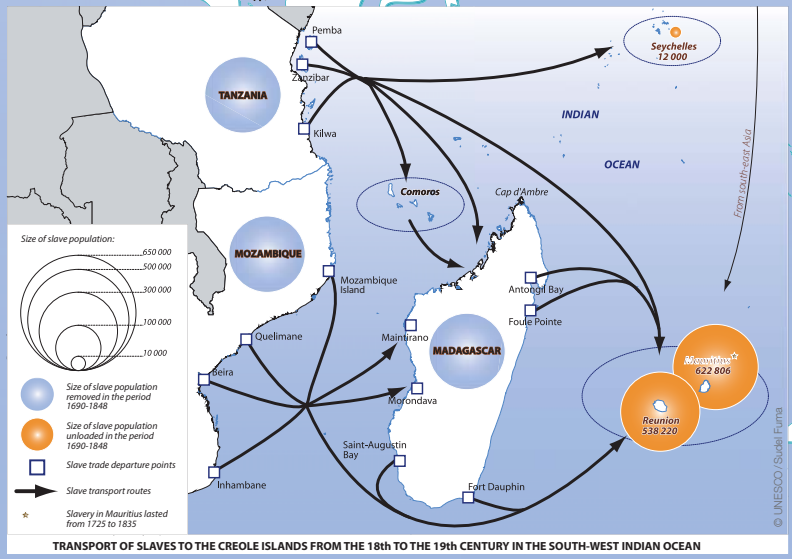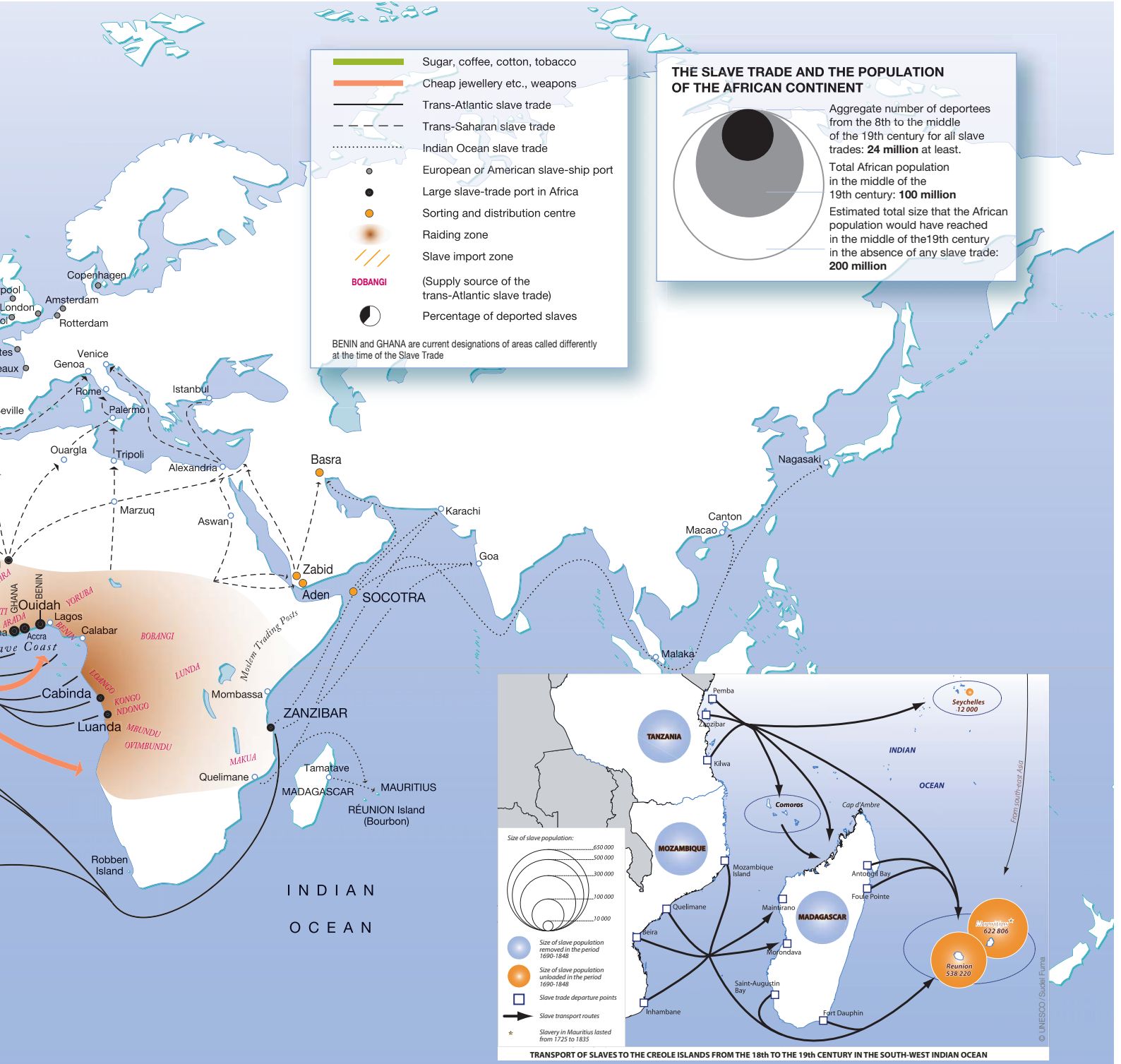|	
1777	Abolition of slavery included in the Constitution of Vermont (United Sates of America)
1780	Abolition of slavery in Pennsylvania (United States of America)
1783	Abolition of slavery in Massachusetts (United States of America)
1784	Abolition of slavery in Rhode Island and Connecticut (United States of America)
1793	Abolition of slavery in Santo Domingo following the slave rebellion begun in August 1791
1802	Re-establishment of slavery in the French colonies
1803	Banning of slave trade by Denmark
1807	Banning of slave trade by the United Kingdom
1808	Banning of slave trade by the United States of America
1814	Banning of slave trade by the Netherlands
1815	European powers meeting at the Congress of Vienna undertook to ban the slave trade
1822	Abolition of slavery in Santo Domingo
1823	Abolition of slavery in Chile
1826	Abolition of slavery in Bolivia
1829	Abolition of slavery in Mexico
1831	Last French law banning slave trade
1833-1838	Abolition of slavery in the British colonies
1846	Abolition of slavery in Tunisia
1847	Abolition of slavery in the Swedish colony of Saint Barthélemy
1848	Abolition of slavery in the French and Danish colonies
