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**Slave Trade**

What is Slavery?

Slavery is the practice or system of owning slaves.

Slavery refers to a condition in which individuals are owned by others, who control where they live and at what they work. Slavery had previously existed throughout history, in many times and most places. The ancient Greeks, the Romans, Incas and Aztecs all had slaves.

To be a slave is to be owned by another person. A slave is a human being classed as property and who is forced to work for nothing. An enslaved person is a human being who is made to be a slave. This language is often used instead of the word slave, to refer to the person and their experiences and to avoid the use of dehumanising language.

Over the five centuries running from 1400 to 1900, the slave trade encompassed four distinct waves: the trans-Saharan, Indian Ocean, Red Sea, and trans-Atlantic slave trades. The last one was by far the most significant in terms of volume and duration: over the 1529–1850 period, over 12 million Africans were embarked, mostly along the coasts of West Africa, and forced to undertake the Middle Passage across the Atlantic Ocean). The peak was reached between 1780 and 1790, with 80,000 slaves per year being transported, but the traffic remained very intense during the nineteenth century, when between three and four million people were embarked. Throughout the period, the Portuguese were always at the center of the trade: they were the ones that initiated it and they continued it long after Britain outlawed it in 1807. The involvement of Britain culminated in the eighteenth century. France also had a prominent role, followed by Spain, the Netherlands, and the USA. The decline started after 1807, even though the process was very slow and became significant only after mid-nineteenth century when Brazil joined in. The three other slave trades pre-dated the trans-Atlantic wave and followed different paths: the trans-Saharan trade took people from the sub-Saharan regions to Northern Africa, while both the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea trades took people from Eastern Africa and delivered them to various parts of Asia.

Overall, the volume of these three waves comprised half of that involved in the trans-Atlantic one. The trans-Atlantic trades are by far the better documented ones, thanks to the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade reports the number of slaves embarked from Africa, by broad embarkation regions and by 100-year periods. West-Central Africa represented the main source, with 45 % of the overall volume. Next came Benin (16 %), Biafra (13 %), the Gold Coast (10 %), and Senegambia (6 %). Slavery was already present in Africa before the slave trades and in fact continues, in some parts of the continent, to the present day. Europe experienced slavery as well.

The Roman Empire was in fact a slave society. However, by 1400, slavery had long dis-appeared from Europe, which motivated the European search for a supply of forced labour in the African continent. African slaves were collected by kidnapping by other Africans or as the result of local wars among Africans. The captives were then sold to foreign traders, together with gold and ivory, in exchange for imported goods including firearms. The consequent so-called gun-slave cycle fueled the perpetuation of the slave Àpapa trade for centuries. In turn, the incentive to purchase slaves on the part of the Europeans rested in the need to collect manpower for the expansions of the plantation economies being developed in South and Central America after Columbus, to satisfy the quickly increasing taste in Europe for colonial goods such as tobacco and sugar.

Again based on the TAST Database, it reports the number of slaves disembarked in different regions, by broad disembarkation regions and by 100-year periods. A comparison with Table 1 reveals that almost two million people were lost during transportation. The main destination was Brazil (45 %), next came the Caribbean (22 and 10 %, respectively, for the British and French portions) and the Spanish Americas (12 %). Less than 4 % were taken to North America.

The coerced population movement set into place by the trans-Atlantic slave trade was only the beginning of a very long mobilization process that has not yet stopped. Indeed Berlin (2010) has influentially portrayed the history of people of African descent in the USA as framed by four great migrations. The first was the Middle Passage, which in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries took people from Africa to North America. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Second Middle Passage involved the transportation of one million African American slaves from the Atlantic coastal regions to the plantations in the interior. The third migratory round, which was no longer forced by voluntary, witnessed the relocation of six million free people of African descent from the rural South to the Northern cities, starting from 1915 with the Great Migration and continuing until the 1970s. Lastly, between the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries, new Global Passages of migrants of African descent arrived in the USA from the regions that had hosted the previous out-of-Africa coerced diasporas, i.e., the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, and Europe. Slavery was introduced in the territories that today represent the USA in the sixteenth century, much later than in Spanish South America and Brazil. The scope was to replace European and African indentured servants as the main source of plantation labor, at the time mostly employed for the cultivation of rice and tobacco. Between 1675 and 1695, the import expanded rapidly. By the 1720s, Virginia and Maryland had been transformed into slave societies.

