

Struggles against slavery

International Year to Commemorate
the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition



international year to commemorate the struggle against slavery and its abolition
année internationale de commémoration de la lutte contre l'esclavage et de son abolition
año internacional de conmemoración de la lucha contra la esclavitud y de su abolición

السنة الدولية لإحياء ذكرى مكافحة الرق وإلغائه

Международный год, посвященный борьбе с рабством и его отмене

纪念反对和废除奴隶制国际年

2004





Message from the Director-General of UNESCO on the occasion of the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition (2004)

The slave trade and slavery constitute one of the darkest chapters in the history of the world. This dehumanizing enterprise, challenging the very basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and roundly condemned by the international community, in particular at the Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance which labelled it a « crime against humanity », gives us all cause for thought and requires each and every one of us to exercise due vigilance.

UNESCO welcomes the proclamation of 2004 by the United Nations General Assembly as « International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and its Abolition », marking as it does the two-hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the first Black republic, Haiti. Ten years after the launch of the UNESCO project on « The Slave Route », the whole world is thus afforded an opportunity not only to fulfil the necessary duty to remember a tragedy without precedent, but also to publicize the countless influences of this enforced dialogue on the cultures and civilizations of Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean. Aside from looking at the past, the intention is to sound the alarm about all forms of contemporary racism, discrimination and intolerance, and thus to set the stage for a greater awareness of the need to respect human beings.

By institutionalizing memory, resisting the onset of oblivion, recalling the memory of a tragedy that for long years remained hidden or unrecognized, and by assigning it its proper place in the human conscience, we respond to our duty to remember. To that end, we must promote the history of the slave trade and slavery, and make it known to the general public ; we must also devote ourselves to rigorous scientific research that highlights the whole historical truth about the tragedy in a constructive perspective. As a matter of urgency this major episode in the history of humanity, whose consequences are permanently imprinted in the world's geography and economy, should take its full place in the school textbooks and curricula of every country in the world.

In celebrating the bicentenary of the first Black republic and commemorating the great abolitionists, we shall forget neither the events which preceded it in Saint-Domingue between 1791 and 1804 and which eventually led to the freeing of the peoples of the Caribbean and Latin America, or the broader and more complex history of the abolition of slavery, a weave of substantial philosophical, political, legal, cultural and social advances and also of tragic setbacks. The triumph of the principles of liberty, equality and the dignity of human rights will thus be highlighted. This major milestone in the history of the liberation of peoples and the emergence of the States of the Americas and the Caribbean should be better known and recognized.

However, this commemoration must also provide the setting for a more meaningful dialogue among cultures and civilizations. By retracing the cultural interactions brought about by the slave trade, which transported so many African men and women far from the land of their birth, we can indeed celebrate the extraordinary meeting of cultures born of this enforced dialogue. It has worked a profound and lasting transformation in the Americas and the Caribbean, bringing to the continent cultural traditions, forms of ingenuity, technical and scientific knowledge, skills and spirituality which are all now inseparable from American and Caribbean cultures. Knowing and recognizing the major imprint of African cultures on the formation of the world's cultures and civilizations will therefore be the second objective of the commemoration.

Through this restitution of history it should be possible to establish an appropriate framework for the promotion of a fair dialogue between peoples with due regard for the universality of human rights and to confirm our commitment to combat all contemporary forms of slavery and racism, as we are invited to do by the final Declaration adopted by the Durban Conference. Understanding and analysing in depth this historical experience will surely enable us to understand more fully the discrimination that is manifest in today's world, and to commit ourselves with reinforced conviction to the fundamental values of human dignity, with a view to building a worthy and lasting future.

Ensuring universal awareness of the tragedy of the slave trade and slavery is thus an essential task which has relevance not only for the past but also for the present and the future. Its educational, ethical and civic importance can be considerable if we manage to give it sufficient attention. That is why I am calling for greater participation, by civil society as a whole and by the public and private sectors in all Member States, so that they can all, in their own way, take an active part in celebrating 2004.

Koïchiro Matsuura





Programme to Commemorate the Year 2004

Introduction

Slavery has been practised in many forms and in many civilizations since antiquity. The slave trade is one of these forms, but in view of its duration, its extensiveness and its consequences, it constitutes the biggest tragedy in the history of humanity. Between the XVIth and XIXth centuries millions of Africans were deported to plantations in the New World, thus depleting the African continent of its most precious human resources.

The forced displacement of millions of Africans and the loss of their heritage of traditions, know-how and ideals, had a determining influence on the shaping of new cultures in the world. This paradox lies behind « The Slave Route » project, a UNESCO initiative launched in Ouidah, Benin, in 1994 with two objectives : first, to break the silence surrounding the slave trade today, which constitutes an aspect of the history of humanity that cannot be ignored; and second, to highlight, in the most objective manner, its consequences, that is to say, the transformation of the world and the interactions between the peoples of Europe, Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean.

The year 2004 offers an exceptional occasion to draw international attention to the fight against slavery and its abolition, marking as it does the bicentenary of the first Black Republic, proclaimed in 1804 following the uprising of Saint Domingue (Haiti).

It was in this spirit that the General Assembly of the United Nations, at the request of the General Conference of UNESCO, proclaimed 2004 as the **International Year to Commemorate the Struggle Against Slavery and its Abolition** (December 2002, 57th session of the General Assembly). The United Nations wished thereby to highlight the achievements of UNESCO's project, « The Slave Route », which led to the recognition of slavery as a « crime against humanity » by the World Conference Against

Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, August-September 2001).

Within the framework of this International Year, UNESCO wishes to add to our knowledge of the slave trade and slavery throughout the world and to emphasize the resulting interactions, as well as the philosophic, political, and legal dimensions of the abolition process.

Objectives

UNESCO, as lead agency for this International Year, has set itself the following objectives :

- Raise awareness among the Organization's Member States of the horrors of the slave trade and slavery, as well as the struggles that led to its abolition ;
- Celebrate the bicentenary of the Haitian Revolution, which resulted in the creation of the first Black Republic, and consequently encouraged the progressive emancipation of the peoples of the Caribbean and South America ;
- Mobilize the international community, the academic world and civil society to clarify the aftermath of this tragedy and exert a renewed vigilance against new forms of slavery.

More especially, some precise objectives have been set :

- Ensure a deepened knowledge of the slave trade and of slavery for the emergence of a new historic consciousness in and beyond the countries that were affected by this history ;
- Restore broken links and broaden solidarity between the African continent and its diasporas, in particular through the networking of its intellectual community ;

- Study and promote the modalities of this dialogue between cultures, and foster peaceful coexistence between peoples by highlighting the interactions generated by the slave trade and slavery in artistic expressions, spiritual traditions and the transfer of know-how ;
- Collect and disseminate scientific information on the abolition of slavery; Study and visit the places and sites of this history; Celebrate the events that marked the abolition process and the memory of the personalities who, in whatever capacity, pioneered such abolition.

Main fields of actions

The national and international strategies fostered by the « The Slave Route » project, in addition to the recognition of the slave trade and of slavery as a crime against humanity by the World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, have enabled several priority actions fields of action to be defined.

UNESCO's action for the International Year - launched on 10 January by the Director-General of UNESCO at the Cape Coast Fortress in Ghana, one of the key sites of memory of the slave trade – is centred around three main thrusts : « **Scientific Research** », « **Living Memory** », and « **Encounters and Dialogue** ».

Scientific Research

The contribution of scientific research should consist in projects focusing on specific regions of Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas, with an emphasis on the documents that are essential for the reconstruction of the forced migration of enslaved populations. In addition, the following research activities have been suggested :

- Reinforce « The Slave Route » project and develop research on slavery and its abolition by extending it to other regions of the world, such as the Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and trans-Saharan regions;

- Envision new means of dissemination of the results of research through visual images, electronic communication, the publication of written and audio documents, the organization of regional and international conferences and seminars on the history of the slave trade, slavery, and its abolitions, as well as the great figures of abolitionism. Centralize and facilitate access to sources and the creation of a network of specialists. On the occasion of the 15th International Congress on Archives (Vienna, Austria, August 2003), an international conference on the archives of the slave trade will take place within the framework of the project, « Archives of the Slave Trade » ;
- Study the links between the slave trade, slavery and contemporary racism. Set up specific scientific research programmes on the influence of slavery on the cultures of all the countries concerned ;
- Conduct research on contemporary forms of servitude and slavery in collaboration with the International Labour Organization and UNICEF, and put in place a database on this issue ;
- Initiate a study on the links between slavery and cultural diversity : miscegenation of cultures, music, multilingualism, Creole, culinary arts, and modes of dress, for example.

