Race and Gender Roles in the Civil War

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Period 1
During the 17th and 18th centuries, slavery was a constant controversial issue.

- 1860- US census: slaves in the lower south – 2,312,352 (47% of total population), slaves in the upper south – 1,208,758 (29% of the total population)

- New states

- The clear agricultural and industrial differences between the north and south
  - Union and Confederacy Map
  - 1808: Slave Trade Ban
  - Fugitive Slave Act
Build up to the Civil War
Fugitive Slave Act (Sept 18, 1850)

- Strengthens the enforcement of the fugitive slave clause in the Constitution (Art. IV, sec. 2), makes the federal government responsible for the apprehension and return of all escaped slaves, and facilitates the job for slave catchers. The fugitives in question are denied a jury trial.
African Americans in the war

- July 17th, 1862: Second Confiscation and Militia Act
- Contrabands
- Cleburne’s Memorial
- Racial Prejudice
Cleburne’s Memorial

- Stated that African American slaves could enlist in the Confederate army in exchange for their freedom
- Confederate Major General Patrick R. Cleburne proposed Cleburne’s memorial
  - November 1864: Cleburne died in Battle of Franklin
  - 3 months later (February, 1865): Robert E. Lee passed the bill to enlist black soldiers
Racial Prejudice

- 1863: Confederate Congress threatens to severely punish officers of black regiments and enslave black soldiers
- President Lincoln retaliated with **General Order 233**
  - General Order 233: threatened reprisal on Confederate POW (prisoners of war) if any black troops were mistreated
- Black soldiers were generally treated much harsher than white soldiers

African Americans in the war
TO COLORED MEN!

FREEDOM,
Protection, Pay, and a Call to Military Duty!

On the 1st day of January, 1863, the President of the United States proclaimed Freedom to over Three Millions of Slaves. This decree is to be enforced by all the power of the Nation. On the 21st of July last he issued the following order:

PROTECTION OF COLORED TROOPS.

"WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,"
"WASHINGTON, JULY 21."

"General Order, No. 233.

The following order of the President is published for the information and government of all concerned:

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, JULY 21.

"It is the duty of every Government to give protection to its citizens, of whatever class, color, or condition, and especially to those who are duly organized as soldiers in the public service. The law of nations, and the usages and customs of war, as carried on by civilized powers, permit no distinction as to color in the treatment of prisoners of war as public enemies. To sell or enslave any captured person on account of his color, is a relapse into barbarism, and a crime against the civilization of the age.

"The Government of the United States will give the same protection to all its soldiers, and if the enemy shall sell or enslave any one because of his color, the offense shall be punished by retaliation upon the enemy's prisoners in our possession. It is, therefore, ordered, for every soldier of the United States, killed in violation of the laws of war, a rebel soldier shall be executed; and for every one enslaved by the enemy, or sold into slavery, a rebel soldier shall be placed at hard labor on the public works, and continued at such labor until the other shall be released and receive the treatment due to prisoners of war.

"ABRAHAM LINCOLN"

"By order of the Secretary of War."
Second Confiscation and Militia Act

- Freed slaves in the South
- July 22, 1862: Lincoln proposed Emancipation Proclamation
- May 1863: Bureau of Colored Troops
  - Approx. 179,000 African American soldier (10% of the Union Army)
  - 19,000 served in the Navy
  - 40,000 African American deaths
Contrabands

- Term commonly used to describe escaped slaves
- Was first coined by William Budd
- The first known contrabands were found at Fort Monroe
  - Contraband Camps
Fort Monroe

- Three slaves (Frank Baker, James Townsend, and Sheppard Mallory) traveled across Hampton Roads harbor from Confederate-occupied Norfolk County.
- September 25, 1861- Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles issued directive $10 per month.
  - Men: $8
  - Women: $4
Contraband Camps

- Following the Emancipation Proclamation, thousands of African Americans enlisted for the Union
  - The Union allowed soldier’s families to take refuge at contraband camps
    - They were fed, clothed, and (in some cases) educated
- By the end of the war, there were more than 100 contraband camps
Women in the war

- The definition of a “true woman” began to shift
- Women soldiers
  - An estimated 450-700 women soldiers
  - Sarah Emma Edmonds
- Hundreds of women spies for both the Union and the Confederacy
  - Harriet Tubman
“True womanhood”

- Women had to take over new jobs
  - Working in the fields, government civil service, and (new) nursing
    - USSC and Women’s Central Association for Relief
  - Women became head of the household (particularly in the South on plantations)
    - Organized and ensured slaves were doing their work
- Women began relocating to big cities and working in factories
  - Became more independent and assertive
    - Protesting poor working conditions and lack of food and supplies

Women in the war
Harriet Tubman

- Harriet Tubman Biography
Sarah Emma Edmonds

- Born in Brunswick, Canada in December, 1841
  - Left to America to avoid arranged marriage, changing her last name, Edmondson, to Edmonds

- Disguised herself as a man to be undetected and get a job
  - Worked in Hartford, Connecticut as a traveling Bible salesman

- An ardent Unionist, Edmonds decided to enlist
  - Joined 2nd Michigan Infantry as a 3 year recruit
  - March, 1862: Edmonds is assigned as a mail carrier
  - May 5, 1862: Battle of Williamsburg – Edmonds fought alongside her comrades
  - Spring of 1863 – Edmonds contracted malaria
    - Left so as not to be discovered (charged with desertion)

- Joined the United States Christian Commission as a female nurse

- 1876: attended reunion of 2nd Michigan and her comrades helped to get rid of the desertion charge and apply for a military pension
  - 1897: Edmonds was admitted into the Grand Army of the Republic (only woman member)
Native Americans in the war

- 1861: Cherokees, Chickasaws, Choctaws, Creeks, and Seminoles joined the Confederacy
  - Reasons: Some tribe members owned slaves
  - Confederate states offered to pay all annuities the US government had been provided and let the tribes send delegates to the Confederate Congress

- After the war, these tribes were severely punished
  - Seminoles had to sell their reservation for 15 cents an acre
  - Creeks had to sell for 50 cents an acre
  - Other tribes were required to give half their territory in Oklahoma
  - All tribes had to allow railroads to cut through their land
Foreign involvement

- **France**
  - Opinion varied based on political values regarding democracy
    - Conservative supporters: Confederacy
    - Republicans supporters: Union
  - 1861-1865: the Union blockade stopped most cotton supplies to French textile mills.
  - Famine du coton (cotton famine): resulted in cotton prices doubling by 1862 (many wanted a quick southern victory)
  - Throughout the war, France remained officially neutral
    - US had forewarned that recognition meant war and the British had rejected intervention
Origin: This is an authentic photograph taken by a Union photographer. It is of the African American contrabands. It was taken in 1864 at a Union camp.

Purpose: The photographer took this picture to show the Union that the contrabands are assisting with the war effort. The ultimate intent the photographer had was to gain more support for the war and the cause itself.

Content: The evidence of the photographer’s intent is found in the race of the people whose photo was taken (African American) and in the old Union uniforms that the contrabands are seen wearing.

Value: The photographer took this picture so as to document the Civil War. The Civil War was the first American war that was photographed hence, there is an abundance of photographs of people of all races from this time period. The pictures from the Civil War were extremely valuable because they helped to document the war vividly.

Limitation: The photographer has a very obvious bias towards the Union. Being that this is a picture of contrabands from the Civil War, the photographer had to have a level of respect for the black slaves which differs greatly from a Confederate’s opinion of the black slaves as property. Despite the bias, the picture is still a solid and reliable source. It provides insight into the events and life style of the people in the Civil War.


