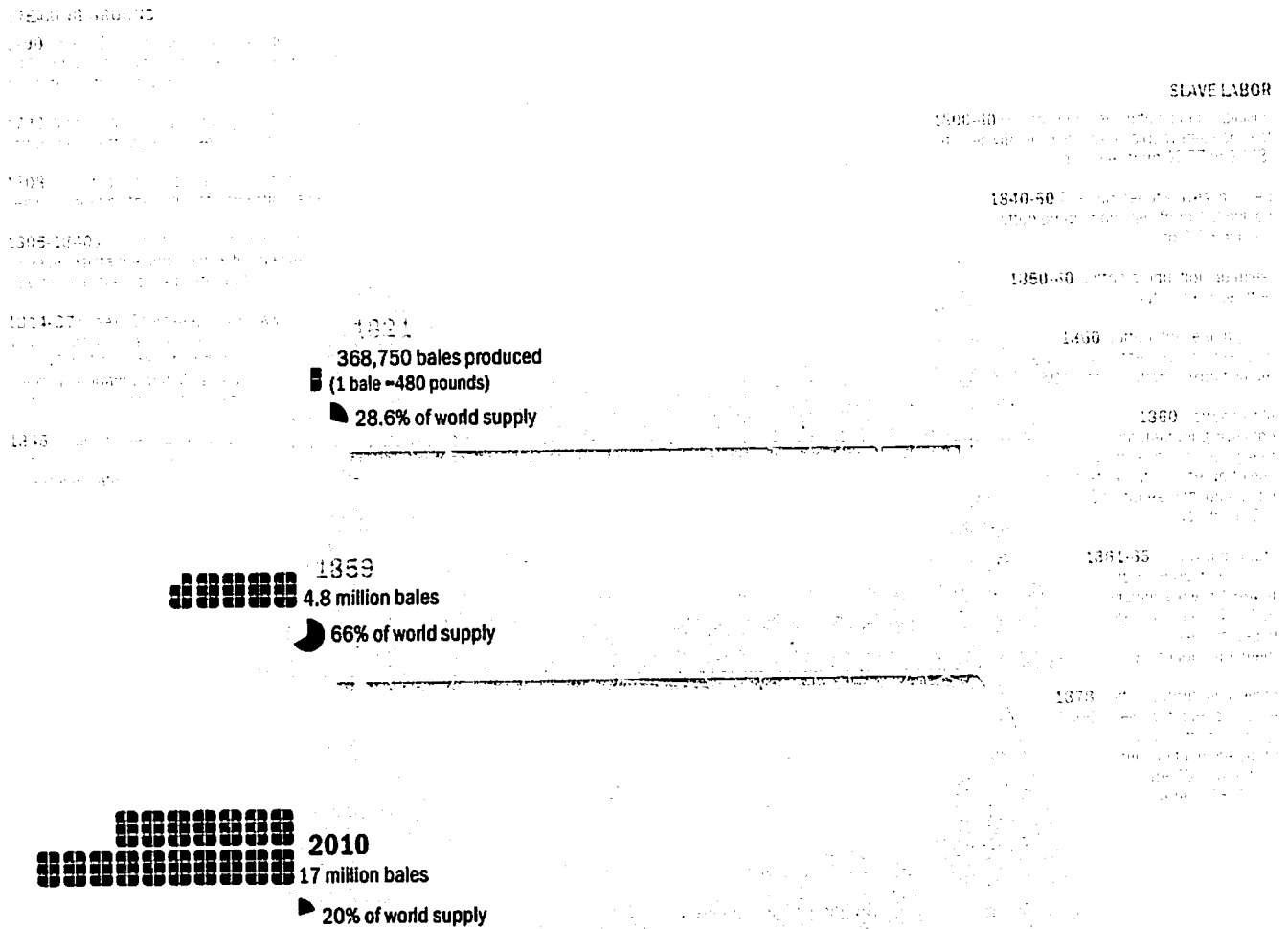


The Big Picture

Datagraphic by Nigel Holmes

Cotton Conquers the Country

Between 1790 and 1860, the amount of U.S.-grown cotton increased from less than half of 1 percent to two-thirds of the global supply, creating both the world's fastest-growing industrial nation and the largest slaveholding nation in the Western hemisphere. In 2011, America remains the leading exporter of cotton, but the labor required for crop production has dwindled from some 2 million slaves to less than 200,000 workers.



MODERN MECHANIZATION

1949 The mechanical harvester of cotton does the work of 50-100 workers, displacing 75% of the sharecropper labor force and adding to the wave of African Americans migrating North.

1980s China overtakes the U.S. as the world's largest cotton grower, and, like England in the 19th century, becomes the world's leading cotton importer.

2010 The U.S. cotton industry employs 200,000 workers and is the world's leading cotton exporter, with about \$3 billion in sales.

2011 Due to shortages created by floods in Pakistan, cotton reaches its highest price in 150 years in March 2011.

Cotton plantations

Major production