Step Forward, Look Back

Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans
Step Forward, Look Back

The construction of historical records is an intricate exercise, since history is almost always a combination of fact and the impressions, values and emotions of the people who write it. Sometimes it is not easy to look back on history, as some periods of the past are difficult for people living in the present to digest. Some things therefore remain unsaid or unexplored. But in order to move on and develop one’s self in positive ways one must look back at the gamut of one’s history, to celebrate the uplifting times, and to understand the unpleasant ones.

The philosophy of stepping forward into the future while looking back to the past is embodied in the Akan symbol Sankofa – a stylized bird that flies forward but looks back. Sometimes the bird is depicted with an egg, which symbolizes the future. For the Akan peoples of present-day Ghana, Sankofa literally means “it is not prohibited to go back and reclaim our past so that we can move forward and understand why and how we came to be who we are.”

The symbol was chosen as the icon of this exhibition since, as we look cursorily at the Trans-Atlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans and the abolition of the British slave trade in those persons (as opposed to the abolition of slavery, which happened in this region many years later, from 1834 to 1838), we may not find pleasant answers, regardless of what race we are (or think we are), but we may find answers that might help us as Caribbean people to better understand who we are, and whom we should strive to be in the future.
Ancient Africa

The practice of one person enslaving another is likely as old as human civilization itself. Its origins, therefore, are difficult to ascertain, but there were certainly many forms in many areas of the world, dating back several millennia before the birth of Christ. However, the history of most areas of the world does not begin with the enslavement of their people. This is particularly true for the African continent, whose intellectual and cultural history is argued by many contemporary scholars to be some of the oldest in the world.

Centuries before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, or the Trans-Atlantic Trade in Enslaved Africans (TTEA), the African continent was the home of some of the greatest civilizations in the world, including Egypt, Ghana, Mali and Songhai – all empires or kingdoms in their own right, with prominent seats of cultural and scientific development. There is evidence that Africans, along with Asian and Nordic peoples, also explored the Americas before other Europeans did so in the late fifteenth century.

Mansa Musa was one of the greatest rulers of the ancient African continent, and presided over one of the leading cultural, intellectual and scientific civilizations of the time – that of the Empire of Mali – from 1312 to about 1337. Mali encompassed the area now occupied by several contemporary African countries: Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, as well as parts of present-day Ghana, Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso. The centre of scholarship in Mali was Timbuktu. This fourteenth century image of Mansa Musa also depicts the gold for which his empire was famous.
It is also true that long before the TTEA, the African continent, like other regions of the world at that time, had a tradition of enslaving people for their personal use, and trading them for commercial gain.

Some of the main reasons for pre-TTEA slavery in Africa were:

1) **Inter-tribal warfare** – the prisoners of war would become enslaved by the victors of the war;

2) **Debt payment** – if someone was unable to pay a debt, he or she offered themselves or members of their families to pay the debt in the form of a period of servitude. When the debt was deemed to be paid off, the person was likely free to go.

3) **Punishment for criminals** – Sometimes, enslavement was the punishment for those who committed crimes against their own tribe or other tribes.

4) **Prestige** – Some members of African royalty may have kept enslaved persons as a sign of power and wealth.

5) **Economic activity** – There is evidence of an extensive trans-Saharan trade in enslaved people long before the TTEA, as well as a trade between Eastern Africa and Asia.

It can be argued that systems of intra-African slavery were equally unjust and would have facilitated the TTEA. However, the effect of the TTEA has been identified by many analysts as the first move towards modern economic globalization and hegemony via subjugation and commodification of fellow humans.
The West Coast of Africa in the time of the TTEA, had different areas known primarily for the trade of various merchandise, including enslaved persons. There was the Grain Coast, the Gold Coast and the Slave Coast. Of course, no coast was exclusive; gold could be purchased on the Grain Coast, grain on the Slave Coast, etc. Source: Sins of the Fathers, Pope–Hennessy, 1967.

