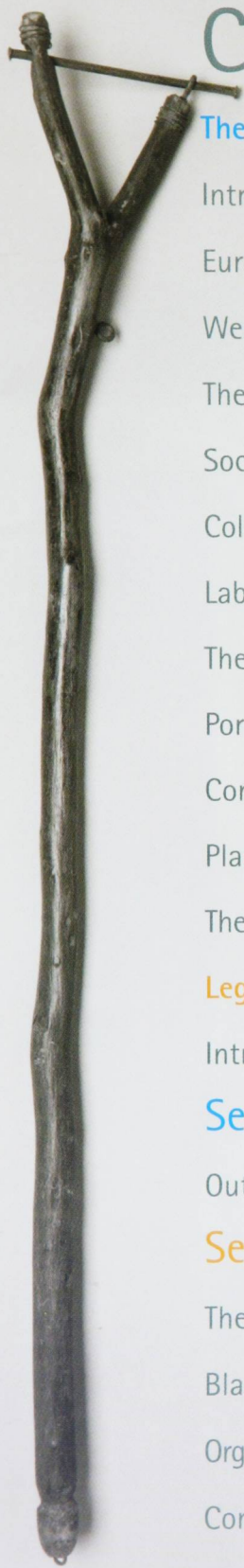


The Transatlantic Slave Trade and its Legacies



Contents

The Transatlantic Slave Trade	3
Introduction	3
Europe Prior to Transatlantic Slavery	4
West Africa Prior to Transatlantic Slavery	5
The Changing Concept of Slavery	6
Society and Slavery in West Africa	7
Columbus and Europe's Discovery of the Americas	8
Labour Requirements in the Caribbean Settlements	10
The Transatlantic Slave Trade System	10
Portuguese Enslavement of Africans	11
Conditions of Transport During the 'Middle Passage'	13
Plantation Slavery in the Americas	16
The End of the Transatlantic Slave Trade	17
Legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade	18
Introduction	19
Section 1	
Outcomes Other Than the Recognised Legacies	20
Section 2	
The Main Legacies	22
Black Majority Churches	31
Organisations	34
Conclusion	35
Bibliography	35

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The Transatlantic Slave Trade

Introduction

Without an understanding of the nature of slavery in antiquity and a knowledge of West African societies it is difficult to appreciate the dynamics of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It is easy to imagine that Europeans went to Africa and bought slaves because that is what Africans did—they sold their own people. But a closer investigation reveals that other forces were involved. There were African leaders who resisted or complained: King Affonso of Kongo, and Queen Nzinga of Angola, for example, but they were ultimately powerless to prevent the trade. Apart from politics and the human capacity for war and conquest, people used moral and philosophical arguments and other means to justify their actions. In the case of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the use of religion, both Christianity and Islam, played a part in encouraging a mindset that from one angle made slavery acceptable, justifiable, and then imperative.

Slaves. Slavery. The Slave Trade. These words are evocative. For some, they conjure up images of Black people [Africans] being brutalised on Caribbean and American sugar and cotton plantations for 276 years. For others, they bring to the surface feelings and emotions of sadness, guilt, despair, anger and even hatred, for what had happened. Yet for others still, they appear to evoke the same feelings and sentiments, except for a different reason: for being reminded of what had happened. Such is the impact of 'slavery' on people's lives: there are those for whom slavery is unfinished business; for others, it is a long past event in human history.

There have been many different 'forms' of slavery and although slavery is universal, Transatlantic slavery is peculiar in its form. History is never a past event or series of past events that no longer have impact or relevance to the present, regardless of how far removed in time we are from those events.

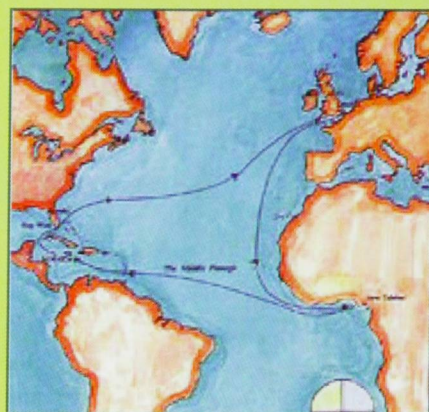
So, why do the terms 'slave', 'slavery' and 'the slave trade' so readily call to mind images of Africans? What is so special about Africans that makes them so overwhelmingly associated with slavery whenever it is mentioned in the historical record? For some people, it is as if 'African' and 'slave' are synonymous. Despite slavery being a universal concept and practice, the answer to this question lies in the fact that the nature, scale and import of Transatlantic slavery are so great that it has come to overshadow and redefine, in people's imaginations, all forms of slavery before or since.

Inevitably, there are caveats, since slavery has various forms. Some institutions or methods of production that are called slave-based are not, and others which are in fact slavery are barely recognisable as such. Today people have become accustomed to completely different worldviews of culture, belief and value systems—as well as historical perspectives—from those held until recently. As such, most people in Western societies today would find any form of the denial of self [e.g. the clan or tribe defining who and what the individual is] as oppressive. It follows then, that any system denying the individual his or her 'freedoms' or right to self-determination would be viewed as being morally reprehensible.

Europe

Prior to Transatlantic Slavery

At the time of Columbus' crossing of the Atlantic Ocean and his subsequent accidental discovery of the Americas in the early 1490s, European nations appeared to be sophisticated and technically advanced in comparison to Africa—a backward continent in some people's imaginations. The reality was that Europe had recently emerged from the Dark Ages [AD 500-1000] of its Medieval period and into its Renaissance characterised by changes in cultural and intellectual endeavours, as well as economics, religion and politics. African civilisation in contrast was actually in decline.



Culturally and intellectually Europe had developed a more outward looking mentality

Culturally and intellectually Europe had developed a more outward looking mentality. This allowed it to pursue secular endeavours and forms of knowledge that were aided by the invention of the printing press.

Economically, agriculture was moving away from the static, self-sufficient, subsistence economy to one that was more open and interdependent. There was also the rise in many cities of a strong commercial class, the bourgeoisie.

Although religion can have a unifying influence and aid a people or nation in overcoming aggressive foreign incursions it can, when misused, become a detrimental force. Under the Roman Catholic Church during the Middle Ages, Europe was to experience its Dark Ages. The Church would stifle most secular forms of intellectual inquiry, amass a great deal of wealth, and generally become despotic. Changing allegiances would have a profound effect in the eroding of the Church's power and authority, and lead to individual nations daring to pursue their own unfettered interests.

Politically, nations such as Portugal, Spain [Castile and Aragon], France, England and, to an extent, the Netherlands had developed strong centralised monarchical states. These nations eventually vied for dominance in the 'New World' and sought to establish colonies and an empire. Spain was not as stable a nation as France or England. In attempting to establish such stability, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella I instituted the Spanish Inquisition in 1480, expelled the Jews in 1492 [the same year as the fall of Granada which ended Islamic dominance] and persecuted the Moors.

West Africa Prior to Transatlantic Slavery

While Europe was emerging from its Dark Ages, Africa was entering its own period of decline. Prior to the Moorish civilisation that had conquered Spain in 711 AD there had been three successive empires in West Africa.

Ghana

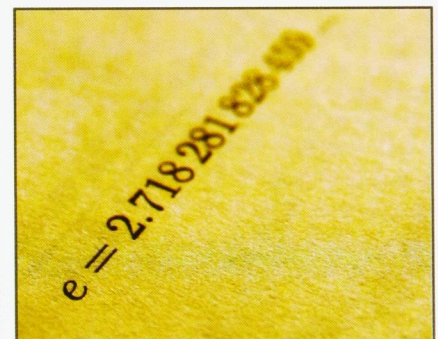
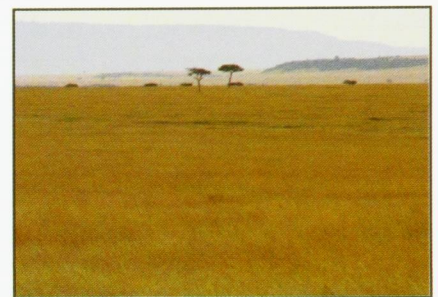
The first of these was Ghana [not related to the present day state], which emerged in AD 300 and lasted until AD1240. Its area was approximately 250,000 square miles. Ghana became rich, trading in gold, salt, spices and other goods, and levying import and export taxes on the flow of trade across North Africa and to the Bornu region near Lake Chad farther to the east. The capital of Ghana was Kumbi Saleh and in 1065 Tunka [King] Menin, the absolute monarch at that time, reportedly had a standing army of 200,000. At the time of Ghana's decline it had disintegrated into smaller states out of which the next major empire, Mali, would emerge.

Mali

Mali developed out of Kangaba, one of the Ghana states in AD 1230, when the emperor [Mansa] Sundiata gained control. Mali's productive emphasis was in agriculture. At its height, the Mali empire stretched from what are now Mauritania and southern Algeria, to northern Nigeria. It had an area of about 500,000 square miles. Mali's most famous emperor was Mansa Musa who established the University of Sankore at Timbuktu, and was well known to Europeans during his reign. Mali began to decline in AD 1400 and was superseded in AD 1468 by Songhai, the next empire to arise.

Songhai

Songhai [in the savannah region of West Africa and encompassing parts of both Ghana and Mali] was the last major empire to emerge in West Africa. It was also the largest and most impressive, covering an area 2000 miles wide and 1000 miles long at its extremities. It was founded in 1468 when Sunni Ali Ber recaptured Timbuktu from Mali. He expanded his empire by being constantly at war throughout



TOP

Ghana became rich, trading in gold, salt, spices and other goods, and levying import and export taxes on the flow of trade across North Africa.

MIDDLE

Mali's productive emphasis was in agriculture. At its height, the Mali empire stretched from what are now Mauritania and southern Algeria, to northern Nigeria. It had an area of about 500,000 square miles.

BOTTOM

Songhai's most famous ruler was Askia Muhammad who continued to build institutions of learning which taught philosophy, maths, astronomy and medicine, among other subjects.

his reign. The most famous ruler was Askia Muhammad who continued to build institutions of learning which taught philosophy, maths, astronomy and medicine, among other subjects. He became the Caliph of the Western Sudan [an area of savannah that was between the Sahara Desert and the tropical rain forests of the Guinea coast]. The Songhai empire lasted until 1591 when a Moroccan army attacked it and although the empire did not fall, it was unable to maintain its cohesion and disintegrated eventually into a number of city states.

It is against this backdrop that the Moors, who had spent 800 years in Spain up until 1492, must be viewed. They were responsible for making education universal there, building libraries, astronomical observatories and roads. In 1519 El Idris taught that the earth "is round as a sphere" years before Ferdinand Magellan the Portuguese navigator who was in the service of Spain. King Ferdinand was to use the wealth of Granada [the last Moorish kingdom and

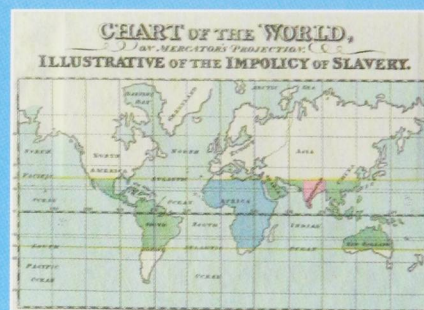
stronghold in Spain] to fund Columbus' voyage to the Americas.

