



ABOUT SLAVERY >

# SLAVERY IN HISTORY

Follow the link at the end of this article to trace the history of slavery and abolition through the ages, from the days of ancient Egypt and Rome to the birth of the anti-slavery movement and the latest United Nations treaties. The following adapted excerpt covers the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

## The Age of Abolition timeline

- **1781** Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II abolishes serfdom in the Austrian Habsburg dominions.
- **1787** The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade is founded in Britain.
- **1789** During the French Revolution, the National Assembly adopts the Declaration of the Rights of Man, one of the fundamental charters of human liberties. The first of 17 articles states: "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights."
- **1803** Denmark-Norway becomes the first country in Europe to ban the African slave trade, forbidding trading in slaves and ending the importation of slaves into Danish dominions.
- **1807** The British Parliament makes it illegal for British ships to transport slaves and for British colonies to import them. U.S. President **Thomas Jefferson** signs into law the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves, forbidding the importation of African slaves into the United States.
- **1811-1867** Operating off the Atlantic coast of Africa, the British Navy's Anti-Slavery Squadron liberates 160,000 slaves.
- **1813** Sweden, a nation that never authorized slave traffic, consents to ban the African slave trade.
- **1814** The king of the Netherlands officially terminates Dutch participation in the African slave trade. At the Congress of Vienna, the assembled powers proclaim that the slave trade should be abolished as soon as possible but do not stipulate an actual effective date for abolition.
- **1820** The government of Spain abolishes the slave trade south of the Equator—but it continues in Cuba until 1888.
- **1833** The Factory Act in Britain establishes a working day in textile manufacture, provides for government inspection of working conditions, bans the employment of children under age 9, and limits the workday of children between 13 and 18 years of age to 12 hours.
- **1833** Through the tireless efforts of **William Wilberforce**, a British politician and evangelical Christian philanthropist who was convinced of the importance of religion, morality and education, Parliament passes the **Slavery Abolition Act**, which abolishes slavery throughout the British Empire, including British colonies in North America. The bill emancipates slaves in all British colonies and appropriates nearly \$100 million in today's money to compensate slave owners for their losses.

- **1840** The new British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society calls the first World Anti-Slavery Convention in London to mobilize reformers and assist post-emancipation efforts throughout the world. A group of U.S. abolitionists attends, but Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, as well as several male supporters, leave the meeting in protest when women are excluded from seating on the convention floor.
- **1845** The British Navy assigns 36 ships to its Anti-Slavery Squadron, making it one of the largest fleets in the world.
- **1848** The government of France abolishes slavery in all French colonies.
- **1850** The government of Brazil ends the country's participation in the slave trade and declares slave traffic to be a form of piracy.
- **1861** Alexander II emancipates all Russian serfs, numbering about 50 million. His decree begins the Great Reform in Russia and earns him the title "Czar Liberator."

### **The American Civil War, 1861-65**

- **1863** President **Abraham Lincoln** issues **The Emancipation Proclamation**, freeing all U.S. slaves in states that had seceded from the Union, except for those in Confederate areas already controlled by the Union army.
- **1863** The government of the Netherlands takes official action to abolish slavery in all Dutch colonies.
- **1865** Congress gives final passage to, and a sufficient number of states ratify, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to outlaw slavery. The amendment reads: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."
- **1888** The *Lei Aurea*, or Golden Law, ends slavery in South America when the legislature of Brazil frees the country's 725,000 slaves.
- **1865-1920** Following the American Civil War, hundreds of thousands of African Americans are re-enslaved in an abusive manipulation of the legal system called "peonage." Across the Deep South, African-American men and women are falsely arrested and convicted of crimes, then "leased" to coal and iron mines, brick factories, plantations, and other dangerous workplaces. The formal peonage system slows down after World War I but doesn't fully end until the 1940s. However, in recent years, activists have noted that the 13 Amendment to the U.S. Constitution does not outlaw prison slavery, and that requiring inmates to work in prison industries today constitutes a continuing form of modern slavery.

**Source:** adapted from <https://www.freetheslaves.net/about-slavery/slavery-in-history/>