

Slavery In History

A Comprehensive Look at Slavery from 6800 BC to Now



Introduction

Slavery has been a pervasive institution, stretching across time and location, ever since the earliest days of human society. The chronology presented in this book begins in 6800 BC and runs through to our current era, offering a comprehensive view of how the practice has manifested in various forms and been influenced by a myriad of factors. Yet, the story of slavery is far from static; it has evolved in complexity, driven by economic conditions, social norms, political agendas, and even technological advancements.

Various civilizations have had different relationships with slavery, influenced by their own unique set of circumstances. While some societies were notorious for their slave-trading empires, others were marked by a more subdued form of servitude. The Ancient Egyptians, the Roman Empire, and the American South each offer distinct narratives on the slave-owner dynamic, revealing how economic needs often outweighed moral considerations. The kinds of labor slaves performed could be as different as the pyramids they built, the battles they fought, or the cotton they harvested.

Economic factors alone, however, cannot explain the longevity and prevalence of slavery. Cultural beliefs and social norms have often served to reinforce the institution. Many societies have justified the enslavement of certain groups based on race, religion, gender, or ethnicity, incorporating these prejudices into their legal and social frameworks. Yet, as dominant as these factors have been, there have been persistent undercurrents of resistance and reform that have slowly but steadily eroded the pillars of slavery.

Public opinion on slavery has been anything but monolithic and has shifted dramatically over time. What was socially acceptable or legally permissible in one era became the target of public outcry in another. Abolitionist movements, both quiet and loud, have existed alongside slavery, driven by individuals, religious groups, and even nations that have come to see the practice as antithetical to human dignity and social progress.

As you explore the events and milestones documented in this book, you'll discover the multifaceted nature of slavery and the equally complex efforts to eradicate it. This is not merely an archive of past transgressions but a living narrative that continues to evolve. The history of slavery offers us a mirror, reflecting not just the failings of human society but also its capacity for change, resilience, and progress.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Age of Abolition 1781 to 1920

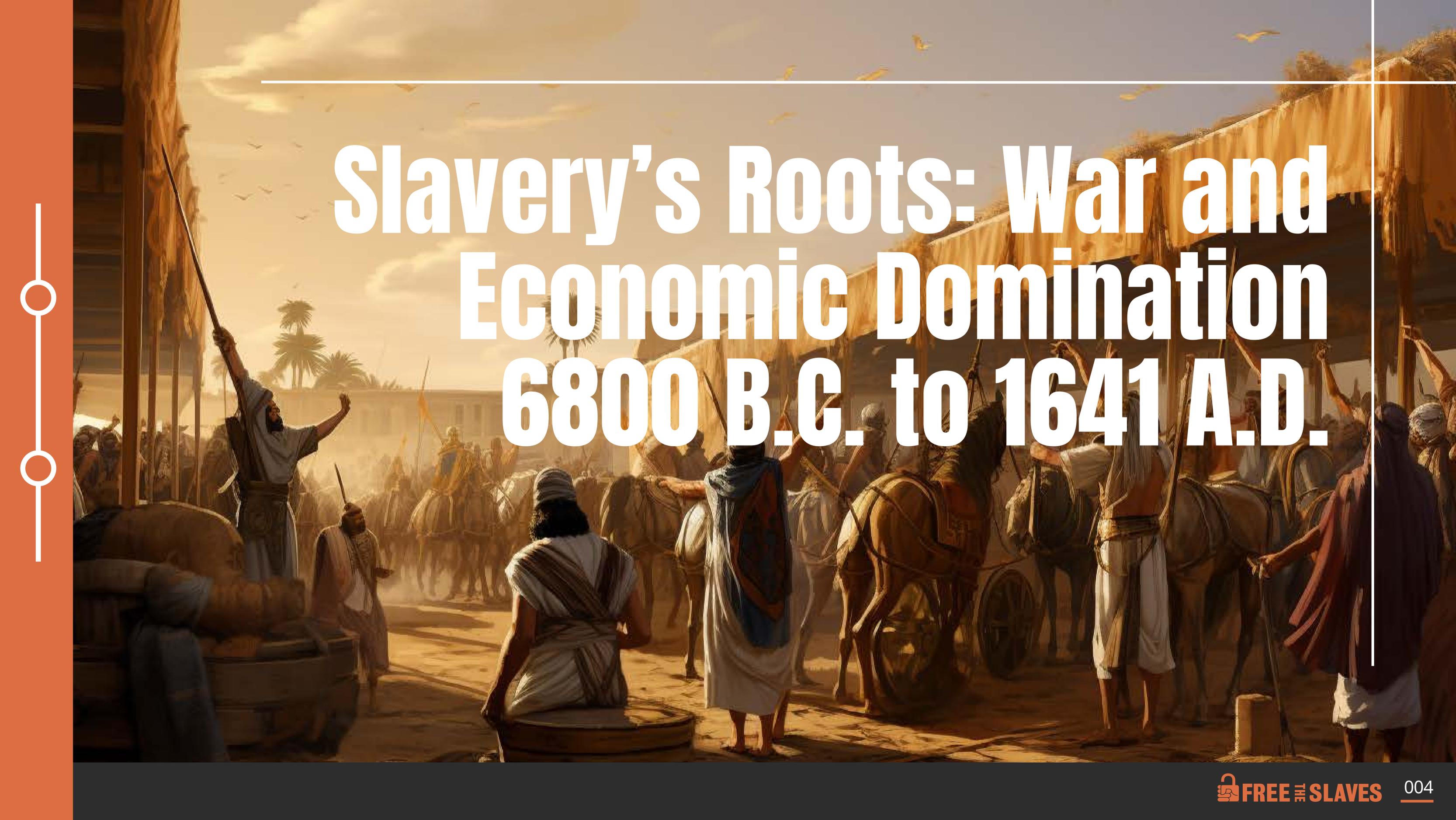
Abolition in Recent Times 1950 to 1999

Slavery's Roots: War and Economic Domination 6800 B.C to 1641

Abolition Spreads Worldwide 1909 to 1949

Abolition in the 21st Century. 2000 to Now





Slavery's Roots: War and Economic Domination 6800 B.C. to 1641 A.D.

6800 BC to

As we delve into the earliest chapters of humanity's recorded history, tracing the origins and evolution of slavery presents a profound challenge. The time spanning from 6800 BC to 1641 is characterized by the limited remnants of oral traditions, ancient inscriptions, artifacts, and the sparse documentation by early historians and explorers. Each fragment serves as a crucial piece of a vast, intricate puzzle, giving us glimpses into the genesis and growth of one of history's most enduring and contentious institutions.

During these millennia, two predominant factors emerged as foundational pillars for the rise of slavery: war and economic domination. Tribal conflicts, territorial conquests, and vast empire expansions often resulted in the subjugation of entire populations. The victors, driven by both a desire for dominance and a practical need to manage the conquered, turned to enslavement. These war captives, stripped of their autonomy and rights, found themselves thrust into a life of servitude, their value reduced to their capacity for labor.

1641 AD.

Parallel to the narrative of war is the tale of economic growth and ambition. As ancient civilizations evolved, their needs expanded. Monumental architectural endeavors, agricultural expansions, and the intricate web of trade routes demanded a substantial labor force. Slavery emerged as a pragmatic solution, promising cheap and controlled labor. Societal hierarchies solidified, with economic gain often prioritized over compassion.

In "Slavery's Roots: War and Economic Domination," we will journey through vast empires, from Mesopotamian city-states to the medieval kingdoms of Europe. We'll discover how the intertwined forces of war and economic ambition fueled the establishment and perpetuation of slavery. Along the way, we'll grapple with the contradictions of human nature: the simultaneous capacity for creation and destruction, compassion and cruelty, progress and oppression. Through the lens of these early millennia, we'll seek to understand the deep-seated roots of a system that has profoundly shaped the course of human history.



6800 B.C.

Around 6800 B.C., a significant turning point in human history took place as the world's first city-state emerged in the fertile region of Mesopotamia. This urban center marked the beginning of organized societies, where agriculture and technological advancements were laying the foundations for civilization. However, with progress came conflict, and disputes over land ownership escalated into armed confrontations. As these ancient city-states vied for dominance and resources, victorious factions often resorted to capturing their defeated enemies, leading to the practice of slavery.

In the wake of war, conquered individuals found themselves subjected to arduous labor and servitude, becoming a valuable commodity to their captors. These early forms of slavery were rooted in the conquerors' desire to exert control and exploit the labor of the conquered. The emergence of slavery in this era set a troubling precedent, casting a long shadow over the course of human history, as it became deeply entrenched in various civilizations and persisted through millennia, with far-reaching consequences for societies and the lives of millions of enslaved people.

In 2575 B.C., ancient Egyptian temple art celebrated the capture of slaves through military conquests. The Egyptian civilization, known for its powerful central authority, sought to expand its dominion by organizing special expeditions up the Nile River into neighboring regions. These expeditions targeted weaker communities, and the defeated enemies were taken back to Egypt as slaves.

The temple artworks not only glorified the conquests but also served as a warning to potential adversaries, showcasing Egypt's military might. Slavery became deeply entrenched in Egyptian society, with enslaved individuals fulfilling crucial roles as agricultural laborers, construction workers, and household servants. This system of exploitation not only contributed to Egypt's economic prosperity but also established a hierarchical social structure, where one's position within the system determined their status and power.





In 550 B.C., the city-state of Athens stood as a flourishing hub of ancient Greek civilization, known for its advancements in art, culture, and governance. A significant source of its economic strength came from the lucrative silver mines that lay within its territory. These mines, situated in the Lavrion region of Attica, played a pivotal role in bolstering Athens' wealth and influence in the region. However, behind this facade of prosperity lay a darker reality—thousands of enslaved individuals were consigned to labor in the treacherous conditions of the mines. The system of slavery in Athens was deeply entrenched in society, with enslaved individuals serving in various capacities, including mining, agriculture, and domestic work. Despite the intellectual and cultural achievements of Athens, the reliance on slave labor was an unfortunate underpinning of its growth and expansion.

The prevalence of slavery in Athens during this period was not unique to the city-state; it was a common practice across many ancient civilizations. Slaves in Athens were acquired through various means, including warfare, trade, and birth into slave families. Their labor in the silver mines was arduous and hazardous, as they faced dangers such as cave-ins, toxic fumes, and exhaustion. The profits from the silver mines played a vital role in financing public works and maintaining the city's military prowess, further cementing the institution of slavery as an integral part of Athens' economic and social fabric.

In 120 A.D., the Roman Empire stood as an imposing force on the world stage, and its insatiable quest for expansion brought immense wealth and power. However, this relentless drive was accompanied by a substantial human toll—the capture and enslavement of thousands through military campaigns. Roman conquests across vast territories, from Europe to Africa and beyond, resulted in the capture of numerous individuals who were subsequently bound into servitude. As a consequence, the population of slaves within Rome itself surged significantly, with estimates suggesting that more than half of the city's inhabitants were slaves.

Slavery in ancient Rome was a pervasive and integral aspect of the empire's socio-economic structure. They served in various capacities, from agricultural laborers to household servants, providing the backbone for Rome's thriving economy. The institution of slavery permeated all facets of Roman society, with slaves often being bought, sold, and even used as pawns for political influence. The staggering numbers of enslaved people within Rome's borders underscore the far-reaching impact of conquest-driven enslavement.





500

Around 500 AD, the Anglo-Saxon invasions brought significant changes to the landscape of England, leading to the enslavement of native Britons. As the Anglo-Saxons established their presence and dominance in the region, they subdued and subjugated the indigenous Britons, subjecting many to a life of servitude. The conquest-driven enslavement served as a means for the Anglo-Saxons to consolidate their power and ensure control over the newly acquired territories.

