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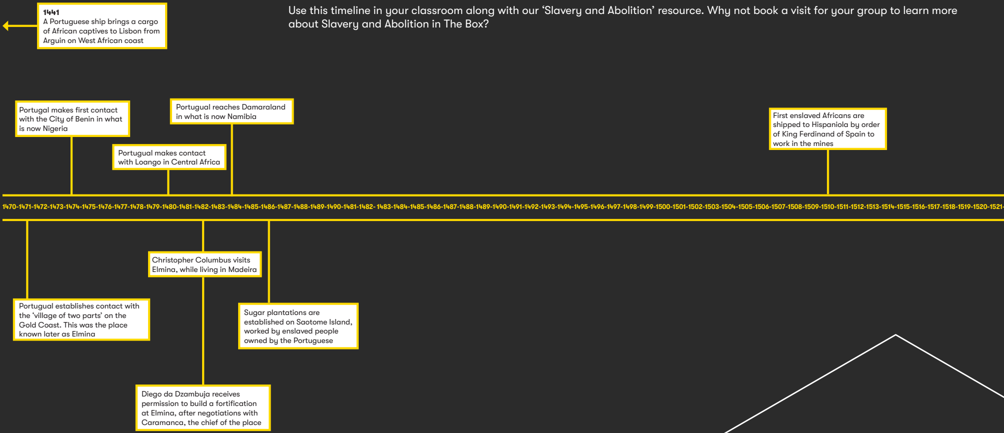
Transatlantic Slavery and Abolition timeline

This timeline is based upon research carried out by curator Len Pole for the exhibition ‘Human Cargo’ at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery.

This exhibition and its learning programme formed part of the nationwide Abolition 200 events, exhibitions and educational projects organised to mark the 200th anniversary of the passing of the ***1807 Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.*** The teaching and learning methods developed as part of the exhibition programme continue to influence how we explore this complicated and sensitive subject at The Box today.

Use this timeline in your classroom along with our ‘Slavery and Abolition’ resource. Why not book a visit for your group to learn more about Slavery and Abolition in The Box?



1441
A Portuguese ship brings a cargo of African captives to Lisbon from Arguin on West African coast

Portugal makes first contact with the City of Benin in what is now Nigeria

Portugal makes contact with Loango in Central Africa

Portugal reaches Damaraland in what is now Namibia

First enslaved Africans are shipped to Hispaniola by order of King Ferdinand of Spain to work in the mines

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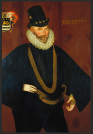
Portugal establishes contact with the ‘village of two parts’ on the Gold Coast. This was the place known later as Elmina

Christopher Columbus visits Elmina, while living in Madeira

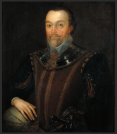
Diego da Dzambuja receives permission to build a fortification at Elmina, after negotiations with Caramanca, the chief of the place

Sugar plantations are established on Saotome Island, worked by enslaved people owned by the Portuguese

John Lok becomes first Englishman to bring Africans from West Africa to London to learn English. They returned home later to help the English trade on the Gold Coast



John Hawkins sails out of Plymouth in October with three ships, bound for Guinea and the West Indies. This was the first English voyage to West Africa made with the intention of taking enslaved Africans to the Americas



A fourth fleet sails out of Plymouth in October, including the *Jesus of Lubeck*, with Hawkins in command. Francis Hrake is given command of a ship captured off the coast of Guinea

A Dominican friar, Tomas de Mercado, writes in Mexico against certain forms of the slave trade

First recorded revolt of enslaved Africans in West Indies

Portugal builds the fortress of Sao Paulo at Luanda, in what is now Angola

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The first English ship sails from Plymouth to West Africa and Brazil. *The Pole* or *Paul* of Plymouth, captained by William Hawkins, father of John Hawkins, stops in the River Sestos in present-day Liberia

