



Wood Engraving, Illustrated London news.

# ESCLAVAGE

# #1

En parlant à la première personne, le chanteur de blues révèle l'identité du Noir aux yeux de l'Amérique. En tant qu'esclave, réduit au statut de possession matérielle à l'instar de la terre, des animaux et des machines agricoles il n'avait ni nom, ni parole.

Le blues va acter le changement de statut du Noir après l'émancipation (même si sa condition n'est guère meilleure qu'avant) qui d'objet devient sujet. Il demeure de ce fait indissociable des jours sombres de l'esclavage du racisme et de la misère, héritage funeste sur lequel il s'est développé en tant qu'expression autonome.

Les premiers Africains sont débarqués en 1619 à Jamestown (état de Virginie). Leur adaptation facile, contrairement aux colons européens, au climat tropical du Sud des États-Unis va faire d'eux une main d'œuvre rêvée dans les plantations qui se consacrent à la culture du tabac, du riz, de la canne à sucre, puis du coton à partir de l'invention de la machine à égrener en 1793.

Le commerce triangulaire, qui fera la fortune de ports négriers en Europe (Nantes en France, Bristol en Angleterre) est aux mains de compagnies créées par les états eux-mêmes qui se font la guerre pour l'« asiento », le monopole de la traite des esclaves africains dans les colonies d'Amérique : c'est Colbert qui fonde la Compagnie des Indes Occidentales en 1664 sur le modèle de la Compagnie néerlandaise des Indes Orientales créée en 1602 et qui rédige le Code Noir, signé par Louis XIV en 1685, qui dénie aux esclaves le statut d'être humain. Les bateaux négriers échangent, contre des marchandises manufacturées en Europe, des prisonniers de guerres intertribales en Afrique de l'Ouest, les transportent dans des conditions épouvantables en Amérique où ils les vendent et repartent sur le vieux continent avec des produits du sol américain. Après le Portugal, l'Espagne et la France, c'est l'Angleterre qui impose progressivement sa domination sur les

mers, c'est aussi de ce pays que vont s'élever les premières voix réclamant l'abolition de l'esclavage. L'abolition de la traite par l'Angleterre en 1807 puis de l'esclavage dans les colonies britanniques en 1833 n'empêche pas son maintien aux États-Unis, indépendants depuis 1783, en raison de la demande exponentielle en coton de l'Europe industrielle.

À la veille de la guerre de Sécession (1860) dont l'issue conduira à l'abolition de l'esclavage (1865), environ 4,5 millions de Noirs vivent aux États-Unis dont 92,2% dans les états du sud, 7,7% dans le nord et 0,1% dans l'ouest. La quasi-totalité de la population noire vit donc en zone rurale. Le travail y est rythmé par les « work-songs » et « field-hollers » chants a capella basés sur des appels et réponses entre un soliste et un collectif, la vie sociale y est ponctuée par des rituels d'origine africaine à l'occasion de cérémonies religieuses, mariages, funérailles : les « ring-shout » qui ont survécu jusque dans la culture hip-hop étaient des rituels extatiques réalisés en cercle, accompagnés de claquements de main et de frottements de pieds sur le sol durant lesquels celui qui se sentait inspiré, se mettait au centre pour effectuer une figure particulière de son invention.



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## LONG JOHN

Worksong extrait de "Afro-American Spirituals, Work Songs, and Ballads", ed. Alan Lomax (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song, AFS L3). Interprété par "Lightning" et un groupe de forçats afro-américains de la Darrington State Prison Farm, Sandy Point, Texas, 1934. Enregistré par John A. et Alan Lomax

All lines are repeated.

Leader :

1. It's a long John,  
He's a long gone,  
Like a turkey through the corn,  
Through the long corn.  
Well, my John said,  
In the ten chap ten,  
"If a man die,  
He will live again."

2. Well, they crucified Jesus  
And they nailed him to the cross;  
Sister Mary cried,  
"My child is lost!"

Chorus:  
Well, long John,  
He's long gone,  
He's long gone.  
Mister John, John,  
Old Big-eye John,  
Oh, John, John,  
It's a long John.

3. Says-uh: "Come on, gal,  
And-uh shut that do;"  
Says, "The dogs is comin'  
And I've got to go."

Chorus:  
It's a long John,  
He's long gone,  
It's a long John,  
He's a long gone.

4. "Well-a two, three minutes,  
Let me catch my win' ;

In-a two, three minutes,  
I'm gone again."

Chorus:  
He's long John,  
He's long gone,  
He's long gone,  
He's long gone.

5. Well, my John said  
Just before he did,  
"Well, I'm goin' home,  
See Mary Lid."

Chorus:  
He's John, John,  
Old John, John,  
With his long clothes on,  
Just a-skipin' through the corn.

6. Well, my John said  
On the fourth day,  
Well, to "tell my rider  
That I'm on my way."

Chorus:  
He's long gone,  
He's long gone,  
He's long gone,  
It's a long John.

7. "Gonna call this summer,  
Ain't gon' call no mo';  
If I call next summer,  
Be in Baltimore."  
He's long gone.

