

# Abolition

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The Abolition movement wanted to put an end to (abolish) slavery. The success of the anti-slavery campaign in Great Britain, which prohibited the slave trade in 1807, significantly strengthened the cause in the United States. The U.S. government outlawed slave trade the following year, and in the 1830s the revival of evangelical religion in the North gave the movement to emancipate African American slaves an even stronger impetus. Those Abolitionists believed that it violated Christian beliefs for one human being to own another. They called for an end to slavery, although the system was crucial to the agrarian economy of the southern states.

Leaders of the abolition movement included journalist William Lloyd Garrison (1805-79), founder of an influential anti-slavery journal; Theodore Dwight Weld (1803-95), leader of student protests and organizer of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society; and brothers Arthur and Lewis Tappan (1786-1865; 1788-1873), prominent New York merchants who co-founded the American Anti-Slavery Society. Writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-96), author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851-52), helped strengthen the abolitionist cause and were instrumental in swaying public opinion. But the nation remained mostly split along North-South lines. A middle ground was occupied by the Free-Soilers, who would tolerate slavery in the South but believed it should not be extended into new parts of the country. The slavery controversy deepened with the Compromise of 1850, which proved a poor attempt to assuage tensions. The legislation was prompted by the question of whether slavery should be extended into Texas and into territories gained in the Mexican War (1846-48). The Congressional compromise allowed for Texas to be a slave state. California was to be admitted as a free state (slavery was prohibited). Voters in New Mexico and Utah would decide the slavery question themselves, while the slave trade was to be prohibited in Washington, DC. Congress also passed a strict fugitive slave law. The question arose again in 1854 when Kansas and Nebraska were added to the Union. Kansas became a proving ground for both sides, but the slavery question remained unresolved. In the hands of some activists the abolition movement became violent: In 1859 ardent abolitionist John Brown (1800-59) led a raid on the armory at Harper's Ferry (in present-day West Virginia), which failed to emancipate slaves by force. The slavery question for the South was not answered until President Abraham Lincoln (1861-65) issued the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863. The Thirteenth Amendment, passed by Congress in January 1865, banned slavery throughout the United States.

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