So, as West Africa's states were in decline, Europe's were in their ascendancy. One result of the disintegration of the Songhai empire and the resulting city states was the political instability of the whole region within the former empire. City states would be mistrustful of each other and would be unable to advance in a meaningful sense but would rather be more concerned with their own survival.

The Changing Concept of Slavery

Because of the enduring impact of Transatlantic slavery, the whole concept of slavery as an institution has been given a different perspective. As far back as the fifth century B.C., the Greek city state of Athens was practising its Democracy as a form of government. Most people today would regard as being democratic a system of government that did not entertain any notion of slavery. Yet, in Athens this was precisely not the case. There may have been up to 100,000 slaves in Athens who were owned by rich and poor alike. They were not citizens and could not vote or take part in the political life of the city. However, some were secretaries and magistrates, and the entire police force consisted of slaves. Most slaves did the jobs that Athenian citizens did not want to do. Farmers and tradesmen used slaves as workmates because they required little pay.

What is interesting here are the notions of slavery and payment, and of being enslaved yet having access to the means of liberation



TOP
Map showing how slavery was distributed around the world

BOTTOM
A cross section of restraining implements used to hold captive Africans

[education and arms] yet not using them for that purpose. A slave who had been mistreated could take his master to court; consequently, slaves were generally not abused. The main reasons for this situation were that slaves were considered to be the property of the gods and were not owned as chattel [absolute personal property]. They were still human beings who had natural rights, therefore attitudes towards them were different. The fact that women were also not able to vote in Athens sheds light on the meaning of democracy at that time and speaks to the existence of classes within that society.

Later, in Europe during the 14th to 16th centuries, slavery still existed. The word slavery comes from the name Slav of the peoples of Eastern Europe who were often enslaved by other Europeans. In Spain, at the time of Moorish invasion, the Spanish were enslaving their own people. The Moors made it possible for them to become free by converting to Islam. The Portuguese and Spanish also used African captives on sugar plantations and as servants. It is estimated that there were up to 150,000 Africans brought to Portugal as slaves between 1441 and 1505. However, slavery in Europe was in decline as a means of labour and production, although slaves were still traded in commerce with the East.

Society and Slavery in West Africa

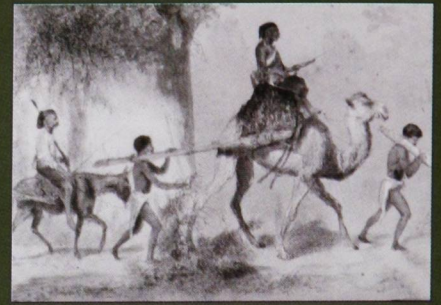
The indigenous African empires of Mali and Songhai and their African Muslim leaders all practised slavery which was permitted in Islam as long as the enslaved person was an infidel [i.e. someone who was not a Muslim]. The slaves were traded via the trans-Saharan trade route along with West African goods. These slaves were usually skilled in metalworking, agriculture and in mining gold. They were also useful in the caravans as they were able to carry goods as they went.

During the decline of the Songhai empire and the socio-political unrest that came with it, emphasis was placed on survival. Prisoners of war were not kept in prisons because there were none; instead, they were enslaved as were criminals. Inevitably this led to a large number of undesirable people within some societies who were denied their liberty. This is in contrast with a class of people in some societies who were not slaves in the sense previously described, but who were nevertheless a labour force whose skill was in cultivating the land. In some West African societies, such as in Senegal, there developed a social order or caste system that grew solely out of a division of labour. This specialisation of labour would in time lead to the hereditary transmission of trades and the establishment of a 'slave' class. Being lower down in the social order, members of this caste would eventually be viewed with suspicion and never really trusted. However, they were never chattel and were not restrained physically in any way; they were merely lower in social status but still had rights and privileges and had to be treated with respect.

Land in Africa at that time was held in common since there was no concept of the personal ownership of land as there was in feudal Europe. Such societies were often stratified according to occupation and skills and it was difficult, if not impossible, to leave one's caste. Nevertheless, it was the case that domestic slavery did exist in the empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai, but they had centralised governments that could defend the empire from external attack, so slave raiding from without would have been almost impossible. The same could not be said of the forest kingdoms farther south. These small kingdoms were reaching their peak as Songhai was in decline, but they lacked the unifying force that a large empire with a centralised government could offer.

The way societies in West Africa were structured is complex and has much to do with how they had to survive wars, droughts, famines and migrations, manage resources and divide labour, resulting in unique but practical ways of social organisation. This also explains why there are so many small and isolated groups of people scattered across the continent who have not made much material development. It is not surprising that over time these isolated communities evolved languages with only a few thousand speakers in some cases. Despite this, some argue for a common origin for most of these languages indicating a common origin of the people and of their ultimate fragmentation from that common source in antiquity. Once a major empire disintegrates it often results in relatively small states which are often antagonistic towards each other. Without the unifying influence of the empire, they have to compete for resources, trade and political allegiances. Some will therefore be ill equipped to protect themselves militarily. This was the case in West Africa at the time and warfare was widespread across the region. These conditions were ripe for slave trading to take root and flourish.

The Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires had left a legacy of well-established trade routes that criss-crossed the Sahara, and towards the east. These trade routes provided the means of survival for whoever could negotiate them successfully [they were dangerous and subject to attack from bandits]. However, it was the Muslim merchants who operated the caravans in the long distance trade between the east and West Africa, with goods such as spices and captives. Initially, the smaller forest kingdoms along the coast suffered from raids from the north when the empires were strong, but they resisted incorporation and eventually were able to strengthen their power through their own trade in gold, pepper, provisions and captives. This may have been their means of survival then, but it would later prove to be their undoing.



TOP
Muslim merchants operated the caravans in the long distance trade between the east, and West Africa



BOTTOM
In West Africa at the time warfare was widespread across the region

Columbus and Europe's Discovery of the Americas

When Christopher Columbus first embarked on his voyage across the Atlantic Ocean in an attempt to find a westward route to the lands of the East, he possessed several important things. One of these was the financial backing and sanction of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella I of Spain. He was commissioned with claiming the lands that he found and their resources for the Crown of Spain, and to win souls for

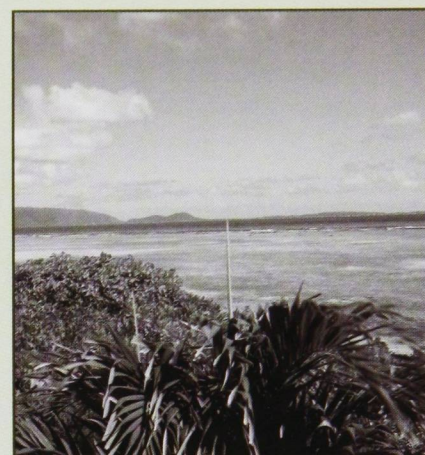
Christianity. This demonstrates the absolute rule of the monarchy, the way that such nations were structured and what this said about the concept of freedom within those nations. Columbus could not do anything without the monarchy's express permission – even when he went abroad.

Columbus had a number of advantages over the indigenous peoples he encountered on his voyages:

- ▶ The superior technology of his seagoing sailing ships allowed him to make such extended voyages and to return from them successfully.
- ▶ The advanced knowledge of navigation, as a result of the contribution the Moors made to education and civilisation in Spain.
- ▶ The superior weaponry compared to that of the people with whom he would later come into contact. Gunpowder, possibly introduced into Europe by the Moors, and swords made of steel would become a major factor in the Europeans' dominance over the Americas in the coming centuries. The technological superiority in being able to manufacture these things would also contribute to Europeans maintaining this hegemony. This superiority and its effects are still evident today.

Columbus made a total of four voyages to what would become known as the West Indies between 1492 and 1503. The whole of the Caribbean basin comprising the northern part of South America, Central America, the southern part of North America along the Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean islands, were all claimed for Spain and became part of the Spanish Empire.

Acquiring wealth through trade and finding gold were the initial objectives of the Spanish; but it soon became evident that the Caribbean was not the East Indies that Columbus thought he had reached, and the untold riches in gold were not forthcoming. This was of little consequence in the end because the new lands would eventually prove themselves profitable in other ways. After Columbus' discovery the Spanish rulers decided that colonisation would be a good idea and actively encouraged people of all walks of life to migrate to the Caribbean. During the first migration the colonists, numbering 12,000, were given six months worth of provisions. These people were to establish themselves and find gold, and rear livestock and crops useful for survival and trade. It was believed that they would provide the empire with vast revenues.



Columbus made a total of four voyages to what would become known as the West Indies between 1492 and 1503.

Labour Requirements in the Caribbean Settlements

Life in the Caribbean was not easy. The gold they had expected to find was not there and the indigenous Arawak, Carib and Taino people resisted, as best they could, the demands of the invaders for gold and food. Initially, the Spanish forced the native population to do all the work, but the indigenous people fought back against forced labour and the imposition of the Spanish language, culture and religion. The colonists had then to fend for themselves.

The growing of tobacco for export and the eventual expansion of sugar and cotton plantations required labour that could be relied upon, and that was not voluntary. The populations of the Arawak, Carib and Taino peoples were eventually decimated through abuse and the contraction of European diseases to which they had little resistance.

The Spanish then experimented with indentured labourers and the undesirables of their own people but found them to be wholly unsuitable for the work involved because of the effort needed. Neither could

they sustain the numbers required. It was also decided that since they were Spanish and Christians it was wrong for them to be enslaved.

The Portuguese had been using enslaved Africans as domestic servants and plantation workers for about fifty years by that time, and so they had much experience in dealing with Africans, and in navigating the west coast of the continent. Following this example, the Spanish decided to use Africans as a source of labour on their plantations.

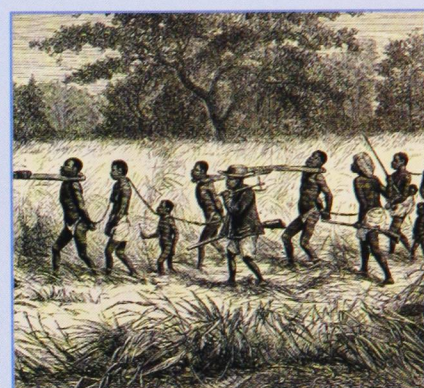
The Transatlantic Slave Trade System

With the arrival of Hernan Cortez in Mexico in 1519, Spain was becoming increasingly wealthy from the gold and silver that was discovered and plundered from the Aztecs. As the Spanish Empire became well established and wealthy, other European nations became jealous and took measures to avail themselves of this wealth producing system.