Living memory

This line of action concerns both the transmission of memory, which may be through the descendants of former slaves, and the necessary revitalization of the memory of the young, in particular, by showing the tangible and intangible traces of slavery and its abolition.

UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet) has arranged for the mobilization of 7,500 schools in 170 countries around the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle Against Slavery and its Abolition. Centred around the flagship project entitled « Breaking the Silence – Teaching about the Transatlantic Slave Trade » (TST), youth forums are being held in Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, and Europe. The revision of school text books and the promotion of intercultural learning and mutual respect between cultures are

the objectives of an action programme that includes the experimentation of innovative pedagogical materials. Other initiatives are proposed, such as :

- The creation of a documentation and research centre in Goree, one of the key sites of memory connected to the slave trade, having links with other important sites, such as Auschwitz (Poland) or Robben Island (South Africa);
- The development of a travelling exhibition : « Lest We Forget : The Triumph over Slavery », organized in cooperation with The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York, in addition to other regional or national exhibitions, in traditional form, as well as on-line ;
- The inventory of monuments, prisons, markets, but also of the sites of resistance and memory of the slave trade that still exist, and the recommendation that they be restored and preserved with a view to their possible inscription on the World Heritage List. About ten significant sites forming part of the « The Slave Route » have already been so inscribed and can be a starting point for itineraries which will reconstitute a grievous route of memory. This route of memory must be based on the compilation of oral traditions, legends, anecdotes, and proverbs that perpetuate tragedies, struggles, and hopes across generations ;
- The evaluation of projects to create museums on the slave trade and slavery in Africa, the Caribbean, and in the Indian Ocean. In the archeology field, UNESCO is sponsoring, for example, the project « Forgotten Slaves » by the Groupe de Recherche en Archéologie Navale (France) that works on the recently discovered wreck of a slave ship, L'Utile, of the French Company of the East Indies which sank in 1761 near the Tromelin Island (Indian Ocean). The wreck of the Fredensborg has been given comparable attention ;
- The organization of celebrations commemorating the great figures of abolitionism ;
- The creation by UNESCO of a medal to commemorate Toussaint Louverture and the struggle against racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance.

Encounters and Dialogue

In the framework of an extreme situation of forced encounters, links have been created between different cultures. This paradoxical dialogue brings a positive response to the defense of human dignity and cultural diversity considered by UNESCO as crucial for a peaceful coexistence.

With a view to retracing and fostering such encounters at national and interregional levels, it is proposed to organize public debates on television and radio, conferences, symposia and workshops with the participation of representatives of scientific, intellectual, artistic and political circles, as well as other stakeholders of civil society.

Among these initiatives :

- Mobilize the African intellectual diaspora, on the occasion of the third Congress of African, American and Caribbean Writers, which will address the theme « From the Abolition of Slavery to the Struggle Against Colonialism and the Place of Black People in a Globalized World » ;
- Study and highlight the forms of artistic expression – notably music – directly inherited from the slave trade and slavery : jazz, salsa, samba, drum music; for example, a Gala by Gilberto Gil is scheduled in Paris, as well as a concert around the work of Chevalier de Saint-Georges ;
- Analyze the influence of the slave trade and slavery on literature and the visual arts. In association with UNESCO, the Smithsonian Festival of Folklore will take place in Washington in June and July 2004 and will be dedicated to « Haiti : Freedom and Creativity »;
- Conduct studies on the transfer of knowledge ; the migrations and acculturations of intangible cultural heritage will equally be underscored ;
- Celebrate specific « days », such as the « International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination » (21 March), the commemorative day of the death of Toussaint Louverture (7 April), the « World Day of Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development » (21 May), the « Africa Day » (25 May), the « International Day

for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition » (23 August), the « International Day for Tolerance » (16 November), the « International Day for the Abolition of Slavery » (2 December) and « Human Rights Day » (10 December).

In order to ensure a wide dissemination of information in this year of commemoration and to implement efficiently the initiatives planned for 2004, a number of activities will be recorded. Co-productions between television and radio will be encouraged. The diffusion will also include the production of audiovisual and printed documents :

- A video clip on the slave trade, slavery, and abolitionist struggles will be available and disseminated around the world. On this occasion, a special issue of the Courier will be published by UNESCO ;
- The production of a documentary film and a DVD on the slave trade and slavery in Africa, the Americas and Caribbean and on fugitive slaves ;
- The reissue of films such as Tamango and Roots ;
- The production of a CD-Rom using a database compiled through the « The Slave Route » project ;
- The publication of Atlases illustrating the African influences on the New World between the 14th and 19th centuries ;
- The republication or translation of classic books on the slave trade and its abolition in order to facilitate access to them by the general public ;
- The dissemination of the catalogue for the traveling exhibition « Lest We Forget : The Triumph over Slavery » / « Devoir de mémoire : Le triomphe sur l'esclavage ».

International mobilisation

UNESCO alone will not be responsible for this immense work. UNESCO will ensure the coordination of a multitude of initiatives - locally, nationally and internationally, in liaison with its Field Offices, the International Scientific Committee as well as the National Scientific Committees of the « The Slave Route » project. The Organization counts on the cooperation of

the Member States, the National Commissions for UNESCO, governmental and non governmental organizations, the UNESCO clubs and centres, the international scientific community, the Artists for Peace, the Goodwill Ambassadors, and also on the contribution of parliamentarians and local authorities. In parallel, UNESCO will encourage all initiatives planned by other institutions, governmental or non-governmental, aiming to promote the objectives of the Year, and will associate itself with them where appropriate. Extrabudgetary funds necessary to achieve these ambitious programmes, which go far beyond the financial capacity of UNESCO, must be mobilized.



Against Slavery : The Ongoing Struggle

Struggles against slavery and all forms of servitude in the world have had one thing in common from the sixteenth century until today, namely a set of arguments that were often similar from one period to another. They were based on the more or less clearly expressed feeling that there was a need for respect for human rights in the face of a scandalous submission to economic interests. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the United Nations Conference against Racism meeting in Durban in 2001 recognized « slavery and the black slave trade » from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries as « a crime against humanity ».

The silence has also been broken with regard to current forms of servitude which affect an exceptionally high number of adults and children, a hitherto unknown phenomenon. These two phenomena require, nonetheless, to be seen in an historical perspective. Slavery, against which its own victims resisted in Africa and the Americas from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, and that which inspired the early Western abolitionists was a comprehensive, large-scale legal system of dehumanization established over the long term. Contemporary forms of servitude, bonded labour to which some 250 to 300 million children and approximately 20 million adults are now subjected, are significantly different phenomena, corresponding to economic interests which have up until now defied any prohibition and any international solution.

When, in 1793-1794, the rebel slaves of Santo Domingo succeeded in imposing the abolition of servitude in the French colonies and

the subsequent independence of their country of Haiti in 1804, the historical recognition of their existence was, among so many obstacles, one of their truly vital achievements. Thanks to them, the silence had been broken. The bicentenary of this event invites us to pause, to dwell upon the past in order to understand the present.

THE BLACK SLAVE TRADE, THE SLAVERY SYSTEM AND RESISTANCE

The black slave trade, the trading in human beings which linked Europe, Africa and the Americas from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, sustained a colossal colonial machine based on the slavery system.

From the *repartimiento* to the slavery system

From the sixteenth century onwards in the Americas, after the *repartimiento* – who provided early Spanish settlers with recruitment of Amerindian labour – and the *encomienda* – who supported manhunts in the Caribbean – had decimated a sizable proportion of the local populations, the Spanish *asientos* secured a massive supply of African captives. This source of labour, with which the Portuguese were already familiar as they had practised this trade since the 1440s, developed on an unprecedented scale when the major European trading companies – Dutch, English and French in particular – funded the expeditions as well as the exploitation of the mineral and agricultural resources of the newly conquered territories in the Americas. While the trans-Saharan trade practised by the Arabs from the seventh to the nineteenth centuries in Africa itself, in the Mediterranean and in the Indian Ocean

involved some 12 million people, according to recent estimates, the transatlantic slave trade is thought to have deported some 15 to 18 million captives (see map).

