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## Not just a number any more: Website traces the African slaves who shaped America by name and country of origin

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

Last updated at 10:43 PM on 26th May 2011

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146

The African slaves, wrenched from their homeland and shipped to America in the 1800s, have been known only as numbers... until now.

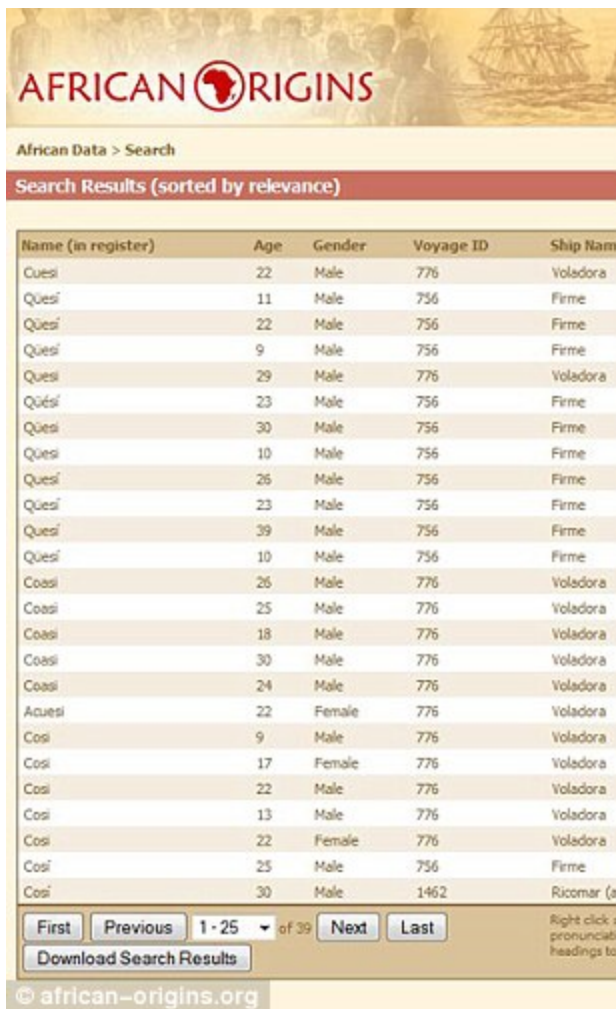
But a new online database could help trace the roots of more than 100,000 slaves and help give them a proper identity.

Called African Origins the project, devised by a team at Emory University, Atlanta, allows the general public to search for the slave's exact name or a similar sounding name and country of origin.

**Scroll down for video**

*Anglo-Siamer Belle's Log: Register of persons  
taken of Africa captured on board the said Ship*

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Stature	Description
137	Ammodo	Man	26	5 3	Scars on ea. side of Face
138	Amyygar	"	25	5 7	Scars all over Body
139	Obokay	"	21	5 7	do do
140	Ajibboray	"	19	5 6	do do
141	Adey	"	18	5 3 1/2	do do
142	Hadelay	"	23	5 6	do do
143	Fasolay	"	25	5 9	Tattooed on cheeks & Scars on
144	Jinaachan	"	26	5 6	Scars on Face and belly
145	Largoloh	"	22	5 6	Large Scars down belly and
146	Olloo	"	21	5 5	Scars on face and belly
147	Syameogoo	"	24	5 7	Scars on belly
148	Laufangush	"	25	5 6	do do and Face
149	Ahaluyoh	"	23	5 4	Scars with small pox
150	Behome	"	24	5 5	Scars on face and belly
151	Ahwolley	"	25	5 5	Scars on belly and Face
152	Kyemach	"	22	5 8	Scars on belly, arms and face
153	Kambah	"	26	5 5	Scars on Face
154	Ahikiblah	"	21	5 9 1/2	Scars on face and belly
155	Lopak	"	19	5 11	Tattooed on Arms & Face
156	Ahaddelos	"	20	5 0	Scars on face, Arms & belly
157	Ahabbee	"	24	5 3	do do do
158	Horroo	"	23	5 6	do do do
159	Fatka	"	26	5 6	Scars and Tattoos all over
160	Oyookee	"	30	5 5	Scars on face and belly
161	Groteloh	"	21	5 5	do do do
162	Ahjuwah	"	25	5 10	do do do
163	Ahgrubedi	"	19	5 7	do do do



