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Chapter 1: Abolitionist Movement

Introductory Overview Essay

The campaign to abolish slavery in the United States produced some of the most profound social, economic, and political changes ever accomplished by a reform movement. Slavery had existed through recorded history in all parts of the world and in territories that became the United States since the early 17th century. The economic investment at stake in the abolitionist debate in the early 19th century was almost beyond calculation. Practically all of the nation's major social institutions had adapted themselves to the existence of the ideas that regarded humans as property and unapologetic ownership of such property. The defense of slavery had facilitated the spread of virulent racist attitudes throughout the nation. The very union of Northern and Southern states was implicitly based on the former's tolerance of slavery and thus the abolitionist movement was correctly perceived as a dire threat to the nation's political institutions. Despite all of these obstacles, an abolitionist movement developed in the United States, endured opposition and even persecution, and gradually won over a growing number of adherents until the slavery debate precipitated the bloody Civil War of 1861-65, which resulted in the emancipation of all of the nation's slaves. While some of the problems caused by the two-and-a-half centuries of slavery remained for many more decades to be solved, abolitionism can be considered one of the nation's most successful reform movements and serves as a model for many others that followed it.

[A] Scholars Debate Abolitionism

Abolitionists have inspired a great quantity of scholarly study and debate. Historians have hotly disputed the abolitionists' motivation for undertaking their crusade in the 1830s, arguing for the primacy of economic, religious, ideological, or psychological forces. A substantial body of literature, drawing on a wide range of disciplines, has analyzed the personality of the American abolitionists both individually and collectively. In recent years historians have attempted to rehabilitate the abolitionists' reputations from long-standing accusations of mental instability.

In addition, historians have studied the evolution of abolitionist tactics but still strongly disagree about their effectiveness. Similar disputes mark scholarly evaluation of the factionalization that occurred in abolitionist ranks in the 1840s and 1850s as a consequence of tactical disagreements. Perhaps the most significant of these disputes concerns the dynamics leading some abolitionists, such as John Brown, to turn to violent means to pursue emancipation. Another major area of antislavery studies concerns the interaction of white abolitionists and Northern free blacks. There is an on-going quarrel among scholars over whether racial tensions deeply troubled abolitionist activities. A parallel series of research has demonstrated that gender-role issues likewise generated conflict in the abolitionist ranks.

While these remain important questions to be examined, a modern historical synthesis on the antislavery movement needs to broaden its focus. Historians only belatedly have begun to study the abolitionists' relation with more moderate antislavery groups in both the North and South. The inter-group dynamics between abolitionist radicals and antislavery moderates needs further exploration. For example, few scholars understand that the sectional schisms of most national religious denominations did not

convert most Northern church-goers into active abolitionists. The impact of abolitionist propaganda in educating the Northern public on how to interpret political events in the 1840s and 1850s as indicators of Southern aggression has never been fully appreciated by scholars.

Scholars still debate the abolitionists' impact on the coming of the Civil War, the emancipation of American slaves, post-war Reconstruction of the nation, and modern race relations. Many of these interpretative problems stem from unproductive attempts to separate the abolitionists out from the broader antislavery movement. Given the unsettled state of many issues raised by the antislavery movement, the topic remains a perpetually active one for students of American history.

[A] The Non-Debate over Slavery in Early America, 1619-1830

Since the beginning of slavery in the English colonies that would eventually become the United States, enslaved African Americans challenged their "unfree" status. Whether by running away, fighting with their masters, or engaging in violent uprisings, American slaves became the nation's first real abolitionists. Whether on their own or in covert alliances with foreigners, Native Americans, or sympathetic Northerners, such slave-abolitionists worked to undermine the system of human bondage. The threat of rebellion kept slaveholders off-guard at home and on the defensive in their relations with outsiders. The slaves' own subversive influence on the institution therefore was an undeniable asset to the abolitionist campaign to end slavery.

