

# Abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade 1772–1873

**EVENTS**

- 1770 **1772 Britain:** Keeping of slaves in Great Britain banned following legal arguments that all persons residing in Britain should enjoy personal liberty. Slavery remains legal in British colonies
- 1780 **1783 US:** Britain recognizes American independence and loses control of plantations in America (until now the largest center of slave use in the British Empire)
- 1787 Britain:** Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade founded. Antislavery movement gains strength; Christian groups denounce slavery; some economists (like Adam Smith) argue that slavery is economically inefficient as well as immoral
- 1790 **1788 France:** *Société des Amis des Noirs* (Society of Friends of Black People) founded; dedicated to ending slave trade and slave ownership
- 1792 Denmark:** First country to ban slave trade in all its colonial possessions
- 1800 **1794 France:** Slavery abolished in all its colonies in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789). Former slaves win control of Caribbean colony of St-Dominique (later Haiti) (until now the center of slave use in the French Empire). Napoléon reestablishes slavery, but his military expedition to take back control of Haiti fails (1802)
- 1810 **1807 Britain:** Slave trade made illegal throughout British Empire following campaign of William Wilberforce and others. Britain puts diplomatic pressure on other European countries to ban the trade. Virtual collapse of West African slave trade
- 1814 Holland:** Slave trade in its colonial possessions banned
- 1820 **1815 France:** Slave trade in its colonies banned during Napoléon's Hundred Days' administration. **Portugal:** Slave trade in its colonies in Northern Hemisphere banned (ban extended to all colonies in 1830)
- 1820 Spain:** Slave trade in all its colonies banned
- 1830 **1822 Britain:** Agreement concluded with sultan of Zanzibar (center of Arab trade in slaves), restricting East African slave trade. Second agreement (1846) further restricts the trade
- 1823 Britain:** Anti-Slavery Society established; dedicated to worldwide ban on slavery
- 1840 **By 1830 South America:** Most states achieve independence from Spanish rule and abolish slavery or adopt programs of gradual emancipation
- 1834 Britain:** Slavery banned in all its colonies
- 1850 **1848 France:** Slavery banned in all its colonies by French provisional government following establishment of the Second French Republic
- 1860 **1863 USA:** President Lincoln issues Emancipation Proclamation freeing all slaves in rebellious states (in practice, effective only in areas controlled by Union army)
- 1865 USA:** End of American Civil War. Thirteenth Amendment to US constitution abolishes slavery
- 1870 **1870 Spain:** Policy of gradual slave emancipation adopted on Caribbean island of Cuba (the largest remaining center of slave use in Spanish colonial possessions)
- 1878 **1873 Britain:** Now a dominant power in East Africa, Britain forces sultan of Zanzibar to ban slave trade in his dominions, effectively ending East African slave trade from Zanzibar

An illustration of the cargo hold of a slave ship was used by anti-slave trade campaigners to show the cruelty with which slaves were treated. Conditions on board were cramped and insanitary; food, water, and medical care were scarce. Often as many as half of the slaves died during the six-week voyage across the Atlantic from their homes on the west coast of Africa to the plantations of North and South America.