These millions of African captives sold as slaves in the Americas provided the labour required for the exploitation of mines and plantations of sugar cane, tobacco, coffee and cotton. More than half of them were employed on the sugar cane plantations in the Caribbean and in Brazil, where their life expectancy did not exceed five to six years after their arrival. It was a deadly system in which it is estimated that for every African captive who reached the Americas alive, five others died during the various phases of raiding, conflict and capture in the villages of the continental hinterland, during the forced march towards the assembly centres and trading posts, and during imprisonment in the *baracoons* on the African shores and subsequently during the transatlantic crossing.

It was a system of trading – the exchange of firearms and ordinary goods for human beings – which brought in, on either side, enough profit for it to have been maintained over four centuries, in spite of the frequent controversy it caused. Slavery, « a totalitarian system for economic, political, social and sexual exploitation, based on force, violence and an ideology of racism » (Lerone Bennett, Jr., *The Shaping of Black America*, 1975). A « dialectics of oppression », a system of social death to which it was possible to escape only by running away, manumission or death (Oruno D. Lara, *Caraïbes en construction : espace, colonisation, résistance*, 1992).

The French edict of March 1685, known as the *Code noir*, devised to govern the rights and duties of masters and slaves in the remote colonies of the Americas, stated under Article 44 : « We declare slaves as movable property ». Accordingly, it was considered, wrongly, as a guarantee for the benefit of slaves against the abuses of authority and violence of their masters. This text subsequently served as a model for the

Code drafted for Louisiana in 1725, and later for the *Código negro Carolino* devised by Spain in 1784 and promulgated in its American colonies in 1789.

Breaking the silence

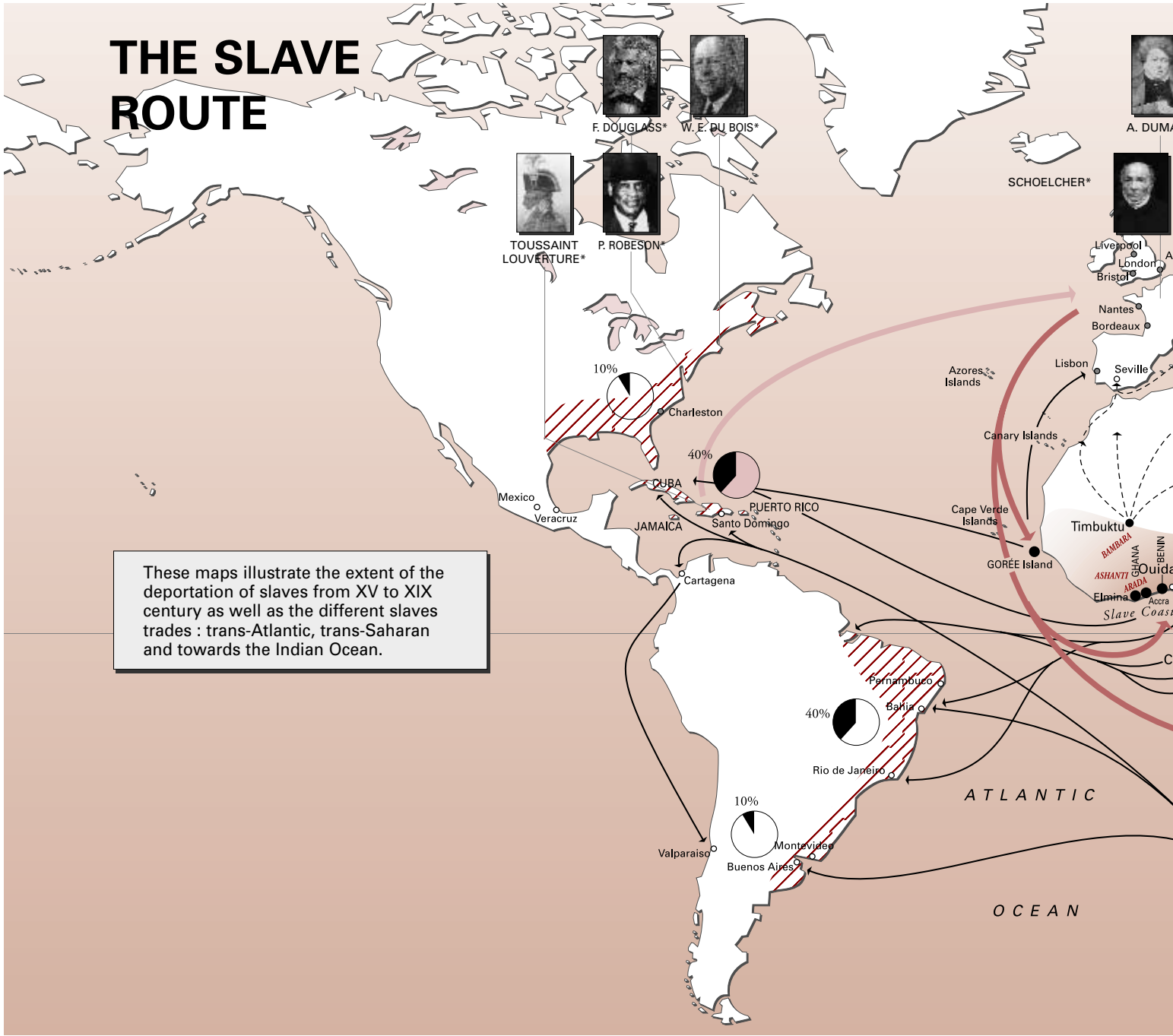
The early abolitionists of slavery were captives and slaves themselves who adopted various methods of resistance from their capture in Africa up to their sale and employment on plantations in the Americas and the Caribbean. Adapting to survival, rebellion and suicide were the main attitudes they adopted.

Off the African coastline at São Tomé in the sixteenth century, the *guerras do mato* brought the Portuguese into conflict with the *quilombos* of the Angolares, the fortified bastions which served as places of refuge for fugitives. Revolts took place on the slave trade vessels, resulting generally in a frequently high number of deaths or by the total loss of the human cargo. As early as the mid-sixteenth century in the Americas, the early *cimarrons* of Panama – the Golden Castille – established themselves as a kingdom and attacked the route of the gold caravans of Peru. The Cacique Enriquillo conducted lengthy, ferocious armed resistance against the Spaniards in Ayti from 1519 to 1533. Between Chagres and Nombre de Dios, the African Bayano governed a community of more than 1,200 *cimarron* Negroes whom the Spanish fought against between 1553 and 1558. *Quilombos, palenque, cumbes, grands camps* or *ajoupa* settled in Santo Domingo, Brazil, Cuba, Guyana, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Jamaica combining African and Karib resistance techniques.