In colonial-era North America, the Society of Friends, otherwise known as the Quakers, stood almost alone in professing that slaveholding was incompatible with Christian piety. The Age of Enlightenment and the American Revolution (1775-83),

however, led more Americans to equate the slaves' right to freedom with the colonists' demand for independence. This ideological inspiration plus slavery's minimal role in the local economy permitted Northern states to begin gradual emancipation. Such antislavery action was undertaken in ways to minimize the impact on both the economy and the racial-order. Emancipation came so gradually in some areas in the 19th century that a small number of blacks remained enslaved in several Northern states at the start of the Civil War. Similar antislavery sentiments were voiced in the Chesapeake Bay region immediately following the Revolution by prominent political leaders, but failed to produce more than legislative debates.

Although the federal government prohibited slavery in the Northwest Territory in 1787 and banned the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1808, antislavery agitation dropped off due to the increasing profitability of Southern slavery. Most remaining antislavery sentiment became channeled through the American Colonization Society, a group founded in 1816 to liberate and transport blacks to Africa. While antislavery sentiment declined even in the North, important socioeconomic trends such as industrialization, western expansion, and political sectional rivalries produced outbursts like the Missouri Controversy (1819-21) when many Northerners complained against the negative influence of slavery over the country. National institutions, religious as well as political, however, effectively countered sectionally divisive trends. Likewise growing economic ties between Southern agriculture and the nascent Northern industries became powerful conservative influences in discussions of slavery.

[A] Birth of the Abolition Movement

Arguably African Americans, whether discontented slaves or their free black brethren, were the clearest antislavery voices in the early 19th century. The conspiracies led by Gabriel Prosser in Richmond (1800), by Denmark Vesey in Charleston (1822), and finally by Nat Turner (1831) all indicated significant levels of Southern slave resistance. In 1829 Boston free black David Walker championed slave insurrection as a final resort in his widely circulated *Appeal*. Other Northern free black leader such as James Forten, Robert Purvis, and Richard Allen launched a convention movement to unite blacks in voicing opposition to the colonization movement and to demand fair treatment from white Americans.

Veteran black opponents of slavery were joined by white allies as the modern American abolition movement emerged in the early 1830s as a by-product of religious revivalism popularly known as the Second Great Awakening. Revivalist tenets led abolitionists to see slavery as the product of personal sin and to demand emancipation as the price of repentance. Abolitionists asked churches to bar slave owners from their communions and all religious offices to pressure Southerners to manumit their human property. Abolitionists recognized that slavery received moral support from racial prejudice, and many lobbied to overturn the nation's racially discriminatory practices.

During the 1830s, abolitionists tried to reach and convert a mass audience. Condemning slavery on moral grounds, abolitionists pursued immediate emancipation through moral suasion tactics, e.g. appealing to the consciences of all Americans to regard slave owning as a sinful and unacceptable practice. The American Anti-Slavery Society, founded in 1833, attracted tens of thousands of members with lecturing agents, petition drives, and a wide variety of printed materials. Individual slaveholders and

national religious institutions--the chief targets of moral suasion--largely rejected abolitionist appeals. Instead, opponents tried to suppress antislavery agitation by enactments of the church and the state and even by mob violence. In the U.S. House of Representatives, for example, antislavery petitions were automatically tabled by direction of the infamous "Gag Rule," enacted in 1835, until the practice was overturned in 1844 thanks to the tireless lobbying against it by John Quincy Adams

African American activists became a significant element in the new campaign. Some had long records of public opposition to the colonization movement and to racial discrimination in the North. Fugitive slaves, such as Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown, provided compelling antislavery testimony, but black abolitionists sometimes encountered patronizing attitudes from their white counterparts. Thus, many shifted their labors to self-help and civil rights efforts while a few concentrated on separatist projects such as African emigration.

