

Brief History of Slavery
Posted On: December 31, 1969

This column should be directed to the Governor of Florida, whose knowledge of slavery reflects his defective education. Slavery was never of benefit to the slaves. This is also written to enlarge the view of slavery as a human institution, not just the Black slavery in the New World.

Hunter/Gatherers, Migration

Our earliest ancestors survived by cooperation. The men (and some women) hunted, but the main diet was provided by women, who gathered edible foods, fish, birds, and herbs that were the first medicines. Men made tools and arrowheads, women sewed skins into clothing and were the first weavers. Slavery was not part of their need. They had all they could do to keep women alive for childbirth, elder care, and as healers. Clans met periodically to trade and for exchanges of mates to prevent inbreeding.

Agricultural Age

When migrators learned to save seeds and plant them and tame animals for food and transportation, agriculture and settled villages were born. These small ventures did not need slaves. But as villages grew to towns and cities, labor was needed for agriculture, irrigation projects, mining for metal and gems, and rowers for merchant ships. Warfare and piracy provided captured labor, male slaves for muscle work and women for domestic labor and childbearing.

The Hebrew Revolution

The Jewish tribes were no different than other ancient tribes until the development of the Hebrew code of laws, the first bible. The law mandated that all male slaves be emancipated every seven years (the origin of the Sabbatical). Women slaves who bore children to their masters were not emancipated.

Universality of Slavery

All civilizations from antiquity, Roman, Greek, Indian, Chinese, and independently New World empires of Incas, Aztecs, and even tribal groups, used slaves captured in war, both men and women.

Medieval Christianity

The early Christians abhorred slavery and as they took over Rome, they attempted to end it. However, Medieval economies after the fall of Rome, created a new system: Serfdom. This differed from personal slavery to a system of peasants bound to the land of each landowner.

Black Plague

The Bubonic plague swept Eurasia, from China to France and England, killing almost 50 percent of the world's population, primarily the poor and underfed workers and serfs. A severe labor shortage prompted serfs and laborers to run away to urban areas where their labor was needed. Since slaves and serfs were mostly the same race as their masters, they could not be identified.

Africa

Africa had the same system of slavery as Eurasia: captives of warfare. Their slaves could run away, being racially the same as their masters. But then Europe discovered that Africa was the one place that the Plague had not reached, and the history of Black slavery began. It should be noted that Black tribal rulers had a lively business in selling their own people to the European slave traders.

The New World

The vast majority of Black slaves were sold to Brazil by the Portuguese. The rest went to the Caribbean and North America. This history is well known for its brutality to male labor and female breeders. Revolts were brutally put down, and an entire intellectual rationalization of racial inferiority began and was enforced.

Emancipation

The first emancipation movements began with Quaker intellectuals in 19th century England. The movement grew and became law in 1832 in the British empire and 1864 in America after a Civil War. The last country to emancipate male slaves was Saudi Arabia during the early 1950s, when the United Nations forced them. Women in Saudi Arabia are still technically slaves who require male oversight.

The Remaining Slaves

Women were the first slaves 10,000 years ago, and continue to be slaves under the status of wives, who are still property in Muslim majority countries. It is only

recently that women were emancipated in America and Europe under law from marital slavery to social and political equality.

Women still suffer from abuse, rape, deprivation, and scorn as a leftover from the past. There is a great divide between upper class women everywhere and the rest of women. We have much more to do.

687 words

Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of "How Do You Know That? Contact her at Lfarhat102@gmail.com or www.globalthink.net.

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Laina

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