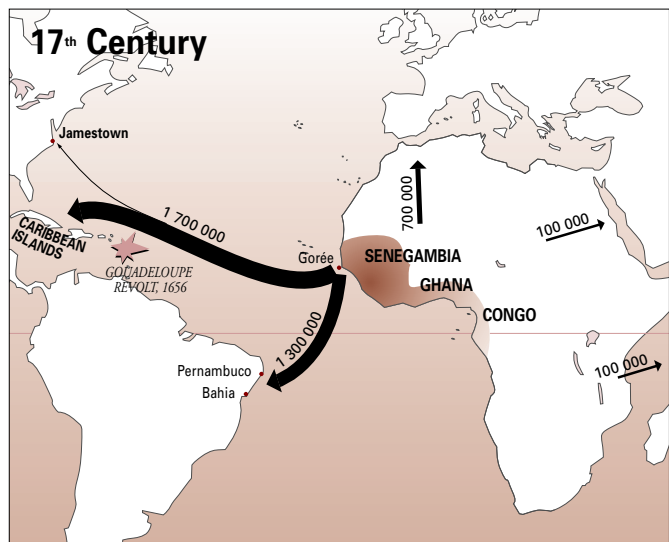
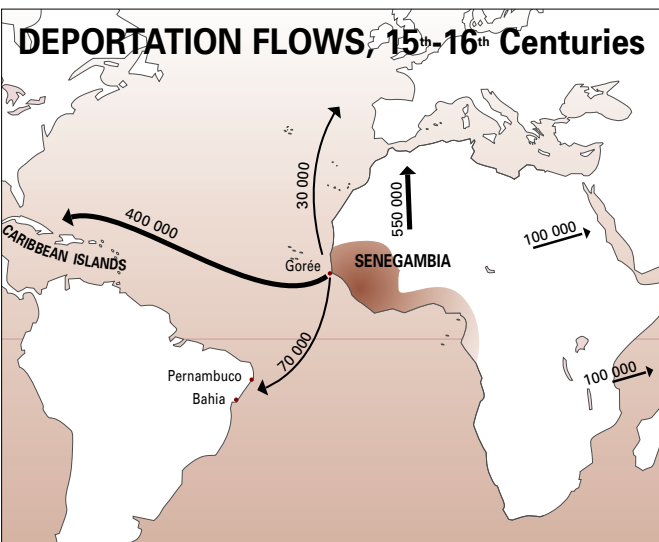
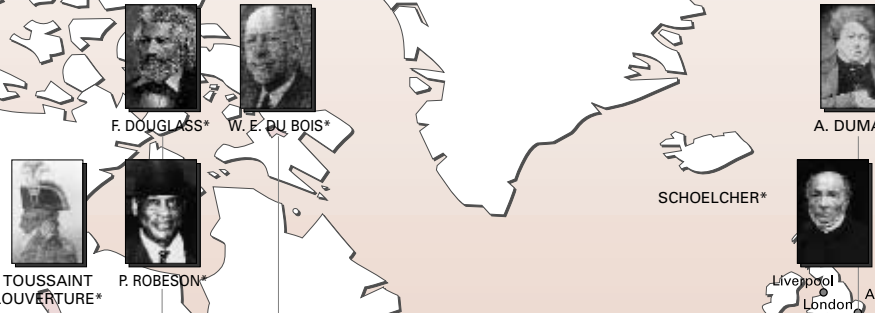
In the seventeenth century, the *quilombo* of Palmarès, in Brazil, had a population of over 20,000 and could boast of a governmental and military organization which enabled it to resist Portuguese attacks for several decades. In the early eighteenth century, the maroon Negroes of Jamaica, Cudjoe, Quao and Cuffe accepted to conclude peace agreements with the British authorities

The American colonies were frequently disrupted by revolts or threats of revolt by their slaves. The administrators of the British and French colonies in the Caribbean testified, in the 1730s, that a « wind of freedom » was

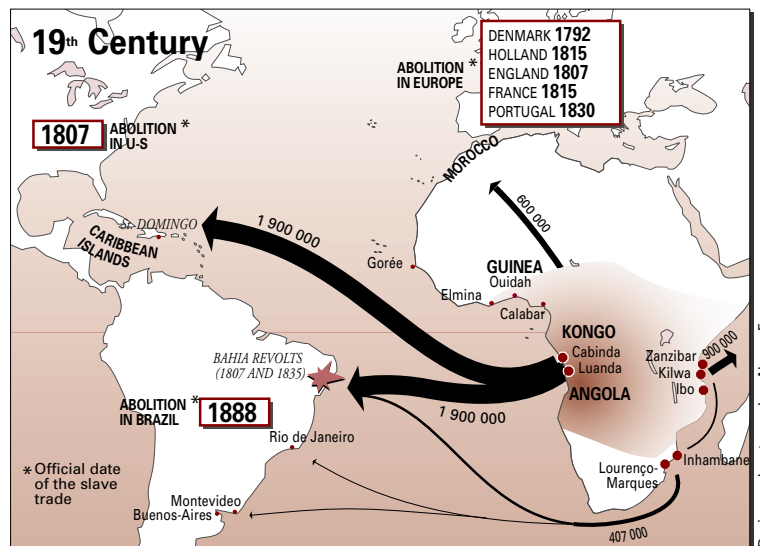
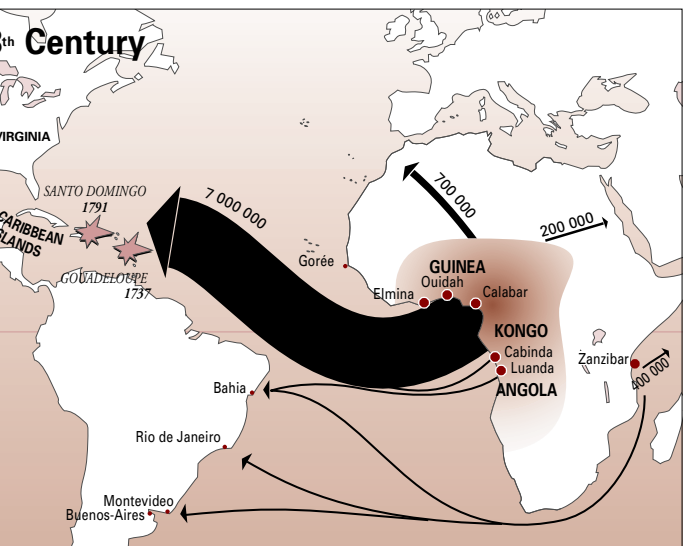
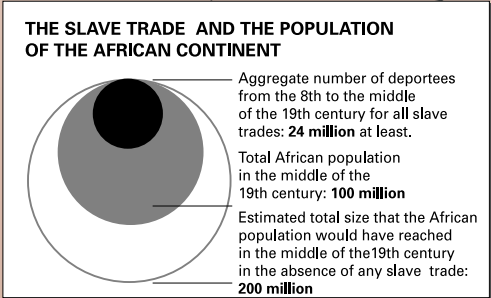
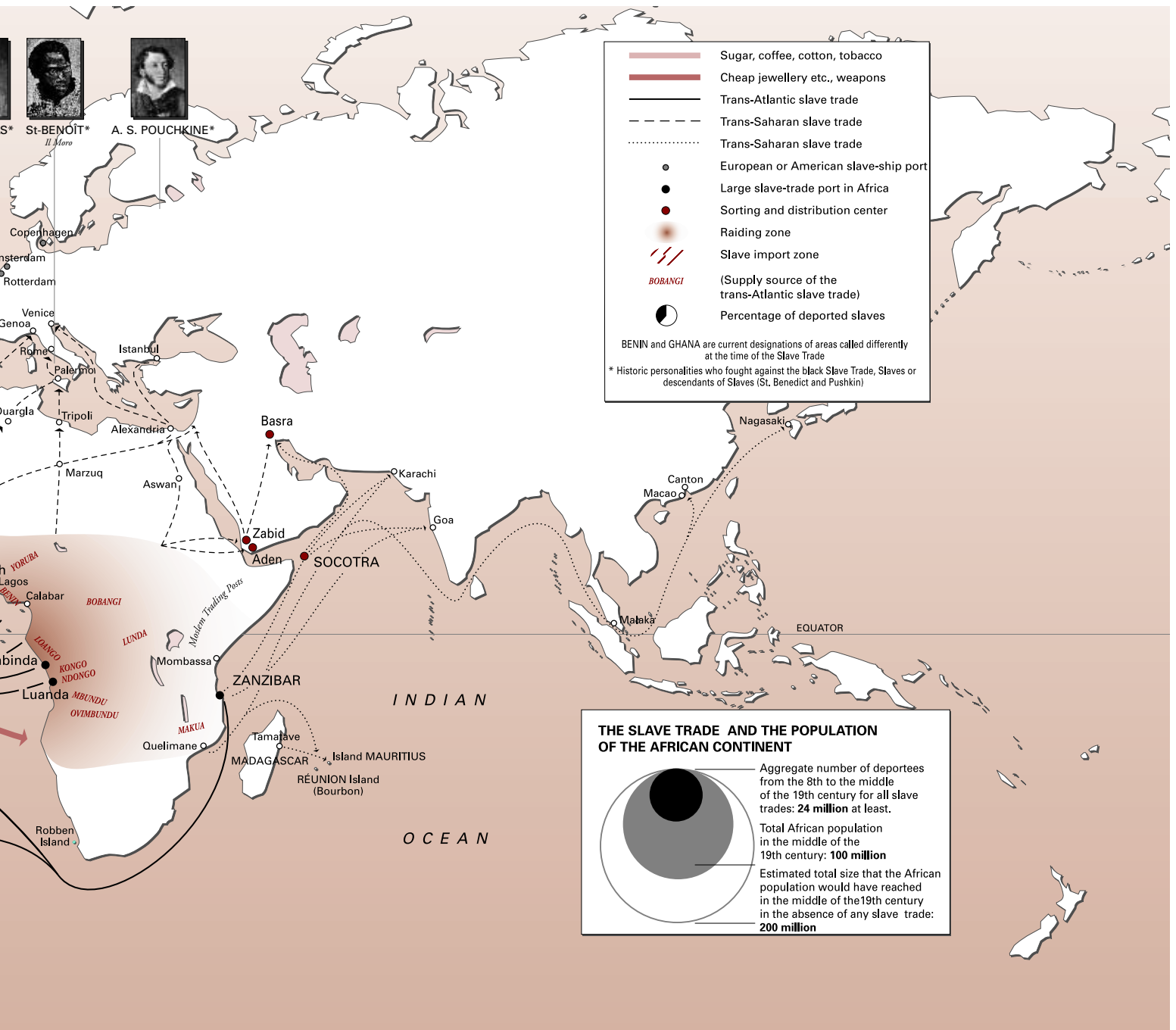
THE SLAVE ROUTE



These maps illustrate the extent of the deportation of slaves from XV to XIX century as well as the different slaves trades : trans-Atlantic, trans-Saharan and towards the Indian Ocean.