Overall, the inflow to the USA, throughout the next centuries, amounted to an estimated 645,000 slaves, brought in mostly from Africa. The slaves were initially disembarked along the Atlantic coast and forcibly settled in the coastal Southern colonies. Even though the USA absorbed less than 4 % of the entire volume of the trans-Atlantic trade, the local reproduction rate was much higher than elsewhere so that the slave population, unlike in the rest of the Americas, expanded. By the 1730s, births to slave women outnumbered import, with an increase of the African population at an annual rate of 3 %. As a result, at the start of the American Revolution, the region was no longer an immigrant society. Later on, in the 1789–1860 period between the Revolution and the Civil War, most slaves were relocated in the inland regions where the plantation economy was quickly expanding following the booming international demand for cotton. This Second Middle Passage ended only with the Confederate defeat in the Civil War. Despite the fact that the Revolution broke the coincidence between blackness and slavery, between 1800 and 1860 the slave population increased from one to four million, so that by the 1860 census the USA had a slave population of about 13 % of the total, distributed within 15slave states, mostly belonging to the South. The American Civil War led to the abolition of slavery in 1865. The Reconstruction period, running from 1865 to 1877, witnessed a transformation of Southern society and the enactment of legislation

‘The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act’ was passed in Parliament. This Act was the beginning of the end1 of the transatlantic slave trade, in which people from the west coast of Africa were taken forcibly to the Caribbean islands and to America to work on sugar, cotton, rice and tobacco plantations. This important Act came about as a result of a number of forces: pressure from the churches; campaigns led by people such as William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson; pressure from black activists such as Olaudah Equiano; slave resistance and revolts on plantations; and, more surprisingly, also as a result of the

actions of ordinary citizens of Britain, including large numbers of women. Although most ordinary people did not have the vote, or even free education, there were many committees and associations set up in different parts of the country to organise activities such as petitions and a sugar boycott, to persuade the government that the trade in slaves was wrong. Some of these people could have lost their jobs, since they made goods used in the slave trade, but there was a very strong feeling against slavery. Slavery was not new then, of course. It has existed throughout human history. For example, the Romans took slaves from many parts of Europe to work for them in their homes and businesses. In the 17th century, Barbary pirates from north Africa took captives from coastal areas of Europe and forced them to row ships as galley slaves. It continued into the 20th century in different forms: in Soviet Russia millions of people were forced to work in mines and forests in the 1930s, and the Nazis used slave labour before and during World War 2.

Liberated Africans were African, American and Caribbean slaves who were found onboard illegal slavers and freed by the courts. However, they were not freed in the sense that they could go and do what they chose. They were not sent back to their countries of origin as it was considered likely that they would be re-enslaved. Although 'liberated', they were not technically free: able-bodied men were 'enlisted' into the military services particularly the army for unlimited service. They were not entitled ato the full benefits of pensions when discharged as unfit for further service or after 21 years. Women and children were often apprenticed to local landowners, to the military and to the local government for periods of up to 14 years.

Some of the smaller colonies with vice-Admiralty and mixed commission courts found that they could not cope with the numbers of liberated Africans and tried to transport them to other colonies. In 1828, the Spanish authorities passed a proclamation to move the liberated Africans in Cuba to other Spanish possessions including Spain. Spain also made an agreement with Britain to send some to British possessions, and many thousands were moved to British colonies especially Trinidad. From 1831, liberated Africans were also moved from Sierra Leone to the Gambia and to the Caribbean. By the 1860s, the anti-slaving patrols off the West Coast of Africa and diplomatic pressures had ended the trans-Atlantic slave trade, with Cuba being the last American country to abolish slavery in 1869.