



Thomas Jefferson and Slavery

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Seminar paper from the year 2008 in the subject American Studies - Culture and Applied Geography, grade: 1,7, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (Fachbereich Angewandte Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft in Germersheim), course: 'Democratic Vistas' in American Cultural History, 9 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: Thomas Jefferson can be considered as one of the most important Presidents of the United States of America.

He was born in 1743 in Virginia and after having been enrolled in The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, he started his political career at the end of the 1760s. In 1769, Jefferson was elected as a legislator. In 1775, he was one of the delegates at the second Continental Congress. Four years later, Jefferson became Governor of Virginia. In 1797, he was elected Vice-President and in 1801, he finally became the third President of the United States of America (Dumbauld XI-XVI).

Jefferson was one of the Founding Fathers of the United States. He lived during the time of revolution and American efforts to reach independence from Great Britain and to establish democracy in the United States.

During his life, he published many writings on democracy, liberty, and equality. "The central feature of Jefferson's political creed was his concern for human freedom." (qtd. in Dumbauld IX). In 1774, he wrote his first published work A Summary View of the Rights of British America. Two years later, he became famous for writing the main part of the Declaration of Independence. Furthermore, he published the book Notes on the State of Virginia and during his presidency, his First Inaugural Address was very important. In all these writings, Jefferson emphasized democracy, liberty and equality, but he had many problems realizing his concepts, especially with regard to slavery, which became a fundamental problem for Jefferson and in the United States of America in general.

In the following work, Jefferson's above mentioned writings will be analyzed with regard to slavery and the inconsistency in his writings about the issue of slavery will be demonstrated. Furthermore, his personal behavior towards bondage will be presented by analyzing some family letters.

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