

The History of Slavery Around the World

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by [Thomas SowellTV](#)

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This video is a reading of an excerpt from “Black Rednecks and White Liberals” by Thomas Sowell.

Transcript prepared by [Truth Comes to Light](#) with the aid of transcription software:

It takes no more research than a trip to almost any public library or college library to show the incredibly lopsided coverage of slavery in the United States or in the Western Hemisphere, as compared to the meager writings on the even larger number of Africans enslaved in the Islamic countries of the Middle East and North Africa, not to mention the vast numbers of Europeans also enslaved in centuries past in the Islamic world and within Europe itself.

At least a million Europeans were enslaved by North African pirates alone from 1500 to 1800, and some European slaves were still being sold on the auction block in Egypt, years after the Emancipation Proclamation freed blacks in the United States. Indeed, an Anglo-Egyptian treaty of August 4, 1877 prohibited the continued sale of white slaves after August 3,

1885, as well as prohibiting the import and export of Sudanese and Abyssinian slaves.

During the Middle Ages, Slavs were so widely used as slaves in both Europe and the Islamic world that the very word “slave” derived from the word for Slav, not only in English, but also in other European languages, as well as in Arabic. Nor have Asians or Polynesians been exempt from either being enslaved or enslaving others. China, in centuries past, has been described as “one of the largest and most comprehensive markets for the exchange of human beings in the world”. Slavery was also common in India, where it has been estimated that there were more slaves than in the entire Western Hemisphere, and where the original thugs kidnapped children for the purpose of enslavement.

In some of the cities of Southeast Asia, slaves were a majority of the population. Slavery was also an established institution in the Western Hemisphere before Columbus’ ships ever appeared on the horizon. The Ottoman Empire regularly enslaved a percentage of the young boys from the Balkans, converted them to Islam, and assigned them to various duties in the civil or military establishment.

The instrumental use of the history of slavery today also underlies the claim that slavery grew out of racism. For most of its long history, which includes most of the history of the human race, slavery was largely not the enslavement of racially different people, for the simple reason that only in recent centuries has either the technology or the wealth existed to go to another continent to get slaves and transport them en masse across an ocean.

People were enslaved because they were vulnerable, not because of how they looked.

The peoples of the Balkans were enslaved by fellow Europeans, as well as by the peoples of the Middle East, for at least six

centuries before the first African was brought to the Western Hemisphere.

Before the modern era, by and large, Europeans enslaved other Europeans, Asians enslaved other Asians, Africans enslaved other Africans, and the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere enslaved other indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere.

History was not based on race, much less on theories about race.

Only relatively late in history did enslavement across racial lines occur on such a scale as to promote an ideology of racism that outlasted the institution of slavery itself. Wherever a separate people were enslaved, they were disdained or despised, whether they were different by country, religion, caste, race, or tribe.

The Europeans who were enslaved in North Africa were despised and abused because they were Christians in a Muslim region of the world, where they were called Christian dogs. Race became the most visible difference between slaves and slave owners in the Western Hemisphere.

As distinguished historian Daniel J. Boorstin put it, now for the first time in Western history, the status of slave coincided with a difference of race.

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