

seems to assume that if the founders said, as they did, that “Government was instituted to promote the welfare of mankind and ought to be administered for the attainment of that end,” it meant the Declaration “was a call for the creation of a powerful state that would actively promote the welfare of the people” (p. 134). Proponents of laissez-faire could just as easily contend that it endorsed their preferred policies of limited government.

Pincus says (p. 126) that there was a broad-based antislavery movement at the time of the Declaration, and identifies Jefferson as clearly a member of it. Why then did Jefferson, Madison, and their followers switch in the early 1790s, after Pincus cuts off his account, from favoring a strong, energetic government to a position of states’ rights and removal of slavery from the list of legitimate issues that Congress might debate? Was it because they had decided for high-minded reasons that limited government was now to be preferred to energetic government? Or was it because, as antislavery South Carolinian John Laurens in 1776 described the self-interested reasoning of slavery’s supporters (p. 123), “Without slaves how is it possible for us to be rich?”

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The American Slave Coast: A History of the Slave-Breeding Industry. By Ned and Constance Sublette. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2016. 752 pages. \$35.00, hardback.

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Slave breeding is the focus of this history of the United States from colonial times to the Civil War. The expansion of cotton cultivation and the closing of the international slave trade increased the demand for slaves in the Southwest and increased slave prices throughout the South. According to Ned and Constance Sublette, the authors of *The American Slave Coast*, slaveholders in the Chesapeake responded to these higher prices by breeding and selling slaves to traders for southern markets. “[P]rohibiting the African slave trade protected the market so that a new class of American traders could come forward, supplied with homegrown captives born into slavery on Virginia and Maryland farms. The conditions were right for a massive forced migration of enslaved Chesapeake laborers down South, and it did not have to be a one-time drain: a continuing domestic slave-breeding industry was now possible” (p. 362).

Despite its 700+ page length, *The American Slave Coast* does not include a comprehensive review of the literature on slave breeding. Many of the authors who deny or minimize the economic importance of slave breeding are not discussed in the text. For example, the Sublettes do not discuss Robert Fogel and Stanley Engerman’s *Time on the Cross* (Little, Brown & Co., 1974). Nor, for that matter, do they discuss the works of Winthrop Collins or L. C. Gray. The slave-breeding industry is a controversial subject and many scholars have questioned its existence. Consider U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (D. Appleton and Co., 1918), p. 361: “It has been said by various anti-slavery spokesmen that many slaveowners systematically bred slaves for the market. They have adduced no shred of supporting evidence however.” A lack of supporting evidence led scholars to conclude that slaveholders rarely bred slaves for sale. Because *The American Slave Coast* omits their research, the Sublettes provide an incomplete literature review of slave breeding.

There is no consensus as to what constitutes slave breeding. The Subletttes define the slave-breeding industry as the complex of businesses and individuals “who profited from the enslavement of African American children at birth” (p. xiii). This is not a useful definition. Presumably all slaveholders profited from the enslavement of African American children at birth (otherwise they would have manumitted them). Indeed, using their definition, all slaveholders could be classified as slave breeders. Most scholars define slave breeding as the use of barnyard techniques normally associated with animal husbandry. The choice of definitions is important. When Phillips writes that there is “no shred of supporting evidence” of slave breeding, he implicitly adopts the more widely accepted definition. Kenneth Stampp *The Peculiar Institution* (Vintage, 1956), p. 245 agrees that “evidence of systematic slave breeding is scarce ... But if the term is not used with unreasonable literalness, if it means more than owner-coerced matings, numerous shreds of evidence exist which indicate that slaves were reared with an eye to their marketability—that the domestic slave trade was not ‘purely casual.’” The choice of definition affects the amount of evidence of slave breeding.

No one knows how many slaveholders bred slaves for the market. Abolitionists accused slaveholders of breeding slaves for sale and slaveholders vehemently denied it. Contemporary tourists in the South wrote about slave breeding but none actually observe it. Stampp suggests that slaveholders did not record such practices because of its reprehensible nature. Of course, the lack of documentation may also indicate that relatively few slaveholders bred slaves for sale. Regardless, the paucity of documented cases makes it difficult to substantiate the authors’ claims. Consider, for example, their statement that “the southern economy depended on the functioning of a slave breeding industry” (p. 3). Because the number of slave breeders is unknown, one can only speculate about the state of the southern economy in the absence of such an industry.

A final comment concerns the authors’ assertions that slaves were used as a type of money (pp. xiii, 42, 292, 640). These statements are simply wrong. Slaves served as a store of value but not as a medium of exchange or as a unit of account. Buyers and sellers commodified slaves via slave markets and commodities have sometimes served as substitutes for money. Slaves, however, were not commodity money. Slaves were heterogeneous and expensive and slave sales involved significant transaction costs. Slaves were not a suitable “commodity” for use as money.

The Subletttes have written a lengthy history of the United States premised on the existence of a slave-breeding industry. Although their use of the word “*industry*” suggests that many slaveholders bred slaves for the market, they cannot substantiate this claim. The authors have raised an important and troubling aspect of our nation’s history but without additional information or analysis, questions regarding the existence of a slave-breeding industry remain unanswered.

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Sugar has been grown in Hawai‘i since Polynesians brought it and other staples of the Polynesian diet to Hawai‘i in migrations of the twelfth/thirteenth centuries. Hawai‘i’s first sugar plantation opened on Kaua‘i in 1835 and by the 1860s sugar