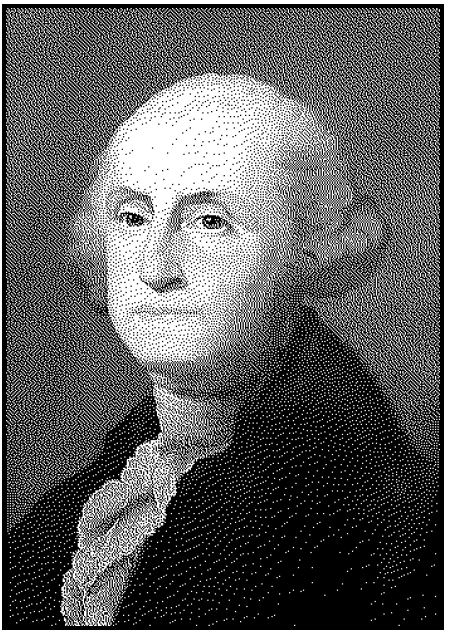
577

A visual of the slaves held by George Washington at Mount Vernon

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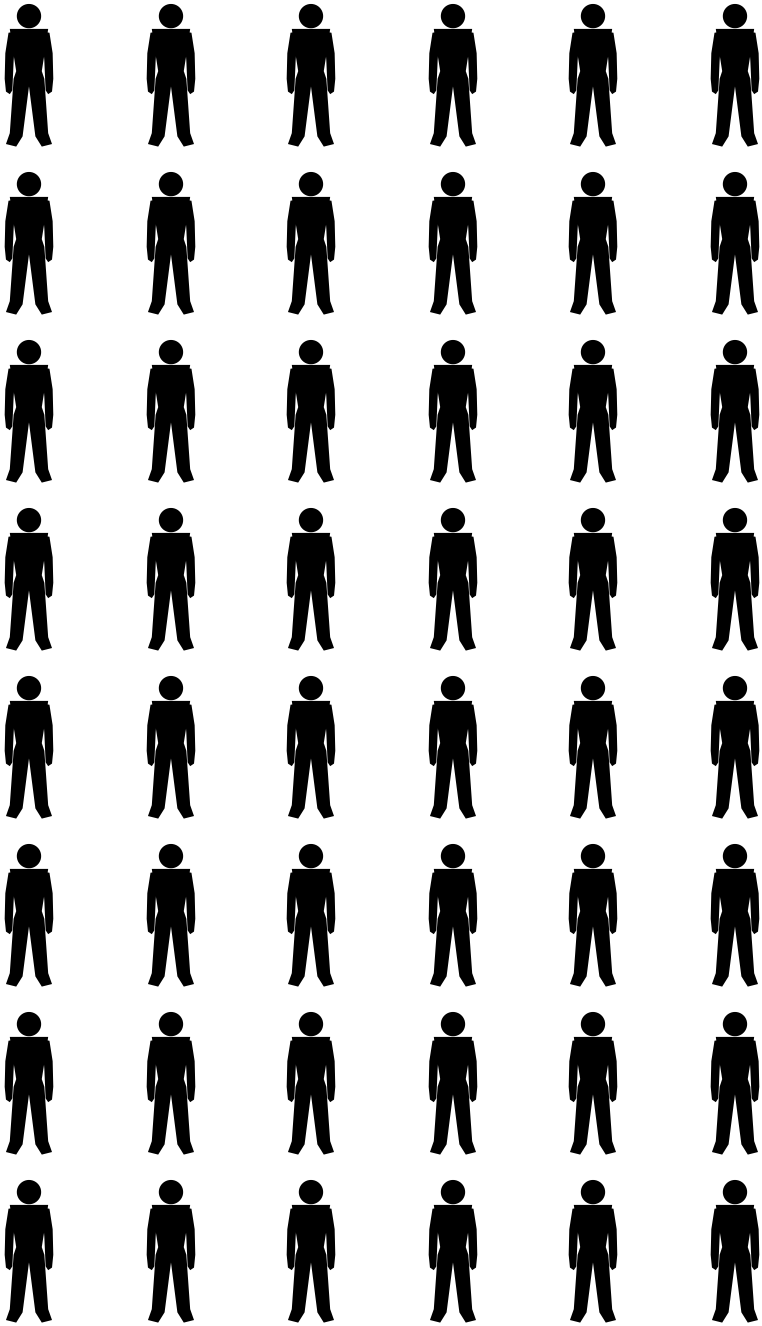


