

Radical reconstruction

[History](#)



Radical Reconstruction Reconstruction legislation bestowed citizenship to former slaves and was originally intended to rebuild the former Confederacy. However, it did little to alleviate the human and economic suffering of the war-ravaged South because Lincoln's grand vision of reconstruction died with him at Ford's Theater. Booth's bullet changed the nation because Johnson and Lincoln were often diametrically opposed regarding the reconstruction of the South and degree of civil liberties the freed slaves were to be afforded.

Johnson's views on slaves were clearly in opposition to Lincoln's stance as was his insistence that Ex-Confederates must be punished. Lincoln was calling for reconciliation prior to his death but the new President was calling for Confederate heads on a platter. According to Johnson, " Robbery is a crime; rape is a crime; treason is a crime; and crime must be punished. The law provides for it; the courts are open. Treason must be made infamous and traitors punished" (" Andrew Johnson", 2007).

Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866, established the Freedmen's Bureau intended to stop the lawmakers in the South from passing discriminatory legislation. President Johnson angered Radical Republicans by vetoing these laws but both were overridden by Congress which then rejected the Supreme Court decision in the Dred Scott case that denied citizenship rights to freed slaves by passing the 14th Amendment. The Amendment, viewed as one of the most important alongside the First, guarantees that " All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside." In addition, it provides that no state can " deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; <https://assignbuster.com/radical-reconstruction/>

nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (Amendment XIV). This Amendment also gave the right to black men aged 21 and over to vote and run for public office.

However, despite these reconstructive legislative efforts white on black violence became increasingly commonplace in the South. Ex-Confederate troops and southern loyalists formed paramilitary organizations to fight the Union Army to kill all blacks and any whites that opposed their cause. “ In effect, Reconstruction became a continuation of the Civil War” (McPherson, 1988: 75-77). The Ku Klux Klan was one of many such groups that grew out of the hateful climate of the time. White vigilante organizations derailed Reconstruction and re-established ‘ home rule,’ a term used to describe whites only in the government and legal system. Blacks were terrorized and threatened not vote and certainly not run for office. The horrific violence perpetrated by whites on blacks during this period has been described as “ the most relentless and large-scale terrorism in American history” (McPherson, 1988: 75-77).

Johnson used the presidency to further his own agenda of oppression and revenge on the South following the Civil War. His actions retarded the progression of Reconstruction and in many ways stopped it altogether. The remnants of the Johnson Presidency felt in the South lasted long after his death. The devastated South never received economic help that had been previously promised by Lincoln thus never fully recovered economically. The oppression of Blacks likely continued to a greater degree and for a longer period of time due to Lincoln’s assassination. The cumulative amount of human misery caused by Johnson is incalculable.

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