William Towerson sails into Plymouth from Guinea with African captives

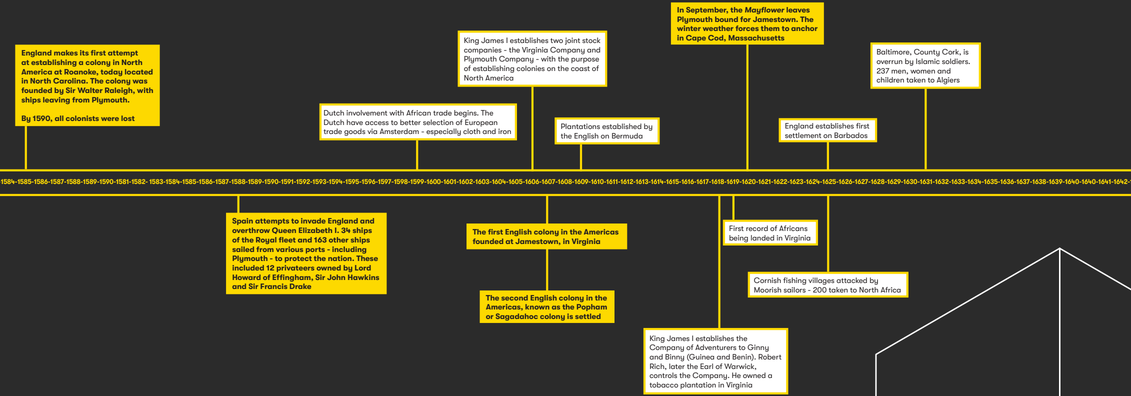
Hawkins returns to Plymouth in September

Hawkins sails again from Plymouth, with four ships - the largest ship was the *Jesus of Lubeck*, lent by Queen Elizabeth I

Hawkins returns to Padstow in October
Hawkins is granted a coat of arms, the crest of which is the torso of an African captive

A third fleet sets sail from Plymouth in ships owned by Hawkins family. Francis Drake serves as an ordinary seaman on one of these ships

The remains of the fleet sails back into English waters, after being routed by the Spanish in the West Indies, and battered by hurricanes. Drake docks in Plymouth, Hawkins returns separately to Mounts Bay. This was the last English slaving voyage for about 100 years



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England makes its first attempt at establishing a colony in North America at Roanoke, today located in North Carolina. The colony was founded by Sir Walter Raleigh, with ships leaving from Plymouth.

By 1590, all colonists were lost

Spain attempts to invade England and overthrow Queen Elizabeth I. 34 ships of the Royal fleet and 163 other ships sailed from various ports - including Plymouth - to protect the nation. These included 12 privateers owned by Lord Howard of Effingham, Sir John Hawkins and Sir Francis Drake

Dutch involvement with African trade begins. The Dutch have access to better selection of European trade goods via Amsterdam - especially cloth and iron

King James I establishes two joint stock companies - the Virginia Company and Plymouth Company - with the purpose of establishing colonies on the coast of North America

The first English colony in the Americas founded at Jamestown, in Virginia

The second English colony in the Americas, known as the Popham or Sagadahoc colony is settled

Plantations established by the English on Bermuda

King James I establishes the Company of Adventurers to Ginny and Binny (Guinea and Benin). Robert Rich, later the Earl of Warwick, controls the Company. He owned a tobacco plantation in Virginia

First record of Africans being landed in Virginia

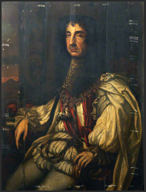
In September, the *Mayflower* leaves Plymouth bound for Jamestown. The winter weather forces them to anchor in Cape Cod, Massachusetts

England establishes first settlement on Barbados

Cornish fishing villages attacked by Moorish sailors - 200 taken to North Africa

Baltimore, County Cork, is overrun by Islamic soldiers. 237 men, women and children taken to Algiers

First Navigation Act brought into force by Oliver Cromwell
This means that foreign ships are banned from importing or exporting goods to or from English colonies



The Company of Royal Adventurers into Africa established by James, brother of Charles II. Charles invested heavily in the Company

England takes over control of Cape Coast Castle
This Castle remained the headquarters of English/British presence in West Africa until 1877

Rebellion in Barbados
It is suppressed. 11 rebels are beheaded, 6 burned alive, 25 executed. 70 are flogged or deported

Potential rebellion in Barbados discovered
Ringleaders are executed

The ship *Daniel & Henry* sails from Dartmouth on a slaving voyage to Guinea and the West Indies

1643-1644-1645-1646-1647-1648-1649-1650-1651-1652-1653-1654-1655-1656-1657-1658-1659-1660-1661-1662-1663-1664-1665-1666-1667-1668-1669-1670-1671-1672-1673-1674-1675-1676-1677-1678-1679-1680-1681-1682-1683-1684-1685-1686-1687-1688-1689-1690-1691-1692-1693-1694-1695-1696-1697-1698-1699-1700-1701-1702-1703-1704-1705-1706-1707-1708-1709-1710-171

England seizes Jamaica from Spain. 1500 enslaved Africans flee into the mountains.
The Maroons, as the free Africans became known, form independent communities in the mountainous parts of the island

