

# *Resurgence of the Slave Trade*

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## *1. Introduction*

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This paper will explore the history of slavery and identify why it is once more becoming widespread, even though most people would be very surprised to hear that slavery is even still taking place. In fact, according to Anti Slavery, one of the oldest pressure groups in the world, there may be as many as 20 million slaves in the world today – more than at any time in history.

Slavery has underpinned many major civilizations through the centuries. It has allowed cultures to flourish, involved millions of people in population transfers to other parts of the world and led to the establishment of new economies and social structures. However, slavery has been abolished everywhere under international law, so this paper will explore why it still takes place today and, in many cases flourishing.

## *2. What is Slavery?*

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Slavery is an extreme form of human rights violation. The characteristics of a slave are someone who is:

- Forced to work through mental or physical threat

- Owned or controlled by someone else
- Dehumanised – treated as property or a commodity
- Restricted in their movements or is physically constrained
- Unpaid
- Unable to leave

### ***3. History of Slavery***

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Some of the oldest known civilisations have used slaves, for example, in the ancient world there are clear accounts of slaves in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome and North Africa. Slavery is referred to in The Bible, for example the Egyptian Pharaoh Seti I enslaved the Hebrews to build cities and Solomon forced Canaanites, Moabites, Edomites and Ammonites to work for him in foundaries by the Red Sea.

Based on the records left by some of these civilisations, the following is a chronological list of the main uses of slaves in history:

#### **Mesopotamia (3500 BC to about 539 BC)**

This is the earliest definite record of slavery. The slaves used by the Mesopotamians are likely to have constructed the famous Tower of Babel for the Babylonians. There were 2 grades of slave in this society: native and foreign. The native slaves were those who had either fallen into debt or committed a crime. The foreign slaves would most likely be prisoners of war, but could also be destitutes from neighbouring towns and cities. Slaves belonged to their masters and would often wear shackles and be branded to identify their ownership.

#### **Egyptians (from about 1550 BC to about 300 BC)**

The Egyptians did not always use slaves to build their civilisation. In fact they only started extensively making use of slavery after they had been well established for about 1500 years. As they only used slaves on a fairly small scale they would probably still have developed successfully without slavery. Most of their slaves were captives brought back after foreign military campaigns.

#### **Greece (up to about 500 AD)**

Slavery was an accepted part of Ancient Greek Society and the status and treatment of slaves varied hugely. Someone could become a slave because they were in debt, they could be sold into slavery as children, they could be born into slavery or they could be a victim of kidnapping or piracy. Public slave sales took place openly in markets.

The Greeks were completely dependent on slavery, as it was slaves who undertook all the essential and manual labour. Slavery was therefore seen as a way of preserving the Greek's freedoms and, as the ancient Greeks believed that some people were born to be rulers and some born to be ruled, this idea was not seen to be at all contradictory, even though the slaves obviously did not have any freedoms.

About 1 in 4 of the population was made up of slaves. There were 3 different categories:

Public slaves - these worked in mining, as clerks, as guards and as executioners (often of other slaves).

Temple slaves – these cleaned the sacred buildings and also supplied ‘sacred’ prostitution.

Private slaves – these worked in domestic service and agriculture.

However, no slaves could fight in wars or conflicts – they could only provide services, which meant they could be oarsmen on the war ships, but could not take part in fighting.

### **The Romans (200 BC to 600 AD)**

The Romans used slaves to produce food and build cities. They were mainly captured enemy troops and were forced to work in the fields shackled together. In some areas there were so many slaves that they outnumbered the free Romans by as much as 3 – 1 and insurrections were frequent. The Romans responded by publicly punishing rebellious slaves and they particularly wanted the punishment to be both painful and degrading. This led to crucifixion becoming the standard method of execution reserved for slaves.

Although Roman slaves were absolutely under the control of their owners, they were usually kept fairly well, as they were a valuable investment. Some slaves were able to set up their own businesses for their masters and if they brought in big profits they could even earn their freedom.

When the expansion of the Roman Empire stopped and things became more stable, there was less need for the services of slaves and also less opportunity for capturing them, as there were no more invasions taking place. When the Empire finally collapsed in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, slavery had declined to almost nothing.

### **The Arabs (800 AD – 1800 AD)**

The spread of Islam through Africa in the 7<sup>th</sup> century corresponded with the next resurgence of slavery. The Arabs slowly conquered North Africa and this included, eventually, the very tough Berbers. The Berbers already had established trade routes as far away as Ghana where they swapped ivory, feathers and skins for gold, salt and slaves.

