

The south and the world



Peter Kolchin was a history professor at the University of Delaware. He received his degree in 1970 from the John Hopkins University. He mainly specialized in the United States history of the 19th century slavery and emancipation and comparative history of the South. He wrote many books about slavery in his career. For instance he wrote books such as American Slavery, Unfree Labour: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom and Sphinx on the American Land: The nineteenth century South in Comparative Perspective. In addition to this he won many prizes like the Bancroft prize, the Craven award, Charles Sydnor Award and Francis Alison Award which is the University of Delaware's highest faculty honour for research teaching and service. Presently he studies emancipation and its results in Russia and U. S South (Kolchin 70). 'American Slavery' is a book which studies slavery in America and closely looks at the lives of people involved in the institution of slavery. Slaves were imported from Africa back sixteen hundred years ago. The slaves provided labour freely in the plantations where they planted cash crops and remained as farm workers. The life of the slaves was full of hardship. They were overworked and sometimes did not get enough food. Some Slave Holders also whipped the slaves making their life hard and pathetic. The act of capturing and taking away slaves led to breakdown of families. Social, religious and economic conditions were also emphasized in the book. They influenced some events in the history of slavery. Slaves were not allowed to practice their own religion. They were forced by the whites to convert to their own religion. They established schools for the African slaves where they were taught their Christian doctrine. The whites saw the African religion and culture as backward. Even the few slaves who rejected the new

religion were forced in to it. The whites wanted to use labour provided by the slaves to boost their economic life. Slaves worked through out the day but never enjoyed the fruits of their sweat. Whites took advantages of the slaves because the raw materials were manufactured into raw materials and sold back to the African at a higher price. The whites discriminated the slaves to the highest degree. They had their schools, hospitals, and dwelling places (Kolchin 71).

Slave owners did not see any problem in the way they treated the slaves. The relationship between the master and the slave allowed whipping when a slave was found to work slowly. The book evaluates people who provide basic needs for people in return for free labour with no opportunity for free will as having interesting outcomes. According to the author some slave owners had minimal impacts on the slaves. Some of them allowed the slaves to have social and religious practices of their own choice and they viewed the slaves as human beings and not properties. In some cases the slaves resisted openly while others provided a less obvious resistance through working at a slow rate, pretending to be sick or striking.

The dual nature of emancipation which resulted from the American Civil war led to liberation of the slaves and the poor whites of the south. Slaves were released from the border but this did not change their skin colour thus the white people looked for other means of maintaining their racial supremacy. Racial discrimination was very high among the southern people where people separated in churches, schools, hospitals and other public places. The poor whites were allowed to participate fully in all aspects. The book

therefore deals in deep with slavery and its consequences in the southern part of America.