The principal focus of the Company of Royal Adventurers is on gold. Gold coins, called Guineas are first minted

CAROLVS II.
DEI GRATIA

The Royal African Company replaces the Company of Royal Adventurers into Africa
It maintains the trading posts along the coast of West Africa, and monopolises the West Africa trade

The monopoly of the Royal African Company's trade in West Africa is lifted
Others wishing to trade to west Africa had to pay 10% of the value of their cargo to the Company

The *Daniel & Henry* returns to Dartmouth, with five tons of muscovado sugar and debts of over £1500
About 220 West Africans had been sold into slavery; a great number died during the voyage

London Quakers annual meeting: advice against owning slaves is given

Insurrection on St John
150 enslaved people from Akwamu (now Ghana) revolted against the owners and managers of the island's plantations

Insurrection on the ship *The Ferrers Galley*
Nearly 80 are killed, many by jumping overboard

Planned uprising in Antigua discovered
86 are executed

100 African captives jump overboard when Bristol slaver *The Prince of Orange* arrives in St Kitts
Most were recaptured, but 33 drowned

Stono revolt in South Carolina
Led by Jemmy, up to 100 enslaved people take to the streets. 25 colonists and 35 to 50 Africans killed

Revolt in Jamaica

Revolt in Jamaica

Job Ben Solomon's story is reported in the pages of the Gentleman's Magazine
He was captured from Guinea in 1731, and transported to Maryland. He spoke and read Arabic. He came to England and met Sir Hans Sloane, whom he helped in translating Arabic manuscipts and medals. He returned to Africa in 1749

The Royal African Company is wound up

Africans on board the *Adventure* seize the ship and run it aground

The new Sultan of Morocco, Sidi Mohammed, signs a peace treaty with the British, ending 144 years of slave raids on Britain

Rebellion in Jamaica
Led by Tacky, the rebellion ends violently - 60 British and 400 rebels killed. Tacky is shot and beheaded by a Maroon marksman

The London meeting of the Quakers advised all friends against participating in the slave trade

Rebellion in Tobago

Work starts on the last British fort to be built on the coast of West Africa, at Beyin

Jonathan Strong is prevented from being sold back into slavery
Strong was defended by Granville Sharp, who successfully demonstrate
that he had been freed

Lord Mansfield rules on slavery in Englan
The ruling states that nobody brought to England could be sent back to the colonies against their will. Its effect is to outlaw slaver
in England, even though that wasn't its inten

Thomas Lewis prevented from being sold back into slavery
Lewis was defended by Granville Sharp, who successfully demonstrated that he had been freed

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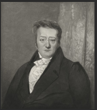
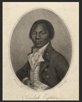


While at Cambridge, Thomas Clarkson writes an essay about slavery
Its subject is ***Is it lawful to make slaves of others against their will?*** It is published and creates great interest, not least in William Wilberforce MP

Olaudah Equiano is in Plymouth, employed by the government to assist in buying supplies for three ships setting out for 'The Land of Freedom', in Sierra Leone



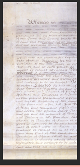
While in Plymouth, Equiano is sacked from this job after exposing corruption and ill treatment of the migrants. He was subsequently compensated £50

The *Zong* case comes to court twice, thanks to the efforts of the writer Olaudah Equiano and Sharp
The case hinged on the insurance issue, not murder, since the captives were considered as cargo. The publicity highlights the inhumanity of the slave trade.

Multiple revolts in the West Indies

London Committee for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade suspends operations

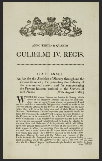
Britain seizes Trinidad from Spain



A bill put forward by William Dolben MP is passed
The bill regulates the number of slaves a ship could carry, but draws attention to the conditions on board slave ships

Rebellion in Demerara (now Guyana)
Over 9,000 thousand rebel slaves involved, with 250 killed. A white missionary, John Smith, is made a scapegoat and sentenced to death. This brings the Church of England to support abolition

The *Piracy Act* is broadened to include slave trading, but it remains impossible for the Anti-Slavery Squadron to board ships flying other nations' flags - the freedom of the seas is paramount



ANNO TERTIO & QUARTO
GULIELMI IV. REGIS.

CAP. LXXIII.
An Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies; for promoting the Industry of the manumitted Slaves; and for compensating the Persons hitherto entitled to the Services of such Slaves. [28th *August* 1833.]

