

American view of slavery from 1790 to 1820s

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SLAVERY 1790 – 1820's American View of Slavery from 1790 to 1820's.

Introduction: Before the mid-fifteenth century, the North American continent was home only to native Americans or Indians as the Europeans came to call them. From 1450 to 1750, European explorers and later European settlers who came to America transformed the lands and used the natural wealth of the country. They also travelled to Africa where they began a trans-Atlantic slave trade, that would bring millions of Africans to the Americas as well. This slave trade was to lead to a new social and economic system, where the colour of one's skin would determine whether one would lead a life of enslavement or freedom¹.

Slave Trade: The Europeans justified the slave trade by proclaiming that they were providing an opportunity for Africans to become Christians. By the 17th century the removal of slaves from Africa became a holy cause that had the full support of the Christian church. (Walvin 1983).

Also, race and racism provided the excuse slave owners needed to allow themselves to own slaves without feeling guilty. " Slavery was not a side show in American history", says Dr. James Horton of George Washington University; " It was the main event".

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In his book *American Slavery – American Freedom*, Edmund S. Morgan makes a searching study of the tragic contradiction which was at the core of America, as seen in Virginia. It was the first state to start the freedom struggle through the Revolution and was also the largest slave holder in the country. The labor of enslaved Africans proved crucial in the development of South Carolina, Georgia, and Maryland, and contributed indirectly through commerce to the fortunes of New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. The Africans were made to work on fields to grow rice, cotton, indigo, sugarcane, tobacco, etc. They also worked in the commercial economy and as domestic servants². Slavery took deepest root in Louisiana and other territories in the South. Several revolts and uprisings took place, in protest against the inhuman conditions and treatment meted out to the Africans.

The Revolution and Declaration of Independence: The American war for independence from Great Britain was from 1775 to 1783. The Declaration of Independence was adopted on 4th July, 1776. After victory in the war, a new nation was born between 1784 to 1790. The enslaved found inspiration from the wording of the Declaration of Independence in which <https://assignbuster.com/american-view-of-slavery-from-1790-to-1820s/>

equality and right to

liberty had been stressed, as also in the Constitution which took effect from 4th March, 1789.

The Great Awakening was a revitalizing of religion that swept through the American colonies

from the 1730's to the 1770's, producing political consequences³. It pulled communities that

were drifting apart back together, and introduced new concepts and perceptions.

Earlier, cotton was only a side crop. But with the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney, a

device designed to separate the cotton from the seeds and the seed pods, the economic value of

plantation slavery was re-inforced in 1793. The cotton-growing industry was revolutionized by

the invention, increasing production fifty-fold, and the demand for slave labour.

The United States prohibited slave trade in 1808. Most states had already proclaimed

emancipation. However, after the war of 1812, the United States claimed slaves to be property,

and demanded their return by the United Kingdom. When Abraham Lincoln came to power as

President of the United States in 1860, he was determined to abolish slavery.

After the American

Civil War between the Northern and Southern states on the issue of slavery,

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the United States

finally abolished slavery by the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865.

However, the

internal slave trade continued for another half century. (Wikipedia, the Online Encyclopaedia).

White paranoia of Black presence caused a tightening of legal and economic restrictions

against blacks, from 1815 onwards. The Africans had to face a lot of discrimination⁴.

Conclusion: In the period between 1790 to 1820's , we see that slavery is revived and continued

although abolition of human bondage as a concept takes root, both politically and from religious enlightenment. The nation is transformed by the economic advantage of slavery.

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