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Design and cartography : Nancy François

blowing on the Caribbean, thereby indicating the existence of a veritable contagion of phenomena of resistance to slavery, as was to occur some 50 years later on the occasion of the rebellion of slaves in Santo Domingo. While Macandal has remained famous for having wrought terror in the colonial population of Santo Domingo in 1757-1758, how many others are still today the victims of documentary silence! The vast territory of Guyana enabled the Boni, Saramaka and Djuka peoples to conceal their flight and to survive away from the slavery system. In the western Caribbean, Karibs and Black Karibs conducted a lengthy resistance to the European conquerors up until the late eighteenth century.

While Bartolomé de Las Casas deplored, in his *Très brève relation de la destruction des Indes in 1542*, that in the space of four decades, « more than 12 million souls, men, women and children » had « died unfairly on account of the tyranny and infernal doings of the Christians », he did not speak out against the trade in human beings from Africa. In the 1570s, Michel de Montaigne deplored the fact that the peoples of this « other world » which Europe had just conquered had « disappeared, been sold, and been betrayed by themselves ». He regretted that it had been necessary to « exterminate ... for a few pearls and pepper ».

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN IMPETUS

As early as the late seventeenth century, voices were raised to condemn the Black slave trade and slavery, either individually, or within the context of various abolitionist societies and committees which had been set up. This

impetus came essentially from the English-speaking countries. British, French and North American abolitionists subsequently devised, up until the end of the nineteenth century, a whole set of arguments that were essentially moral, religious, occasionally economic, and a means of acting against the Black slave trade and slavery to which the powerful lobbies of planters responded with fierce resistance.



Thomas Clarkson

« Every man by Nature is born free, and has a Right to his own Body, and whoever attempts to enslave him by force and against his own consent, is the worst of Robbers, and violates a Commandment of God, I ask this again in the name of Humanity ».

Letter to François Guizot, 18 January 1841,
Archives nationales, Paris..

Voices of freedom

The Community of Friends which the Quakers founded in Pennsylvania in the late seventeenth century came out publicly in 1688, for the first time in the Western world, against the fact of « buying and keeping Negroes » and condemned the « trade in human bodies ». A century later, Anthony Benezet convened the first meeting, in April 1775, of the Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage. The majority of its 24 members were Quakers who, in February 1784, founded the Pennsylvania Abolition Society. Their activities brought about the founding of equivalent bodies in several major cities in the United States. Through petitions, the Pennsylvania Abolition

Society succeeded, in collaboration with the Society of Friends, in obtaining from the State Assembly a ban on trading in children and pregnant women, the separation of slaves' families through sale and a modification to the gradual abolition legislation adopted in 1780. In 1789, the ban came out in favour of a plan of aid for free Blacks, creating reserved schools and helping them in finding jobs.

In England, the Colonial Office modified its labour recruitment policy when confirmation came at the end of the eighteenth century of Britain's domination of several provinces of India. The reduction in the economic importance of the West Indies, together with the loss of the Thirteen North American colonies, prompted a shift in British colonial interests. To these specific international economic conditions corresponded a religious and humanist renewal initiated by John Wesley, the Reverend James Ramsay and William Wilberforce. The Society for the Extinction of the Slave Trade led in 1788 to an investigation by the Crown's Privy Council. The subsequent debate in Parliament enabled Wilberforce to secure a vote on the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. British abolitionists then intensified their campaigns, resorting to means that were very varied but also very efficient in order to raise public awareness: lectures, signing of petitions, campaigns to boycott goods coming from countries which used slaves, dissemination of illustrated booklets and leaflets describing the living conditions of slave trade captives and slaves on the American and Caribbean plantations. Accordingly, a cross-section of the *Brooks*, a Liverpool slave ship, showing the internal layout and space reserved for African captives, provided an illustration in 1822 of *The African cry against Europeans*,

their oppressors, or a quick look on the murderous commerce called the slave trade by Thomas Clarkson. In this way, Britain, influenced by the initiatives of the North American Quakers, assumed the leadership of worldwide abolitionist currents after having governed the Black slave trade for more than two centuries.

The Age of Enlightenment

In the mid-eighteenth century, the Encyclopédie stated that « slavery is the establishment of a right based on force, a right which makes of a man the property to such a degree of another man that the former becomes the absolute master of his life, goods and freedom », recalling that « all men are born equal » and that « nature had made them all equal ». « Reducing a man to slavery, buying him, selling him, keeping him in servitude – these are veritable crimes and crimes that are worse than theft », Condorcet asserted in his *Réflexions sur l'esclavage des Nègres* which he published in 1781 under the pseudonym of Joachim Schwartz. A few years earlier, when writing *Esprit des lois* (1748), Montesquieu had judged slavery to be « against nature » (Book XV, Chapter VIII). In the Encyclopédie, the wish was expressed « that the European colonies be rather destroyed than make so many miserable ! » and Voltaire expressed surprise in his *Essai sur les mœurs* in 1756 that one should « dare speak of the peoples' rights » at a time when slaves « are curtailing their lives in order to flatter our new appetites ». Enlightened European opinion was made still more sensitive to the problem with the publication of the *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des*

Européens dans les deux Indes, a collective work published under the name of the Abbé Raynal in 1770.

After a stay in England, Jean-Pierre Brissot, with Etienne Clavière, founded in Paris the *Société des Amis des Noirs* in 1788, and subsequently, the *Société des Amis des Noirs et des Colonies* in 1796. The argument put forward by its founders, such as Mirabeau, Lafayette, Frossard and Condorcet, was directly inspired by that of Clarkson and Wilberforce. They demanded no more than a ban on the Black slave trade at the time, on the belief that the abolition of slavery would bring into question such interests that any measure would then be delayed, possibly rejected, by the government authorities.

Abuses of authority displayed by the masters, and ill-treatment inflicted on slaves were denounced but the slavery system itself was not the subject of any economic reappraisal, although Adam Smith had stated in 1776 that « a free worker is superior to a slave as constraint never makes a man inventive, zealous and intelligent ».

THE CENTURY OF EMANCIPATION

The destruction of the slavery system began in the French colony of Santo Domingo at the end of the eighteenth century. This long-running process was to last until 1886 in Cuba and 1888 in Brazil (see chronology).

An irreversible process

The rebellions of slaves and the desire on the part of the planters in Santo Domingo for economic and political independence from French centralized power profoundly weakened

the Caribbean colonial system. The slaves' insurrection in the French part of the island in August 1791 brought about the abolition of slavery by the government commissioners in August and September 1793, a measure which the Convention in Paris extended to all French colonies by a decree dated 4 February 1794, under pressure of threats of British and Spanish intervention.

When the leaders of the insurrection, Jean-François and Biassou, joined the Spanish authorities in Santo Domingo, Toussaint Louverture rallied to the French Republic in May 1794, taking command of the troops who were fighting against the foreign invasion. Promoted Major-General in 1796 and General-in-Chief of the colony in May 1797, he devised for the colony, until 1802, genuine governmental structures, a constitution in 1801 and particularly coercive labour regulations. At the head of an army of 40,000 men, supported by his lieutenants Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe, he occupied the Spanish part of the island in January 1801 in order to unify the island under his governorship. Napoleon Bonaparte, however, was preparing military expeditions for re-establishing French authority in Guadeloupe and Santo Domingo.