The enslaved native Britons faced various forms of exploitation, from forced labor in agricultural fields and construction projects to domestic servitude. Their displacement and subordination under the Anglo-Saxon rule reshaped the social fabric of the land and left a lasting impact on the cultural and economic dynamics of England. The practice of enslaving the conquered population became entrenched in Anglo-Saxon society, further deepening the divide between the conquerors and the subjugated, and setting the stage for centuries of social and economic inequality.

Around the year 1000, England's rural and agricultural economy relied heavily on the labor of destitute workers who found themselves caught in a system of debt bondage to landowners. Slavery, in the form of indentured servitude, became a norm in the countryside, as impoverished individuals and families offered their labor in exchange for access to land and meager provisions. These workers, often facing desperate circumstances and struggling to survive, willingly placed themselves in servitude, agreeing to work for the landowners for an extended period to repay debts or secure their basic needs.

In this system of debt bondage, the cycle of poverty and dependence perpetuated itself, as successive generations found themselves bound to the same landowners. The harsh conditions and limited prospects for economic improvement meant that many remained trapped in this state of virtual slavery, with little hope for a better life. Slavery as a labor practice in England's rural landscape during this period highlights the grim reality of an agricultural society heavily reliant on the labor of those bound by debt and servitude.

1000





1380

By 1380, Europe found itself grappling with the devastating aftermath of the Black Plague, a catastrophic pandemic that decimated the population and triggered a severe labor shortage across the continent. In response to this crisis, the demand for cheap and abundant labor surged, and the slave trade saw a marked resurgence. Slaves were sourced from various regions, including within Europe itself, the Middle East, and North Africa, to fill the growing void in the workforce.

The thriving slave trade during this period had profound implications for societies across Europe. Slave markets sprung up in major cities, and individuals, often captured in war or traded by unscrupulous merchants, were forced into servitude. The influx of slaves from diverse backgrounds reshaped labor practices and further fueled economic growth in various industries. However, it also perpetuated human suffering and exploitation as enslaved individuals endured a life of subjugation and abuse.

In 1444, Portuguese traders embarked on a fateful voyage, bringing the first substantial cargo of enslaved individuals from West Africa to Europe by sea. This pivotal event marked the establishment of what would become one of the most horrific and enduring chapters in human history—the Atlantic slave trade. As the Portuguese ships crossed the vast ocean, they carried with them the tragic fate of thousands of Africans who were forcibly uprooted from their homeland and condemned to a life of unimaginable suffering and exploitation.

The emergence of the Atlantic slave trade had far-reaching consequences that reverberated across continents and centuries. This cruel commerce not only reshaped the demographics of entire regions but also laid the foundations for a deeply entrenched system of racial oppression and economic exploitation. The enslaved Africans endured a harrowing journey known as the Middle Passage, where countless lives were lost due to the appalling conditions aboard the slave ships. The establishment of this brutal trade route perpetuated the dehumanization of a people and cemented the commodification of human lives.

1444





1526

In 1526, Spanish explorers ushered in a pivotal moment in American history when they brought the first African slaves to settlements that would later become part of the United States. This marked the introduction of Africans to the North American continent and laid the foundation for the long and painful history of slavery in what would become the United States. The forced labor of these enslaved individuals played a crucial role in shaping the early American economy and society.

In the same year, these African slaves made history by staging the first known slave revolt in the Americas. This bold act of resistance challenged the oppressive system of slavery and exemplified the unyielding spirit of those who were unjustly subjected to the cruelty and bondage of forced labor. The revolt demonstrated that the enslaved individuals were not passive victims but active agents seeking their freedom and dignity. Despite the harsh consequences they faced, this courageous act of resistance left an indelible mark on the collective memory of the struggle for liberation and equality in the face of enslavement.

Around 1550, Renaissance art reflected the prevailing attitudes of the time, depicting slaves as objects of conspicuous consumption. In these artworks, enslaved individuals were often portrayed as status symbols and luxuries, akin to other valuable possessions that adorned the lives of the wealthy and powerful. These depictions perpetuated a troubling narrative that viewed slaves as commodities to be owned and displayed, rather than as human beings with inherent dignity and rights.

The Renaissance period witnessed a flourishing of artistic expression, but it also illuminated the complexities of society, including the acceptance and normalization of slavery. The portrayal of slaves in opulent settings and alongside their owners in art reinforced the notion that their existence was subservient and that they existed for the pleasure and glorification of their masters. This imagery further perpetuated the dehumanization of enslaved individuals and contributed to the social acceptance of the institution of slavery, which persisted throughout much of the Renaissance era and beyond.

1550





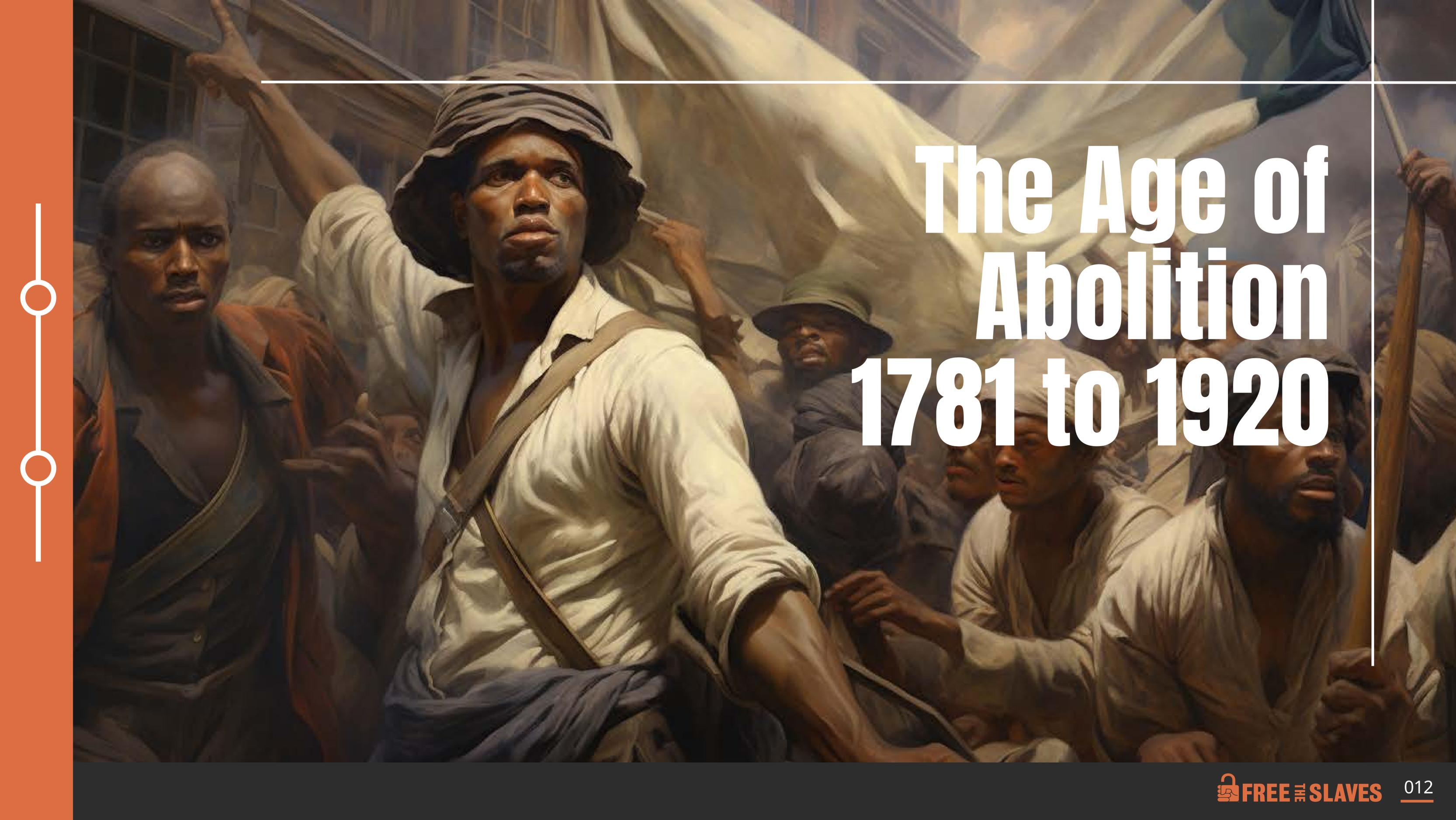
1641

In 1641, a significant turning point in the history of British colonies occurred as Massachusetts became the first colony to legalize slavery. The General Court of Massachusetts Bay Colony passed a law that formally recognized and institutionalized the practice of chattel slavery, granting legal status to the ownership and forced labor of enslaved Africans and Native Americans.

This legislative act set a troubling precedent, and the legalization of slavery in Massachusetts had far-reaching consequences that reverberated across the colonies and laid the groundwork for the expansion of slavery throughout British America. The institution of slavery would evolve and endure for centuries, shaping the social, economic, and cultural fabric of the emerging nation.



FREE SLAVES



The Age of Abolition 1781 to 1920

1781 to 1920

As we transition from the deeply rooted foundations of slavery into an era marked by moral, intellectual, and political upheaval, the story takes a dramatic turn. The period between 1781 and 1920, which we explore in "The Age of Abolition," represents a profound shift in collective consciousness, one that changed the course of human history. Through an intricate tapestry of political debates, religious fervor, social activism, and unprecedented cultural changes, the institution of slavery came under intense scrutiny.

During this transformative period, the age-old structures that had for centuries supported and perpetuated slavery began to waver. The American and French Revolutions introduced the world to transformative ideals—liberty, equality, fraternity—that proved incompatible with the blatant inequities of slavery. In tandem, the Industrial Revolution altered economic paradigms. No longer was human bondage seen as indispensable for economic prosperity; machines could do the work faster and more efficiently.

But change didn't happen overnight or without struggle. The push for abolition was fraught with contradictions, rife with complexities, and marred by immense human suffering. Abolitionists found themselves up against formidable social and economic systems deeply invested in the status quo. The crusade against slavery engaged everyone from impassioned activists and politicians to religious leaders who argued the immorality of treating human beings as property. Yet, it also ignited fierce resistance from those who saw abolition as a threat to their way of life and economic stability, as well as to those who continued to believe in the inherent inferiority of certain peoples.

This chapter delves into the landmark events that marked this turbulent era. We explore the end of the transatlantic slave trade, the rise of the abolitionist movement, the Civil War in America, and the subsequent amendments that legally ended slavery. We also venture beyond the western world to examine global efforts to dismantle similar oppressive systems elsewhere.

"The Age of Abolition" serves not just as a testament to human resilience and the enduring struggle for justice, but also as a sobering reminder that progress is often slow, uneven, and fraught with complexities. It's a narrative that challenges us to recognize both the triumphs and tragedies that have shaped our ongoing journey toward a more equitable world.



1781

In 1781, Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II made a decision that transformed the social landscape of the Austrian Habsburg dominions. His decree abolished serfdom, liberating a significant portion of the population from the centuries-old system of feudal servitude. The serfs, who had long been bound to the land and subjected to the authority of their lords, were now granted newfound freedoms and the right to seek better opportunities beyond their estates. This move towards emancipation was emblematic of Joseph II's commitment to Enlightenment ideals, emphasizing individual liberties and social progress.

The abolition of serfdom under Joseph II's reign marked a pivotal moment in European history, inspiring similar reforms across the continent and fueling discussions about the rights and dignity of individuals in society. This significant step towards a more equitable and just society challenged the entrenched structures of oppression, laying the foundation for the advancement of human rights in the modern era.

In 1787, the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was founded in Britain. It became a powerful force against the transatlantic slave trade. Led by prominent activists, including Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce, the Society was driven by a shared mission to end the inhumane and exploitative trade of enslaved Africans.

The Society's formation initiated a sustained and organized campaign to raise public awareness about the atrocities of the slave trade and lobby for its abolition. Through pamphlets, petitions, and public speaking engagements, the Society exposed the brutal realities of the slave trade, advocating for moral, humanitarian, and economic arguments to put an end to the practice. The relentless efforts of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade paved the way for more change in the years to come.

