

Economic basis of african slavery in the united states

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



Economic Basis of African Slavery in the United States In early American history slave owners were mainly of the Christian faith and believed in the literal truth of the Bible. They felt that many quotes in the bible gave them a "right" to use slaves for prophet. One such quote comes from Colossians 3: 22 " Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. " There are several economic factors contributing to African slavery in the United States, three of which will be discussed.

Tariffs are one major economic factor that contributed to slavery in the US. The United States federal government taxed imports at rates from 5 to 15 percent, the taxes were primarily designed to create revenue to pay expenses and part of the national debt that the federal government had. These tariffs increase the price of items brought into the US from overseas. As the shipping costs rose and the taxes increased as well as the need for the importers to make a profit as well, the costs of these imported goods became too high and the demand for US products grew.

Such products as Cotton and Tobacco could be grown and harvested in the US and sold at a far lower price, and slaves were used to harvest these products and avoid the tariffs. Avoiding many of the costs of importing these types of products and using slaves to harvest them allowed the owners of the slaves to make the money they needed to survive and become wealthy. Another major economic factor contributing to the growth of slavery in the US was the high demand of cotton.

In 1793 the invention of the cotton gin, which separated the cotton seeds from the fiber, made it possible for plantation owners to produce more cotton products faster but the harvesting of the cotton could not keep up, more and more slaves were used to harvest the cotton just to keep up with the gin capacity. Once again not having to pay the slaves allowed the plantation owners to become wealthier and maintain a lifestyle they have become accustomed to. As time continued, the southern economy became reliant on an Agricultural economy and the growth of agriculture is another economic factor in contributing to slavery in the US.

Southern Plantation owners not only were heavy in cotton and tobacco but also started growing rice, corn, wheat, hemp and sugar. In order for the economy to grow the plantations needed to grow, and as the plantations grow so did the number of slaves. Slavery grew to maintain an economy based on agriculture, once again using unpaid slaves allowed owners to continue to get wealthy and maintain their lifestyle. As the slave trade grew so did the relationship between the Plantation owners and the slave traders so much so that exporting became a factor in the economy of slavery in the US.

With the so called free labor that slaves brought to the plantations, the owners were able to produce items at such a cheap rate they could sell them as exports to other countries and make money. The cost of these goods in other countries were more expensive to produce mainly because of the cost of labor, where in the south labor was done by slaves. The plantation owners and the slave traders were able to come to agreements allowing both parties

the ability to make money, Plantation owners sold goods to other countries and Traders hauled the product back and forth overseas for a profit.

Tariffs, cotton, tobacco and an economy based on agriculture, as well as additional income due to exports are a few major factors that contributed to slavery in the United States. The issue of slavery divided the Southern part of the states from the Northern. The North separated themselves as an economy based on industry instead of Agriculture. As Abraham Lincoln campaigned against the expansion of slavery beyond the states in which it already existed it made the northern states conclude that slavery was morally wrong and should come to an end.

The southern states wondered how an economy could survive without slaves, not enough money to pay workers to harvest the product and maintain there lifestyle. Slavery was one of many reasons for theCivil War, which had a lasting effect on early America. While it is unfair to say slavery was the only cause of the civil warI believethat many of the causes can be attributed to slavery. I will list three causes to the civil war which barely touches the surface of what I think is one of the most misunderstood wars.

The causes I chose are ones that involve slavery in one way or another. First the Dred Scott decision, Dred Scott v. Sandford,(1857), was a decision by the United States Supreme Court that ruled that people of African descent imported into the United States and held as slaves, or their descendants whether or not they were slaves were not protected by the Constitution and

could never be citizens of the United States. It also held that the United States Congress had no authority to prohibit slavery in federal territories.

The Court also ruled that because slaves were not citizens, they could not sue in court. Lastly, the Court ruled that slaves as chattel or private property could not be taken away from their owners without due process. The Supreme Court's decision was written by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney. Opponents of slavery attacked the Dred Scott decision. In the Albany, New York, Evening Journal they combined two themes and "denounced the decision as both an offense to the principles of liberty on which the nation was founded, and a victory for slave states over the free states".

This decision divided the north and the south even more deeply the south was clearly a winner in this decision as it help maintain the need for slavery, while the north became even more angered with the south. Second, John Brown's raid was an attempt by white abolitionist John Brown to start an armed slave revolt by seizing a United States Arsenal at Harpers Ferry in Virginia in 1859. Brown's raid was defeated by a detachment of U. S. Marines led by Col. Robert E. Lee. The intent of the raid was to arm rebellious slaves and allowing them to strike fear into the slaveholders of Virginia.

Brown and others were charged with treason and hung in Virginia once again angering politicians in the north. Third the election of Abraham Lincoln, while it is well known that Lincoln was opposed to slavery and the slave trade, he did say that a war would not be waged to abolish slavery but as a way to strengthen the Union. The South did not believe him and felt he was only

interested in what was best for the north and thus proceeded to succeed from the union, while South Carolina was the first many others followed, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. This “ declaration of Secession. ” Made it clear that the north and south had divided and the only way to become one was to go to war. Citations Peter Kolchin, B. A. , Ph. D 2009 retrieved August 9, 2009, from http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761580652_3/Slavery_in_the_United_States.html Martin Kelly 2009 retrieved August 12, 2009 from http://americanhistory.about.com/od/civilwarmenu/a/cause_civil_war.htm Swain, Gwentyth, 2004, Dred and Harriet Scott: A Family's Struggle for Freedom. Saint Paul, MN: Borealis Books. Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, 1974, Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.