



Twelve Years A Slave

Solomon Northup (1808- 1863)

Read by:	Rob Board	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	8 hours 3 minutes	Catalog:	DB-1051
Language:	English	UPC:	0684758936318
Style:	Solo	MSLP:	\$9.99
Genre:	Biography & Autobiography, History		

Twelve Years a Slave (1853) is a memoir by Solomon Northup, a black man who was born free in New York. The story tells of being kidnapped, sold as a slave, and shipped to serve various masters on plantations in Louisiana for 12 years. Northup narrative describes the culture of the slave markets in Washington DC and New Orleans and his experience as a slave on the cotton and sugar plantations in Louisiana. With the help of a sympathetic ally he was eventually able to contact friends and family in New York, who managed to secure his release.

Northup had the slave trader in Washington arrested and tried, but he was acquitted because District of Columbia law prohibited a black man from testifying against white people. Later, in New York State, Northup's northern kidnappers were charged, but the case was tied up in court and finally dropped by the State of New York when DC was found to have jurisdiction. Washington DC did not pursue the case. Those who had kidnapped and enslaved Northup received no punishment.

The work was told to and edited by David Wilson and was published on the heels of Harriet Beecher Stowe's best-selling novel about slavery, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Northup's book was dedicated to Stowe and became a bestseller, selling 30,000 copies. After several editions the book fell into obscurity until it was re-discovered in the early 1960s. It has since been adapted and produced as the 1984 PBS television movie *Solomon Northup's Odyssey* and the 2013 Academy Award-winning film *12 Years a Slave*.

Solomon Northup (July 1808–1863?) was a free-born African American who owned land in Hebron, New York. A violinist as well as a farmer, he traveled to Washington, DC in 1841 in response to an offer to perform with traveling entertainers. Shortly after arriving in DC, he was drugged and kidnapped by slave traders, who sold him as a slave. He was shipped to New Orleans and sold to a planter in Louisiana, where he served on several plantations in the Red River region for 12 years.

His family and friends had no knowledge of him apart from a short message at the outset of his bondage. The systems used to control slaves thwarted his attempts at communication. Eventually, a Canadian working on his plantation helped Northup contact family and friends. They enlisted the help of the Governor of New York, since state law provided for aid to free New York citizens kidnapped into slavery. Northup regained his freedom on January 3, 1853 and returned to his family in New York.

Northup published *Twelve Years a Slave* in 1853. He gave speeches throughout the Northeast about his experiences to build momentum against slavery. He disappeared in 1857. The circumstances of his death are unknown.