Portuguese Enslavement of Africans

At first, the Spanish did not find the acquisition of a few Africans too difficult. The Portuguese had been acquiring captives from Guinea for about fifty years. The manner in which the Portuguese acquired their slaves was initially by trickery and capture while raiding small villages. Their main objective was to amass wealth in gold, spices and slaves by diverting trade away from the Saharan trade routes. They did not overtly allude to this, however, for fear of arousing the interest of their European neighbours. They began in the mid 1400s by befriending local coastal rulers by bestowing gifts, and then negotiating rents for settlements along the coast. Portuguese merchants would then pay the Portuguese authorities, and later monarchs, a fee to trade. Concerning the slave issue, the Portuguese sought sanction from the Church to trade in slaves, and received it because it was seen as an opportunity to spread the Christian gospel and save heathens. There was one condition; that guns and munitions were not to be traded as these might help to strengthen Muslim and pagan power and, consequently weaken Portugal's own influence and power in the region. The Portuguese sometimes found it expedient to resell

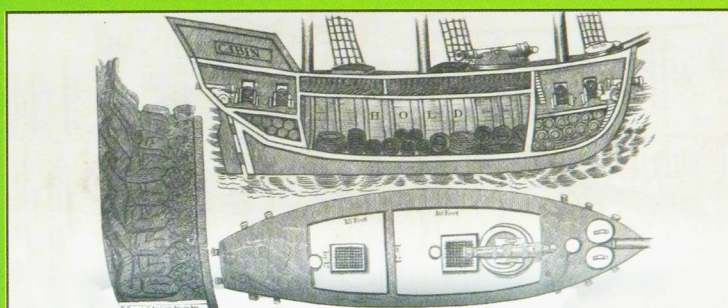
captured Africans back to their original states in exchange for gold. Not having their own established contacts in West Africa the Spanish relied on the Portuguese to supply them with slaves for the Caribbean as they had already been doing for the Iberian peninsular. As previously mentioned, many of these Africans were already skilled in plantation work, mining and metalworking, so their value to the new colonies was crucial.



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Britain Begins to Trade

The British, England at the time, became involved in slaving in 1562, when John Hawkins made an alliance with two kings of Sierra Leone to attack their neighbours. He profited from this by being given war captives that he took to the Caribbean and sold [as contraband] to Spanish colonists in Hispaniola for hides and sugar. In so doing he realised, for the British, the potential of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.



A typical slave ship showing how it was fitted out for the Transatlantic crossing

The Spanish, Dutch, Pirates and Privateers

The Spanish did not have direct links or access to the West African coast but relied on the Portuguese to supply them with enslaved Africans. At first the Spanish gave the Portuguese special licences to provide slaves to its colonists. In 1640, the contract [asiento] was given by Spain to the Dutch who had usurped the

Portuguese position, and in 1713, it was given to the British. The Portuguese had a monopoly on trading for captives along the coast by

The Dynamics of the Trading System

Captives were taken from Africa in an area ranging from Senegal in the north to Angola in the south. Over a period of time the Portuguese, Dutch and other Europeans established forts and trading posts along the coast. The European traders established relationships with the local rulers of the coastal kingdoms for the privilege of trading, but were forbidden access to the interior. This prevented them



from bypassing the middlemen and reducing profits.

The trade goods that the Africans wanted included iron bars and tools, copperware such as basins, cotton textiles, glass beads manufactured in Venice [that were used for trading in the European slave trade with the east,] trinkets, muskets, ammunition and gunpowder. The Africans insisted upon firearms as articles of trade because they were seen as the source of the slave traders' power and consequently as a potential threat to their own existence. Firearms were needed as much for protection from Europeans as from other African enemies, who would inevitably also be supplied with them. Alcohol and horses were also traded. Goods and captives were exchanged by barter. Europeans found that Africans were very skilled in this but it was difficult to calculate what the actual profits were at the end of the many months of the triangular trade cycle.

In the 17th century, a new 'currency' for trading was devised whereby a slave trader was able to reckon his profit on the exchange more easily. This was the 'trade ounce' in which the cost of a package of various items was related to an ounce of gold. With this in mind the slave trader was able to have a fixed monetary value in mind and be able to calculate the value of his cargo. Alternatively, an iron bar with a known monetary value in England and Africa would be used as a measure of value. During the trade, the bars were not actually exchanged; all that was required was an agreement that a captive and other goods were worth so many bars for the exchange to take place.

Some of the goods exchanged in Africa were cheap and inferior substitutes for goods the Africans already produced for themselves such as cotton fabrics, printed calico and chintzes, and metalware. It is argued that this had the effect of undermining local production and accelerated the decline in the economic and productive infrastructure of the African societies. In some areas Africans produced steel that was superior to that produced in Europe but due to warfare it was more expensive to produce because of the difficulty in acquiring the wood used as fuel. This forced many Africans to trade for European steel thus undermining their own economies and technologies.

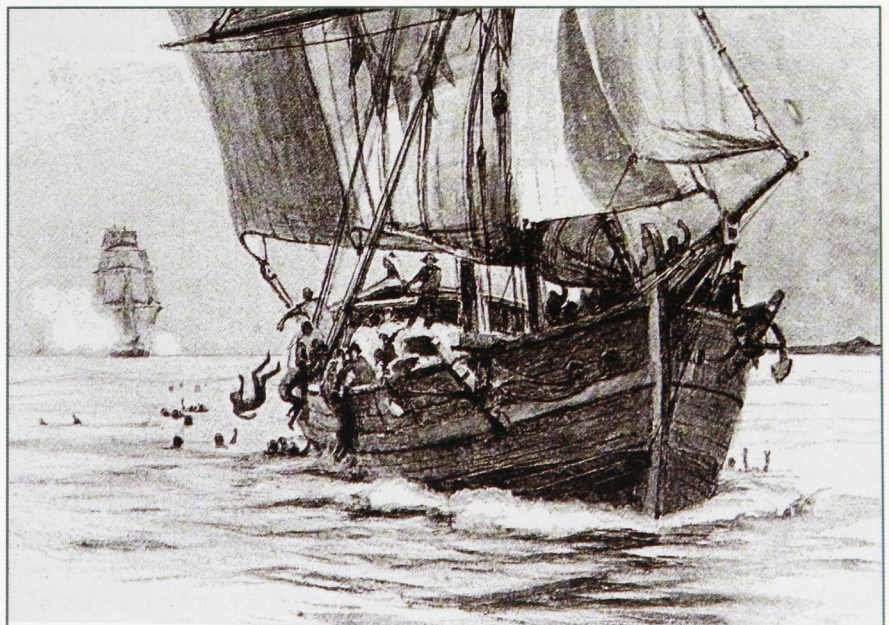
the Treaty of Tordesillas [1494]. This was negotiated between the Pope, and Spain and Portugal. The details of the treaty gave Portugal access to the African trade, and eventually to Brazil when it was discovered later. The other European nations did not recognise the treaty and ignored it, giving rise to pirates

and privateers who attacked Spanish ships or the ships of unfriendly nations. Privateers had the approval of their nations to do this.

Conditions of Transport During the 'Middle Passage'

Capturing Slaves

Through curiosity and a desire to find a direct trading route to India, the Portuguese ventured along the west coast of Africa in AD 1441. They explored the mouth of the Senegal River and found a fisherman's hut. They approached the hut stealthily and seized a boy and his eight year old sister, and took them back to Portugal. On subsequent raids to the West African coast more and more Africans were captured in this manner. Any resistance was dealt with by killing "without pity".



This is the manner in which the Portuguese initially procured slaves from West Africa. By 1448 they had begun to trade along the coast in gold, ivory and eventually in captured people, and built their own forts there. The Africans disliked them because of their rapaciousness, but once they had abandoned their kidnapping tactics, eventually began to trade with them. On occasion, African leaders would seek

ABOVE

After abolition, slave traders would often throw their African captives overboard to avoid prosecution for slave trading

OPPOSITE PAGE

Bartering for slaves on the Guinea Coast

the aid of the Portuguese in military conflicts with other local African rulers. Local wars between West African states led to the Portuguese being able to trade in prisoners of war.

The English were not at first involved in this activity, but became so after John Hawkins' raiding voyages in 1562, 1564 and 1567, once it was realised that slave trading was a profitable commercial venture. Britain was also concerned about the increasing wealth of Spain.

The manner in which Africans were captured was by taking advantage of the local wars that had by this time become widespread in West Africa. Through raids, war, the fomentation of factionalism and the supply of arms, and trickery in various ways, the whole of the West African coastline states and many more inland were destabilised. As African societies were being destroyed many African leaders resisted the slave trade at all stages of the process, but such was the scope and severity of the destabilising influences that they eventually succumbed and were co-opted into the system.

Slave Trading Castles on the West African Coast

The slave castles built along the West African coast were used as staging posts for holding captives ready for shipment to the Americas. They were also living quarters for European slave trading company personnel such as civil servants, craftsmen, soldiers, sailors and slaves. The largest of these castles was Elmina in modern day Ghana. When it was captured from the Portuguese by the Dutch in 1637, it became the headquarters of the Dutch West India Company. The castle at Elmina was made from stone, and was very well fortified. It was also said to be cannon-proof.

In the 18th century during the height of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, Elmina housed about 400 company personnel, including the company director, as well as 300 "castle slaves". The whole commerce surrounding the slave trade had created a town outside the castle of about 1000 Africans. This contrasts with the development of port cities like Bristol and Liverpool in England, which also grew as a result of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. There were approximately 80 such castles dotted along the slave trading coast.



A typical slave fort barracoon where African captives were held before transportation on slave ships to the Americas

Conditions During the 'Middle Passage'

The 'Middle Passage' is the term given to the Atlantic crossing made by slave ships [slavers] from Africa to the Americas. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, it is estimated that in the region of nine to twelve million Africans were forcibly taken to the Americas for a life of slavery. The journey of 3,500 miles took between six and twelve weeks. The mortality rate for the average journey was between 10-15%; some estimate it was as high as 30%. A similar proportion perished during the long march from the interior regions of West Africa to the slave forts on the coast, or died during captivity in barracoons [slave holding quarters].

Slavers varied in size and could carry up to 400 captives. At the peak of the trade towards the end of the 18th century, some ships carried twice that amount. Conditions aboard these ships were appalling for both African and sailor. The captives were treated as cargo and kept below deck for most of the journey in some of the most inhumane conditions. The men were invariably chained by the leg and forced to lie side by side in cramped quarters. Thomas Clarkson, the British abolitionist, produced a diagram of the slaver Brookes showing the barbarity of this arrangement.

