

# Slavery Abolition in the English, Spanish and French Caribbean

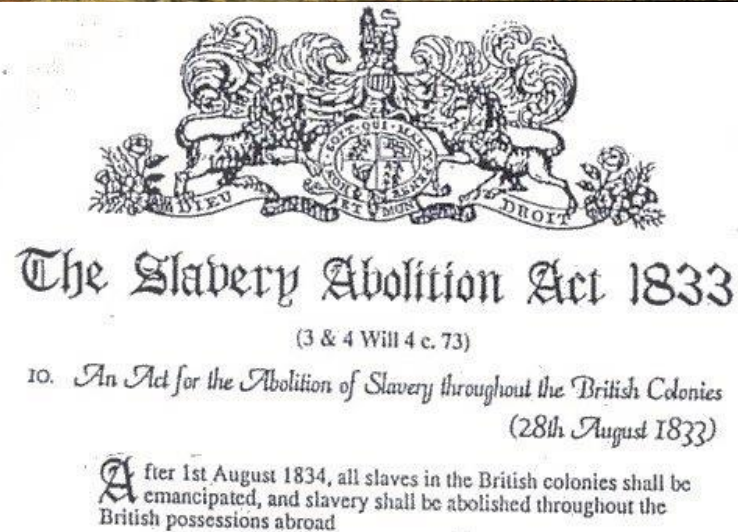


*Social,  
Political  
&  
Economic Causes*





# Humanitarian, Economic and Revolutionary Causes of Emancipation



# Learning objectives

- Students will be able to

- **identify** the major causes of slavery abolition in the Caribbean

- **analyse** the contribution of each factor to abolition

# Timeline of Slavery Abolition in the Caribbean

- 1794 – Slavery abolition in Haiti
- 1834 – Slavery abolition in the British West Indies
- 1794/1848 – Slavery abolition in the French West Indies
- 1873 – Slavery abolition in Puerto Rico
- 1886 – Slavery abolition in Cuba





# Slavery Abolition

## Socio/Political Factors-Humanitarianism

- The emergence of the **British Anti-Slavery Movement** throughout the United Kingdom from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century
- **Leaders/ 'The Saints' –**
- Granville Sharpe – the lawyer - 1760s – 1770s
- William Wilberforce – the parliamentarian – 1787 – 1823
- Thomas Fowell Buxton - parliamentarian – 1823 – 1834
- Other Leaders– Thomas Clarkson, Henry Brougham, Thomas Pringle, Zachary Macaulay, Henry Thornton, Elizabeth Heyrick