The screenshot shows the 'AFRICAN ORIGINS' website interface. At the top, there's a header with the site name and a background image of a ship. Below the header, a navigation bar says 'African Data > Search'. A red banner indicates 'Search Results (sorted by relevance)'. The main content is a table with columns: Name (in register), Age, Gender, Voyage ID, and Ship Name. The table lists 25 entries, mostly with names like Quesi, Coasi, and Acuesi, ages ranging from 9 to 39, and genders mostly male. The ship names include Voladora, Firme, and Ricomar. At the bottom, there are navigation buttons: First, Previous, 1 - 25 of 39, Next, Last, and a button to Download Search Results. The footer shows the copyright for african-origins.org.

Name (in register)	Age	Gender	Voyage ID	Ship Name
Quesi	22	Male	776	Voladora
Quesi	11	Male	756	Firme
Quesi	22	Male	756	Firme
Quesi	9	Male	756	Firme
Quesi	29	Male	776	Voladora
Quesi	23	Male	756	Firme
Quesi	30	Male	756	Firme
Quesi	10	Male	756	Firme
Quesi	26	Male	756	Firme
Quesi	23	Male	756	Firme
Quesi	39	Male	756	Firme
Quesi	10	Male	756	Firme
Coasi	26	Male	776	Voladora
Coasi	25	Male	776	Voladora
Coasi	18	Male	776	Voladora
Coasi	30	Male	776	Voladora
Coasi	24	Male	776	Voladora
Acuesi	22	Female	776	Voladora
Cosi	9	Male	776	Voladora
Cosi	17	Female	776	Voladora
Cosi	22	Male	776	Voladora
Cosi	13	Male	776	Voladora
Cosi	22	Female	776	Voladora
Cosi	25	Male	756	Firme
Cosi	30	Male	1462	Ricomar (a

Navigation: First Previous 1 - 25 of 39 Next Last  
 Download Search Results  
 Right click & pronuncials headings to

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**From this to this: 19th century court documents listing the names, ages and boat of African slaves have been turned into a 21st century database enabling people to search for their ancestors and giving slaves an identity**

This then brings up their age, their voyage ID and the slave ship's name they were liberated from.

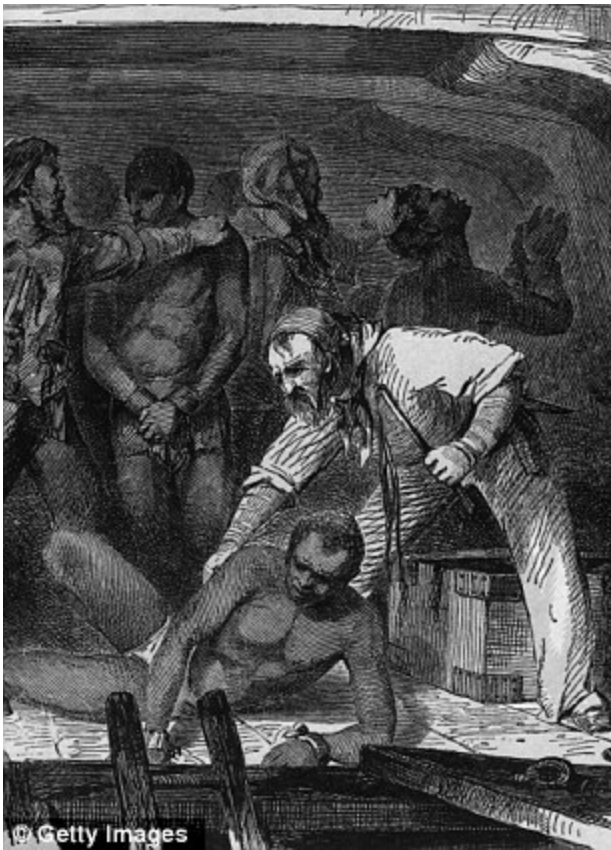
The information has been painstakingly digitised from 19th century court documents when the slave trade was in the process of being stamped out.