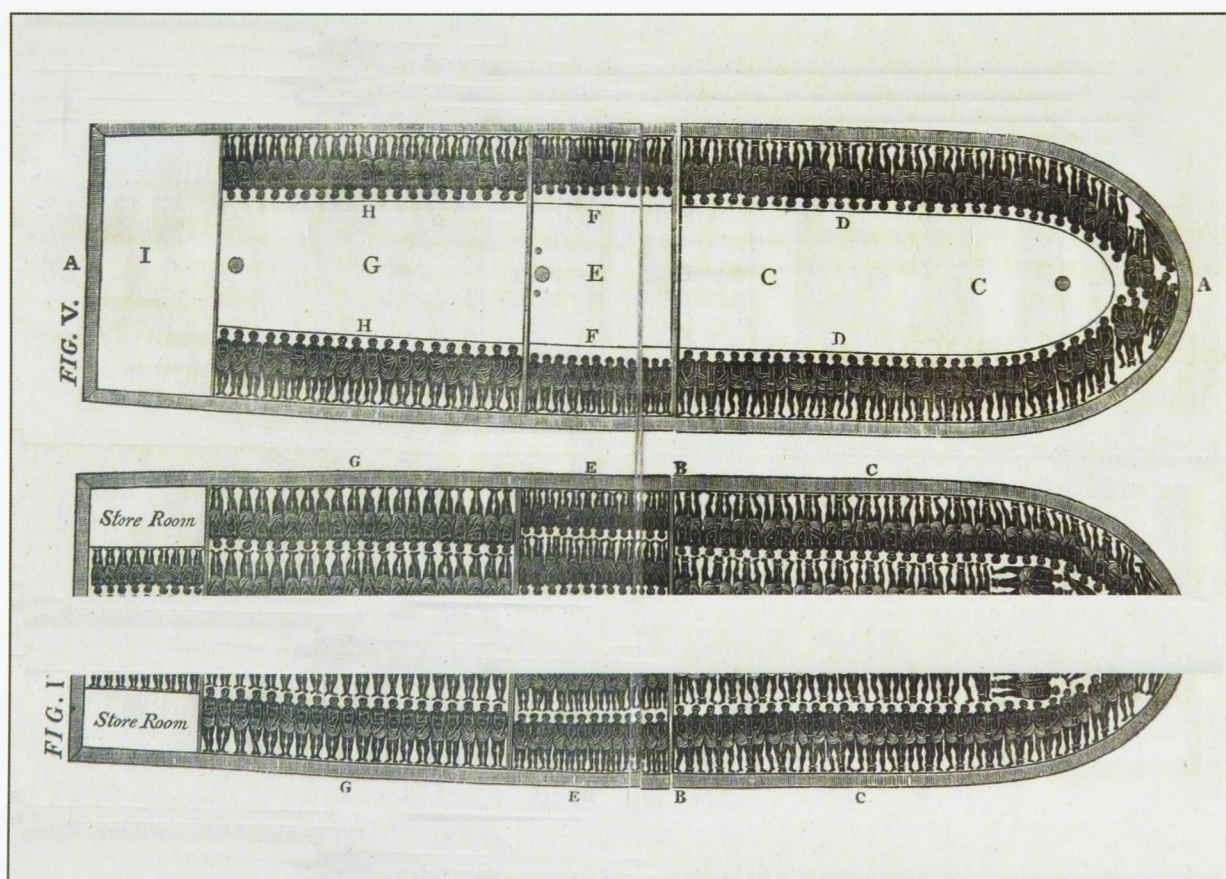
Captives were forced to sleep, eat, urinate, defecate and menstruate in coffin-like confines which lacked ventilation and sanitation. As a result, infections, infestations and diseases thrived. Similarly, bad weather not only curtailed the African's opportunity to get some fresh air on deck during their limited exercise periods, but confinement in stormy conditions increased the likelihood of seasickness.

Because the Africans were considered to be 'merchandise', captains wanted to ensure that their 'investments' were sale-worthy on arrival, and

exercise was one of the ways to make certain of this. Exercise time was considered dangerous for the captain and crew. Knowing that it was one of the few opportunities for a slave revolt or escape, they paraded around the deck brandishing firearms to dissuade slave mutinies.

The captives' diet consisted of at least one meal a day, a porridge-like substance which did little to fend off scurvy or malnutrition, and they often suffered [and died from] dehydration due to the lack of drinking water. Any attempts at 'hunger-strikes' were met with force feeding aided by implements that prized the jaws apart, and thumb screws as a means of coercion.

For African women, time on deck brought the unwelcome attention of crewmen, and acts of rape and molestation were not uncommon. The diaries of John Newton, the former slave captain turned preacher/abolitionist, attest to the debauched behaviour of crewmen aboard these ships. Newton reserved some of the severest criticism for his own behaviour which he described as debase, vile and blasphemous.



A cross section of the slaver, Brookes, showing the arrangement of African captives during the Middle Passage transportation

Plantation Slavery in the Americas

The pressing need of the European colonists, initially the Spanish, was for labour. The eventual demand for sugar in Europe in the 18th century led to the establishment of very large sugar plantations throughout the Caribbean and parts of South America such as Guyana and Brazil. Africans were found to be suitable for the work involved because of their knowledge and skill in plantation agriculture, mining and metalworking. They were also relatively easy to procure because of established trading links with the Portuguese, and the unstable political situation among African states.

When the captives landed in the Caribbean they were cleaned and given rudimentary care to make them presentable for sale at the local markets. They were then employed on the sugar plantations to toil in relentless heat. The enslaved African's day was from 4:00 a.m. until nightfall. During that time they were allowed some food for breakfast and lunch. They had to tend their own plots to grow food to supplement their diets with a more substantial evening meal. They went to sleep around midnight. The average life-span of an African on a plantation was only about seven years. They were punished severely for minor offences as an example to the other slaves. Punishments included floggings, amputations, aborting foetuses by cutting open pregnant women's stomachs, and inserting gunpowder into orifices and setting it alight. These abuses were designed to instil fear and maintain order on the plantation.

The planter class, as owners became known, and other European colonists were greatly outnumbered on most of the islands and they used physical force to prevent the Africans from revolting. This was impossible to achieve: between 1655 and 1844 there were more than 91 slave revolts and rebellions throughout the British and Spanish colonies. The situation was different in the Bahamas since there were no plantations there. In Jamaica and South America, escaped enslaved Africans resisted recapture and established free communities known as Maroon communities. In North America the landscape did not lend itself to the establishment of these communities.



Plantation slavery was particularly brutal and punishments were often used as a form of terrorism

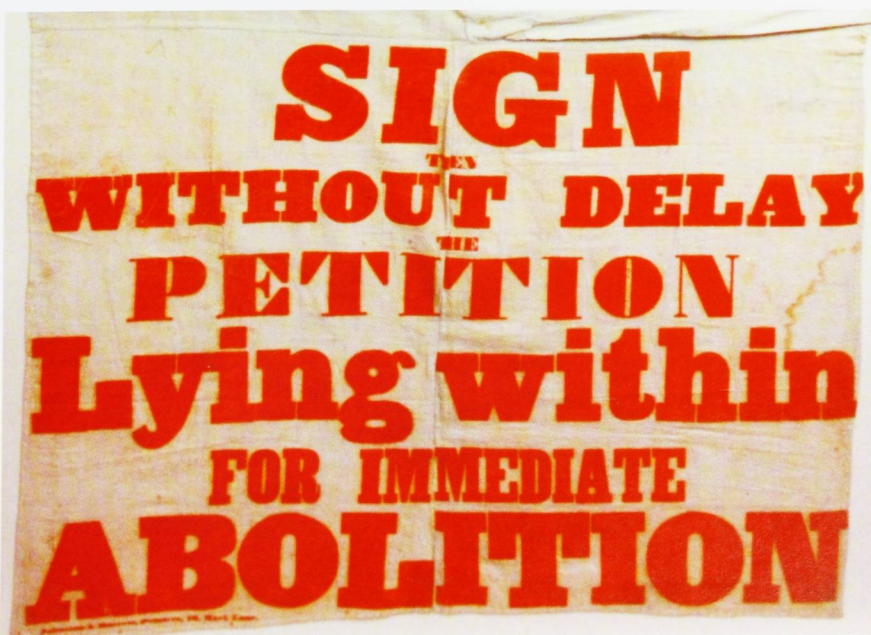
The End of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

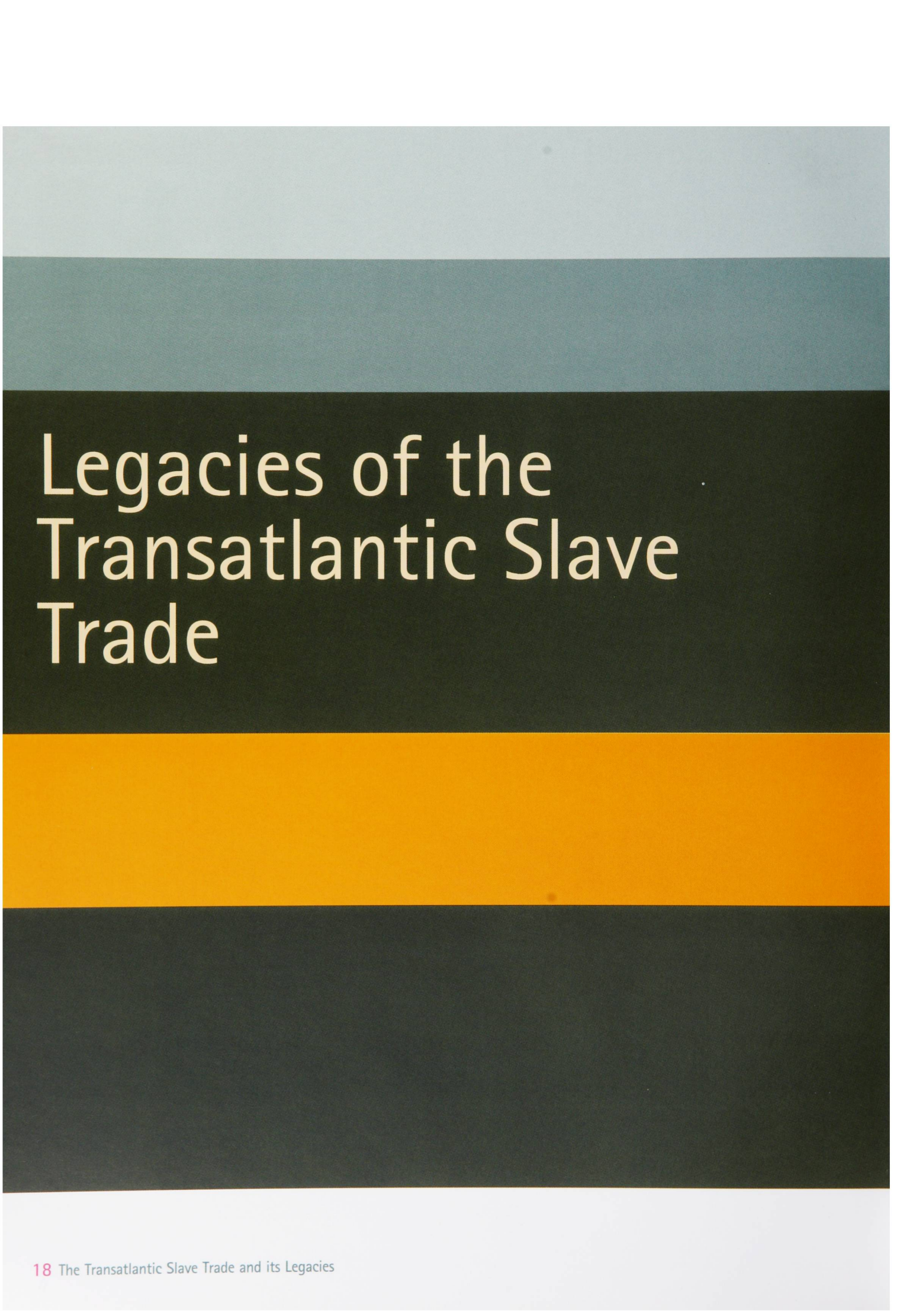
A combination of local slave resistance, the Abolition movement in England and a decline in sugar profits led to the eventual collapse of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Despite the British ending their legal involvement in the trade, other nations still continued to trade in enslaved Africans. Britain's Royal Navy made attempts to prevent them from trading by patrolling the coast of West Africa, but the area was too large for them to be totally successful. Although many African leaders had become complicit in the trade, Europeans still controlled the real power to continue or prevent the slave trade.