Thousands of women also braved public disapproval to participate in the early abolitionist campaign. Often veterans of moral reform activities, these women were inspired by religious principles and republican ideology. Like their African American counterparts, they encountered opposition within the movement. Although a few women attended the founding convention of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, the society initially barred women's membership. In response, abolitionist women formed local organizations, such as the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, which met at national conventions in 1837, 1838, and 1839. They also raised considerable money for the antislavery cause by sponsoring events such as picnics and bazaars.

[A] The Abolitionist Movement Shatters

Abolitionists encountered hostility from commercial, religious, and political leaders with ties to the slaveholding South. Such individuals encouraged and often led violent mob attacks on abolitionists in New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia as well as scores of smaller communities. A national convention of abolitionist women meeting in Philadelphia provoked the burning of the recently complete Pennsylvania Hall in May 1838. The preceding year, abolitionist editor Elijah P. Lovejoy had been murdered while defending his printing press from mob attack.

Wide-spread rejection of the antislavery program forced abolitionists to reconsider their moral suasion strategy. Many followed the lead of the Boston abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and abandoned the churches, believing them to be hopelessly corrupted by slavery. Similarly Garrisonians condemned the government's protection of slavery and counseled Northerners to refuse to vote as a way of expressing disapproval for the "proslavery" Constitution. The Garrisonians also championed other reforms, including temperance, pacifism, and extension of women's rights.

Many male abolitionists opposed a public role for female abolitionists--some held antifeminist views while others feared backlash from the link between antislavery and the even more unpopular cause of gender equality. The "woman's issue" complicated quarrels among abolitionists regarding tactics in the religious and political spheres, and these problems led to a schism between the factions. The Garrisonians won control of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1840, when opponents quit in protest of the election of a female officer. While this schism produced long-lasting hard feelings among abolitionist factions, it simultaneously freed the groups to pursue an even wider range of antislavery tactics.

Under Garrisonian control, the American Anti-Slavery Society committed itself to nonresistant political practices and advocated the dissolution of the union with slaveholding states Garrisonians also experimented with dramatic new propaganda techniques to awaken the Northern conscience. For example, Garrisonian militants invaded churches and disrupted Sunday services with unannounced and usually undesired antislavery lectures. In politics, pacifist or "nonresistant" principles led many Garrisonians to refuse to vote Garrison advocated the dissolution of the federal union to separate the North from the guilt of sustaining a proslavery Constitution and a proslavery nation.

Women played key roles in the American Anti-Slavery Society after 1840. Maria Weston Chapman of Boston served as one of the society's principal organizers and oversaw the operation of its main office. Lydia Maria Child edited the New York City-based *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, the Garrisonians' official newspaper for almost two years. Abby Kelley, Lucy Stone, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and dozens of other women braved insults and threats of physical harm in order to serve as traveling lecturers and organizers. These public figures became important role models for women seeking to overcome societal barriers.

Many non-Garrisonian abolitionists regrouped in a new organization, the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. These abolitionists continued to lobby religious institutions, and they gained valuable allies in the early 1840s, namely the well-organized Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian antislavery auxiliaries. Their agitation helped bring about sectional schisms in the Methodist and Baptist churches in the mid-1840s and the New School Presbyterians in 1857 that divided these denominations

into proslavery Southern groups and antislavery Northern groups (some of which endure to this day). Even after those divisions, however, abolitionists protested that the Northern church branches tolerated thousands of border-state slave owners in their fellowship.

Until the Civil War, abolitionists continued to lobby the religious institutions, agitating the fellowship issue inside the nation's network of missionary and religious publication societies. When those bodies resisted, abolitionists created a parallel network of religious benevolent enterprises, such as the American Missionary Association. Despite noteworthy gains during the 1850s, undiluted abolitionism remained a minority viewpoint in the Northern churches, and few blacks received equal treatment in Northern religious bodies.