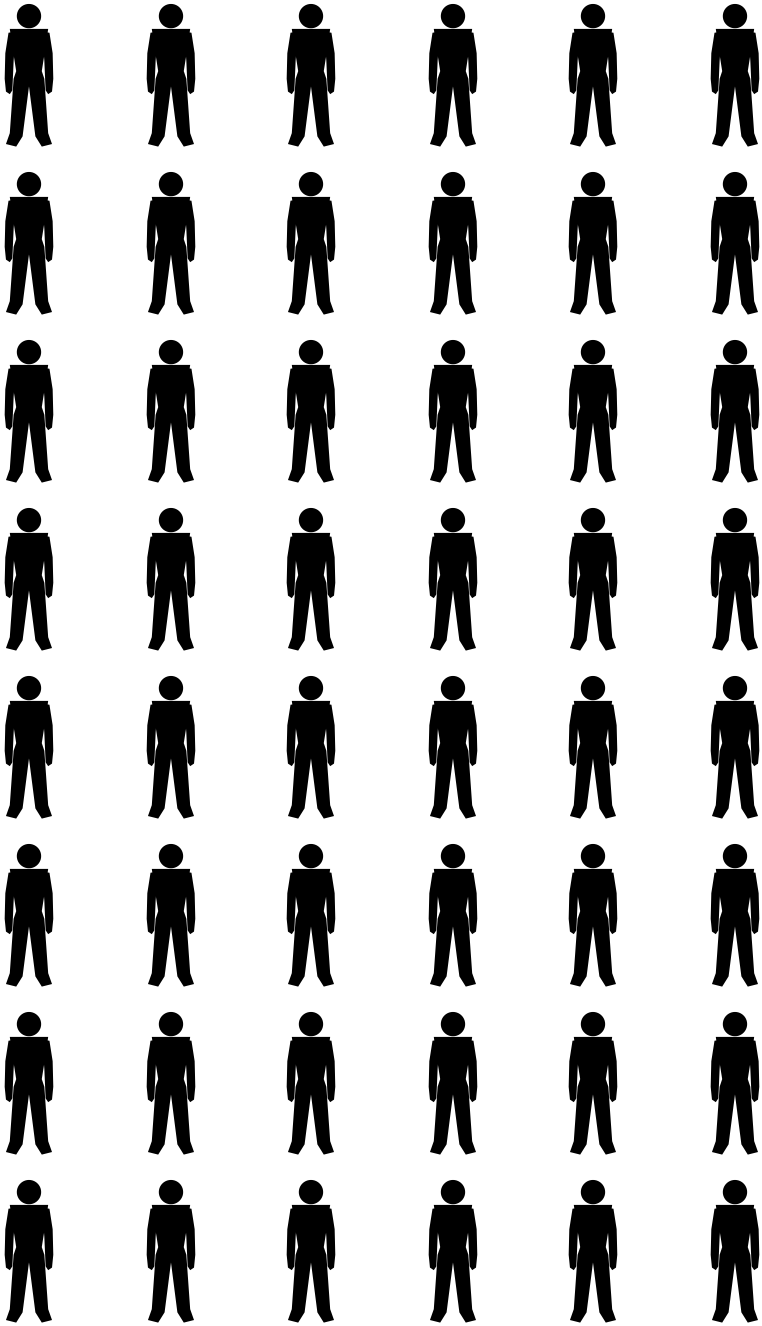
Over the course of his life, at least **577** enslaved men, women, and children lived and labored at Mount Vernon — the household of George Washington, the man Americans are taught to call the father of their country.

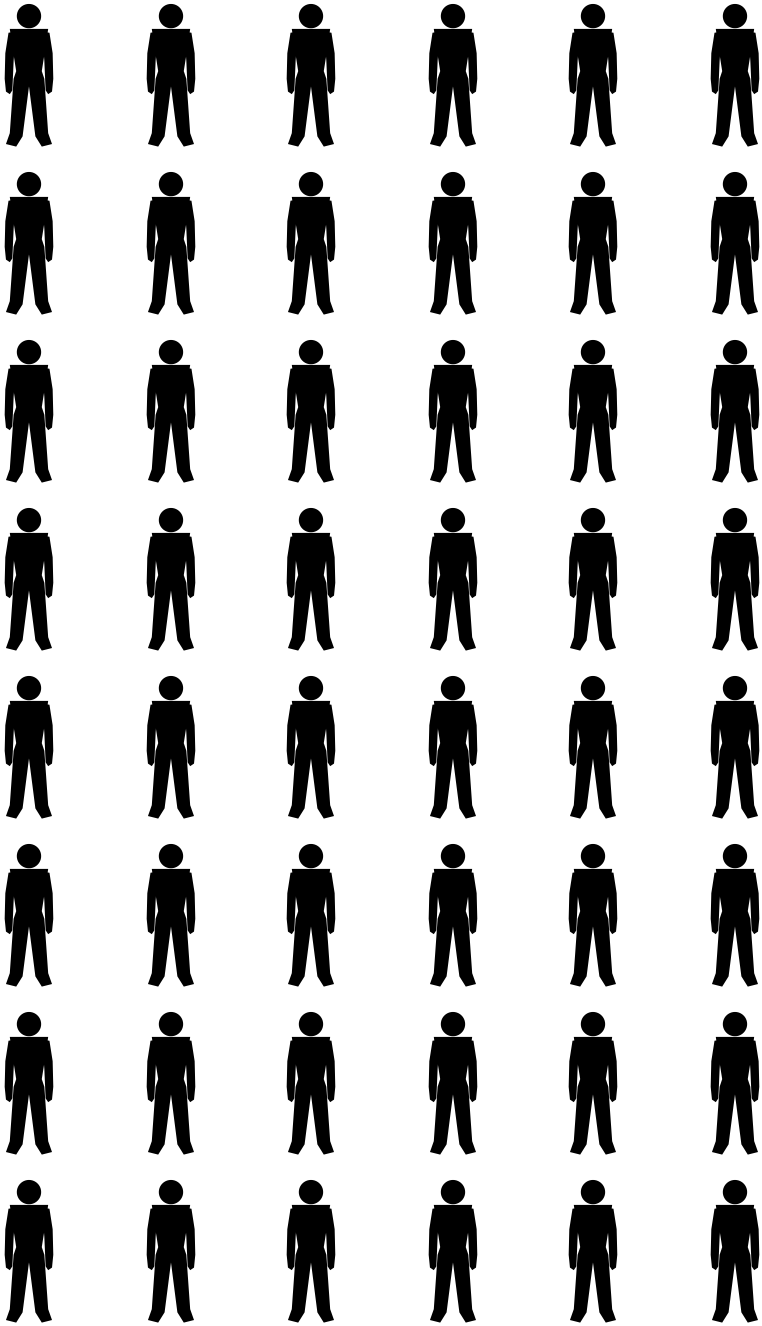
America's first president was, in the most literal sense, a man who held hundreds of human beings as property, their unpaid labor forced for his profit.

