

Driving force of slavery history essay

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Kelsey BoldenHistory 2CSean HarringtonSection: Tuesday 11amDriving Force of SlaveryThe demand for commodities such as metals, silk, and spices, led to a global trade between many countries around the world between the 16th, 17th, 18th centuries. This high demand in commodities led to a high demand in supply and thus, a large labor force to create this supply, especially in the Americas as new populations were trying to stabilize themselves and their economy in the New World. This in turn led to the enslavement of African people for their labor force and with it, pressing concerns and contradictory morals about slavery in general. The enforcement of slavery also impacted Africa creating a gender imbalance and a change in power. The European colonies set up in the Americas made available new products such as " furs from French North America, sugar from the Caribbean, tobacco from British colonies on the American mainland, and coffee from Southeast Asia and the Middle East." [1]As a way to gain and maintain wealth, a system of mercantilism was practiced, which made it so that the " mother country" would solely benefit from the exploitation of resources in the colonies that they controlled in other countries around the world. [2]If the merchants supplied the commodities, the government protected them. A key example from *The Diligent* exposes the use of mercantilism by enforcing slavery as a way to maintain wealth for the sake of France's economy. The article notes that the king of France allowed one of their trading ports " to send out unlimited numbers of private slave trading expeditions," which treasurer Gerard Millier thought would bring in more commerce and increase wealth. [3]The increased demand for goods and commodities in Europe facilitated a need in the increase of supply in the Americas and an increase in a labor force to create this supply. According to <https://assignbuster.com/driving-force-of-slavery-history-essay/>

Robert Walsh, "it often seems to be scarcity that engenders regimes of coercion." [4] The enslavement of Africans became the primary way to create these commodities such as sugar, tobacco, and cotton. One reasoning for using slavery, as mentioned before, was to create and maintain wealth. "Mellier's first argument in defense of slavery drew on mercantilist economic theory, which saw France locked into a zero-sum competition with other nations of Europe for national wealth and power." [5] Economically, slavery was seen as producing financial growth for many and their supplying colonies. Another reason why slavery was justified is because many people believed that they were saving the African's souls by converting them into the Catholic faith. However, this reasoning contradicts the idea that slaves were seen as simply property. The *Diligent* exposes the contradictory values that the French held when it came down to the idea of slavery. On the one hand, slaves were "exposed for sale like any other commodity" [6] and on the other hand, they were considered free once they touched French soil. [7] One prime example of this is the case of Pauline, a slave girl who wanted to become a nun. Pauline's owner considered her personal property but France considered her a free individual due to the fact that "there was a customary principle in France that any slave who set foot on French soil became free." [8] This exposes the moral confusions concerning slavery both in private and public matters. Clearly there were personal moral concerns, however, when it came down to reaching an economic goal, slavery was defensible and necessary. The increased use of slavery in many of the colonies affected the people of Africa and their nation. Although slavery has existed for a long time among Africans, the Atlantic slave trade enslaved more men than it did women, leading to a gender imbalance in Africa.

Women outnumbered men and gained more power. In *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart*, the authors note "women were able to assert power because of their large number and heightened importance. In fact, Dahomean women became so deeply involved in succession disputes that their intrigues could make the difference between winning and losing political power."^[9] Because of the demand for men slaves, wealth was reallocated "from households owning large herds or lands to those who profited from the capture and exchange of slaves—urban merchants and warrior elites."^[10] Although the slave trade helped women to gain power, the change in wealth proved hurtful for Africa because they only thrived off of the exchange of slaves for commodities, which worked to continue the use of slavery rather than abolish the use of it. Commodities that were foreign to different countries were in high demand. Sugar, silk, spices, tobacco, metals, and many other goods desired and many European countries sought to reproduce a large supply of these goods to comply with the high demand. Through mercantilism, country controlled colonies used slavery as the basis of creating the large supply as a way to create and maintain wealth. As economical and political reasoning was the sole purpose of slavery, African slaves were considered property that aided in this growth. However, France's principles expose moral contradictions concerning the rights and freedoms of slaves within France, showing that slaves were not only considered property, but also human beings. Despite these moral conflictions, slavery persisted due to the fact that a country's economic wealth trumped individual freedom. The Atlantic slave trade impacted Africa as well. As more men were enslaved and transported to the Americas, women in Africa gained political power while wealth was shifted to merchants and warriors who were able to

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trade slaves for commodities. This prolonged slavery not only in European countries and its colony, but also within African societies, further justifying the existence of slavery.