Even after the slave trade had ended in 1807 slavery itself continued to be a part of most of the British Caribbean societies up until the 1830s. When slavery ended, Britain introduced the controversial 'apprenticeship' scheme, as a period of transition during which ex-slaves were supposed to be paid for their labour, and enabled to adjust to their freedom. In effect, this was a means of keeping Africans subdued and working on the plantations, continuing to create wealth for their 'former' masters. The apprentice period finally ended in the British Caribbean in 1838. British plantation owners received compensation of £20,000,000 in 1833, about 40% of Britain's gross domestic product [GDP] at the time.



Abolitionists' anti-slavery campaign poster arguing for an immediate end to slavery instead of apprenticeship



The book cover features a dark, textured background with a prominent horizontal band of bright orange. The title is printed in a large, white, sans-serif font, centered on the dark background.

Legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Introduction

Sociologists have often commented that it is impossible to oppress someone without also oppressing or dehumanising yourself. Consequently, the Transatlantic Slave Trade has a lasting impact of profound legacies for all people who were connected with slavery, both Black and White. Chattel enslavement advanced the ideology of 'unearned privilege' based on skin colour, which resulted in the abuses of power that took place over several centuries. Europe obtained great wealth and considerable power through its involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and cemented this supremacy during the colonial era. One of the debates surrounding the legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade is the reparations question, involving the need to restore and repair to Africa what she and her people lost during the 400 years of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Legacies can be traced in people, countries and societies either

- where African people were enslaved
or
- where people benefited in some way from the products of slavery, e.g. as slave traders, plantation owners, merchants, industrialists with businesses based on slavery, or even simply as consumers of products made using slave labour.

Many of these legacies continue to have an impact on present-day societies, particularly in Europe, Africa, North and South America, and the Caribbean. These enduring legacies have tended to be negative and characterised in a number of social, economic, political, psychological and emotional ways.

In Section 1, outcomes other than the recognised legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade are outlined.

In section 2, the main areas of legacy are explained. These include:

- i. Emotional and psychological
- ii. Economic and political
- iii. Violence in Black Communities
- iv. Education
- v. Family
- vi. Society
- vii. The Church
- viii. Racism

Section 1

Outcomes Other Than the Recognised Legacies

Apart from the legacies explained in later sections, other outcomes of the Transatlantic Slave Trade include:

Pan-African Resistance

Africans were compelled to lay aside historic inter-ethnic rivalries and unite to resist a common enemy. This had effects in the African continent but also in the Caribbean, and North and South America.

Communities of Resistance in the New World

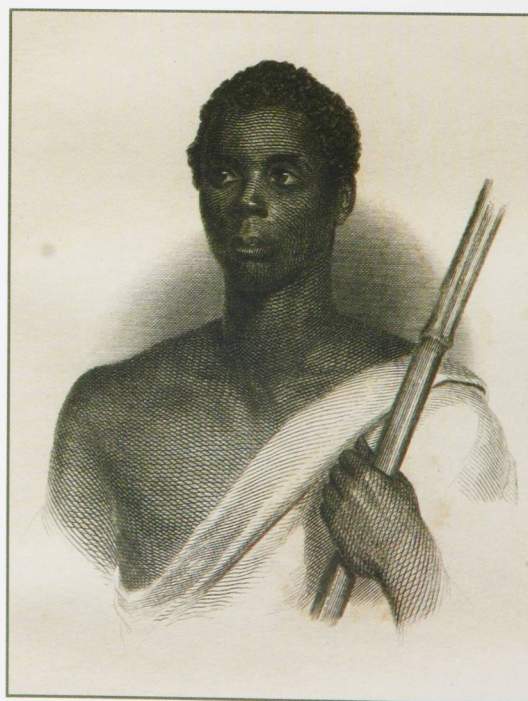
During the era of slavery, communities of resistance were created, led by revolutionary enslaved Africans who fought against White domination throughout the Americas. In Jamaica [the Caribbean] and Surinam [South America] these semi-autonomous communities were called Maroon villages. In Brazil they were known as Quilombos; in Mexico, Palenques; while in the USA, they were called Seminoles. These villages cum societies, many of which are still in existence today, formed the blueprint for African villages after the ending of slavery. The Free Villages in Jamaica were based around the principles of the Maroon settlements on that island.

New Independent Countries

The most notable example of African resistance occurred in Haiti where the Africans, under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture, threw off the shackles of French enslavement to become the second independent country in the western hemisphere after the USA. The Haitian Revolution served as an inspiration to enslaved Africans throughout the Americas, as they saw that an unjust, violent system could be undone by unified resistance.

Inspirational Leaders and Movements

History shows that there were inspirational leaders, particularly in the abolitionist and resistance movements. Many of these leaders, both Black and White, African and European, were men and women of faith. Even today, the majority of Black leaders in the Diaspora are men and women of faith.



Joseph Cinque, leader of the Amistad revolt

The Anti-slavery Movements

The anti-slavery activities of Africans on their own continent and in the Americas found their equivalent in the anti-slavery groups in Europe and in America, where communities and societies were formed to fight slavery.

The Quakers

The Religious Society of Friends or Quakers were at the forefront of the abolition movement in the 18th century. Decades before others in Europe began questioning the legitimacy or morality of slavery, the Quakers had outlawed slave owning and trading among their adherents. Once they had 'put their own house in order' Quakers began working to ensure that others knew about the injustices of the slave trade. The Quakers often faced ridicule and persecution for their opposition to slavery, yet from their 'communities of resistance' they helped to instigate what would arguably become the first organised society to struggle for human rights.

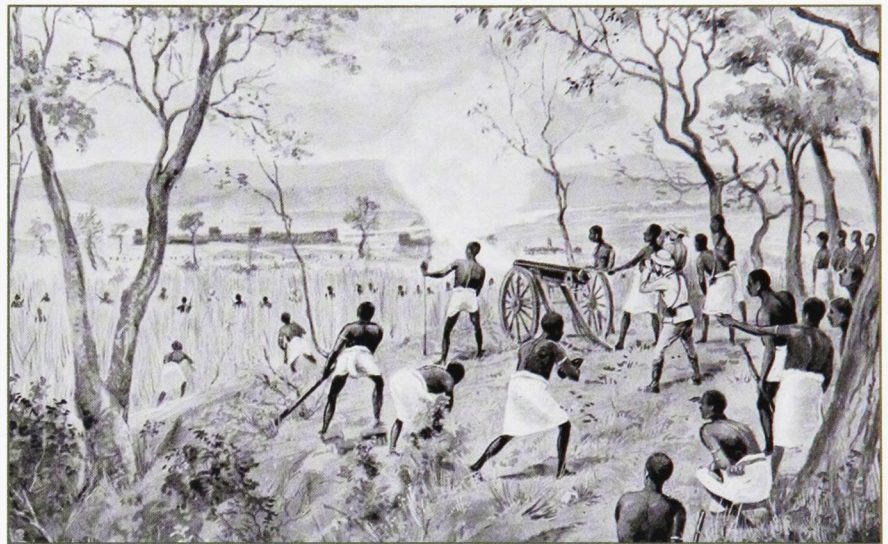
The Clapham Sect

In the late 18th and 19th centuries, the Clapham Sect, a south London based community of evangelical Christians, was one of the first groups in England to recognise the humanity of Africans and the immorality of the slave trade. This group of wealthy friends and relatives, which included William Wilberforce, Zachary Macaulay, James Stephen etc., used Holy

Trinity Church on Clapham Common as their spiritual base. They challenged the vested interests of the time who had made the slave trade central to Britain's financial interests. The anti-slavery campaigning of these individuals and organisations helped to transform views and opinions about slavery in Britain, and around the world.

African Abolitionists

African resistance took many forms, with the pen proving as mighty as the sword. Former enslaved Africans such as the 'Sons of Africa' – a group consisting of Olaudah Equiano and friends – worked alongside White abolitionists in the fight against slavery. Moreover, the books and writings by Equiano, Ottobah Cugoano, Mary Prince and Ignatius Sancho created greater urgency among the populace for the need for abolition. [In Britain, many working men and women who would later become renowned as campaigners for workers' rights, first cut their activist teeth in the abolition campaigns of the 18th and 19th centuries].



Africans were compelled to lay aside historic inter-ethnic rivalries and unite to resist a common enemy.

Section 2

The Main Legacies

The Transatlantic Slave Trade, and the chattel enslavement which followed, systematically sought to divest Africans of aspects of their culture, dignity and humanity. It made them comply with their new, brutal working environment, and forget about their lives in Africa.

Emotional and Psychological Legacy

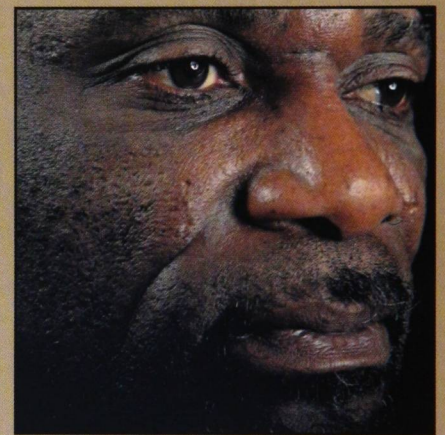
Many of the emotional and psychological legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade relate to colour and superiority. The Transatlantic Slave Trade advanced the belief that Black people were morally and intellectually inferior to their White counterparts and more suited to slavery. Equally, the emergence of European 'racial' science theories which coincided with the development of the slave trade, suggested that Africans were a subspecies or the lowest 'race' of human beings. [Academics now agree that there is only one race – the human race].

The Bible, which appears to endorse the belief in the oneness of humanity, was also used as part of a dehumanising process, with verses from the story of Noah found in Genesis 9 [the Curse of Ham] interpreted to suggest that all Africans had been condemned to slavery for disobedience.

At the same time, while Africa was regarded as an area of darkness and its people as uncivilised, Europe was considered as the force behind civilisation and White people as the 'bringers of light'. As a consequence, Africans had to struggle not only against slavery, but also against the racist ideas that developed about their capacity to function as equals in the world in which they lived. Ideas of racial inferiority became the norm throughout the Americas during slavery, with laws being drawn up to restrict the liberty of enslaved Africans.

Under the US Constitution, drawn up in the 18th Century, African-Americans were not considered 'full' human beings. Even after the ending of slavery, the situation did not improve as the southern states of the USA introduced segregation laws in 19th and 20th century, known as Jim Crow laws. The status of African-Americans was still being questioned in the 1960s when Black civil rights campaigners in the Deep South were forced to march with banners declaring 'I am a man' or 'I am a woman'.

Black civil rights campaigners in the Deep South were forced to march with banners declaring 'I am a man' or 'I am a woman'.