1851	Abolition of slavery in Colombia
1853	Abolition of slavery in Argentina
1854	Abolition of slavery in Venezuela
1855	Abolition of slavery in Peru
1863	Abolition of slavery in the Dutch colonies
1863-1865	Abolition of slavery in the United States of America
1873	Abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico
1876	Abolition of slavery in Turkey
1880-1886	Progressive Abolition of slavery in Cuba
1888	Abolition of slavery in Brazil
1896	Abolition of slavery in Madagascar
1897	Abolition of slavery in Zanzibar
1910	Abolition of slavery in China
1920	Abolition of slavery in Somalia
1923	Abolition of slavery in Ethiopia and Afghanistan
1924	Abolition of slavery in Sudan
1924	Abolition of slavery in Iraq
1926	Abolition of slavery in Nepal
1926	League of Nations Convention on Slavery
1928	Abolition of slavery in Iran
1936	Abolition of slavery in Nigeria
1952	Abolition of slavery in Qatar
1956	UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery
1962	Abolition of slavery in Yemen and Saudi Arabia
1963	Abolition of slavery in the United Arab Emirates
1970	Abolition of travery in Oman
1980	Abolition of slavery in Mauritania (after the abolitions in 1905 and 1961)
1992	Abolition of slavery in Pakistan
2003	Banning of slavery in Niger

