COLONIAL SLAVERY IN THE AMERICAS

Over 4 million African slaves landed in Brazil, representing nearly one third of the whole Atlantic trade. Brazil was also the last country that abolished slavery in 1888.

In North America, there were nearly 600,000 slaves in the thirteen colony territory in 1780 which do not exceed the number of slaves in the French colony of Santo Domingo. As soon as independence was declared, the enslaved Blacks, the free Blacks, the mulatto people and the Natives were immediately excluded from American citizenship.

Some of the Founding Fathers such as J. Jay, A. Hamilton or B. Franklin were opposed to slavery. Others such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were from Virginia, planters and slave-owners. Consequently the authors of the Constitution reached a compromise that separated the North and the South with a line running South of Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

The co-existence of the "free states" and "slave states" made the Black issue one of the major national debates. The entire Union did not side with freedom before the Civil War. When the Civil War broke out in 1860, the United States had almost four million slaves, representing a 500% increase since the Proclamation of Independence. The States, along with Brazil, were the only two independent countries in America, where slavery was legal.

Georges Washington
Dobrée Museum, Nantes

Engraved portrait of John Adams
Dobrée Museum, Nantes
John Adams (1735-1826) helped write the Declaration of Independence. When independence was declared he was sent to France and to the Netherlands to obtain subsidies and was the United States' first ambassador to King George III after the war. He became the new nation's second president in 1797.

Engraved portrait of Thomas Jefferson
Dobrée Museum, Nantes
A large Virginia landowner, a writer, former lawyer, economist and architect. Jefferson (1743-1826) was one of the most open-minded and cultivated men of his time. He was main author of the Declaration of Independence. He represented his country in Paris from 1785 to 1789 and was elected the U.S.' third president in 1801.

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