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Despite their surface unity in supporting the war and their general agreement on most economic matters, the Republicans disagreed sharply with one another on the issue of slavery. "Radical Republicans"—led in Congress by such men as Representatives Charles Sumner of Massachusetts and Benjamin Stevens of Pennsylvania and Senators George F. Edmunds of Vermont, Thaddeus Clapp of Connecticut, and George D. Barnes of California—favored a more cautious policy—in part to placate the slave states that remained, precariously, within the Union.

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Nevertheless, momentum began to gather behind emancipation early in the war. In 1861, Congress passed the **Confiscation Act**, which declared that all slaves used for "insurrectionary" purposes (that is, in support of the Confederate military effort) would be considered freed. Subsequent laws in the spring of 1862 abolished slavery in the District of Columbia and the western territories and provided for the compensation of owners. In July 1862, Radicals pushed through Congress the second Confiscation Act, which declared free the slaves of persons supporting the insurrection and authorized the seizure of their property. As a result, the Radicals gained increasing influence within the Republican Party—a development that did not go unnoticed by the president, who decided to seize those parts of the Confederacy already under Union control (Tennessee, western Virginia, and southern Louisiana). It applied, in short, only to slaves over whom the Union had no control. Still, the document was of great importance. It clearly and unequivocally established that the war being fought not only to preserve the Union but also to eliminate slavery.

Eventually, as federal armies occupied much of the South, the proclamation became a major factor in the liberation of slaves. Instead, the war helped African Americans liberate themselves, and they did so in increasing numbers as the war progressed. Many slaves were taken from their plantations and put to work as workers building defenses and other chores. Once transported to the front, many of them found ways to escape across Northern lines, where they were treated as "contraband"—goods seized from people who had no right to them. They could not be returned to their masters. By 1862, the Union army often flocked to join them by the thousands, often whole families. Some of them joined the Union forces. Once transported to the front, many of them found ways to escape across Northern lines, where they were treated as "contraband"—goods seized from people who had no right to them. They could not be returned to their masters. By 1862, the Union army often flocked to join them by the thousands, often whole families. Some of them joined the Union forces.

Even in areas not directly affected by the proclamation, the anti-slavery impulse gained practical reality and led directly to the freeing of thousands of slaves.

On September 22, 1862, after the Union victory at the Battle of Antietam, the president announced his intention to use his war powers to issue an executive order freeing all slaves in the Confederacy. And on January 1, 1863, he formally signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared forever free the slaves inside the **Emancipation Proclamation**. The Emancipation Proclamation did not apply to the Union slave states; nor did it affect those parts of the Confederacy already under Union control (Tennessee, western Virginia, and southern Louisiana). It applied, in short, only to slaves over whom the Union had no control. Still, the document was of great importance. It clearly and unequivocally established that the war being fought not only to preserve the Union but also to eliminate slavery.

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THE POLITICS OF EMANCIPATION

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Union army, others simply stayed with the troops until they could find their way to free states. When the Union captured New Orleans and much of southern Louisiana, slaves refused to work for their former masters, even though the Union occupiers had not made any provisions for liberating African Americans.

By the end of the war, two Union slave states (Maryland and Missouri) and three Confederate states occupied by Union forces (Tennessee, Arkansas, and Louisiana) had abolished slavery. In 1865, Congress finally approved and the states ratified the **The Thirteenth Amendment** Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery in all parts of the United States. After more than two centuries, legalized slavery finally ceased to exist in the United States.

AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE UNION CAUSE

About 186,000 emancipated blacks served as soldiers, sailors, and laborers for the Union forces. Yet in the first months of the war, African Americans were largely excluded from the military. A few black regiments eventually took shape in some of the Union-occupied areas of the Confederacy. But once Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, black enlistment increased rapidly and the Union military began actively to recruit African American soldiers and sailors in both the North and, where possible, the South.

Some of these men were organized into fighting units, of which the best known was probably the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Infantry, which (like most black regiments) had a white commander: Robert Gould Shaw, a member of an aristocratic Boston family.

Most black soldiers, however, were assigned menial tasks behind the lines, such as digging trenches and transporting water. Even though many fewer blacks than whites died in combat, the African American mortality rate was actually higher than the rate for white soldiers because so many black soldiers died of diseases contracted while working long, arduous hours in unsanitary conditions. Conditions for blacks and whites were unequal in



AFRICAN AMERICAN TROOPS Although most of the black soldiers who enlisted in the Union army performed noncombat jobs behind the lines, some black combat regiments—members of one of which are pictured here—fought with great success and valor in critical battles. (The Library of Congress)