



Attacking Our Nation's Founders

During Sen. Bernie Sanders' campaign visit to Liberty University, he told the students that our nation was created on racist principles. Students at a Christian-based university, such as Liberty, do not often hear the founders-as-racists argument. But it is featured at many other universities, as well as primary and secondary schools. Most often, the hate-America teachings are centered on the fact that slavery is a part of our history. What is left untaught is: Slavery was a routine part of human history. Blacks were the last people to be enslaved. Plus, our Founding Fathers struggled mightily over the issue of slavery. Let us look at some of that struggle.



George Washington said, "I can only say that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it." Thomas Jefferson, John Jay, Patrick Henry and others were highly critical of slavery, describing it as a "disease of ignorance," "an inconsistency not to be excused" and a "lamentable evil." George Mason said, "The augmentation of slaves weakens the states; and such a trade is diabolical in itself, and disgraceful to mankind." James Madison, in a speech at the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, declared, "We have seen the mere distinction of color made in the most enlightened period of time, a ground of the most oppressive dominion ever exercised by man over man." Benjamin Rush said: "Domestic slavery is repugnant to the principles of Christianity.... It is rebellion against the authority of a common Father."

In their effort to create a union, the delegates at the Constitutional Convention had to negotiate many contentious, deal-breaking issues. Slavery was chief among them. Southern states made clear that they would not vote to ratify a constitution that abolished slavery or ended the slave trade. Northern delegates wanted to end slave trading and did not want slaves counted at all for congressional apportionment. Southern delegates wanted slaves counted as whole people. That would have given the



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South greater political power in the House of Representatives.

Convention delegate James Wilson offered a compromise whereby each slave would be counted as three-fifths of a person for the purposes of determining the number of representatives a state would have in the House. This rule applied only to slaves. Freemen, whether black or white, would be counted as whole people. Another compromise was to set 1808 as the year to abolish the slave trade.

Contrary to what academic hustlers teach, the Three-Fifths Compromise was not a statement about human worth; it was an attempt to reduce the pro-slavery representation in Congress. By including only three-fifths of the total number of slaves in congressional calculations, Southern states were actually being denied a greater number of representatives in Congress and hence electoral votes for selecting a president.

There's little question that slavery is an abomination and a gross violation of human rights, but the founders had to decide whether there would be a union or not. Had morality been their sole guide, they might have taken a hardened, nonnegotiable stand against slavery, but then the Constitution would have never been ratified and a union would not have been formed.

A question that we might ask those academic hustlers who use slavery to attack and criticize the legitimacy of our founding is: Would black Americans, yesteryear and today, have been better off if the Constitution had not been ratified — with the Northern states having gone their way and the Southern states having gone theirs — and, as a consequence, no union had been created? I think not.

Ignorance of our history, coupled with an inability to think critically, has provided considerable ammunition for those who want to divide us in pursuit of their agenda. Their agenda is to undermine the legitimacy of our Constitution in order to gain greater control over our lives. Their main targets are the nation's youths. The teaching establishment, at our public schools and colleges, is being used to undermine American values.

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