

Thomas jefferson's views of race and government assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Prompt: How did Jefferson's views on government and race morph over time?

Over time Jefferson's views on government and race drastically changed, from outright denouncing slavery as morally incorrect to endorsing the expansion of slavery in the west, Jefferson due to various reasons had fluctuating views on issues such as equality of races and governmental structure, primarily because of economic, social, and geographic causes. Both economic climates of the nation as well as Jefferson's personal debts greatly influenced his views on government and race, more prominently race.

Earlier in Jefferson's life, before he had acquired massive amounts of debt due to creditors, Jefferson wrote that all men are created equal and that the emancipation of slaves was necessary, these views were extended to both blacks and Indians. But as America's economy continued to grow more and more dependent on slave labor so did Jefferson. Due to Jefferson's more extravagant way of life his personal debt mounted and he found that slaves were vital to the continuation of his excessive consumption of luxury goods.

As Jefferson grew older and older and his debt grew more and more massive he began having a very different outlook on racial equality changed. He saw blacks as having lesser intellectual aptitude than whites and made no attempts at trying to educate his slaves. Jefferson's views on government changed due to economic causes as well. During the revolution and prior to his presidency Jefferson believed in states' rights over a strong federal government, as well as a small federal budget.

However, during his presidency he reversed this policy because of the economic trading war with France and Great Britain. Jefferson's views on both race and government were clearly heavily influenced by economics. In addition to an influential economic climate, the social climate to a great extent influenced Jefferson's views on race and government. Jefferson, a prominent leader in the Republican political party, believed in a strict interpretation of the Constitution and a less centralized government.

Even so, his views changed when he became president and there was much societal evidence that believed in the contrary which thereby somewhat "federalized" Jefferson during his presidency. Also, when social conflicts began arising between states Jefferson began to see the need of a strong centralized government. The social climate also influenced his views on race; at first Jefferson's views on the Indians were very positive. He saw them as uncorrupt and beautiful and simply the victims to an inferior environment.

But when Indians began to frustrate Americans due to land conflict Jefferson morphed his views on Indians to fit those of his friends and the general American public. Social pressures certainly changed Jefferson's views on race and the government, some for the better, but some for the worse.

Surprisingly, along with social and economic causes Jefferson's views on race and the government changed because of geography. Jefferson believed in a strict interpretation of the constitution, which is why he was conflicted when presented with the opportunity to double the size of the country with the Louisiana Purchase.

Nowhere in the constitution did it mention the president's right to purchase land, if Jefferson had not changed his political views in order to accommodate this purchase of land the United States could be a much smaller country. Also as the United States began expansion, it infringed on Indian lands which changed Jefferson's view on race further. In addition to the social pressure of negative views about Indians the continual geographical struggle between Americans and Indians made Jefferson see the Indians as an "uncomplimentary addition to the states. Indisputably Jefferson morphed his views on government in order to proceed with advancing the country in a geographic sense. Undoubtedly Jefferson's views and opinions on race and the government changed greatly over the course of his life for various reasons, particularly economic, social, and geographic pressures. But without these changes in opinion, especially about government, the presidency of Jefferson could have been all the more disastrous.