While some non-Garrisonian abolitionists focused on reforming the churches, others shifted their energies to political antislavery reform. Beginning in the mid-1830s, abolitionists petitioned legislatures and interrogated political candidates on slavery-related issues. When no candidate expressed antislavery sentiments, abolitionists often protested by "scattering" their ballots among write-in candidates. When the federal government failed to respond to petitioning or lobbying, politically minded abolitionists formed an independent antislavery party in 1840.

The Liberty Party was launched in time for the presidential election of 1840 to pursue emancipation through partisan politics. Although some political abolitionists wanted to introduce economic considerations into arguments against slavery, the Liberty Party platforms in the 1840 and 1844 presidential elections differed little from those of the old antislavery societies. They called for an immediate abolition of slavery and for the repeal of all racially discriminatory legislation on political and moral grounds.

In the early 1840s, abolitionists were deeply divided over the fledgling Liberty Party. Most Garrisonians condemned any form of political activity as an implied endorsement of the legality of slavery. Many church-oriented abolitionists feared that antislavery political activity would compromise the moral focus of the movement. Some non-Garrisonian abolitionists were reluctant to support the Liberty Party because of their longstanding allegiance with the moralistic Whig Party. Despite the Liberty Party's ethically defined platform, few antislavery Whigs defected. Lacking united support from even the small abolitionist community, the new party performed poorly at the polls. In 1840, Liberty Party presidential candidate James G. Birney received just 7,000 votes (0.29 percent) and in 1844 only 62,000 (2.31 percent).

The Liberty Party was one of the first reform or radical movements to encounter the institutional obstacles to third-party success inherent in the U.S. political system. The winner-take-all elections and the federal governmental system made voting for single-issue candidates seem impractical. Even in regions far removed from slavery, the Liberty Party failed to elect many members to local or statewide offices. The small party, however, sponsored numerous newspapers, rallies, and debates to publicize the abolitionist principles of its candidates to force the slavery issue into political consciousness. Sometimes the party drew enough support away from the major parties to affect the outcome of elections. The most important instance of this was in the presidential election of 1844 when the almost 16,000 votes Birney attracted in New York probably tipped that state—and all its electoral votes—away from Whig Henry Clay, thereby electing the more strongly proslavery Democrat James K. Polk. Despite this ironic impact, the Liberty Party's focus on the single issue of slavery never became

strong enough to sway most Northern voters. The subsequent history of the antislavery

movement would be characterized by efforts of the abolitionists to broaden their support

without having to compromise their morally-defined standards too far.

[A] The Growth of Antislavery Politics

Events in the 1840s fostered growth of Northern political antislavery sentiment.

Public controversy over such issues as the congressional "gag rule" against antislavery

petitions, the annexation of Texas as a new slaveholding state, and the disposition of

territory won in the Mexican-American War (1846-48) made opposition to the "Slave

Power" more respectable in Northern circles. A growing proportion of Northerners

sought to halt the further spread of slavery into western territories. In 1848, a Liberty

Party faction led by Salmon P. Chase, Gamaliel Bailey, and Henry B. Stanton (husband

of Elizabeth Cady Stanton) advocated cooperation with political groups that opposed

extension of slavery into Western states. In a complicated series of intraparty battles, the

Liberty Party merged with antiextensionist Whigs and Democrats to create the Free Soil

Party. The new party dropped the Liberty Party's support for immediate abolition and for

black civil rights. With this more moderate stance, it attracted far more voters than the

Liberty Party.

Not all Liberty men could accept the compromised antislavery position of the new

party. As early as 1845, Birney, William Goodell, and Gerrit Smith had proposed to

broaden the Liberty Party platform into a program of universal reform. Calling

themselves the Liberty League, the faction advanced the theory that the Constitution did

not sanction slavery and that Congress therefore had the power to abolish slavery

everywhere in the Union. Although the Liberty League failed to capture control of the

Liberty Party or to block the Free Soil merger, its members continued to work for an undiluted abolitionist program. Running candidates until the Civil War, first under the old Liberty Party name and then with the Radical Abolitionist Party label, this tiny abolitionist faction urged larger antislavery parties to take stronger positions against slavery and racism.

