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Jennifer Maloney
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The Legacy of Race Based Slavery in the United States
Pell Thesis

> "Generally speaking, it requires great and constant efforts for men to create lasting ills; but there is one evil which has percolated furtively into the world; at first it was hardly noticed among the usual abuses of power; it began with an individual whose name history does not record; it was cast like an accursed seed somewhere on the ground; it then nurtured itself, grew without effort, and spread with the society that accepted it; that evil was slavery."[1]

Tocqueville once remarked that the problem of the races in America would become its Achilles heel .Although I am sensitive to racial division and conflicts in the United States, it was Tocqueville who first concentrated my attention on the development of race relations since the colonial period and institutionalized race-based slavery in the United States. Tocqueville claims that the stain of slavery would be too difficult for America to overcome. This paper takes the reader through such a journey beginning with the founding of the first American colonies and examining the relations between whites and blacks up through the Civil Rights Movement of 1964. Although I do not deal with contemporary racial issues in this paper, the reader is free to consider to what extent we may in fact have made progress towards racial equality.

The first American colony was founded in Virginia in 1607 and 12 years later the institution of race-based slavery, unique to the United States, was born.[2]

These colonies are classically categorized as Middle, Northern, or Southern colonies. However, I will categorize them as simply Northern or Southern. The Northern Colonies are Rhode Island and Providence Plantation, Connecticut, Massachusetts Bay, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Delaware. The Southern Colonies are Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

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[1] Tocqueville, "*Democracy in America*," NY: HarperCollins.2000. p. 340

[2] Jamestown was the first colony to be settled in America by the Virginia Company in May of 1607. Its founding marked the beginning of what would become the United States of America as it is known today. English settlers voyaged across the Atlantic in search of gold and the opportunity to prosper in a land that they could call their own. In this particular area of Atlantic coastline they came in search of wealth and riches, while their counterparts who shortly after voyaged to the Northern Atlantic coastline, came with desires for autonomy, prosperity, and the right and ability to practice their religion as they wished. The remaining 12 colonies were born over the next one hundred and twenty five years. Benavides, Diana, and Hector Mancillas. *Colonization.* <http://www.harlingen.isd.tenet.edu/coakhist.coloniz.html >

The Northern Colonists founded themselves on the grounds of religious freedom. They were people who wished to escape the tightening reigns of the state induced religious oppression and live and practice their faith freely. They did not hold manual labor or hard work in contempt. On the contrary they felt that work was of great value to the fulfillment of one's life and with it would come unsurpassed progress. The belief of work as a positive omen helped motivate them to adapt to the rough terrain of the North. In doing so they were able to cultivate the land and establish their new lives. For the Northern colonists, there was no work that was not worth attaining their American Dream.

The Southern colonists were quite different than their neighbors to the north. They settled on the Atlantic coasts viewing the New World as a virgin land just waiting to be cultivated and for wealth to be sown from her soils.[3] They were blessed with an incredibly temperate climate. The soil was fertile, the weather was mild, and the Natives had shared with them the secrets for cultivating the soil.[4]

The inhabitants of the South saw America as a land of economic opportunity. They were aware of the fruitful land that awaited them across the Atlantic and wanted to capitalize on her bounty in the name of the Queen.[5] There was still some adjustment that had to be made for

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[3] The main reason why the first colony of Jamestown was thought to be doomed to fail is due to the greed and lust for gold that the Southern Europeans possessed. They were willing to starve while in search of easy riches rather than work to allow their colony to survive. This is the classic story of John Smith and Pocahontas, in which the Natives ended up introducing agriculture to the English settlers. Benavides, Diana, and Hector Mancillas. *Colonization.* <http://www.harlingen.isd.tenet.edu/coakhist.coloniz.html>

[4] These blessings did not matter to the Southerners, who viewed work as the job of the slave. "The American on the left bank scorns not only work itself but also enterprises in which work is necessary to success; living in idle ease, he has the taste of idle men; money has lost some of its value in his eyes; he is less interested in wealth than in excitement and pleasure and expends in that direction the energy which his neighbor puts to other use…Slavery therefore not only prevents the…men from making their fortunes but even diverts them from wishing to do so." Tocqueville, "*Democracy in America,"* NY: Harper Collins. 2000. P.347-8. Tocqueville is referring to Kentucky, on the left bank of the Ohio River in which slavery existed and blacks were the main work force in the state, whereas on the other side of the river, in Ohio, slavery did not exist.

