

Nat Turner's Rebellion (1831) / John Brown's Raid (1859), and the U.S. Civil War (1861-65)

PART ONE

Nat Turner's Rebellion

SOURCE: <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-newnation/4574>

By [L. Maren Wood](#) and [David Walbert](#)

Nat Turner's rebellion was one of the largest slave rebellions ever to take place in the United States, and it played an important role in the development of antebellum slave society. The images from Nat Turner's Rebellion — of armed black men roaming the country side slaying white men, women, and children — haunted white southerners and showed slave owners how vulnerable they were. Following the rebellion, whites throughout the South were determined to prevent any further slave [insurrections](#), and they tightened the already harsh slave codes to keep African Americans, slave and free, in a [subservient](#) position.

Nat Turner was born in 1800 into slavery in Southampton, Virginia, about twenty miles from the North Carolina border. Turner's experience was typical of slaves on southern plantations. He had little freedom; he could not legally marry, travel without his master's permission, own property, or earn money. He was forced to work long, hard hours in the fields for [meager](#) rations of food and clothing, and if he refused he faced the whip or other punishment. And, like many slaves, Turner was sold several times to different masters. Each time, he was forced to leave family and friends and move to a different plantation. It was this brutal, demeaning, system of slavery that Nat Turner sought to overthrow. He sought not only his own freedom, but to dismantle the entire system of slavery and liberate African Americans from white tyranny.

In his twenties, Turner was a spiritual leader among his fellow slaves, and many people, including his mother and grandmother, believed that he had been chosen by God to do great things. Then, in the 1820s, he had a series of visions through which he believed God was commanding him to prepare himself for a great battle against evil. During the religious revivals of the [Second Great Awakening](#), many Americans from all walks of life experienced visions or believed that God spoke directly to them, and Nat Turner's belief that God had destined him for a special purpose reflected the religious [fervor](#) of his time. But the purpose for which he believed God had chosen him was

extraordinary. In February 1831, a solar eclipse seemed to Turner to be the sign he was waiting for, and he began preparations for an insurrection. On August 13, the sun appeared blue-green in the sky, and Turner and his friends took this as the final sign.

On August 22, 1831, Nat Turner and six fellow slaves began their attack. Their plan was to move systematically from plantation to plantation in Southampton and kill all white people connected to slavery, including men, women, and children. They started on their own plantation and murdered Turner's owner and his family. During the next twenty-four hours, Turner and his fellow [insurgents](#) moved throughout the county to eleven different plantations, killing fifty-five people and inspiring fifty or sixty enslaved men to join their ranks. They then moved on to the town of Jerusalem with the intention of destroying the town and killing all the inhabitants. But before they could reach their destination, they were stopped by a heavily armed white militia. The Governor had called about three thousand militiamen to put down the rebellion. Seeing that they were greatly outnumbered, the insurgents disbanded, and many fled into the woods and swamps.

The white militia hunted down and soon captured or killed the men who had participated in the rebellion, except for Nat Turner. For two months Turner hid in the woods of Southampton County. When he was finally captured, he was tried, convicted, and then hanged and his body skinned. Fifty-four other men were executed by the state. In addition, to terrorize the local African American population, some of the militia decapitated about fifteen of the captured insurgents and put their heads on stakes. Then, as fear spread through the white population, white mobs turned on blacks who had played no role in the uprising. An estimated two to three hundred African Americans, most of whom were not connected to the rebellion, were murdered by white mobs. The governor of Virginia tried to put a stop to this [vigilante](#) justice, insisting that those who had participated in the rebellion should be tried and executed by the state to reinforce the supremacy of the law for both blacks and whites. In the aftermath of the rebellion, the state legislature of Virginia considered abolishing slavery, but instead voted to tighten the laws restricting blacks' freedom in hopes of preventing any further insurrection.

In nearby North Carolina, several slaves were accused — falsely — of being involved in Turner's rebellion and executed. Rumors spread that slaves in North Carolina were plotting their own uprising, and white mobs murdered a number of enslaved men, while other slaves were arrested, tried, and a few executed. North Carolina, like Virginia, passed new legislation further restricting the rights of both enslaved people and free blacks. The legislature made it illegal for slaves to preach, to be "insolent" to white people, to carry a gun, to hunt in the woods, to cohabit with a free black or white person, to own any type of livestock. These new codes also forbade white people from teaching an enslaved person to read.

PART TWO

[Nat Turner's Rebellion—Significance]

SOURCE: Oxford African American Studies Center

Born into slavery in Southampton County, Virginia, Nat Turner led the bloodiest slave insurrection in American history.

[...]

While the authorities put down the rebellion with fair speed, Nat Turner and his confederates left in their wake a legacy of fear and paranoia. Southerners had long dreaded that slaves might take up arms against them, and Nat Turner's actions proved them right. To combat the possibility of further violence, Southerners arrested and even executed “suspicious” slaves and also tightened restrictions on slaves' behavior, making a situation slaves had already seen as intolerable even worse. Nat Turner's rebellion made the South more defensive than ever about its “peculiar institution.”

