

In what way the  
african americans  
shaped the course  
and consequences of  
the civil...

[War](#), [Civil War](#)



In what way the African Americans shaped the course and consequences of the Civil War? Confine your answer to the years from 1861 and 1870.

Immediately after the election and inauguration of Abraham Lincoln, the newly-established Republican Party's presidential nominee, eleven states of the South seceded from the Union. These events marked the beginning of the Civil War and the war was a result of many political tensions that had emerged between the North and the South in the prior decades, all of which were associated with the institution of slavery installed in the Southern United States. President Lincoln began the Civil War with the South in response to states' secession from the Union, and therefore, the war was not solely concentrated over the issue of slavery in American society. The North fought to preserve the Union while the Confederacy fought to protect states' rights. The contributions of African Americans for the Union war effort in the Civil War pushed the federal government, controlled largely by the Republican Party, to fundamentally change the purpose of the war itself, changing the course of the conflict, and therefore, the social and political consequences that followed in the Reconstruction Era.

In the first few years of the Civil War, there was a consensus in the Union that the war was being fought over the Confederacy's claims to protection of slave property and the power states' rights over the federal government. Originally, the war was not fought for the emancipation of African-American slaves in the South. Major Benjamin Butler of the Union army was unsure of the status of fugitive slaves he encountered in the South and he asked the secretary of war if Union forces have the right to liberate these people [A]. Additionally, Major Butler realized that these African-American men, women,

and children could potentially be helpful in the Union's war effort [A]. Over time, President Lincoln and the Union recognized the aid that African Americans could bring and he decided to make the emancipation of slaves throughout the United States a primary goal of the Union, promising them freedom [C]. Lincoln saw the loyalty of African-Americans in the United States and their support of the Union's war effort in response of a group of African-Americans to President Lincoln's proposal for the resettlement of black people outside of the country [B]. President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation declared all African-American slaves in the South to be free and this statement marked a change in the course of the Civil War as the conflict shifted from one over states' rights and protection of slave property to one over the liberation and status of African Americans in American society.

President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation changed the course of the Civil War as it declared that the liberation of African-American slaves was a primary goal of the war. The importance of this goal to the Union war effort was ever more strengthened by the Republican Party's platform in election of 1864. The Republican Party, led by President Lincoln, identified slavery as a cause of the Civil War in their election platform and called for the elimination of the institution of slavery throughout the United States [D]. Additionally, in 1864, the Republicans believed it was their responsibility to provide all available protection to all men, regardless of race who had fought for the Union, referencing to African-American soldiers who had died in the conflict. The Republicans determined to make the elimination of slavery of goal of the Civil War after they saw the contributions of African Americans

through military service and the fact that these were willing to fight despite experiencing mistreatments and prejudices. The New York Times portrayed the appreciation of whites regarding African-American military service for the Union [F]. This statement by the Republican Party exemplified a fundamental shift in its position on slavery as when the war had begun in 1861, the Republican Party saw the issue of states' rights and the protection of slave property the reasons for the war.

Because President Lincoln and the Republicans changed the course of the Civil War by making it a war over the abolition of slavery, the consequences that would emerge after the conclusion of the war would therefore be different than what they had originally believed. Although the war had ended, many of the issues that had existed before the conflict still lingered. To deal with these long-lasting issues, the Republicans passed the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery in all of the United States. Thomas Nast's political cartoon published in Harpers Weekly in 1865 depicted leaning liberty, the symbol of American democracy asking forequalityfor African American veterans of the Civil War. In the cartoon, the black soldier has lost his leg fighting for the Union, showing the great sacrifices that African-American soldiers had made [G]. Nast's cartoon revealed that although African-American slaves were emancipated, they remained to be considered as second-class citizens were not well treated after the war and that the South had not yet fundamentally changed. African-American Virginia, at the Convention of the Colored People of Virginia in 1865, saw themselves as American citizens and demanded racial equality [H].

This document suggests that African American still do not have equal rights and that they wished to be part a part of the Reconstruction process following the war. Because African Americans remained as second-class citizens in American society, the federal government passed the Fourteenth Amendment, which gave all people equal protection under the law and recognized blacks as American citizens, in the Fifteenth Amendment, which guaranteed suffrage to African Americans. Lastly, African Americans demonstrated that they were part of the Reconstruction process by their participation in state constitutional conventions in the late 1860s [J]. In addition, African Americans were eager to receive an education following their emancipation took elevate themselves to appear equal to white Americans [E]. Although it appeared that African-American involvement in the Civil War would not be some necessary, when black troops did commit and participate in the Union's war effort, they shaped the course and consequences of the Civil War.