'In the 19th century, when the slave trade was in the process of being suppressed, there were a set of international courts established around the Atlantic world and captured slave vessels were brought into these ports and adjudicated by the courts,' David Eltis, a member of the project and history professor at Emory, told CNN.

'The people on board those vessels had their information taken down in bound registers which have survived.



History: A group of men and boys sit at the dock in Jacksonville, Florida, in the mid 19th century. The slave trade was in the process of being stamped out by then. Courts were set up to adjudicate captured slave ships leading to the raft of documents available today



**Identity:** The ultimate goal of the African Origins project is to create a geographic profile



of the people forced into the slave trade so they become a person rather than just a number on a ship's log

'And the most interesting thing about these bound registers is it provides information on the African name, which is actually quite rare in the history of the black Atlantic,' he added.

Professor Eltis is now calling for people with knowledge of African naming traditions to contribute to the site in order to help identify where the individual slaves came from.

'The range of languages and practices in Africa are very great,' Dr Eltis told the news channel.

en pt fr www.slavevoyages.org

# AFRICAN ORIGINS

African Data Help About

Home contributor not logged

## Welcome

African Origins contains information about the migration histories of Africans forcibly carried on slave ships into the Atlantic. Using detailed information on 9,453 Africans liberated by Courts of Mixed Commission, this resource presents geographic, ethnic, and linguistic data on peoples captured in Africa and pulled into the slave trade. Through contributions to this website by Africans, members of the African Diaspora, and others, we hope to realize the history of the millions of Africans captured and sold into slavery during suppression of transatlantic slave trading in the 19th century.

To begin searching these records of liberated Africans, try the Guided Search below. Enter an African name that you know (such as Quarko, Kwesi, or Fatima) and select a country (or countries), then click Explore. Checking either the male or female box will filter your search.

- 1 Enter a name:**   
Africans with the same or similar name will be found.
- 2 Select one or more countries**  
Check the box next to a country name in the list below. This will narrow the search to corresponding African ports from which the Africans embarked.
  - ☐ Angola
  - ☐ Benin
  - ☐ Cameroon
  - ☐ Congo (Democratic Republic of the)
  - ☐ Equatorial Guinea
- 3 Select gender (optional)** ☐ Male ☐ Female  
By selecting gender, you will narrow the search to show only male or female Africans.

**Explore!**

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African Origins: Portal to Africans Liberated from Transatlantic Slave Vessels. Copyright 2009 Emory University. All rights reserved. Sponsors: EMORY UNIVERSITY National Endowment for the Humanities W.E.B. Du Bois Institute (Harvard University)

african-origins.org

Database: Users can search for the exact name of an African slave or what the name is spelled like phonetically, the country of origin and gender on the website



**Go team: Origins project members Liz Milewicz, left, Kwesi Degraft-Hanson, centre, and David Eltis, right, search for the historical equivalent of the modern Akan peoples name 'Kwesi'**



Many of the African slaves in the database were on board the Spanish ship Voladora, which left Africa with 335 slaves in 1828 but was captured by the British just off Cuba

## LIFE ON A SLAVE SHIP

The database aims to give African slaves an identity of sorts.

Typing the name 'Kwesi' and Benin into the search on African Origins brings up 39 names with differing versions of the spelling.

One boy of just nine called Qüesí was liberated by an international court located in Havana, Cuba in 1828.

He had been one of 466 on board the slave ship Firme or Ferme, which departed from the port of Popo before being captured by the British and taken to Havana, Cuba.

Conditions for young Qüesí would have been awful, with men, women and children crammed into every available space.

The heat and the stench would have been unbearable and Qüesí would have witnessed many of his fellow slaves die of dysentery or simply from slow suffocation.

Many slaves were manacled together in twos and threes.