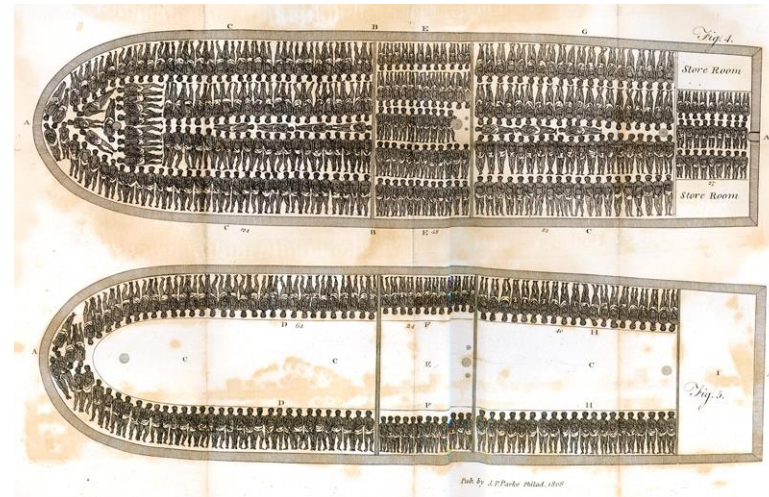
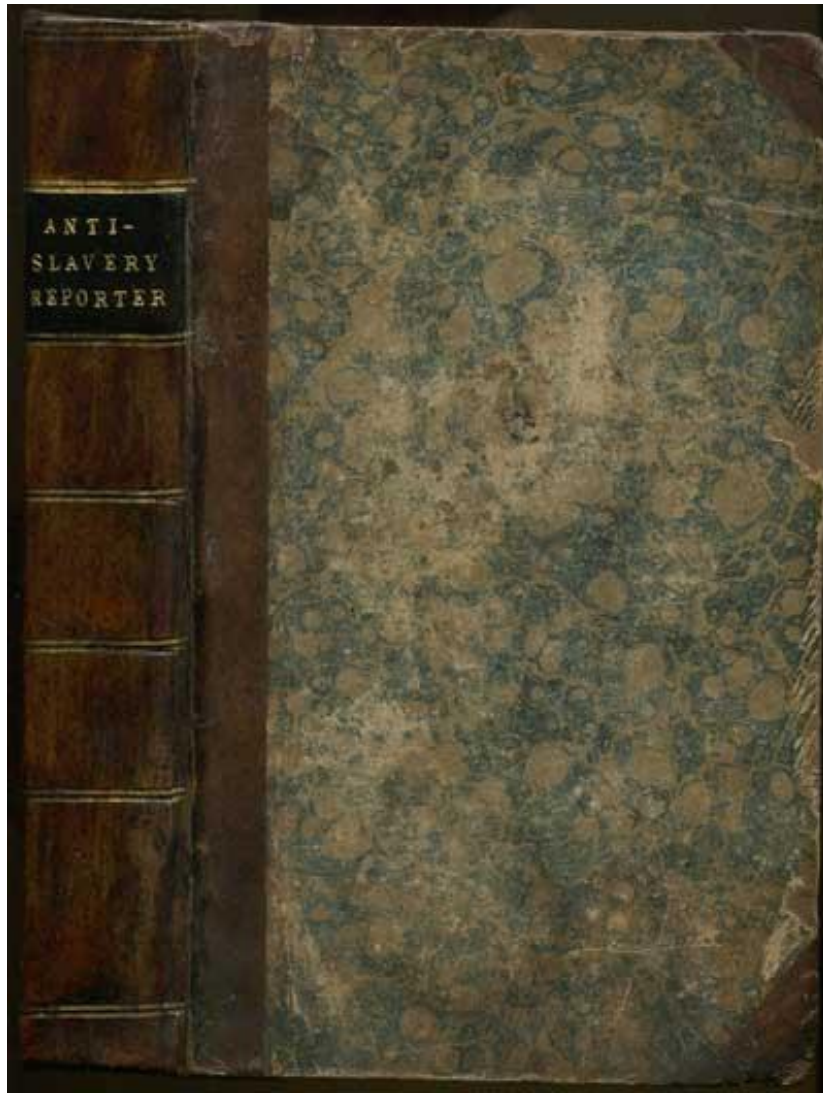


# Tactics of White British Abolitionists - Propaganda

- Sermons
- Pamphlets
- Treatises
- Poems
- Narratives
- Newspaper articles
- Reports
- Petitions
- Rallies, public meetings, Book tours
- Posters
- Letters to MPs, lobbying the British Parliament
- Parliamentary speeches and motions
- Mass mobilization of the formerly non politicised
- Boycotts of goods produced by enslaved labour led mainly by female abolitionists
- Use of symbols
- Establishment of anti-slave trade and slavery branch societies



# Symbols of British Anti-Slavery





# Four Phases of British Abolitionism

- Phase 1 – attack on the **trade in captured Africans** – 1787 – 1807
- Phase 2 – the unobtrusive period and the **African Institution** – 1808 – 1815
- Phase 3 – the **amelioration** period – 1815 – 1830 – registration of the enslaved and amelioration
- Phase 4 – campaign for **immediate and complete emancipation** – the Agency Committee 1830 – 1834

## Results –

- 1807 – Abolition of British involvement in the human traffic from Africa
- 1834 - abolition of slavery
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6Cv5P9H9qU>

# British Amelioration Proposals of 1823

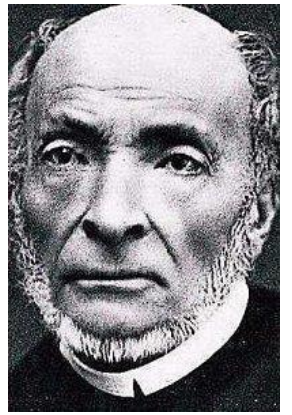
- Overseers could not carry **whips** in the fields
- Enslaved **women** should not be flogged
- Enslaved **marriages** were encouraged
- Enslaved were to have Saturday for **market** and Sunday to attend **church**
- Enslaved families should not be **divided**
- The enslaved could not be sold as a payment of **debt**