When published in 1831, *The Confessions of Nat Turner, the Leader of the Late Insurrection in Southampton, Virginia* was read throughout the nation. *The Confessions* is presented in question-and-answer form, somewhat akin to the modern oral history interview. Scholars have questioned how much of *The Confessions* was genuinely offered by Turner and how much was added by Gray, as the attorney freely interpreted his transcript of the interviews and embellished Turner's account based on his notes. Given the nature of the document, Nat Turner's *Confessions* was and remains a source of controversy.

Slavery's advocates and opponents alike found ways to utilize *The Confessions* for their benefit. Those who supported slavery took Turner's story as a warning, with state after state tightening up slave codes in response to the paranoia regarding incipient slave insurrections and conspiracies that took hold. Slavery's supporters saw Turner as at best deluded, at worst a dangerous fanatic. Antislavery advocates, meanwhile, saw him as a prophet inspired by God to free his people from bondage and used his story as a beacon of hope for the enslaved.

Over time arguments continued to rage over interpretations of Turner's actions. Was he truly motivated by a religious zeal and convinced that he could free his people, or was he suffering from delusions of grandeur, ready to lead his people down the garden path toward certain death in a futile attempt at freedom? Long after Turner's death, in 1967, the author William Styron published

a fictionalized version of the slave leader's life, *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. In his novel Styron posited that Turner had a sexual relationship with Margaret Whitehead, a white girl whom he later killed. Styron's novel stirred up its own controversy. Critics argued that Styron, a white southerner, could never fully understand the mind of a black slave and contended that the novel was racist. In 1968 *William Styron's Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond* was published, where ten African American male authors attacked Styron and his book. Historians like Martin Duberman and Eugene Genovese then responded to *William Styron's Nat Turner*, pointing out the distortions and factual errors in the critiques. Throughout the controversy, the novel retained both detractors and supporters. Even in the twenty-first century, Nat Turner remains an enigmatic, fascinating figure whose actions and motivations are still worthy of discussion and debate.

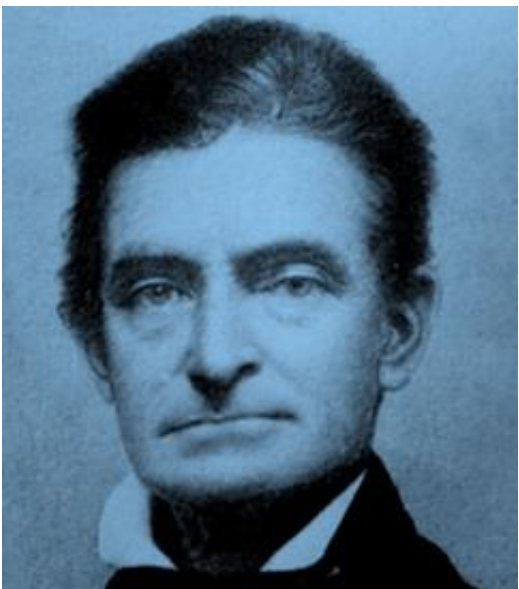
PART THREE

John Brown, abolitionist (1800-1859)

Written By: [The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica](#) SOURCE: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Brown-American-abolitionist>

John Brown, (born May 9, 1800, Torrington, Connecticut, U.S.—died December 2, 1859, Charles Town, Virginia [now in West Virginia]), militant American abolitionist whose raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now in West Virginia), in 1859 made him a martyr to the antislavery cause and was instrumental in heightening sectional animosities that led to the American Civil War (1861–65).

John Brown, engraving from a daguerreotype, c. 1856. *National Archives and Records Administration* (Photo Number: 531116)



Moving about restlessly through Ohio, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New York, Brown was barely able to support his large family in any of several vocations at which he tried his hand: tanner, sheep drover, wool merchant, farmer, and land speculator. Though he was white, in 1849 Brown settled with his family in a black community founded at North Elba, New York, on land donated by the New York antislavery philanthropist Gerrit Smith. Long a foe of slavery, Brown became obsessed with the idea of taking overt action to help win justice for enslaved black people. In 1855 he followed five of his sons to the Kansas Territory to assist antislavery forces struggling for control there, a conflict that became known as Bleeding Kansas. With a wagon laden with

guns and ammunition, Brown settled in Osawatomie and soon became the leader of antislavery guerrillas in the area.

- Brooding over the sack of the town of Lawrence by a mob of slavery sympathizers (May 21, 1856), Brown concluded that he had a divine mission to take vengeance. Three days later he led a nighttime retaliatory raid on a proslavery settlement at Pottawatomie Creek, in which five men were dragged out of their cabins and hacked to death. After this raid, which became known as the Pottawatomie Massacre, the name of “Old Osawatomie Brown” conjured up a fearful image among local slavery apologists.

In the spring of 1858, Brown convened a meeting of blacks and whites in Chatham, Ontario, Canada, at which he announced his intention of establishing in the Maryland and Virginia mountains a stronghold for escaping slaves. He proposed, and the convention adopted, a provisional constitution for the people of the United States. He was elected commander in chief of this paper government while gaining the moral and financial support of Gerrit Smith and several prominent Boston abolitionists.