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Liverpool
London
Bristol
Nantes
Bordeaux
Azores Islands
Lisbon
Sev
Canary Islands
Cape Verde Islands
Timbuktu
GORÉE Island
BAMBARA
ASHANTI
Elmina
Slave

10%
Charleston
Mexico
Veracruz
40%
CUBA
PUERTO RICO
JAMAICA
Santo Domingo
Cartagena
EQUATOR
Pernambuco
Bahia
40%
Rio de Janeiro
10%
Valparaiso
Montevideo
Buenos Aires

ATLANTIC OCEAN

© UNESCO /Joseph Harris

DEPORTATION FLOWS

15th-16th centuries

CARIBBEAN ISLANDS
400 000
30 000
550 000
100 000
Gorée
SENEGAMBIA
70 000
Pernambuco
Bahia

© UNESCO / Nancy François

17th century

Jamestown
CARIBBEAN ISLANDS
1 700 000
GUADELOUPE REVOLT, 1656
100 000
Pernambuco
Bahia

Legend

Sugar, coffee, cotton, tobacco	
Cheap jewellery etc., weapons	
Trans-Atlantic slave trade	
Trans-Saharan slave trade	
Indian Ocean slave trade	
European or American slave-ship port	
Large slave-trade port in Africa	
Sorting and distribution centre	
Raiding zone	
Slave import zone	
BOBANGI	(Supply source of the trans-Atlantic slave trade)
	Percentage of deported slaves

BENIN and GHANA are current designations of areas called differently at the time of the Slave Trade

THE SLAVE TRADE AND THE POPULATION OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

Aggregate number of deportees from the 8th to the middle of the 19th century for all slave trades: **24 million** at least.

Total African population in the middle of the 19th century: **100 million**

Estimated total size that the African population would have reached in the middle of the 19th century in the absence of any slave trade: **200 million**

Map labels (Europe, Africa, Asia)

Copenhagen, London, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Venice, Genoa, Rome, Palermo, Istanbul, Ouargla, Tripoli, Alexandria, Marzuq, Aswan, Basra, Karachi, Zabid, Aden, SOCOTRA, Goa, Nagasaki, Canton, Macao, Malaka

Ouidah, Lagos, Calabar, Accra, BENIN, GHANA, YORUBA, ARADA, BOBANGI, Slave Coast, LOANGO, LUNDA, Cabinda, KONGO NDONGO, Luanda, MBUNDU, OVIMBUNDU, MAKUA, Mombassa, ZANZIBAR, Quelimane, Tamatave, MADAGASCAR, MAURITIUS, RÉUNION Island (Bourbon), Robben Island

Moslem Trading Posts

INDIAN OCEAN

TRANSPORT OF SLAVES TO THE CREOLE ISLANDS FROM THE 18th TO THE 19th CENTURY IN THE SOUTH-WEST INDIAN OCEAN

Pemba, Zanzibar, TANZANIA, Kilwa, Mozambique Island, MOZAMBIQUE, Quelimane, Beira, Comoros, Cap d'Ambre, Antongil Bay, Foule Pointe, MADAGASCAR, Maintirano, Morondava, Saint-Augustin Bay, Inhambane, Fort Dauphin

Seychelles 12 000

INDIAN OCEAN

Mauritius 622 806

Réunion 538 220

from south-east Asia

Size of slave population:
650 000 / 500 000 / 300 000 / 100 000 / 10 000

Size of slave population removed in the period 1690-1848

Size of slave population unloaded in the period 1690-1848

Slave trade departure points

Slave transport routes

★ Slavery in Mauritius lasted from 1725 to 1835

© UNESCO / Sudel Fuma

18th century

VIRGINIA

SANTO DOMINGO 1791

CARIBBEAN ISLANDS

GUADELOUPE 1737

Gorée, Elmina, Ouidah, Calabar, GUINEA, KONGO, Cabinda, Luanda, ANGOLA, Zanzibar

Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, Buenos-Aires

700 000 / 7 000 000 / 200 000 / 800 000

19th century

MOROCCO

SANTO-DOMINGO

CARIBBEAN ISLANDS

Gorée, Elmina, Ouidah, Calabar, GUINEA, KONGO, Cabinda, Luanda, ANGOLA, Zanzibar, Kilwa, Ibo

