

Olaudah Equiano was kidnapped as a boy from his homeland in what is today Nigeria, recalls in his memoir *Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*

"I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I were sound by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me."

He goes on to describe the journey:

"I was soon put down under the decks, and here I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything."

Indeed, slave ships were so notorious for their stench of bodily fluids, excrement, and human waste, that sailors often detected nearby vessels not from sight but from their odor, which the Atlantic winds carried for miles.

Again, the words of Equiano;

"The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us." The result of the overcrowding was that, "The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable." Other observers attest to this as well, exclaiming, "They [Africans] are often heard, on such occasions, to cry out in their language, "We are dying, we are dying."

An account from Olaudah Equiano, autobiography as he recalled...

"When I looked around the ship too and saw a large furnace of copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained

together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection & sorrow, I no longer doubted my fate and quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I feel

motionless on the deck and fainted... I asked if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces & long hair."