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## **Franklin Pierce on Slavery** **Digital History ID 314**

Author: Franklin Pierce

Date: 1838

### **Annotation:**

Franklin Pierce (1804-1869) was the first "doughface" president. He was, in the popular phrase, "a Northern man with Southern principles." In this letter, the future President offers his views on slavery and argues that abolition was delaying emancipation in the more northern parts of the South. After his election to the White House in 1852, Pierce, a New Hampshire Democrat, tried to unite the country with an aggressive program of foreign expansion he called "Young America." He sought to annex Hawaii, purchase Cuba, expand American influence in Honduras and Nicaragua, and acquire new territory from Mexico. Many Northerners suspected that Pierce's real goal was the acquisition of new territory for slavery.

### **Document:**

I am no advocate of slavery. I wish it had no existence upon the face of the Earth, but as a public man, I am called upon to act in relation to an existing state of things.... [T]he violent course of the Abolitionists at the North has postponed the emancipation of the coloured population in Maryland, Kentucky & Virginia Many & many a long year.... It should be remembered, that there are but two methods by which domestic slavery at the South can possibly be abolished. It can only be accomplished by the consent and agency of the Southern people themselves or by revolution. Would you recommend overturning the Constitution by a civil war, which carry ruin & desolation to every portion of this Country and probably result in the extermination of the coloured population upon this Continent?

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