***ACT FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE* IS TABLED. IT IS PASSED BY THE LORDS AND THE COMMONS. IT BECOMES LAW ON 25 MARCH**
British parliament outlaws British involvement in slave trade from Africa to Americas

Women began to form anti-slavery societies. The 'Birmingham Ladies Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves' is established by Lucy Townsend, Elizabeth Heyrick, Mary Lloyd and Sarah Wedgwood, all of whom had campaigned for many years. The formation of other independent women's groups soon followed

***ACT FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY* PASSED. WILLIAM WILBERFORCE DIES THREE DAYS LATER**
Although slavery itself is abolished, the enslaved are not free, becoming 'apprentices' for six years. Strikes and demonstrations reduced this to four years

Inhabitants of Plymouth consider petitioning the Prince Regent concerning the renewal of the horrors of the Slave Trade. People were concerned about the use of British capital in continuing the trade, also trading enslaved people into British colonies from French colonies. This was not outlawed by the 1807 Act.

Luke Collingwood, the Captain of the slave ship *Zong*, throws 133 captives overboard
This is said to be necessary to save the crew and the ship because of shortage of water. He claims £30 per head insurance money

Olaudah Equiano publishes *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa the African*

***ACT FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY* COMES FORCE ON 1 AUGUST**
Slave owners were compensated over £20m for th
of their property. The enslaved receive no compe

Foreign Slave Trade Bill is passed into law. The Act bans British involvement in the slave trade with France and her allies; it is presented as a measure to help defeat the enemy.

William Wilberforce MP tables a bill to abolish the slave trade

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Plymouth petitions Parliament on 'ameliorating slavery in the Colonies of the British Empire'

The letters of Ignacius Sancho are published, two years after his death

His Abolition bill is defeated by 163 votes to 88

French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte captured and imprisoned on a ship in Plymouth Sound

British & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society formed

Wilberforce tables the Slave Trade Abolition Bill
It is voted down

Revolt in German Coast, Louisiana

Revolt in St Domingue

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In London the Quakers print the pamphlet *Care of Our Fellow Creatures, the Oppressed Africans.* 400 copies were printed to distribute in Plymouth

Clarkson visits Plymouth to collect evidence

Revolt in Richmond, Virginia

At the suggestion of Wilberforce, the London Committee for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade reforms. It acts as a parliamentary lobbying group, rather than a pressure group

A new abolitionist organisation is founded, called The London Society for Mitigating and Gradually Abolishing the State of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions. Elizabeth Heyrick's response to this was to publish a pamphlet ***Immediate not Gradual Abolition***

John Gladstone, a plantation owner in Guyana, was given permission to import labourers from India, later known as 'coolies'. Many Indian labourers ended up working for little more than food and shelter.

John Wesley publishes his ***Thoughts Upon Slavery***

St Domingue revolt is successful. 500,000 enslaved are emancipated

British forces withdraw from St Domingue. Toussaint L'Ouverture's forces are victorious.

Major uprising in Tobago
Many are burned alive, or have their hands cut off

Plymouth petitions Parliament for 'the gradual abolition of slavery', presumably in support of the London Society

Period of 'indentured labour' comes to an end on 1st August.
The ex-slaves get neither compensation nor access to land work. Many are forced to work fo their former masters for a pittanc and have to pay rent and taxes

Freetown, Sierra Leone, is taken over by the British Crown, to be used as a naval base, for two ships to patrol the West African coast

The James Somersett case
He was an escaped and recaptured slave, discovered on board ship in England about the leave for Jamaica. Somersett is defended by Sharp, who argues on Somersett's right to freedom even though slavery was not unlawful in England

The Committee for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade is set up in London

France reinstates slavery in its empire and overthrows Toussaint in St Domingue
St Domingue forces continue to oppose French.

Britain forces invade St Domingue, but get bogged down in guerilla war against the forces of Toussaint L'Ouverture

Mary Prince, an abolitionist and former slave in the West Indies, has her story published in England. The book ***The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave*** contributed to the growing abolition campaign. She presented an anti-slavery petition to Parliament

Clarkson starts touring the country again

West African writer Quobna Ottobah Cugoano publishes ***Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species.***

France formally frees all slaves
This allows the British pro-slavery lobby to point to abolitionist activity as sympathy for the enemy, thus a form of treason. Lord Nelson argues against giving up Britain's West Indian possessions

Establishment of Republic of Haiti (formerly St Domingue)
France insists on reparations for the expropriation of its properties; they are set at 150 million francs.