Although many African tribes sold their own people, a lot of slaves were captured in annual raids by troops from the Arab kingdom of Kanem which grew steadily in size throughout the Sub-Saharan region. They also traded their slaves in markets throughout North Africa, Egypt and the Middle East.

By the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the centre of the kingdom had expanded to Bornu, near Lake Chad in North East Nigeria and the slave trade here continued until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Apart from the ‘noble’ families, there are still 3 social groups in the Bornu which reflect their links with slavery. These are:

- i) Kambe freemen – descended from freed slaves
- ii) Kalia – either foreigners or men and women captured in war
- iii) Zuzanna – descendents of slaves, especially rank and file workers for the army

### **Sub-Saharan Africa (9<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries)**

There were various other slave-based societies in this region. These are numerous, but some include:

- Ashanti – slaves could marry and even own a slave themselves
- Housaland – slaves lived outside the cities producing food for those who lived inside
- Nupe, Borgu and Mamprussi – who worked on a feudal basis with the peasants producing all their food

- Mandingo Empire – in present-day Mali, they enslaved defeated enemies

### **Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (15<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> Century)**

At the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century there were already some black slaves in Europe (about 100/year came from Africa), they were found mainly in the various European courts as exotic curiosities. At the same time there were also white slaves and broadly speaking, they were treated the same as those from Africa. The major factor which started the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade was when the Portuguese arrived in Africa and they broke the Arab monopoly in the slave trade. A fort was set up at Elmina on the Gold Coast and this was where the Trans-Atlantic slave trade truly began.

The Trans-Atlantic slave trade was different to any previous sort of slavery for several reasons, all concerned with the exploitation of the New World (America).

The first Portuguese and Spanish settlers in America needed cheap labour and originally used the native Indians, who were in many cases keen to work and trade with the new settlers. However, they were not strong enough to do the heavy work required by the Europeans and many died, either from hard work or from the previously unencountered European diseases of smallpox and measles. Some estimates believe that the indigenous population was reduced by 2/3 over a period of 60 or so years.

This left the settlers with a labour shortage. Originally the strictly Christian Spanish had not wanted to use black Africans as labour because they were considered heathens and therefore subversive and they wanted to keep their new colonies 'pure'. However, they were now desperate.

In 1537, the Spanish Bishop Bartolome de Las Casas returned to Spain to ask Charles V for help. He had witnessed the annihilation of the indigenous people and wanted to suggest an alternative – the much stronger natives from Africa. He requested a licence for each colonist to be granted 12 African slaves. This led to a licence being granted for the right to ship 4000 blacks per year to Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica and Puerto Rico, and the Portuguese slave traders started to monopolise the Guinea coast and earn a fortune from this lucrative trade.

However, the Portuguese were also involved. They supplied the Spanish with slaves and also needed their own slaves to work in Brazil where there was a severe labour shortage. In particular they used Congolese and Angolan slaves, which became such a successful trading commodity that they no longer bothered with palm cloth and ivory as they had done before.

Of course, other countries saw the profits to be made. The Dutch West India Company was formed and in 1621 took 15,430 slaves to Brazil. It also started sending them to New Amsterdam (now New York) and was so successful that it took over the port of Elmina from the Portuguese in 1637.

The rest of Europe joined in too, including the French, the Danes, the Swedes, Germans and English.

The English involvement in slavery became particularly strong when they made the decision to open up the trade to any English merchant. Another factor was the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 which meant that England won the right to supply 144,000 black slaves into the Spanish colonies over a 30 year period.

Interestingly, at the same time black slaves were being brought to the colonies against their will, there was a group of white indentured servants (called 'engages' by the French) who also served as slaves, but often voluntarily. They worked for 3-5 years and were then given land to live on. However, as they were not permanent slaves, they were often neglected and died. Black African slaves were cared for better as they were permanent and were more expensive to

replace, as well as being considered better workers. Therefore demand for black slaves was always higher than for white slaves.

But why was there such a huge demand for slaves in the first place? One of the main reasons was sugar. Originally sugar came from India via Egypt, across the Mediterranean, and eventually to the Americas where it was a very profitable crop. Demand was massive in Europe and this led to a phenomenon known as the 'Triangular' or 'Circuit Trade'.

European slave ships sailed to Africa with wool, cotton, rum, brandy, iron and glass which they exchanged with African traders for slaves. The ships then set sail for the West Indies, Newport, Boston or Charleston, where they dropped their cargo of slaves and loaded up with sugar, tobacco, cotton and coffee. They then returned home, which completed the final leg of the triangle.