The beginning of the TTEA is generally identified as 1441, when Portuguese merchants, sailing along the West African coast, came into possession of approximately ten Africans and took them back to Portugal for the Portuguese royalty, probably more as an exotic novelty than anything else. Gradually, over decades, and then centuries, the Europeans, whose internal stability, maritime strength and hegemonic ambitions had increased, began the systematic purchase and sale of captured people, chiefly to supply labour for the cultivation of sugar and other products grown in their colonies for which there was widespread demand in Europe.
The African slavery system was nothing for any individual with any humanity to be proud of, but many feel that the TTEA took enslavement to a new level of human degradation; Africans began to systematically entrap and kidnap other Africans so that they could sell them to Europeans.

Many argue that the impoverishment of many parts of contemporary Africa, as well as the foundation of modern-day racism, were built from this rise of European demand for forced African labour that lasted for over four hundred years. These scholars contend that racism did not cause trans-Atlantic slavery; trans-Atlantic slavery caused racism.

The slave forts were where the kidnapped and purchased Africans would be kept until they began their trip to the so-called "New World". Ironically, they were called castles. The first of its kind was the Portuguese Castle of Elmina, initially known as Fort São da Mina de Ouro and established in 1482 as a trading post for gold, which still stands today. The Cape Coast Castle, the main British fort, established by the Swedes in 1653, then captured by the Dutch and subsequently by the British, has also survived the test of time. These and other physical vestiges of the TTEA, such as the trading posts on Gorée Island off the coast of present-day Sénégal, are accessible to tourists, scholars and other investigators of history.
Why, might you ask, would the Africans agree to sell their own people, especially in such great numbers to people who did not belong to the continent? The answer lies in a combination of factors, some of which may be that:

(i) The African continent already had a trans-Saharan trade and East Africa–Asia trade, and therefore trading in humans was not a novelty;

(ii) The Europeans courted the Africans and brought them gifts and consumable items which only increased the African desire for them. It is highly likely that Europeans convinced them that the acquisition of foreign, technologically advanced and/or exotic merchandise was so desirable that the Africans were prepared to trade their own people for this merchandise. Perhaps this was one of the first large-scale multi-product marketing campaigns that the world had ever seen. Some analysts contend that Africans devalued their own economy, not to mention their fellow Africans, by accepting far less valuable fare per enslaved person. So if an African trader would originally accept several thousand cowrie shells for one person, he might now accept a mere mirror or a couple of guns;

(iii) In some instances the Europeans convinced the Africans that they were taking troublesome members of society (such as criminals) off their hands. There was also an extensive history of Europe shipping off what they considered to be the misfits of their own society as bonded servants to their various colonies before the TTEA;

(iv) Of course, one must not forget that the slave-trading Europeans also had superior weaponry in the form of guns. As the TTEA progressed, guns became one of the major tools of subjugation; the slave traders could easily kill or maim Africans who resisted enslavement, which would intimidate the witnesses of the act, and they could put guns into the hands of Africans who agreed to help them, thereby winning allies in African ranks. They could have also forcibly retained these mercenaries with the threat of “capture or be captured”; “kill or be killed”.

This is an engraving of a slave coffle – a procession of people walking as a group in yokes and chains. This was a common method of transporting captured people on the African continent. The African captors would go into the interior and deliver the captives to the coastal slave forts. Source: The Slave Ship Fredensborg; Leif Svaalesen, 2000.
The Europeans, starting with Portugal, continuing with Spain, France, Brandenburg, Britain, Holland, Sweden and Denmark, justified the trade with various arguments:

1. Initially, they may have rationalized that these enslaved Africans were Africans whom the Africans themselves did not want in their society.
2. As subscribers to a mercantilist philosophy, they felt that the means justified the ends. At the height of the TTEA, the governments, monarchies and business communities of the leading slaving countries had heavily invested in the trade and made handsome profits.
3. The major churches of the day, in general, walking in step with the economic aspirations of the monarchy, merchants and governments, convinced themselves that the Africans were heathens, in need of Christianizing, and therefore to take them away from a “savage” way of life would be an act of saving their souls. In fact, the first enslaved Africans brought to the “New World” were actually brought from Spain, not the African continent; they were considered more desirable since they had been Christianized.
4. Some decided, probably for the sake of their own sanity, that the people that they enslaved were not really human and therefore could be treated as sub-human.

