

## Nice Try, Candace: Jews Didn't Run the Slave Trade

### The Lie

- Jews ran the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

### The Truth

- Like all other nations, some Jews participated in the slave trade in limited numbers, but the claim that they ran or controlled the trans-Atlantic slave trade has been conclusively rejected by historians.

### Background

- On December 20, 2025, Candace Owens urged Black Americans to “quarrel” with Jews, claiming that “Jewish people were in control of the slave trade.” ([X](#))
- Candace Owens later repeated this claim on social media and attached a list of Jewish slave owners as supposed proof. ([X](#))
- This narrative has mainly been promoted by disgraced figures such as Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan and former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke.
- The claim was also adopted by the Black Lives Matter movement to justify excluding Jews from protests.

### Truth Explained:

- Jews owned far fewer slaves than non-Jews in every British colony in the Americas. ([Faber, 2008](#))
- American Jewish merchants accounted for less than 2% of all African slaves imported into the New World. ([New York Times](#))
- In the domestic slave trade, all Jewish slave traders combined bought and sold fewer slaves than the single non-Jewish firm of Franklin and Armfield. ([New York Times](#))
- Prominent slavery historians emphasize that Jews constituted a very small fraction of the Atlantic slave system. ([American Historical Association](#))
- In the American South in 1830, only 120 Jews were among the 45,000 slaveholders who owned 20 or more slaves. In the same year, only 20 Jews were among the 12,000 slaveholders who owned 50 or more slaves. ([New York Review of Books](#))
- British Jews were always a minority among investors in slave-trading ventures, not primary owners of slave fleets. ([Faber, 2008](#))
- In 1774, Jews in Jamaica owned 310 slaves, which amounted to only 4% of the island's slave population. ([Tablet Magazine](#))
- For every Jew involved in the Atlantic slave system, there were many Catholic and Protestant participants. ([New York Review of Books](#))
- Expulsions of Jews and legal restrictions targeting them across Europe severely limited their access to capital, ships, ports, and imperial monopolies, making any Jewish domination of the trans-Atlantic slave trade impossible. ([New York Review of Books](#))
- Jewish involvement in the seventeenth-century Dutch slave trade was limited and subordinate. ([New York Review of Books](#))
- The primary source claiming Jewish control of the slave trade is the 1991 Nation of Islam book *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*. The book misquotes historians and falsely identifies non-Jewish slave owners as Jewish, which is why historians regard the book as ideological propaganda rather than legitimate scholarship. ([New York Review of Books](#))
- African elites and kingdoms were the primary sellers of enslaved Africans. Some African states, including Dahomey in present-day Benin, urged Britain not to abolish the slave trade because it was highly profitable. ([BBC](#)), ([New York Review](#)), ([PBS](#))

### Quotes:

- “The participants in the Atlantic slave system included Arabs, Berbers, scores of African ethnic groups, Italians, Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutch, Jews, Germans, Swedes, French, English, Danes, white Americans, Native Americans, and even thousands of New World blacks who had been emancipated or were descended from freed slaves but who then became slaveholding farmers or planters themselves.” — David Brion Davis, historian
- “To be sure, [The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews] massively misrepresents the historical record, largely through a process of cunningly selective quotation of often reputable sources. But its authors could be confident that few of its readers would go to the trouble of actually hunting down the works cited. For if readers actually did so, they might discover a rather different picture.” — Henry Louis Gates, Jr., historian

### Takeaway:

Jews did not run or control the trans-Atlantic slave trade; their participation was limited and proportionate to their small population. Candace Owens's false claim that Jews controlled the trans-Atlantic slave trade echoes narratives promoted by the Nation of Islam and the Black Lives Matter movement, which Owens claims to oppose.