[5] In the late 16th century Queen Elizabeth granted a charter to Sir Humphrey Gilbert to establish the first English colony in North America. He was shipwrecked before his colony could ever be established, but Walter Raleigh received a similar charter from the Queen and when he settled the first colony just off the coast of North Carolina he

Southerners to settle, but the natural resources along with the substantially warmer weather, and gentler terrain created the lackadaisical mindset of the southern people that promoted enslavement of the Africans for so many years. [6]

The first African slaves were brought to Jamestown in the year 1619 and were sold off as indentured servants by a Dutch sailor in exchange for food, thus beginning what Tocqueville refers to as one of the worst kinds of evil in history.[7] Slavery continued this way, disguised as indentured servitude, until the birth of the racially based system of slavery (known as chattel slavery), which is the most commonly know today.[8]

The New World offered many opportunities for European men seeking to own land, and offered this privilege at a cost that was much lower than that of their countries of descent. The paradox in this situation lies in the fact that land was so widely available and affordable that no Europeans wanted to come and work the land. They wanted to own it. Therefore, the need for labor was great and the price of a slave was cheaper than the yearly wages of a white laborer.[9]

Economically slavery had a vast impact on the development of the Northern Colonies. [10] Many of the slaves in the North who were laborers worked building ships as ship building was a

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named the colony and region surrounding it Virginia, in honor of the Queen. Leigh, Kathy. *Colonial Period"From 1607-1763--156 Years.* March 27, 2001. <http://www.usgennet.org/usa/topic/colonial/main/timeline.html>

[6]This is the main difference between the two groups of colonists, which ultimately lead to the existence of American slavery. The mindset that each possessed when it came to physical labor differed so greatly that it permitted one region to prosper through paying more upfront, and the other to remain poor and actually pay more over time, even with the use of free labor. Tocqueville, *"Democracy,"* P.346.

[7] Chronology on the History of Slavery: 1619-1789.Becker, Eddie. (http://www.innercity.org/holt/slavechron.html)

[8] Europeans hoping to gain passage to the Americas were also enslaved as indentured servants. They would forfeit themselves into servitude for a few years labor to gain citizenship and freedom in the United States. Becker, Eddie. "Chronology on the History of Slavery 1619 to 1789." *InnerCity.* 1999. <http://www.innercity.org/holt/slavechron.html>

[9] The Northern colonies were the epicenter of the transatlantic slave trade. This can be partially attributed to the great influence from the Dutch (who formerly reigned over the Mid-Atlantic colonies) and the British, both of whom reveled in the idea of slavery. (Becker, Eddie. "Chronology on the History of Slavery 1619 to 1789." *InnerCity.* 1999. http://www.innercity.org/holt/slavechron.html)

[10] It is for this reason that states such as Rhode Island ruled the business of slave trading and for many years earned very tangible profits off of the selling of human beings. In the year 1791, William Ellery, a merchant who inhabited Newport was quoted as saying, "An Ethiopian could as soon change

major source of income for the New England economy during the years leading up to the Revolutionary War. The existence of slavery also gave many of the Anglo men more time to focus their minds elsewhere. It is at the height of the slave trade that we begin to see Northern focus shifting away from labor and honing in on areas such as law, science, civic duty, and ultimately the industrialization that would transform the North. It was also this shift that would eventually lead to the abolition of slavery in the North and the immense economic boost that baffled the South.

Slavery began first in the South with the harvesting of native tobacco.[11] The land in the South was much more easily inhabitable and immensely fertile, which allowed for a vast array of crops to be successfully harvested in this region. This topographical blessing required constant tending and upkeep. With the feelings towards work and labor that the Southerners had, there was an overwhelmingly superior number of Africans enslaved in the south, working on farms and plantations harvesting crops and tending to the fields and housework.

Agriculture was the main source of income for their economy. While the standard of living for those colonists who inhabited the south was generally higher than it had been in England, it was still not the standard that many of the Southern gentlemen had imagined they would attain in coming to the New World. The cause of this is actually slavery itself.[12] The problem is that the slave owners in the South spent more money owning slaves than they would have paid out in salaries. However, it took years for them to realize this because the cost of

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his skin as a Newport merchant could be induced to change so lucrative a trade as that in slaves for the slow profits of any manufactory." (Thomas, Hugh. *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440-1870.* New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.)