BAHIA REVOLTS (1807 AND 1835)

ABOLITION IN BRAZIL

Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, Buenos-Aires, Lourenço-Marques, Inhambane

1 900 000 / 600 000 / 1 900 000 / 300 000 / 407 000

(first panel)

SENEGAMBIA, GHANA, KONGO, Gorée

700 000 / 100 000 / 1 300 000 / 100 000

▬ Preservation

The heritage originating from the slave trade and slavery is both tangible and intangible; it is the bearer of tracks that must not be erased. It exists in the form of written and oral archives, sites, places and buildings, cultural and artistic creations, spiritual manifestations, worldviews and political thought. In short, this human heritage can become a vector for reconciliation, education and development. The preservation and safeguarding of this heritage is not only a duty of collective memory, but it is a political responsibility and commitment on the part of every citizen.

Archives to be safeguarded

Operational in 11 countries in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (Argentina, Barbados, Benin, Brazil, Cape Verde, Colombia, Cuba, Gambia, Ghana, Haiti and Senegal), the **'Memory of the World'** project has facilitated improvement in the conservation conditions of original documents linked to the slave trade (letters, property deeds, contracts of sale), thanks in particular to the provision of technical training courses. One of the outcomes of this project has been the creation of a vast website containing archives of the slave trade, which includes more than 200,000 records and images. As a result of this project, digitized versions of three major collections – *Documentary Heritage of People of Enslaved Peoples of the Caribbean* (Barbados, 2003); *Registry of Slaves of the British Caribbean (1817-1834)* (2009); and *Negros y esclavos* (Colombia, 2005) – are now accessible on the websites of the respective countries, and also on CD-ROM.

American jazzman Marcus Miller, UNESCO Artist for Peace.
© Wikimedia Commons/Markandels

Oral archives play a role of equal importance in taking stock of this tragic series of events. They provide a different perspective – that of the victims, who have only their memory and their cultural creativity as a source of remembrance. This oral heritage conveys information of great interest for research. In fact, oral traditions are carefully revised and structured expressions, and constitute an immense pool of knowledge acquired by the community, according to well-determined criteria, and conveyed throughout Africa and the African diaspora by experts on communication. The collection, compilation and safeguarding of oral traditions from various regions of the world has made it possible to fill the gaps in European written archives. Accordingly, works published as part of The Slave Route project, for example, on the oral memory of the islands of the south-western Indian Ocean and in West Africa, provide valuable insights into the slave trade and slavery.

When geography sheds light on history

Sites, buildings and places linked to the slave trade and slavery constitute tangible evidence of often-concealed past events, and can be grouped to form itineraries of memory through the regions and countries concerned. In addition, they can be useful in areas of education and tourism at the national and regional level.

Within the context of its activities on **itineraries of memory**, The Slave Route project has lent its support to several initiatives in the various regions of the world, in order to identify, document and link the symbolic sites and to promote the concept of 'memory tourism', which could generate income for the various local communities.

Cultural assets bearing direct or indirect traces of the slave trade, inscribed on the World Heritage List

