

Image of "Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?" version of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade emblem



"Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?"

The figure of a Black man - or woman - kneeling and in chains became the key image for abolitionist and anti-slavery campaigns both in Britain and America. As well as appearing on pamphlets and books, these images were incorporated into cameos, bracelets, brooches, snuff boxes and even hair pins.

This particular version of the figure of a female slave is taken from a banner used in the campaign in the 1830s against the apprenticeship system. Slaves within the British empire were 'apprenticed' into unpaid work for a number of years after their emancipation came into force in 1834. As the banner proclaimed, apprenticeship had 'proved to be but another name for slavery'.

Although such images helped focus attention on the evils of the slave trade (as intended), it can be argued that their design reflected and perpetuated the notion of White 'superiority' over the 'grateful' Black.

Anti-Slavery International (c. 1836-8)

Extracted from the National Archives website