

3: The United States of America

<http://thierry.raguier.free.fr/3Blacks1.htm>



III/ Black people in America.

A/ The origins:



Slavery has a long story: it used to exist in Antiquity (in ancient Greece or in the Roman Empire) and the Bible or the Koran have references to it.

With the « discovery » of America in 1492, European countries (Great Britain, France and others) developed the « slave trade » business to bring back to Europe sugar, cotton

or tobacco. English or French slavers made big sums of money with this trade. How many slaves did the crossing between Africa and America? We will never know. Specialist think between about 15 and 20 million people were brought between the two continents.

1619: about 30 Black slaves arrived for the very first time on the American soil. The trade lasted for about 250 years.

The slave-trade system was simple: boats left ports in Europe (London, Bristol, Liverpool, Nantes, La Rochelle, etc) with cheap objects (« trinkets »). In Africa, the trinkets were exchanged against Black slaves. The boats crossed the Atlantic (the « Grand Voyage ») and sold the slaves in the Carribeans. Boats returned to Europe with expensive things (tobacco, sugar or cotton).



Questions:

1/ Did slavery exist in ancient Greece or Rome?

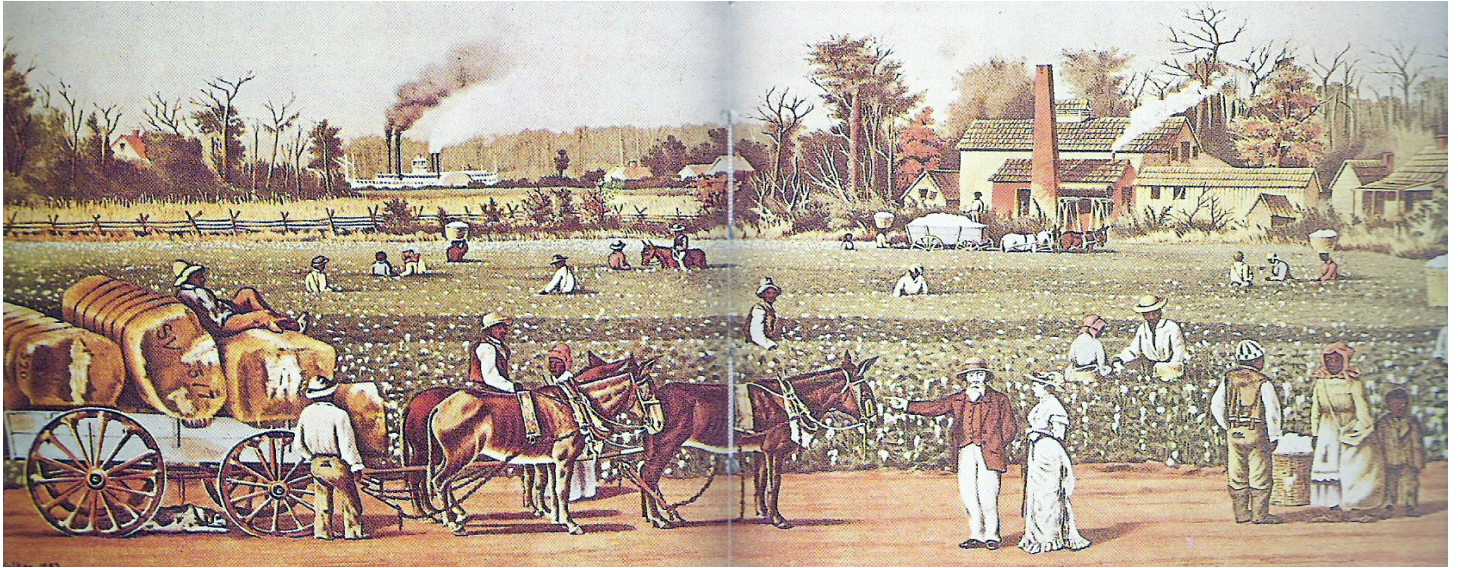
2/ How long ago was America « discovered »?

3/ What created the slave-trade?