In December 1801, two expeditionary forces left for the Caribbean. Their orders were to re-establish law and order and subsequently slavery. The law which the First Consul had passed on 20 May 1802 « maintained » slavery as before 1789 and confirmed the legality of the slave trade. Slavery was re-established in Guadeloupe after unprecedented repression of the insurgence. Their leader, Louis Delgrès, had exclaimed « May the entire universe hear this last cry of innocence and despair » before taking his life with his supporters. On Santo Domingo, General Leclerc had Toussaint Louverture arrested in July 1802. He was deported to France and imprisoned at Fort de Joux (Jura) where he died on 7 April 1803. The expeditionary forces sent by the First

Consul nevertheless capitulated in November 1803, overcome by arms and disease. Slavery remained abolished and the colony became independent, under the name of Haiti, on 1 January 1804.

Atlantic « cruises »

When Abbé Grégoire was denouncing in 1822 the « agents of crime » which he proposed to bring before the Court of Assises in France, Britain, which had banned the transatlantic slave trade in 1807, was setting up a network of « cruises » which crisscrossed the Atlantic Ocean in an attempt to intercept slave ships. The Royal Navy, however, only succeeded in capturing 4% of the slave ships. While the banning of the slave trade in each of the participating countries had been recommended at the Congress of Vienna in February 1815, this noble intention had not had any immediate effect. The trade networks had been modified. The jagged coastline of Brazil offered the anchorage that was vital for transferring the captives of the illegal trade towards the Caribbean and the United States. As for the travelling conditions, they had grown worse. While the price that the captives fetched and the profits derived from an efficient circuit had considerably increased, the vessels were overcrowded, food was inadequate and the death rate was still higher during the crossing.

Abolitionist committees, societies and initiatives

The Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery, founded in Paris in 1822 within the Société de la Morale Chrétienne, had gradually began to buy back women slaves.

The influence of the Haitian Revolution in the Caribbean and the Americas

The rebellion of the slaves on Santo Domingo, in August 1791, sparked off a general insurrection which led to the abolition of slavery and to the War of Independence. It marked the beginning of a triple process of destruction of the proslavery system, the slave trade and the colonial system.

From 1798 to 1807, before Britain launched its crusade against the transatlantic slave trade, Haiti was alone in combating the slave trade in the Mediterranean of the Caribbean, pursuing Portuguese, Spanish and Cuban vessels and freeing cargoes of African captives.

From 1795 to 1800, insurrections by slaves gradually undermined the Spanish possessions. In Venezuela, insurgents of Coro in May 1795 called for the « law of the French », the abolition of slavery. Rebellions also broke out on the plantations of Louisiana in 1794-1795. In Cuba, from 1810 to 1812, the conspiracy led by José Antonio Aponte in Havana took Haiti as its model.

The Haitians also played an important part in the gradual process of destruction of the proslavery system in Guadeloupe and Martinique between 1804 and 1848. This was also true of the 1808 rebellion in British Guyana and that of the slaves of Demerara in 1823 and other insurrections which broke out in Jamaica (1831-1832) and in Puerto Rico during the second half of the nineteenth century. The arrival of the Haitians in the United States encouraged the authorities to strengthen the proslavery system which led to many revolts, particularly in Louisiana and the heroic resistance of Gabriel Prosser (1800), Denmark Vesey (1822) and Nat Turner (1831, Virginia).

In Venezuela, Francisco de Miranda, in February 1806, and Simon Bolivar in December 1815-January 1816 and in October-December 1816, received assistance from Haiti which had a determining effect. President Pétion asked Bolivar for « freedom to be granted to all the slaves in the province of Venezuela ». The Haitian Government also accepted to provide weapons and ammunition to the Mexicans led by General Mina in September 1816 and to Colombia in September 1820. Finally, after the abolition of slavery in the French colonies in 1848, « new freemen » took as their model the Haitian Revolution for advocating the independence of Guadeloupe.

The Haitian Revolution had set off an irresistible process of liberation in the Americas, combining the ideas of freedom and equality and embarking on the road to independence.

Oruno D. Lara

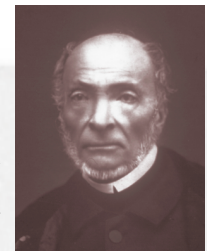
It was more particularly responsible for creating, in 1834, the Société Française pour l'Abolition de l'Esclavage which brought together peers, Parliamentarians, men of letters, financiers and magistrates of every political and religious allegiance.

Its *Déclaration de principe* stated : « In the eyes of the most enlightened societies in Europe, slavery today appears to be nothing else than a flagrant violation of the precepts of Christian charity and a violation of the least contestable rights of man ». At the same time, Victor Schoelcher declared that « slavery means death » in *De l'esclavage des Noirs et de la législation coloniale* (1833) and Cyrille Bisette of Martinique, banished from his island for having called for political rights for his fellow « coloured men », founded a society and journal in Paris to call in 1835 for the complete and immediate abolition of slavery in the French colonies.

The numerous plans for abolishing slavery which came to light during this period were faced with two fundamental obstacles: the choice between immediate or gradual abolition and the question of compensation to be paid to planters dispossessed of their slaves. The frequent propaganda campaigns which the members of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, founded in London in 1839, undertook in Europe in the 1840s, together with the conventions they organized, were aimed at the internationalization of the principle of « immediate » emancipation, without *apprenticeship*. Committees of corresponding members were set up in France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Spain and Italy.

Any action taken by the European churches to combat slavery in the nineteenth century was limited and belated. While the Quakers in the United States and other Protestant orders in the British colonies took the lead in the anti-slavery movements, the Catholic Church remained in an ambiguous

position. In his *Apostolic Letter* of December 1839, Pope Gregory XVI confined himself to calling upon the faithful to « not torment unjustly Indians, Negroes and other human beings of that kind or rob them of their goods or reduce them to servitude ». Few and far between were the ecclesiastics who dared denounce the suffering of slaves, the practices of the settlers on their plantations and the shortcomings of colonial justice.



Victor Schoelcher

« In a society of slaves, there will always be horrendous accidents that can be attributed to its way of life, will always be peculiar to it and can never be found in the state of freedom. As slavery is a state of violence, it is impossible that it should not involve awful acts of violence. Slavery corrupts the master as it does the slave. Slavery can corrupt even those who are good through the ease with which abuses can be perpetrated and the aberrations of limitless power, to the extent that we have seen ».

About the workers' petition for the abolition of slavery, Pagnerre, Paris, 1844.

« Measures had to be taken to ensure that this great act of reparation of a crime of human abuse was conducted in a manner that was most beneficial to those who had been the victims ».

Victor Schoelcher, *Preliminary report to the Minister of the Navy and Colonies by the Emancipation Commission*, 3 May 1848..

In fact, Western abolitionists adopted working methods that were often similar. The mediators whom they turned to – particularly the press, scholarly journals – published letters, appeals and petitions to parliaments and governments. However, while the campaigns for signing petitions and for boycotting colonial

products enjoyed remarkable success in Great Britain, the movement in France was more discreet, even more elitist. It was only in the 1840s that more practical argumentation was developed. Descriptions were made of life on plantations and torture inflicted on slaves; accounts were given of lawsuits brought against settlers and commanders who had exceeded their right to punish slaves. Finally, pictures were disseminated depicting scenes of the slave trade, sugar cane cultivation and punishments to which slaves were subjected.

Two outstanding decrees

There were two outstanding decrees for abolition in the nineteenth century: the *Abolition Bill* passed by the British Parliament in August 1833 and the French decree signed by the Provisional Government in April 1848. The former so-called « gradual » abolition, was the result of several earlier plans and specified a compulsory period of apprenticeship for former slaves with their owners. The second, some 15 years later, put into practice the principle of so-called « immediate » abolition. It gave back to slaves in the French colonies the freedom which had been previously decreed in 1794 and lost in 1802, by declaring slavery to be « entirely abolished ».