[...] [**Raid on Harpers Ferry**]

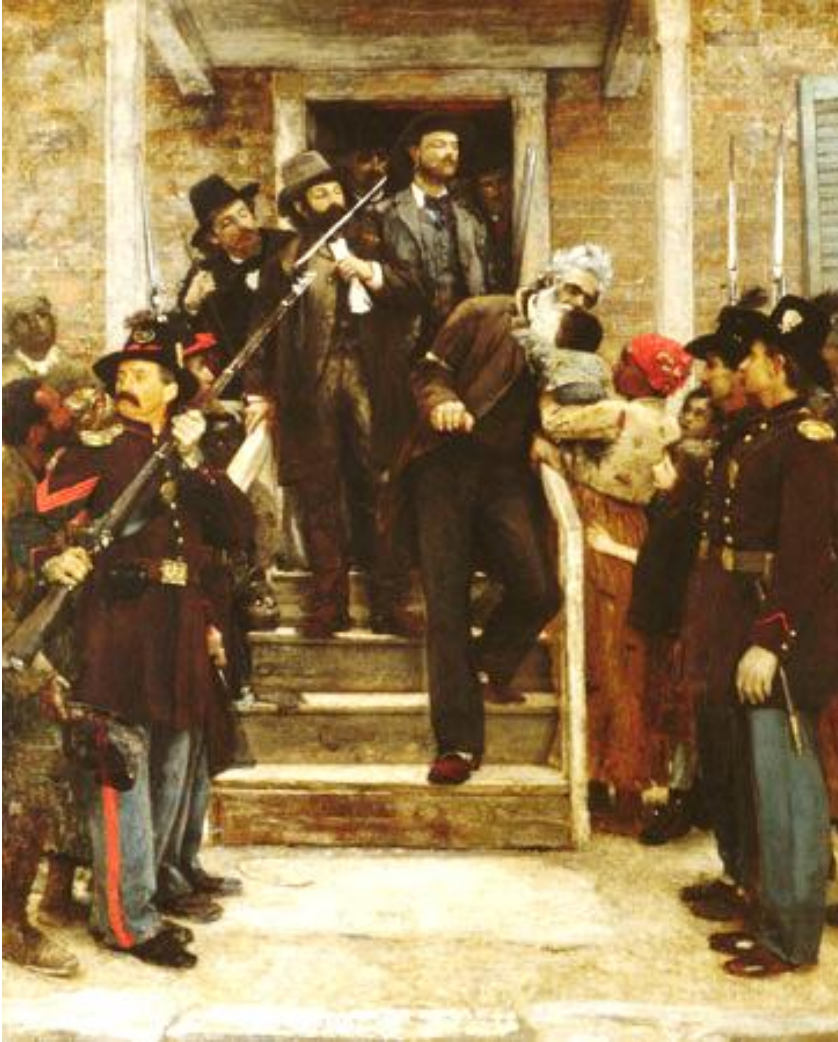
In the summer of 1859, with an armed band of 16 whites and 5 blacks, Brown set up a headquarters in a rented farmhouse in Maryland, across the Potomac from Harpers Ferry, the site of a federal armory. On the night of October 16, he quickly took the armory and rounded up some 60 leading men of the area as hostages. Brown took this desperate action in the hope that escaped slaves would join his rebellion, forming an “army of emancipation” with which to liberate their fellow slaves. Throughout the next day and night he and his men held out against the local militia, but on the following morning he surrendered to a contingency of troops under the command of then Col. Robert E. Lee, including a small force of U.S. Marines that had broken into the armory and overpowered Brown and his comrades. (John Wilkes Booth, later Abraham Lincoln’s assassin, was also at the scene as a militiaman.) Brown himself was wounded, and 10 of his followers (including two sons) were killed. He was tried for murder, slave insurrection, and treason against the state and was convicted and hanged.

[**Civil War**]

Although Brown failed to spark a general slave revolt, the high moral tone of his defense helped to immortalize him and to hasten the war that would bring emancipation. Noting that the gaze of Europe was fixed on America, French novelist Victor Hugo wrote that Brown’s hanging would “open a latent fissure that will finally split the Union asunder.” As they marched into battle during the Civil War, Union soldiers sang a song called “John Brown’s Body” that would later provide the tune for “the Battle Hymn of the Republic”:

John Brown died that the slaves might be free,

But his soul goes marching on.



The Last Moments of John Brown, oil on canvas by Thomas Hovenden, 1882–84. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*

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PART FOUR

John Brown's address to the court

SOURCE: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2943t.html>

Address of John Brown to the Virginia Court at Charles Town, Virginia on November 2, 1859

Charged with murder, insurrection, and treason against the state of Virginia, John Brown -- leader of the raid on Harpers Ferry -- lay wounded on a cot in the courtroom. He had requested that the proceedings be delayed by one day to allow time for his lawyer to arrive. The request was denied, and he was assigned a lawyer who, against Brown's wishes, set out to prove his client insane.

