

Abolitionism

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The concept of abolitionism is rooted in history. Eisenstark and Weber (2010) relates to slavery and, specifically efforts made toward eliminating slavery, when referring to abolitionism, as abolitionism was a social movement with the aim of eliminating slavery through the enactment of anti-slavery laws. Today, abolitionism exists in the form of many countries having laws that prohibit slavery. Overall, abolitionism relates to the responsibility of leaders to trend toward eliminating slavery by enacting laws that rendered it illegal.

Abolitionism was founded in the realization that slavery was barbaric against humans (Eisenstark & Weber, 2010). The earliest in the effort to abolish slavery is evident with the Spanish Crown (in the Americas). Additionally, under Charles V's empire, the Spanish Crown passed the *Laws of the Indies* in 1542, which declared freedom for all American natives (Eisenstark & Weber, 2010). However, this was only an action toward abolitionism, but the Spanish Crown did not actually abolish slavery, as Africans continued to be slaves. Besides that, these laws were only in effect until 1545 (Eisenstark & Weber, 2010).

After the Spanish law failed, abolitionism seemed to have been stalled. However, some religious groups resurrected the subject of abolitionism again in the seventeenth century. Regarding this issue, Christians viewed slavery as un-Christian and advocated that it needed to be abolished (Eisenstark & Weber, 2010). The enlightenment period began in the eighteenth century and was a very important time for the abolitionism debate. Rational thinking emerged during this period as well. With this new thinking, slavery was regarded as inhumane and it was seen as a violation of human rights. Sentiments regarding abolishing slavery were high during this enlightenment period; however, these sentiments alone were not effective in influencing the

trend toward deviating from slavery and abolishing it (Eisenstark & Weber, 2010). The *Summerset* case in 1772 was an influential event abolishing slavery in England. After this event, many abolitionism actions followed. In 1780, following the *Summerset* case, an act to abolish slavery was passed in Pennsylvania. Afterwards, Canada was among the first countries to follow suit to initiate abolitionism efforts in the country. In 1793, Upper Canada passed legislation to end slavery (Peterson, 2010), and Lower Canada followed this action in 1803. In 1807, Britain then passed a law that banned the importation of African slaves. This measure had far-reaching effects in reducing the practice of slavery, because Britain was a main destination for imported slaves, especially African slaves. In 1833, France followed in Britain's footsteps and passed the *Slavery Abolition Act*. However, the United States did not follow, at the time, and slavery was still common in the United States (Peterson, 2010). However, this was halted in 1865 when the United States passed the 13th amendment to the United States Constitution, which resulted in the abolishment of slavery in the country.

It is a fact that abolitionism did not cease because of acts enacted to abolish slavery worldwide (Peterson, 2010). Instead, abolitionism continued due to those oppressed seeking to gain their freedom and liberty. Emancipation reform is a result of this initiative that surfaced in 1861. Overall, emancipation reform refers to liberal reform instituted in Russia, which regarded the serfs (a group of people in rural populations who were considered a specific slave category in society). Through emancipation reform, more than three million serfs were granted freedom from this type of slavery (Peterson, 2010).

Abolitionism produced many key figures, such as Bartolomé de las Casas, a highly influential person who convinced the Spanish Crown to pass laws to abolish slavery. Another key figure was William Wilberforce who played a pivotal role in influencing the enactment of

the Slave Trade and Slavery Abolition acts, in Britain (Eisenstark & Weber, 2010). Other key people in Britain who championed for abolitionism were Kames Ramsey, Thomas Clarkson, and Olaudah Equiano. Additionally, abolitionists in Italy included Francesco Bartolozzi. Significant groups that played major roles in abolitionism include the African Association, which was formed in 1788, and the American Anti-slavery Society. Today, law has abolished slavery in most every country in the world (Eisenstark & Weber, 2010).

Conclusion

As mentioned, abolitionism was the result of a trend of laws established that eliminated slavery in various countries, such as France, Canada, Britain, and the United States. Essentially, abolitionism took root in countries where slavery had become both a tradition as well as a trade, which is the reason enacting laws in those countries to abolish slavery was so important.

References

Eisenstark, R., Weber, J. (2010). *Abolitionism*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010.

Peterson, D. (2010). *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic*. New York: Ohio University Press.