

# American society from 1865-1910 essay sample

War



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From the end of the Civil War until the turn of the century there were many changes in American society. While some may see these changes as all beneficial, others will argue that the changes made in American society from 1865 to 1910 were mainly detrimental. When we talk about history, its difficult to say if it was good or bad. Throughout history some groups of people have benefited, while others were harmed. Not everyone can prosper from the same event; there will always be winners and losers.

The 13th amendment was ratified in 1865 by Abraham Lincoln, and abolished slavery in the United States. Though most people believe that the primary motive behind freeing the African-American's was to benefit their race, it was instead to assist in helping the Union gain more power and eventually win the war over the Confederate states. In order for the southern states to be readmitted to the Union, they were required to acknowledge and ratify this amendment. Lincoln knew that if he were to abolish slavery, the southern states would lose their labor force and weaken their economy.

In response to the 13th Amendment, southern states still tried to maintain power over African-Americans by using certain techniques such as Black Codes. The Black Codes restricted African-Americans' freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and legal rights; and outlawed unemployment, loitering, vagrancy, and interracial marriages.

One of the documents, titled ' Louisiana Black Codes Reinstate Provisions of the Slave Era, 1865,' displays the codes that, even though freed, African-Americans were still forced to abide by in the town of Opelousas. The document states that no negro or freedman shall: be within city limits

without special permission from employers, be within the city limits after 10 p. m., live within the city limits under any circumstance without being in regular service of a white man, hold public meetings within the city limits, carry firearms unless in military service, get drunk within the city limits, be found within the city limits after 3 p. m. on Sunday unless they reside in the city, or sell, barter, or exchange any articles of merchandise without permission in writing from their employers. A breach of any of these was punishable by time in prison and work on public streets, usually for a time of five days, or pay a sum of five dollars. These restrictions ultimately made life harder for African-Americans than before the ratification of the 13th Amendment (E. D. Estillette, " Black Codes 1865," 6-7).

In both the essays of ' Continuing the War: White and Black Violence During Reconstruction' and ' Ending the War: The Push for National Reconciliation', death and violence are seen as the main themes. Reconstruction and reconciliation between the Union and Confederate states was not cheap and cost the lives of many Americans. The creation of opposing hate groups, such as the Union League and the Klu Klux Klan, helped to further promote violence between the races after the Civil War. One instance in which violence erupted between the races is the riot that took place in Camilla, Georgia in 1868. A procession towards Camilla lead by white Republicans joined by freed people was halted by the local Democrats. The riot begun shortly after when a local drunkard opened fire at the freedmen. The Camilla riot lasted for several days and resulted in the deaths of at least nine African-Americans and the wounding of many more (Steven Hahn, " Violence During Reconstruction," 20-26).

The essay 'Ending the War: The Push for National Reconciliation' tells of President Andrew Johnson's lenient reconstruction policy in order to swiftly readmit the Southern states. Johnson's reconstruction plan returned a tremendous amount of authority to the hand of the white Southerners. His plan consisted of a wide establishment of pardon for the participants of the rebellion that would take an oath of loyalty to the Union. Johnson encouraged Southern states to pass the Black Codes, which were created to control labor and maintain plantation discipline (David W. Blight, "Ending the War," 29). President Johnson had this to say in a document from 1867:

... It is the glory of white men to know that they have had these qualities in sufficient measures to build upon this continent a great political fabric and to preserve its stability for more than ninety years, while in every other part of the world all similar experiments have failed. But if anything can be proved by known facts... it must be acknowledged that in the progress of nations negroes have shown less capacity for government than any other race of people. No independent government of any form has ever been successful in their hands. On the contrary, wherever they have been left to their own devices they Congress has undertaken to confer upon them the privilege of the ballot. Just released from slavery, it may be doubted whether as a class they know more than their ancestors how to organize and regulate civil society (President Andrew Johnson, "Program of Reconstruction," 8);

Under Johnson's reconstruction plan, Southerners were able to recreate government's controlled by white men to govern white men. In the fall of 1865, ex-Confederates were reclaiming their land and saw their political

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power increasing. If the Southern Democrats were to reestablish their political power with the Black Codes in place, the African Americans would ultimately become slaves again without being called slaves (David W. Blight, "Ending the War," 29).

The Chinese started to immigrate to America after the discovery of gold in California. Most of the immigrants came to perform labor on the transcontinental railroad and in the coalmines. Chinese immigrants worked for less money than the average white man. They worked in harsh conditions and were subjected to unfair treatment. If white workers were to go on strike, the companies would replace them with Chinese workers. Once the Chinese refused to go on strike with the white workers, animosity erupted between the two groups. A specific incident was recorded in Rock Springs, Wyoming; on September 18 of 1885 when an organization of white miners was formed whose soul purpose was the expulsion of all Chinese miners from Rock Springs.

These mobs would approach Chinese workers and then proceed to rob, beat, or even kill them. Those that were members of the gangs that did not participate in the robberies or killings would spectate clapping and cheering on the others. The bodies of deceased Chinese were thrown into the flames of burning buildings for disposal. Other Chinese immigrants that were too sick to run away were burned alive in their houses. The attack on Chinatown in 1885 ended in the murder of 28 Chinese and the wounding of 15. This is an example which exhibits how the progress of western settlement with the railroads and coal mining, actually proved to have a negative impact on American society. Immigrants were taking jobs from the American people <https://assignbuster.com/american-society-from-1865-1910-essay-sample/>

causing tensions to grow and conflict between the races (Hon. Huang Sih Chuen, " Wyoming Gunfight," 46).

Even though urbanization of the city brought about advances in technologies such as telephones, trolleys, and electric light bulbs, other negative consequences can be contributed to it. Due to the growth of business corporations, companies began to care less about factory worker's lives and more about their profit. Corporations began to use child workers, even though it was illegal, because they could pay them less.

In an interview with a chairman, Thomas O'Donnell replied to why he had not worked more than half the time since a strike in Fall River with, " Well, at Fall River if a man has not got a boy to act as " back-boy" it is very hard for him to get along. In a great many cases they discharge men in that work and put in men who have boys... Men who have boys of their own capable enough to work in a mill, to earn 30 or 40 cents a day (Thomas O'Donnell, " Worker's Plight," 75)."

Another method businesses used to save money were to cut corners when it came to safety measures. Another incident, which demonstrates the destructive effect of rapid growth in cities, is the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire. On March 25 of 1911, 146 factory workers lost their lives to a fire that broke out on the eighth floor of the building. Because the company wanted to conserve space for more factory floor, there were only two staircases instead of three and the doors only opened inward, making them nearly impossible to open during the panic. In order to prevent workers from sneaking off for a break or to prevent theft, managers had locked some of the

exit doors. The fire escapes were constructed poorly and collapsed shortly after the fire had started. Firefighters attempted to tame the flames, but failed from ladders and hoses being incapable of reaching such heights.

As history has shown, many decisions have been detrimental to our nation. From the presence of the first European-Americans all the way to businesses choosing cheap immigrant labor over American labor, we have gone down a long slope of hate and violence. Those ramifications continue to show their faces today as racial tensions continue to run high, and “ native” Americans continue to have an “ it’s mine” view when it comes to this country and immigrants.

In the end, change itself is detrimental to any people. Change in all nations throughout history, has been met with violence and resistance. Even in today’s world, a quick glance at the news shows us that change is still not met with a smile by the majority.