There are diary entries from British liberators that describe the moment a living man was brought above deck still shackled to his neighbour, long dead.

Qüesí would have witnessed the dead being tossed over the side of the ship, their lives meaningless.

He may also have seen the horrific moments when people killed each other in a bid for more room.



But he was also one of the lucky ones and now his name will forever be remembered thanks to the African Origins project.

'There are over 300 languages in Nigeria alone and there is no way that anyone can possibly be in command of all the names associated with those languages.'

Many African names are specific to certain regions and even small villages, meaning those who can recognise them could be very useful to the project.

Most of the original names have survived through the decades allowing ancestors to trace them right back to the village where they were born.

Emory graduate, Kwesi Degraft-Hanson, from Ghana, is now helping the project after recognising several names on the database.

'Exciting may sound like a strange word, but it was exciting to me,' Mr Degraft-Hanson told CNN.

'Exciting because I realised these are people who were embedded in these documents, and who have been lying dormant for so long, and who really, as I put it, are reaching out their hands to people like myself, Dr Eltis, to all those who will interact with this, to say "here we are,"' he added.

His first name 'Kwesi' mean 'male born on Sunday' and is specific to the Akan people from Ghana and Ivory Coast.

'I was very surprised when I saw that if you go back to the 1600s you find lists with Akan on it - it has currency all through the ages,' he said.

'I think it will fill in a lot of gaps on how the slave trade operated and where it originated,' he added.

Those who think they could add to the search can send information to the African Origins team, who then vet the submission.

If the information passes the process the person is given a name and identity in the data base.

The ultimate goal of the project, Professor Eltis said, was to create a geographic profile of the people forced into the slave trade.

'I think it will fill in a lot of gaps on how the slave trade operated and where it originated - not necessarily where the enslavement process began, but the regions in Africa which were drawn on most heavily for people who were taken to the Americas,' he said.

'It's just as important, I think, for people who live in the Americas, the African Diaspora population.'

Places:

[Nigeria](#),  
[Cuba](#),  
[Ghana](#),  
[Africa](#),  
[America](#)

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"Shaped America????? Hardly.. - cayman214, anywhere, USA, 27/5/2011 00:29" In 1812 wool cotton outstripped wool as the major source of GDP revenue in Britain. This led to the mechanisation and industrialisation of the textiles industry and the subsequent industrial revolution, changing Britain from an agrarian to an industrial based nation with all the attendant social, industrial and economic sequelae that that involved- cities, rail roads, coal mines, steel works, mechanisation, consumerism etc. The reason that the US was able to supply this raw commodity in such abundance was because of the mechanised steam engine and the trans atlantic slave trade. It was on the back of this trade in human suffering that the industrialisation of the US and the UK took place.

- Ads, London, 27/5/2011 10:44

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I wonder if the site will contain information about who sold the slaves to the traders and which of the African tribes were responsible for the initial capture of those souls. If there's going to be an expose let's have the whole picture.

- Derek Eddlestone, New Forest, 27/5/2011 10:31

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fantastic research, and about time, shame we have not learnt from it, still there is slavery happening, sex slaves and domestic slaves being escorted all around the world, let's pray all this ends one day

- angel of Jah, England, 27/5/2011 10:27

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"The African,s were forced into the slave trade by their own tribal chief,s?. - B Edwards, London England" ---- Yes but tribal chiefs would have been out of "business" if white American masters had simply refused to buy them?

- Jake, London, 27/5/2011 09:58

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It is not realised that before the american war of independence between 50-75% of all whites were forcibly taken to the USA . Effectively they were slaves, taken on the same ships as african slaves and treated as slaves. References "Power and Plenty, Trade war and the world economy in the Second Millenium" Ronald Findlay and Kevin O'Rourke Page 231, chapter 5 White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America By Don Jordan and Michael Walsh They were white and they were slaves. M Hoffman

- J Taylor, South Africa, 27/5/2011 07:39

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Shaped America????? Hardly..

- cayman214, anywhere, USA, 27/5/2011 00:29

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