

African american history argumentative essay

[History](#), [American History](#)



Most historians agree that slavery was among the most decisive factors that led to the Civil War. Thus, Abraham Lincoln, writing to Alexander Stephens, the will-be vice-president of the Confederation, while agreeing not to interfere with the slavery issue, admitted that the issue of slavery was “ the rub” also adding: ‘ It certainly is the only substantial difference between us’ (Spicer, 2004, p. 45).

The issue of slavery was also regarded by Stephens himself, according to his later acknowledgements, as ‘ the immediate cause of the late rupture’ (Spicer, 2004, p. 46). While the Southern states believed in slavery as the natural condition of Africans, in the Northern states the participants of the abolitionist movement had succeeded in convincing the public of the immorality of slavery as an institution.

The fight over the slavery issue that led to the Civil War broke out over the new territories joining the union, for instance, with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and the annexation of a large territory following the victory in the Mexican war.

Since each state was given the chance to join as 'pro-slave' or 'free-soil' territory, conflicts persisted (Spicer, 2004, p. 46). This conflict reflected in the Missouri Compromise of the 1820 and the 'Bleeding Kansas' struggle of between supporters and opponents of slavery was destined to break out at some point.

There were plenty of courageous individuals who bravely put themselves in the way of slavery, trying to defy its existence and the ambition of the

Southern states to extend their system into the newly acquired territories. These people fomented the Civil War with their actions.

Among them was “ blood-spilling intransigence of John Brown, the tear-jerking Uncle Tom’s Cabin written by Harriet Beecher Stowe, and the courageous act of William Lloyd Garrison who burnt the US Constitution as a “ covenant with death” (Hitchens, 2005, p. 121). Fuelling the war was the whole Abolitionist movement with its Underground Railroad, the secretive network to help fugitive slaves escape to freedom.

Thus, slavery was undoubtedly the main issue that fuelled the outbreak of the Civil War. However, it was so deeply interconnected with other aspects that it was hard to separate it from, for instance, the economic part of the question. Since Southern slave-owners depended on the preservation of slavery for their profits off their cotton plantations, there was certainly an economic interest present. Many of the Southern leaders who went to war to protect their right to have slaves were also slave-owners. With the invention of the cotton gin, using slaves to grow cottons promised even greater revenues.

At the same time, there is no indication that the North was unanimously opposed to slavery as an institution. The Northern shipping industry recognized the profits that were associated with slave trade. Moderate politicians like Lincoln were not likely to clamp down on slavery in any way that would alienate the southern states. Others, including Thomas Jefferson, thought that “ slavery was on its way out, doomed to die a natural death” (American Civil War).

They were more inclined to watch this process passively than take an active stance against it. However, the abolitionist cause in the North and passionate speeches by activists like John Brown instigated northerners to believe that it was wrong to compromise where such serious moral issues were at stake.

To the South, the issue of slavery was not merely a moral issue of whether it was appropriate to own a human being of African descent or not. It was to them the defence of their right to establish their local economic system in the way they thought fit, a symbol of the territories' right to self-determination.

Apart from the "constitutional argument over whether or not a state had a right to leave the Union", they were also interested in "the continuation of antebellum southern culture" (Leidner, 2006). This willingness to self-determination was expressed by Major General John B. Gordon in his "Reminiscences Of The Civil War":

To the charge of the North that secession was rebellion and treason, the South replied that the epithets of rebel and traitor did not deter her from the assertion of her independence, since these same epithets had been familiar to the ears of Washington and Hancock and Adams and Light Horse Harry Lee. In vindication of her right to secede, she appealed to the essential doctrine, "the right to govern rests on the consent of the governed," and to the right of independent action as among those reserved by the States.

Thus, although slavery cannot be considered the only issue that led to the Civil War, the impact of this problem on North-South relationships is evident

in most events that led up to the war. This, for instance, concerns the debate over counting slaves for the purposes of voting that erupted between the delegates of the North and the South at the Constitutional Convention.

The Northerners argued that if “ the Southern slaves were mere property, then they should not be counted toward voting representation in Congress” (American Civil War). As a result, the Southerners were forced into a compromise in which one slave was counted as three-fifths of a free man.

This compromise reflected that tensions between the North and South over slavery were also a struggle for power. The ban or permission to have slaves automatically put the state into a category and inspired its citizens to side with one party or the other. These two categories, the slave-owning states and free-soil ones, constituted deep opposition to each other.

The issue of slavery, therefore, was the main cause of the Civil War. From this issues, however, there stemmed other issues that precipitated the war: the conflict between different cultures, economic interests of Southern plantation owners, and the South’s belief in its power to make decisions for itself. Thus, the war was caused by dissent over slavery that was fuelled by a number of other controversies.

References

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