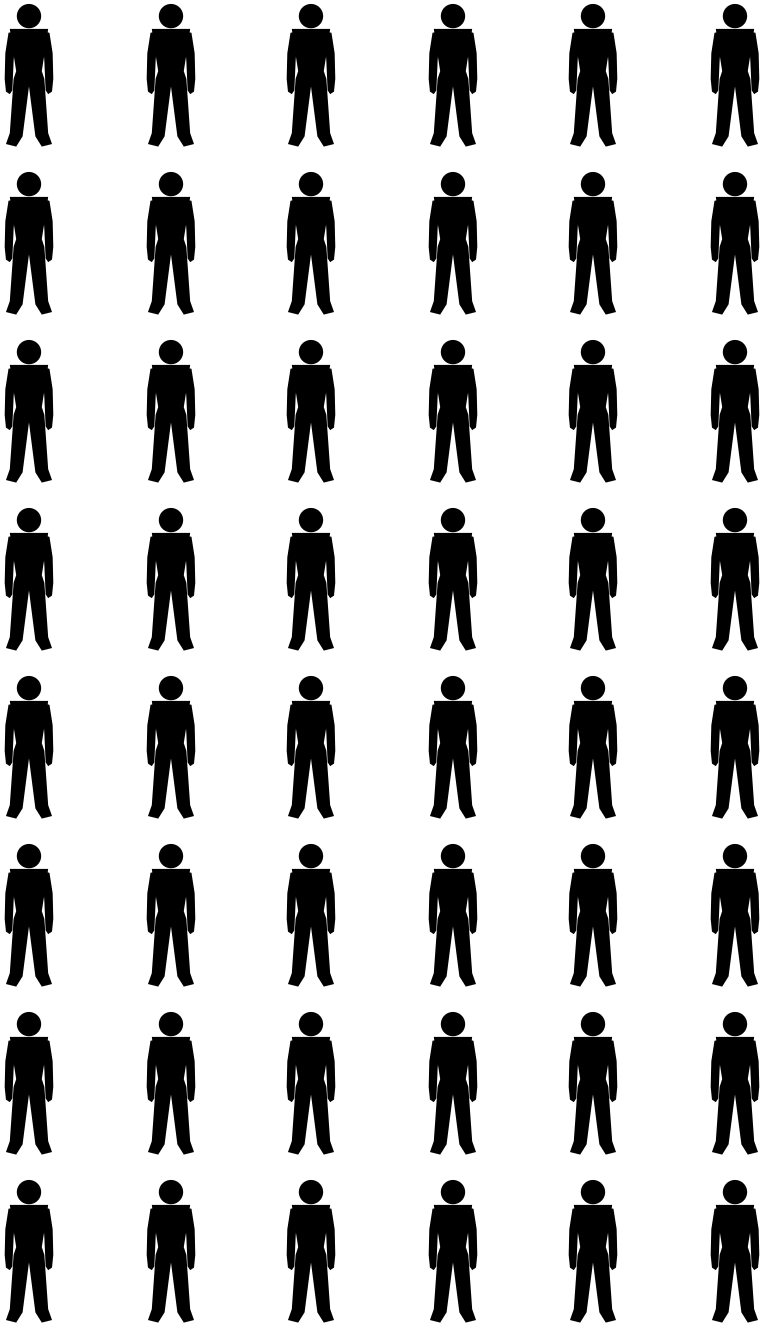
Roughly two hundred of these people Washington held in his own right — bought, inherited, or born into his direct ownership. The rest belonged to his wife's family estate, or were rented from a neighbor. The distinction did not matter to the people who were owned, dehumanized, forced to work the land.