A typical ship carried around 500 slaves in extremely cramped conditions for a journey which usually took about 5 weeks. On average, about 12% of slaves died on route, from disease, suicide or violence at the hands of the ship's crew. The slaves were chained up for most of the day and fed a minimum amount of food. As they neared America, the slaves would be given more food to 'fatten' them up and would be rubbed with oil to make them look better for market.

When they arrived in America, the weak and sick slaves would be sold first. The rest would be sold at a fixed price or 'scramble sale'. The slaves would be placed together in a large yard and at the start of the sale, purchasers would be allowed to rush in together and simply grab any slaves they could get hold of.

At the peak of the slave trade, about 80,000 slaves were brought to the Americas each year and about 55-60% of these come from the West African region. This means that perhaps as many as 10 or 12 million people crossed the Atlantic as slaves during this time.

## ***4. Abolition***

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The Trans-Atlantic slave trade went generally unchallenged until the 1760s, when 18<sup>th</sup> century citizens' ideas about natural rights and liberty and a change in moral consciousness started to have an effect. Christianity also played an important part as it led to a humanitarian movement and this was a dominant force which eventually helped to change public opinion.

Probably the first abolitionists were the American religious group the Quakers. The earliest reporting of their concerns about slavery was contained in a 1688 document, The Germantown Protest which opposed both slavery and the slave trade:

*'Now, tho they are black, we cannot conceive there is more liberty to have them slaves, as it is to have other white ones... And those who steal or robb men, and those who buy or purchase them, are they not all alike?'*

The first non-Quaker to publicly express an anti-slavery viewpoint was Chief Justice Sewall of Massachusetts. He produced a pamphlet called 'Selling of Joseph' which said:

*'all Men, as they are the Sons of Adam are Coheirs; and have equal Right unto Liberty, and all other outward Comforts of Life...so that Originally, and Naturally, there is no such thing as Slavery.'*

Part of the problem was that, although they were influential, most Quakers at the time believed slavery was just one of many evils surrounding them and were not prepared to make too public a

stand against it. In addition, opponents of slavery were often thought of as fanatics and were not taken seriously.

In 18<sup>th</sup> Century Britain too, religion was influential in the eventual abolition of slavery. John Wesley, the preacher who founded the Methodist Church, was clear that even though slavery was legal, that did not make it right.

A key point in the beginning of the abolition campaign was in 1765 when Grenville Sharp, a junior civil servant in London met Jonathan Strong in the street. He was a black slave who had been beaten and almost blinded. Sharp took him to his brother, a doctor and he was nursed back to health. 2 years later, Strong's owner David Lisle discovered that he was well, so kidnapped him and sold him to a West Indian planter. Grenville Sharp was contacted and he filed a petition for assault. In turn, David Lisle issued a writ for robbing the master of his slave.

The public outrage at this case was so great that Lisle withdrew, to the disappointment of Sharp, who had wanted to use this as a test case under English law to establish that slavery was illegal. The status of slavery in England was unclear, because most of the slavery took place in the colonies, where it was legal.

He got a second chance when he rescued another slave, Thomas Lewis, but the judge, Lord Justice Mansfield ruled that because the slave master had not properly established his claim of ownership, there was no case to answer about the legality of slavery.

Finally, in 1772 Sharp was able to put another case, that of James Somersett before the Lord Justice Mansfield again. Mansfield was notoriously ambivalent towards slaves and supportive of their owners and the case was complicated because under the law in the American state of Virginia where he came from, James Somersett was clearly the property of his owner. Lord Mansfield tried hard to avoid judging this controversial case, even trying to adjourn it twice. However, he finally judged that:

*"The power claimed never was in use here or acknowledged by the law...The state of Slavery is of such a nature that it is incapable of being introduced on any reasons, moral or political, but only by positive law, which preserves its force long after the reasons, occasion, and time itself whence it was created, are erased from the memory. It is so odious that nothing can be sufficient to support it but positive law. Whatever inconveniences, therefore, may follow from the decision, I cannot say this case is allowed or approved by the law of England, and therefore the black must be discharged."*

This was hugely important because in effect, he was saying that slavery could not exist on English soil and this marked the beginning of the end of slavery throughout the British Empire.

In reality however, there were still many obstacles to overcome. Another judgement came under Lord Mansfield in 1783 regarding the slave ship Zong. 132 of the slaves on this ship were thrown overboard, allegedly because it was short of water and suffering from an epidemic. The owners wanted compensation because they considered this to be legal jettison. Lord Mansfield ruled that under law it was *"as if horses had been thrown overboard"* and so the owners were entitled to compensation. There was public outrage at this ruling, but it did at least serve to bring together the various abolitionist groups and they focussed their efforts even more strongly on achieving abolition. However, the biggest problem facing the abolitionist movement, was that they had no effective influence on the British government.