# Socio/Political Causes of French Emancipation- Humanitarianism

- The humanitarian attack on slavery in the French West Indies
  - **Time span** - 1788 - 1793
  - **Main organ** - *Société des amis des Noirs* or *Amis des noirs*
  - **Headquarters** - Paris
  - **President** - Jacques Pierre Brissot
  - **Members** - Mirabeau, Petion and Abbe Henri Gregoire
  - **Demands** – slave trade abolition and civil rights for blacks in the colonies
  - **Strategies** – use of propaganda, translation and circulation of British anti-slavery writings , petitions to the French National Assembly

# Leading French abolitionist - Victor Schoelcher



- His abolitionist work –
  - Establishment of **Societe** francaise pour l'abolition de l'esclavage 1834
  - **Toured** the Caribbean gathering evidence against slavery
  - **Wrote** several anti-slavery tracts focusing on the advantages of free versus enslaved labour
  - **Persuaded** Minister of the Marines and Colonies to proclaim slavery abolition in the French West Indies 1848



# Political and Economic Causes of Emancipation in the Spanish West Indies

- No significant humanitarian movement emerged in the Spanish American Empire
- **Political** factors which led to abolition included
  - By the 1860s **British pressure** forced the Spanish to honour its 1819 agreement to end the slave trade
  - **Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation** ended Spanish reliance on American ships to transport captured Africans to Cuba and Puerto Rico which created a **severe labour shortage** in the Spanish colonies
  - **Amelioration** gave the enslaved a greater sense of their rights as persons and made them less reluctant to work for free
  - The **Ten Years War** for Cuban independence, 1868 – 1898, led by **Carlos Manuel de Céspedes** and **Antonio Maceo**, which in part demanded the abolition of slavery, ended in the passage of the **1870 Moret Law** granting immediate freedom for those less than 2, more than 59 and those who fought for freedom and the **Patronato** which enslaved all others until **1880**

# Economic Causes of British Abolition- Capitalism and Slavery

- Eric Williams shaped this **economic explanation** of slavery abolition in his Oxford PhD dissertation of 1938 published in 1944 as *Capitalism and Slavery*
- It undermined the **thesis of humanitarianism declaring that morality and compassion** were **peripheral** to abolition
- He insisted that the role of the 'saints' was "**misunderstood and greatly exaggerated**"
- He demonstrated that West Indian enslavement by the 1770s
  - enriched Britain
  - financed the British industrial revolution
  - was a spent force by the end of the **18<sup>th</sup> century** with **American independence**
  - colonies were now viewed as **obstacles** to the British economy- (overproduction, soil depletion, competition) which convinced Britain to dismantle enslavement
- Later writers **rejected** the William's thesis



# Criticism against *Williams'* Economic Explanation for Slavery Abolition

- **G. R. Mellor** - *British Imperial Trusteeship 1783 – 1850* – If only incidentally, Williams' **misused and distorted evidence** and the **style** of his writing was **non traditional**
- **Anstey Roger** – *Capitalism and Slavery: A Critique* – parts of Williams' **arguments are not well supported** especially the view that Pitt's attitude to abolition waned when St Dominique was no longer a formidable economic competitor
- **Seymour Drescher** – Britain did not abolish the slave trade when the enslavement system was in decline but when it was in its prime thereby committing **economic suicide**
- Yet Williams' economic explanation has defined and continues to **define subsequent publications** on the emancipation

# Slavery Abolition

## Socio/Political Causes-**Revolutionary** Emancipation

- Enslaved people throughout the Caribbean **continuously** fought against slavery in many ways
  1. **Day to Day Acts of Resistance**
  2. **Marronage**
  3. **Revolts**
  4. **The written word**

## Revolts – the most Dynamic Form of Enslaved Resistance

- Tacky's Revolt 1760 Jamaica
- Cuffy's Revolt 1763 Barbice
- The Haitian Revolt 1791
- Barbados Revolt 1816
- Demerara Revolt 1823
- Jamaica Revolt 1831

# Impact of servile revolts on slavery

1. Interrupted plantation **production**
2. Undermined the **labour force**
3. Interrupted and reduced **trade**
4. Destroyed plantation **property**
5. Damaged **investor confidence**
6. Resulted in **abandoned plantations**
7. Brought a complete and immediate end of colonial rule and slavery in **the first black republic** of the western hemisphere - Haiti
8. Prompted British abolitionists to argue that if slavery was not abolished by **law**, it would be abolished by **war**



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