

Civil disobedience by thoreau civil disobedience by thoreau essay samples

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The American thinker, philosopher and writer Henry David Thoreau devoted all his short life (1817-1862) to epy search for the truth, moral purity and simplicity of the human relationships, harmony of the world of people and the nature. Henry Thoreau became one of the most eloquent propagandists of the idea of the civil disobedience (Cain, 2000).

Once, when he came to the city for one day in a shoe shop, Thoreau was caught by the police because he did not pay the poll tax. Faced with a choice to go to jail or pay, a hermit chose the first variant, thus, protesting against the military actions of the US in Mexico, which, in his opinion, were carried out with the purpose of the conquest of territory, on which it could be extended a system of slavery. In the prison he spent the whole day, where he got the idea to write an essay, which along with the other works of the philosopher brought him the international fame. Essay was called ' Civil Disobedience' (1849).

In this essay, Thoreau argued that the freedom of choice and the freedom to act were the only citizen obligation, which may be imposed by the government that promotes slavery. He believed that people are able to create a strong resistance to such government and make a ' peaceful revolution' (Rosenwald, 2006).

The Thoreau's views served as a spiritual tool for many political actions. The similar ideas were preached by the great Russian writer Leo Tolstoy, who encouraged people to realize their own participation in the social evil and to deny the state with the support in the non-violent way (Cain, 2000).

The general strike, shook the Russian Empire in 1905, demonstrated the revolutionary force of the non-participation, although it was not based on

any particular theory of nonviolent actions. In the UK, the suffrage movement of the early 20th century used civil disobedience in the struggle for the women's suffrage. In winter 1914-1915, in Sioux City (Iowa State), 83 members of the 'Industrial Workers of the World,' who fought against the restrictions of freedom of speech ended up in jail. Many of people who were protested against the ban of the street demonstrations were sent to the jail (Rosenwald, 2006).

Henry David Thoreau was not the propagandist of the armed revolution and overthrowing the government. He insisted on the unarmed opposition to a government that has lost the confidence among the people. He called one such method, which was the tax evasion. However, the Thoreau was against the total abandonment of all taxes. Some taxes have the target applications and help to support the essential community infrastructure (schools, roads, hospitals). In its turn, the poll tax, according to Thoreau, the purpose of which was not specified, can be used by the State for the bad purposes (Cain, 2000). Thus, the refusal to pay taxes is the act of the civil disobedience and conditional declaration of war to the government.

Thoreau's essay 'Civil Disobedience' was incredibly important and timely. He was not only described his own experience and thoughts, inspired by the night in jail. He described in detail the mechanism of the non-violent struggle against the egoistic state. And between 1845 and 1848, the US manifested itself as the aggressor which attacked Mexico and seized Texas, California and New Mexico.

According to many scientists of that time, the war with Mexico was merely a pretext of the expansion of the slavery into the new territories. Any attempts

to prevent the possibility for the spread of slavery by the southern slave-owning planters were doomed to failure.

North Democrat and Congressman David Wilmot in 1846 introduced to Congress an amendment, the main idea of which was a ban for the spread of the slavery among the territory captured from Mexico. This amendment has not been accepted and the issue of the slavery among the new territories has not been resolved (Cain, 2000).

One of the candidates for presidency from the Democrats, Senator of Michigan Lewis Cass, expressed his opinion regarding the suitability of California and New Mexico to slavery because of their climatic conditions and the type of agriculture. However, the final solution of the problem of slavery among the new territories Cass proposes to solve by the residents of these areas (Rosenwald, 2006).

Subsequently, only California has been recognized as the state, which was free from slavery. Other new states retained the slavery, which created an imbalance between the opponents of slavery and slavery fighters.

Thus, Henry Thoreau`s essay ' Civil Disobedience' and his ideas made a huge impact on the activities of many human rights activists. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Leo Tolstoy, at alias were among them (Rosenwald, 2006). Exactly the described by Thoreau nonviolent civil disobedience to the unjust State allowed civil rights activists to achieve the justice without the violence and human casualties.

Works Cited

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