The big breakthrough came when the William Wilberforce got involved with abolitionist group, The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. He was wealthy, had strong religious principles, had good connections and had already spoken against slavery in parliament, but most importantly, he was close friends with the Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger. As a result of his influence, The Prime Minister created a select Committee of the Privy Council to investigate the slave trade.

An influential contributor to this investigation was Thomas Clarkson, an evangelical Christian, who had originally become involved in the abolitionist cause whilst studying at Cambridge University. He wrote an essay 'Is it legal to make slaves against their will?' and was so powerfully affected by what he found out about the treatment of slaves that he decided to dedicate his life to the abolition of the trade. He set about compiling a detailed dossier on the abuses taking place in the slave trade and collected shackles, thumbscrews and other instruments as well as interviewing seamen, ships doctors, slave captains and other merchants who had first hand experience of the slave trade. Although some were persuaded to tell him their experiences, he found that when it was time to present the evidence, many became reluctant. Some witnesses changed their stories or even said that the slaves had been very happy on their journeys and were looking forward to their new lives so much that there was singing and dancing.

Eventually however, enough evidence was provided to discuss slavery in Parliament.

There were other significant steps made at around the same time.

### Sierra Leone

In 1787 the new country of Sierra Leone was created in Africa when the English government bought ¼ million acres of land from a neighbouring chief. Sierra Leone was set up for "the relief of the London black poor" and the idea was to give them their own country where they could be free and prosper. Originally about 400 freed blacks and 60 Europeans settled there, but they struggled with illness and a lack of basic resources such as food, money and arms. In 1790 the St George's Bay Company set up there and things improved. Overall numbers increased when many black settlers came to Sierra Leone from Nova Scotia where they had no means of owning land.

### Public Opinion

Public opinion in England was swinging against slavery. The well-known potter Josiah Wedgwood designed a medallion for the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, showing a chained up slave with the motto "*Am I not a man and a brother?*" He made 200,000. Fashionable ladies wore cameos with the seal on them. Thomas Clarkson published a print showing how slaves were stowed on the slave ship Brookes. 300,000 housewives refused to take sugar in their tea as a protest against the enslaved sugar workers. William Cowper wrote a famous poem "The Negro's Complaint", an excerpt of which is shown below:

*'I would not have a Slave to till my ground  
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,  
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth  
That sinews bought and sold, have ever earn'd.  
We have no slaves at home – why then abroad?'*

In 1791 William Wilberforce tried to get parliament to abolish slavery. He failed – too many people had strong economic interests in maintaining it. He kept trying and had many more defeats.

The breakthrough came after the Napoleonic wars with France when Britain gained various French and Dutch sugar islands. Parliament realised that the slave trade was only increasing other country's fortunes at the expense of themselves.

Finally, the bill for abolition was passed in 1804. In 1806 another bill was passed which ended the trade in supplying foreign slaves and banned exportation of them into the colonies. Then in 1807 Lord Grenville got a bill passed which declared "*all manner of dealing and trading in slaves...utterly abolished, prohibited and declared to be unlawful*". This meant that in January 1808 slavery became completely outlawed throughout the British Empire.

However, even though slavery was now illegal in Britain or its colonies, the slave trade itself still continued. It was not until 1833 that slaves in all the British territories were finally freed, with the passing of the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery on 29<sup>th</sup> August.

The Danes had also abolished slavery, but the Spanish, Portuguese, French and Dutch still continued as actively as before. In the end, considerable financial inducements were paid in return for an agreement to stop trading, however, between 1811 and 1870 approximately 2 million slaves still crossed the Atlantic as all these countries basically flouted the conditions of these agreements.

Meanwhile, in America itself, the campaign for abolition continued separately. Freed blacks were regarded with massive suspicion – they were “felt to be a nuisance and a menace throughout the United States”, so a society was set up called the American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Color of the United States. The aim of the society was to obtain a territory somewhere in Africa where free blacks could settle and after 10 years fund raising they managed to acquire part of Liberia. However, many freed slaves did not want to go there, preferring to call themselves Americans, not Africans. By 1850 there were about 450,000 freed slaves (compared to 3,200,000 slaves.) and many of these had bought or worked for their own freedom, and did not wish to sacrifice the gains they had made.

When the American Anti-Slavery Society was formed in 1833 it became the focus for many smaller societies and had a membership of approximately 200,000 by 1838. However, it was largely ineffectual, partly as a result of its rather fanatical founder, William Lloyd Garrison.