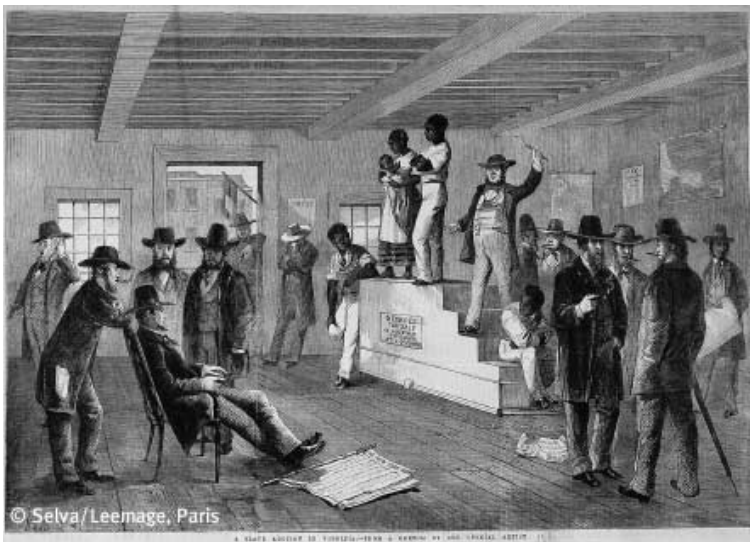
4/ How long have Black people been living in America?

5/ Why was the slave trade interesting for European nations?

B/ The plantations:



White people regarded / considered slaves as objects, not as human beings. Slaves were sold on slave-markets and went to work on « plantations ». The price of Black slaves depended on the age, the sex or the health. Plantations were vast farms in the USA's southern states (= the « cotton-states » of Alabama, Georgia, Carolina or Mississippi where White people grew cotton). On a plantation, slaves were not free, they belonged to the master. A day's work was very long in the cotton-field.



Bad treatments or punishments were possible if the slaves rebelled or tried to escape. Many White people in the « slave-states » were racist and didn't like Black people.



Left: a group of slaves picking cotton on a plantation.

Right: a slave with marks of whipping on his back. Perhaps he didn't want to obey or maybe he tried to escape.



Questions:

1/ Explain: « a slave-market »:

2/ Explain: « a plantation »:

3/ Explain: « cotton-states » / « slave-states »:

C/ The 1960s: Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King and the fight for Civil Rights.

Slavery was abolished at the end of the « Civil War » (1861-1865) in the USA, but mentalities didn't change in the slave-states. Many White people in the south continued to think Black people were inferior, had no rights. Racism existed, with a new form now: segregation (=racism in everyday life).



One December day in 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her front seat on a bus to a White man (Black people on buses had to sit at the back of the bus...). Rosa went to prison.

Martin Luther King heard about the incident (Rosa was not the first to refuse). He began to set up his campaign to demand equality between Black and White and for Civil Rights. He organised non-violent marches and demonstrations. He made / delivered speeches (photo: his famous « I have a dream » speech in Washington, August, 28th, 1963).

Martin Luther King was murdered in 1968, but his dream came true: it became illegal to have segregation in public places, and Black people had equal rights to White people.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbUtl_0vAJk





(Picture: the bus where Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in December, 1955.)

Questions:

- 1/ How long ago was slavery officially abolished in the USA?*
- 2/ Where didn't mentalities change in the USA? Why?*
- 3/ Why was Rosa Parks important in the Civil Rights movement?*
- 4/ What did Martin Luther King demand?*
- 5/ What was M L King's technique to get what he wanted?*

Black people in America: complete this summary:

The v..... first group of Black slaves a..... in America in 1..... They were part of the « s..... t..... ». This system l..... f.... about 250 years with about 15 to 20 million Black people who w..... b..... between Africa and America. It permitted rich s..... in Europe to make m..... money. Boats crossed from Europe with t..... to Africa, where they e..... them a..... slaves. After the crossing of the Atlantic, slaves were s..... to work in cotton-fields or tobacco-fields. Slaves were r..... / c..... as things, not human beings. After the Civil War, s..... started in the slave-states.

In the 1960s, Martin Luther King began to d..... equality for Blacks and Whites in the USA, with his Civil Rights movement. He had non-violent techniques (demonstrations and marches). He d..... / m..... a famous s..... in Washington (August, 1.....), but he was m..... in 1968.