So the slavers shipped them off, often completely naked and with little hope of being reunited with their families, to this “New World”. For centuries, this circuit that traced in humans across the Atlantic was one of the shipping circuits referred to as the Triangular Trade. The Triangle would originate in Europe and then follow one of these routes:
1. Africa to the Caribbean and back to Europe;
2. Africa to North America and back to Europe;
3. Africa to South America and back to Europe.
The Middle Passage, the second leg of this Triangular Trade, was the most notorious since this was the leg of the journey that carried the enslaved persons from Africa to the Caribbean and North and South America, with most men allocated the square footage equivalent to a coffin. Women and children may have had more room on the upper deck. Agonizing deaths by torture, disease, mutiny, malnutrition and suicide were common. Some historical reports describe sharks following ships since the stench of blood and other body fluids signalled a ready meal especially since the slave ships sometimes threw what they considered to be excess cargo overboard, including people. Additionally, alcoholism and disease were common among the ships’ crews.

A diagram of the slave ship Fredensborg (the wreckage of which was found off the coast of Norway) indicated how enslaved people were carried. Most surviving diagrams of slave ships have shown similar methods of “packing” the enslaved people.


A multi-century debate ensued about whether a ship should pack the cargo “loose” (i.e. with fewer slaves but more ventilation and room to move and therefore less cargo loss) or “tight” (with more slaves but greater risk of disease and loss of said cargo). One of the most infamous cases illustrating the results of tight packing was the British slave ship Zong. In 1781, the captain, Luke Collingwood, had over-packed the ship with enslaved Africans and the rate of death by disease was high; he had lost six crewmen and sixty slaves and many others were ailing. In order to cut his losses, he decided to throw 132 sick enslaved people overboard, confident that he could claim them as business losses under British insurance laws, which did indeed cater for compensation for the loss of enslaved people in transit, once they did not die a natural death on board the ship. He submitted his claim to the insurer, arguing that there was insufficient water for the crew and therefore he had to get rid of some of the weaker, less important cargo that would have consumed the scarce water. The insurer refused to pay and in 1783 the Zong owners went to court, demanding £30 per human. They lost the case, but only because evidence was given that there was enough water on board and therefore the disposal of slaves was unjustified and uninsurable.

Chief Justice Lord Mansfield who presided over the case commiserated with the Zong owners, stating that he understood that throwing away the slaves was the same as if horses had been thrown overboard, but based on the insurance investigation results, he could not rule in favour of compensation. Neither the legal nor insurance systems appeared to give consideration to the fact that mass murder had occurred. The case caused outrage in many British quarters, and was a catalyst for the growing agitation in Britain for the abolition of the slave trade and of slavery.
The estimates of the people who were enslaved or who perished by the TTEA vary widely; there is no systematic way of accurately accounting for those lost to entrainment in Africa or to the Middle Passage since the slave ships’ cargo was so often understated and Africans who died in raids or slave coffles in Africa would hardly have been accounted for. The number is certainly in the millions, and it is felt in many quarters that those Africans who survived the Middle Passage do not number less than 10 million. This must also be remembered in the context of the decimation of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean and North and South America (such as the Incas, the Mayas, the Caribs, the Tainos and the Arawaks, whose elimination through enslavement and diseases brought from Europe was also in the millions.)
The TTEA did not only bring profit through the sale of enslaved people; the trade supported iron industries in Europe since there was a consistent demand for shackles, guns and other devices of subjugation, as well as goods used to entice the African traders to deliver more Africans to the Europeans. These included objects such as mirrors, fabric, brandy and rum. Some quantities of gold and other African products would have found their way to the “New World”, and, of course, King Sugar found its way to Europe, along with other crops. In some instances, the legal slave trade was even used to camouflage trade in contraband merchandise, so that slave ships would be packed in such a way that the enslaved people concealed illegal goods.

Although crops like tobacco, cocoa, rice, and cotton were grown in the “New World”, the European demand for sugar, for many historians, was far and away the main cause of the TTEA.

An enslaved woman being branded. Branding was one manifestation of chattel slavery. This form of slavery gives full rights of ownership to the purchaser of the human. Through branding, the purchaser of the enslaved person is at liberty to identify his/her “merchandise”. Any children this “merchandise” would produce would also belong to him/her.

Enslaved people were usually branded twice - once by the slave traders before they left Africa, and, once when they arrived in the New World and were sold. In the first instance, the slaving enterprise wanted to keep track of its cargo, and in the second, the purchaser of the individual wanted to be able to identify his property once the sale had been completed.