There were also political factors to consider. One of the major complications was that there was a split between northern and southern states – in 1819 there were eleven southern states (slave states) and eleven northern states (free states). However, over the next few years, new states were created, and northerners and southerners became more at odds with one another. Interestingly in 1850 the Fugitive Slave Law was reinforced, partly in order to get the North to recognise the South’s claims of ownership over their slave property. At the same time, new states such as Kansas-Nebraska were facing the problem of whether to allow settlers to decide for themselves if they would have slavery in their territory or not. Whilst Nebraska favoured pro-slavers, in Kansas public disorder occurred as citizens fought and disagreed, leading to violence and murder.

There were also important legal judgements that slave owners could take their slaves into the northern states quite legally, to the annoyance of those in the north. These various resentments smouldered and then came to a head when, in 1860 Abraham Lincoln – an ardent supporter of anti-slavery – was elected President.

South Carolina (a slave state) declared that it was no longer part of the United States of America – the south in general thought the north was an aggressor, whereas the north saw the south as reactionaries. As this was such a huge conflict, it was probably inevitable that things could not stay the same. Abraham Lincoln declared that the United States must become either a completely slaveholding nation or a completely free one. Although his primary objective was to save the Union, he recognised that the issue of slavery was the issue splitting it, and he even stated separately that if necessary he would free all slaves, but if necessary he would free none as well, whatever it took to save the Union. And so this is how the American Civil War Started in 1861.

When war broke out, many slaves in border states fled to the north for safety and a chance to fight their cause. However, there were still those in the north who feared the vast amount of freed black slaves flooding north, as they were competition in the labour market. From 1863 when Lincoln issued an Emancipation Proclamation, and freed slaves in states considered to be rebelling, black enlistment was made possible for the first time, and whilst their pay and conditions were worse than for whites, this was a vital step. In fact black troops distinguished themselves throughout the war and fought alongside white troops for a common cause. This enraged the southerners, particularly as a lot of the recruitment took place in the south. In fact, many white officers were particularly keen to command black regiments and as the standards were so high.

Bruce Catton in 'This Hallowed Ground' explains the profound impact this war had on the way Negroes were perceived.

*"The privilege of belonging to an admittedly superior race – the deep conviction that there actually were superior and inferior races – could not be wrenched out of human society without a revolutionary convulsion. The convulsion was unthinkable, yet it was beginning to take place, even though hardly anyone had consciously willed it; it was coming down the country roads with the swaggering destructive columns in weathered blue, lying across the landscape behind the haze of smoke that came down from the ridges around Gettysburg and Chattanooga, and there was no stopping it. The bugle that would never call retreat had been heard by people who had not previously been allowed to look upon themselves as persons possessing any rights which other people were bound to respect. To end slavery was to commit the nation permanently to an ideal that might prove humanly unattainable. The inner meaning of the war now was that everything which America had done before – its dreams and hopes, its sacrifices and its hard-bought victories – was no more than prologue to a new struggle that would go on and on for generations, with a remote ideal lying dim but discernable beyond the dust of the coming years.*

*Here was the real revolution: here was the fundamental and astounding conclusion, which had been implicit in the first crash of the marsh guns around Fort Sumter, which had followed Old Glory and Palmetto Flag down so many streets amid so many gaily cheering crowds. Here was what was being bought by infinite suffering, tragedy, and loss. Here was the showdown, not to be understood at once, not to be accepted for generations, but nevertheless wholly inexorable...down the dusty roads came ten miles of Negroes, bags packed for a journey longer than any man could understand, marching toward a future that could never again be built in the image of the past...*

*De massa run ha-ha!  
De darkey stay, ho-ho!  
I tink it must be Kingdom Coming  
And de year oh Jubilo!*

*It would be that sort of year: year of Jubilo, year of overturn...hard tramp of marching military feet, endless shuffle of splay-footed refugees...the significance of their march being that it led toward the unknown and that all America like it or not, was going to follow."*

Emancipation for slaves finally came in full in 1865 when 3 million slaves were freed and the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution incorporated the final emancipation declaration. This was followed in 1870 by the Fifteenth Amendment which stated that all citizens of the United States had the right to vote regardless of 'race, color, or previous conditions of servitude'

And so began the process of integrating freed slaves into America. There were many problems to be faced and overcome by these people. Illiteracy was about 80%, many now had no land, homes, money or jobs and experienced strong hostility from white people. In addition, slaves had not had to rely on themselves before and had to learn quickly. Many children of slaves still ended up forcibly apprenticed to the old slave owners, who still needed the cheap labour they could provide. In particular, the Southern states created individual laws which served their own purposes and gave blacks only limited rights. They strenuously resisted any change imposed on them by the Northern States and hoped for a return to the situation before the Civil War.

