

MARCH - APRIL 2022

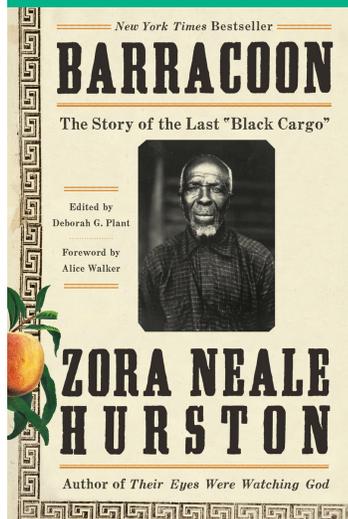


Content Warning: The following book club discussion guide contains information related to the enslavement of African people, white supremacy, and trauma.



ShelterBox 2012 response to flooding in Nigeria

CURRENTLY READING



BARRACOOON

by Zora Neale Hurston

Book Cycle:
Mar - Apr 2022

In 1927, Zora Neale Hurston went to Plateau, Alabama, just outside Mobile, to interview eighty-six-year-old Cudjo Lewis. Of the millions of enslaved people stolen from Africa to America, Cudjo was then the only person alive to tell the story of this integral part of the nation's history. Hurston was there to record Cudjo's firsthand account of the raid that led to his capture and bondage fifty years after enslaving people was outlawed in the United States. Barracoon illustrates the horrific tragedy of slavery and how one's life is forever impacted by it.



You can help support those displaced by conflict and disaster. By making a monthly contribution, families experiencing homeless after disaster receive the tools they need to rebuild and recover. **For a monthly donation of \$10 or more,** you will receive an exclusive ShelterBox bookmark.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Barracoon tells the story of Cudjo Lewis, born as Kossola or Oluale Kossola, around 1841 in West Africa, one of the last living survivor of the transatlantic slave trade. In 1860, at the age of 19, Kossola was kidnapped and brought to the barracoons (barracks used to temporarily hold enslaved Africans) in Ouidah, a city on the coast of modern-day Benin. Though enslaving people in the United States was officially outlawed in 1808, Kossola and about 110 others were captured and brought to Mobile, Alabama, on Captain William Foster's ship Clotilda.

The Author, Zora Neale Hurston, in 1927 interviews Kossola's and compliments his accounts with historical record—not to verify or to confirm accuracy, but to serve as testament to his incredible memory. In their short time together, he describes his time growing up in Takkoï, his African homeland, native rites of passage, marriage customs, and community-based justice systems at the ready, even when the process of recollection elicits violent flashbacks. Kossola also describes his journey across the Atlantic on the Clotilda, his five and a half years in captivity enslaved by Jim Meaher in Alabama; and, finally, the series of tragedies that befell him following his emancipation in 1865.

MEET THE AUTHOR: ZORA NEALE HURSTON (1891-1960)

"I have the nerve to walk my own way, however hard, in my search for reality, rather than climb upon the rattling wagon of wishful illusions." - Letter from Zora Neale Hurston to Countee Cullen.

Zora Neale Hurston was a novelist, ethnographer, folklorist, and cultural anthropologist. Hurston was born on Jan. 7, 1891, and grew up in Eatonville, Florida. Established in 1887, the rural community near Orlando was the nation's first incorporated Black township. She is the author of four novels (Jonah's Gourd Vine, 1934; Their Eyes Were Watching God, 1937; Moses, Man of the Mountain, 1939; and Seraph on the Suwanee, 1948); two books of folklore (Mules and Men, 1935, and Tell My Horse, 1938); an autobiography (Dust Tracks on a Road, 1942); and over fifty short stories, essays, and plays.

Hurston attended Howard University, Barnard College, and Columbia University. She earned an Associate degree from Howard University in 1920 and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Barnard College in 1928. She died in Fort Pierce, Florida in 1960. Still, Hurston never received the financial rewards she deserved. (The largest royalty she ever earned from any of her books was \$943).





December 2020 and January 2021 response in Nigeria

SHELTERBOX IN WEST AFRICA

Barracoon follows the story of Cudjo Lewis who was born in the Yoruba kingdom of Takkoi; a kingdom in western Africa, now known as southern Benin. ShelterBox has responded in Benin in 2010 due to flooding. Our current responses in west Africa reach across Nigeria, and Cameroon, supporting internally displaced people in the Chad Lake Basin conflict.

Since 2009, Boko Haram has been waging an insurgency in the central Sahel region, which includes the countries of Chad, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Niger. This region is facing one of the fastest-growing displacement crises in the world. 17 million people are affected by the crisis, 10.3 million are in urgent need of life-saving humanitarian aid, 3.2 million are in need of emergency shelter, and more than half a million children are acutely malnourished.

ShelterBox responses in the Chad Lake Basin are ongoing and continue to support newly internally displaced people with tents, tarpaulins, kitchen sets, water carriers, sleeping mats, high thermal blankets, mosquito nets, and solar lights. In many cases we have supported the locally procurement of aid items and construction of Bama Shelters that are culturally appropriate. Learn more [here](#).



MEET AMGUJJA

20-year-old Amgujja lives with her husband and baby Fatima in a camp for internally displaced people in north-east Nigeria. Amgujja said, “I’ve been here for four years, even before I got married, I was living with my parents here.”

Amgujja was forced to flee her village due to fighting and insurgency. She reflected, “we trekked here. It took almost two days and one night. There was no notice, it came very suddenly and we had to leave, there was nothing we could do. We were very scared and also not knowing what we might encounter when we’d arrive here.” When Amgujja was asked what happened when she first arrived at the camp, she said, “It was very bad. We had nothing.”

Four years later, Amgujja has married and started a family. Working with our partner ACTED, ShelterBox were able to support her with tarpaulins, and other essential items. She said, “It has really helped the condition of our shelter. We have new tarpaulin to cover our household, which will hopefully keep out the rain during the rainy season.”

Amgujja concluded, “I can stay in my house for longer periods of time compared to before I received the shelter kit, as it is now better covered.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR **BARRACOON**

Question 1:

Why do you think Hurston choose to not alter Kossula's dialect into standard English?

Question 2:

Cudjo Lewis expressed an affinity for his cultural traditions. What are three African traditions or customs that Cudjo continues in America?

Question 3:

What was Cudjo's experience aboard the Clotilda? How did his experience differ from that of the Americans aboard the ship?

Question 4

If you met the author, what three questions would you like to ask?

Question 5:

One of the first things Cudjo Lewis and his fellow compatriots do after emancipation is make homes for themselves. How do they go about acquiring land and building houses? What about their process allows them to create their own neighborhood and community?

Question 6:

What hardships does Cudjo's family face? How does Cudjo handle these situations?

Question 7:

Do you perceive any parallels between Kossula's experience of life in America and contemporary race relations? If so, what are some examples?

Question 8:

How do you think the horrific legacy of slavery and colonialism in Western Africa contributes to current conflict situations?

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