ANALYZING TRANS-ATLANTIC HUMAN MIGRATIONS: 1492-c1650

Directions: Read the following documents explaining trans-Atlantic human migrations between the years of 1492 and c1650. Use these readings to complete the following tasks

1. Compare & contrast the movement of peoples from Europe to the Americas to the movement of Sub-Saharan Africans to the Americas during the period of 1492-c1650.
   - Consider the following as you compare and contrast these human migrations:
     o Who initiated the trans-Atlantic crossings?
     o What were the reasons for the crossings?
     o What kinds of people made the crossings?
     o What were the numbers involved?
     o Were the crossings one-way only or not?
     o What were some of the effects of these migrations?

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<th>Differences unique to Migrations by Europeans to the Americas</th>
<th>Similarities between Migrations by Europeans and Africans to the Americas</th>
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2. List as many reasons as you can for the increasing demand for imported African slaves in the Americas before 1650. What were the problems in European eyes with available workers other than African slaves? What did they see as the advantages of using African slaves?
WESTERN EUROPEANS: 1492-c1650

Europeans did not in the beginning flock eagerly to the Americas. By 1570, there were still only some 140,000 of them in Spanish and Portuguese America. Home governments worked hard to get their people to move and settle there, because permanent Europeans presence in the Americas depended on continuous immigration. There were two reasons for this.

First, death rates among the early settlers were very high. Scarce, unreliable, and unfamiliar food supply; heavy work under often brutal conditions; and sickness took by far the most lives. European casualties in battles with Native Americans were typically low. During the first decade in the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, probably two-thirds of the Spaniards there died, and nearly half of the English immigrants perished of disease and exposure during their first winter in New England.

Second, women were a much lower proportion of the immigrants from both Iberia and England than men. They were only 5 percent of immigrants in the first two decades after 1492, 16 percent in the two decades up to 1560, and 28 percent in those up to 1580. During the sixteenth century, Portugal sent orphan girls and even “women of bad repute” to provide wives for male settlers in Brazil. Spain’s rulers promoted the marriage of Spaniards to Native Americans (though not Africans). A white population could not keep up, let alone add to, its numbers of natural increase alone. However, the numbers of children born to variously mixed parentage of Amerindian, European, and African unions in Spanish, Portuguese, and French (though not English) territories created large populations with various names, among others, mestizos, mulattoes, and metis. Mestizos (Spanish America) and metis (French North America) were people of mixed European and Amerindian ancestry. Mulattoes were people of mixed European and African ancestry.

Some Europeans who arrived in the Americas were convicts, their passage forced. Many British and French immigrants arrived as indentured servants. That is, they were bound by a legal contract to serve their employer without pay for a number of years, typically four to ten, in return for having their passage paid and their housing and food provided during their indenture. Their experience could be a poor one in the New World, just as in their home countries. They had little protection from being badly fed and worked to excess, or from dying of neglect when they were sick. But in America they could sometimes run away, a disadvantage for their employers.

Spanish law forbade foreigners from settling in Spain’s American territories. But in North America, between 1600 and 1650, Finns, Swedes, German Protestants, Jews, and Danes, as well as the British, French, and Dutch established settlements. Some Europeans went to the New World but did not stay. These included would-be settlers and explorers who found opportunities in the New World less splendid than they had thought; those who had gone only to get rich, and were glad to leave having done so; officials returning home at the end of their tour of duty; churchmen recalled by their superiors; and merchants who came temporarily to seek trade prospects.
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICANS: 1492-c1650

During the early period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, those who financed and ran it were mostly Spanish and Portuguese, but the English, French, Dutch, and other Europeans also soon took part. At least as important as the buyers were the sellers, African merchants and rulers familiar with slavery and their slave trade as long-established institutions.

The slaves carried to the Americas were taken from many different sub-Saharan African societies. Most of them were prisoners of war (fought for reasons having nothing directly to do with the slave trade), or they were caught in raids made expressly to acquire slaves for sale. Some had been enslaved for debt or a criminal offense; some were “pawned” by parents to improve the family’s economic condition; some were kidnapped. Some sold themselves because of dire conditions, such as famine.

In Spanish America, Africans carried there remained slaves. This was not necessarily so in Portuguese Brazil. There, a master quite often stipulated that after his death his favorite mistress of African origin and his children by her (or them), as well as his loyal male slaves, would be set free. Some slaves in Portuguese Brazil could also buy their freedom by saving up modest wages. Masters paid wages, however low, as an incentive for high-quality work to those with skills in demand. In Portuguese territories these former slaves joined the slowly-growing pool of free people of African and part-African origin. The dividing lines in the New World between those of European, Native American, and African descent were strictly drawn, but least so in Portuguese Brazil.

Whether enslavement of Africans was legal, and, if so, how it could be justified, was not asked before 1650, though these same questions were lengthily debated about Native Americans. Upon early Spanish and Portuguese settlement, many Native Americans were forced into slavery in the Europeans’ ravenous search for gold and silver. Many Natives in Spanish Mexico and Peru served as coerced laborers in the highly profitable silver mines. However, in the Spanish empire, Native Americans eventually came to be thought of as subjects of the crown, and therefore they had some rights. The Jesuits, in particular, began to speak out for improved treatment of the indigenous population. This did not apply to uprooted Africans. Not only this, but a majority of Native Americans who had been enslaved for the purpose of mining or cash crop production died from Old World diseases and, therefore, a new labor force was needed. Africans began to fill that gap in the labor supply. The development of sugar plantations in the Caribbean and Portuguese Brazil created the greatest demand for the importation of Africans.

Scattered and incomplete information suggests that women numbered about one-third of the African slaves imported before 1650. The working life of slaves was short, estimated at seven to ten years, especially on tropical sugar plantations. Infant mortality was high. Therefore, natural increase among slaves was not enough even to maintain, let alone to increase, the slave population and to keep up with the increasing demand for labor. Plantations for the growing of cash crops such as sugar cane and silver mine owners found that continuous importation was necessary.

Until 1650, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was small relative to its later dimensions. It probably did not even reach the numbers of black slaves sold in the Trans-Saharan trade network during the same period. The total number of African slaves shipped to the Americas between 1492 and 1650 has been estimated at more than 600,000. The greatest number of Africans were brought to the Americas in the 1700s.