1787





1789

In 1789, amidst the fervor of the French Revolution, a landmark document emerged that would go on to become one of the cornerstones of human liberties—the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Adopted by the National Assembly, this seminal charter proclaimed the fundamental rights and freedoms that every individual should inherently possess. The opening article of the Declaration boldly asserted the principle of universal equality, stating that "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights."

This powerful statement encapsulated the revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity that echoed across the nation and reverberated throughout the world. The Declaration of the Rights of Man enshrined the belief that all human beings are entitled to certain unalienable rights, regardless of their social status, birth, or background. It challenged the prevailing hierarchies and feudal systems of the time and laid the groundwork for the advancement of human rights and dignity on a global scale.

In 1791, enslaved individuals in Haiti rose up in rebellion against their French oppressors. This bold revolt, led by figures such as Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, would ultimately pave the way for Haiti's independence from France in 1804. Remarkably, this revolution stands as a unique example in history where a slave rebellion not only resulted in the abolition of slavery but also led to the creation of an independent nation.

The Haitian Revolution was a protracted and grueling struggle that challenged the institution of slavery and colonial rule on the island of Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti). The enslaved population, inspired by the principles of liberty and equality, fought valiantly against immense odds and overcame military forces sent by France. Their triumphant stand against oppression was a testament to the indomitable spirit of those who yearned for freedom and justice. The culmination of the revolution in 1804 marked a historic moment as Haiti became the first nation in the Americas to gain independence.

1791





1803

In 1803, Denmark-Norway etched a significant milestone in the fight against the transatlantic slave trade by becoming the first country in Europe to pass legislation banning the African slave trade. This law effectively put an end to the trading of enslaved Africans and also halted the importation of slaves into Danish dominions.

The abolition of the African slave trade by Denmark-Norway was a progressive step towards acknowledging the inhumanity and injustice of the transatlantic slave trade. It reflected a growing global awareness of the horrors of slavery and a recognition of the urgent need for change.

In 1807, strides were made in the fight against the transatlantic slave trade as both Britain and the United States took decisive actions to prohibit the importation of enslaved Africans. The British Parliament passed a law that made it illegal for British ships to transport slaves, and British colonies were also forbidden from importing them. This landmark legislation represented a major step towards the eventual abolition of slavery within the British Empire.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, U.S. President Thomas Jefferson signed into law the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves. This legislation marked a critical moment in America's journey towards dismantling the transatlantic slave trade.

1807





1811-1867

Between 1811 and 1867, the British Navy's Anti-Slavery Squadron worked to stop the transatlantic slave trade off the African coast. With a mission to intercept and disrupt slave ships, the squadron successfully liberated an estimated 160,000 enslaved Africans. Operating in the Gulf of Guinea and along the West African coast, the squadron's presence deterred and challenged the illegal trade in human lives. Once suspected slave ships were apprehended, the British naval officers and crews would board them to free the enslaved individuals and provide them with essential care. The liberated Africans were then transported to designated British colonies, where they were granted their freedom and the opportunity to build new lives as free individuals. The efforts of the Anti-Slavery Squadron were instrumental in weakening the transatlantic slave trade and served as a crucial step towards its eventual demise.

In 1813, Sweden, a nation that had never authorized slave traffic, made the decision to ban the African slave trade. Taking a principled and humanitarian stance, Sweden joined the growing international movement against the transatlantic slave trade. Despite not being directly involved in the practice, Sweden's consent to the ban represented a significant contribution to the efforts of ending the inhumane trade of enslaved Africans.

By prohibiting the African slave trade, Sweden aligned itself with the prevailing sentiment of the time, recognizing the profound moral and humanitarian implications of the transatlantic slave trade. This decision added momentum to the global abolitionist cause, demonstrating a commitment to justice and human rights.

1813





1814

In 1814, the king of the Netherlands officially ended Dutch participation in the African slave trade. This decision reflected an increasing awareness of the moral implications surrounding the transatlantic slave trade.

Simultaneously, during the Congress of Vienna, major European powers acknowledged the urgency to abolish the slave trade. Though they proclaimed their commitment to ending it as soon as possible, no specific effective date was set. Nonetheless, this collective recognition demonstrated a growing international consensus against the trade in human lives, signaling a critical shift in attitudes towards the cruel practice of enslaving Africans for profit.

In 1820, the government of Spain abolished the slave trade south of the Equator. This decision marked a progressive move in curbing the inhumane trafficking of enslaved Africans to Spanish territories in the southern hemisphere.

However, despite the official abolition, the slave trade persisted in Cuba until 1888, nearly seven decades later. Despite the Spanish government's initial efforts, the practice continued on the island, prolonging the suffering and exploitation of countless individuals who were forcibly transported and enslaved in Cuba.

1820





1833

In 1833, during the height of the Industrial Revolution, Britain enacted the Factory Act, a pivotal piece of legislation that ushered in improvements to working conditions in the textile industry. This act brought about crucial reforms to protect the welfare of factory workers, particularly children who were vulnerable to exploitation and harsh labor practices.

The Factory Act of 1833 introduced several provisions. It established a regulated working day for textile manufacture, providing workers with fixed hours and addressing the issue of excessively long workdays. Moreover, the act enabled government inspections to monitor and enforce compliance with the new regulations, ensuring that factories adhered to the improved working conditions. One of the most significant aspects of the act was the ban on child labor under the age of 9, a vital step towards ending the exploitation of young children in factories. Additionally, it limited the workday of children between 13 and 18 years old to 12 hours.

In 1834 the Abolition Act was passed, which brought an end to slavery throughout the British Empire, including the British colonies in North America. The Abolition Act emancipated enslaved individuals in all British colonies.

Under the Abolition Act, nearly 800,000 enslaved individuals were granted their freedom, marking a pivotal shift towards a more just and humane society. The act also addressed the economic aspect of abolition by providing compensation to slave owners, totaling a substantial amount of nearly \$100 million in today's money. This compensation aimed to alleviate the financial impact on those who had previously profited from the labor of enslaved people.

1834





1840

In 1840, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society organized the first World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. The primary objective of this historic gathering was to mobilize reformers and foster collaboration in the global fight against slavery. The convention aimed to support post-emancipation efforts in various parts of the world.

Notably, a group of U.S. abolitionists attended the convention. However, a significant controversy arose when women, including prominent figures Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, were denied seating on the convention floor. The exclusion of women delegates led to a protest, and Stanton, Mott, and their supporters left the meeting in protest. This incident highlighted the gender discrimination prevalent within the abolitionist movement at the time and sparked discussions about the intersection of the abolitionist cause with the emerging women's rights movement.

In 1845, the British Navy made a significant commitment to combat the transatlantic slave trade by assigning 36 ships to its Anti-Slavery Squadron. This move bolstered the squadron's capabilities and made it one of the largest and most formidable fleets dedicated to the abolitionist cause in the world.

The Anti-Slavery Squadron operated to intercept and disrupt slave ships, liberating enslaved individuals and apprehending those involved in the illegal trade. By deploying such a substantial fleet, the British Navy demonstrated its resolute dedication to confronting the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade and enforcing the abolition of slavery.

1845





1848

In 1848, the government of France decided to abolish slavery in all its colonies. This decision was prompted by a combination of factors, including domestic social movements, changing attitudes towards slavery, and political developments.

In the early 19th century, France witnessed the rise of abolitionist movements and a growing public sentiment against the institution of slavery. Advocates for abolition, including prominent intellectuals, activists, and humanitarians, campaigned tirelessly for the liberation of enslaved individuals and the recognition of their inherent rights and dignity.

In 1850, the government of Brazil made the decision to end the country's participation in the transatlantic slave trade. The move was a response to growing international pressure and the efforts of abolitionist movements both within Brazil and abroad. The trade of enslaved Africans to Brazilian territories had been a significant and lucrative business for many years but increasing scrutiny and condemnation of the brutal practice led to calls for its abolition.

The Brazilian government's decision to declare slave traffic as a form of piracy was a bold and impactful move. By categorizing it as piracy, the government not only condemned the inhumane nature of the trade but also signaled its intent to take strong action against those involved in the trafficking of enslaved individuals. This declaration further aligned Brazil with the broader international efforts to combat the transatlantic slave trade and dismantle the institution of slavery.

1850





1861

In 1861, Russian Emperor Alexander II issued a decree that emancipated all Russian serfs, numbering approximately 50 million individuals. This landmark decree marked the beginning of the Great Reform in Russia and earned Alexander II the title "Czar Liberator."

The emancipation of the serfs was a significant move towards social and economic change in Russia. Before the decree, serfs were bound to the land they worked and were considered the property of the noble landowners. The emancipation granted them personal freedoms and allowed them to own property, marry without consent, and pursue various occupations.

However, the emancipation was not without challenges. The serfs were given land, but they had to pay for it over time, resulting in substantial debt for many. Additionally, the noble landowners received compensation for the loss of their serfs, which further burdened the newly freed population.

In 1863, during the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued The Emancipation Proclamation, an executive order that declared the freedom of all enslaved individuals in states that had seceded from the Union. This proclamation marked a significant step towards ending slavery in the United States and redefined the purpose of the Civil War as a fight for the abolition of slavery.

The Emancipation Proclamation had a profound impact on the course of the war and the fight for freedom. It provided a moral and legal justification for the Union's military efforts and encouraged enslaved individuals to escape to Union-controlled areas in search of freedom. While it did not immediately free all enslaved people in the country, it signaled a pivotal shift in the nation's commitment to ending the institution of slavery.

1863





1863

In 1863, the government of the Netherlands officially abolished slavery in all Dutch colonies. The movement to abolish slavery in Dutch colonies had gained momentum during the 19th century, fueled by the efforts of abolitionist activists, and changing perceptions about the inhumanity of the institution. The Netherlands had been involved in the transatlantic slave trade for centuries, with Dutch colonies in the Caribbean and South America relying heavily on enslaved labor for economic prosperity.

However, mounting criticism and condemnation of the inhumane treatment of enslaved individuals, as well as the influence of the global abolitionist movement, prompted the Dutch government to act. On July 1, 1863, the Dutch government issued a decree formally ending slavery in all its colonies.

In 1865, the United States Congress granted final passage to the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, officially outlawing slavery. This amendment marked a historic and definitive end to the institution of slavery in the United States.

The 13th 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." With the ratification of this amendment by a sufficient number of states, the legal foundation for slavery was effectively abolished, and millions of enslaved individuals were granted their long-awaited freedom.

1865





1888

In 1888, Brazil reached a historic turning point when the Lei Aurea, or Golden Law, was enacted, signaling the end of one of the largest systems of slavery in the Americas. The abolitionist movement in Brazil had been gaining momentum for decades, spurred by the efforts of prominent activists and intellectuals who tirelessly campaigned for the emancipation of enslaved individuals.

The Lei Aurea was signed into law on May 13, 1888, by Princess Isabel, the daughter of Emperor Dom Pedro II. This legislation marked a profound shift in Brazilian society and effectively granted freedom to approximately 725,000 enslaved people. The Golden Law not only dismantled the institution of slavery but also recognized the inherent rights and dignity of those who had been subjected to years of forced labor and oppression.

Between 1865 and 1920, the aftermath of the American Civil War saw a disturbing and abusive practice known as "peonage" emerge, leading to the re-enslavement of hundreds of thousands of African Americans. Exploiting a manipulative legal system, African American men and women were unjustly arrested and convicted of crimes, only to be "leased" to various industries such as coal and iron mines, brick factories, plantations, and hazardous workplaces across the Deep South. This deplorable system allowed employers to benefit from the forced labor of these individuals, stripping them of their freedom and subjecting them to inhumane working conditions.

The peonage system persisted throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, causing untold suffering, and perpetuating the legacy of slavery in the United States. While the formal peonage system eventually slowed down after World War I, it was not entirely eradicated until the 1940s.