West Coast of Africa Squadron is established by the Royal Navy, with six ships. Its remit is to suppress the slave trade operated by ships of other countries

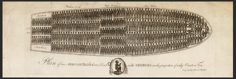
American War of Independence - British defeated
3000 ex-enslaved Africans, having assisted the British forces in exchange for their freedom, are relocated to Nova Scotia.

Bristol writer Hannah More, publishes ***The Black Slave Trade***, which is distributed by the Abolition Committee

Freetown in Sierra Leone becomes the headquarters of British interests in West Africa.

Insurrection in Jamaica, inspired by Sam Sharpe, a Baptist Deacon.
15 white people are killed, over £1m worth of property destroyed or damaged. Over 500 rebels are killed or executed. British troops regained control after two weeks. Baptist chapels were burned down. Sharpe was executed and his owners compensated £16 10s.

SLAVE TRADE ABOLISHED IN FRANCE



Plan of an AFRICAN SHIP'S lower Deck with NEGROES in the proportion of only One to a Ton.

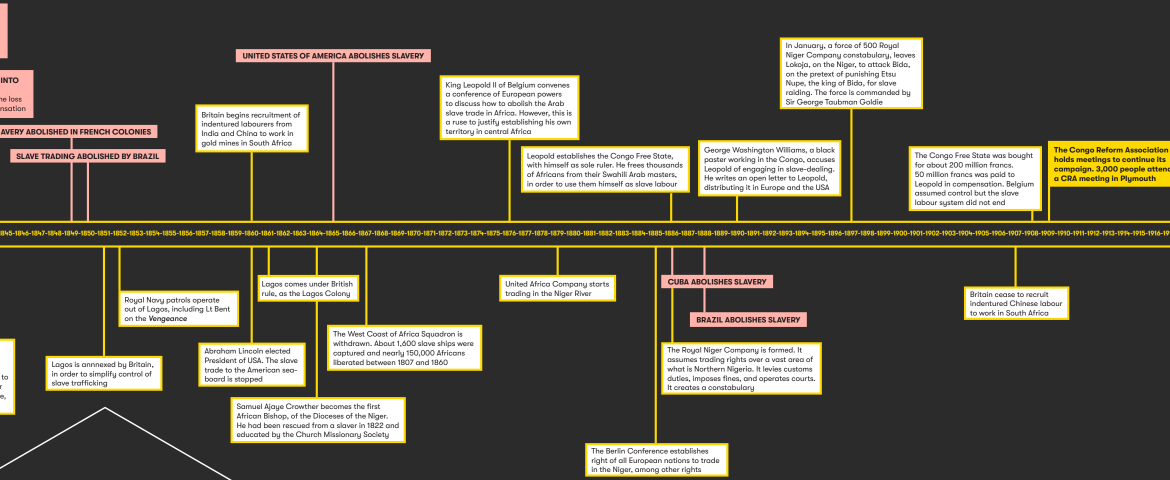
Plymouth Committee of Abolitionists is founded. It publishes a pamphlet with plan of the *Brookes* slave ship
The plan was initially drawn in Plymouth to illustrate what the allowed space of 'one person per ton of ship', as specified in Dolben's bill, actually meant. It becomes an iconic and influential image.

SLAVE TRADE ABOLISHED IN NETHERLANDS

Slave Registration Act comes into force. This Act forced all slave owners to provide a details of the enslaved people they owned every two years

Rebellion in Barbados led by Bussa. Hundreds of slaves are killed or executed. £175,000 worth of property destroyed

SLAVE TRADE ABOLISHED IN SPAIN



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SLAVE TRADING ABOLISHED BY BRAZIL

Britain begins recruitment of indentured labourers from India and China to work in gold mines in South Africa

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ABOLISHES SLAVERY

King Leopold II of Belgium convenes a conference of European powers to discuss how to abolish the Arab slave trade in Africa. However, this is a ruse to justify establishing his own territory in central Africa

Leopold establishes the Congo Free State, with himself as sole ruler. He frees thousands of Africans from their Swahili Arab masters, in order to use them himself as slave labour

George Washington Williams, a black paster working in the Congo, accuses Leopold of engaging in slave-dealing. He writes an open letter to Leopold, distributing it in Europe and the USA

In January, a force of 500 Royal Niger Company constabulary, leaves Lokoja, on the Niger, to attack Bida, on the pretext of punishing Etsu Nupe, the king of Bida, for slave raiding. The force is commanded by Sir George Taubman Goldie

The Congo Free State was bought for about 200 million francs. 50 million francs was paid to Leopold in compensation. Belgium assumed control but the slave labour system did not end