The Garrisonians demonstrated an ideologically complicated response to the rise of political anti-extensionism. While most leading Garrisonians continued to boycott the ballot box, they acknowledged that growing Northern opposition to the spread of slavery could assist the eventual elimination of the entire institution. Dramatic Garrisonian antislavery propaganda against the "Slave Power" indirectly aided first the Free Soilers and then the rise of the new Republican Party in the 1850s by fanning Northern sectionalism.

Undeterred by the criticism of either the Garrisonians or the Liberty Leaguers, moderate political abolitionists built their electoral strength. The 1848 Free Soil ticket of former president Martin Van Buren and Charles Francis Adams received 290,000 votes, more than four times that of the Liberty Party in 1844. The passage of the Compromise of 1850, however, which initially appeared to resolve the question of the extension of slavery in the west, temporarily depressed Northern antislavery sentiment, and the party received only 156,000 votes in 1852. This trend was reversed in 1854 with passage of the controversial Kansas-Nebraska Act, which repealed the Missouri Compromise's bar on slavery in western territories north of the 36°30' latitude. The simultaneous rise of nativism weakened traditional party allegiances, and the Whig Party could no longer satisfy either Northern or Southern militants. The party performed poorly in the 1852

election and disintegrated amid the turmoil accompanying the Kansas-Nebraska Act. At the same time Free Soilers and antiextensionsists from the Whigs and Democrats merged to form the Republican Party. The new party attracted a broad range of voters, including many who were more concerned with economic development and curtailing competition with black labor than with ending slavery. Nevertheless the new party adamantly opposed the further spread of slavery. The Republicans attracted over 1.3 million votes in their first presidential campaign in 1856, a plurality of all Northern ballots, but not enough to stop the election of proslavery Democrat James Buchanan. The defeat of the young Republican Party in the 1856 election produced a new round of questioning of the best tactics to attack slavery.

[A] Violent Antislavery

The inability of antislavery politicians to block egregiously proslavery legislation by the national government helped produce a new, more militant strain of abolitionism. Since the nation's earliest days, an informal "Underground Railroad" had operated to assist fugitive slaves evade capture and reach shelter in safer areas of the United States or Canada. In some Northern communities, organized vigilance committees of free blacks forcefully confronted slave catchers. Abolitionists in the 1830s and 1840s scored some successes in persuading Northern local and state authorities to intervene to block the return of fugitive slaves to Southern owners. Such actions outrage the South, which successfully demanded passage of a stringent federal Fugitive Slave Act as part of the Compromise of 1850. The new law's gross violation of long accepted legal protections for the accused emboldened abolitionist militancy. In numerous highly publicized incidents during the 1850s, such as the Jerry McHenry Rescue in Syracuse and the

Shadrach Minkins Rescue in Boston, younger white abolitionists joined blacks in dramatic rescues of runaways from legal authorities. On several occasions, these rescue attempts resulted in violence and even killings.

Passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act likewise fanned abolitionist militancy. Settlers in the territory were empowered by the popular sovereignty provision of the law to decide whether slavery would be or banned, thereby inciting intense sectional competition over settlement there. After a Southern-settler minority backed by "Border Ruffian" interlopers from Missouri fraudulently won control of the territorial government of Kansas in early 1855, a well-organized "emigration" effort recruited hundreds of antislavery settlers for Kansas and armed them to resist the proslavery statehood movement there. For the next several years, abolitionist paramilitary groups in Kansas engaged in low-level guerrilla warfare against the proslavery territorial government supported by federal army units dispatched by Democratic presidents Franklin Pierce (1853-57) and James Buchanan (1857-61). Amidst this violence in "bleeding Kansas," the Supreme Court released its Dred Scott decision in 1857, further outraging abolitionists. The Court ruled that Congress lacked constitutional authority to ban slavery from any U.S. territory and went on to declare all blacks, free as well as slaves, ineligible for American citizenship. Abolitionist propaganda interpreted events in Kansas and the Dred Scott ruling as evidence that a "Slave-Power Conspiracy" dominated the national government. More and more abolitionists despaired that slavery could ever be ended by conventional political means.

