

# Slave revolts

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Historical Analysis on the Issue of Slavery  
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Slavery has been an enormous global issue and is one of the most talked about topics that historians give scholarly attention for centuries.

Horace Mann (2008) defined slavery as any circumstance where a person is being owned by another, is considered as a property and is stripped off of his or her rights. In the United States, this form of freedom oppression took place around 1776 until 1863 where the Emancipation Proclamation was upheld and all slaves received freedom. The movie *Amistad* epitomizes the harsh treatment and mindset of society on servitude, the struggles of African slaves to regain personal liberty and the sudden change of these views as the country move forward to the new era.

Set in 1839, *Amistad* reveals the story of a group of recently captured West African slaves aboard the ship of *La Amistad* from the coast of Cuba, their unexpected voyage to the United States and their plight for freedom under legal complexities. Their leader Cinque recounts that they were illegally taken to a slave fort in the British territory of Sierra Leone in Africa. They were enslaved and eventually transported and sold to Cuban slave markets. During the transatlantic journey, the slaves suffered from torture, random execution and even rape. Because of the horrible conditions that these men endured, the thirst for freedom conquered their fears that led to a revolt aboard *La Amistad*. The slaves killed their captors in cold blood and directed the remaining crew to bring them back in their home country. However, the ship crew brought them in the United States instead, and the series of legal battle against slavery followed that eventually reached the Supreme Court. The issue of slavery in society up stretched the immoral and callous truth of treating a fellow human being as an object of property and as a marginal

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individual. In the course of the Amistad uprising, whites bought black African slaves, or anyone with African descent, for additional labor either for their household or in agricultural plantations. Very little rights were given to slaves, while their fate, reproduction and survival belong solely to their owners. It was an atrocious normal way of life as supported by law and politics during that era. Nonetheless, the centuries-worth of suppression gradually developed into an eruption of violence through rebellion and mass disobedience, which later pushed to the American Civil War (Mann, 2008). In addition to the Amistad case, the U. S. Supreme Court backed up the previous ruling of the lower court to give the captured slaves their freedom as supported by the law of illegal slave trading. This is indeed a commendable resolution considering that the crime committed by the slaves was done outside the U. S. jurisdiction. Furthermore, new laws were created to progressively abolish slavery, as embraced in the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Former slaves were given rights that are equal among all men in the North while few states in the South reluctantly uphold enslavement brought by demands from the thriving cotton plantations during that period. Strong campaigns for abolitionism called for moral and political change that has been the catalyst for the Civil War and establishment of free soil states (Mann, 2008).

Since the origins of slavery cannot be traced due to its ancient history, it is logical that the abolition of this idea in people's minds has been a tedious process. No wonder that even if slavery was ended in the XIX century, racial segregation and white supremacy were still evident in the 1960s.

Nevertheless, the freedom that Americans enjoy at present is owed from the forefathers that crusaded for change. Liberty and equality are essential to

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every man, thus slavery is a mistake from the past that people need not forget.

#### References

Mann, H. (2008). Slavery. Applewood Books.