

North atlantic slave trade assignment

[History](#)



HIST1105 Essay Question: Edward Long justified slavery in 1774 by arguing that black Africans’ “ narrow intellect” and “ bestial smell” implied that they might almost be of a different species. What part did racism play in establishing and maintaining the north Atlantic slave trade? Response: With the discovery and colonisation of the New World, white Europeans had to establish a workforce to perform the transformation of vast areas of land.

Massive vegetation clearance, road construction, building development, establishing and maintaining food supplies and service to those who were entrusted with the management of the new found colonies, the demand for manual labour to establish the new colonies as independent identities from the mainland was a massive undertaking. The majority of white Europeans in the colonies during this time believed that manual, ordinary labour was far beneath their status; therefore, there was a requirement for sourcing ongoing cheap, ‘ appropriate’ labour.

The Atlantic slave trade, or Maafa as some African and African-American scholars call, was established and originated due to the need for cheap labourers. As the land was inexpensive and available, many free European immigrants were able to become landowners quite quickly, which in turn increased their need for workers in the New World. Millions of Africans were traded and kidnapped to labour on cotton, sugar, cocoa and coffee plantation, in houses to work as servants, in gold mines and in rice fields.

Historical scholars who perceive quite different perspectives continue to argue about whether slavery was the cause of racism or racism was the cause of slavery between the white and blacks. One aspect that is very

evident in either argument is that money was the root, however along with other evidence, the argument of slavery coming before racism has more support. Originally the first merchants who entered the slave trade did it to make money and to earn profits so they were willing to enslave anyone who could legally work for them for little or no cost, they weren't necessarily prejudiced against the Africans.

There were laws in place protecting the rights of white Europeans which meant plantation owners were unable to have complete control over people in order to enslave them, leaving the option of using Africans as their labourers. Furthermore, once the trade developed and a foundation of economic profit had been laid, racism began playing a rather large role within the white society to maintain many years of success for the reason that its primary function was built on financial terms.

It became useful to the Europeans to view the black people as inferior beings, mere property to be used for trading, leading to a given notion that this practice was morally acceptable. This then began rumours of the black's savagery and stupidity emerging into a new set of beliefs and an ideology that justified slavery. It was seen as " slave equals black, black equals slave" . The trade affected the communities within Africa, showing how racism is not the upmost main driver for the slave trade because many African tribal leaders were selling their own in exchange of military weapons and goods.

Another origin of racism in the civilised, white society includes the forms of supremacy that the white people had over the blacks. The whites managed to have unlimited power, giving them the ability to rule over the African

people, resources, events and history; as soon as the Europeans touched down on Africa, all African power was lost. Power may be referred to as one's ability to influence social structure upon communities, individuals and societies. This authority can also be used to influence people's rights, choices, wishes and beliefs to being able to get things done and to make progress in achieving ones goals.

Europeans saw themselves as being superior and thus used negative power to abuse and exploit the Africans. Once again the European countries had the economic power over Africa in order to take advantage of it. The white people were able to control, lead and influence the slaves which in turn were used to generate more power to them. Through failed attempts of fighting against their attackers that had sophisticated machine guns and weapons, the blacks were captured and used as labourers.

For the African rulers to be strong they needed fire arms which could only be obtained from Europeans by selling their people for slaves. Under the power held by white people, Africans experienced being kept in dungeons, being victims of sexual, psychological, physical and emotional abuse. Most married African women would have had strong and blessed marriages within their communities before they were captured, however slave masters and priests would be demanding for kisses from the married women. The slaves received inhuman treatment during the trade without any dignity or respect from their white superiors.

Different racial stereotypes were often developed by the white Europeans about the Africans during the trade period, which in fact continued on long

after the great disaster ended. There were comparisons in criticism towards the black people; however there was one main view of which they were drawn upon, this was that they were described as naive, ignorant and superstitious, moreover many assumptions were made based on their physical appearance. These stereotypes were caused and maintained by racism which had come as a result of the slavery.

Further, they created a problem which continues to stay as “stereotyping objects in popular culture that depict blacks as servile, primitive, or simpleminded and explains how the subtle influences of such seemingly harmless images reinforce anti-black attitudes.” Blacks are often portrayed as poor, lazy, very religious, criminals, and violent; these thoughts of their culture are unrealistic. The idea of ‘race’ in the United States was based on peoples’ skin colour and characteristics.