Sometimes there would be a “slave scramble”, where all the enslaved people who had recently arrived in the “New World” would be offered in the marketplace for the same price. At an appointed time, the area where they were being held would be thrown open and purchasers could rush in and grab as many people that they could get their hands on. Ropes were sometimes used to lasso a group of enslaved people in order to maximize the number of possible purchases.
Left: A 2007 picture of a tree in what is now called Old Market in Scarborough, Tobago. Senior citizens, whose forebears were born soon after the abolition of slavery, have indicated that they were informed that this is where slaves and other merchandise were sold.

Right: A poster advertising items, including humans for sale, 1829. It is not certain whether it is a poster from Tobago; the reference to “Under the Trees” may or may not pertain to the Old Market area. However, it is a typical poster of that period in colonial history. Sources: *The Slave Trade: The Story of Transatlantic Slavery*; Oliver Ransford, 1971, and the Tobago Museum.

The history of Trinidad and Tobago as it pertains to the TTEA is not as well-documented as that of say, Barbados, Jamaica or Cuba, one reason being perhaps that widespread settlement of Europeans came much later for what was to become the twin-island state that many people now call home. Tobago’s history is more complex than Trinidad, in terms of the number of European countries which sought to occupy it and the number of times that each of them did. Some analysts contend that the island was too strategic in the age of sailing ships to be developed for sugar as soon as the other Caribbean territories and therefore was kept more as an outpost. It changed hands often, starting with the Spanish, then back and forth between the Dutch, French and British and even the Duchy of Courland (a province of modern-day Latvia), before finally resting in British hands in 1803.

The first shipment of sugar is said to have left the island in 1770, and the height of its sugar production was actually in the early nineteenth century – much later than many other territories in the region at that time. Tobago was placed under the administrative control of Trinidad in 1889.

Trinidad also had relatively little European settlement for nearly two centuries after the arrival of Columbus. It was only in 1783, when Spain granted a Cedula of Population to France to develop Trinidad that settlements began in earnest. The French came from other Caribbean territories with enslaved persons, and the first sugar estate and factory was established by M. Pico de Lapeyrouse (after whom a Port of Spain cemetery is now named) in 1787. The British took over the island to some extent in 1797, and it was ceded to them by the Spanish in 1802.

Trinidad and Tobago became a sovereign state upon independence from Britain in 1962. The nation became a republic in 1976.
After the Abolition of the British TTEA, enslaved people could still be shipped from territory to territory within the Caribbean. To ensure that this was done legally, the British Order in Council set up a Slave Registry, the first of which was in Trinidad. Enslaved people who were bought, sold, inherited or moved had to be registered. This continued until the abolition of slavery in 1834.

This first page of an 1819, sixteen-page “Indenture” (a deed of land and other property) records enslaved people on the Camden Estate, located in Couva. The certification of the number of slaves on the Camden Plantation was noted to be two hundred and ten, dated Trinidad 16th March 1814 by Henry Murray (Registrar of Slaves). The certification stated their names, surnames, employment, colour (i.e. “Negro” or “mulatto”), age, stature, country of origin, tribal marks (if any) and relations (or otherwise). Included in this list were twenty-five “Negroes” brought from the Endeavour Estate, Mustique Island and attached to the Camden Estate, Trinidad.

This page is the Second Schedule referred to by the Indenture. It lists families of slaves on the Camden plantation, including full names and details about colour, occupation, age, stature, country of origin and tribal marks. This listing includes information on relationships between the persons listed and further subdivides them according to family name.

Collection of VALIS.
This is a detail of the Fourth Schedule referred to by the Indenture. It contains the names, ages and occupations of the twenty-five people who had been brought from the Endeavour Estate, Island of Mustique, October 8th, 1807 and employed upon the Camden Estate in the Island of Trinidad.

Collection of NALIS.
Arnos Vale, Tobago is home to one of the few almost intact sugar processing systems of the colonial era that remain in the country today. The plantation changed hands several times over the colonial era, and is still privately owned. The two hundred and thirty-nine-year-old structure currently functions as the backdrop to an open-air restaurant.

