

## Colonial Slavery

During the colonial era (1600-1900), under European rule, parts of the Americas, Africa and Asia were colonized or used as trading posts. Millions of women, men and children were enslaved and shipped from Africa and Asia to faraway places. They, their children, and the many generations that followed were subjected to a system that dehumanized and objectified them based on the color of their skin, or their faith.

The Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Dutch West India Company (WIC) played a significant role in the colonial slave trade. The VOC focused its activities on Southern Africa and Asia, the WIC on West Africa, the Caribbean and North and South America. Both trading companies were established with private and state capital, and their authority was partially governmental. In total, the Netherlands enslaved and sold more than a million people. They were taken to work on plantations, in households, as artisans and in mines, or employed in the transport of products or military expeditions.

Colonial slavery was a legalized system in which human beings were reduced to tradable property. This form of slavery was abolished during the 19th century. From then on in successive international declarations slavery was defined as a crime against humanity - most recently during the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, in 2001. Still, traces of this system linger in societies across the world. This exhibition strives for a deeper understanding of the system of slavery by looking at the role and agency of individuals within it. It aims to raise questions about injustice as a universal phenomenon and the role individuals play in the protection of human rights.