It was around 1865 in Tennessee that a group of Confederate veterans opposed to the new found status of blacks formed a social kuklos (from the Greek for 'circle'). They started dressing in long white Halloween-type clothing and found to their surprise that their flowing ghostly looking robes terrified the superstitious blacks. This led to the development of a secret society, the Klu Klux Klan whose function was to scare blacks and re-establish white supremacy. Wearing conical white hats, they shot, hanged, drowned and burned blacks and terrorised the black population of the South. It was only the passing of legislation in the 1880s that caused the Klan to die out. It

re-emerged in the beginning of the twentieth century and the following of the Klan has increased and decreased right up to the present day. It is still a potent symbol of the most extreme form of racism towards blacks in America and one of the enduring legacies of the slavery which affected so many of them.

Freed slaves faced other problems. In 1873 Tennessee passed a series of laws known as Jim Crow laws. In effect, what this did was to give blacks 'separate but equal' status. In other words, it led to segregation; blacks and whites were effectively separated in all public places including schools, shops, trains and buses. This made it even harder for co-operation to exist between the two groups and served to reinforce feelings of inferiority amongst blacks.

The effect of these laws lasted well into the twentieth century and ensured that most blacks suffered from massively worse conditions socially and economically. In 1954 the Supreme Court was subjected to several test cases regarding segregation and found that 'the segregation of Negro children in public schools...was unconstitutional'. This finally enabled blacks to push for further rights.

In 1955 after a black bus passenger - Rosa Parks - refused to give up her seat to a white passenger and was arrested, a 25 year old black Baptist Minister named Martin Luther King organised a massive disruption of bus services. Soon after, a series of peaceful 'sit-ins' took place by blacks in white-only segregated areas, in particular lunch counters in Woolworth's stores, which eventually led to the removal of the segregation policy.

Martin Luther King led many marches to allow blacks the right to vote and, although their protests were marred by fury from whites and many injuries, President Johnson pushed through a Voting Rights Bill which basically removed the barriers to black people voting. Unfortunately though, many whites simply disregarded the civil rights of blacks. The following excerpt from 'Chaos and Community' by Martin Luther King gives a perspective on the problem:

*"Let us take a look at the size of the problem through the lens of the Negro's status in 1967...Of the good things in life he has approximately on-half of those of white; of the bad he has twice those of whites...half of all Negroes live in substandard housing...Negroes have half the income of whites...There are twice as many unemployed. The rate of infant mortality ...among Negroes is double that of whites...In elementary schools Negroes lag one to three years behind whites and their segregated schools receive substantially less money per student than do white schools. One-twentieth as many Negroes as whites attend college and half of these are in ill-equipped Southern institutions."*

Martin Luther King was shot and killed in 1968 in Memphis by an assassin, but he was massively influential in ensuring that integration actually started to take place and that blacks and whites could live together and co-exist peacefully in America.

## ***5. Types of Slavery Today***

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There are various different types of slavery taking place today. These categories are explored below, together with some of the key terms associated with slavery. These are:

- Bonded Slavery
- Chattel Slavery
- Contract Slavery
- Child Labour
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
- Early and Forced Marriage
- Trafficking

### **Bonded Slavery**

Bonded Slavery is also known as 'debt bondage' or 'bonded labour'. A person becomes a bonded labourer when they are tricked into taking out a loan and have to work to pay it off. They usually end up working long hours to repay the debt they have incurred, for very little or no pay. Corrupt owners ensure that the debt is never paid off and passes from one generation to the next. Bonded labourers often experience violence and intimidation when they try to escape from this form of slavery. The United Nations estimate that as many as 20 million people may be working as bonded labourers in the world.

### **Chattel Slavery**

Chattel Slavery is when people are bought and sold as though they were just commodities and is the closest to the old forms of slavery detailed earlier in this chapter. Chattel slaves can be captured, abducted, born into slavery, sold, inherited or given as gifts. Unusually, given that slavery is illegal, the owners often still assert ownership. The slave's children are also treated as the owner's property. This type of slavery is not very widespread and mainly takes place in North and West Africa and some Arab countries.

### **Contract Slavery**

Contract slavery is a form of deception, in that people are offered contracts of employment, but then end up enslaved because the contract is a trick. They find that they cannot escape and are threatened with violence, paid nothing and have no personal freedom at all. This is a rapidly growing form of slavery and is most commonly found in Africa, South-east Asia, some Arab states and Brazil.

