

The Aylesbury Transcript

Unforgivable Past

Two different pasts, with one present

Brazil and the United States. Two different countries. With similar values. The slavery institution was present in both of these nations, and unfortunately in the two, it took a long time to abolish it. Together with their main farming regions, unfair labor was part of both of these countries' history, but it still varied greatly in many levels.

These two countries had slavery present in their past, but still there were many distinct characteristics between both. Brazil, famous for its coffee plantations and cane sugar, only managed to

end enslavement in 1888, by the *Lei Áurea*. In contrast, the United States abolished slavery in 1865 with the Thirteenth Amendment. Another main difference between slavery in the United States and in Brazil was the racial tolerance. In Brazil,

people were much more liberal with racial mixing, so there were many different classes

of races, including, blacks, mestizos and mulattos. On the other hand, the people in the United States had more difficulty accepting other races into their lives, so there was only a very strict two-category system of race divided into blacks and whites, where anyone with a black mother would already be considered black. Also, another thing that differentiated Brazilian from American slavery were

the demographic characteristics. Brazil had a much higher death rate and lower birth rate, so it depended a lot on African imports for their labor. In contrast, the United States' slaves had a high birth rate and most of the enslaved population was American-born. There were many aspects that contrasted slavery in these both countries, and also a big distinction between the both was the contrast between their two main farming regions.

In Brazil, many factors contributed to the fast expansion of coffee plantations in Vale do Paraíba. Together with the huge pieces of land available for farming, railways were another influence for the great farming systems in the South Fluminense. Also, the Barra do Piraí had a state policy that was favorable to coffee exportations, and because of their location, they had an efficient connection between African and Brazilian ports that made slave trade easier. All of these characteristics led to a region famous for their coffee plantation that was responsible for a big percentage of Brazilian coffee.

Because of its huge terrain and coffee-valuing qualities, the Vale do Paraíba, was a very famous region known for its many coffee plantations. The Valley, located in the South of Fluminense, also had a supporting geography that



Vale do Paraíba: region in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, because of its favorable geographic features, was known for its many coffee plantations.



Replica of the *Lei Áurea* signed by Princess Isabel that abolished slavery in Brazil in May 13th, 1888.

helped the development of the coffee plantations in that region. With a lot of virgin land available and a favorable weather for planting, this territory was the perfect place for farming coffee. Also, as most of the Vale do Paraíba is located between hills, it helps with the coffee plantations, as most farming techniques were done in sloped areas. This area had all the ideal characteristics for coffee planting, so, it was a region that thrived greatly and benefited a lot from these features.

The Vale do Paraíba generated a lot of money for the barons and landowners of that time, but even though they had huge profits from this region, it didn't last very long. One of the most common farming technique was the 'fileira', which was mostly used because it made slave labor easier and the coffee was produced faster. But even though it had these positive qualities, it ended

up ruining that terrain. When it rained, the water would go down the hills, washing of all the soil's nutrients, causing the land to be completely damaged.

Unfortunately, after this, in the end of the 19th century, all the landowners started being unable to produce coffee, making them lose all their money, and later, their coffee plantations.

Most of the United States' cotton came from the Cotton Belt, a region in Southeastern U.S., where cotton is the main cash crop and that had favorable topographical characteristics convenient for planting cotton.



Coffee plantations using the *fileira* technique that ended up ruining the soil as it removed all of the land's nutrients.



Cotton Belt: region in Southeastern U.S. where cotton was mostly planted during the 1800s.

As this territory was located in the Great Plains, where it was much easier to plant cotton because of the flat land, the area thrived in cotton farming. Also, it had a very fertile soil, and subtropical and tropical climate that contributed to the agricultural production. Just like the Vale do Paraíba, the Cotton Belt had many geographic features that were helpful for the crop cultivations in those areas.

Even though the South suffered a lot during the Civil War, it still managed to gain a lot from its very popular cotton production. As the North had huge

advantages over the South because of its great industrial economy and their outstanding railways, when



American slaves working in the cotton plantations

slavery became illegal, southern economics suffered enormous losses. Because of these disadvantages, Southern economy ended up declining and going through a huge economic crisis. Even though the South's economy decreased a lot because of the North's Civil War devastation, it still profited a lot from the cotton production. In 1850s, the agricultural economy of the South started to grow because of the huge success of cotton plantations. Therefore, the Cotton Belt benefitted from these consequences and ended up being a prosperous region that progressed because of its cotton plantations.