The Congo Reform Association holds meetings to continue its campaign. 3,000 people attend a CRA meeting in Plymouth

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Lagos is annnexed by Britain, in order to simplify control of slave trafficking

Royal Navy patrols operate out of Lagos, including Lt Bent on the *Vengeance*

Abraham Lincoln elected President of USA. The slave trade to the American sea-board is stopped

Lagos comes under British rule, as the Lagos Colony

Samuel Ajaye Crowther becomes the first African Bishop, of the Dioceses of the Niger. He had been rescued from a slaver in 1822 and educated by the Church Missionary Society

The West Coast of Africa Squadron is withdrawn. About 1,600 slave ships were captured and nearly 150,000 Africans liberated between 1807 and 1860

United Africa Company starts trading in the Niger River

The Berlin Conference establishes right of all European nations to trade in the Niger, among other rights

CUBA ABOLISHES SLAVERY

BRAZIL ABOLISHES SLAVERY

The Royal Niger Company is formed. It assumes trading rights over a vast area of what is Northern Nigeria. It levies customs duties, imposes fines, and operates courts. It creates a constabulary

Britain cease to recruit indentured Chinese labour to work in South Africa

Haiti completes reparation payments to France - 150 million francs
This represent 70% of Haiti's gross national product

League of Nations sets up the Temporary Slavery Commission.
The Commission reviews the situation of slavery in all its forms around the world

'Slavery Convention 1926' is published by the League of Nations. This Convention calls for the abolition of slavery in all it forms

The International Labour Organisation publishes the Forced Labour Convention.
The Convention sets limits on the use of forced or compulsory labour. It is concerned about forced labour in many countries, including the USA, South Africa and India

UNITED NATIONS AGREES THE *UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS*

UN publishes the 'Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery'.
This Convention seeks to criminalise and abolish debt bondage, serfdom, forced marriage, child exploitation and all other slavery-like practices

SAUDI ARABIA ABOLISHES SLAVERY

OMAN ABOLISHES SLAVERY

MAURITANIA ABOLISHES SLAVERY

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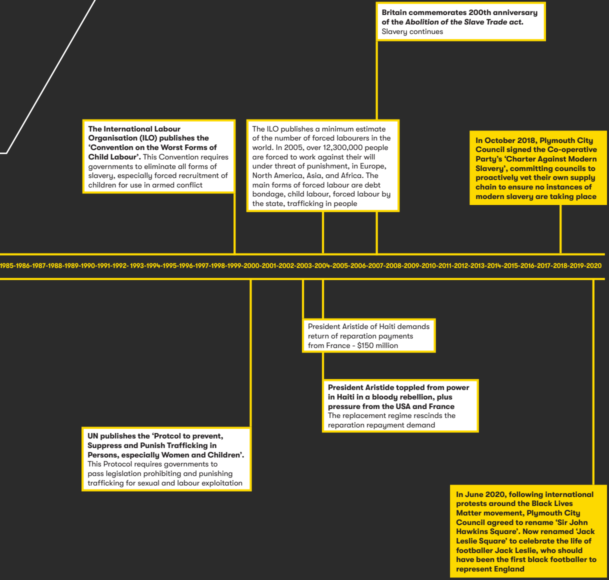

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) publishes the 'Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour'. This Convention requires governments to eliminate all forms of slavery, especially forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict

The ILO publishes a minimum estimate of the number of forced labourers in the world. In 2005, over 12,300,000 people are forced to work against their will under threat of punishment, in Europe, North America, Asia, and Africa. The main forms of forced labour are debt bondage, child labour, forced labour by the state, trafficking in people

Britain commemorates 200th anniversary of the *Abolition of the Slave Trade act.*
Slavery continues

In October 2018, Plymouth City Council signed the Co-operative Party's 'Charter Against Modern Slavery', committing councils to proactively vet their own supply chain to ensure no instances of modern slavery are taking place

UN publishes the 'Protcol to prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children'. This Protocol requires governments to pass legislation prohibiting and punishing trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation

President Aristide of Haiti demands return of reparation payments from France - $150 million

President Aristide toppled from power in Haiti in a bloody rebellion, plus pressure from the USA and France
The replacement regime rescinds the reparation repayment demand

In June 2020, following international protests around the Black Lives Matter movement, Plymouth City Council agreed to rename 'Sir John Hawkins Square'. Now renamed 'Jack Leslie Square' to celebrate the life of footballer Jack Leslie, who should have been the first black footballer to represent England