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Source: Charles Sumner, "Objections to the Mexican-American War," adopted by the Mass. State Legislature, 1847.

Note: Sumner was a young state legislator from Massachusetts who later served 24 years in the US Senate.

Mexico, on achieving her independence of the Spanish Crown ... decreed the abolition of human slavery within her dominions, embracing the province of Texas....

At this period, citizens of the United States had already begun to [move] into Texas.... The idea was ... that this extensive province ought to become a part of the United States....

A current of emigration soon followed from the United States. Slaveholders crossed the Sabine [river between Louisiana and Texas] with their slaves, in defiance of the Mexican ordinance of freedom. Restless spirits, discontented at home ... joined them.... The work of rebellion sped. Our newspapers excited the lust of territorial robbery in the public mind.... Certainly [Mexico] ... might justly charge our citizens with disgraceful robbery, while, in seeking extension of slavery, [our own citizens denied] the great truths of American freedom....

Note: According to an early Texas census, there were 103,000 whites and 38,000 slaves in the state in 1847.

Document Analysis

1. After achieving independence from Spain in 1821, did Mexico make slavery legal or illegal?

2. Sumner mentions a "disgraceful robbery." Who robbed what from whom?

3. Did Charles Sumner have the support of the people of Massachusetts? Provide evidence and explain your thinking.

4. How does this document help answer the question: Was the United States justified in going to war with Mexico?

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