

# American slavery essay 3



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Slavery, especially in America, has been an age old topic of riveting discussions. Specialist and other researchers have been digging around for countless years looking for answers to the many questions that such an activity provided. They have looked into the economics of slavery, slave demography, slave culture, slave treatment, and slave-owner ideology (p. ix).

Despite slavery being a global issue, the main focus is always on American slavery. Peter Kolchin effectively illustrates in his book, *American Slavery* how slavery evolved alongside of historical controversy, the slave-owner relationship, how slavery changed over time, and how America compared to other slave nations around the world. Slavery evolved in many different ways over the years. America was truly changed by slavery and is evident when Kolchin states that “ The colonial era saw the emergence in America of a true slave society, the transformation of a society in which some people were slaves into which slave labor formed the basis of the economy and social order (p. 8).

” The economy, the way of life, and culture were all transformed when the first indentured servants came over. Throughout the seventeenth century, labor was mainly done by indentured servants. In the 1680’s however, the mainland colonies took on a massive shift from indentured to slave labor. With the demand rising in the colonies and the lack of availability of indentured servants, black slaves became the most popular choice. According to Kolchin, “ slaves were held permanently rather than for a few years, and female slaves passed their status to their children (p. 2),” and that “ slaves also offered masters a reduced level of successful flight (p.

13),” which were two main reasons of the permanent switch to pure slavery. The shift from indentured servants to slaves was one of the most influential switches in the American economy and changed the way that the nation felt towards blacks. Such a dramatic switch as the one from indentured servants to slaves was not the only transformation in American slavery. Slaves underwent many integral changes as the years of servitude progressed. The slave-owner relationship directly represented how times changed for slaves while working. As they were brought over to America and were in culture shock, they were often treated like absolute dirt.

The inferiority of slaves is illustrated as Kolchin states that “ It was easy to look upon Africans in an instrumental manner: they were “ savages” imported to work, and few planters expressed much interest in their lives, except for a lively concern with training them in that work or securing their obedience (p. 59). ” As time progressed however, and less slaves were directly from Africa, the ideology towards slaves changed. Kolchin writes that “ Slave owners were changing too: just as the slaves were becoming America-born, so, too, were the masters (p. 59).

” Slave owners started to look at slaves at as people instead of objects. This was a very monumental step in slavery. Slaves began to gain more freedoms from their masters. These freedoms included religious Sundays off, family visitations, and the ability to make money on the side. While some slaves were still met with the hardships of harsh southern slave owners beating them, as time went on, slaves became more of family friends then servants. However much slavery evolved though, it was never a truly good thing.

Despite slave relations with their masters, they were still slaves, and overall still treated like one. Slavery did not only change in forms and relationships, but also who actually was enslaved. The very first slaves were both of white and Indian descent. To illustrate this, Kolchin writes that “ they saw nothing particularly noteworthy about some people working-even under constraint-for the well-being of others as they experimented with forced labor on Indians and Europeans before resorting to that of Africans (p.

4). ” This did not last long however. White slave owners realized however that black slaves worked more efficiently, especially more than Indians. Blacks came along because there was an unlimited supply and a strong work ethic was already prevalent.

They could also be controlled more easily in a foreign environment such as America. With blacks being such an easy form of labor, there was never any reason to experiment with a new or different race of people. Despite popular belief, slavery was not only present in America. Many other nations implied forced labor systems such as Russia and the Caribbean Islands.

The most ironic part is the fact that slavery was nowhere near as bad in America as it was in the southern nations. Those southern nations had more slaves by far, worse working conditions, and the treatment by the masters was severely worse. Kolchin illustrates that how “ In Russia, where serfs were in many ways indistinguishable from slaves- peasants were typically regarded as constituting the lowest element of society...(p. 52)” Even though they were different systems, the British colonies and Russia both had “... governments that made provisions eased for the economic security of the

masters, providing various forms of compensation for the loss of their human property (p. 198).

" Kolchin goes into great detail trying to inform people of how serious slavery was not only in America but in the entire world. Slavery is possibly the single most controversial topics in American history. While not limited to America, it is most popularly labeled of being in America. Kolchin does a good job illustrating how slavery had evolved over the years along with how slavery affected almost everyone in the nation.

He details how slavery varied from place to place and the fact that slavery was not the same in principle. Different nations had different beliefs and they are shown by the different types of slave-owner relationships that were present in the book. No matter where it was in the world, slavery was never good and is probably one of the most tragic time periods in world history.