One of the most militant abolitionist settlers was John Brown, who murdered four proslavery settlers in "Bleeding Kansas" in 1856. Committed to battling slavery through

violent means, Brown received clandestine financial support from antislavery veterans, mainly from the small Radical Abolitionist political faction. In 1857 and 1858, Brown assembled a small, racially integrated company that aimed to set up a base in the Southern Appalachian Mountains to aid escaping slaves. This plan evolved into an unsuccessful attack on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry in October 1859, which failed to spark an expected mass-slave insurrection. The fear that Brown's raid engendered in slave owners, however, made them exaggerate the threat that abolitionists were beginning to dominate the North. Such paranoia vastly strengthened Southern Nationalist sentiment that favored secession rather than acceding to a Northern-controlled federal government.

The majority of political abolitionists rejected violent tactics and remained content to work with moderate antislavery Northerners inside the Republican Party. Former Liberty Party leaders and radical abolitionists who defected from other major parties joined forces to resist conservative or racist elements in the Republican coalition. The actions of first the Pierce and then the Buchanan administrations had convinced a rapidly expanding proportion of Northerners that the federal government existed foremost to serve the interest of slaveholders. Belief in a "Slave-Power Conspiracy" fueled Northern "anti-Southern," if not antislavery, sentiment. While the selection of moderate Republican Abraham Lincoln of Illinois as the presidential candidate in 1860 worried some antislavery veterans nearly all political abolitionists and even some Garrisonians endorsed the Republican ticket.

[A] Secession, Civil War, and Emancipation

The combined influence of the Garrisonians, the religious abolitionists, and the political abolitionists helped provoke sectionalism and ultimately Southern secession in

late 1860 and 1861. The misperceived abolitionist threat fanned Southern Nationalism. Thanks to three decades of abolitionist agitation, important religious and political institutions, where Southerners and Northerners had once effectively cooperated, either split apart or were weakened. By the winter of 1860-61, Southern paranoia over the hidden antislavery intentions of even moderate Northerners like Abraham Lincoln allowed Southern Nationalist militants to lead their region into secession.

The Civil War, which began in 1861, caused considerable alterations in abolitionist strategies. All abolitionist factions realized that southern secession made slavery preeminently a political question. In particular, the abolitionists recognized that the war gave them an unprecedented opportunity to press the federal government to adopt an emancipation policy. Longtime pacifists joined veteran political abolitionists in endorsing the war and in calling for decisive antislavery action by the government. The secession of the Southern states permitted abolitionists to persuade most religious denominations to acknowledge the moral corruption of slaveholding and to endorse emancipation. When the Republican Congress and Lincoln administration hesitated to take such a revolutionary step and initially endorsed the restoration of the union as the war's sole goal, abolitionists worked to embolden the politicians by producing evidence of Northern public support for emancipation.

The culmination of this agitation came when Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862. Although that measure exempted at least one million of the nation's four million slaves from its provisions when it took effect on January 1, 1863 and was surrounded with an aura of military expediency, most abolitionists responded favorably to Lincoln's actions as a major step toward the

successful culmination of thirty years of their relentless campaigning. Abolitionists also actively advocated the use of black troops in the Union army. When Lincoln belatedly began recruiting African Americans in 1863, many younger abolitionists volunteered as officers for those black units. Abolitionists used the argument of black military service to demand equal rights for the former slaves.

