

If you get the chance, watch...

Amazing Grace

Based on the life of antislavery pioneer William Wilberforce, Amazing Grace is directed by Michael Apted (The World is Not Enough, Coal Miner's Daughter) from an original screenplay written by Academy Award® nominee Steven Knight (Dirty Pretty Things).

The film stars Ioan Gruffudd (Black Hawk Down), Albert Finney (Erin Brockovich), Romola Garai (Vanity Fair), Michael Gambon (Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban), Benedict Cumberbatch (Hawking), Rufus Sewell (Legend of Zorro), Ciaran Hinds (Rome) and introduces Youssou N'Dour.

Gruffudd plays Wilberforce, who, as a Member of Parliament, navigated the world of 18th Century backroom politics to end the slave trade in the British Empire. Albert Finney plays John Newton, a confidante of Wilberforce who inspires him to pursue a life of service to humanity. Benedict Cumberbatch is William Pitt the Younger, England's youngest ever Prime Minister at the age of 24, who encourages his friend Wilberforce to take up the fight to outlaw slavery and supports him in his struggles in Parliament.

Elected to the House of Commons at the age of 21, and on his way to a successful political career, Wilberforce, over the course of two decades, took on the English establishment and persuaded those in power to end the inhumane trade of slavery.

Romola Garai plays Barbara Spooner, a beautiful and headstrong young woman who shares Wilberforce's passion for reform, and who becomes his wife after a whirlwind courtship. Youssou N'Dour is Olaudah Equiano. Born in Africa and sent as a slave to the Colonies, Equiano bought his freedom and made his home in London, where he wrote a best-selling account of his life and became a leading figure in the fight to end the slavery of his fellow countrymen.

Visit www.amazinggracemovie.com to view the trailer, and to download a range of beautifully presented study and educator's guides.



5 minutes on... Slavery

Definition:

Slavery is an institution in which one person owns another and can demand and obtain from that person labour and often other services.

Slavery in the Ancient World

Slavery has existed throughout human history. References to it appear in the written accounts of all early civilisations.

In Greek and Roman times, slaves were regarded as property and had no legal rights.

Slavery flourished in the Byzantine Empire, and the pirates of the Mediterranean often enslaved the victims of their raids.

Slavery in medieval Europe

Slavery increased with the barbarian invasions and breakdown of the Roman Empire. The word 'slave' comes from this period, via the word 'sklabos' meaning Slav.

Throughout this period slaves were traded in most large cities, including Marseille, Dublin and Prague, mainly to buyers in the Middle East.

The town of Caffa in the Crimea was considered to be the capital of medieval slave trade.

Modern Slavery

The explorations of the African coast by Portuguese navigators in the 15th and 16th Centuries resulted in the exploitation of Africans as slaves. The British, Dutch, French, Spanish, and Portuguese all engaged in the slave trade.

America quickly became the biggest importer of slaves. By the date of the Declaration of Independence (1776) one-fifth of the population were (predominantly African) slaves.

The Anti-slavery Movement

By the 18th century, Europe began to move toward the abolition of slavery.

In Great Britain, Christian humanitarians campaigned vigorously to outlaw the slave trade. Led by William Wilberforce, they saw the Abolition Act passed in 1833.

In the United States

Slavery's abolition was championed by the Quaker movement, with the official abolition of the slave trade being passed in 1808.

In the American South, however, slavery was an integral part of the economic system. From the late 18th century to the Civil War in the 1860s, more than a million slaves were moved from the Eastern Seaboard to the Deep South, to work in the sugar and cotton fields.

The slave trade was the South's second largest enterprise; only the plantation system that it fuelled surpassed it. Slavery was not banned in the South until the late 19th Century.

United Nations & Slavery

The Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly in 1948, contained a provision prohibiting slavery or trading in slaves.

The Security Council in 1954 condemned systems of forced labour, particularly those employed as a means of political coercion.

What the Old Testament says about slavery

In ancient Israel, people who could not provide for themselves or their families could offer themselves as slaves to a wealthier family. In this way, a family would receive food and housing in exchange for labour.

Injuring or killing slaves was punishable – up to death of the offending party.

Hebrews were commanded not to make their slave work on the Sabbath, slander a slave, or even to return an escaped slave.

A Hebrew was not to forcefully enslave another Hebrew, even if they owed money, but was to have them work as a hired worker, then to be released in the Year of Jubilee (which occurred every seven years).

What the New Testament says about slavery

Many of the early Christians were Roman slaves.

The New Testament writings tell slaves to have a similar attitude to their masters as free Christians should have with regard to governing authorities.

The Apostle Paul instructed slaves to serve their masters with integrity, so that Christianity would not be looked down upon.

The New Testament proclaims that all people are equal in the eyes of God – even slaves.

Galatians 3:28 states:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Modern Day Slavery Statistics

Estimated number of enslaved people: 10 - 30 million

Number trafficked across international borders each year: 800,000

Number of foreign nationals trafficked into the U.S. every year: 17,500

Footnote:

After the abolition of the slave trade in Britain on February 24, 1807, Wilberforce turned to his friend and asked, "Well, Henry, what shall we abolish next?" The reply was: "The Lottery, I think!"

In 1808 a Committee of the House of Commons enquired on reforming the law. They reported:

"In truth, the foundation of the lottery is so radically vicious, that your Committee feel convinced that, under no system of regulation which can be devised, will it be possible for Parliament to adopt it as an efficient source of revenues, and at the same time divest it of all the evils and calamities it has hitherto proved so baneful a source. No mode of raising money appears to your Committee so burdensome, so pernicious, and so unproductive; no species of adventure is known, where the chances are so great against the adventurer, none where the infatuation is more powerful, lasting, and destructive."

On July 9, 1823, Parliament set the abolition for 1826, and the last draw was made on October 18 of that year.

The lottery wasn't revived in the UK until 1994!