

Transatlantic Slave Trade Compared to North African Slave Trade

Slavery Wars

AI Overview and US Critique

“The Transatlantic Slave Trade lasted for over 360 years, spanning from the mid-16th century to the 1860s. While major, sustained trafficking occurred between 1501 and 1867, with over 12.5 million Africans forced into the voyage, the illegal trade continued even after prohibition, often lasting until the 1860s.

Key details about the duration include:

- Time Period: The trade operated from roughly 1514 to 1866.
- Duration: Lasted for approximately 366 years.
- Impact: Over 12.5 million Africans were shipped across the Atlantic, with about 10.7 million surviving to reach the Americas.
- Major Operations: European nations, including Portugal, Britain, France, Spain, and the Netherlands, dominated the trade during this time.
- End Period: While Britain outlawed the trade in 1807, illegal trafficking to places like Brazil and Cuba continued for decades, only stopping completely in the 1860s.

The SlaveVoyages database offers a detailed overview of the trafficking journeys and dates. 514 to 1866.”

→ Continued North African Slave Trade

“While the transatlantic slave trade primarily targeted over 12 million African men, women, and children from West and Central Africa between the 16th and 19th centuries, it was part of a larger global system. Other groups, including indigenous peoples and European captives of North African pirates, were also enslaved during this era.

Key Groups Enslaved During the Transatlantic Era:

- African People: Primarily from regions including Senegambia, the Gold Coast, Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra, and West Central Africa (Angola/Congo).
- Indigenous Peoples: In the early stages of colonization, European powers (specifically Spain and Portugal) enslaved indigenous populations in the Americas, particularly in the Caribbean and Brazil.
- European Captives: Concurrent with the Atlantic trade, North African (Barbary) pirates enslaved an estimated 1 to 1.3 million Europeans between 1530 and 1780.

Contextual Details:

- Methods of Capture: Enslaved Africans were often victims of war, kidnapping, or trade, sold by local rulers or merchants, or taken by raiding parties.

- Demographics: The enslaved included specialized individuals such as priests, musicians, farmers, and soldiers.
- Child Enslavement: Children were frequently kidnapped or sold, such as the account of young child Ottobah Cugoano who was seized with other children.

Note: While some European convicts and indentured servants were transported to the Americas, their status was generally different from the chattel slavery endured by Africans and indigenous people.”

Our Critique:

Notice the note. The Union of Saints offers a different perspective. We believe that both historic and modern systems of slavery and war can be studied more deeply and with greater care. Through this deeper understanding, we may move closer to peace and freedom, while also recognizing the vital importance of personal safety, clear boundaries, and well-defined borders.

Deepening the Study of Slavery, War, and Human Exploitation

The Transatlantic Slave Trade remains one of the most extensively documented and industrialized systems of human trafficking in history. Its scale, racialization, and hereditary structure distinguish it in significant ways. However, it did not exist in isolation.

Across history, many societies have practiced forms of enslavement, captivity, and forced labor. These systems emerged through war, debt, punishment, and political expansion. Studying them together allows for a broader understanding of human behavior, power, and vulnerability.

A Broader Historical Context

Other systems of enslavement during similar eras include:

- The Barbary Slave Trade, in which North African corsairs captured and enslaved Europeans along coastal regions and at sea.
- Systems within the Ottoman Empire slavery system, where individuals from Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Caucasus were trafficked through state and private networks.
- Early colonial systems such as the Encomienda system, which imposed forced labor on Indigenous peoples in the Americas.

Each of these systems differed in structure, duration, and social meaning.

Union of Saints Perspective: Boundaries, Awareness, and Protection

The Union of Saints emphasizes that studying these histories is not only about the past, but about developing discernment in the present.

Through deeper understanding, individuals can:

- Recognize patterns of coercion, manipulation, and control
- Strengthen personal boundaries and community accountability
- Protect their time, energy, and well-being
- Encourage systems that value autonomy, dignity, consent, and responsibility

History reveals that exploitation often begins where boundaries are weak, where people are dehumanized, or where slavery is left unchecked.

A Path Toward Peace and Freedom

By examining these systems honestly and without distortion, we gain tools for both personal and collective growth. Awareness fosters responsibility. Responsibility strengthens protection. Protection allows for peace.

The goal is not to compare suffering, but to understand it fully so that it is neither repeated nor ignored.