Barbados	▪ Historic Bridgetown and Its Garrison (2011)
Benin	▪ Royal Palaces of Abomey (1985)
Brazil	▪ Historic Town of Ouro Preto (1980) ▪ Historic Centre of the Town of Olinda (1982) ▪ Historic Centre of Salvador de Bahia (1985)
Cape Verde	▪ Cidade Velha, Historic Centre of Ribeira Grande (2009)
Chile	▪ Rapa Nui National Park (1995) ▪ Historic Quarter of the Seaport City of Valparaiso (2003)
Colombia	▪ Port, Fortresses and Group of Monuments, Cartagena (1984)
Cuba	▪ Old Havana and its Fortifications (1982) ▪ Trinidad and the Valley of los Ingenios (1988) ▪ San Pedro de la Roca Castle, Santiago de Cuba (1997) ▪ Archaeological Landscape of the First Coffee Plantations in the South-East of Cuba (2000)
Dominican Republic	▪ Colonial City of Santo Domingo (1990)
France	▪ Bordeaux, Port of the Moon (2007)
Gambia	▪ Kunta Kinteh Island and Related Sites (2003)
Ghana	▪ Forts and Castles, Volta, Greater Accra, Central and Western Regions (1979)
Haiti	▪ National History Park – Citadel, Sans Souci, Ramiers (1982)
Kenya	▪ Lamu Old Town (2001)
Mauritania	▪ Ancient Ksour of Ouadane, Chinguetti, Tichitt and Oualata (1996)
Mauritius	▪ Aapravasi Ghat (2006) ▪ Le Morne Cultural Landscape (2008)
Mozambique	▪ Island of Mozambique (1991)
Netherlands	▪ Historic Area of Willemstad, Inner City and Harbour, Curaçao (1997)
Panama	▪ Fortifications on the Caribbean Side of Panama: Portobelo-San Lorenzo (1980)
Paraguay	▪ Jesuit Missions of La Santísima Trinidad de Paraná et Jesús de Tavarangue (1993)
Peru	▪ Historic Centre of Lima (1988)
Portugal	▪ Central Zone of the Town of Angra do Heroismo in the Azores (1983) ▪ Historic Centre of Oporto (1996)
Saint Kitts and Nevis	▪ Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park (1999)
Senegal	▪ Island of Gorée (1978) ▪ Island of Saint-Louis (2007)
Suriname	▪ Historic Inner City of Paramaribo (2002)
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	▪ Maritime Greenwich (1997) ▪ Historic Town of St George and Related Fortifications, Bermuda (2000) ▪ Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City (2004)
United Republic of Tanzania	▪ Ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani and Ruins of Songo Mnara (1981) ▪ Stone Town of Zanzibar (2000)
United States of America	▪ Independence Hall (1979) ▪ Statue of Liberty (1984) ▪ Monticello and the University of Virginia in Charlottesville (1987)
Yemen	▪ Historic Town of Zabid (1993)

The role of Africa in the cultures of the world

The various geographical areas affected by the slave trade and slavery (the Americas, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean, the Middle East and Asia) constitute an ideal space for cultural syncretism. Studies and research have shown that the hybrid cultures born of interactions between the peoples of various regions are the result of acts of resistance and a striving for freedom. By recovering and reinterpreting the practices, customs and beliefs imposed by their enslavers, the captives expressed their human dignity, as well as their creativity. The **Slave Route label** is accorded to relevant music, dance and film festivals by the project to ensure the promotion of living cultures and forms of artistic and spiritual expression that bear the imprint of values, ideas, beliefs, knowledge and expertise that originated in Africa, and which developed through a dialogue resulting from the meeting of different cultures. Through these practical initiatives, the project responds to the objectives of the **International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022)**, aimed at promoting mutual comprehension and respect for the diversity, rights and equal dignity of all peoples through intercultural dialogue.

A living heritage

The project has contributed substantially to identifying, recognizing and promoting the intangible heritage linked to the slave trade and slavery, particularly the forms of artistic expression that, to this day, lie at the heart of the vibrant cultures of the communities concerned.

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) has inscribed on its Representative List significant elements of cultural intermixing derived from the slave trade. Passed on from generation to generation and revived continuously, this heritage, establishes a link between past and present, tradition and modernity, helping to provide communities of African descent with a sense of identity and continuity.