The processing of sugar required energy, which was provided by a water-powered wheel that drove the rollers that crushed the cane (wheel - top left; rollers - above left). The sugar cane juice would then be sent to the boiling room where it would be separated at high temperatures into raw sugar and molasses. The chimney, above right, helped to disperse some of the heat of the boiling room. The raw sugar was sent to England to be refined; the molasses was made into rum.

The image below is a boiling room as it may have looked in the colonial era.
One hundred and eighty-eight years after the date on the register of enslaved persons for the Camden Estate, this 2007 photograph shows the original Camden Road in Couva, Trinidad. According to residents of the area, it was probably a smaller estate and was likely acquired by the British sugar producer Tate and Lyle and then annexed to the Caroni sugar processing system. This area was also once a back-up landing strip for Waller Field and Carlsten Field during World War II. The road currently leads to the site of a heliport. Note that the road is still flanked by sugar cane. Directly opposite the road was the cemetery where enslaved people of the estate were buried.
The instances of resistance to enslavement were a recurring theme before and after the abolition of the slave trade, in both Africa and the "New World".

In Africa, Queen Nzinga of the Kingdoms of Ndongo and Matamba (present-day Angola) resisted the Portuguese occupation of southwest Africa for decades in the seventeenth century. Renowned for her guerrilla tactics, she resisted their attempts to get footholds in her territory for the purpose of trading in enslaved humans. Never surrendering, she died at age 80 in 1663. It was only after her death that the Portuguese were able to expand their trade in that part of the world so rapidly.

In its most visible form on the ships and in the colonies, resistance would take the form of organized rebellion and revolt. There is established documentation on key movements of anti-enslavement activity among the people of who were the victims of the TTEA. In the Caribbean, one of most well-known groups was the Maroons of Jamaica of which Cudjoe and Nanny (brothers) were two famous leaders. The Jamaicans celebrate Cudjoe Day in January. There was also the well-documented case of Joseph Cinque (or Cinque) who led the revolt on the Spanish slave ship Amistad in 1839. Coffy, who led a revolt in Berbice in Guyana, is a national hero.

The most famous rebellion was the one on the island of Santo Domingo (Saint-Domingue), modern-day Haiti, led by Toussaint Louverture, in the late eighteenth century. Louverture was a former enslaved person, a strategist and a charismatic military leader. Constantly outmanoeuvring his opponents, he consolidated control of Saint Domingue by the turn of the century, and had also declared that slavery was abolished. His continued resistance, along with the resistance efforts of others such as Jean-Jacques Dessalines, resulted in the creation of Haiti, the first modern independent black republic, in 1804 – two years after his death.

There had long been opponents to the TTEA in England and other parts of Europe. Some individuals strongly opposed the ill treatment of fellow humans right from the onset of the trade. However, the decisive push for abolition of the trade in humans on British ships, by far the largest at the time, began in Britain in 1787 with the formation of the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. For economic and philosophical reasons, there were various revolutions in that era which would also have led to more attention being given to abolition, notably the American Revolution which began in 1775, the French Revolution which began in 1789, and the Haitian Revolution which began in 1791.

The names most often associated with the championing of the abolition are Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce and Granville Sharp, but many more were active, such as a former enslaved person called Olaudah Equiano whose book on his life in enslavement, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus the African*, was a bestseller in London and helped to bring attention to the horrors of slavery. Quobna Ottobah Cugoano, another former enslaved person, wrote the first abolitionist book by an African entitled, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*. Alexander Falconbridge, an English ship’s surgeon on four slaving voyages, wrote *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa*, which also highlighted the injustices of the practice. Petitions were signed and pamphlets were distributed all over Britain to bring attention to the need for abolition. Several women’s groups also lobbied against it. Clarkson tirelessly collected evidence, often in the face of danger, to bring before Parliament as proof of the need to abolish the slave trade, and Wilberforce continuously brought abolition bills before Parliament. Finally, on March 25, 1807, the act was passed.

