



Reenactors portray slave labor.

## Expansion of Plantations Brings Resistance

**KEY QUESTION** How did African Americans resist their enslavement?

Slavery allowed plantation farming to expand in South Carolina and Georgia. Without slave labor, there probably would have been no rice plantations in the lowcountry—the region’s swampy lowlands.

**Backbreaking Labor** Rice cultivation required great skill. Because West Africans had these skills, planters sought out slaves who came from Africa’s rice-growing regions. Rice growing involved backbreaking labor. Enslaved workers drained swamps, raked fields, burned stubble, and broke ground before planting. They also had to tend the fields and harvest the crop.

On higher ground, planters grew **indigo**, a plant that produces a deep blue dye used to dye clothes. A young woman named **Eliza Lucas** had introduced indigo as a successful plantation crop after her father left her to supervise his South Carolina plantations when she was 17.

**The Enslaved Fight Back** Although they were kept in bondage, people of African origin found ways to resist their enslavement. They sometimes worked slowly, damaged goods, or deliberately carried out orders the wrong way. A British traveler in 1746 noted that many slaves pretended not to understand tasks they often had performed in West Africa.

### PRIMARY SOURCE

“You would really be surpriz’d at their Perseverance; let an hundred Men shew him how to hoe, or drive a wheelbarrow, he’ll still take the one by the Bottom, and the other by the Wheel; and they often die before they can be conquer’d.”

—Edward Kimber, quoted in *White over Black*

In South Carolina, the enslaved vastly outnumbered whites, who lived in fear of slave rebellions. Their fears came true in the late 1730s when a revolt occurred in South Carolina.

**The Stono Rebellion** In September 1739, an uprising known as the **Stono Rebellion** took place. The revolt began when about 20 slaves gathered at the Stono River just southwest of Charles Town. Wielding weapons, they killed planters and marched south, beating drums and chanting “Liberty!” They called out for other slaves to join them in their plan to seek freedom in Spanish-held Florida. Many joined them, and their numbers grew until there were perhaps one hundred in open rebellion. Seven plantations were burned along their route and twenty whites were killed. By late that afternoon, however, a white militia had surrounded the escaping slaves. The two sides clashed, and many slaves died in the fighting. Those captured were executed.

### Connecting History

#### Slavery

In the next century, South Carolina’s continuing dependence on slavery would lead the state to secede from the Union in 1860—the event that led to the Civil War.

See Chapter 15, p. 502.