In the West, Hollywood helped to perpetuate racist stereotypes in its 'golden years' through movies which portrayed buffoon-like Black people only capable of holding-down employment as 'servants' i.e. housekeepers, maids, janitors and bell-hops. These films also portrayed Africa as a savage place where its people were only interested in eating human flesh and Tarzan [who was White] saved the day!

Historical studies show that slavery often went hand-in-hand with betrayal and deception. Research also reveals that



The Bible was used to reinforce the belief that the devil, his demons and even sin itself were characterised as being dark, while angels and other heavenly beings were always light.

Africans played a role in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In addition, White slave masters used a significant minority of Africans as slave drivers, while other enslaved Africans obtained certain benefits to act as informants or testify falsely against their less compliant counterparts. This history of complicity and collusion has led to a reluctance among some Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora to discuss slavery in any capacity. Moreover, the slave trade and the resulting attempt to dislocate and divest enslaved Africans of their cultural heritage led some in the West to believe that they were superior to their African-born brethren. This view has persisted as a result of the misinformation about Africa and its people in the media and publications.

Equally, the Transatlantic Slave Trade was largely responsible for the spread of the term 'black' to describe 'African' people. 'Black' in the English language is a loaded word which describes everything negative, bad or wicked. Conversely, everything 'white' is considered perfect, pure and virtuous.

Again, the Bible was used to reinforce this belief since the devil, his demons and even sin itself were characterised as dark, while angels and other heavenly beings were always of the light. In the Americas, a dark skin became associated with slavery, whilst a white one equated to freedom, power, privilege, intelligence and beauty.

In most countries with a slavery heritage, a pyramid-style ethno-social structure developed which invariably had a small White or near-White elite at the apex, with the social composition becoming ethnically darker and more numerous lower down the structure. As a result, some Black people sought to raise their status by marrying a person of lighter complexion. The obvious knock-on effect is the expectation that their 'fairer-skinned' children would supposedly stand a better chance of 'success' in such colour conscious societies.

Prior to the 1960s and the emergence of the 'Black pride' movement, some people of African origin associated whiteness with 'positive' attributes and consequently would use skin lightening creams and hair straightening potions to effect a more European look. Even today, some people of African origin buy into these concepts of European beauty and use all manner of chemicals on their skin and hair, [many of which are banned in the developed world] to 'look White'. Equally, a significant proportion of African Americans and African-Brazilians are among the growing number of people undergoing plastic surgery in search of European features. The 1960s heralded the 'Black is beautiful' movement, with Black people taking pride in their African facial features. However, even today, several famous Black models and celebrities have suggested that they owe their good looks to some distant White or non-African ancestor, implying that being of pure African 'stock' is not intrinsically beautiful.

Economic and Political Legacy

It can be argued that the Transatlantic Slave Trade gave birth to the notion that Africans were 'uncouth', 'savage' and 'child-like'. Moreover, the European colonialism in Africa and the Americas which followed slavery did little to change this perception. Many Europeans went to these colonies under the misguided belief that in continents such as Africa, the 'natives' could teach them nothing, particularly about science and culture.

Historical studies reveal that Sub-Saharan Africa's struggles for socio-economic and political development in the last two centuries have taken place against the backdrop of the slave trade, which robbed the continent of millions of its most productive people, destabilised its societies and exposed the continent to unequal relationships.

Although Europe did contribute towards the development of Africa in some respects, the socio-economic and cultural exchange between the two regions was always weighted in Europe's favour e.g. ownership of technology, which is central for development and wealth. It is notable that whether one considers sugar in the Caribbean or minerals in Africa, Europeans always preferred to import the raw materials obtained from developing countries in order subsequently to refine or manufacture goods from them. Consequently, the technical expertise and the associated machinery were never shared with the colonies, which then always had to rely on the scientific know-how of Europe.

This unbalanced relationship continued after the birth pangs of African independence from colonial rule in the 1950s and 1960s. The subsequent history of African self-rule and development has proved challenging at best, and horrific at worst.

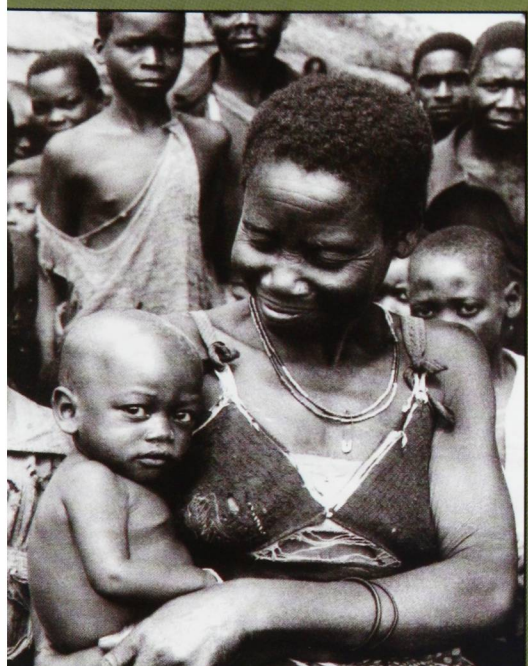
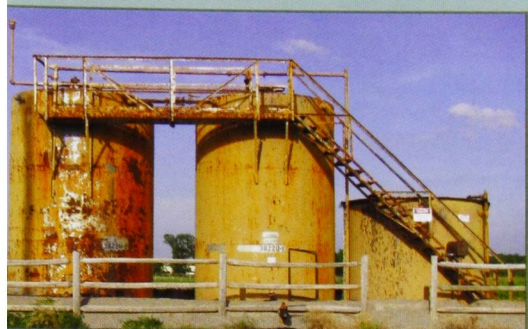
However, any appraisal of the African continent post independence must be done against the backdrop of the Cold War exchanges between the USA and the former Soviet Union which led to major political upheaval and intrigue globally. Parallels with the system of Transatlantic slavery are notable. Slavery was a system of power and control, and often slave masters would select acquiescent enslaved Africans [Uncle Toms] as 'leaders' of other Africans. Their job was to persuade their colleagues that slavery was in 'their best interests'. A careful analysis of Sub-Saharan African leadership during the second half of the 20th century reveals a number of dictators and politicians 'installed' with the blessing of either Washington or Moscow, who were only too keen to do their masters' bidding and, in some cases, line their own pockets. Equally, the overthrow of democratically elected politicians in the Congo [Patrice Lumumba] and Ghana [Kwame

Nkrumah] in the 1960s by the secret services of Western governments has been indicative of the struggle of African Governments to pursue policies independent of the West.

However, just as it is wrong to think of all 'legacies' as purely negative, so it would be erroneous to assume that the history of African independence is one of total political mismanagement, corruption and poverty. The continent exhibits a great diversity of creativity and culture. Equally, Africa is a mineral-rich continent with an abundance of oil, gold, diamonds, platinum, copper, and bauxite ore from which we get aluminium – resources which the West has not been slow to recognise or exploit.

In the West, it is sometimes difficult to obtain balanced information about Africa because Western news agencies frequently focus on disaster stories such as famine, drought and war, which creates the impression that only bad news comes out of Africa. What is more, the Western media usually lose interest when the 'disastrous' situation is resolved and only return if the problem does, thus perpetuating this perception of chaos.

Moreover, it can be argued that such an editorial approach reinforces the notion of



dependency and incompetence. Sometimes, even respected charities and NGOs use a similar approach to help with fundraising for their work in Africa. Some relief and development agencies choose to use images of African women sitting in the dirt with their arms outstretched, with an emaciated child sucking at their breast. The more thoughtful and responsible charities prefer to use images of Africans working to help themselves, which encourages donors to support work which enables Africans to help themselves. The better relief and development agencies work in real partnership with grass roots organisations in Africa to ensure that the aid and support gets to where it is needed most and can be best used for long term change and development. Such partnerships are built on respect, trust and integrity, where service is at the core of all activities.

Much has been done recently to highlight the fact that no real development can take place on the continent as long as there are trade rules which are unfair, unclear and undemocratic towards Africa. A number of economists have shown that many African countries have little choice but to open up their markets to Western economies and big business who appear more interested in profits and productivity than people and the environment.

Violence in Black Communities

The Transatlantic Slave Trade tried to reduce Africans from human beings to the status of commodities or cargoes. African lives were considered dispensable, to be used, abused and cast aside once they had served their purpose. Black life has continued to be viewed as cheap and expendable in both Africa and the Diaspora with scenes of death and destruction on the continent often treated with indifference.

In London, in January 2006, Sir Ian Blair, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner criticised the British press, suggesting that the media was more interested in covering crimes affecting White communities than Black ones. This has been the perception of many in the Black community for a long time, with the feeling that Black lives are considered to be cheap and expendable, and violence in Black communities only garners news coverage if young people are caught up in the mayhem.

Likewise, it would appear that in Britain, some people of African origin have internalised this apparent disdain for their lives

TOP

Africa is a mineral-rich continent with an abundance of oil, gold, diamonds, platinum, copper, and bauxite ore from which we get aluminium.

BOTTOM

Some relief and development agencies choose to use images of African women sitting in the dirt with their arms outstretched, with an emaciated child sucking at their breast.

resulting in the upsurge of so-called 'Black on Black' or lateral violence. This violence, which is sometimes linked to criminal activity, has become a blight within Black communities and is arguably a result of the actions of people with little appreciation of life, or understanding of the struggles of their forebears to win the freedoms which they now abuse.

Several organisations in the UK are working to reduce crime in Black communities involving gun and other violent crimes, especially involving young people. They liaise with victims and families of victims of crime, as well as the young people involved. They work nationally with links with local faith, community and voluntary organisations and key statutory agencies such as the Home Office and the Metropolitan Police, whom they advise on key policy issues on crime-related issues.

For more information about one such organisation, Bringing Hope, which has published a toolkit to help individuals and groups work with people caught up in crime associated with drugs, guns, gangs and knives :

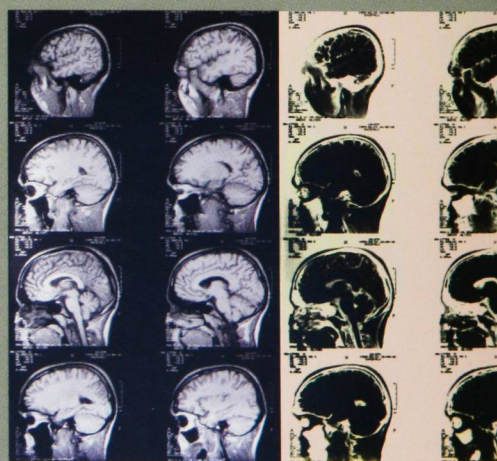
Email: info@bringinghope.co.uk Website: www.bringinghope.co.uk
Tel: 0121 772 3444

Education

The Transatlantic Slave Trade emphasised the notion of African physical prowess and minimized their intellectual capacity. Ideas of African cerebral inferiority took root during slavery and have persisted ever since. So-called 'race science' used the skulls of 'the various races' to argue that Africans had smaller brains than their other ethnic counterparts. While Nazi ideology of racial superiority was widely debunked by the African-American Jesse Owens at the 1936 Olympics in Germany, beliefs of African intellectual inferiority still linger in some places. In the 1990s, the American authors Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray wrote the book, *The Bell Curve*, which illustrated that Africans have greater physical aptitude than White people, but also argued that they were intellectually inferior by virtue of IQ and other aptitude test results. In March 2006, Frank Ellis, a professor at Leeds University, sparked outrage when during an interview which discussed 'race' issues he allegedly suggested that White people were more intelligent than their Black counterparts.