1865-1920



A historical black and white photograph of a factory street. In the foreground, a group of men in coats and hats stands on a sidewalk. A horse-drawn carriage is on the dirt road. In the background, several large brick factory buildings with multiple chimneys are visible, with thick smoke rising into the sky. The scene is set in an industrial area.

Abolition Spreads Worldwide 1909 to 1949

1909 to 1949

Navigating the period from 1909 to 1949, "Abolition Spreads Worldwide" offers a global perspective on the sprawling tapestry of abolitionist movements that challenged the remnants of slavery and servitude across continents. This era, characterized by two World Wars and significant geopolitical shifts, bore witness to a renewed global conscience—a world increasingly interconnected, seeking to rectify the shadows of its past and build a more inclusive future.

While the preceding century laid the foundational ethos for the rejection of human bondage, it was during these four decades that abolitionist ideologies gained momentum on a global scale. The sheer devastation of World War I, where nations saw the enormous human toll of conflict, further reinforced the global conversation on fundamental human rights. The establishment of the League of Nations in the aftermath of the war was a testament to this newfound collective intent, as the global community endeavored to prevent future conflicts and safeguard human dignity.

But the path to worldwide abolition was by no means linear. As we delve into this chapter, we encounter both pioneering nations that took significant strides in eradicating forced labor, and regions where old systems merely transformed into new manifestations of exploitation. The rise of new ideologies and political systems also brought about shifts in attitudes towards slavery. Then came World War II, another profound period of human suffering, which reemphasized the universal importance of human rights, leading to the formation of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

"Abolition Spreads Worldwide" invites readers to traverse a myriad of landscapes—from the political arenas of Europe and the Americas to the diverse societies of Asia and Africa, all grappling with the lingering specters of exploitation. This chapter underscores that, while the march towards global abolition was gathering pace, the world was still far from freeing itself entirely from the chains of human servitude. The challenge was (and remains) to change laws and transform deeply ingrained societal norms and economic practices. The journey through this chapter is both an exploration of global progress and a reflection on the inherent complexities of achieving universal freedom.



1909

In 1909, the Congo Reform Association was established in Britain, signaling a pivotal moment in the history of the Congo Free State (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo). This marked the initiation of an organized effort to dismantle the brutal forced labor system under the rule of Belgium's King Leopold II.

The association's Red Rubber Campaign emerged as a direct response to the horrifying revelations of the atrocities used to force local people to produce rubber for the European market. King Leopold II's agents resorted to extreme measures, including severing hands and destroying homes, to enforce compliance with their demands. The collective efforts of the Congo Reform Association succeeded in pressuring King Leopold II's regime to relinquish control over the Congo Free State, effectively ending the brutal forced labor system.

In 1910, the International Convention for the Suppression of the White Slave Trade was signed in Paris. This marked the world's first collective effort to combat the trafficking of women and girls into prostitution. The convention introduced a significant shift by compelling participating nations to take legal action against individuals involved in recruiting underage women or girls into prostitution, even if they claimed consent. This treaty addressed the escalating issue of human trafficking and coerced exploitation, reflecting the international community's growing concern for the welfare and rights of vulnerable individuals.

1910





1913

In 1913, the Peruvian Amazon Company faced a torrent of public indignation fueled by media revelations and a subsequent popular petition. This British entity stood accused of subjecting indigenous people in Peru to grievous exploitation and torture. Media reports laid bare the distressing details of the company's inhumane practices, leading to widespread condemnation.

As public outcry intensified, citizens rallied against the company's actions by signing a petition, amplifying the growing demand for accountability. In response to this groundswell of discontent, the British Parliament took decisive action, ordering the closure of the Peruvian Amazon Company. This event marked a turning point in the evolving relationship between public awareness, corporate conduct, and governmental intervention.

In 1915, the Malaya colonial government officially abolished slavery. This move marked a crucial shift in the region's history, ending the era of exploitative practices that had persisted.

Under colonial rule, Malaya had grappled with the presence of enslaved individuals subjected to forced labor and oppression. However, in 1915, the colonial authorities recognized the injustice inherent in these practices, leading to the formal abolition of slavery.

1915





1918

In 1918, a revealing insight into social practices emerged as the British governor of Hong Kong estimated that a significant number of households, predominantly those with means, employed young children as household slaves. This striking observation shed light on the prevalence of such practices during that period.

The presence of child household slaves, predominantly in families with financial resources, reflected socio-economic disparities and prevailing norms. It underscored the challenges faced by vulnerable populations, particularly children, who were subjected to forms of labor and exploitation within domestic settings.

In 1919, the International Labor Organization (ILO) was established. Headquartered in Geneva, this global body aimed to set a universal standard for labor practices, bringing together governments, labor representatives, and management to address key aspects of employment.

The ILO's formation responded to the pressing need for international cooperation on labor issues in the aftermath of World War I. Its mission encompassed a wide range of concerns, including pay scales, working conditions, the rights of trade unions, occupational safety, the employment of women and children, and social security measures. By uniting various stakeholders, the ILO sought to foster fair and equitable labor practices across the world, emphasizing the importance of upholding the dignity and rights of workers.

1919





1923

In 1923, the British colonial government in Hong Kong banned the sale of young girls as domestic slaves. The colonial government's decision showcased a commitment to upholding human dignity and ending exploitative practice.

The ban on selling young girls as domestic slaves in Hong Kong signaled a growing awareness of the need to protect the most vulnerable members of society from exploitation. This measure aligned with evolving global attitudes toward human rights and represented a departure from the norms of the time, which had tolerated such practices.

In 1926, the League of Nations endorsed the Slavery Convention. This landmark document defined slavery as the state in which a person is subjected to the powers equivalent to ownership. With over 30 governments signing onto this commitment, the convention obliged member nations to collaborate in eradicating all forms of slavery.

The approval of the Slavery Convention by the League of Nations signified an international consensus on addressing the scourge of slavery in its various manifestations. By providing a comprehensive definition of slavery, the convention aimed to encompass not only traditional forms but also modern versions of coerced labor and exploitation.

1926





1926

In 1926, Burma officially abolished legal slavery. The abolition of legal slavery in Burma was indicative of changing perspectives on human rights and the recognition of the inherent dignity of all individuals. This move represented a departure from the traditional practices that had allowed for the ownership and exploitation of certain individuals as slaves.

By taking this step, Burma demonstrated its commitment to aligning with evolving global standards and principles that condemned systems of oppression and exploitation. The abolition of legal slavery underscored the nation's dedication to fostering a more just and equitable society, where the rights and freedoms of all citizens were acknowledged and respected.

In 1927, Sierra Leone legally abolished slavery. Founded as a British colony in the 18th century with the intention of providing a new beginning for those who had escaped the bonds of slavery, Sierra Leone's decision to formally eradicate the practice represented a culmination of its foundational purpose.

The abolition of slavery in Sierra Leone demonstrated the evolution of societal norms and values, as well as the nation's commitment to upholding the dignity and rights of all its inhabitants.

1927





1930

In 1930, the U.S. Tariff Act was established, barring the import of products produced through "forced or indentured labor." This step aimed to combat exploitative trade practices. In 1997, the Sanders Amendment clarified that this also applied to products made with "forced or indentured child labor," addressing the vulnerability of young workers to coercive conditions. This legislative action exemplified the U.S.' commitment to ethical trade and human rights, reflecting global efforts against exploitative labor practices.

In 1936, a decree was issued by the King of Saudi Arabia, marking the cessation of new slave imports, the regulation of existing slaves' conditions, and the provision for manumission—the act of slave owners freeing their slaves—under specific circumstances. This royal edict reflected a momentous step in addressing the institution of slavery within the country.

The decree signaled Saudi Arabia's commitment to reforming its practices related to slavery. By ending the importation of new slaves and introducing regulations, the country acknowledged the need for change and sought to establish more humane treatment for those already enslaved. The provision for manumission showcased a willingness to offer pathways to freedom for individuals held in bondage.

1936





1938

In 1938 during World War II, the Japanese military established "comfort stations," essentially brothels, to cater to Japanese troops. However, the reality was grim, as thousands of Korean and Chinese women were subjected to forced sexual slavery within these stations. Many of the women involved were coerced, abducted, or deceived into servitude, enduring horrendous conditions and abuse.

The issue of military comfort women has since become a contentious topic, representing not only a violation of human rights but also a reflection of the harrowing impact of conflict on civilian populations.

During the years 1939 to 1945, the German Nazi regime employed a vast system of slave labor across both agricultural and industrial sectors. This widespread exploitation affected an estimated up to nine million individuals, subjecting them to grueling labor conditions until they were utterly exhausted. Once their strength was depleted, many of these unfortunate individuals were subsequently transported to concentration camps.

The utilization of slave labor by the Nazi government marked a horrific manifestation of their inhumanity and disregard for basic human rights. Millions of individuals, often taken from occupied territories, were forcibly subjected to harsh work regimes, facing physical and emotional torment. This exploitation contributed to the Nazi war machine while inflicting immense suffering on those forced into labor.

Enslavement in Nazi Germany was not only a matter of sustaining the war machine, it was also part and parcel of Hitler's worldview, which sought the exploitation and ultimate elimination of those regarded as "inferior" - Jews, homosexuals, and Sinti-Roma.

1939-1945





1941

In 1941, the Adoption of Children Ordinance Law was enacted in Ceylon, now known as Sri Lanka. This legislation aimed to address critical aspects of child welfare by introducing measures to regulate and oversee the adoption process.

Under the law, the registration of all adopted children became mandatory, providing a structured framework to monitor their well-being. Moreover, routine inspections were established to ensure that adopted children were not subjected to exploitative conditions, including forced labor or servitude. This step marked a concerted effort to prevent any form of child exploitation and to uphold the rights and dignity of young individuals.

In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations. This historic document enshrined the principle that "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms."

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights represented a global consensus on fundamental human dignity and the absolute rejection of all forms of slavery. It established a foundation for the protection and advancement of human rights worldwide.

1948





1949

In 1949, a pivotal step was taken in the global effort to combat human trafficking and sexual exploitation with the establishment of the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. This convention made it illegal for anyone to procure, entice, or lead another person into prostitution, even if the person gave their consent.

The significance of this Convention lies in its establishment of a legal framework that addresses the exploitative nature of human trafficking, regardless of the consent of the individuals involved. By prohibiting such actions, the convention recognized the vulnerability of individuals to manipulation and coercion, reinforcing the idea that no one should be subjected to involuntary servitude, even in cases where consent might be coerced.



FREE SLAVES



Abolition in Recent Times 1950 to 1999

1950 to 1999

The second half of the 20th century, covered in "Abolition in Recent Times," is a crucial period in the ongoing journey toward the eradication of slavery and human bondage. This era presents a vivid mosaic of triumphs, setbacks, and ambiguities as nations, buoyed by post-war idealism and newly-found unity, confronted the intractable remnants of enslavement within their societies and global systems.

As the shadow of World War II began to fade, the nascent United Nations became a critical platform for championing human rights and influencing global attitudes towards slavery. Key documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and later, specialized conventions and treaties began framing slavery, forced labor, and human trafficking as crimes against humanity, not just moral failings. It was no longer just about isolated movements or individual nations; the fight had become a collective global endeavor.

However, the Cold War era presented its own set of challenges. Ideological battles between superpowers sometimes overshadowed or complicated the quest for human rights. But even amid geopolitical tensions, the era saw landmark moments in civil rights, notably the American Civil Rights Movement and the end of apartheid in South Africa. Yet, as international trade boomed, so did instances of exploitation, with supply chains muddying the ethical landscape, often making consumers unknowingly complicit in modern forms of slavery.

In developing countries, especially in Africa and Asia, the fight against slavery faced unique challenges. These nations were grappling with rapid economic development, the lingering effects of colonial rule, and entrenched social divisions. At the same time, global financial organizations implemented economic reform programs in these countries, often creating instability. Unfortunately, this instability sometimes made people more susceptible to forms of enslavement. Economic upheaval weakened social safety nets and made desperate populations more vulnerable to exploitation, inadvertently complicating efforts to abolish slavery.

