Congress to eliminate slavery, and as a result, is believed that the "interest" in this case was the interest of the founders to protect slavery from being abolished.

Because the framers allowed the idea of slavery to be included in the initial drafting of the Constitution, even if in an indirect manner, it ultimately created a system of evil that would be hard to break. Historian Mary Frances Berry notes that "these slavery provisions have profoundly affected the predominant African American vision of the Constitution over the past 200 years, African Americans' status, and aspirations" (Berry 17). On the surface, the 3/5 clause and the other included provisions may give the illusion that the North had much more power, but in reality, the long term political ramifications were far more detrimental. Because it is believed that many of the founders' ultimate goals were to seek permanent protection of slavery, it can be said that the North lost moral virtue as a result of allowing slaves to become a part of American history. Colonel Mason gave his perspective of slavery in the constitutional debates when he said that slavery would "bring the judgment of Heaven on a country…By an inevitable chain of causes and effects, Providence punishes national sins by national calamities" (Phillips 44), and this held true for the United States of America.

In addition to this loss of moral virtue, southern states were ultimately given aristocratic power, as Mr. Gouverner Morris so eloquently states in the debates (Phillips 39). Because the Constitution itself was so corrupt, it created a corrupt society where the North did not *compromise* with the South, but instead gave away more power and influence than they possibly could have imagined. Morris explains this by saying, "and what is the proposed compensation to the northern states for a sacrifice of every principle of right, of every impulse of humanity? They are to bind themselves to march their milita for the defence of the Southern States, for the defence against those very slaves of whom they complain" (Phillips 39). By agreeing to let slave imports continue, even if it was only supposed to be for twenty more years, the North had let their virtue slip and they had given the power to the Southern slaveholders. The political effects of this document and the provisions therein not only left uncertainty in the minds of African Americans for twenty years, but for centuries following. And they still continue to fight for equality even in this day and age. In an article discussing the constitutional framers, Thurgood Marshall sums up the pro-slavery attempts that are evident in the Constitution and the political effects that slavery had on African Americans. He states that although the phrase "We the People" may no longer enslave, "the credit does not belong to the framers" (Marshall 42).

Did the Constitution Prevent Congress from Banning or Discouraging Slavery?

In 1789, two new proposals regarding the issue of banning slavery forced the members of Congress to discuss the idea of sending the proposed bills to

a committee. The first of these proposals claimed that slave states should be required to pay a tax for the importation of all slaves. The hope that existed in this proposal was that taxing importation would eventually lead to the end of slave trade. The second of these proposals was written in a petition that was sent to Congress and signed by Benjamin Franklin. This proposal stated that not only should the importation of slaves be stopped, but it also requested the total emancipation of slaves that were currently held in bondage. Because of the severity of these two issues, Congress entered into a debate regarding whether or not it was constitutionally acceptable to tax slave importation or even to abolish slavery once and for all. Representatives from the northern states believed that something had to be done in order to stop the horrible practice of slavery. Slave states, however, believed that Congress had no right to tax or abolish slavery because the Constitution had strictly prohibited it; therefore, they argued against the constitutionality of these propositions.

Initially, the proposed idea was that Congress should issue a tax that would force the southern states to pay $10 for each imported slave. Mr. Parker of Virginia, who originally introduced the idea for this bill, stated that "he hoped such a duty as he moved for would prevent, in some degree, this irrational and inhuman traffic" (Phillips 108). Essentially, Parker and his supporters believed that imposing a tax on the importation of slaves would discourage the southern slave states from continuing to import them, which would eventually end slavery. On the other hand, southern slave states believed that the Constitution had left no room for Congress to impose such a tax in order to stop the importation of slaves. Mr. Tucker of South Carolina argued that "we have no right…to consider whether the importation of slaves is proper or not; the Constitution gives us no power on that point; it is left to the States to judge of that matter as they see fit" (Phillips 109). Because the Tenth Amendment left all powers not specified in the Constitution, including the issue of slavery, in the hands of the states, the slave states believed that Congress was barred from imposing any regulation to end slavery, such as taxes on the importation of slaves.

However, the Quakers were not satisfied with simply an importation tax, and they proposed a new idea, the complete halt of the importation of slaves and the emancipation of those who were already enslaved. In the letter, which was signed by Benjamin Franklin that was sent to the members of the debates, the abolitionists outlined their grievances against the horrific practice. They moved "for promoting the abolition of slavery, the relief of free negroes unlawfully held in bondage, and the improvement of the condition of the African race" (Phillips 129). The southern slave states were appalled by this proposition, and again argued that this was outside of the congressional boundaries set up by the Constitution. Mr. Burke of South Carolina questioned this bill by saying "Did it not desire Congress to interfere and abolish the slave trade, while the Constitution expressly stipulated that Congress should exercise no such power?" (Phillips 131). He then added