A few abolitionists continued to complain that Lincoln still shrank from immediate and complete emancipation. These activists unsuccessfully attempted to replace Lincoln as the Republican nominee with a more committed antislavery candidate. After Lincoln's reelection in 1864, abolitionists worked to ensure the permanency of wartime emancipation by lobbying Congress to pass the Thirteenth Amendment to abolish slavery everywhere. For example, abolitionist women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. gathered over 400,000 signatures on pro-emancipation petitions introduced by Senator Charles Sumner in summer 1864. Anti-Southern and anti-slaveholder sentiment fanned by the growing casualty lists helped many Northerners overcome racially based misgivings and support emancipation as a means of punishing the South. The result of this combined pressure was congressional passage in February 1865 of the Thirteenth Amendment, abolishing slavery nationwide, and its ratification by the requisite number of states by December of the same year.

[A] Abolitionists in Reconstruction and After

While Garrison believed the Thirteenth Amendment had fulfilled the abolitionists' original goals, the American Anti-Slavery Society remained in operation to secure civil rights, citizenship, and the political equality of former slaves These were ultimately achieved with passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and ratification of the

15th Amendment in 1868 and 15th Amendment in 1870 (which secured black male suffrage). Veteran abolitionists also played prominent roles in efforts to educate the newly freed slaves. Abolitionist-led religious groups, such as the American Missionary Association, collected funds and dispatched teachers into the South. Garrisonians likewise played major roles inside various freedmen's aid societies and later the federal Freedmen's Bureau. These abolitionist efforts culminated in the founding of a number of colleges that would educate Southern black leaders for the next century and beyond.

In addition to their educational programs, abolitionists sought other ways to assist the emancipated slaves. Many abolitionists and their "Radical Republican" allies lobbied unsuccessfully for a program of Southern land confiscation and redistribution to provide the freedmen with sufficient economic power to safeguard their newly won political and civil rights. The obstruction by Southern-born president Andrew Johnson and the desire of Northern businessmen to have cotton production quickly revived frustrated abolitionist plans for a major socioeconomic transformation of the South. When Southern white resistance during postwar Reconstruction nullified many of the blacks' hard won gains, abolitionists vainly attempted to pressure Northern politicians not to sacrifice racial equality for the sake of sectional reconciliation. The sectional passions unleashed by the Civil War had enabled abolitionists to achieve the initial victory of emancipation but true racial equality would require more generations of struggle.

Abolitionism played a central role in the wide array of reform movements that characterized antebellum America. Sharing many of the same religious and ideological influences, individuals involved in temperance, anti-prostitution, and sabbatarianism frequently participated in the abolitionist campaign. Some abolitionists played prominent

roles in communitarianism and the land reform movement. The abolitionists were among the first champions of public education for African Americans. After the Civil War a few abolitionist veterans such as Wendell Phillips and James Redpath applied their abolitionist principles to promote the cause of exploited industrial workers. Probably the most significant intersection was between the abolitionist and women's rights campaigns. Not just male Garrisonians but many other abolitionists supported increased opportunities for women. The participation of thousands of women in the abolitionist crusade not only helped raise their consciousness about their own subordinate status, but trained them in effective strategies to win their rights.

The abolitionists left a rich legacy in the American reform tradition. They pioneered many of the propaganda techniques that became fixtures in the arsenal of later reform efforts. The abolitionists demonstrated the ability of reformers to cooperate effectively in groupings that crossed racial, gender, and class lines to advocate for the rights of oppressed groups. More specifically, the abolitionist movement planted the seeds for all forms of civil rights campaigns in the 20th century and after. The evolution of the Liberty Party into increasingly broader antislavery coalitions that eventually won major party status as the Republican Party set a standard of success to which all later third parties could aspire. Perhaps the most important contribution of the abolitionist movement to the broader American reform tradition was its demonstration that intensive and persistent questioning of the morality of a socioeconomic system that had existed all through recorded history could achieve substantive change.

See also ANTEBELLUM CIVIL RIGHTS EFFORTS; BENEVOLENT EMPIRE; RECONSTRUCTION ERA CIVIL RIGHTS EFFORTS.

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