A living heritage to be safeguarded

Argentina and Uruguay	▪ Tango (2009)
Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua	▪ Language, dance and music of the Garifuna (2008)
Brazil	▪ Samba de Roda of the Recôncavo of Bahia (2008) ▪ Frevo, performing arts of the Carnaval of Recife (2012) ▪ The Candle of Our Lady of Nazaré at Belém, in the State of Para (2013)
Colombia	▪ Carnival of Barranquilla (2008) ▪ Cultural space of Palenque de San Basilio (2008) ▪ Marimba music and traditional chants from Colombia's South Pacific region (2010) ▪ Festival of St Francis of Assisi, Quibdó (2012)
Cuba	▪ La Tumba Francesa (2008)
Dominican Republic	▪ Cocolo dance drama tradition (2008) ▪ Cultural space of the Brotherhood of the Holy Spirit of the Congos de Villa Mella (2008)
France (La Réunion)	▪ Maloya (2009)
Jamaica	▪ Maroon heritage of Moore Town (2008)
Uruguay	▪ Candombe and its socio-cultural space: a community practice (2009)
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	▪ The Parranda of San Pedro de Guarenas and Guatire (2013)

▬ Reconciliation

By contributing to an enhanced understanding of the formation and development of modern, multi-ethnic societies, The Slave Route project has served as a bridge between Africa and its diasporas, particularly in Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the Middle East. It has also become a catalyst for cooperation in educating the public in the areas of cultural diversity, pluralism, intercultural dialogue, human rights and common heritage. As such, the project is a **reference point** and an indispensable international player, as regards issues and challenges raised by the construction of new identities and citizenships, and forms of 'living together', which take into account the plurality of collective memories and affiliations.

For these reasons, the project promotes a holistic, inclusive approach to the slave trade and slavery, in order to heal memories and bring about reconciliation at both national and international levels. In this way, the project contributes to the process of 'decolonizing' attitudes and historical perspectives, initiated by UNESCO in the 1960s with its monumental work on the history of Africa. In fact, long before The Slave Route project, the Organization had set out to break the silence on Africa's contributions to humanity by launching, in 1964, a *General History of Africa*, written by an African team of experts with a view to rectifying the essentially European-centred and stereotypical viewpoint.

Fifty years after initiating the *General History of Africa*, and twenty years after the launch of The Slave Route project, what remains to be achieved? Perhaps with the existence of better pedagogical tools, as a result of these two projects, it would now be advisable, particularly for the countries of the African Union, to **reform the teaching of African history**, by integrating the period of the slave trade into a broader historical perspective, extending from the origins of humanity to the end of apartheid. This entails examining the process of decolonization and highlighting the common roots of the various African cultures, and their contributions to the overall progress of humanity. Henceforth, what is required is to convert the results of this dual project into a new mindset, particularly among young Africans, by inspiring pride in their history and heritage, as well as promoting their self-esteem and confidence in the mastery of their individual and collective destiny.