The court found Brown guilty and asked if there was any reason why a sentence of death should not be pronounced. Although not prepared to make a statement, Brown stood up and, in a mild and composed manner, addressed the court.

I have, may it please the court, a few words to say.

In the first place, [...]

The court acknowledges, as I suppose, the validity of the law of God. I see a book kissed here which I suppose to be the Bible, or at least the New Testament. That teaches me that all things whatsoever I would that men should do to me, I should do even so to them. It teaches me further to "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." I endeavored to act up to that instruction. I say, I am too young to understand that God is any respecter of persons. I believe that to have interfered as I have done -- as I have always freely admitted I have done -- in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong, but right. Now if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments. -- I submit; so let it be done!

[...]

Now I have done.

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PART FIVE

SOURCE: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4i3093.html> [Resource Bank Contents](#)

Modern Voices

Historian James Horton on Harpers Ferry

Q: How did Southerners react to the raid on Harpers Ferry?

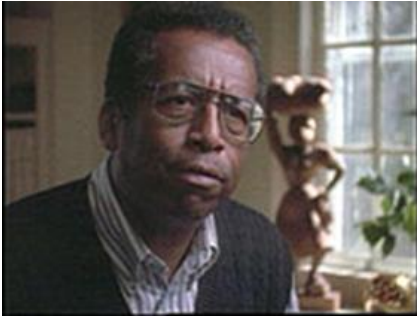
A: It is a critical moment from the standpoint of the South, because the South uses the John Brown raid to make the point, slavery can never be safe. The abolitionists and their supporters will be always threatening this institution of slavery.

[...]

Southern slave holders asked themselves, "To what extent can we depend on the federal government to protect our property, to keep us from being invaded by" -- what they saw as an abolitionist movement becoming more and more violent. They were ever mindful of the fact that in the early 1830's, Nat Turner, a slave from Virginia, had led a rebellion which had killed fifty-some-odd whites in that vicinity. They were convinced that the abolitionists, that fugitive slaves,

that free blacks had as their ultimate goal the in the invasion of the South, to bring violence into the South.

In the 1850's, free blacks did, in fact, establish military companies in in in cities: Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, New York, Boston, Cincinnati. These were military companies in which black people argued that what they were doing was preparing for the inevitability of violent conflict with the South over the institution of slavery.



James Horton, Benjamin Banneker Professor of American Studies and History
George Washington University

There were all kinds of signs that this conflict was coming, and it would not be peaceful. From the standpoint of the South, this was very frightening.

One of the things that comes across very strongly is that John Brown was a hero of monumental proportions within the black community. You know, before his raid, he had traveled around the country, trying to raise money for his raid. And he has raised lots of this money in black communities. Blacks were very supportive. Harriet Tubman thought seriously about participating in his raid, and it was only at the last minute when she was unable to. So that this was not a crazy man, to black people in America. This was a person with a vision of freedom, and they wanted to participate and support that vision.

From the standpoint of the South, of course, to have this white abolitionist be in a position of being able to provide arms to slaves in the area of Harpers Ferry, was tremendously frightening. I mean, they all knew that in the early thirties, Nat Turner had staged a very successful slave rebellion in which fifty-some-odd whites were killed. Can you imagine their fear of the possibility of having Nat Turner with repeating rifles, and having them supported by an armed abolitionist band? This was the worst nightmare for some slave holders, who were really increasingly convinced that the abolitionists were going to mount an invasion of the South.

PART SIX

Race-based legislation in the North

1807 – 1850

SOURCE: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2957.html>

To the fugitive slave fleeing a life of bondage, the North was a land of freedom. Or so he or she thought. Upon arriving there, the fugitive found that, though they were no longer slaves, neither were they free. African Americans in the North lived in a strange state of

semi-freedom. The North may have emancipated its slaves, but it was not ready to treat the blacks as citizens. . . or sometimes even as human beings.

Northern racism grew directly out of slavery and the ideas used to justify the institution. The concepts of "black" and "white" did not arrive with the first Europeans and Africans, but grew on American soil. During Andrew Jackson's administration, racist ideas took on new meaning. Jackson brought in the "Age of the Common Man." Under his administration, working class people gained rights they had not before possessed, particularly the right to vote. But the only people who benefited were white men. Blacks, Indians, and women were not included.

This was a time when European immigrants were pouring into the North. Many of these people had faced discrimination and hardship in their native countries. But in America they found their rights expanding rapidly. They had entered a country in which they were part of a privileged category called "white."

Classism and ethnic prejudices did exist among white Americans and had a tremendous impact on people's lives. But the bottom line was that for white people in America, no matter how poor or degraded they were, they knew there was a class of people below them. Poor whites were considered superior to blacks, and to Indians [Native Americans] as well, simply by virtue of being white. Because of this, most identified with the rest of the white race and defended the institution of slavery. Working class whites did this even though slavery did not benefit them directly and was in many ways against their best interests.

