

In reading *Abina and the Important Men*, two paradoxes of British colonial rule can be perceived, and both involve slavery. The first was that the British, having previously been a massive proponent of selling and exploiting slaves, were the first to call for and implement its abolition. On the surface, this may seem like an act of civilization, barring Africans and others from enslaving and exploiting their fellow countrymen and women. Still, the desire for abolition existed to inflate the population of laborers who were now men of industry. Modernization was rampant in the developing new world and sought to make wealth available to all to those who would seek it. This leads us to the second paradox. Although slavery had been abolished, there was a desire to maintain relationships with indigenous businessmen and landowners, most of whom still held slaves in the 1870s. The British did not want to damage or inflame these relationships as they were maintained to ensure the continuous flow of resources out of Africa and into Europe. One of the most marketable and desired resources was palm oil, used heavily in manufacturing during the Industrial Revolution. After the British abolished slavery, it primarily took on the form of slaves, now women and children, as both were considered vulnerable and could be justified under the belief that they were under a fatherly rule, like that of Southern North America. Although the Industrial Revolution was claimed to be a saving grace for humanity and a necessary force in evolution and modernization, it was still built on human suffering and the desire of few to gain and maintain wealth on the sweat of others.