This sort of thinking has undoubtedly permeated schools in Britain [and elsewhere]. Inevitably, teachers and pupils bring their own prejudices into schoolrooms. Use of unsuitable resources in schools

Partnership: Several organisations in the UK are working to reduce crime in Black communities.



So-called 'race science' used the skulls of 'the various races' to argue that Africans had smaller brains than their other ethnic counterparts.

has reinforced the notion of Black people being childlike, stupid and lazy. The introduction of 'Black History' during Black History Month has helped to readdress the balance, yet far too many Black pupils continue to underperform in Britain's schools. Over the years there has been a great deal of research into this concerning phenomenon, which has suggested that the cause is very complex, involving the stereotyping of Black pupils by teachers, especially boys, lack of suitable Black male role models in academic professions, issues of parental involvement in their children's education and the inflexibility and unsuitability of the school curriculum. What is not beyond doubt is the fact that when schools adopt an inclusive approach to education that involves teachers, pupils, schools, parents and the local community, pupils of all ethnicities thrive.

Three organisations working with Black young people to tackle these issues are:

Rendezvous of Victory [ROV]: a Pan-African-led Abolitionist Communities of Anti-Slavery Resistance Heritage Learning movement which has initiated a project called the Youth Internationalist Parliament of Humanity [YIPH]. ROV is seeking, through YIPH, to facilitate international cross-community dialogue, constructive engagement and Global Citizenship educational activism between young people and their organisations from Africa, Europe and the Americas [including the Caribbean], the continents of the triangular experience of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. YIPH is offering young people an international opportunity to meet and share their own experiences, perspectives and free expressions of creativity on a range of socio-economic, cultural, race, faith, gender and political issues. The YIPH Convening Council is made up entirely of young people of both sexes who take an active interest in community-based work and are politically and culturally engaged, with a good number of them also engaged in faith matters, which betrays the notion that all young people of today are vacuous and fickle. YIPH also provides an opportunity for the uninitiated to become aware of social justice and political issues as they matter not only at local and national levels but also in their global dimensions. For more information e-mail: Yiphrov@yahoo.com or Rovforall@hotmail.com and/or see www.rendezvousofvictory.org. Telephone: 07060 958 456.

PEERS Project seeks to provide young people aged 11–25 years with a practical toolkit of resources to help them to develop their roles as active citizens in their local communities. The toolkit will equip them with the knowledge that will help them to address issues they may encounter with regards to Policing, Education, Employment, Rights and Self Esteem. [PEERS]. Further information is available on the PEERS website: www.peersproject.org.uk.

Various organisations are working to reduce crime in Black communities involving gun and other violent crimes, especially involving young people. They work nationally and have links with local faith, community and voluntary organisations and key statutory agencies such as the Home Office and the Metropolitan Police, whom they advise on key policy issues on crime



National Black Boys Can is another response to under-achievement in school. The community-led project has close links to the Church of God of Prophecy, a large UK Black Majority Church. It is a proactive, action-oriented organisation that aims to provide Black boys with educational opportunity, valuable life skills, and the self-esteem, confidence and determination to succeed. All these qualities are essential if they are to overcome disadvantage and make the most of their formative and adult years. For more information visit www.blackboyscan.co.uk or telephone: 0121 358 8618.

Families

Much has been said and written about the apparent breakdown of Black families in the UK, especially among those of African-Caribbean origin. This disintegration can be traced back to the Transatlantic Slave Trade where, over centuries, families were torn apart; siblings, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters were all separated. The situation did not improve during chattel enslavement in the Americas since marriage was not encouraged and cruel and whimsical slave masters could destroy any permanence within families. Enslaved Africans were the property of owners who bought and sold them without any thought about their family situation. After slavery ended in the British Caribbean in the 1830s, many former enslaved Africans [men in particular], who did not want to work on the plantations, were forced to leave their families to find alternative employment. This placed further strain on the already shaky family unit. Students of Caribbean history will know that after emancipation, waves of Caribbean folk left their islands to find work in North, Central and South America since the colonial governments failed to create sufficient, adequately-paid work for a growing population.



ABOVE
Black organisations have been established which work to support Black families and enable men in particular to play that all-important father-figure role in the lives of their children.

OPPOSITE PAGE
'Breaking the chains of bondage'
Organisations such as set all free, a project of Churches Together in England, offers spaces for dialogue on a number of issues including reparations and apologies. Central to its work is finding ways to facilitate the process of healing and reconciliation between ethnic groupings, churches, and church and society.

In the 19th century emancipated African-Jamaicans left their island to work. Some went to Cuba to work on la Zafra or sugarcane harvest in the west of the Spanish-speaking island. In the early 20th century thousands helped to construct the Panama Canal. A generation later many went en masse to find work in Honduras and Nicaragua. Others met racial discrimination head-on while carrying out farm work in the southern states of the USA. Latterly, many came to Britain as the first wave of migrants from the New Commonwealth helping to rebuild a war-ravaged Britain. In all these instances migration and travel broke up families temporarily or even permanently, as men and women left spouses and children behind in their search of a better life for their families.

Over the last two decades a number of Black organisations have been established which work to support Black families and enable men in particular to play that all-important father-figure role in the lives of their children.

The Men's Room is a UK men's network which focuses on leadership development, mentoring, understanding women, men's role in the home, health matters, fatherhood and sex education. For more information, email: clive@themens-room.org.uk
Website: www.themens-room.org.uk. Tel: 01452 305 978.

Society

The sheer iniquity of chattel enslavement casts a long shadow not just over Africa, but also over Europe and the Americas. Such is the collective guilt that many feel unwilling, unable, ashamed or too frightened to discuss something that was abolished almost two centuries ago. In some instances, the Transatlantic Slave Trade remains a footnote on the page of world history when it ought to be one of the headlines.



Many have compared the Transatlantic Slave Trade with another catastrophic episode in world history, the Jewish Holocaust. Yet, the latter is often discussed, whilst the former is more or less ignored. Unlike the Holocaust, which can be attributed to the machinations of a dictator with an ideology which was unacceptable to the vast majority of people, there are no easy explanations to account for the mass chattel enslavement of Africans. Practically every European seafaring country, with the exception of Italy, was involved. Moreover, unlike the Holocaust, no governments were prepared to stand up against the evils of the Transatlantic Slave Trade at the outset. Although Britain was the first major European country to abolish the slave trade, it did so only after it had trafficked millions of enslaved Africans and had made vast sums of money out of the human trade.

Slavery still remains a very emotive subject, whether the discussion centres on apologies, reparations or the debate about the role of Europe and Africa in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The bicentenary of the Act to Abolish the Slave Trade provides an opportunity to break the silence about slavery and enable informed debate about the lasting impact of this phenomenon on society. For this to happen, safe spaces need to be found where these important discussions can take place.

The 2007 Bicentenary Cross-Community Forum [2007BCCF] creates and facilitates space for Dialogue. This is jointly convened by the Rendezvous of Victory [ROV], Anti-Slavery International and the World Development Movement [WDM]. It is a Heritage Learning initiative which assists in discussions and alliance-building on issues arising from the legacies of African Enslavement such Maangamizi [Afrikan Holocaust] Awareness, Afriphobia, Reparations, global injustices today and contemporary forms of Enslavement. It has Task Action Groups such as the Cross-Community Dialogue Action Group

on Education [CCODAGE], which is jointly hosted by the Council for Education in World Citizenship [CEWC], and the School of Education of Kingston University in London. There is now being developed out of the 2007BCCF a Global Justice Forum [GJF] in order to advance work beyond 2007. The GJF has a focus on Reparations for Global Justice. For more information e-mail: Crosscommunityforum2007@hotmail.co.uk or Globaljusticeforum@yahoo.com and/or see www.rendezvousofvictory.org. Telephone: 07949 730 836.

set all free, a project of Churches Together in England, also offers spaces for dialogue on a number of issues including reparations and apologies. Central to its work is finding ways to facilitate the process of healing and reconciliation between ethnic groupings, churches, and church and society. For more information visit www.setallfree.net.

Church

The Church certainly played a role during chattel enslavement; churches were complicit in the enslavement of African people in a number of ways. Christians were to be found amongst the slave traders, the slave owners, plantation managers and the many businessmen and financiers who were involved either directly in slave trading or in the industries using the products from plantations using slave labour. Churches profited from the slave trade and some can attribute their fine buildings to the profits of the trade.

Even the Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of London were deeply implicated as the trustees of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel [SPG] which owned the two Codrington sugar plantations, with their 300 enslaved Africans, in Barbados. These had been a gift to the Society from Sir Christopher Codrington on his death in 1710, having retired as Governor-General of the Leeward Islands. The conditions and treatment of the Africans on the plantations is carefully documented in SPG's [now USPG] history.

Like all holy books, the Bible can be used to justify a number of actions, and during the Transatlantic Slave Trade Holy Scriptures were interpreted to suggest that African people had been condemned to a life of slavery due to their disobedience. Indeed, clergymen such as Revd Raymond Harris even scoured the Bible for verses which appeared to suggest that God had sanctioned the enslavement of Africans for their social benefit and Britain's economic advantage.

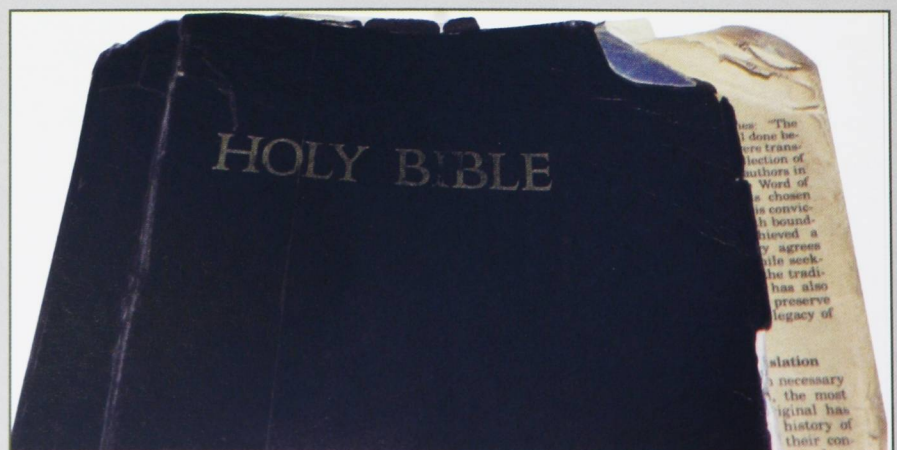
Some Christians argued that the slave trade was God-ordained in order that 'heathen' Africans could come into contact with the Gospel in the Americas. Others pointed to the favourable trade winds between the two continents and suggested that the God who controlled the winds and the waves 'set them on such a course to facilitate the middle passage'.

