

The role of race and class in the antebellum south

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The Role of Race and in the Antebellum South The living conditions for southerners changed after 1820 due to the proliferation of slavery. During this period, cotton and sugar became the main economic activity in Antebellum South. As such, the demand for labor increased to cater for the need for intensive labor forces. The living condition among the southerners was influenced by the agricultural development of the area. As such, hierarchical and patriarchic structures were established as a sign of power and authority. The living condition in the south entailed slavery to support the dominant farmer ruling class (Berkin, 267).

Elite white southerners viewed the change as an abolition of slavery (Fertig, 95). They believed that slavery was necessary to promote the new economy established. As such, they implemented codes that disallowed the ability for African-Americans to own or lease land, sign labor contracts, serve on juries, to vote, and testify against whites in a court of law. African-Americans did not have access to public schools whereas orphans were returned to their native countries. The elite southerners attempted to create a new economy and society because they had a comparative advantage in the production of cotton.

The slaves, free blacks, and poor whites felt inferior after such a change. They believed that their providence of habits did not match that of the elite whites. As such, the notion of being inferior had a permanent defect of character that would gradually enslave them if they were to remain in such a state (Valdez, 109).

Work Cited

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