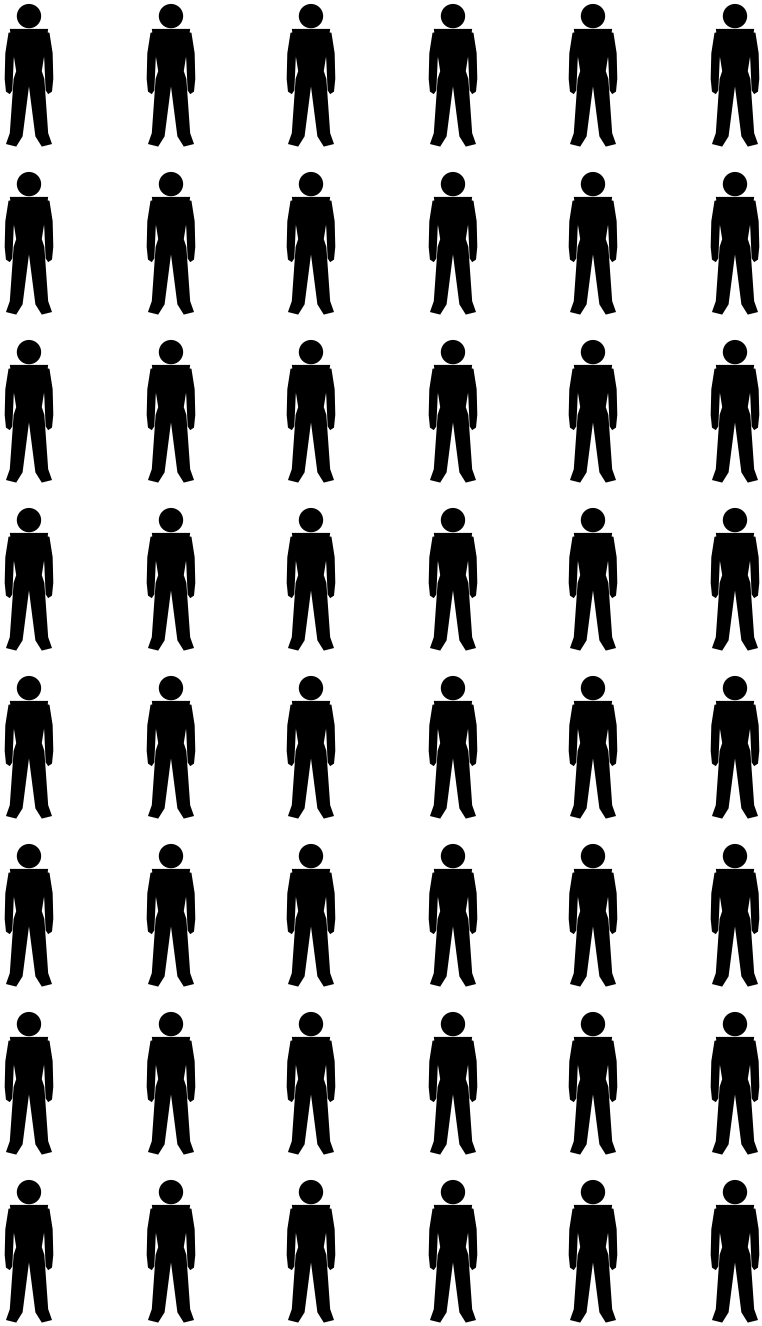
Each figure stands for one person. While enslaved they were not considered people. They faced intense cruelty, horrific conditions, and endless labor. No amount of historical revision, no amount of waxing poetic about how he “treated his slaves like family” can ever change that.