[11] The agricultural stage for the Southern settlers was set in 1609, two years after the founding of the first colony of Jamestown, with the introduction of tobacco by the local Native Americans. (Benavides, Diana, and Hector Mancillas. *Colonization.* http://www.harlingen.isd.tenet.edu/coakhist.coloniz.html)

[12] The paradoxical situation that the Southerners found themselves in is really quite ironic. The existence of slavery was thought to be the perfect solution for the vast need for labor, as well as increased wealth among slave owners due to the fact that they were not paying laborers to tend to their land. (Tocqueville, p.346/7)

feeding, sheltering, and caring for the slave was paid in small increments. There was no lump sum leaving their pockets each week. The cost seemed minute and the free labor a blessing.

Another problem that led to the poor economy is that slaves were much less productive than free laborers. Salaried laborers had drive and motivation to work efficiently and produce greater results than the slaves: they received a paycheck every week which they used to support themselves and their families. Slaves had no income, and no real hope for freedom, so any motivation for productivity was vacant from their tortured lives.[13]

The abolition of slavery in the United States in 1865 with the drafting of the Thirteenth Amendment was the first step towards the equality of the races.[14] Within three years of the freeing of the slaves the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were added to the United States Constitution.[15] While this was not a huge adaptation for the North, which had abolished slavery on its own accord some 61 years prior to the establishment of these amendments, it was met with strong resistance in the South. The Ku Klux Clan (KKK) was formed and ran secretly underground, torturing and killing blacks and any whites who showed the race the slightest bit of sympathy or kindness.[16]

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[13] Tocqueville, p. 346-7.

[14] Prior to the Thirteenth Amendment was the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 in which President Lincoln freed all slaves inhabiting states that were in rebellion against the Union (Administration, National Archives & Records. "Featured Documents." 2008. Emancipation Proclamation. 12 November 2008 http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/transcript.html)

[15] The Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship to all people born in the United States and made naturalization available to those who were born elsewhere. It also stated, "…nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." The Fifteenth Amendment clearly states "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." (Mount, Steve. "US Constitution." 1 November 2008. 14th Amendment. 12 November 2008 http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am14)

[16] The Ku Klux Klan was initially formed in Tennessee in 1866, and was comprised of white supremacists who loathed the Black race. They felt that by granting citizenship to the slaves, white power and dominance was being threatened. (Simkin, John. "Spartacus Educational." Ku Klux Klan. 11 November 2008 http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAkkk.htm)

By 1896, with the ruling in Plessy v. Ferguson, the "Separate but equal" doctrine was passed actually legalizing the complete segregation of blacks and whites. In the South, strict implementation of this doctrine was apparent in every facet of life from education to dining, shopping to transportation, sanitary facilities to drinking fountains, and beyond.[17] This doctrine effected the entire United States but Blacks in New England at this time made up only about 10% of the total Black population in the U.S. and the occurrence of true segregation, like that of the South was less common north of the Mason Dixon line.

Although Blacks had been declared citizens by the Fourteenth Amendment, many whites still did not recognize their rights and refused to view them as equal. Blacks were permitted to work at the same establishments as whites, and to hold the same occupations, but were still met with resistance and competition. Many whites would do all that they could under the rule of the law to keep Blacks from working side by side with whites, and with the growing population of European immigrants entering the U.S. and seeking employment themselves this also hindered the progress of Blacks to assimilate into white society. Blacks' right to vote was also smothered in the North, due to the small population, and in the South equal rights laws did not seem to faze white Southerners.

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[17] Plessy v. Ferguson (Louisiana) influenced this doctrine when Plessy argued that blacks should not be segregated from whites on railcars. The Separate but Equal doctrine states that "racial segregation is constitutional as long as the facilities provided for blacks and whites are roughly equal. This doctrine was long used to support segregation in the public schools and a variety of public facilities, such as transportation and restaurants, where the facilities and services for blacks were often clearly inferior. For decades, the Supreme Court refused to rule the separate but equal doctrine unconstitutional, on the grounds that such civil rights issues were the responsibility of the states." (The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition. Separate by Equal. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.)