Before 1800, free African American men had nominal rights of citizenship. In some places they could vote, serve on juries, and work in skilled trades. But as the need to justify slavery grew stronger, and racism started solidifying, free blacks gradually lost the rights that they did have. Through intimidation, changing laws and mob violence, whites claimed racial supremacy, and increasingly denied blacks their citizenship. And in 1857 the *Dred Scott* decision [by the U.S. Supreme Court] formally declared that blacks were not citizens of the United States.

In the northeastern states, blacks faced discrimination in many forms. Segregation was rampant, especially in Philadelphia, where African Americans were excluded from concert halls, public transportation, schools, churches, orphanages, and other places. Blacks were also forced out of the skilled professions in which they had been working. And soon after the turn of the century, African American men began to lose the right to vote -- a right that many states had granted following the Revolutionary War. Simultaneously, voting rights were being expanded for whites. New Jersey took the black vote away in 1807; in 1818, Connecticut took it away from black men who had not voted previously; in 1821, New York took away property requirements for white men to vote, but kept

them for blacks. This meant that only a tiny percentage of black men could vote in that state. In 1838, Pennsylvania took the vote away entirely. The only states in which black men never lost the right to vote were Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts.

[...]

African Americans also faced violence at the hands of white northerners. Individual cases of assault and murder occurred throughout the North, as did daily insults and harassment. Between 1820 and 1850, Northern blacks also became the frequent targets of mob violence. Whites looted, tore down, and burned black homes, churches, schools, and meeting halls. They stoned, beat, and sometimes murdered blacks. Philadelphia was the site of the worst and most frequent mob violence. City officials there generally refused to protect African Americans from white mobs and blamed blacks for inciting the violence with their "uppity" behavior.

African Americans and their white allies did not simply sit back and accept Northern racism; they responded to it in a whole range of ways. Black people founded their own churches, schools, and orphanages. They created mutual aid societies to provide financial assistance to those in need. They helped fugitive slaves adjust to life in the North. Blacks and whites working together took legal measures to try to prevent the erosion of black rights and to protest against new restrictions. African Americans held a series of national conventions to decide on a collective course of action. Combined with these actions was the constant effort to end slavery, to protect fugitive slaves, and to save free black people from being kidnapped and sold South. Some states even passed Personal Liberty Laws to counteract federal legislation such as the *Fugitive Slave Act of 1850*. These protected fugitives and guaranteed some rights to African American citizens of that state.

PART SEVEN

Modern Voices

Deborah Gray White on northern racism

SOURCE: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4i2989.html>

Q: How did people think about race in this period [pre-Civil War]?

A: One of the things that they [white workers] have to worry about, particularly white men, is whether or not, as wage slaves, they will fall into [chattel] slavery themselves....

American freedom exists above the color line. And I think it is that color line, that line that differentiates between white and black, that makes it possible for there to be freedom among white people, for there to be such a thing as upward mobility. No one would ever fall below the line. No white person is ever going to fall below that line that demarks freedom and slavery. They can never

be slaves. And as a result, they can never perhaps be wage slaves. They can always somehow have opportunity. It is the black man who is doing the hardest, the heaviest, the most demeaning labor, that makes it possible for white people to believe that they will never have to do that. It makes American freedom possible. That makes mobility and equal opportunity for whites possible. It is freedom that exists above the color line.



Deborah Gray White, Professor of History, Rutgers University

And so in American society, unlike most European societies, class becomes demarcated not so much along socio-economic levels -- how much do you make. But class really gets differentiated along lines of color -- blacks versus whites. As long as you were white, then you could never be black. As long as you were white, you could never be a slave. And as long as you were white, you could never do the most demeaning, the most horrible work. You could never be exploited like a slave. That was what black people did.

A graphic with a blue background. On the left, there are three circular portraits of Frederick Douglass at different stages of his life: a young man, a middle-aged man with a beard, and an older man with a full white beard. To the right of the portraits is a large quote in white text. Below the quote, the name 'Frederick Douglass' is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Underneath the name, in a smaller white font, is the text: '(Escaped African American slave, Abolitionist, Writer, and Orator) From an address delivered on July 5, 1852, in Rochester, New York'.

"This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, [is] inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony... What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to Him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.

Frederick Douglass
(Escaped African American slave, Abolitionist, Writer, and Orator)
From an address delivered on July 5, 1852, in Rochester, New York

PART EIGHT

The Civil War and Emancipation, 1861 - 1865

SOURCE: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2967.html>

On November 6, 1860 Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States -- an event that outraged southern states. The Republican party had run on an anti-slavery platform, and many southerners felt that there was no longer a place for them in the Union. On December 20, 1860,

South Carolina seceded. By February 1, 1861, six more states -- Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas -- had split from the Union. The seceded states created the Confederate States of America and elected Jefferson Davis, a Mississippi Senator, as their provisional president.

In his inaugural address, delivered on March 4, 1861, Lincoln proclaimed that it was his duty to maintain the Union. He also declared that he had no intention of ending slavery where it existed, or of repealing the Fugitive Slave Law -- a position that horrified African Americans and their white allies. Lincoln's statement, however, did not satisfy the Confederacy, and on April 12 they attacked Fort Sumter, a federal stronghold in Charleston, South Carolina. Federal troops returned the fire. The Civil War had begun.

