

SLAVERY AND THE FOUNDING FATHERS

A Radical New Idea

What if I told you that most of the world practiced some form of slavery? That the concept of using people for labor has been in existence for as long as we've been documenting history. Our country America, also participated in this act of slavery. The act of using people to perform jobs they didn't want to do themselves. There were those who were indentured servants and those who were enslaved. The founding fathers knew the practice of using indentured servants, as British colonies had been using this form of labor for quite sometime. The practice of using an enslaved individual from the continent of Africa was something new to the entire world. These enslaved individuals wouldn't be treated like the indentured servants our founding fathers were used to. You see, they considered these humans from Africa, to not be humans at all. They felt that because they were clearly not human, using them as enslaved people to build our country wasn't wrong. You see, most of the world thought this way too.

The History of Slavery

Did you know that Kings of Africa didn't quite understand what this new form of slavery would entail in America when they were trading their people to Europeans? In Africa slavery was dealt with a little differently during those times. In Africa a slave was employed in a domestic capacity, similar to the British's indentured servants. They usually fitted into the operations of the household or kinship groups that had recruited them. They often helped produce textiles and crafts. Sometimes they even played important roles as soldiers, also called "Slave Warriors". You see, the concept of slavery in Africa and America were vastly different.

In America we bought and sold these individuals as we pleased. They were brought across the sea and stripped of everything they once knew. Many Africans jumped overboard to escape their destiny in slavery to white Americans. We sold them to each other like cattle. They were used as a source of free labor in America. We beat them, we fed them scraps, we chained them together and we often did it in the name of Christianity. Using the Bible to justify our actions. Were we alone in this horrible act? We Absolutely were not. Africans were imported all over the world by Americans, the British, the Spanish, the French, the Dutch, and

the Danish. Enslaved people were used to establish new territory's for others. Does that make it okay for America because other countries were doing it? It sure doesn't.

It's safe to say that slavery was central to the United States economy at the time of the War of Independence. Most of our forefathers were aware of the obstacles that would be met if they abolished slavery. The practice of slavery was a brutal and dehumanizing experience, which went on for so long because of the needs the New World. Our forefathers didn't think about abolishing slavery for so long for this very reason. It wouldn't be until the 1830s that people in America would start to organize together and start campaigning to put an end to slavery. This "Great Awakening" inspired others to rise up against the horrors of slavery. Which provides us with great life lessons. When we learn about America's history, we can be empowered to make sure that we never let that happen in America again. We now can think of other ways that we can help those who are still living enslaved today. Because although we may have freedom for all in America today, sadly, there are many who are still living in some form of modern day slavery.

Let's revisit some words

indentured Servant:

Are people who agree to work for a person in the colonies.

Slave:

We actually call these individuals "enslaved" because they didn't choose to be a slave. Instead they're forced & kept against their will.

How do you think the lives of these individuals differed from the from one another?

Reflection

Now that we learned that our founding fathers used the practice of slavery to build America. Do you think we should justify our actions because other countries also participated in the act of slavery? What are some things we can do today to make sure everyone is treated equally? How does it make you feel to know that other individuals still face slavery in parts of the world today? Take the time to research those who were opposed to slavery in America. Do you think their fight for freedom was worth the effort?