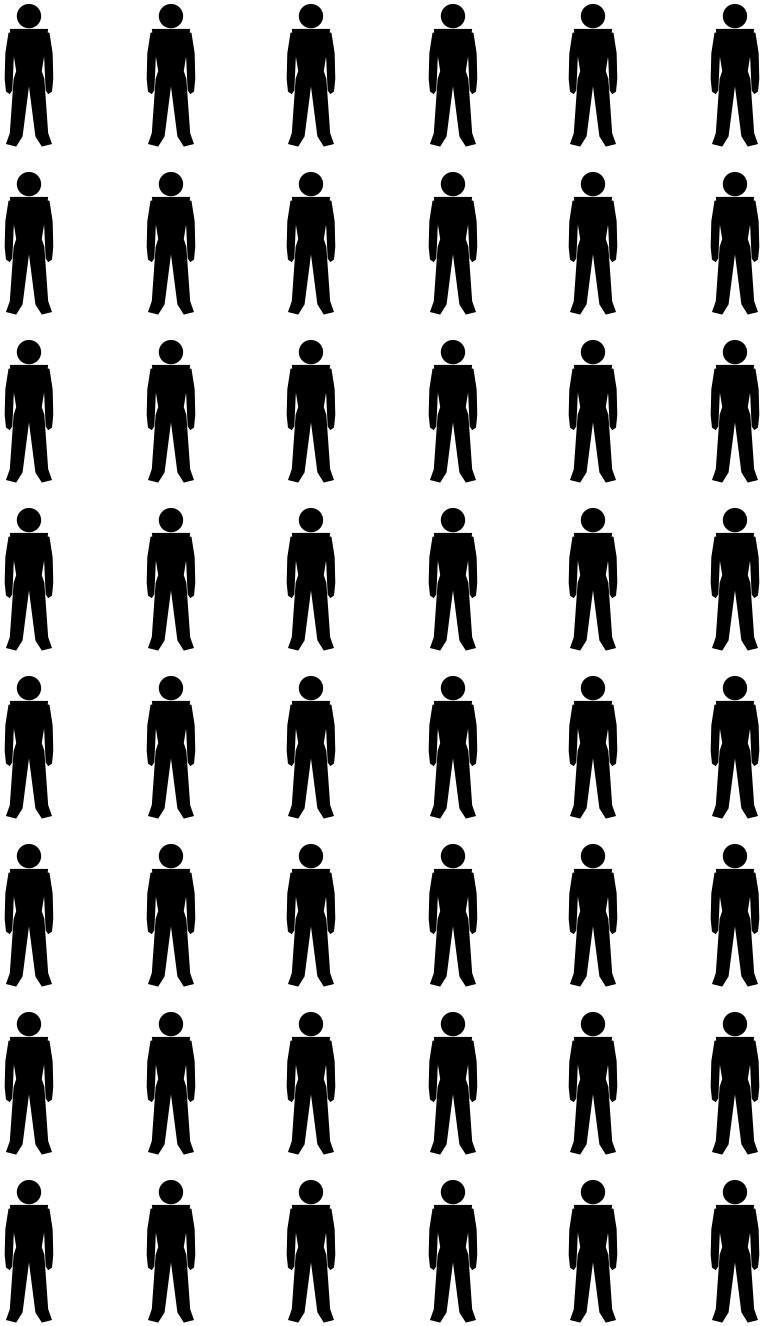


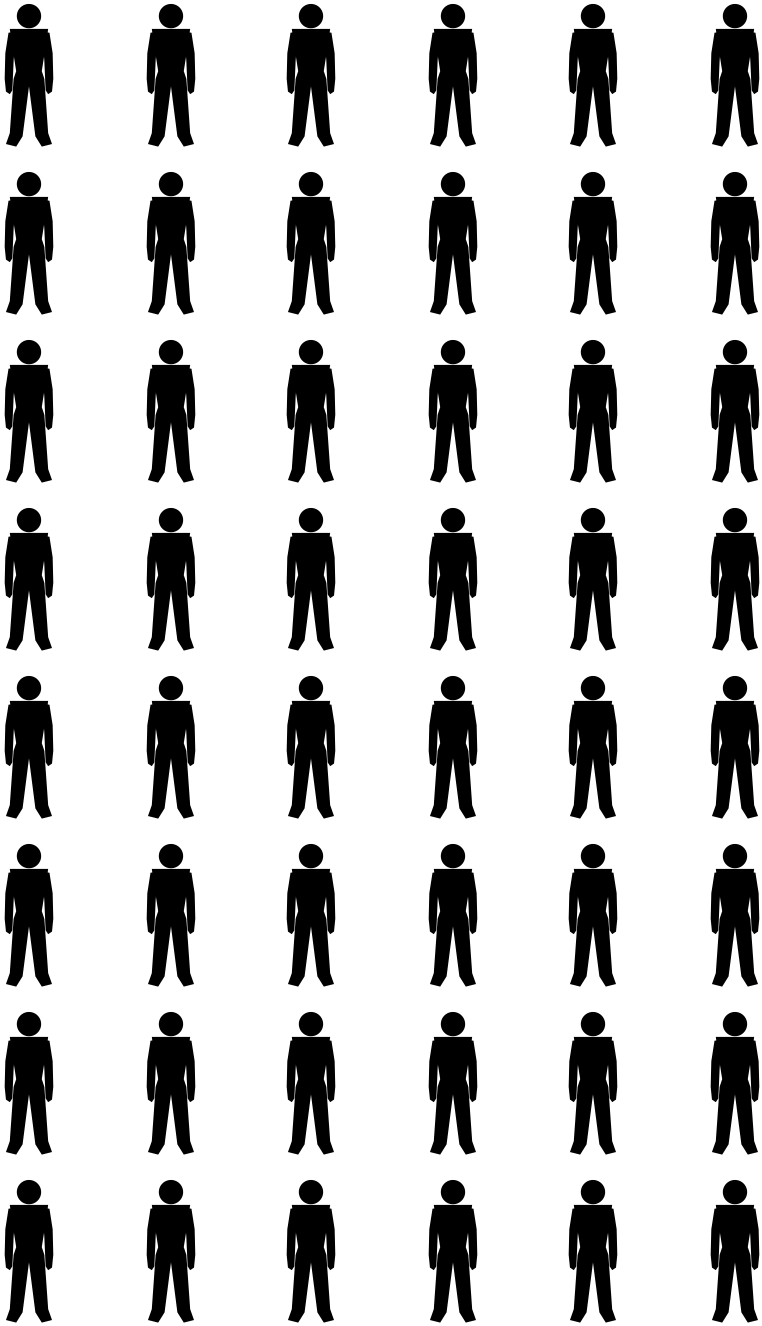


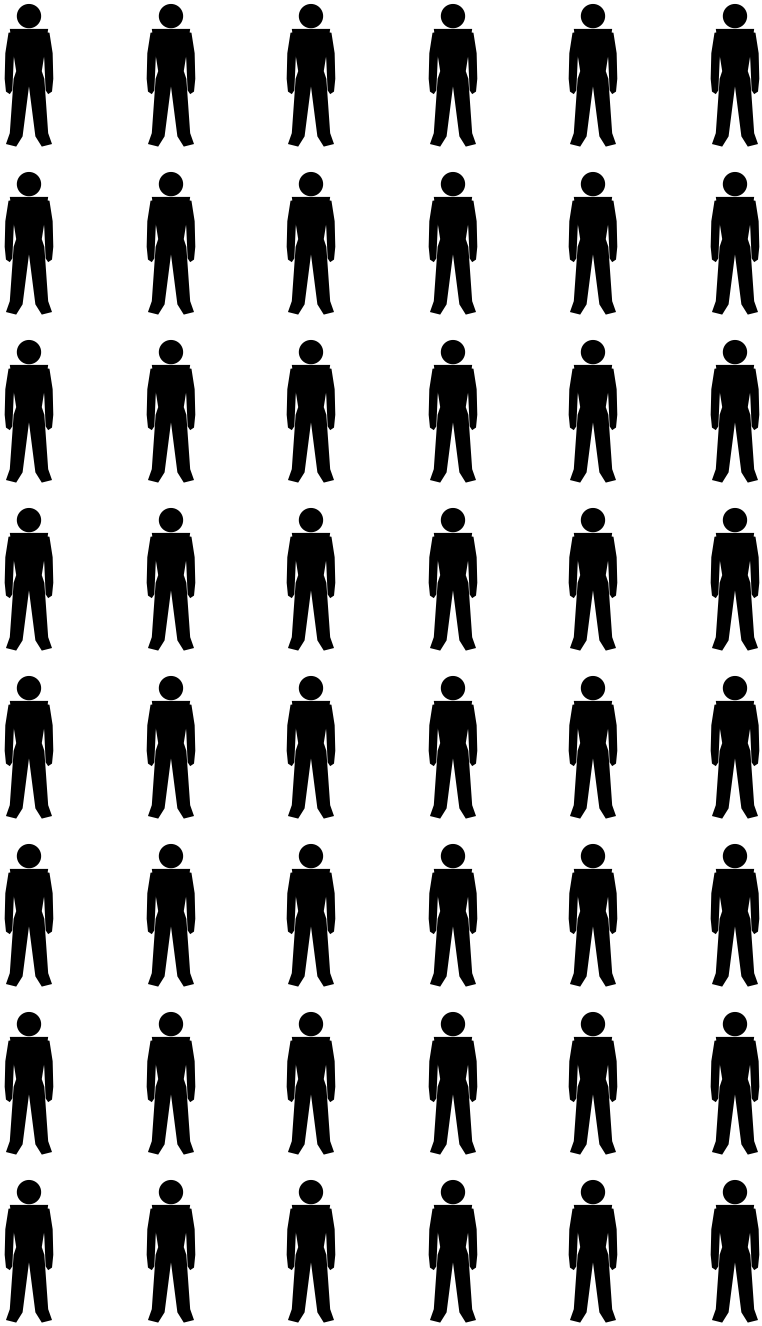


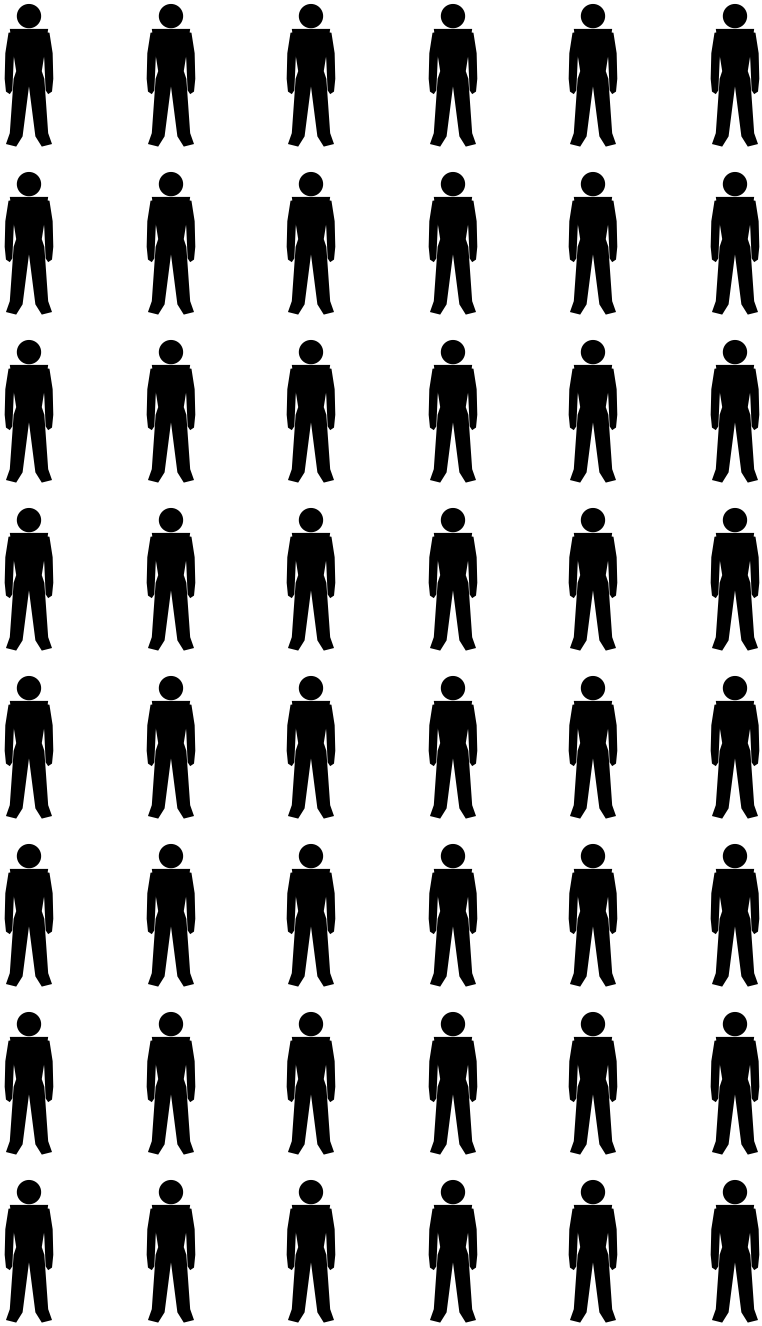


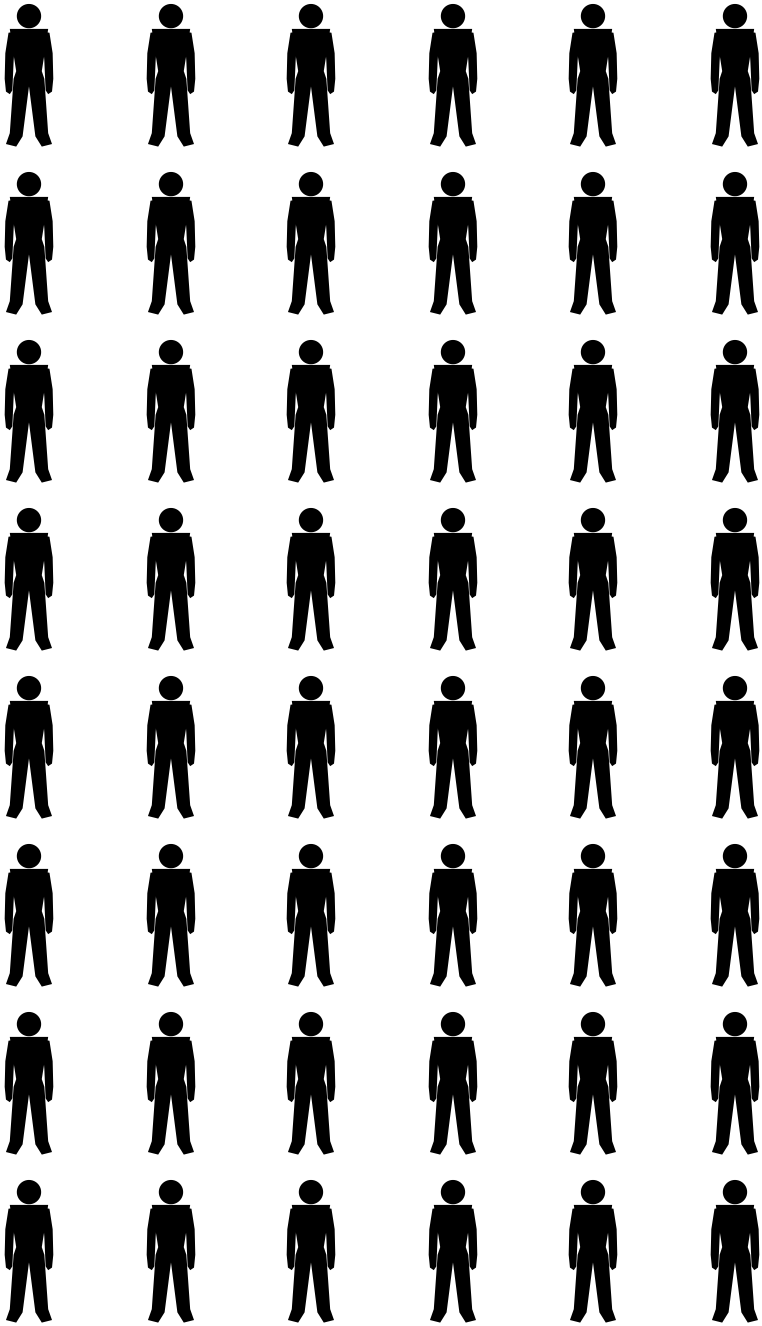


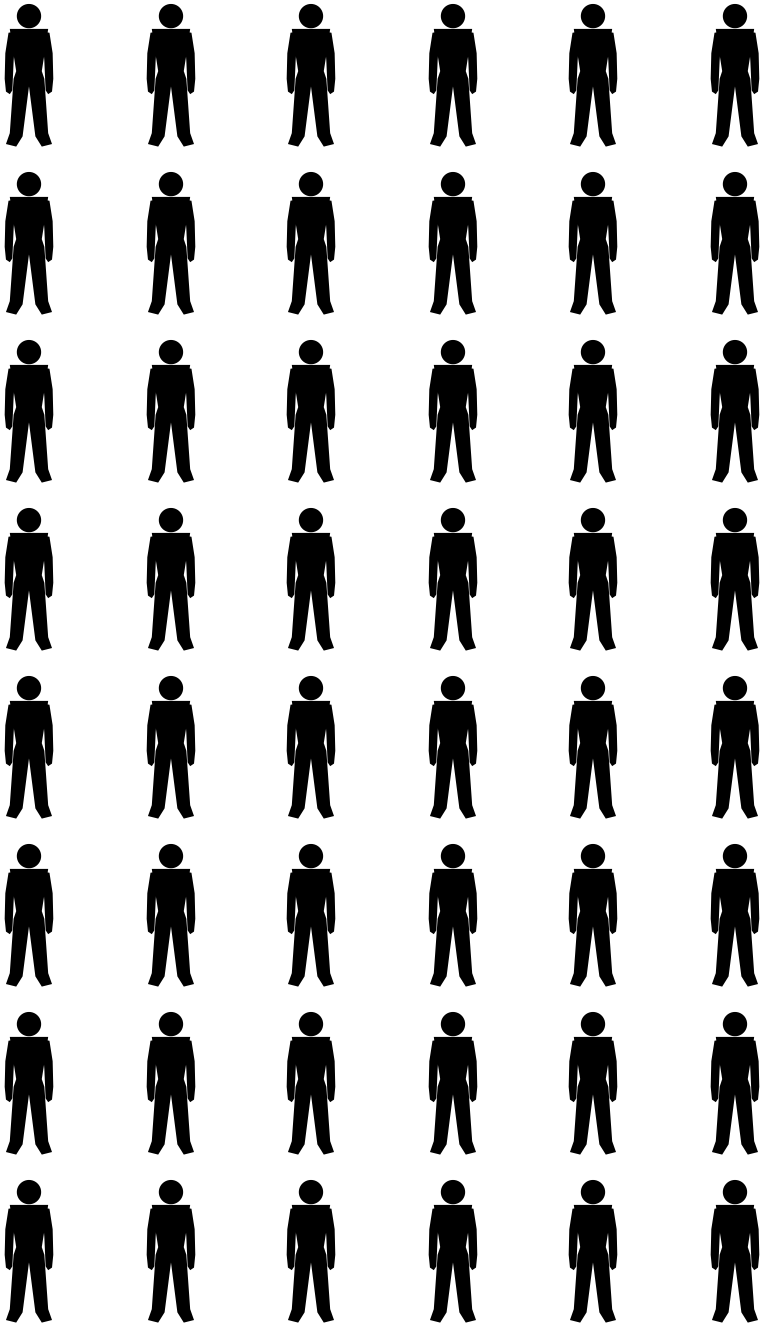


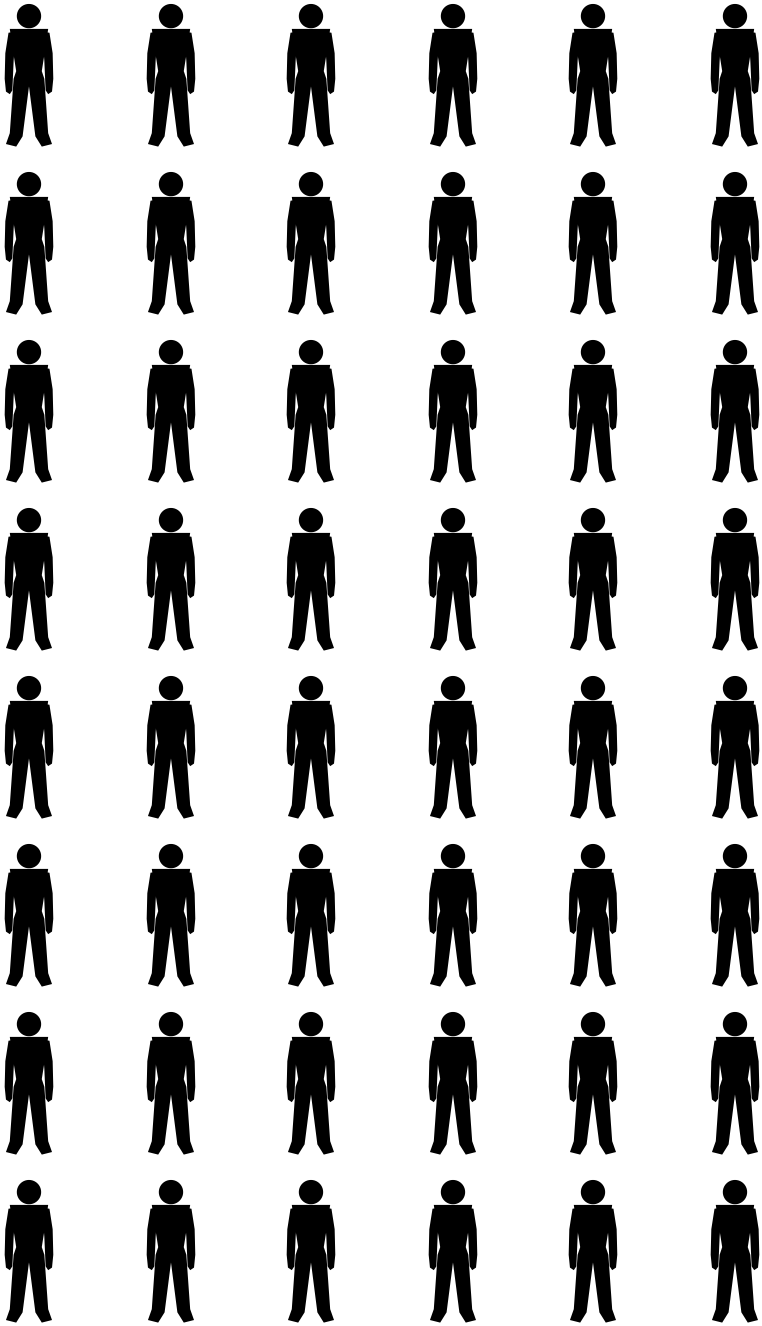














What does it mean for a country, when its founding legends are stained by the blood of the whip?

One estate, one lifetime, one of the men Americans are taught to call a founding father. Hundreds of lives spent in terrible, degrading conditions, children born into chattel slavery for the profit of a land baron. Washington was one of the richest men in the colonies, holding exorbitant amounts of land, stolen from the natives, worked by the enslaved.