Immediately following the attack, four more states -- Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee -- severed their ties with the Union. To retain the loyalty of the remaining border states -- Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri -- President Lincoln insisted that the war was not about slavery or black rights; it was a war to preserve the Union. His words were not simply aimed at the loyal southern states, however -- most white northerners were not interested in fighting to free slaves or in giving rights to black people. For this reason, the government turned away African American volunteers who rushed to enlist. Lincoln upheld the laws barring blacks from the army, proving to northern whites that their race privilege would not be threatened.

There was an exception, however. African Americans had been working aboard naval vessels for years, and there was no reason that they should continue. Black sailors were therefore accepted into the U.S. Navy from the beginning of the war. Still, many African Americans wanted to join the fighting and continued to put pressure on federal authorities. Even if Lincoln was not ready to admit it, blacks knew that this was a war against slavery. Some, however, rejected the idea of fighting to preserve a Union that had rejected them and which did not give them the rights of citizens.

[...]

Though "contraband" slaves [captured slaves] had been declared free, Lincoln continued to insist that this was a war to save the Union, not to free slaves. But by 1862, Lincoln was considering emancipation as a necessary step toward winning the war. The South was using enslaved people to aid the war effort. Black men and women were forced to build fortifications, work as blacksmiths, nurses, boatmen, and laundresses, and to work in factories, hospitals, and armories. In the meantime, the North was refusing to accept the services of black volunteers and freed slaves, the very people who most wanted to defeat the slaveholders. In addition, several governments in Europe were considering recognizing the Confederacy and intervening against the Union. If Lincoln declared this a war to free the slaves, European public opinion would overwhelmingly back

the North.

On July 22, 1862, Lincoln showed a draft of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet. It proposed to emancipate the slaves in all rebel areas on January 1, 1863. Secretary of State William H. Seward agreed with the proposal, but cautioned Lincoln to wait until the Union had a major victory before formally issuing the proclamation. Lincoln's chance came after the Union victory at the Battle of Antietam in September of 1862. He issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22. The proclamation warned the Confederate states to surrender by January 1, 1863, or their slaves would be freed.

Some people were critical of the proclamation for only freeing some of the slaves. Others, including Frederick Douglass, were jubilant. Douglass felt that it was the beginning of the end of slavery, and that it would act as a "moral bombshell" to the Confederacy. Yet he and others feared that Lincoln would give in to pressure from northern conservatives, and would fail to keep his promise. Despite the opposition, however, the president remained firm. On January 1, 1863, he issued the final Emancipation Proclamation. With it he officially freed all slaves within the states or parts of states that were in rebellion and not in Union hands. This left one million slaves in Union territory still in bondage.

Throughout the North, African Americans and their white allies were exuberant. They packed churches and meeting halls and celebrated the news. In the South, most slaves did not hear of the proclamation for months. But the purpose of the Civil War had now changed. The North was not only fighting to preserve the Union, it was fighting to end slavery.

Throughout this time, northern black men had continued to pressure the army to enlist them. A few individual commanders in the field had taken steps to recruit southern African Americans into their forces. But it was only after Lincoln issued the final Emancipation Proclamation that the federal army would officially accept black soldiers into its ranks.

African American men rushed to enlist. This time they were accepted into all-black units. The first of these was the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Colored Regiment, led by white officer Robert Gould Shaw. Their heroism in combat put to rest worries over the willingness of black soldiers to fight. Soon other regiments were being formed, and in May 1863 the War Department established the Bureau of Colored Troops....

By the end of the war more than 186,000 black soldiers had joined the Union army; 93,000 from the Confederate states, 40,000 from the border slave states, and 53,000 from the free states.

Black soldiers faced discrimination as well as segregation. The army was extremely reluctant to commission black officers -- only one hundred gained commissions during the war. African American soldiers were also given substandard supplies and rations. Probably the worst form of discrimination was the pay differential. At the beginning of black enlistment, it was assumed that blacks would be kept out of direct combat, and the men were paid as laborers rather than as soldiers. Black soldiers therefore received \$7 per month, plus a \$3 clothing allowance, while white soldiers received \$13 per month, plus \$3.50 for clothes.

Black troops strongly resisted this treatment. The Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Regiment served a year without pay rather than accept the unfair wages. Many blacks refused to enlist because of the discriminatory pay. Finally, in 1864, the War Department sanctioned equal wages for black soldiers.

In the South, most slaveholders were convinced that their slaves would remain loyal to them. Some did, but the vast majority crossed Union lines as soon as Northern troops entered their vicinity. A Confederate general stated in 1862 that North Carolina was losing approximately a million dollars every week because of the fleeing slaves.

Numbers of white southerners also refused to support the Confederacy. From the beginning, there were factions who vehemently disagreed with secession and remained loyal to the Union. Many poor southern whites became disillusioned during the course of the war. Wealthy planters had been granted exemptions from military service early on. This became especially inflammatory when the South instituted the draft in 1862 and the exemptions remained in place. It became clear to many poor southern whites that the war was being waged by the rich planters and the poor were fighting it. In addition, the common people were hit hard by wartime scarcity. By 1863, there was a food shortage. Riots and strikes occurred as inflation soared and people became desperate.

