Africa and the Africans in the Age of the Atlantic Slave Trade
SLAVERY ALREADY EXISTED
Portuguese ships on the Cape of Good Hope in 1487 where they established forts and trading posts most important was the El Mina (gold producing).
Mutually beneficial trading between the Africans and Portuguese. Portuguese success due to ability to penetrate existing African trade routes
Attempted to convert rulers of Benin, Kongo, etc. Kongo successful with conversion of ruler, Nzinga Mbanda
Curiosity about European culture showed up in African art, for example. Portuguese saw Africans as savages and pagans
Portuguese settle in Luanda- later Angola
Other Europeans soon competed with them-Dutch, English, French
1441 first slaves brought from Africa directly to Portugal
Sugar plantations in Madeira and the Canaries increased slave trade

1450-1850 about 12 million shipped across the Atlantic, 10-20% mortality rate on board. 18th century had greatest numbers.
Mortality high, fertility low, so need to import more
Dimensions varied based on economic and political situation. Spanish America and Brazil received the most from 1530-1650 and then English and French later
Slave trade in Africa continued to exist
Slaves came from Senegambia in the 16th c., west central Africa by 17th century, and gold coast and slave coast by end of 17th
Demographic Patterns

- More men transported to Americas, while women traded within Africa
- New crops helped population grow to replace lost Africans

Organization of the Trade

- Until 1630 Portugal controlled most of the trade
- Dutch seized El Mina in 1637 and began to rival Portugal
- 1660s English created the Royal African Company
- High mortality rate for Europeans in Africa due to diseases
- Slaves obtained by military conquest and by trade with local African rulers
- Triangular Trade
- Profitability of slave trade debated

In 1762, there were 140 slave ships in Liverpool alone.
African Societies, Slavery, and the Slave Trade

- Slavery as an institution common in Africa - a form of labor control and wealth
- Domestic slavery and the extension of lineages through the addition of female members remained a central feature in many places
- Africans, as a rule, did not enslave their own people but neighboring ones, so the expansion of states allowed rulers to enslave more people

Slaving and African Politics

- Most states of central and west Africa small and fragmented, so unstable caused by competition and warfare by need to expand. Warrior/soldier emerged as important social type/class. Sale of captives into the slave network an extension of African politics

Asante and Dahomey

- Response to the realities of Europeans in Africa
- Asante from the Akan people (Ghana). 1650 expansion and centralization under the Oyoko clan. Under Osei Tutu – supreme civil and religious leader - asantehene. Remained dominant power on the Gold Coast until 1820s
- Dahomey developed on the interior and by 1720s (with firearms) ruled an autocratic and brutal state based on the slave trade
- Growing divine authority paralleled rise of absolutism in Europe
- Artisan guilds
- Best artisans worked for the royal court
**East Africa and the Sudan**

- Swahili trading cities continued their commerce in the Indian Ocean.
- Zanzibar and other offshore islands followed the European model and set up clove-producing plantations using African slave labor.
- Luo people exercised great power in 16th and 17th centuries.
- End of 18th century Islamization entered new phase which was violent and linked to the external slave trade.
- 1770s Muslim reform movement sweeping down western Sudan. Intense impact on Fulani people. 1804 Usman Dan Fodio—upheaval and creation of Sokoto.

**White Settlers and Africans in Southern Africa**

- Little affected by the slave trade.
- Bantu-speaking people (hunter-gatherer societies) organized into chiefdoms began competing for land, which led to further expansion.
- 1652 Dutch East India Company established colony at Cape of Good Hope—post for ships going to Asia.
- By 1760s Dutch had crossed for new land.
- 1795 Britain seized colony and by 1815 had it under control.
- Early 19th century series of wars between Bantu and settlers.

**Mfecane and Zulu Rise to Power**

- Nguni people—process of unification.
- 1818 leadership fell to Shaka—brilliant military genius.
- Zulu Chiefdom became center of military organization.
- 1828 Shaka assassinated.
- 1840s power still growing as successors continued his policies.
- Mfecane—wars of crushing and wandering as Zulu expanded.
- New African states emerged following Zulu model—Swazi and Lesotho emerged but successfully did not use Zulu example.
African Diaspora

- Africa’s integration into mercantile structure of the world
- Prices of slaves rose in 18th century and terms of trade favored African dealers
- Slave lives - destruction of villages and separation of families
- Trauma of the Middle Passage
- plantation system in the Americas prompted the demand for slaves

American Slave Societies

- Salt water slaves - African born
- Creole Slaves - American born
- Rebellions often organized along African ethnic lines
- Slave-based societies varied in their composition
- Slavery in North American less influenced by Africa

People and Gods in Exile

- Family life difficult - few women, separated families
- Elements of culture and language survived
- Religion - adoption of Christianity
- Resistance common
End of the Slave Trade

- Mid-18th Century opposition to trade appeared
- Enlightenment thinkers like Rousseau and Smith condemned the practice
- William Wilberforce fought for the end of the trade in England and in 1807 the British ended the trade
- 19th century opposition huge and by 1888 Brazil abolished slavery