The close of the 20th century saw the beginning of the digital revolution, introducing both new platforms for advocacy and novel arenas for exploitation. As the world prepared to step into the new millennium, it was clear that while enormous strides had been made, the quest for abolition remained intricately tied to broader struggles for justice, equality, and human dignity.



1950-1989

During the Cold War (1950-1989), international efforts to combat slavery were stymied by ideological divides between the Western and Soviet Blocs. The Soviet Union argued that slavery was a capitalist issue, conveniently ignoring forced labor camps like the Gulag within its borders. Conversely, the West claimed that people under communist rule were effectively enslaved, focusing more on anti-communism than slavery itself. As a result, new and traditional forms of slavery in the developing world—such as bonded labor in South Asia and forced child labor in Africa—received little attention. This ideological standoff also hindered international bodies like the United Nations from taking decisive action, as member states were often aligned along Cold War lines and progress was hindered by Cold War rivalries.

In 1954, China passed the State Regulation on Reform through Labor, a landmark legislation that officially sanctioned the use of prisoner labor in its laogai prison camps. These labor camps were positioned as tools for both punitive measures and political re-education. Under the guise of "reform through labor," the Chinese government established a legal framework that allowed for the exploitation of prison labor, often in extremely harsh conditions. This policy was not merely an economic strategy aimed at harnessing a captive workforce; it was deeply entrenched in communist ideology that advocated for the transformative power of labor. Critics, however, contend that the State Regulation effectively institutionalized a form of forced labor. Prisoners in the laogai camps were made to produce a range of goods, from textiles to electronics, often destined for both domestic markets and exports. The 1954 regulation, therefore, not only normalized the exploitation of incarcerated individuals but also had broader implications for labor standards globally.

1954





1956

In 1956, the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery was adopted to extend international regulations against slavery to include various other forms of exploitation. This included serfdom, debt bondage, the sale of wives, and child servitude. Prior to this, international focus had largely been on traditional forms of slavery that involved outright ownership of human beings. The Supplementary Convention acknowledged that slavery had evolved and manifested in different practices that were deeply embedded in the social and economic fabrics of various countries.

The Convention was a significant leap in international human rights law as it expanded the definition of slavery and aimed to address its subtler, yet equally damaging, forms. Member states were not only called upon to criminalize these practices but also to bring forth social, economic, and legislative measures to eradicate them.

In 1962, Saudi Arabia and Yemen formally abolished slavery, marking a significant yet delayed milestone in the global anti-slavery movement. Until that point, both countries had remained some of the last holdouts in maintaining legalized slavery, a practice deeply entrenched in their social and economic systems. The abolition came under significant international pressure, particularly from newly independent African nations and Western countries advocating for human rights.

The abolition in Saudi Arabia and Yemen was not merely a local or regional event; it had international implications. It drew attention to the persistence of slavery in the modern age and showcased the influence of global diplomatic pressures in effecting social change. However, the formal abolition didn't immediately eradicate these countries' deeply rooted practices of forced labor and servitude. Challenges remained in implementing and enforcing the new laws, particularly in rural areas far removed from the scrutiny of international observers or the central government.

1962





1964

In 1964, the sixth World Muslim Congress pledged its global support for all anti-slavery movements. The move was impactful not just within the Muslim community, but also globally, as it provided moral and ethical momentum to anti-slavery efforts worldwide. Occurring at a time when some Muslim-majority countries had only recently abolished slavery, the pledge signaled a shift in religious and cultural perspectives, emphasizing that Islamic teachings could be aligned with the values of human dignity and freedom.

This commitment was especially notable given the backdrop of the Cold War, a period often characterized by ideological divides that overshadowed global human rights issues. The World Muslim Congress's pledge transcended these divides, demonstrating that the fight against slavery could unify people across different religious, cultural, and geopolitical lines. In essence, the decision served as a reminder that the issue of slavery was a universally acknowledged human rights imperative, not confined to any single ideology or national interest.

In 1973, the U.N. General Assembly adopted the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. The Convention criminalized a range of inhuman acts, including forced labor, that were committed to establish and maintain racial domination. The Convention was a watershed moment in international law, formalizing apartheid as a crime and linking it explicitly to practices akin to slavery. The adoption came amidst global outrage against the apartheid regime in South Africa, where racial segregation was institutionalized and backed by various forms of forced labor and exploitation.

The Convention also served as a legal tool that anti-apartheid activists and international bodies could leverage. It was not merely a denouncement of the South African government, but a framework aimed at universalizing the fight against racially motivated forced labor and exploitation.

1973





1974

In 1974, emancipated slaves in Mauritania formed the El Hor ("freedom") movement to actively combat enduring slavery practices and advocate for the rights of former slaves. The organization was revolutionary in its approach, insisting that true emancipation could not be achieved without the rigorous enforcement of anti-slavery laws and provision of economic independence for former slaves. El Hor called for systemic changes like land reform and encouraged the establishment of agricultural cooperatives to provide economic opportunities for liberated individuals.

The El Hor movement emerged in a country where slavery had deep historical roots and was an enduring social and economic institution. Its focus on land reform and economic empowerment underscored the complex challenges of eradicating slavery; liberation was not just a legal status but also involved social and economic upward mobility.

In 1975, amid growing awareness of modern slavery practices, the United Nations established the Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. Its mandate was to collect information and formulate recommendations on issues related to slavery and similar forms of exploitation. Unlike earlier U.N. bodies that often focused on traditional forms of slavery, this Working Group was tasked with shedding light on evolving and less visible practices, such as forced labor, child labor, and human trafficking.

The founding of the Working Group signaled a recognition that, despite legal abolitions, slavery had morphed into various contemporary forms that required specialized attention. It aimed to provide an international platform for dialogue and action, cut across geopolitical divides, and sidestep the ideological battles that often stymied progress on human rights issues.

1975





1976

In 1976, India passed the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, outlawing the practice of bonded labor—a form of modern-day slavery where individuals work to repay a debt and often find themselves in cycles of ever-increasing obligations. The legislation was a significant move, as bonded labor had been deeply entrenched in India's social and economic fabric, particularly in rural areas. It sought to emancipate and rehabilitate those ensnared in such labor arrangements, also making it a punishable offense to enforce bonded labor contracts.

The law was part of India's broader effort to align its legal frameworks with international human rights norms, including those against forced labor and slavery-like practices. However, the efficacy of the law has been limited due to challenges in enforcement and social attitudes that perpetuate such labor practices.

In 1980, Mauritania declared the abolition of slavery for the fourth time, marking yet another attempt to eradicate this entrenched social and economic institution. While the law formally decreed that "slavery" no longer existed, it failed to provide a comprehensive framework for its actual dismantlement. Specifically, the legislation did not address key transitional issues such as compensating former masters or enabling former slaves to gain property and achieve economic independence.

The multiple attempts at abolition underscored the complex interplay between formal law and deep-rooted cultural practices. The 1980 law was not just a legal document but a representation of the systemic challenges in dismantling slavery in Mauritania, where societal norms often superseded legislative mandates.

1980





1989

In 1989, Sudan experienced a pivotal political change when the National Islamic Front seized control of the government. Shortly after taking power, the regime began arming Baggara tribesmen to fight against the Dinka and Nuer tribes in the southern regions of the country. This militarized conflict had a devastating impact on human rights, as these newly empowered militias raided villages, capturing and enslaving inhabitants.

The enslavement campaigns were not merely by-products of tribal conflicts but were orchestrated as a tool of war and subjugation. The regime's actions showed the grim reality that slavery could be weaponized in modern conflicts. The international community took note, although effective intervention was stymied by broader geopolitical concerns, including the winding down of the Cold War and shifting global alliances.

In 1989, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a comprehensive international treaty aimed at safeguarding the well-being of children. The Convention promotes a wide range of protections, including access to basic health care and education, as well as shielding young individuals from abuse, exploitation, or neglect, whether at home, in the workforce, or in armed conflicts. All countries ratify it except Somalia and the United States.

The Convention was revolutionary in establishing children's rights as a specific category of human rights requiring special attention. It was particularly relevant to the issue of child labor, exploitation, and even slavery, addressing these subjects in a manner that urged nations to adopt child-protective policies and laws.

1989





1990

In 1990, the 19th Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) formally adopted the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam. This followed its endorsement by 54 countries during the 1980s. The declaration was significant for stating that "human beings are born free, and no one has the right to enslave, humiliate, oppress, or exploit them."

The Cairo Declaration sought to frame human rights within an Islamic context, and its explicit rejection of slavery was a noteworthy aspect. The endorsement by the OIC, a significant multinational body comprising Muslim-majority countries, added weight to the declaration and signaled a growing consensus within the Islamic world against all forms of slavery and human exploitation.

In 1992, Pakistan's National Assembly passed the Bonded Labor Act, a legislation aimed at abolishing indentured servitude and the "peshgi" system, which involves money advanced to laborers that keeps them in perpetual debt and bondage. The law was a landmark move in a country where bonded labor has been a pervasive issue, particularly in sectors like agriculture and brick-making.

However, despite the law's formal enactment, it faced significant implementation and enforcement challenges. There were no clear mechanisms laid out for the actual realization of the law's provisions, rendering it largely ineffective in eradicating the deeply rooted practices of bonded labor.

This legislative gap highlighted the complexities in the transition from legal abolition to practical emancipation. It also revealed the limitations of legislative measures when not backed by robust enforcement and awareness-raising efforts. While Pakistan took a formal step in aligning its legal framework with international human rights standards, the experience underscored the need for comprehensive approaches that go beyond mere legal prohibition.

1992





1995

In 1995, the United States government released the Model Business Principles, a set of guidelines aimed at encouraging businesses to adopt ethical practices. These voluntary codes of conduct covered a range of issues including the avoidance of child labor, forced labor, and discrimination based on race, gender, national origin, or religious beliefs. The Principles emerged in a post-Cold War era increasingly defined by globalization and the internationalization of labor markets, making the guidelines highly relevant for American companies operating abroad.

Though voluntary, these Model Business Principles represented an attempt by the U.S. government to standardize ethical business conduct in an environment where issues like child labor and forced labor were becoming increasingly scrutinized. It was also a recognition that the private sector had a crucial role to play in upholding human rights and could be a partner in combating forms of modern-day slavery and discrimination.

In 1995, Christian Solidarity International (CSI), a Swiss-based charity, embarked on a highly controversial mission to liberate slaves in Southern Sudan through a "buy-back" program. While CSI argued that its efforts were a practical way to free individuals from the bonds of slavery, numerous international agencies vehemently disagreed. They contended that buying back slaves essentially legitimized the slave trade, fueled the market for human trafficking, and indirectly provided financial resources to slaveholders.

The debate underscored the ethical complexities and unintended consequences involved in combating modern-day slavery. Critics argued that well-intentioned efforts like those of CSI risked perpetuating the very system they aimed to dismantle, pointing out that sustainable solutions should aim at root causes rather than symptoms.

1995





1996

In 1996, the RugMark campaign was founded in Germany with the goal of certifying handwoven rugs that were not produced using slave or child labor. The initiative aimed to offer consumers an ethical choice and to incentivize the rug industry to adopt fair labor practices. By granting a "RugMark" to rugs made without exploitative labor, the campaign sought to create a market-driven solution to a long-standing human rights issue.

The effort came at a time when globalization was making the interconnectedness of supply chains increasingly apparent, and consumer awareness about ethical sourcing was on the rise. The RugMark campaign was indicative of a larger trend toward certification schemes for various products, aiming to provide transparency and encourage ethical consumerism.

In 2010, RugMark rebranded itself as GoodWeave, broadening its mission to include other ethical concerns within the textile industry.

In 1996, the World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children convened. This gathering sought to address one of the most harrowing forms of modern-day slavery: the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Representatives from governments, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies convened to discuss strategies, share research, and forge commitments to eradicate this form of abuse.

