Name

Professor name

Subject

Date

Hist assessment paper

1. Document# 1

Daniel Webster opposes doctrine of the ability of state to nullify federal laws. He justifies the claims by emphasizing on the absurdity. He states, “the people's Constitution, the people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people” (Webster). The central argument made by Webster is that same source is used by the government and state government for deriving power. He has focused on the constitution for all which means no individual state of war is apparent. Posterity according to him could only be ensured by promoting unity and preserving union for the generations. He claimed that without constitutions governments are nothing more than confederations. Constitution’s power will be limited when it comes to exert control over government related decisions.

South Carolina justified its argument by stating that the congress was exceeding its power by imposing taxes on South Carolina while only constitution had the right of making supreme laws. South Carolina was supporting free trade because it was generating high profits. The imposition of taxes in the region resulted in criticism from the people of the region. South Carolina blamed that the government was crossing its boundaries which makes the power of constitution less significant. They claimed that the federal laws are nullified because the constitution has violated the actual meaning and intent of the law. The failure of congress to equally impose tax burden on states also reveals the weakness of the laws. Constitution according to them had become unfair because it was not taking fair decisions. I think the arguments made by the people of South Carolina were more valid because taxes were imposed unequally that reflected congressmen’s intentions of collecting more revenues. This proved that the congressmen had greater power than constitution.

1. Document# 3

The examination of 1851 political cartoon depicts that southerners argued against Northern protest of 1850 fugitive slave act. The cartoon exhibits differences between the views of slaveholders and abolitionist. It reveals that the slaveholders were willing to recognize the US laws for keeping slaves. However the reaction of abolitionist were different because they were advocating anti-slavery agenda. The law was declared as unjust that evoked the conscience and beliefs of the antislavery proponents. South was involved in the conspiracy of spreading slavery through coercion irrespective of the voting of North. the image can be related to the issues of nullification raised on the document# 1 and document# 2. By using the evidence from first document it can be claimed that the Fugitive Slavery Act was flawed because it did not followed the simple rule that constitutions is “people's Constitution, the people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people” (Webster). The act was developed for addressing the powerful slaveholders only. Document# 2 can be related to the cartoon because the Fugitive Slave Act proved that the congressmen will have more power than the constitution. The laws that are for their own interest make them null and void. This proves that congressmen can always exceed their power.

The cartoon can be related to the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 that gave the right of keeping slaves to the owners. The cartoon represents the same themes of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in which dispute occurred between the pro-slavery and anti-slavery supporters. This act opened dispute and violence in the region. In the end anti-slavery settlers outnumbered the supporters of slavery. Therefore the constitution was drawn up. The image can be used for understanding how slavery act divided the settlers that made laws ineffective.

1. Document# 5

Dred Scott Decision support the doctrine of nullification in Document# 5 that limits the ability of federal government to limit expansion of slavery. This is because the popular case Dred Scott v. Sandford slaves can be treated as property who are lacking any legal rights. This gives every power to the white citizens to treat them in anyway. The case proved that whites are not bound to respect slaves because they were only considered as commodities (Kennedy). The laws were unconstitutional and were declared as nullified. This also limited the ability of the federal state to restrict expansion of slavery or to impose penalty over white owners who mistreated their slaves. Supreme court had assigned the position of non-citizen to the African-Americans. The court, “established that any person of African descent, enslaved or free, could not be a citizen of the United States”. This reflects that the blacks were not accepted as American citizens and court recognized them as property (Rubin).

Fredrick Douglas finds inconsistencies with the founding principles of the nations. He claimed that the great principles of political freedom and justice are not applicable over the blacks. He stated, “the rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me” (M. Douglas). The arguments made by Douglas reveals that the principles of founding fathers were not fair because people belonging to African decent were not enjoying the same level of freedom (Kendi). They lacked freedom of choice because white masters controlled them. Dred Scott’s decision confirms Douglas’s claims that the great principles are unjust and unfair. Scott was denied of freedom because he was black and the court declared blacks as non-citizens (Douglas). This case supports Douglas’s arguments because Africans were never accepted as humans.

1. Document# 7

According to William H. Seward irresistible conflict claimed that United States will either become entirely a slave holding nation or entirely free labor nation. He mentioned, “the laborers who are enslaved are all negroes, or persons more or less purely of African derivation” (Document# 7). Seward in his speech accepted that slaves are only black people which makes a clear distinction between them and whites. The reason for prevalence of slavery is its acceptance by the black people. However, he also alarmed that a free-labor system will create resistance in African decent. He stated that slavery is distrustful and dangerous because it lacks uncertainty. Therefore free labor is better because it works as a system having certainty (Gallagher).

Alexander Stephens defined that confederacy is based on “the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man” (Document# 8). By confederacy he attempted to analyze the American system in which black were never considered equal as whites (Blair). Stephens mentions, “with us, all of the white race, however high or low, rich or poor, are equal in the eye of the law. Not so with the negro” (Document# 8). The purpose of confederacy was to create a clear line between blacks and whites (Holton).

President Lincoln initiated Civil War in an effort to restore union and as a moral imperative. He aimed at imposing the true meaning of equality advocated by the American forefathers. He stated that the purpose for creating America was that all men are equal. He united people to fight for the freedom that is for bringing justice and equality to all. Lincoln mentioned, “a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal” (Lincoln). The purpose of civil war was to end slavery and give the status of American citizenship to the Africans.

1. Reflection

I agree that states had the power of nullifying federal laws. Document# 1 reveals initial attempts of Daniel Webster to nullify the laws of constitution. I realized that constitutional laws were weak and criticized by different people in the history. South Carolina also rejected the validity of these laws when congressmen imposed heavy taxes. I learned from Document# 1 and 2 that the constitutional laws are more strong enough to restrict the power of the congressmen and political leaders. This because evident when they exceeded their power of imposing heavy taxes.

After reading the documents I managed to learn about the history of slavery in America and important events that strengthened its foundations. In Document# 3 I learned about the political cartoon of 1851 that was a response to 1850 Fugitive Slave Act. The document can be connected to the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 that divided the slaveholders and abolitionists. By reading the document the history of African slaves is revealed who were lacking freedom. The popular case of Dred Scott v. Sandford also added to my knowledge that blacks were treated not more than property. I think this was one of the reason for blacks to realize their status. This becomes visible when Fredrick Douglas criticized the great principles of fathers of nation. Lincoln was the first leader who stood for ending slavery and bringing equality for the blacks (Foner). I think Civil War had many positive consequences such as abolition of slavery was not possible without that. After than most of Africans became free labor and better conditions for work were developed (Padden). I also think that this war played significant role in lives of black people by giving them the right to education and freedom. They made progress socially and economically.

Work Cited

Blair, William. Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861–1865. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Douglas, Feredrick. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. 1845.

Douglas, Massey. Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System. . New York: Russels: Sage Foundation, 2007.

Foner, Eric. Give Me Liberty. W.W Norton & Company, 2014.

Gallagher, Gary W. The Confederate War. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Holton, Woody. Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves, and the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia. University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Kendi, Ibram X. Sacrificing Black Lives for the American Lie. 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/24/opinion/sunday/philando-castile-police-shootings.html>.

Kennedy, Randall. The Persistence of the Color Line: Racial Politics and the Obama Presidency. New York: Pantheon Books, 2011.

Padden, Brian. Polarized Politics Deepen Divide Over Who Is a 'Real' American . 2019. <https://www.voanews.com/usa/polarized-politics-deepen-divide-over-who-real-american>.

Rubin, Anne Sarah. A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861–1868. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.