

# Jefferson essay

Sociology, Human Rights



Jefferson Essay Thomas Jefferson played a very important role in the history of the United States. Jefferson is most famously known for writing the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson talked many times about African-Americans in America. Where they equal to white people? How were whites and blacks different? What about slavery? Thomas Jefferson had an opinion on all of these subjects, but much of what Thomas Jefferson said was later contradicted with his own words. What did Thomas Jefferson mean when he said that all men were equal? Well, many people would agree with what it means today in modern times. Today the statement, all men are created equal means; all men and women whether black, white, tall, short, fat, or skinny were all created equal. That is not necessarily what it meant in the 1700s. Blacks were enslaved and worked hard while wealthy white men did nothing of the sort. Justice Thurgood Marshall said, " The blacks were so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect... and that the Negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. " This excerpt shows that in that time blacks were not treated the same as whites and clearly did not have the same rights. Conor Cruise O'Brien's book confirms this belief as he takes a quote from Thomas Jefferson himself: " It is accepted that the words ' all men are created equal ' do not, in their literal meaning, apply to women, and were not intended by the Founding Fathers to apply to slaves. " This shows that when Thomas Jefferson talks about all men being created equally he means to say white men. The meaning of the word expatriation is as follows; to leave one's native country to live elsewhere (Merriam-Webster). Jefferson wanted to send the blacks that were descendent of the original slaves back to Africa.

The deal here was Africa was no longer their native country. This act was known as expatriation. The southern courts believed that slavery violated the natural rights of blacks and although slavery was allowed and legal it was immoral and unjust. Thomas Jefferson made it known that he supported the abolishment of slave trading. He said the following to Congress; " withdraw the citizens of the United States from all further participation in those violations of human rights which have been so long continued on the unoffending inhabitants of Africa. " By this Jefferson means that the people of the United States should stop the enslavement of blacks so that they no longer violate the human rights and stop offending the people of Africa. In this way Jefferson's reasons for promoting expatriation and understanding for the natural rights of blacks were consistent. He wanted to send the blacks back because he wanted to stop offending the people of Africa. Jefferson believed that blacks and whites were very different. He said that he believed that blacks were originally their own race and became distinct by time and certain circumstances. According to Jefferson blacks came from their own species but were from the same general genus that is the human race. He said that blacks were inferior to whites in mind and body. This can be said to mean that whites were possibly better looking people or that they were more fit. It could have been said to mean that whites were smarter than blacks because they had an education that the blacks did not have. Jefferson did not believe blacks were men. " Men, " was said to be referred to as only white men. Samuel Eliot Morison says in his book; " In his views (Jefferson) blacks were not men. " The possession of individual rights was mainly determined by one's race or skin color. Blacks had no rights early on in the

1700s but began to become free in the early 1800s. A wealthy white male had all rights; he was allowed to do what he wanted so long as it was just. A black man was free and eventually gained simple rights due to the belief that the United States was violating human rights. I do not believe that expatriation could have been a helpful solution to the problem of slavery in America. I believe this because if the slaves would have gone to Africa they would be gone, but there is no saying that the lazy southern farmers would not have brought in slaves from other places. They would have gotten so used to not having to work that they would not be able to start working again. I think that they would possibly keep indentured servants as permanent slaves or enslave poor people. I'm sure that expatriation would not solve the problem of slavery, at least not immediately. As I stated in the beginning, Jefferson's view changed greatly throughout the course of his lifetime. Later in his life he began to appreciate black people more because of all their hard work. Also, he realized that blacks were the same as whites in that they were to be given human rights and that the people of the United States had been violating their rights from the very beginning. Jefferson also saw that blacks were men, and that really God created all men equal, black and white. Thomas Jefferson certainly lived an intriguing life. He lived during a time where slavery was legal. He lived during a time when slavery began to die out. Jefferson was part of the reason why blacks are free today. Although his beliefs shifted throughout the duration of his life he ended on the good side, the side that was just. He began to believe that all men are created equal with a literal meaning.