His face has been etched into eternity, defacing Tȟuŋkášila Šákpe, his figure haunts the dollar bill. His portrait sits in thousands of buildings, offices and schools. He was a man who built his fortune on the forced, unpaid labor of hundreds of people, and used violence to keep it that way.

Some basic math: if the average lifespan of someone enslaved by George Washington was 50 years, then a total of 28,850 years of human life was spent in bondage to him.

What does this nation owe the descendants of the 577, and the descendants of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children who were held in bondage to build America?

Perhaps it is time to stop worshipping slavers.

So monstrous is the making and keeping them slaves at all, abstracted from the barbarous usage they suffer, and the many evils attending the practice; as selling husbands away from wives, children from parents, and from each other, in violation of sacred and natural ties; and opening the way for adulteries, incests, and many shocking consequences, for all of which the guilty masters must answer to the final Judge.

Thomas Paine, *African Slavery in America* (1775)

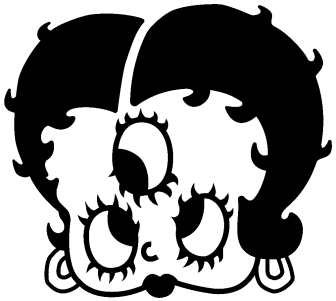
Whereas, Slavery, throughout its entire existence in the United States is none other than a most barbarous, unprovoked, and unjustifiable War of one portion of its citizens upon another portion; the only conditions of which are perpetual imprisonment, and hopeless servitude or absolute extermination; in utter disregard and violation of those eternal and self-evident truths set forth in our Declaration of Independence.

John Brown

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, ***except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted,*** *shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.*

13th Amendment, US Constitution

Source: Mount Vernon · 1754–1799
Inspired by American Incarceration in Real Numbers



HOUDINI Magazine

See all 577 online.