The insurrection of slaves in Demerara in British Guyana in 1823 – one of the largest ever experienced in the American colonies – and that of slaves in Jamaica in 1831-1832 had strengthened the position of abolitionists within Parliament at Westminster. The *abolition bill* passed on 28 August 1833 was to come into force in the colonies one year later, thereby leaving the local assemblies of settlers time to organize an apprenticeship system for slaves who were to undergo gradual emancipation. The Bank of England provided sizeable compensation to the settlers who had been dispossessed in this way of their servile labour force. The definitive

abolition of slavery in the British colonies occurred in 1838 at the end of a four-year period of apprenticeship which had revealed the numerous difficulties in implementing this system.

Drawing on the experience of the British precedent, it was abolition then referred to as « immediate and complete » that Victor Schoelcher succeeded in having adopted on 27 April 1848 by the Provisional Government set up in the wake of the revolutionary days in Paris in February. The republican abolitionist had joined the French and European anti-slavery movement by studying, on the spot, the slavery system and the interests at stake in the Caribbean. Once appointed President of the Abolition Commission and Under-Secretary of State to the Navy and the Colonies in 1848, he devised a set of decrees for the French colonies which made of former slaves « new freemen » and « new citizens » who would have the right to elect their representatives to the National Assembly through universal suffrage. The former owners would receive compensation and credit facilities from the new colonial banks with a view to building large sugar factories. The slaves, for their part, would receive neither land nor compensation. They were firmly advised to continue cultivating sugar cane, to abide by the law and to conform to working regulations of which many aspects recalled the framework of slavery, and to « forget the past ». French emancipation accelerated the promulgation of the abolition decree in the Danish colonies (1848) and, subsequently, in the Dutch colonies (1863).

Immediately after the emancipation of the British and French colonies in the Caribbean and in Dutch Guyana, there was recourse, as there had been for several decades in Cuba, to so-called free labour under contract from Africa, India, China, Indonesia and Malaysia, for whom the recruitment and working conditions were immediately denounced as a « second wave of slavery ».

Abolitions in South America

Another type of emancipation procedure was applied in the Spanish colonies. In South America, in the days of Simon Bolivar, or in Cuba during the Ten Years' War (1868-1878), freedom was promised to male slaves in exchange for their enlistment in the armies mustered against Spanish central power.

In Venezuela, Francisco de Miranda, « El Precursor », declared in 1809 with regard to the slave population : « We have before us two major examples: the American and French Revolutions. Let us cautiously imitate the former and carefully avoid the latter ». In fact, the events in Santo Domingo, Haiti had inspired uprisings of which, such as that launched by J.L. Chirino in the Sierra de Coro in 1795, were still in everyone's memory. In 1810, however, when the Junta Suprema of Venezuela banned the slave trade, it did not refer to the survival of slavery. Miranda, in 1812, limited his promises of freedom « to slaves who would enlist and serve in the army for ten years » (« a los esclavos que se alistasen y sirviesen en el ejército por el espacio de diez años »). In Chile in 1814 and in Brazil in 1817, slaves who refused to join the army were subjected to « perpetual bondage ».

In 1816, Bolivar abolished slavery in Venezuela following a promise he had made to the Haitian President Alexandre Pétion in exchange for logistical aid, with which the latter had accepted to supply him. Once again, however, emancipation was for men in exchange for enlistment in the army. Furthermore, the Venezuelan Congress meeting in Angostura in 1820 did not ratify these decisions. Slavery was abolished in 1823 in Chile, in 1826 in Bolivia, in 1829 in Mexico, in 1851 in Colombia, in 1853 in Argentina, in 1854 in Venezuela and in 1855 in Peru.

The Civil War which was tearing the United States apart, the creation of the Sociedad Abolicionista Española in 1864 in Spain and

the beginning of an armed conflict in Cuba had a determining effect in favour of emancipation in the Spanish colonies. The liberals in the Cortès made emancipation one of their principal demands. They prepared a law on gradual abolition which Segismundo Moret, Minister for Overseas Affairs, who himself was opposed to slavery, presented in May 1870. All slaves born since September 1868 would be declared free as well as those who were aged over 60. The law came into effect in Puerto Rico in 1873 but its enforcement in Cuba required additional debates. Wishing to enable the Cuban planters to retain the necessary labour for operating the *haciendas*, the Cortès voted a law in January 1880 establishing *patronato* or compulsory apprenticeship for slaves, of a duration of eight years, subsequently reduced to six. Cuban emancipation was declared definitive and complete in 1886.

On several occasions during the nineteenth century, the Governments of Brazil attempted to repress the illegal Black slave trade along the coastline. British abolitionists waged campaigns, organized conferences and set up newspapers until the government in London dispatched several naval vessels and a diplomatic delegation. The end of a long war against Paraguay, which had delayed any efficient measure for suppressing slavery – and the example of the United States did accelerate reform of the Brazilian bondage system. The internal slave trade in the country was abolished, as was the separation of families through sale and public sale markets. Abolitionist societies were founded in Rio de Janeiro, Recife and São Paulo. The law of 28 September 1871 freed the newborn and provided funds for the emancipation of

children. In 1879, the parliamentarian Joaquim Nabuco laid before the National Assembly an emancipation plan and founded the Brazilian Abolitionist Society in 1880. In the province of Ceará, however, an active abolitionist campaign was developing which went as far as to close the provincial port to slave traffic. In 1884, the Brazilian Government envisaged granting freedom to slaves aged over 60 by buying them from their masters, and in 1886, punishments by whipping were banned. It was not until 13 May 1888 that the General Assembly voted for the complete and definitive abolition of slavery in Brazil.

In the United States : the end of a « peculiar institution »

After the early movement of opposition and debates on the subject of slavery initiated by the Quakers of Pennsylvania in the late seventeenth century, the movement reappeared at the end of the following century. Drawing inspiration from the *Declaration of Independence* of 1776, the slaves of New England published petitions in favour of their freedom. The states of Vermont in 1777, and then Massachusetts and New Hampshire inserted the prohibition of slavery in their constitutions. Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Connecticut expressed a preference for gradual emancipation. The North of the United States was becoming industrialized, requiring salaried labour in ever-increasing numbers. The prosperity of the South based on cotton seemed forever linked to slavery.

A decisive abolitionist campaign began in the North in the early 1830s. Politicians, religious leaders, women's associations and free Blacks who had fled the South had set up groups of sympathisers and

newspapers. The *Philanthropist*, which the Quaker Charles Osborne had founded in 1817 in Ohio, *The Emancipator*, set up by Elihu Embree in 1820, and *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, established by Benjamin Lundy 1821, had been efficient forerunners of *The Liberator*, the first issue of which was published by William Lloyd Garrison in Boston on 1 January 1831. To quote him, « I will be as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice ». In 1832, he published an impressive indictment of the aims and early achievements of the American Colonization Society (*Thoughts on African Colonization*) which had, for some 20 years, been organizing the departure of free Blacks from the United States towards Africa where Liberia had just been founded. In December 1833, five months after the Abolition Bill had been passed by the British Parliament, W.L. Garrison and Arthur and Lewis Tappan founded the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia. Garrison, however, who was in favour of immediate abolition, was soon to part with the Tappan brothers who advocated « gradual » emancipation.

Manifestations of resistance among slaves in the South had not stopped. Rebellions which have remained famous to this day broke out like the one led by Gabriel Prosser in August 1800 who had set himself the aim of bringing slavery to an end in Virginia, or that of Denmark Vesey in South Carolina in 1822. In August 1831, Nat Turner launched an insurrection in Virginia. He was captured in October and hanged in November, along with 54 other insurgents. The repression was commensurate with the terror inspired by Turner's revolt, far beyond the frontiers of Virginia. In 1842 and in 1851, slaves held by the Cherokee people rose up and attempted to flee towards Mexico. John Brown, who believed that slavery in the United States was « barbarous » and likely to set one part of the population at war against the other, took possession of the arsenal of Harper's Ferry in Virginia in October 1859, with a few followers. The aim was to organize the escape of several hundred slaves towards the North. When the

venture failed, Brown was hanged in December 1859. Victor Hugo had launched in vain, on 2 December 1859, a final appeal to the federal government calling for the condemned man to be pardoned : «There is something even more frightening than Cain killing Abel, that is Washington killing Spartacus ».

Frederick Douglass, a slave who escaped from the South in 1838, published his autobiography in 1845 under the title, *My Bondage and My Freedom*. He settled in Washington and became a journalist and subsequently a diplomat. When the Convention of Coloured People met in Cleveland, Ohio in November 1848, it paid tribute to the liberation of slaves in the French colonies. Frederick Douglass, who was the main speaker at these conventions, reminded his audience that : « We are now the most oppressed people in the world. In the southern states of this union, we are slaves (...) The means by which we have been destroyed must be used to save us ». He recommended the use of existing committees, the press and networks of publications of all kinds to silence the proslavery lobby.