In his world-famous, seminal work, *Capitalism and Slavery* (published in 1944 as an extension of his doctoral dissertation), Dr. Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago (1962–1981), argues that both the rise and fall of the TTEA were based on European economic objectives. His prospectus for the book describes the work as showing “how the commercial capitalism of the eighteenth century was built upon slavery and monopoly, while the Industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century destroyed slavery and monopoly.” (Palmer, 2005). William’s thesis is that the main reason for the abolition was more economic than altruistic, but he does recognize the important contribution made by the abolitionists.
The Parliamentary Act of Abolition

A transcript of the Parliamentary act that was passed to end the Slave Trade on March 25th, 1807. It would be 31 more years before the British abolition of slavery, for which Wilberforce and others also fought. As a point of interest, the trade in slaves to Trinidad was outlawed by Britain in 1806. Source: www.pdavies.nl/legisl_06.htm

Excerpt from the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade

[25th March 1807]

I. Whereas the Two Houses of Parliament did, by their Resolutions of the Tenth and Twenty-fourth days of June One Thousand eight hundred and six, severally resolve, upon certain Grounds therein mentioned, that they would, with all practicable Expedition, take effectual Measures for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade in such Manner, and at such Period as might be deemed advisable, and whereas it is fit upon all and each of the Grounds mentioned in the said Resolutions, that the same should be forthwith abolished and prohibited, and declared to be unlawful;

From May 1. 1807 the Slave trade shall be abolished.

Penalty for trading in or purchasing Slaves, &c. 100L for each Slave.

Be it therefore enacted by the King his most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That from and after the First Day of May One thousand eight hundred and seven the African Slave Trade, and all and every manner of dealing and trading in the Purchase, Sale, Barter, or Transfer of Slaves, or of Persons intended to be sold, transferred, used, or dealt with as Slaves, practiced or carried on, in, to, or from any Port or Coast of Africa, shall be, and the same is hereby utterly abolished, prohibited and declared to be unlawful; and also that all and every manner of dealing, either by way of Purchase, Sale, Barter, or Transfer, or by means of any other Contract or Agreement whatsoever, relating to any Slaves, or to any Persons intended to be used or dealt with as Slaves, for the Purpose of such Slaves or Persons being removed or transported either immediately or by Transhipment at Sea or otherwise, directly or indirectly from Africa, or from any Island, Country, or Place whatever, in the West Indies, or in any other part of America, not being in the Dominions, Possession, or Occupation of His Majesty, to any other Island, Country, Territory, or Place what ever, is hereby in like Manner utterly abolished, prohibited, and declared to be unlawful; and if any of His Majesty's Subjects, or any Person or Persons resident within this United Kingdom, or any of the Islands, Colonies, Dominions or Territories thereto belonging, or in His Majesties Possession or Occupation, shall furnish and after the Day aforesaid, by him or themselves, or by his or their Factors or Agents or otherwise howsoever, deal or trade in, purchase, sell, barter, or transfer, or contract or agree for the dealing or trading in, purchasing, selling, bartering, or transferring of any Slave or Slaves, or any Person or Persons intended to be sold, transferred, used, or dealt with as a Slave or Slaves contrary to the Prohibitions of this Act, he or they so offending shall forfeit and pay for every such Offence the Sum of One hundred Pounds of lawful Money of Great Britain for each and every Slave so purchased, sold, bartered, or transferred, or contracted or agreed for as aforesaid, the One Majesty thereof to the Use of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and the other Majesty to the Use of any Person or Persons who shall inform, sue, and prosecute for the same.

Vessels fitted out in this Kingdom or the Colonies, &c for carrying on the Slave Trade shall be forfeited.

II. And be it further enacted, that from and after the said First Day of May One thousand eight hundred and seven, it shall be unlawful for any of His Majesty's Subjects, or any Person or Persons resident within this United Kingdom, or any of the Islands, Colonies, Dominions, or Territories thereto belonging, or in His Majesties Possession or Occupation, to fit out, man, or navigate, or to procure to be fitted out, manned, or navigated, or to be concerned in the fitting out, manning or navigating or in the procuring to be fitted out, manned, or navigated, any Ship or Vessel for the Purpose of assisting in, or being employed in the carrying on of the African Slave Trade, or in any other the Dealing, Trading, or Concerns hereby prohibited and declared to be unlawful, and every Ship or Vessel which shall, from and after the Day aforesaid, be fitted out, manned, navigated, used, or employed by any such Subject or Subjects, Person or Persons, or on his or their Account, or by his or their Assistance or Procurement for any of the "purposes aforesaid, and by this Act prohibited, together with all her Boats, Guns, Tackle, Apparel, and Furniture, shall become forfeited, and may be seized and prosecuted as hereinafter is mentioned and provided.

