General Overview of Mexican-American War: Analytical Essay

Part 1.

Throughout our lifetime, we learn about history and its significance, were taught about key terms and events that had happened which forged and shaped our world today. Three major terms and events that happened in our history that shaped the world we live in and started a chain of events were slavery, abolition, and colinization.

Slavery dates back all the way to the first civilizations in 3500 BCE in the country of mesopotamia. During the 1700's, slavery was at its all time high, with the invention of the cotton gin, cotton became a "cash crop" in the deep south which started to increase the supply and demand towards enslaved people in the southern states. Due to cotton being sold internationally, the reach for the slave economy was vast, the United States had connections from all over the world. During 1790-1859, many enslaved African Americans were sold to slave owners in Virginia, Many white men were given economic opportunities due to the domestic slave trade. "Since the conditions of slavery—as well as chances of escape—got progressively worse farther south, slaveholders in the Upper South wielded the notion of being "sold down the river" as a threat to keep their slaves in line. All told, the movement of slaves from the Upper South to the Deep South made up one of the largest forced internal migrations in the United States."

Abolition started as a anti-slavery social reform movement in the mid-18th century where it lasted until the year 1865 when slavery was completely exiled. Abolition would focus on the religious morals and beliefs that "everyone was created equal in the eyes of God." Antislavery sentiments would be passed and shared between the Mennonites, Quakers, Presbyterians, Baptists, Amish, and other practitioners of Protestant denominations. Throughout the years, abolitionist sentiments would soon evolve into antislavery societies and would later carry on into the early 19th century. During this movement, some abolitionists believed that colonization was an unjust movement and stating that taking African Americans away from their place of birth was wrong.

Colonization was considered to be the early efforts of the previously mentioned abolition and its movement. .In 1817 the American Colonization Society was formed, they would colonize on the west coast of Africa in 1822 in the country called Monrovia which would later be called Liberia in the present day. Today, colonization has changed drastically, although it is not mentioned as much in school lectures, websites or even news broadcasts, it is still very much a thing.

Today in 2019, these three factors that factors that help our future come to be are still happening. Slavery my still be happening all around the world by keeping enslaved people and even in other ways such as sweatshops, child slavery, and forced marriages. People today are still trying their very best to stop all forms of slavery including the ones that were listed previously. Lastly, colonization does not seem to be happening as much as the other two, however, it was still a turning point in our history that brought us where we are today.

Part 2.

Scott landed with a US naval fleet several weeks beforehand. He bombarded the coastal stronghold of Veracruz and then fought his way inland toward the capital. Scott actually followed the same route that Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes took more than 300 years earlier. Winfield Scott's campaign to Mexico City was just one of three fronts in the two-year-long, continent-spanning effort of the United States to take Mexican territory by force. The other two fronts were in California and New Mexico. After the two nations made peace by signing the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in mid 1848, the United States gained over a million square miles of new territory, a landmass larger than the Louisiana Purchase. For Mexico, this war was a catastrophic defeat, which resulted in the loss of about 1/3 of its total area. The Mexican-American War doesn't really loom large in American memory, compared to the Revolutionary War or the Civil War, but it was a transformative event in the history of the United States and North America. On the scale of national politics, the war led to political realignment, and eventually, the Civil War. But on a human scale, it led to transformations in the lives of people who lived in the West who went to bed one day in Mexico and woke up the next day in the United States. National boundaries shifted under their feet. For those people, the outcome of the war meant new laws, customs, new friends and enemies, and even the loss of rights and privileges. So let's dive a little deeper into the causes and effects of the Mexican-American War. The war began in April of 1846. A Mexican cavalry brigade attacked US forces who were under the command of General Zachary Taylor across the Rio Grande River from the town of Matamoros, Mexico. After this attack, President James K. Polk sent a war message to Congress. He fumed that the Mexican troops had invaded our territory and shed American blood on American soil. Now back up a minute. You may be wondering, as many keen observers did at the time, what exactly were US forces doing there near Rio Grande River in the first place? And the answer to that reveals the two major causes of the war, Texas annexation and Manifest Destiny. Let's start by talking about Texas annexation. American settlers, many of whom were slave owners, had been moving to Texas since the 1820s, when the region was still controlled by Spain. After Mexican independence, the country outlawed slavery. But the American settlers resisted the Mexican government's authority. In 1836, they rebelled and won independence for Texas. They requested the United States annex the new nation shortly thereafter, but adding another slave state to the Union was politically dangerous for the administration at that time. So Texas remained an independent nation until 1845. In 1845, Democratic president James K. Polk took office. Now Polk was an ardent expansionist. He was a believer in Manifest Destiny, this idea that God wanted the United States to expand across the North American continent. Polk wanted to annex Texas, which his administration undertook immediately. He also desperately wanted California, which was a hub of commerce on the Pacific Ocean. This is actually before gold was discovered there. So Polk sent a representative to the Mexican government offering to buy California. But Mexico said California was not for sale. Now Polk was determined to get this territory with blood or money. So he came up with an alternate plan. The border between Mexico and Texas was under dispute. So Polk directed General Zachary Taylor to go down into this disputed territory and provoke hostilities. And that's exactly what happened when the Mexican cavalry attacked Taylor's forces. As far as Mexico was concerned, Taylor's troops were invading their country, and they had no choice but to defend it. Despite Polk's war message saying that American blood had been shed on American soil, many US politicians were also skeptical about who started the war and where. A young Whig congressman from Illinois named Abraham Lincoln demanded that Polk show him the exact spot where American blood had been shed. The war that ensued was longer, costlier, and

deadlier than the US government had estimated, which is often the case with wars. At its conclusion, Polk had achieved his vision for Manifest Destiny. In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the war, the United States agreed to pay Mexico $15 million, and in exchange, Mexico ceded Texas, California, and most of the modern-day Southwest to the United States. So what were the effects of this war? Well, the addition of this Mexican cession territory had far-reaching consequences for both the United States and the residents of the West. The existing resident of the territory, including Mexicans, Native Americans, and the descendants of Spanish colonists, found that life under the rule of the United States could be very different than under the rule of Mexico. Where Mexican law had abolished slavery and proscribed equality under the law for people regardless of color, the Texas constitution permitted slavery and denied civil rights to non-white residents. For other residents of the territory, life didn't change much at all. Huge swathes of the West were actually controlled by Native American nations, like the Comanche Empire, which didn't care whether the distant government who claimed their territory on paper was located in Mexico City or in Washington DC. For the United States government, the addition of this new territory was political kryptonite. Both Northerners and Southerners were convinced that the opposite region was conspiring to limit their economic opportunities in the West. During the war, Congressman David Wilmot of Pennsylvania introduced a resolution in the House that would prohibit slavery in any territory gained from the conflict. The reaction to the Wilmot Priviso showed just how big the sectional divide in the country was becoming, since party lines broke down entirely. Northerners, Whig, and Democrat alike voted for the Wilmot Proviso, and Southerners, Whig, and Democrat alike voted against it. Ultimately, the proviso passed in the House was defeated in the Senate. And then gold was discovered in California, just before the end of the war, sending hordes of prospectors West and making statehood for California an urgent issue that would soon upset the balance of power between free and slave states in Congress. In other words, we can draw a direct line from the Mexican War to the breakdown of the second party system, which was replaced by a solidly Southern Democratic party and a new Northern Republican party, and from there to the Civil War.

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