There were also northerners who resisted the war effort. Some were pacifists. Others were white men who resented the fact that the army was drafting them at the same time it excluded blacks. And there were whites who refused to fight once black soldiers were admitted. The North was also hit by economic depression, and enraged white people rioted against African Americans, who they accused of stealing their jobs.

Finally, on April 18, 1865, the Civil War ended with the surrender of the Confederate army. 617,000 Americans had died in the war, approximately the same number as in all of America's other wars combined. Thousands had been injured. The southern landscape was devastated.

A new chapter in American history opened as the *Thirteenth Amendment*, passed in January of 1865, was implemented. It abolished slavery in the United States, and now, with the end of the war, four

million African Americans were free. Thousands of former slaves travelled throughout the south, visiting or searching for loved ones from whom they had become separated. Harriet Jacobs was one who returned to her old home. Former slaveholders faced the bewildering fact of emancipation with everything from concern to rage to despair.

[Reconstruction]

Men and women -- black and white and in the North and South -- now began the work of rebuilding the shattered union and of creating a new social order. This period would be called Reconstruction. It would hold many promises and many tragic disappointments. It was the beginning of a long, painful struggle, far longer and more difficult than anyone could realize. It was the beginning of a struggle that is not yet finished.

As part of Reconstruction, two new amendments were added to the Constitution. The *Fourteenth Amendment*, passed in June 1865, granted citizenship to all people born or naturalized in the United States. The *Fifteenth Amendment*, passed in February of 1869, guaranteed that no American would be denied the right to vote on the basis of race. For many African Americans, however, this right would be short-lived. Following Reconstruction, they would be denied their legal right to vote in many states until the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

But all of this was yet to come. The Americans of 1865 were standing at the point between one era and another. What they knew was that slavery was dead. With that 250-year legacy behind them, they faced the future.

PART NINE

[History in an Hour: History for busy people](#)

Native Americans and the Civil War

By Emily Clay

SOURCE: <http://www.historyinanhour.com/2013/06/09/native-americans-and-the-civil-war/>

The American Civil War was a years-long battle that divided the United States into two: north versus south. The war is most often remembered for its role in the end of slavery in the South, but many other political issues affected how each side was supported. The process of taking sides in the

battle split families and friendships and created conflict between once-peaceful communities. But the Civil War was especially complex for Native Americans.

Native American tribes living in warring states were forced to make choices that affected their future. Tribes understood that aligning with the losing side could eventually put their freedom at risk. They also risked losing the ancestral lands they occupied. But there was disagreement over which side was the right one to follow, and that caused Native Americans to split their support. In some cases, individual tribes split to support opposing sides, creating another layer of conflict in the already complex fight between states.

Divided interests and allegiances

Native Americans and the Civil War In total, more than 28,000 Native Americans participated in the American Civil War. (Pictured, an unidentified Native Indian during the Civil War, photographed by Mathew Brady). In many cases, the motivations for entering the war and choosing a side depended on perspective. For example, in the Union states, Native Americans had greater latitude in deciding whether to fight or stay out of the conflict. There were incentives to get involved, such as building goodwill with the government and continuing the tradition of fierce, brave tribal warriors. Perhaps most importantly, participating in the war carried the potential to earn Native Americans increased respect and ultimately help them preserve their culture within a growing country.

The situation was a bit different in the Confederate states. Earning the good graces of their neighbors was an attractive benefit of involvement, but it wasn't a predominate factor motivating participation. What was? Many tribes in the south also happened to be slave owners; the Choctaw alone had about 6,000 slaves at the time of the Civil War. Because a Confederate loss could jeopardize their ability to own slaves and, with that, the tribe's economy of the time, slave-owning tribes (including Cherokee, Choctaw and the Chickasaw people) typically sided with the Confederacy during the Civil War.

Another contributing factor for Native Americans siding with the south, particularly for the Chickasaw people, was a general and growing distrust of the Federal government who had forced tribes off their ancestral lands into an area that another tribe claimed and then failed to protect them against that tribe. Part of Confederate recruitment included suggestions of an Indian state in the Confederate States of America as well as full citizenship and government representation. These were appealing offers for many Native Americans.

Growing involvement in the war effort

In some parts of the country, Native Americans were not highly sought out by the Union and Confederate states — particularly in the early years of the war; this was especially so in U.S. territories that had aligned themselves with a certain side. But as the war dragged on and each side

needed more soldiers, Native Americans became increasingly important. And operating in their respective armies, Native American soldiers had plenty to be proud of.

[...]

Unfortunately, the long-term benefits of Civil War involvement were minimal for Native Americans. Their own communities were wounded by the losses of battle, and the earned respect desired at the war's outset provided very little material gain. While the Native Americans have their heroes, the conflict was ultimately one that inflicted lasting damage and pain, just as it did for the rest of the people living in the United States at that time.