History shows that once in the Americas, many Africans received no biblical instruction, and if they did, it was a version that appeared to justify their enslavement at every juncture. More commonly, Christianity and church attendance was used as a way of pacifying or subduing potentially rebellious Africans. Yet at the same time, Christians led the movement to abolish the

Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Quakers had long opposed the use of slave labour. Many of the well known abolitionists, both White and Black, belonged to the Quakers or other Christian churches. The Clapham Sect, with which William Wilberforce was associated, met at Holy Trinity Church, Clapham. In fact, Christian involvement in abolition was characterised by outstanding individual and group valour. However, institutional Church indifference and, in some instances, outright opposition also prevailed.

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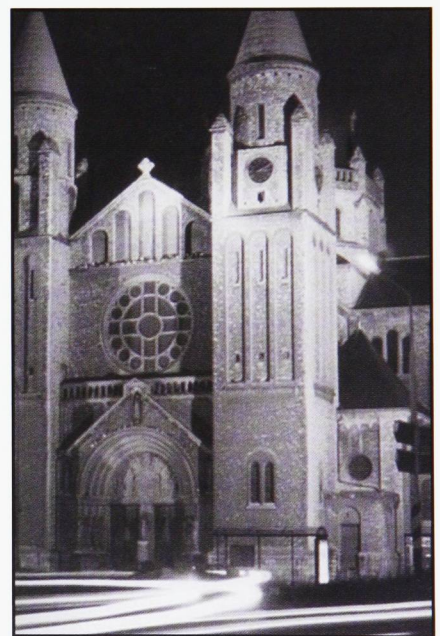
Black Majority Churches

A key trait of Black communities whether from Africa, the Caribbean or Britain, is their steadfast belief in God. A central figures in the abolitionist movement, Olaudah Equiano, himself a Christian, spent much time in the Caribbean before settling in Britain. In this he can be considered a forerunner of the thousands of Caribbean people who have settled here during the Windrush era, dating back to the late 1940s. One of the legacies of this people movement has been the establishment of Black Christianity as a recognisable force in British society. It is normative in major cities of Britain for congregations of all denominations to be peopled in part or whole by Black Christians, with their roots in Africa and the Caribbean.

When Black Christian believers began arriving in Britain after the Second World War they received a frosty reception from the English churches. This has meant that it has been a struggle for Black Christians to find their place and grow in 'mainstream' churches, though many of them belonged to those same churches back home. Some refused to live with the racism that was directed at them and either left the Church altogether or joined one of the many Pentecostal churches that were being planted by Black adherents from the Caribbean and Africa.

The establishing of Black-led or Black-majority churches has its roots not in the racism experienced by Black people who belonged to 'mainstream' churches in Britain, but to the evangelical zeal of those who arrived already belonging to those churches from home. However, their growth and proliferation has been due in no small part to those who found refuge in them from the hostile environments of mainstream churches.

During the past twenty years there has been a discernable 'return' by Black Christians to 'mainstream' churches as anti-racism actions within those churches have led to a greater level of tolerance and integration all be it against a background of white flight from inner city areas which has led to many 'mainstream' churches now becoming Black



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majority, if not Black-led. At the same time, the churches initiated and peopled by Black Christians have continued to grow apace and represent the fastest growing sector of Christianity in Britain.

A major challenge remains - that of bridging the sizeable chasm that remains between Black and White in and across the churches in Britain and indeed anywhere else where slavery existed. Another legacy of the Transatlantic Slave Trade is that these churches in the UK are split into two groups, those congregations of African origin and those of African-Caribbean origin. Certain Christian organisations are working to breakdown the socio-cultural barriers that exist between these church groups, such as the International Ministerial Council of Great Britain, the African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance, Minority Ethnic Christian Affairs, and Reconciliation Ministries International, to name a few.

Christian Ministries Involved in Reconciling Black and White Churches

Several Christian ministries have recognised the damage done by the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the resulting racism that followed and are working to promote healing and reconciliation among Black and White Christians.

Reconciliation Ministries International is a global association working to promote unity between Christians, especially those of different ethnicities. For more information, e-mail: info@rmiuk.org. Website: www.rmiuk.org.

The **Lifeline Expedition** is an international project that aims to promote reconciliation in the context of the Transatlantic slave trade and its legacy, as well as effecting an apology for the slave trade and in particular for Christian responsibility. Its work also involves disseminating information about slavery, racism and reconciliation and fundraising for projects in Africa and the Caribbean. The Lifeline Expedition encourages fair trade and seeks to rectify the socio-economic imbalance between the West and Africa. For more information, e-mail: lifelinex@fountaingate.co.uk. Website: www.lifelineexpedition.co.uk. Tel: 020 8694 2220

Dream Africa

Dream Africa is working to bring greater unity within the Black churches. Dream Africa has the vision and mission to cohere and stimulate a greater sense of accountability on the part of Africa and Black people over the past, present and future of the continent. It is a vision of a Black renaissance that will lead to a springing up of the redemptive gifts and divine purposes of God for the Black race involving personal and corporate responsibility. For more information: e-mail: dreamafrica2004@aol.com Website: www.dreamafrica.org.uk.



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Racism

The real negative legacy of the Transatlantic Slave Trade has been racism and there is little doubt that it lies at the heart of all that has been previously discussed. There is no shortage of material written about the subject, yet very few writers focus on the role of slavery in the germination and dissemination of racist ideas.

One of the most common definitions of racism is that it is a combination of prejudice and power which can be expressed against those of a different race on an individual and institutional level. Consequently, any work to end racism in our society needs to work on various levels.

The Macpherson Report, which came out of the inquiry into the racist killing of the Black teenager, Stephen Lawrence, introduced the term 'institutional racism' into the national arena. This has been defined as 'The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin which can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people.'

Any commitment to ending racism involves a root and branch examination of institutional structures to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to aspire to

or reach their full potential, or obtain a service they deserve. There are numerous groups promoting equal opportunities policies which enable organisations to provide their clients, customers and staff with professionalism, integrity and diligence.

Churches Commission for Racial Justice [CCRJ] monitors trends and developments in the field of racial justice in Britain and Ireland and in Europe. Where appropriate, it co-ordinates the churches' response on key issues. It enables the churches to develop theological reflection and exploration, using various traditions and experience including those of the Black and minority ethnic communities. **For more information, e-mail: info@ctbi.org.uk. Website: www.ctbi.org.uk. Tel: 020 7654 7254.**

PANAFRIINDABA is an anti-racist network of organisations of Afrikans and Afrikan Descendants who are pooling their efforts together in order to internationally amplify the unified voice of their own self-determining Pan-Afrikan Community in democratizing critical engagement, consultations and policy developmental work with governmental and non-governmental organisations throughout Europe. It emphasizes mainstreaming the grassroots Pan-Afrikan Community Agenda of Sankofa Positive Action as being worked out through dialogue between a range of Black self-empowering organisations that are striving to uphold, fulfil and advance in the 21st Century

the historical work of the Pan-Afrikan Congresses and the All-Afrikan People's Conferences of the 20th Century. It is also doing advocacy work in defence of Afrikan Human and Peoples' Rights on the basis of the application to Europe of the Afrikan Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as well as the Programmes of Action of the 2001 United Nations World Conference Against Racism [2001 UN-WCAR]. **For more information e-mail: Panafriindaba@yahoo.com or Pafiscc@yahoo.com and/or see www.uhuruutando.org. Telephone: 020 7582 7968.**

Organisations

The Black Abolitionist Christian Study and Action Group [BACSAG] is working to raise awareness about the actual dimensions of Anti-Slavery Resistance, about the true role of Africans and African Descendants in the Abolitionist movement and about the Liberation Theology which Black Christians have developed and continue to propagate as part of their own Communities of Resistance all over the World. The BACSAG is also liaising with interested groups within and outside Christianity in order to build upon its own initiative of establishing the Black Abolitionist Inter-Faith Study and Action Network [BAIFSAN]. For more information, e-mail Bacsag@yahoo.com or Benchrist1@aol.com and/or see www.rendezvousofvictory.org Telephone 020 7639 4058.

UHURAMBEE is a project of Pan-Afrikan Community Self-Help Action for Refugees and Migrants which is an initiative of AFRIKALABASH. It is one of the flagship projects of the Forum of African Human Rights Defenders in Europe [FAHRDE], one of the member-organisations of PRAXIS, an umbrella organisation championing the rights of displaced peoples which is based at the United Reformed Church in Bethnal Green, in the London

Borough of Tower Hamlets. UHURAMBEE promotes Pan-Afrikan Community Advocacy in defence of Human and Peoples' Rights, including Global Citizenship entitlements for Afrikan refugees and migrants who come into Europe from different parts not only of the continent but also of the diaspora of Afrika. It challenges, in the best traditions of Sojourner Truth, Martin Luther King, John Chilembwe and other Pan-Afrikan freedom-fighting 'sheroes' and heroes, what it deems to be the unjust legislation and policy measures of European states which are compelling asylum-seeking refugees and other migrants to endure, often after the horrors of trafficking, still tortuous slavery-like conditions of destitution or unemployment in the countries of Europe and campaigns for the granting of legal status to all unregistered migrants.

For more information, e-mail Uhurambree@yahoo.com or Uhurupanadvocacy@yahoo.com and/or see www.uhuruutando.org Telephone 020 7582 7968.

Chaingeconnexions is a 2007 and beyond project of the London Anti-Slavery Heritage Educational Consortium [LASHEC] which is bringing together Keep It Real [KIR], the Islington Youth Alliance [IYA] and the Youth Task Force of the Association of Black Social

Workers and Allied Professions [ABSWAP] with the support of the 2007 Bicentenary Cross-Community Forum [2007BCCF]. It also has the support of the Pan-Afrikan Youth and Students Forum in London [PAYSFOIL], facilitated by the Pan-Afrikan Youth Development Focus [PAYDEF], which is pooling together the efforts of Pan-Afrikan as well as African and African-Caribbean student and youth groups on and off campuses of the numerous colleges and universities all over London. Chaingeconnexions seeks the transformation of the chains of Afrikan Enslavement into the Ubuntu links of People-to-Peoples' interconnectedness for Social Justice, Healing and true Reconciliation at local, national and international levels. From testing themselves with their own adaptations of the ground-breaking UEquipoise programme of Rootsgroove, the young pioneers of Chaingeconnexions are also working to bring together into the innovative Soul4Real the lessons learnt from their own experiences with youth Edutainment programmes such as Keep It Real and SoulRoots Groundings. For more information, e-mail Paydef@yahoo.com or Info@keepitrealworld.com and/or see www.keepitrealworld.com Telephone 020 8808 4444.

Conclusion

Anniversaries such as the 2007 bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act provide an opportunity for reflection and a reassessment of slavery's continuing impact on society.

Churches have a key role to play in this redemptive calling since they must finish the work started by the original Christian abolitionists. Yesteryear's abolitionists fought to emancipate Africans but ignored or overlooked the need to destroy the systems and structures that enslaved them in the first place. As a consequence, the lives of the newly-freed Africans did not improve after emancipation; although the chains were removed they were still enslaved. Today's battle involves freeing people from modern-day slaveries, emancipating people from those legacies which constitute mental slaveries and ensuring that the countries blighted by the Transatlantic Slave Trade have the opportunity to throw off the shackles that retard their development.

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