Persons prohibited from carrying as Slaves Inhabitants of Africa, the West Indies, or America, from one Place to another, or being concerned in receiving them &c.

Vessels employed in such Removal, &c to be forfeited, as also the Property in the Slaves.
Abolition Timeline

Formal abolition of the TTCA in Britain was a major, worldwide step in the direction of eliminating the trade, since Britain was the trading superpower of the day. Some countries, like Denmark, had abolished the TTCA before the British. Other countries such as France, Spain and Portugal still traded legally under their countries’ laws decades after 1807 before they, too, abolished the trans-Atlantic trade in enslaved humans or their vessels. However, a fully accurate timeline of the real cessation of the TTCA in its entirety would be guesswork at best, since even in the case of the British, the illegal slave trade in enslaved people persisted for decades.

Chronology of the Abolitions of Slavery

1791 August
Same rebellion in Saint-Domingue ( Haiti)
1793
Abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue ( Haiti)
1802.20 May
Law of 20 May in France, barring slavery in the French colonies according to the previous legislations of 1791.
1803
Prohibition of the slave trade by France
1807
Prohibition of the slave trade by Britain and the repatriation of captives and slaves by the United States.
1814
Prohibition of the slave trade by the Netherlands.
1815. February
The United States congress met in December to prohibit the slave trade in the states. Congress votes to prohibit the slave trade.
1819. 20 February
The French issue a decree abolishing the slave trade.
1820. 13 April
Decreed the Convention abolishing slavery on 6 February.
1821
Abolition of slavery in Saint-Domingue.
1822
Abolition of slavery in Chile.
1823
Abolition of slavery in Bolivia.
1824.
Abolition of slavery in Mexico.
1825. 7 July
The French law prohibiting the slave trade.
1833. 1848
Abolition of slavery in the British coloииs of the West Indies, British Guiana, and Mauritius.
1846
Creation of the British Society for the Abolition of Slavery in Paris.
1849
Creation of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in London and issued the Anti-Slavery Reporter. A person, acontinuous activity culled by the name of Anti-Slavery international and published The Reporter.
1849-1860
Abolition of slavery in the British Virgin Islands.
1856
Abolition of slavery in Trinidad.
1857
Abolition of slavery in Sweden.
1858
Abolition of slavery in French Colonies.
1858
Abolition of slavery in Cuba.
1858
Abolition of slavery in Colombia.
1858-1860
The French and Germans in the Americas.
1855
Abolition of slavery in Venezuela.
1860
Abolition of slavery in Peru.
1862
Abolition of slavery in the Caribbean colonies of the Netherlands; and in “Antilles”.
1865.1869
Abolition of slavery in the United States.
1866
Spanish laws prohibiting the slave trade.
1868
Abolition of slavery in Peru.
1867
Abolition of slavery in Turkey.
1869
Measures for the suppression of slavery in India taken at the Berlin Conference.
1870-1871
Global abolition of slavery in Cuba.
1872
Abolition of slavery in Brazil.
1873
Brussels Conference on Slavery in Africa.
1876
Abolition of slavery in Madagascar.
1894. June
Creation of the League of Nations of a Temporary Commission on Slavery.
1920-1930
Adoption by the League of Nations of the Slavery Convention.
1920.9
International Labour Organization (ILO).
1921-33
Adoption by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
1948. December
Adoption by the United Nations of the Convention on the Abolition of Slavery.
1958. November
Adoption by the United Nations of the Convention on the Abolition of Slavery.
1977
Convention concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour by the ILO.
1997
Creation by the Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations of a Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.
2000
Abolition of slavery in Mauritania.
2000
2000. November
2003. November
2004. December
The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union prohibits slavery, forced labor, and trafficking in human beings.
2007
Abolition of slavery in the United Nations.
2007
The World Conference of the United Nations Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Stellenbosch, South Africa) acknowledges, last but not least, the catastrophic slave trade as a crime against humanity.