A typical example of this type of slavery is the many people who are offered work as domestic workers for rich families who then travel to other countries. Once in the new country, the worker will find that they are no longer paid, they are subject to threats and violence and may have their passport withheld, in effect trapping them in a foreign country.

### **Child Labour**

Tens of millions of children work full-time instead of being educated, often in dangerous or exploitative conditions. They have little or no chance of a normal childhood and often work very long hours producing luxury goods such as carpets or cigarettes. They are valued because their small fingers can complete delicate or complex work better than the larger fingers of adults. The goods they make are then often exported to western countries, whose consumers have no idea of their source. These child slaves often kidnapped from their villages through promises of treats but end up being forced to work. In the worst conditions, child slaves are beaten continually, are frequently locked up and hidden from the outside world, get very little to eat and they never earn any money for their labour. Such a child would also have no chance of any kind of proper education either.

In some parts of the Caribbean and West Africa, there is another form of slavery involving children. Children are given or sold to be domestic servants – an acceptable way of dealing with 'extra' children. They are in effect trapped until adulthood – control is enforced by violence and they cannot freely leave.

### **Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Workers**

Children are particularly vulnerable and can be kidnapped, bought or forced to enter the sex market. They have a commercial value to their owners in the areas of prostitution and pornography and are often frequently trafficked for profit.

In Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo there is a form of sexual slavery which is linked to religion. Here, girls aged about 10 are sent into slavery for local fetish priests. They cook, clean and farm for their masters and also serve them sexually until they decide to grant freedom to the girls. Such

slaves may also bear the priest children during this time. If he does free her, then her family are often obliged to send another girl to replace her.

### **Early and Forced Marriage**

Many women are forced to marry against their will and end up living a life of total servitude, physical violence and sexual exploitation, often with much older men.

### **Trafficking**

This is the transport and trade in humans for slavery. It frequently involves women and children and deception is widely used, for example to trick people into thinking they are heading for a better life, only to discover they will be forced into domestic work or prostitution. A factor in the increase in trafficking in recent years has been the economic problems suffered by the countries of the former Soviet Union. People from these countries as well as Africa, South-east Asia and South America who are desperate for jobs are vulnerable to trafficking as they search for employment.

## **6. Factors causing the Resurgence of the Slave Trade**

In 1926 the League of Nations estimated that there were between two and five million slaves in the world, but this figure did not include forced labour. Now the figure is far higher. Slavery has been abolished everywhere under international law, but it still takes place and is effectively growing. Why is this?

Well, after the Second World War, the global population grew from approximately 2 billion to over 6 billion and this growth was particularly apparent in the developing world. At the same time, the global economy also boomed. This led to great benefits and affluence in the developed world but had the opposite effect on the developing world. Where once communities had been stable but poor, they were now pushed into destitution. This was frequently as a result of pressure from their governments to produce cash crops for the benefit of the developed world, often supported by organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It meant that local subsistence farmers who had worked in a village within a close community were now forced off their land with no support and no way to earn a living, making them extremely vulnerable.

However, being destitute does not mean that people are slaves. Another important factor is corruption which is used to take advantage of their vulnerability. Slavery is illegal, so it cannot take place without the co-operation of corrupt officials, for example the police. Slave owners often bribe officials to ignore them and their activities, which will frequently include violence towards the slaves. Therefore, in countries where there is poor law enforcement, slavery can flourish. Having said that, even countries with good levels of law enforcement can be affected by slavery, as it is so widespread.

One of the main reasons for the spread of slavery is that there is basically a surplus of slaves. In the past, slaves were a valuable commodity. An average slave in the American South in 1850 would have been worth about £40,000 in today's prices. The value of a slave now is only about £60, as they are 'disposable' and there are so many on the market.

In 'Slavery – Commodities and disposable people in the Modern World' published in 2000 by Channel 4 Television, this is explained:

*"...When the price of anything drops so much, supply and demand changes as well. Today there is a glut of potential slaves on the market, and that means they are worth very little, which in turn means they are capable of generating high profits. The amount*

*of profit to be made on slaves in 1850s Alabama averaged about 5% a year. Today profit margins start in double figures and go as high as 800%.*

*The low cost of slaves is good for the slave-holder but very bad for the slave. It means that the slave does not require special care as a major investment, and it means slaves are easily replaced. They are like the cheap plastic biro businesses buy for office use. No one worries about the care and maintenance of biro, or files titles of ownership. Biro is disposable, and so are many slaves.*

