The practice of slavery is one of humankind's most deeply rooted institutions. The abolitionist movement emerged in states like New York and Massachusetts. The agricultural–based plantation economy of Southern colonies like Virginia and the Carolinas required a large labor force, which was met via enslaving people of African descent. Its pages featured firsthand accounts of the horrors of slavery in the South and exposed, for many, the inhumane treatment of enslaved people on U.S. soil. In Europe, the first significant efforts to ban human trafficking and abolish forced labor emerged in the 18th century. The leaders of the movement copied some of their strategies from British activists who had turned public opinion against the slave trade and slavery. Enslaved Africans supplied the free labor that helped the British Empire prosper for much of the 18th century. His newspaper, the Liberator, was notorious.

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