Timeline of Abolition: Source: Struggles Against Slavery — International Year to Commemorate the Struggle Against Slavery and Its Abolition: UNESCO, 2004. The images of the woman and man are examples of images of the resistance by enslaved people against their enslavers.
Caribbean writers have long reflected on the enormity and impact of the TTEA and its aftermath. In the twentieth century, the St. Lucian writer and Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott penned a poem entitled *The Sea is History* (1979) which reflects on the nature of the TTEA and the ensuing struggle for the descendants of forced migration to this area of the world to understand their past. As Caribbean people with a history of enslavement and indentureship, there is a need for us to remember the philosophy of the Sankofa - look to the past to understand the future.

**The Sea Is History**

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
in that grey vault. The sea. The sea
has locked them up. The sea is history.

First, there was the heaving oil,
heavy as chaos;
then, like a light at the end of a tunnel,

the lantern of a caravel,
and that was Genesis.
Then there were the packed cries,
the shit, the roaring:

Exodus.
Bone soldered by coral to bone,
mossies,
manilled by the benediction of the shark’s shadow,

that was the Ark of the Covenant.
Then came from the plucked wires
of sunlight on the sea floor

the plangent harp of the Babylonian bondage,
as the white covers clustered like manacles
on the drowned women,

and those were the ivory bracelets
of the Song of Solomon,
but the ocean kept turning blank pages

looking for History.
Then came the men with eyes heavy as anchors
who sank without toms,
brigands who barbecued cattle,
leaving their charred ribs like palm leaves on the shore,
then the foaming, rabid maw

of the tidal wave swallowing Port Royal,
and that was Jonah,
but where is your Renaissance?

Sir, it is locked in there sea sands
out there past the reefs, molasses,
where the men-o’-war floated down:

stop on these goggles, I’ll guide you there myself.
It’s all subtle and submarine,
through colonnades of coral,
past the gothic windows of sea fans
to where the crusty grouper, coryx eyed,
blinks, weighted by its jewels, like a bald queen;

...and these groined caves with barnacles
pitted like store
are cur cathedrals,

and the furnace before the hurricanes:
Gomorrah. Bore the grind mill
into marl and commingal,

and that was Lamentations –
that was just: Lamentations, it was not History;
then came, like scum on the river’s drying lip,
the brown reeds of villages
mantling and corroaling into towns,

and at evening, the midges’ choirs,
and above them, the spires
lancing the side of God
as His son set, and that was the New Testament.
Then came the white sisters capping
to the waves’ progress,
and that was Emancipation –

jubilation. O jubilation –
vanishing swiftly
as the sea’s face dries in the sun,

but that was not history,
that was only faith,
and then each rock broke into its own nation,

then came the synod of flies,
then came the secretary heron,
then came the bullfrog bellowing for a vote,

fireflies with bright ideas
and bats like jetting ambassadors
and the martis, like khaki police,

and the huddled caterpillars of judges
examining each case closely,
and then in the dark ears of ferns

and in the salt chuckle of rocks
with their sea pools, there was the sound
like a rumour without any echo
of History, really beginning.

Source: The Star-Apple Kingdom; Derek Walcott. 1979.
HUMAN TRAFFICKING
Modern Day Slavery

Modern day slaves. You wouldn’t know it, but many live among us. Poor children are “adopted” by rich households, then forced into domestic slavery or sexual exploitation. Men are deceived by promises of good jobs, only to have their documents taken away and forced into backbreaking labour. Women are promised work as waitresses or maids, then forced into prostitution.

If you know someone who has been lured, trapped, tricked, threatened or imprisoned by an employer or family member, they could be a victim of human trafficking—modern day slavery. You can help them.

Together, we can end slavery... again.

DOMESTIC SERVITUDE
Victims may be forced into taking care of children, house cleaning, laundry or other domestic tasks, sometimes accompanied by sexual exploitation.

FORCED LABOUR
Victims are forced to work for little or no pay, often under brutal conditions, in agriculture, mining, construction, fishing, stores, markets and restaurants.

SEXUAL SLAVERY
Victims are forced into various forms of sexual exploitation, including exotic dancing, strip tease, pornography and prostitution.

Tragically, the world has not been able to rid itself of slavery. It still occurs in many forms, as this poster of the International Labour Organization indicates. It is up to each of us as individuals to try to contribute to its elimination in whatever way we can.