Held at a time when globalization was intensifying and the internet was becoming more pervasive, the Congress recognized that commercial sexual exploitation had become a transnational issue requiring coordinated international action. The gathering aimed to create a global framework for combating the problem, which often manifests in child prostitution, child pornography, and child trafficking for sexual purposes.

1996





1997

In 1997, the United Nations established a Commission of Inquiry to investigate alarming reports of widespread enslavement in Burma (now Myanmar), particularly perpetrated by the Burmese government. The move was a response to accumulating evidence suggesting that forced labor and enslavement were systematically being used as tools of control and economic exploitation by the state. This U.N. initiative came at a crucial time when Myanmar was already under international scrutiny for its human rights abuses, including suppression of political dissent and ethnic persecution.

The establishment of the Commission underscored the role of international bodies in holding governments accountable for human rights violations, including slavery. The Commission also highlighted the complexities involved in addressing state-sanctioned slavery, including geopolitical considerations and the challenge of enforcing international norms within sovereign nations. While the Commission's efforts did not immediately eradicate slavery in Myanmar, it did place increased international pressure on the government and made the issue more visible on the global stage.

In 1997, the United States banned the import of goods produced through child-bonded labor. This move was an amendment to the Tariff Act of 1930 and aimed to ensure that the American market did not become a destination for products created under exploitative conditions.

By making the import of such goods illegal, the U.S. government put the onus not just on foreign producers but also on American importers and retailers to scrutinize their supply chains more closely. While enforcement has remained challenging, the legislation has had a chilling effect on the import of goods produced under dubious conditions and has encouraged businesses to adopt more transparent and ethical sourcing practices. It also bolstered similar initiatives worldwide, adding to the momentum of global efforts to eradicate child labor and slavery.

1997





1998

In 1998, the Global March Against Child Labor was launched as a coordinated effort to stage worldwide demonstrations protesting against child labor and advocating for a U.N. Convention specifically addressing the worst forms of this practice. The initiative sought to harness global public sentiment against child labor, mobilizing people from diverse backgrounds and nations to stand in solidarity against the exploitation of children.

By galvanizing public opinion and focusing international attention on child labor, the Global March contributed to the momentum that led to the establishment of stronger international frameworks for the protection of children. It demonstrated the potency of coordinated, global activism in influencing policy and underscored the necessity of multi-faceted, international approaches to combating deep-rooted problems like child labor.

In 1999, despite being denied entry into Burma (now Myanmar), the United Nations gathered enough evidence to publicly condemn the government for state-sponsored slavery, which included forced, unpaid labor and a political system built on force and intimidation to stifle democracy and the rule of law. The international body's announcement was a watershed moment that made it unequivocally clear that the Burmese government was engaging in human rights abuses on a grand scale. The U.N. condemnation was based on interviews with refugees, analysis of satellite imagery, and corroborated reports from various human rights organizations.

Although the U.N.'s condemnation did not result in immediate reforms within Burma, it significantly raised international awareness about the plight of Burmese citizens and added pressure on the regime, setting a precedent for global scrutiny of state-sponsored slavery.

1999





1999

In 1999, the International Labor Organization (ILO) adopted the Convention Against the Worst Forms of Child Labor, also known as Convention No. 182. This marked a major advancement in international labor laws, setting widely acknowledged standards to protect children from the most harmful forms of labor, including forced or indentured work, involvement in prostitution and pornography, and participation in drug trafficking.

The impact of the Convention has been profound. Not only has it established a legal framework to which countries are held accountable, but it has also catalyzed a broader movement against child labor globally. It provided activists, governments, and NGOs with a shared vocabulary and legal basis for addressing these issues.

In 1999, the book "Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy" by Kevin Bales was published, offering the first comprehensive global analysis of modern slavery and its intricate relationship with the global economy. The book was groundbreaking in its scope, rigor, and impact, estimating that around 27 million people were living in conditions of slavery worldwide at that time.

Bales' work received wide attention from academics, policymakers, and activists alike, acting as a catalyst for deeper investigations into the economics of slavery. The book's release also coincided with growing awareness and activism around issues of labor exploitation and human trafficking, adding academic weight and urgency to these concerns.

By providing a quantifiable estimate of the scale of modern slavery, "Disposable People" offered a sobering counter-narrative to the story of global progress and prosperity, demanding that governments, corporations, and individuals reconsider the ethical implications of their economic choices. Its publication further legitimized and intensified global efforts to combat slavery, shaping discourse and influencing policy in the years that followed.

1999





Abolition in the 21st Century 2000 to Now

2000 to Now

The dawn of the 21st century heralded an era of increased connectivity, technological advancement, and global discourse. Yet, even amidst rapid progress, the shadows of slavery persisted, evolving in form and adapting to modern challenges. The early years of the century saw groundbreaking international efforts to define and combat human trafficking, illustrated by the United Nations' protocols. However, the challenges multiplied with the onset of global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated economic vulnerabilities and disrupted anti-slavery operations worldwide.

The interplay between globalization and technology brought both challenges and opportunities to the fight against enslavement. This period marks a surge in corporate and consumer responsibility, with laws requiring businesses to be transparent about their supply chains in efforts to eliminate forced labor. At the same time technology facilitated new forms of exploitation, such as cyber-trafficking, it also armed abolitionists with innovative tools for advocacy, exposure, and victim support.

In this chapter, the battle against slavery transcended national borders, uniting countries and cultures in common purpose. International treaties, conventions, and collaborations sought to provide a unified front against human trafficking and forced labor. Still, as economic disparities grew and geopolitical tensions simmered, new vulnerabilities emerged, putting marginalized populations at risk.

This chapter explores the dynamic landscape of the 21st-century abolition movement, underscoring both the resilience of exploitative systems and the unwavering commitment of those determined to eradicate them. Through a mosaic of narratives, policies, and landmark events, we gain insight into a world grappling with its past while fervently working to secure a future free from the bonds of slavery. **It's a chapter still in the making.**



2000

In 2000, Free the Slaves was established, initially as the sister organization to the U.K.'s Anti-Slavery International, one of the world's oldest human rights organizations. However, Free the Slaves has since evolved into an independent entity with its own mandate and operations.

The creation of Free the Slaves signaled a significant moment in the fight against contemporary forms of slavery. Unlike historical slavery, modern slavery often operates in the shadows, hidden within supply chains, informal sectors, and in private homes, making it challenging to address. Free the Slaves was formed to combat these challenges, employing a range of strategies from advocacy and awareness-raising to direct interventions.

Its inception also coincided with an era when non-governmental organizations were playing increasingly vital roles in shaping public policy and opinion on human rights issues. As an independent organization, Free the Slaves has been instrumental in working toward the eradication of slavery globally, collaborating with various stakeholders including governments, civil society, and the private sector. By doing so, it has contributed to the broader international dialogue on slavery, influenced legislation, and offered actionable pathways to emancipation for those in slavery.

In 2000, Nepal's government officially banned all forms of debt bondage, marking the culmination of a long-fought campaign led by human rights organizations and individuals who had been freed from such labor conditions. This legislative milestone came at a critical juncture in Nepal's efforts to align its labor practices with international human rights standards. Debt bondage had been a pervasive issue in various sectors of the Nepalese economy.

Although the ban was a significant step forward, its effectiveness has been limited by challenges in enforcement and monitoring.

2000





2000

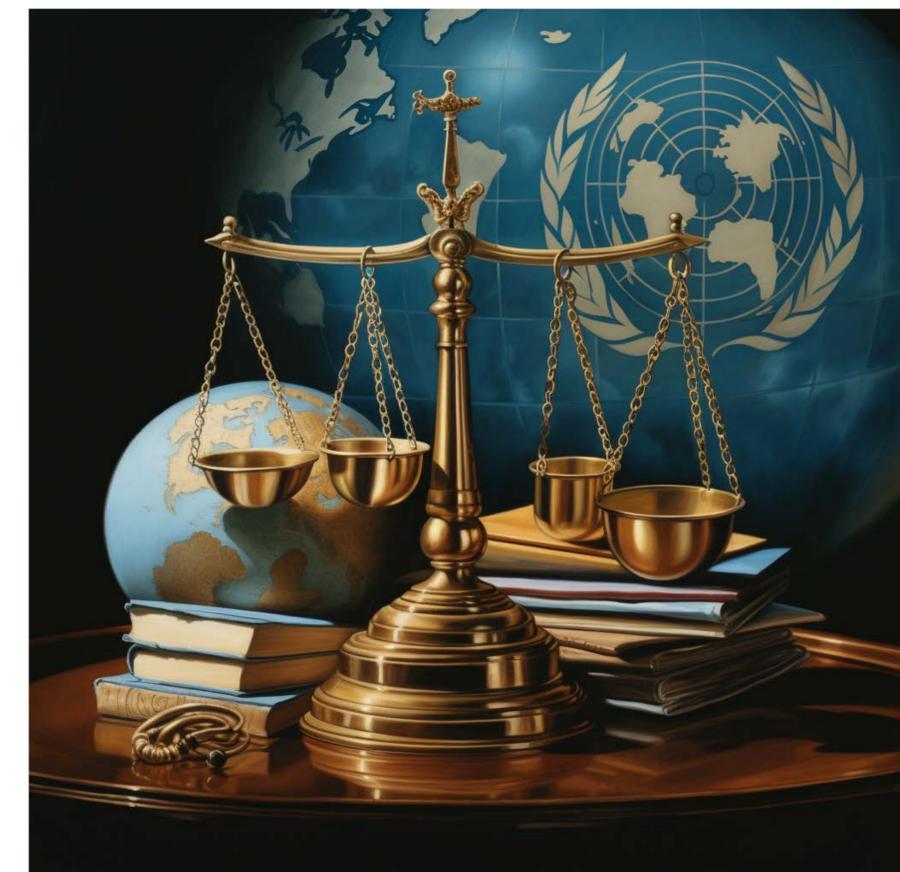
In 2000, the United States Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), a landmark piece of legislation aimed at combating human trafficking as a form of modern-day slavery. The TVPA was important for U.S. policy because it addressed the gaps in existing laws related to trafficking and forced labor. The law increased penalties for traffickers, making it a federal crime to engage in forced labor, sex trafficking, and involuntary servitude.

Simultaneously, the TVPA provided essential support services for victims, including medical assistance, legal aid, and the possibility of temporary or permanent residency in the U.S. The Act served as a comprehensive approach to tackle both the criminal and humanitarian aspects of trafficking, offering a victim-centered approach to law enforcement.

In 2000, the United Nations adopted the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, often referred to as the Palermo Protocol, as a supplement to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. This marked a milestone in international efforts against human trafficking, providing for the first time a globally accepted, legally binding definition of the crime. The protocol addressed the key components of human trafficking: the act, means, and purpose, thereby offering a standardized framework for international law.

The adoption was significant not just for its unifying terminology but also for its implications for international cooperation. By setting common standards, the protocol facilitated enhanced cross-border efforts to combat trafficking, involving legal systems, law enforcement agencies, and NGOs.

2000





2001

In 2001, the documentary "Slavery: A Global Investigation" made its debut in the U.S. and Europe, focusing on the exploitation and forced child labor in the cocoa and chocolate industry. This eye-opening film had an immediate impact, raising public awareness about the harsh realities of modern slavery in a context that was uncomfortably close to everyday life. It went on to win prestigious awards, including a Peabody and two Emmys, underscoring its critical and societal importance.

More than just accolades, the film generated a wave of consumer activism aimed at the implicated industries. It prompted discussions among legislators and played a role in the formulation of policies targeted at combating human trafficking and forced labor. The film's revelations also pressured corporations to re-examine their supply chains for ethical sourcing.

In 2002, the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) agreed on an action plan aimed at tackling the deeply entrenched issues of slavery and human trafficking in the region. This marked a concerted regional effort to address the problems, acknowledging that slavery and human trafficking were not isolated issues but complex, interwoven challenges that crossed national borders.