Frederick Douglass

« What to the American Slave is your Fourth of July? I answer : a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in this year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim ».

Frederick Douglass, Discours du 4 Juillet, Rochester, 1852.

The *Underground Railroad*, to which Harriet Ross Tubman, herself a former fugitive from the South, devoted much of her life, helped slaves to flee towards the North of the country and to Canada. Within this context, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe – who contributed actively to helping fugitives – was published in 1852 and won international success. Nevertheless, the *Fugitive Slave Act* of 1850 authorized hunters of fugitive slaves to capture the latter in the northern states where slavery had in fact been abolished. In 1854, the Republican Party included the abolition of slavery in its manifesto. Abraham Lincoln, the Republican candidate elected to the presidency in 1860, applied the measure to the whole Union in the wake of the Civil War in 1865. The abolition of slavery – which then concerned approximately 4 million people – became the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. However, the Ku Klux Klan was founded in Tennessee in December 1865.

Testimony of inestimable value was collected from the recently liberated slaves of the South. The *Slave Narratives*, some of which were drawn up in the nineteenth century as a means of propaganda for the abolitionist committees, while others were the last direct testimonies of former slaves recorded in the early twentieth century, are among the very rare sources emanating from the principal actors of four centuries of history in the Americas.

CONTEMPORARY BONDAGE

Anti-Slavery International estimates that in the world today there are some 20 million adults subjected to so-called *traditional* slavery.

The International Labour Organization estimates that between 250 and 300 million children – aged 5 to 14 – are now subjected to working conditions which can be assimilated to slavery. The exploitation of child labour occurs when a child is sold or transferred by its family or after being kidnapped, situations that are encouraged in times of conflict. Bondage concerns the developing countries first and foremost but also exists in the West. Child labour is linked to the fragile nature of their status and is particularly frequent in agriculture, domestic service, industry and arts and crafts, for the use of intricate machines or poorly paid manual work. This fragility is worsened by geographical displacement, the loss of contact with families, physical violence, isolation, fear and the law of silence.

On 25 September 1926, within the framework of the proceedings of the League of Nations in Geneva, a Convention on Slavery was signed which advocated its repression. This was the first piece of legislation of an international nature since the Berlin Conference which, in 1885, had called for a ban on the slave trade in Africa and the Brussels Conference which, in 1890, had prescribed *anti-slavery vigilance* for European colonizers. The abolitionists were to follow the access opened up by the colonial armies towards the hinterland of the African continent.

In June 1930, the International Labour Organization adopted a Forced Labour Convention aimed at suppressing it « in all its forms within the shortest possible period ». The Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others which was approved by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1949 came into force in July 1951. The Convention on Slavery of 1956 took up the definitions

put forward in 1926 and extended them to servitude for debt, bondage, forced marriage, the sale or transfer of a woman by her parents, guardian, family or by heritage, the disposal of a child or adolescent for the exploitation of their person or their work.

In 1974, the United Nations created in Geneva a Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery within the context of the Human Rights Commission. To practices likely to be qualified as slavery, the Working Group added apartheid, colonialism and the exploitation of drug addicts. The International Programme for the Abolition of Child Labour initiated in 1992 led in 1999 to the Convention of the International Labour Organization on « the banning of the worst forms of child labour ». Adopted in 2002, this affects slavery, war – child soldiers –, prostitution and drug trafficking. In July 1998, the International Criminal Court defined acts qualified as « crimes against humanity » including « reducing to slavery, the fact of exerting on a person, any one or all the powers related to the right of ownership, including in the context of trading in human beings, particularly women and children ». The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union signed on 7 December 2000, bans slavery, forced labour and trading in human beings. Finally, the United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Intolerance, meeting in Durban (South Africa) and the French Parliament recognized, in 2001, « slavery and the transatlantic slave trade as a crime against humanity ».

Nelly Schmidt

Chronology of the Abolitions of Slavery

- 
- 1791 August** Slave rebellion in Saint-Domingue (Haiti).
- 1793** Abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue (Haiti).
- 1794 - 4 February** Decree of the Convention abolishing slavery on 16 Pluviôse Year II.
- 1802 - 20 May** Law of 30 Floréal Year X, re-establishing slavery in the French colonies according to the previous legislation of 1789.
- 1803** Prohibition of the slave trade by Denmark.
- 1807** Prohibition of the slave trade by Great Britain and the importation of captives and slaves by the United States.
- 1814** Prohibition of the slave trade by the Netherlands.
- 1815 - February** The European powers commit themselves to prohibit the slave trade at the Vienna Congress (Great Britain, France, Austria, Russia, Prussia, Sweden, Portugal). 29 March: during the Hundred Days, Napoleon I decree prohibiting the slave trade.
- 1818 - 15 April** The first French law prohibiting the slave trade.
- 1821** Creation, in Paris, of the *Society of Christian Morals* (« Société de la Morale Chrétienne ») and in 1822, of its *Committee for the abolition of the slave trade and slavery*.
- 1822** Abolition of slavery in Santo Domingo.
- 1823** Abolition of slavery in Chile.
- 1826** Abolition of slavery in Bolivia.
- 1827 - 25 April** The second French law prohibiting the slave trade.
- 1829** Abolition of slavery in Mexico.
- 1831 - 22 February** The third French law prohibiting the slave trade.
- 1833 - 1838** Abolition of slavery in the British Colonies of the West Indies, British Guyana, and Mauritius.
- 1834** Creation of the *French Society for the Abolition of Slavery* in Paris.
- 1839** Creation of the *British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society* in London which published the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*. At present, it continues its activities under the name of *Anti-Slavery International* and publishes *The Reporter*.
- 1846 - 1848** Abolition of slavery in the Danish Virgin Islands.
- 1846** Abolition of slavery in Tunisia.
- 1847** Abolition of slavery in the Swedish colony of Saint-Barthélemy.
- 1848** Abolition of slavery in the French Colonies.
- 1851** Abolition of slavery in Colombia.
- 1852 - February** The first French decrees for the recruitment of free workers on contract in Africa, then in India, for the Caribbean colonies.
- 1853** Abolition of slavery in Argentina.
- 1854** Abolition of slavery in Venezuela.
- 1855** Abolition of slavery in Peru.
- 1863** Abolition of slavery in the Caribbean colonies of the Netherlands and in « Insulinde ».



1863 - 1865	Abolition of slavery in the United States.
1866	Spanish decree prohibiting the slave trade.
1873	Abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico.
1876	Abolition of slavery in Turkey.
1885	Measures for the repression of slavery in Africa taken at the Berlin Conference.
1880 - 1886	Gradual abolition of slavery in Cuba.
1888	Abolition of slavery in Brazil.
1890	Brussels Conference on Slavery in Africa.
1896	Abolition of slavery in Madagascar.
1924 - June	Creation by the League of Nations of a Temporary Commission on Slavery.
1926 - 26 September	Adoption by the League of Nations of the <i>Slavery Convention</i> .
1930	<i>Convention concerning forced labour</i> of the International Labour Organization (ILO).
1948	Adoption by the United Nations of the <i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> .
1949 - December	Adoption by the United Nations of the <i>Convention for the repression of the trade in human beings and the exploitation of prostitution</i> .
1956 - September	Adoption by the United Nations of the <i>Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery</i> .
1957	<i>Convention concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour</i> by the ILO.
1974	Creation by the <i>Commission on Human Rights at the United Nations</i> of a <i>Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery</i> .
1980	Abolition of slavery in Mauritania.
1989 - November	Adoption by the United Nations of the <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i> .
2000 - November	Coming into force of the ILO <i>Convention 182</i> on « the elimination of the worst forms of child labour ».
2000 - December	The <i>Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union</i> prohibits slavery, forced labour, and traffic in human beings.
2001 - May	Proclamation of the French law which « recognizes the Slave Trade and Slavery (15th-19th centuries) as crime against humanity ».
2001 - September	The <i>World Conference of the United Nations Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance</i> (Durban, South Africa) acknowledges that « slavery and the transatlantic slave trade are a crime against humanity ».

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