

Political, social, economic, and intellectual life

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Between the time period of 1840 and 1860, slavery played an influential and pivotal role in the development of a new southern lifestyle. In the struggle for dominance in America, slavery was the South's stronghold and the underlying cause in much of their motives for many of the economic instigations along with the affirmative political actions. By dominating the everyday southerner's life, slavery also dominated the economic and political aspects of life during the height of the slavery period.

By the 1840's the Southern economy had become almost entirely slave and agriculturally dependent. Without the dependence of slaves in the south, a person was to remain landless, povertystricken or struggling to sustain life through the means of a minute, ineffective farm. However, even though slaves dominated the southern economy, slaveholders only included about 2 to 3 percent of the population, and most owned less than ten slaves. This small percentage of fortunate individuals were the few people successful in a slave based, cash crop, agricultural, Southern economy.

In turn, the Southern economy was controlled and dominated by those who did and did not have slaves, which generated the political ideology and political atmosphere formed as a result of the utter reliance on slavery controlling all aspects of everyday life. ? Slaves in the south were the main contributors to the South's economic success. The invention of Eli Whitney's cotton gin made possible the wide-scale cultivation of short-staple cotton.

All professionals worked diligently with one another to make sure each function, from production to distribution, was properly executed on the plantation, and that an ample supply of cotton was always present. An organized network of commerce never developed in the South, as the high <https://assignbuster.com/political-social-economic-and-intellectual-life/>

demand for cotton in Europe, primarily Great Britain, and in North America, more slaves were needed in the south to continue to produce the lucrative cash crops, booming the southern economy and the need to create and reform the cash crop business.

The the new cotton crop and other rising crops like rice and tobacco led to the increasing demands that were higher than the current production rate. In order for them to generate a more lucrative business, the south used slaves as a labor source to produce crops, which had the largest impact on the southern lifestyle. This in turn boosted the south's economy, which allowed the the southern life to thrive and create a distinction between themselves and the other economies of North America. Whilst slaves dominated the southern economy, slaveholders only accounted for about two to three percent of the southern population.

This small, yet powerful percentage of individuals were the people successful in agricultural business and the driving force behind the usage and continuation of slavery in the South. Without slaves there would be no cotton, tobacco, or sugar production and without these integral items, the Southern economy would absolutely collapse. The South depended on slaves to fuel their economy which in turn allowed for slavery to dominate the economy and be the sole resource of the South. ? Between 1840 and 1860 many political issues, debates, and actions were inflamed by the presence of slavery.

As America grew, both in population and in size, the South wanted more slave states and the North wanted more free states to increase their hold in politics and sway decisions in favor of what put them in a position for the

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greatest success. One important act that provoked the slavery dominated political world of 1840 to 1860 was the Kansas and Nebraska Act, composed by the highly acclaimed Democrat Stephen Douglas. This act was successful in repealing the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and called for popular sovereignty in Kansas and Nebraska which under the Missouri Compromise had been free, as dictated by federal law.

The Missouri Compromise was originally an act to settle disputes about free states and slave states entering the Union in an attempt to keep the balance of free states and states that permitted slavery equal. To repeal this was to almost beg for revolution; hence the term " Bleeding Kansas" which included the John Brown riots and caused political and social unrest in these areas affected by the law. The Compromise of 1850 was another feeble solution to the predominate problem of run-away slaves and the recurring issue of slavery in new territories.

This Compromise created stronger fugitive slave laws which satisfied Southern slave catchers and enraged Northern abolitionists. Millard Fillmore, President at the time, was inept in favoring any side and felt that this compromise would be the driving force that would keep the already fragile union together. The compromise also made California a free state, and the area won in the Mexican Cession would be subject to popular sovereignty, and lastly, dictated that there would be no slave trade in Washington D. C. but it would remain a slave state to keep the proper balance. The weak and extremely controversial compromises would only further split the nation on the topic of slavery and create a greater schism within the topic. From 1820 to 1860 slavery was a recurring topic in Congress and the House

of Representatives. Slavery is even considered to be the cause of the Civil War and in the end, was grasped as the main reason for bloody fighting. All political issues during this time could not be discussed without the topic of slavery behind it.

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