The action plan served as a blueprint for member states, outlining strategies for prevention, prosecution, and protection of victims. It also encouraged data collection and sharing among the countries to better understand the scope of the issue. This move was seen as critical in a region that was becoming a focal point for human trafficking and forced labor, largely due to political instability, armed conflict, and poverty.

2002





2002

In 2002, the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) was founded, marking a landmark moment in corporate responsibility and anti-slavery advocacy. This initiative was unique because it represented a collaboration between major chocolate companies like Nestlé and Mars, and anti-slavery organizations. The ICI aimed to address the deeply troubling issue of slavery and child labor in cocoa production, particularly in countries like Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, which are major suppliers of cocoa beans.

The ICI worked to establish monitoring and certification systems, develop community awareness programs, and support government actions to enforce labor laws. Despite challenges in effective implementation and oversight, the initiative represented an important shift in how industries approach ethical sourcing and human rights concerns.

In 2004, Brazil took a major step towards combating forced labor with the launch of the National Pact for the Eradication of Slave Labor. The initiative was a multi-stakeholder effort involving civil organizations, the private sector, and the government, aiming to root out forced labor within corporate supply chains. Companies participating in the pact committed themselves to proactive measures to prevent and eradicate slave labor, a long-standing issue in sectors like agriculture and construction in Brazil.

One of the most innovative aspects of the pact was the introduction of a "dirty list," a public registry of companies whose products or services were tainted by forced labor. Companies placed on this list faced social and economic repercussions, including the loss of financial backing from signatory banks.

2004





2004

In 2004, the United Nations took a decisive step to combat human trafficking by appointing Sigma Huda as the Special Rapporteur on Human Trafficking. This position was established to focus international attention on human trafficking, often described as modern-day slavery, and to assist countries in implementing existing human rights standards to counter this pervasive issue. The role involves a wide range of responsibilities, from collecting data and reporting on the state of human trafficking globally, to making recommendations for policy changes and advocating for effective implementation of anti-trafficking measures.

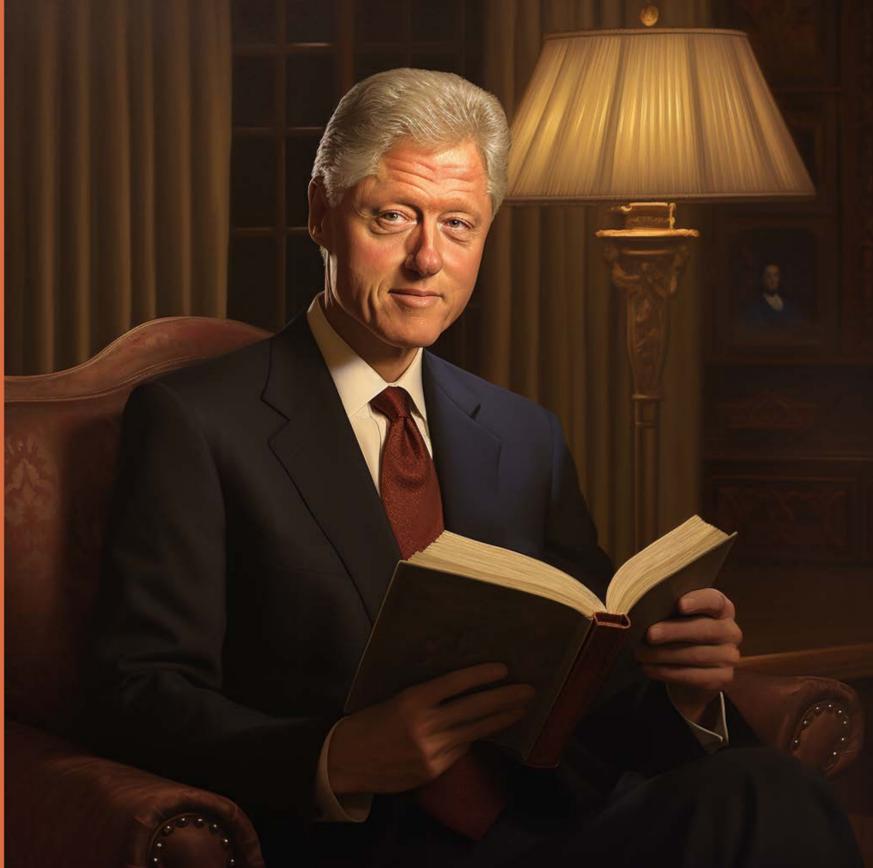
In 2005, the United Nations International Labor Organization (ILO) released its first Global Report on Forced Labor, estimating that 12.3 million people worldwide were victims of forced labor, including various forms of modern slavery. The report was a watershed moment for global awareness of the scale and pervasiveness of forced labor, laying bare the grim realities that millions faced. It utilized a methodology that considered various forms of coercion and drew data from multiple sources, offering a nuanced and comprehensive view of the issue.

The report had significant policy implications, serving as a baseline for governments, international organizations, and civil society to formulate anti-slavery strategies and programs.

In 2012, the ILO released an update, which revised the global estimate to an alarming 20.9 million people caught in forced labor.

2005





2007

In 2007, Kevin Bales, co-founder of Free the Slaves, published "Ending Slavery: How We Free Today's Slaves," a seminal work that provided the first comprehensive plan for the global eradication of modern slavery. The book estimated the cost of abolishing slavery worldwide at \$10.8 billion spread over 25 years, a figure that provoked both discussion and action. By providing a pragmatic roadmap and attaching a financial figure to the endeavor, the book changed the discourse from a moral imperative to a practical, achievable goal.

The book received high-profile endorsement when President Bill Clinton highlighted it at the Clinton Global Initiative, lending both credibility and urgency to the plan. It further gained academic validation when it won the 2011 University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order.

In 2008, the Special Court for Sierra Leone made a landmark judgment by declaring forced marriage as "a crime against humanity." The court convicted three officers of the Revolutionary United Front for the offense, marking the first-ever convictions for forced marriage within an international criminal tribunal. The ruling came in the wake of Sierra Leone's brutal civil war, during which forced marriages were widely reported as a systematic tactic to humiliate and subjugate communities.

The verdict set an important precedent in international law, acknowledging forced marriage as a serious violation of human rights, beyond its previously limited understanding as a byproduct of war or a cultural practice. This new legal categorization added an essential tool for prosecuting such crimes at the international level.

2008





2008

In 2008, the United Nations International Labor Organization (ILO) released a shocking estimate that the annual profits generated from human trafficking stood at a staggering \$32 billion. This quantification moved the issue beyond human rights rhetoric to underline it as a highly lucrative criminal enterprise, on par with the global drug and arms trade. However, in 2014, the ILO released an updated report titled "Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labor," which revised the annual profit estimate to an even more alarming \$150 billion.

These updated figures highlighted not only the resilience and expansion of human trafficking and forced labor but also underscored the interplay between profits and poverty. The 2014 report emphasized how the economics of forced labor sustain a cycle of poverty and exploitation, affecting vulnerable communities disproportionately.

The estimates from the ILO served as a wake-up call to both governments and international organizations. They shifted the conversation from abstract moral arguments to a concrete financial reality, pressing the urgency to tackle the issue not only as a human rights violation but also as a significant global economic concern.

In 2010, the organization Free the Slaves published a poignant book titled "Slavery," featuring powerful photographs taken by humanitarian photographer Lisa Kristine. The visual narrative included a foreword from Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu of South Africa, a global icon in the struggle against apartheid and social injustice. Lisa Kristine's evocative images captured the grim realities faced by slaves and survivors, providing a visual context to the often-unimaginable human suffering perpetuated by modern slavery.

Kristine's collaboration with Free the Slaves garnered her the 2013 Humanitarian Photographer of the Year Award from the Lucie Foundation. Her work helped shine a spotlight on the human faces behind the statistics, turning abstract numbers into palpable human experiences.

2010





2011

In 2011, California took a significant legislative step to combat modern slavery with the enactment of the California Transparency in Supply Chains Act. This groundbreaking law mandated that major manufacturing and retail firms disclose their efforts to eliminate forced labor and human trafficking within their supply chains. The disclosure had to be public, often taking the form of a statement on the company's website, thus making corporations more accountable to consumers and stakeholders.

The act applied to companies with global annual receipts exceeding \$100 million, casting a wide net that included a significant portion of firms operating in California. This public transparency aimed to empower consumers to make informed choices, thereby creating a market incentive for companies to uphold ethical labor practices.

In 2012, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) enacted the Conflict Minerals Rule, a crucial provision stemming from the 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. This rule obliges major publicly-held corporations to disclose whether their products include certain metals—namely tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold—sourced from the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo or adjoining countries. Moreover, these corporations must reveal if their procurement of these minerals financially supports armed conflicts in the region.

The rule was created in response to the critical issue of minerals fueling warfare and human rights abuses, including slavery. Free the Slaves, an organization focused on combating modern slavery, has documented that forced labor and slavery are widespread in mining sites that fall under this corporate disclosure requirement.

2012





2013

In 2013, the Walk Free Foundation introduced the inaugural Global Slavery Index, offering a comprehensive, country-by-country assessment of the state of modern slavery worldwide. The initial report estimated that 29.8 million people were living in conditions of slavery. This groundbreaking index stirred international attention, acting as a wakeup call for governments, businesses, and civil society to act. Over the years, the index's estimates have risen sharply, reaching 35.8 million in 2014, 45.8 million in 2016, 40.3 million in 2018, and 50 million in 2023.

The Global Slavery Index became a pivotal tool for human rights activists, policymakers, and organizations in understanding the scale and scope of modern slavery. It also provided an empirical foundation for advocacy efforts, enabling more targeted interventions. By highlighting areas with high concentrations of slavery and assessing the effectiveness of government responses, the index serves as both a resource for action and a benchmark for progress.

In 2015, Free the Slaves reached a pivotal milestone by announcing that it had successfully liberated over 10,000 people from various forms of slavery. This announcement came as the organization marked its 15th anniversary, highlighting its long-standing commitment to combating this inhumane practice. The achievement served not only as a testament to Free the Slaves' effective interventions but also as an emblem of what sustained, focused efforts can accomplish even in the face of deeply entrenched systems of exploitation. The milestone had a ripple effect, energizing other anti-slavery movements and organizations globally, and added weight to the broader push for governments and corporations to take more proactive roles in eradicating forced labor and human trafficking.

2015





2015

In 2015, the United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at addressing a range of global challenges, from poverty and inequality to climate change. Notably, SDG 8.7 explicitly targets the eradication of forced labor, modern slavery, human trafficking, and the worst forms of child labor. The goal stipulates that "immediate and effective measures" must be taken to eliminate these issues, setting a deadline of 2025 for ending child labor in all its forms. This inclusion in the SDGs elevates the fight against modern slavery to a global priority, obligating member states to adopt and enforce policies that aim to abolish these practices. It also provides a common framework and timeline for global anti-slavery initiatives, including the mobilization of resources and international cooperation.

In 2017, a research consortium comprising the U.N. International Labor Organization, Walk Free, and the U.N. International Organization for Migration released a seminal study, putting the global number of people trapped in various forms of modern slavery at 40 million. The report offered a detailed breakdown: 50% were in forced labor, employed in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, construction, mining, and fishing; 12.5% were in sex slavery; and the remaining 37.5% were subjected to forced marriage. This landmark study provided a more nuanced understanding of the pervasiveness and forms of modern slavery, enhancing global awareness and potentially guiding policy and intervention measures. It emphasized the multidimensional nature of the problem, affecting both genders and all ages, and occurring in diverse sectors and setups.

2017





2018

In 2018, Australia enacted the Modern Slavery Act, a landmark legislation requiring businesses with annual consolidated revenue of more than AUD \$100 million to submit annual Modern Slavery Statements. These statements must outline the risks of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains and describe their actions to address those risks. The legislation is a significant move towards greater corporate responsibility and transparency, compelling businesses to publicly disclose their efforts—or lack thereof—to combat slavery. By making this information accessible, the act empowers consumers and investors to make more informed decisions, putting economic pressure on companies to uphold ethical practices. The Australian government also commits to publishing its own Modern Slavery Statement, setting an example for corporate compliance.

