

Being black means
being underestimated



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We always have the least amount of faith put in us as if we aren't capable of making great accomplishments. Being black means facing many challenges and obstacles that white Americans normally wouldn't face. Sometimes we have a harder time getting our foot in the door for certain positions because we are of color. This makes us go even harder in life to achieve success.

Being black means being bold, dominant, and prosperous. No matter what we go through we find a way to get things done.

Have African-Americans truly received the full rights of citizenship? What is citizenship? Citizenship means having the position of status of being a citizen of a particular country. Most African-Americans may agree that they never actually received the full rights of citizenship. To gain citizenship in America today, people have to undergo an extensive process. This process includes interviews, examinations, and other things required so see if a person is eligible for citizenship in the United States. However, African-Americans had a difficult process in order to gain their citizenship.

The fight for citizenship all started around the time of slavery when African-Americans were captured and sold as property to be used as slaves for plantation owners. From that very moment African-Americans didn't have any rights and were referred to as less than human. They didn't even get a chance to fight for their equality in America. Some slaves decided to rebel by running away and some slaves tried to outsmart their oppressors by learning as much as they could about them. African-Americans who ran away made things a lot harder for other slaves as well as themselves. At that time Americans knew land more than the slaves, and the slaves were illiterate, with no education so most slaves ended up getting caught. Some slaves

managed to make it to a free state but by that time the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 had been passed. This bill had 10 sections that went in depth about the consequences and penalties slaves would receive if they were caught in a free state. This act forced slaves to be returned to their owners if found, so that made all federal officials responsible for keeping the act in place.

In 1852 Frederick Douglass, a slavery abolitionist delivered a speech talking about what the 4th of July means for the African-American people. It's ironic how he has to give his speech to citizens of America while he is enslaved. In this speech he explained how he heard the mournful wail of millions over the citizens national, tumultuous joy. He justifies how slaves are actually human also, and how America is treating the people of color unfairly. He tries to get citizens to see how they are wrong by treating slaves as property even though they are all human beings. Frederick Douglass continues to go in depth about the wrongful treatments of African-Americans, and how the 4th of July may be celebrated by citizens, but mourned upon by slaves because they don't have citizenship in this country and they were taken away from their lives to be treated as animals in the nation. This speech helps you understand the hardships slaves are going through and possibly could have made some Americans think twice about how they are treating their slaves.

The Civil War also played a huge part in the road to gaining partial citizenship. This war is one of the most historical wars known to mankind to this day. This war was caused for many reasons. Some of these reasons are slavery, succession, expansion, and Bleeding Kansas. All of these played a huge part in starting the war. When it came down to slavery, the southern states needed slavery because that was their way of being economically

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stable and being able to produce and grow and a whole. Their way of providing resources was from slaves working in the field picking crops and other farming practices. However Northern states relied more on industry machines, and they didn't need slave labor to keep their economy stable. This started a conflict because the northern didn't need slaves, but the south were so use to them that they thought they wouldn't be able to succeed without their slaves. The South wanted to succeed from the United States when Abraham Lincoln became the president. They felt this way because Abraham Lincoln was against slavery and had views on emancipating the slaves and since he was becoming the president, he would more than likely be able to make that happen so the South didn't want to be on his side. As stated in the article, Bleeding Kansas was the first fight to take place over slavery. This was caused mainly because the government passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which allowed residents to vote on whether or not Kansas would be a slave state or free state. These all contributed to the start of the war including other reasons not stated.

During this war, 3 very important amendments was passed. The 13th Amendment abolished slavery, the 14th Amendment allowed citizenship, and the 15th Amendment gave African-American men the right to vote. These amendments were passed but it wasn't easy. This time in history was very important regarding gaining citizenship in America. African-Americans made a bold move volunteering and signing up for the war draft. This itself, could have showed the nation an act of nationality stating that even though they were treated as less, they were ready to fight for their country. For the first

year and a half African-Americans were excluded from the Union Army. They later accepted African-Americans to join the Union Army.

Even southern slaves wanted to join the Union Army however, their purpose for fighting was for freedom. They didn't want to show nationalism or patriotism, they just wanted to fight for a side that would not let them be enslaved any longer. Some slaves still fought for the southern states, maybe they were content with their condition, but the government most likely forced them against their will. The blacks became the topic of discussion politically and economically. The topic of discussion in the African-American society was why should our people fight their war, and why are we trying to help the people who don't want to help us? At this time the amendments haven't been passed yet, so were African-Americans fighting for America or for their citizenship. They were smart because in a sense, they were fighting for both. While they were fighting for America, they were also fighting to show their nationalism towards America, and maybe that would have an impact on them gaining citizenship and being citizens of the country. The government still treated African-Americans bad. In 1857, there was the Dred Scott v. Sanford Case, where the Supreme Court had ruled that black weren't citizens of the United States. This probably killed the hope of the African-American community and also caused some confusion. Were free blacks technically citizens? Even though they didn't have the same rights as citizens they weren't slaves so could they pass as a citizen or were they just free? The case never really went in depth about citizenship for free blacks, so people probably assumed they still didn't have their citizenship rights.

There were also cartoons that made that depicted scenarios that was going on during the time. One cartoon that was made during the time that Blacks couldn't join the war was called Vanity Fair. This cartoon showed how white military men were marching by an African-American who was grinning because he knew he couldn't be drafted, and the Union wasn't accepting black volunteers at the time neither. It was ironic how he seemed happy that he wasn't eligible to participate in the war and he could just go on about his day. This could also be a concern dealing with citizenship. If you are a citizen of the United States, do they have the right to just draft you into the military? What about your personal life, and family? There were times in history that Blacks, or Americans in general would just be drafted if they met the requirements. This is wrong, and it forces you to do something that you can't even decide for yourself if you want to do it or not. The government sometimes goes too far and takes advantage of the power that they have.

Abraham Lincoln was a legendary figure during this time. His perspective on slavery had a great effect on the nation. Frederick Douglass and many southerners supported Abraham Lincoln campaign, and when he was elected as president in 1860, it gave hope to America. He stood firm on his beliefs and was able abolish slavery and also issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. This stated that all persons held as slaves are, and henceforward shall be free. At this time

Around 1865 Black Codes were put in place which restricted the rights of black citizens to own property, to engage in occupations, and to testify in court. This was extremely wrong. Our people were basically being treated like animals, and we didn't have any equality. The government had also put

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strict labor requirements on us that put us in a bad position if we broke the contract.