



## Slavery & the Law

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# Slavery & the Law

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Central to the development of the American legal system, writes Professor Finkelman in *Slavery & the Law*, is the institution of slavery. It informs us not only about early concepts of race and property, but about the nature of American democracy itself. Prominent historians of slavery and legal scholars analyze the intricate relationship between slavery, race, and the law from the earliest Black Codes in colonial America to the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Dred Scott decision prior to the Civil War. *Slavery & the Law's* wide-ranging essays focus on comparative slave law, auctioneering practices, rules of evidence, and property rights, as well as issues of criminality, punishment, and constitutional law. What emerges from this multi-faceted portrait is a complex legal system designed to ensure the property rights of slave-holders and to institutionalize racism. The ultimate result was to strengthen the institution of slavery in the midst of a growing trend toward democracy in the mid-nineteenth-century Atlantic community.

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