Mozambique Island. © UNESCO / Remongin
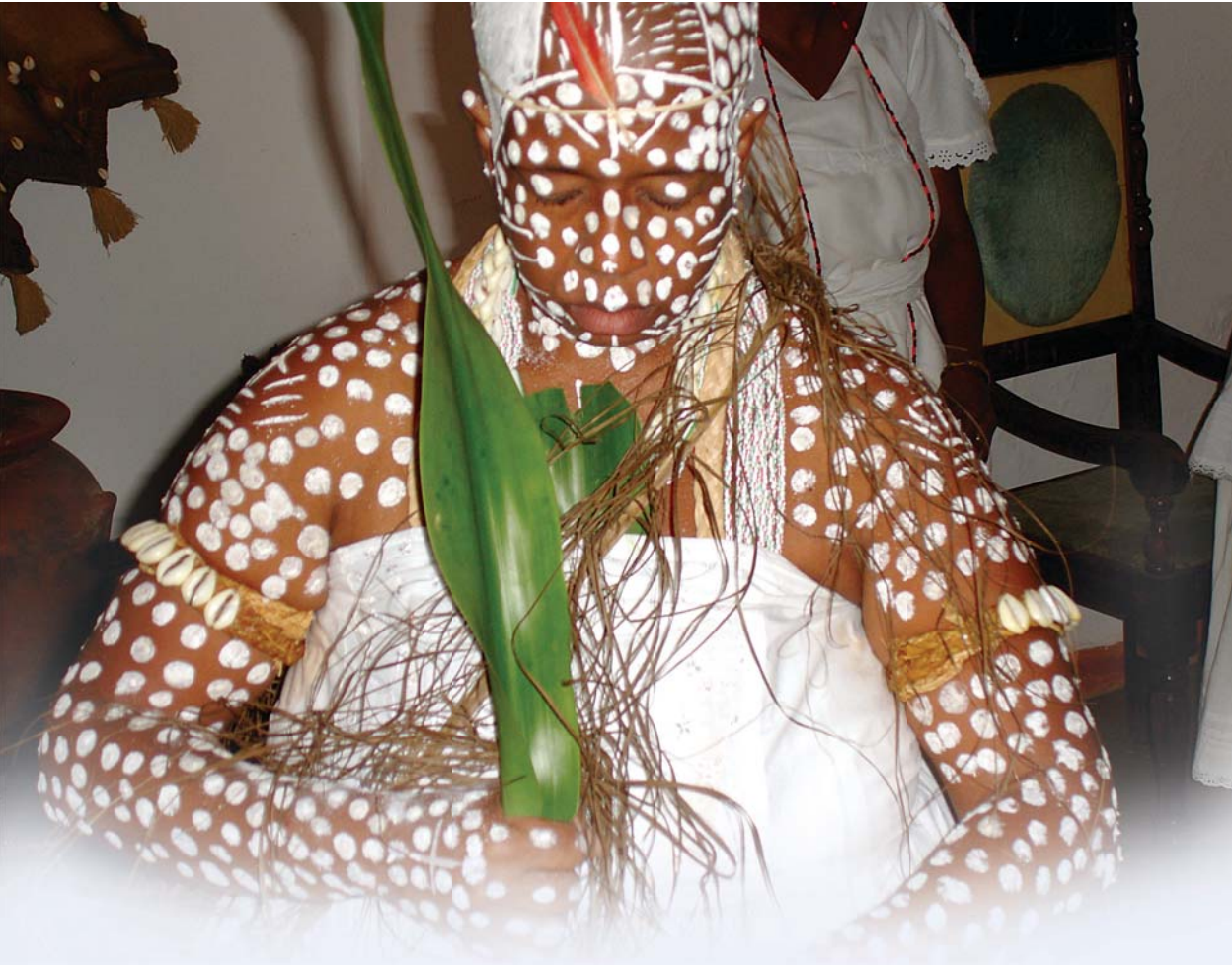
Celebration

'While the diversity of cultural expressions generated through the slave trade and slavery continues to influence our societies beyond the regions in which slavery was practiced, the added values of such cultural enrichment still need to be properly acknowledged as part of Africa's contribution to the world's cultural heritage' (UNESCO World Report *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue,* p. 40, 2009).

This is precisely one of the objectives of the **International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024)**, which the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed in 2013 under the overall theme 'Recognition, Justice and Development'. This Decade provides a framework and a favourable platform for encouraging States to implement practical policies for combatting forms of social injustice inherited from slavery that continue to this day. As a time for reflection and an opportunity for action, the Decade also aims to convince people of the contribution and universal nature of African cultures.

The Maroon heritage of Moore Town, descendants of independent communities of former runaway slaves known as Maroons (Jamaica). © UNESCO / Andrew P. Smith

La Parranda de San Pedro de Guarenas y Guatire (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela). © Centro de diversidad cultural

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Committed partners

This pluridisciplinary and intersectoral project is coordinated by UNESCO's Culture Sector under the guidance of an international scientific committee composed of 20 experts in various disciplines hailing from all regions of the world (Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, North America and South America). At the national level, the project benefits from the collaboration of the National Committees for the Slave Route project (some 20 or more scattered across various parts of the world), whose aim it is to disseminate the knowledge acquired and to foster greater awareness of this issue. Furthermore, the project has established fruitful partnerships with various institutions and organizations, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the World Tourism Organization, UNESCO Chairs, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the Centre for Black African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), the Palmares Cultural Foundation, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on the Global Migrations of African Peoples, as well as numerous media partnerships around the world.