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### *Breaking the Silence: UNESCO's Transatlantic Slave Trade Education Project*

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Available online at [www.yale.edu/glc/publichistory/hareide.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/glc/publichistory/hareide.pdf)

UNESCO's Transatlantic Slave Trade Education Project (The ASPnet-TST-project) sprang out of UNESCO's Slave Route Project which was initiated by West-African and Caribbean Member States and launched in 1994. The aim of the Slave Route Project was to ensure a transdisciplinary study of the causes, methods, and consequences of the transatlantic slavery. To contribute to the establishment of a culture of peaceful coexistence between races and peoples was also a main objective. In later years the study of the slave trade in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean has become a part of the project.

The TST- Education project took the name "Breaking the Silence" because the history of the slave trade was more or less non-existent in curricula and textbooks in most parts of the world. The project is part of UNESCO's Associated Schools' Network (The ASPnet), founded in 1953 and now comprises almost 8000 educational institutions in 176 countries. Some 25 countries in Africa, the

Americas, and Europe take part in the TST-project, all countries that were historically involved in the transatlantic slave trade.

The TST-project aims at breaking the silence surrounding the trade, and finding innovative and transdisciplinary ways of teaching the history of the slave trade and related themes like human rights and modern forms of slavery.

One aim is to create close connections between students and teachers in Africa, the Americas and Europe in order to elaborate and improve the teaching of the slave trade and its consequences. Twinning schools in different regions of the world, using museums, places of memory, oral traditions, arranging cultural festivals and using the possibilities of the ICT, are some of the methods used. There has been, and is still, a great need for teaching material, both traditional text books and electronic material. UNESCO's activities in this field will be discussed.

An outline of the structure of the TST will be given, and the development of the project will be discussed. The TST is an emotionally difficult project, and schools have treated issues like anger, guilt and shame in different ways. This will be discussed, together with some examples of how schools are using museums and sites of memory, and how they have included immigrant clubs and societies in their teaching.

One of the earliest documentation projects in the TST was the project on the slave ship *Fredensborg* and the Danish-Norwegian slave trade, and this will be used as a short case study.

2004 was the UN International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition. Among UNESCO's many 2004-activities was an exhibition on the Slave Trade which was shown in many countries and which helped trigger other activities like national and local exhibitions, film- and music festivals and conferences on historic or current events related to the slave trade.

The Slave Route Project, including the TST, underwent an extensive external evaluation recently. This resulted in a new strategy and structure for the project: a leaner administration and some new topics, like more emphasis on modern forms of slavery.

The United States re-entered UNESCO in 2003 after almost 20 years of absence. What consequences will this have for the TST-Educational project?