White people would perform shows that portrayed the blacks and their supposed stupidity, by using grease paint or shoe polish to darken their skin, they would then act out their impression of the Africans as buffoonish and superstitious, often wearing ragged clothes and woolly wigs, and exaggerating their lips. In 1844 the Secretary of State John C. Calhoun argued for an extension of the slavery as he stated ‘here (scientific confirmation) is proof of the necessity of slavery. The African is incapable of self-care and sinks into lunacy under the burden of freedom. It is a mercy to give him the guardianship and protection from mental death. There were comparisons of how the white people saw the Africans during the slave trade, and how they really felt about the situation of exploiting the blacks. Some people were persuaded that the slave trade was a good idea, some

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were against it at first but then went along with, while there were very few who were against the trade and stood up for the Africans. Edward Long had been associated with Jamaica during the period of the slave trade, where he was a British colonial administrator and historian. Long was a writer on slavery with his greatest publication the History of Jamaica.

The History of Jamaica is based on the 1665 to 1774 period giving the reader an insight into the economic, political, and social history. It contains a vast amount of information regarding the different aspects of the island, and of which is still an essential Caribbean history. However, Long's work is written strongly through the support he had for the plantocracy in which he would emphasize plantocracy's right to rule Jamaica, defending the institution of slavery. Long took his racist justifications of slavery to the extreme by claiming that black people differed 'from other men not in kind, but in species'.

Despite the fact that The History of Jamaica was read by many, his arguments that black people were naturally inferior to Whites were found by many to be deeply offensive. He stressed that the Negroes had no redeeming qualities, distinguishable from the rest of mankind in which perfection could be found among all other men. Not only does he educate on his view of the Africans' appearance but also his thoughts that the blacks did not show any appreciation for the arts, nor the ability to invent. His book was considered an influence towards racist ideology development within the 19th century.

Thomas cooper was an American academic, another white man which supported the institution of slavery, however his earlier viewpoint on the action of slavery was in fact the very opposite. Cooper was one who fought passionately against " that infamous and impolitic traffic" . Before arriving in America Cooper claimed that " as Englishmen, the blood of the murdered African is upon us, and upon our children, and in some day of retribution he will feel it, who will not assist to wash off the stain", however he soon changed his mind when he arrived in America. He accepted slavery completely and stated his doubt that " in South Carolina or Georgia... he rich lands could be cultivated without slave trade". Cooper mistakenly believed " that negroes were incapable of affection, fidelity and gratitude" , when he had no real understanding about them. An English historian and Politian by the name of Bryan Edwards was another who supported the slave trade. He stressed about the " faults" within the African race during the trade period. Edwards was the author of the History, civil and commercial, of the British colonies in the West Indies, in which he mentions his friend, Sir William Young. Sir William Young was different to the other men, as he had good mutual relations towards the blacks.

Overall, the unfair stereotyping and criticism of the Blacks was racist fuel which helped successfully maintain the slave trade to keep the use of Africans as labourers. Racism is seen as the dominant factor causing the development and maintenance of the trade; however there are still other factors that contribute in a considerate amount to show that racism was not the only issue. The increasingly high demand for labourers is one example of an influencing factor as there was a rise for the need to provide raw

materials necessary for the British to provide goods, using the North American land.

Since the trade, the United States has been respected around the world as an international business powerhouse, moreover with the root of their success coming from the exploitation of the African slaves. Further, only the wealthy Europeans could afford goods produced by the Africans slave trade at first, however, the goods increasingly became more affordable to those within the middle class which forced a push in demand for more slaves. The slaves needed to be available once again for little or no cost, therefore the need to exploit Africans rather than their own.

There was very little economy to begin with and with an expanding New World a work force was needed and no European wanted to travel over to perform the farming tasks themselves. African's resilience to disease also made them a target for slavery. Originally the Europeans tried using Indians as slaves, however they did not cope well against European disease and many would die. Unfortunately, they didn't have the generic or cultural defences against some of these diseases. Within the New World Europeans suffered when attempting to work under tropical disease and they weren't suited to the climate there.

On the other hand however, the Africans were seen as excellent workers because they not only had the agricultural experience but they were also used to a tropical climate. They were able to be pushed to work harder on the plantations and mines as their resistance to the tropical diseases aloud then, resulting in a benefit to the New World economy. * Conclusion: It is

clear and evident that because the white Europeans within New World believed themselves to be superior to people of different colour, ethnic backgrounds, religion and wealth, that their actions resulted in ‘ racism’ behaviour.

The manner in which the slaves were, bought, transported and worked shows a definite lack of respect for the African nation as a whole. They were certainly not treated as equal individuals, but as a lowly class of people well beneath the race of the white Europeans. BIBLIOGRAPHY Primary Sources Cooper, Thomas. “ Letters on the Slave Trade. ” In the British Transatlantic Slave Trade Vol III, ed. John Oldfield (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2003), 19-56. Cooper, Thomas. Tracts, ethical, theological, and political. Warrington and London: np, 1789. Edwards, Bryan.

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