American slaves from the southern U.S., usually worked on the cotton plantations. They were forced to leave Africa and go to America. Slaves were treated as objects, instead of people. They were really expensive and represented great value to their owners, so they could not be killed, and instead, were tortured if they did something against their master's orders. Enslaved women were usually responsible for the domestic chores that included cooking, cleaning, taking care of her owners' kids and others. American slaves also had the job to work in cotton plantations, that were

usually located in the cotton belt. They were forced to work in awful conditions and like Brazilian slaves, they were also treated very unfairly.

Slaves from Brazil had some similar characteristics, but were not completely equal to U.S. slaves. Just like in America, female slaves had domestic chores. Déusa, a slave that worked on Fazenda Ponte Alta, says that her main job were house chores: cooking; cleaning the house; taking care of the kids; sewing clothes, among others. She also tells that if slaves misbehaved or did something their owners would frown upon, they would be punished by torture instruments, that had the mean to harm slaves by the most horrible and painful ways. Deusa also



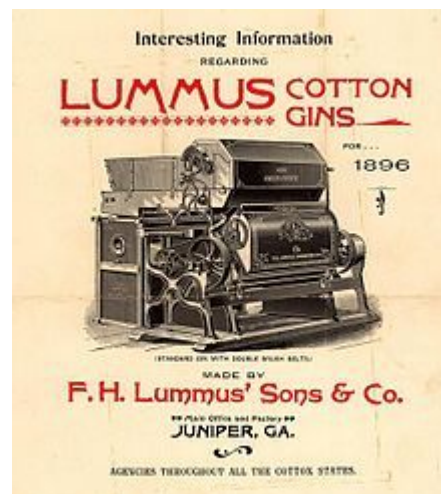
Torture devices, on the bottom left of the picture: *caneleira*, which was a ball of cement together with a chain, that would be bound to the slave, so that he wouldn't escape.

comments that there were other types of

slaves like plantation slaves. These used to farm in the coffee plantations, working all day in extremely unfair conditions. However, American slaves worked in cotton plantations, instead of coffee plantations, like Brazilian slaves. Slavery in the U.S. and in Brazil had some common points, but it still had major differences.

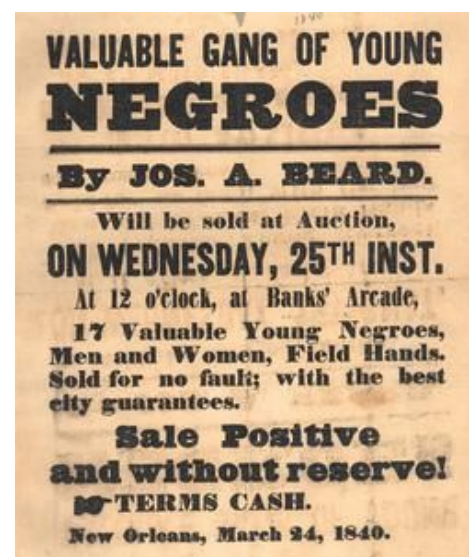
Unfortunately, slavery played a big part in these countries' past when it should never have happened. The slavery institution was a big mistake that was extremely wrong since it completely discriminated these people by making them inferior to others for the sheer reason of profiting and gaining money. These unbelievable unfair acts shaped these countries' histories to worst, but made the world realize that everyone deserves equal rights and that no one should ever be treated as inferior to anyone. Even though slavery has already been abolished in these countries, these racist thoughts continue in people's minds and sadly, are still among us. If the world keeps these

small-minded ideals, it will not only be stuck in the same place, as it will stop moving forward. If we don't get rid of these intolerant ideas, we will not progress. Because you can't master your future if you're still a slave to your past.



Advertisement for the **Cotton Gin**: a machine that aided workers in cotton production

Advertisement that announced slaves for sale



(Pictures by João Pedro Silva and report by Manuela Pinheiro, *The Aplesbury Transcript*, 26/09/17)

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