In 2019, the United States made a significant legislative move to intensify its battle against modern slavery and human trafficking by passing the Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act. This law serves as an update to the landmark Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000.

Named in honor of the iconic abolitionist Frederick Douglass, the act garnered bipartisan support and was signed into law by President Trump on January 8, 2019. The reauthorization aims to amplify the nation's efforts on several fronts: prevention, victim protection, and the prosecution of human traffickers. It enhances resources and programs designed to combat trafficking both domestically and internationally. The law also provides for increased penalties for traffickers, bolstering the legal tools available to bring offenders to justice. By revisiting and updating the TVPA, this act reinforces the United States' ongoing commitment to eradicating human trafficking and modern slavery.

2019





2020

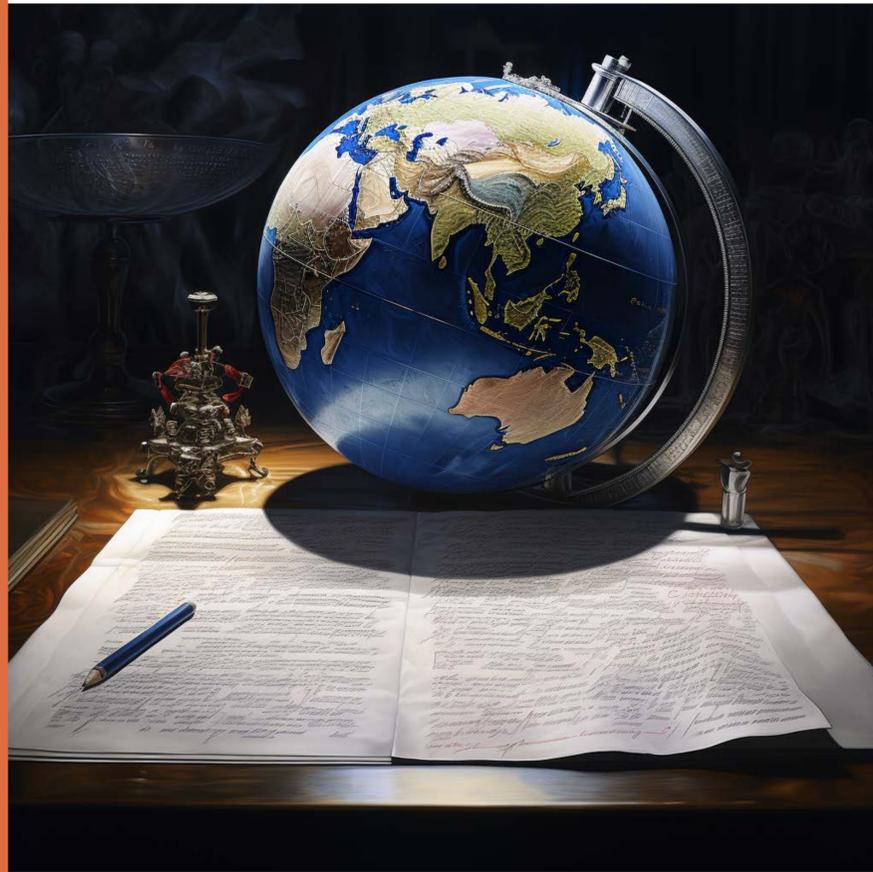
2020: The COVID-19 pandemic allows for an increase in human trafficking and modern slavery, exacerbating vulnerabilities for exploitation worldwide. As economic conditions deteriorate due to lockdowns, marginalized communities find themselves at higher risk for forms of slavery such as forced labor and sexual exploitation. At the same time, the pandemic hampers anti-slavery efforts on multiple fronts. Law enforcement and NGOs face challenges in carrying out rescue operations and providing support to victims due to social distancing and other health-related restrictions. Border closures disrupt international cooperation against trafficking networks. Resources and attention are diverted from anti-trafficking campaigns to pandemic response, resulting in a loss of momentum for global initiatives against slavery. Meanwhile, traffickers exploit the situation, capitalizing on the desperation and disarray caused by the pandemic. The increase in online activities also provides traffickers with new avenues for exploitation, making victim identification and rescue even more challenging.

In 2020, the United States made significant strides in its commitment to combat the importation of goods produced with forced labor. The Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force (FLETF) was established through Executive Order 13923 on May 15, 2020. The formation of FLETF was a proactive response, authorized by the USMCA (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement) Implementation Act, to more effectively monitor and enforce the long-standing import prohibition on goods made with forced labor as outlined in 19 U.S.C. § 1307.

Building on this foundation, the bipartisan Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) came into effect on June 21, 2022. The UFLPA introduces a rebuttable presumption that goods mined, produced, or manufactured in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, or by entities on the UFLPA Entity List, are made using forced labor, thereby subjecting them to potential prohibition from U.S. imports. Together, the establishment of FLETF and the passage of the UFLPA underline the United States' reinforced commitment to tackle forced labor in international trade.

2020





2021-2022

In 2021-2022, a monumental move was made towards eradicating modern slavery. Free the Slaves collaborated with the Alliance 8.7 Secretariat to formulate an Accountability Framework aimed at holding Pathfinder Countries responsible for their efforts to end slavery. This groundbreaking initiative originated in 2021 when Free the Slaves initiated the development of a toolkit and set of indicators designed to evaluate the efficacy of anti-slavery measures adopted by Pathfinder Countries. By December 2022, the Alliance 8.7 Global Coordinating Group (GCG) had unanimously adopted the Accountability Framework in Turin, Italy.

This guiding document marks a paradigm shift in how international efforts against slavery are coordinated and measured. Now, for the first time, every country wishing to become a Pathfinder Country must adopt this framework. With these new measures in place, the global community has significantly bolstered its arsenal of tools designed to hold countries accountable in the ongoing fight against modern slavery.



Free The Slaves

The journey through the annals of slavery—from its earliest roots to the more recent manifestations—serves not just as an intellectual exercise, but as a reservoir of lessons and insights crucial for contemporary action. Understanding the history of slavery illuminates the multi-faceted complexities of this pervasive issue and equips us to deal with its current versions more effectively.

Since our inception in 2000, Free The Slaves has committed itself to a singular, urgent mission: ending modern slavery. During this time we have accumulated invaluable experiences that shed light on the regional and demographic specificities of modern slavery. These experiences have revealed that slavery is not a standalone issue, but rather a symptom of deeper societal issues. From ingrained inequalities to limited access to resources and opportunities, the undercurrents that sustain slavery are structurally embedded in societies across the globe.

As we enter the next phase of our fight against slavery, our approach is becoming more nuanced and strategic. We recognize that freeing slaves is only part of the solution; unless we address the underlying structural issues that perpetuate slavery, we'll find ourselves in a never-ending cycle of oppression. Our mission now includes targeted interventions aimed at eradicating these root causes across various strata of society.

In the following sections, you'll learn about the four specific areas of society that Free the Slaves is focusing on, as we strive to not only free individuals but to make entire communities resistant to the scourge of slavery. Read on to discover more about our evolving strategies and how you can be a part of this monumental effort.

1. Influencing Policymakers and Advocating for Change

A critical challenge in eradicating modern-day slavery lies in government policies and the success of their implementation and enforcement. Inadequate or misaligned policies and ineffective implementation can perpetuate the conditions that allow slavery to thrive. Therefore, we're actively involved in influencing governments to adopt transformative policy changes and invest in effective implementation of programs and services in alignment with those policies. Through deep relationships, evidence-backed framework creation, and strategic partnerships, we strive to reform laws and regulations at the international, national, and local levels. This includes our leadership role with Alliance 8.7, a United Nations program focused on eradicating forced labor, modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labor. In addition, we work closely with U.S.-based partners who have direct channels to the U.S. Congress and executive branch agencies. By transforming the very legal and structural framework that allows human trafficking to exist, we create an increasingly hostile environment for traffickers and a safer world for potential victims.

2.

Engaging Local Communities

One of the most susceptible targets for human trafficking are local communities that lack the necessary education and resources and access to social supports services to effectively resist traffickers and protect their members. Recognizing this, our approach is centered around community engagement. We provide essential training and resources and mobilize communities to demand recognition of their human and labor rights and access to social services support structures that reduce their vulnerability to the deception, manipulation and threats of traffickers. By equipping them with the tools to protect themselves and reducing the social, economic, and political isolation of marginalized communities, we pave the way for grassroots resistance against slavery. The engagement of local communities creates a ripple effect, resulting in a nation and a region that's inherently more resistant to human trafficking.



3.

Movement Building

In a field where resources are limited, isolated efforts can quickly exhaust available resources and hamper the efficacy of anti-trafficking initiatives. Free The Slaves focuses on movement building to mitigate this issue. Our Freedom from Slavery Forum acts as a catalyst for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and collective action within the broader anti-slavery and anti-trafficking movement. Leveraging strong affiliations with a myriad of human rights, social justice, and international organizations, we foster a collective approach to confront the root causes of trafficking and slavery. Furthermore, we create and support survivor networks, offering those with firsthand experience a platform to influence future strategies and provide feedback on the effectiveness of current efforts. The combined impact of these efforts is extraordinarily impactful. As we build a stronger more cohesive movement, we optimize the use of available resources and significantly increase our chances of success.

4.

Continuous Learning

The landscape of human trafficking is constantly changing, posing a risk that existing anti-slavery measures may become outdated. In recognition of this, Free The Slaves cultivates a culture of continuous learning and actively invests in specialized research projects to refine our approaches. For example, we have delved into the connection between human trafficking and climate change in local communities in the Philippines, gaining insights into how environmental factors heighten vulnerabilities to trafficking. Similarly, our work in Peru focuses on understanding the complexities of modern slavery within indigenous communities. Through these projects, we maintain open channels of communication with survivors and research institutions, ensuring that our strategies remain both current and effective. This ongoing research, combined with insights from lived-experience experts, positions us to better anticipate and tackle future challenges, making our fight against slavery more proactive and less reactive.

Join Us

Join Us in Reshaping Society for a Slavery-Free Tomorrow

If you've been moved by the journey we've shared through history and are inspired by the work we're doing today, now is the time to take action. Your support could make all the difference in the lives of enslaved individuals and help us fundamentally reshape societal structures, perspectives, and norms for a more just and equal world.

Why Your Support Matters:

- **Tailored Solutions:** Your donations allow us to continue our work in crafting unique, region-specific strategies to combat slavery where it hits hardest.
- **Tackling Root Causes:** Your support helps us go beyond rescue efforts to focus on the structural issues that allow slavery to persist—inequality, limited access to necessary resources, and vulnerabilities within society.
- **Creating Resilience:** By reshaping societal structures, perspectives, and norms, we aim to create environments that are not just slavery-free but slavery-proof. This is only possible with your help.

Your generosity will power our strategies, **from immediate emancipation to long-term structural and cultural change**. Together, we can ensure that history's lessons are not in vain but serve as powerful catalysts for creating a future where freedom is a birthright, not a privilege.

Visit FreeTheSlaves.net to learn more and donate.

CREDITS

The information presented in this book is expanded from the "[Slavery in History](#):" page on the Free the Slaves website. Many historical timeline entries are adapted from "New Slavery: A Reference Handbook" by Kevin Bales, Second Edition, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004, pp. 55-68.

Additional text, research, and graphics have been created with the help of artificial intelligence (AI). The book and graphics are intended for informational purposes only and should serve as a starting point for further research.

The graphics included in this book are designed by AI and are for visual interest and engagement, and while they enhance the reading experience, they are not accurate descriptions of historical events.

This book is made available for free by Free the Slaves as part of their ongoing efforts to expand the movement and work towards a world without slaves. It is our hope that this book contributes to raising awareness, fostering discussion, and inspiring action to address and eliminate the scourge of slavery in all its forms.

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