## RUN OLD JEREMIAH

Ring Shout enregistré par Alan Lomax, 1934

By myself. (5)  
You know I've got to go.  
You got to run.  
I've got to run.  
You got to run.  
By myself. (3)  
I got a letter, (2)  
Ol' brownskin.  
Tell you what she say.  
"Leavin' tomorrow,  
Tell you goodbye."  
O my Lordy. (6)  
Well, well, well. (2)  
O my Lord. (2)  
O my Lordy. (2)  
Well, well, well. (2)  
I've got a rock.  
You got a rock.  
Rock is death.  
O my Lordy.  
O my Lord.  
Well, well, well.  
Run here, Jeremiah. (2)  
I must go  
On my way. (4)  
Who's that ridin' the chariot? (2)  
Well, well, well . . .

(New Leader:)

One mornin'  
Before the evening  
Sun was goin' down (3)  
Behind them western hills. (3)  
Old number 12  
Comin' down the track. (3)  
See that black smoke.  
See that old engineer.  
See that engineer. (2)  
Tol' that old fireman  
Ring his ol' bell  
With his hand.  
Rung his engine bell. (2)

Well, well, well. (2)  
Jesus tell the man,  
Say, I got your life  
In My Hand;  
I got your life  
In My Hand. (2)  
Well, well, well.  
Ol' fireman told,  
Told that engineer,  
Ring your black bell,  
Ding, ding, ding,  
Ding, ding, ding, ding.  
Ol' fireman say  
---?---  
---?---  
---?---  
That mornin',  
Well, well, well, (2)  
Ol' fireman say,  
Well, well,  
I'm gonna grab my  
Old whistle too.  
Wah, wah, ho,  
Wah, wah, wah, wah, ho,  
Wah, wah, ho,  
Wah, wah, wah, ho. (etc.)  
Mmmmmmm  
Soon, soon, soon,  
Wah---- -o.  
Well, well, well,  
Ol' engineer,  
I've got your life  
In my hands. (2)  
Tol' your father, (2)  
Well, well, well,  
I was travellin'; (2)  
I was ridin' (3)  
Over there. (2)  
Ol' engineer.  
This is the chariot. (2)

Écoute et compléments pédagogiques sur [www.itineraires-blues.com](http://www.itineraires-blues.com)







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## TROUBLE SO HARD

Written & performed by Vera Hall (1937)

Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God

Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God

Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God

Went down the hill  
 Other day  
 My soul got happy  
 and stayed all day

Went down the hill  
 Other day  
 My soul got happy  
 and stayed all day

Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God

Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God

Went in the room  
 Didn't stay long  
 Looked on the bed and,  
 Brother was dead

Went in my room  
 Didn't stay long  
 Looked on the bed and  
 Brother was dead

Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God

Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Ooh Lordy, troubles so hard  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God  
 Don't nobody know my troubles  
 but God

## PICK A BALE OF COTTON

Leadbelly (1940)

Chorus :  
 Ho, Lordy pick a bale of cotton,  
 Ho, Lordy pick a bale a day.  
 Ho, Lordy pick a bale of cotton,  
 Ho, Lordy pick a bale a day.

We're gonna jump down turn  
 around,  
 Pick a bale of cotton,  
 We're gonna jump down turn  
 around,  
 Pick a bale a day.

We're gonna Jump down turn  
 around,  
 Pick a bale of cotton,  
 We're gonna Jump down turn  
 around,  
 Pick a bale a day.

Chorus  
 Me and my wife can pick a bale  
 of cotton,  
 Me and my wife can pick a bale  
 a day.  
 Me and my wife can pick a bale  
 of cotton,  
 Me and my wife can pick a bale  
 a day.

Chorus  
 Me and my gal gonna pick a bale  
 of cotton,  
 Me and my gal gonna pick a bale  
 a day.  
 Me and my gal gonna pick a bale  
 of cotton,  
 Me and my gal gonna pick a bale  
 a day.

Chorus  
 Me and my buddy can pick a bale

of cotton,  
 Me and my buddy can pick a bale  
 a day.  
 Me and my buddy can pick a bale  
 of cotton,  
 Me and my buddy can pick a bale  
 a day.

Chorus  
 Well, me and my partner can  
 Pick a bale of cotton,  
 Me and my partner can pick a  
 bale a day.

Me and my partner can  
 Pick a bale of cotton,  
 Me and my partner can pick a  
 bale a day.

Chorus  
 We're gonna jump down turn  
 around  
 Pick a bale of cotton,  
 Gonna jump down turn around  
 pick a bale a day.  
 We're gonna jump down turn  
 around  
 Pick a bale of cotton,  
 Gonna jump down turn around  
 pick a bale a day.

Chorus  
 Ain't got money I can pick a bale  
 of cotton  
 Ain't got money I can pick a bale  
 a day  
 I can pick, pick, pick, pick, pick a  
 bale of cotton  
 I can pick, pick, pick, pick, pick a  
 bale a day.

Chorus