PART TEN

How the Civil War Became the Indian [Native American] Wars

By Boyd Cothran and Ari Kelman, May 25, 2015

SOURCE: <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/05/25/how-the-civil-war-became-the-indian-wars/>

On Dec. 21, 1866, a year and a half after Gen. Robert E. Lee and Gen. Ulysses S. Grant ostensibly closed the book on the Civil War's final chapter at Appomattox Court House, another soldier, Capt. William Fetterman, led cavalymen from Fort Phil Kearny, a federal outpost in Wyoming, toward the base of the Big Horn range. The men planned to attack Indians who had reportedly been menacing local settlers. Instead, a group of Arapahos, Cheyennes and Lakotas, including a warrior named Crazy Horse, killed Fetterman and 80 of his men. It was the Army's worst defeat on the Plains to date. The Civil War was over, but the Indian [Native American] wars were just beginning.

These two conflicts, long segregated in history and memory, were in fact intertwined. They both grew out of the process of establishing an American empire in the West. In 1860, competing visions of expansion transformed the presidential election into a referendum. Members of the Republican Party hearkened back to Jefferson's dream of an "empire for liberty." The United States, they said, should move west, leaving slavery behind. This free soil platform stood opposite the splintered Democrats' insistence that slavery, unfettered by federal regulations, should be allowed to root itself in new soil. After Abraham Lincoln's narrow victory, Southern states seceded, taking their congressional delegations with them.

Never ones to let a serious crisis go to waste, leading Republicans seized the ensuing constitutional crisis as an opportunity to remake the nation's political economy and geography. In the summer of 1862, as Lincoln mulled over the Emancipation Proclamation's details, officials in his administration created the Department of Agriculture, while Congress passed the Morrill Land

Grant Act, the Pacific Railroad Act and the Homestead Act. As a result, federal authorities could offer citizens a deal: Enlist to fight for Lincoln and liberty, and receive, as fair recompense for their patriotic sacrifices, higher education and Western land connected by rail to markets. It seemed possible that liberty and empire might advance in lock step.

But later that summer, Lincoln dispatched Gen. John Pope, who was defeated by Lee at the Second Battle of Bull Run, to smash an uprising among the Dakota Sioux in Minnesota. The result was the largest mass execution in the nation's history: 38 Dakotas were hanged the day after Christmas 1862. A year later, Kit Carson, who had found glory at the Battle of Valverde, prosecuted a scorched-earth campaign against the Navajos, culminating in 1864 with the Long Walk, in which Navajos endured a 300-mile forced march from Arizona to a reservation in New Mexico.

That same year, Col. John Chivington, who turned back Confederates in the Southwest at the Battle of Glorieta Pass, attacked a peaceful camp of Cheyennes and Arapahos at Sand Creek in Colorado. Chivington's troops slaughtered more than 150 Indians. A vast majority were women, children or the elderly. Through the streets of Denver, the soldiers paraded their grim trophies from the killing field: scalps and genitalia.

In the years after the Civil War, federal officials contemplated the problem of demilitarization. Over one million Union soldiers had to be mustered out or redeployed. Thousands of troops remained in the South to support Reconstruction. Thousands more were sent West. Set against that backdrop, the project of continental expansion fostered sectional reconciliation. Northerners and Southerners agreed on little at the time except that the Army should pacify Western tribes. Even as they fought over the proper role for the federal government, the rights of the states, and the prerogatives of citizenship, many Americans found rare common ground on the subject of Manifest Destiny.

During the era of Reconstruction, many American soldiers, whether they had fought for the Union or the Confederacy, redeployed to the frontier. They became shock troops of empire. The federal project of demilitarization, paradoxically, accelerated the conquest and colonization of the West.

[...]

The Indian wars of the Reconstruction era devastated not just Native American nations but also the United States. When the Civil War ended, many Northerners embraced their government, which had, after all, proved its worth by preserving the Union and helping to free the slaves. For a moment, it seemed that the federal government could accomplish great things. But in the West, Native Americans would not simply vanish, fated by racial destiny to drown in the flood tide of civilization.

[...]

One hundred and fifty years after the Civil War, collective memory casts that conflict as a war of liberation, entirely distinct from the Indian wars. President Lincoln died, schoolchildren throughout the United States learn, so that the nation might live again, resurrected and redeemed for having freed the South's slaves. And though Reconstruction is typically recalled in the popular imagination as both more convoluted and contested – whether thwarted by intransigent Southerners, doomed to fail by incompetent and overweening federal officials, or perhaps some combination of the two – it was well intended nevertheless, an effort to make good on the nation's commitment to freedom and equality.

But this is only part of the story. The Civil War emerged out of struggles between the North and South over how best to settle the West – struggles, in short, over who would shape an emerging American empire. Reconstruction in the West then devolved into a series of conflicts with Native Americans. And so, while the Civil War and its aftermath boasted moments of redemption and days of jubilee, the era also featured episodes of subjugation and dispossession, patterns that would repeat themselves in the coming years. When Chief Joseph surrendered, the United States secured its empire in the West. The Indian wars were over, but an era of American imperialism was just beginning.

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