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Enslaved People in the United States

There was a period of time in the history of the United States when slavery was legal. As hard as it is to believe, until the end of the Civil War in the 1860s, it was legal in southern states to enslave black African Americans and force them to work on southern plantations. These people endured harsh treatment, inhumane living conditions, and endless amounts of grueling labor for the benefit of the plantation owner and his family. The harshness of a slave's life is a terrible thing to consider.

Enslaved people endured housing conditions that just barely met basic human needs. A small one-room cabin provided shelter for a dozen or more people. Privacy was almost impossible. For windows they would cut holes into the walls. They didn't have glass for windows so cold air and bugs could come into the cabin through these holes. When rain fell the cabin got wet inside because the roof leaked. The people and their straw bedding got wet, and the dirt floors got muddy. They had a small fireplace they used to heat their cabin. As terrible as the living conditions were, they were the least of the hardships slaves had to endure.

Some people worked in the main house for the master and his family. The work was not as physically hard, but they still worked long hours. The domestic workers were usually treated better than the field workers (wore nice clothing, ate good food, might have slept in the house.) The master didn't want them to get sick.

Enslaved people who worked in the field suffered greatly. They worked all day. They worked before the sun came up until after sunset. They couldn't rest. If they weren't working hard enough, they were whipped. If you tried to run away you might be

killed. They picked cotton or other crops. They needed to fill large sacks every day, and they had to work in rain or hot sun. Children worked in the fields at age seven or eight.

Even though slavery was terrible it was legal in the United States for over 200 years. However, in 1863 the Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves. After that there was no more slavery in United States.