# **Nat Turners’ Rebellion**

This rebellion is also known as the Southampton Insurrection. Nat Turners’ rebellion was a slave rebellion, which took place in August 1831 in Virginia of Southampton County ("North Carolina and The Nat Turner Slave Rebellion", 2017). The rebellion which was started and led by Nat Turner ended up killing between 55 to 65 white people that were involved in slavery. This was considered the greatest and most frightening slave revolution in the history of the United States. Although the rebellion was put under control in just a few days, the leader of the rebellion, Turner, managed to escape and hide for almost two months before he was found by a farmer. Turner was tried, hanged and skinned as a lesson to all those that would want to do the same thing. The rebellion had been completely suppressed by the morning of August the 23rd 1831 at Belmont plantation. The rebellion left a lasting impact “Turner and 16 of his conspirators were captured and executed, but the incident continued to haunt Southern whites” ("The Nat Turner rebellion.", 2017). Although the rebellion only took two days, Turner had managed to recruit more slaves into his course and they had done enough damage to pass their point across. Turner believed that God had chosen him to right the wrongs of slavery and punish the white masters.

The rebellion spread a lot of fear throughout the south and mobs of white people organized a form of retaliation against the enslaved people. During the retaliation over 100 slaves and free African Americans were killed by the mobs across the South. 56 slaves who were suspected of being part of the rebellion were executed by the state and some of them were decapitated and their heads hanged on spike along roads ("North Carolina and The Nat Turner Slave Rebellion", 2017). Laws were then passed across the South that forbade slaves from getting any form of education, their right to assembly or meetings of any sort was also taken away and white ministers were also required to be a part of all the worship services held by slaves and free African Americans. By instilling stricter laws on the slaves, the state hoped to keep them on a leash and also instill fear in any other slaves that would want to rebel in the future.



Figure 1: The figure illustrates the rebellion and the battle that followed ("The Nat Turner rebellion.", 2017).

Apart from the fear that the rebellion instilled in white people and all slaveholders, the revolution pushed the idea of emancipation further up on peoples lists. More southerners started getting used to the idea of abolishing slavery. More people in the south looked at the incident as assign. The revolt had been gruesome and many lives had been lost in the process and most people started wondering about the morals that surrounded slavery ("North Carolina and The Nat Turner Slave Rebellion", 2017). Some tried to look at the religious principles that the slavers based their acts on. Most of all most southerners were worried about the risk that came along with the ownership of slaves. The idea that their future was in danger and the constant worry that slaves would rebel again helped speed up the abolition of slavery.

Authority had been the tool used by the white master over slaves for years, being in control helped govern the relationship between slaves and their masters. The masters were always in control and looked at the slaves as lesser beings who relied on them for everything. Slaves needed the masters for food, shelter, medical help and basic survival ("North Carolina and The Nat Turner Slave Rebellion", 2017). This then meant that the master was in charge of the fate of the slaves. The masters then used this as their cover when it came to defending their slavery methods, to them they were only doing what was best for the slaves. However, when the rebellion by Turner came up a lot of these ideas started to be questioned, the not so capable slaves were rising up and defending themselves. The misconception about their weakness was brought to light and white people were filled with fear when they realized that the slaves were capable of revolting. The notion that white people were respected and feared became disapproved by the rebellion.

The gruesome methods and actions taken by the slaves in the rebellion led by Turner brought along fear that played a big part in the conversation of freeing slaves in the South. The southerners especially those that lived on the Eastern side of Virginia became aware of how dangerous the idea of slavery was. As long as there were slaves there was a chance that another rebellion just like the one led by Turner would occur ("North Carolina and The Nat Turner Slave Rebellion", 2017). Similarly, they also realized that people like Turner who had great drive and motivation existed throughout the state and every black person could potentially be a rebel just like Turner. People feared that the uprising would come again and more white people would end up dead. Most masters were no longer willing to keep slaves and wanted the slaves out of their homes immediately. Thus, it is through the fear instilled in the white people by the rebellion that the emancipation of slaves became gradual. The idea of a master and slave relationship became frightening and most people thought it was not worth the risk.

 While anti-slavery sentiments grew over the years anti-abolitionists ideas and methodologies also became popular. The idea of anti-abolition become famous across the south and north and more people were starting to get less sympathetic towards the slaves and even stricter rules were being imposed on slavery. The leader of the abolition movement was almost killed by a mob of angry northers who felt that his movement was only bringing trouble in the state. However, some of the Northerners still recognized the issues at hand and had confused feelings about slavery and how the slaves were being treated. While they did not think the attacks were justified, they felt that as long as slavery was part of the North then such violence would be expected to happen again ("North Carolina and The Nat Turner Slave Rebellion", 2017). Even if immediate freeing of slaves was not realistic steps towards emancipation would have released some of the tension between slaves and masters. It was suggested that gradual change and freedom would only be more dangerous because the slaves were not prepared for the life of freedom. Some people thought it would have been better to slowly introduce them to the idea of being free until the slaves were capable of taking care of themselves. It was believed by most that releasing the slaves into the world unprepared would cause more harm than good.

In conclusion, the attacks on slavery made by the abolitionists from the Northern side brought up heated arguments between the south and the northern states. Even though the abolitionists did not in any way represent the majority of the northerners, the north still understood that as long as slavery existed there would always be a possibility of another rebellion. It was clear that the black population was now more than ever determined to get their freedom back and Turner's rebellion was just but the first move. As much as slaves were killed during the rebellion more slaves felt inspired and some were ready to die if it meant that they would bring about freedom. This made the idea of emancipation more common in the North over time. The slaves were responsible for providing great revenue for plantation owners and farmers in the south and because of this, the people in the south were not open to the idea of Emancipation even after the rebellion ("North Carolina and The Nat Turner Slave Rebellion", 2017). The institution of slavery was still booming in the south and this caused a lot of differences between the northerners who were considering the abolition of slavery and the southerners who were mostly anti-abolitionists.

As the two opposing sides pushed their viewpoints tension began to rise between the north and southern states. This brought about a lot of tension in the two states over the following years as both states backed up their viewpoints and beliefs in what was supposed to be done in relation to slavery. The more the northern side pushed its agendas about anti-slavery and abolition of the slavery institution the more the people on the south backed up their pro-slavery defenses. It would be safe to assume that Turner's rebellion brought about the tension that eventually turned into the Civil War. It is the rift between the two states that sparked and ignited the Civil War that quickly developed after the Nat Turner rebellion. The war only made the condition of slaves worse and more detrimental.

References

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