*If slaves get ill, are injured, outlive their usefulness or become troublesome to the slaveholder, they are dumped or worse. The young woman enslaved and forced into prostitution in Thailand is thrown out when she contracts HIV. The Brazilian man tricked and trapped into slavery making charcoal is tossed out when the forest is razed and there are no trees left to fell. In London an enslaved domestic worker is thrown on the street when her 'family' moves to another country."*

The article then goes on to compare old and new slavery:-

<b>Old Slavery</b>	<b>New Slavery</b>
Legal ownership asserted	Legal ownership usually not asserted
High purchase cost	Very low purchase cost
Low profits	Very high profits
Shortage of potential slaves	Glut of potential slaves
Long-term relationship	Short-term relationship
Ethnic differences important	Ethnic differences less important
Slaves maintained	Slaves disposable

It is clear from this, that there is not only supply, but demand for slaves in the modern world and it is quite likely that even more people will end up as slaves as a result.

## ***7. Rehabilitation of Slaves***

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There are many organisations and individuals working to free slaves, but often gaining their freedom is just the first step. A person who has been trapped, beaten, threatened, starved and dehumanised for many years cannot just reintegrate into society without help, particularly if that person has been a child slave.

Obviously wherever possible, it makes sense for freed slaves to go back to their families, but sometimes it may simply not be possible to trace them. Anti slavery organisations tend to get involved with the rehabilitation of slaves and a considerable period of adjustment is often needed, where they provide care and support as the newly freed person begins to understand that they are no longer captive and face the implications of freedom.

Freed slaves have all sorts of problems. Most slaves are kept slaves through the use of violence, so many will have terrible injuries, wounds and bruises. They may be malnourished, weak or have infections or diseases caused by poor diet and poor living conditions over many years. Most importantly, they are likely to be traumatised, uneducated and totally lacking in confidence.

It is often a gradual process to rehabilitate such a person. Obviously, if it is possible, their physical health should be attended to promptly and they will probably require regular and nutritional meals to improve their overall wellbeing. There may also be practical problems to overcome, for example the person who ends up in a strange foreign country, with no identification or documentation may not even speak the language.

It is however, the psychological effects of slavery which often take the longest to overcome. The following quote is from Cristina Tallens who helped to rehabilitate slaves for the Committee against Modern Slavery in Paris. In 'Slavery – Commodities and disposable people in the Modern World' she says:

*"Slavery, for the people who live it, becomes a reference point and a way of life. Rehabilitation is difficult when people have grown up in slavery. When you are a child, your parents give you the structure on which you then build your perception of yourself and the nature of life around you. The same happens when you are a child in slavery, but the structure is given to you by your master. From this structure grows a whole series of values and ideals that make up the foundation of your self and your psychology. Most people, and not just slaves, find it very difficult to question this foundation....."*

*...In spite of the violence, and the living and working conditions, people in slavery have their own mental integrity and their own mechanisms for surviving. When you disrupt this order, suddenly everything is confused. Some of the women who were freed attempted suicide.*

*It is easy to assume that this happened because of the abuse they had lived through. But for some of these women slavery had been a major psychological building-block in their lives. When that was destroyed, the meaning of their life was like a bit of paper crushed up and thrown away. They were told 'No, this is not the way it is supposed to be. Start all over again.' It was as though their life had no meaning."*

Fortunately, freed slaves can go on to have happy and fulfilling lives and many do, but there are still very many who experience terrible problems adjusting to freedom. Although there are many anti-slavery organisations, at the time of writing, there is no specialist organisation anywhere in the world that has a formally helps to rehabilitate ex slaves. Most of the anti-slavery organisations – understandably - concentrate of securing the freedom of slaves and preventing slavery taking place. This means they often do not have the resources to provide the kind of support and assistance that freed slaves often need. In consequence, much of the support given is minimal and may end with the reconciliation of slaves with their families, if indeed they can be traced at all.

## ***Conclusion***

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Slavery has spanned the ages, supporting civilisations and contributing to the economic prosperity of many. However, the loss of freedoms and the treatment endured by the enslaved is a high price to pay for such benefits, however wonderful they are. Indeed as the legacy still continues today, it should be a cautionary reminder that many of us are probably using products which can be traced either directly or indirectly to slave labour and the suffering this involves.

## *Self-Assessment Questions*

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- 1. What are the 6 factors that define slavery?*
- 2. Which civilisations have used slavery in the past?*
- 3. Why was the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade so significant compared to the types of slavery that had been experienced before?*
- 4. What was significance of the 'triangular' or 'circuit trade' in allowing the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade to flourish?*
- 5. Why is slavery more prevalent today than at any other time?*
- 6. Which groups are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and slavery today?*
- 7. What are some of the problems faced by freed slaves?*