The KKK reemerged in 1915 with their primary focus on the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). [18] Martial law was placed on many states between 1906 and 1926 in response to race riots resulting in numerous death and the barbaric activities of the KKK. During this time segregation was at its peak, resulting in blows of violence to and from both sides of the fight.

The beginning of the desegregation of schools in 1954 with the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* seemed to be the turning point that blacks in America were praying for. [19] However, even after this ruling, desegregation would not take full effect for many years, during which riots and protests would increase tensions and more innocent blood would be shed.

The 1960's were a tumultuous but triumphant time for advancements in rights for blacks in the United States. In 1964 Congress passed the Civil Rights Act granting all people of the United States the same rights.[20] The assassinations of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1965 and 1968 fueled more black Americans to push for their equal treatment.[21]

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[18] The NAACP was created by W. E. B. Du Bois in 1909. It is a non-profit group comprised of all peoples dedicated to the vision that all men, regardless of race, are equal.(People, National Association for the Advancement of Colored. "NAACP." History. 13 November 2008 http://naacp.org/about/history/index.htm)

[19] Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka was a monumental case in 1954 in which the Supreme Court ruled that the desegregation of public schools, grades K-12 was unconstitutional. With this ruling it was thought that school desegregation would ultimately occur quickly and judicially. Harvey, Harvey, King. "*The Impact of the Brown v. Board of Education Decision on Postsecondary Participation of African Americans.*" The Journal of Negro Education, Vol. 73, No. 3. 2004. This case overturned a previous ruling in 1896 in Plessy v. Ferguson declaring that it was legal to segregate blacks and white under the "separate but equal" doctrine

[20] Transcript of the Civil Rights Act of 1964: "An Act :To enforce the constitutional right to vote, to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accommodations, to authorize the Attorney General to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, to establish a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and for other purposes.
Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the 'Civil Rights Act of 1964'" (Center, The Dirksen Congressional. "Major Features of the Civil Rights Act of 1964." Congres Link. 13 November 2008 http://www.congresslink.org/print_basics_histmats_civilrights64text.htm)

[21] Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a civil rights activist, practicing non-violence in the fight for equal rights. He was assassinated in Thursday, April 4, 1968, while standing on his hotel room balcony, preparing to depart for a dinner with fellow activists. Frady, Marshall. *Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Penguin Group, 2002. p.204/5

With blacks now legally valued as equals to their white counterparts it seemed as if the tension between races would finally begin to subside, but inequalities in both education and treatment still existed. While the laws changed to include blacks as an equal race, the mores of the people could not be altered by a piece of paper. "…In the modern world the hard thing is to alter mores…This is because in the modern world the insubstantial and ephemeral fact of servitude is most fatally combined with the physical and permanent fact of difference in race. Memories of slavery disgrace the race, and race perpetuates memories of slavery."[22]

Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, legally the races were considered equal under the United States Constitution. With the enacting of these laws of equality and the amendments, race relations have improved dramatically since the abolishment of slavery, however, there is still much to be done.

While relations between the two races have drastically improved since the colonization of the United States the claims laid by Tocqueville in the mid-nineteenth century still carry some weight. Although blacks have attained their legal freedom, the black race in the United States is still fighting to catch up to the class that formerly oppressed their ancestors, and there is no more effective a way that they have done this than to assimilate into white society and mimic the whites whom they admire. "Plunged into this abyss of wretchedness, the Negro hardly notices his ill fortune; he was reduced to slavery by violence, and the habit of servitude has given him the thoughts and ambitions of a slave; he admires his tyrants even more than he hates them and finds his joy and pride in a servile imitation of his oppressors…His intelligence is degraded to the level of his soul." [23]

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[22] Tocqueville, p.341

[23] Tocqueville, p.317.

There still exists a definitive difference in the quality of living among whites and blacks as classes and although there may be exceptions, many blacks live in cities where the education, job markets, and annual income are well below that of predominantly white cities. They are kept in line and on track through violence, the same method used centuries ago to manage slaves, so while it is possible to say that America has come a long way in the last 200 years in recognizing all of its inhabitants as equals, it is also accurate to point out that the historical relations between the two races still plague this country today.

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