

Ah 213 olds 7



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AH 213 Olds 7 DBQ Essay Reconstruction or Disfranchisement: After the Civil War, the South's economy was devastated and was filled with angry whites who were frustrated over the emancipation of slavery. They wished to change the social status of African Americans and suppress them once again. The post-war South was in a state of chaos. In hopes to solve this problem, Lincoln established a Reconstruction Plan. Reconstruction was meant to tackle the issues through the re-admittance of southern states into the Union while rebuilding the south's economy, and giving equality to the newly freed African Americans. However, Congress' Reconstruction plan failed due to political disharmony between the Democrats and the Radical Republicans. The Democrats felt superior to African Americans and did not want them to have equal rights while the Radical Republicans wanted to eliminate the power of the former slaveholders, give African Americans full citizenship and the right to vote. Lastly, the plan failed because of the prejudice against blacks by Southern whites. Therefore, instead of the South ensuring the rights to the freedmen; they not only successfully disfranchised them, but placed them in a class based on inferiority and discrimination. After the death of Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson was faced with the problems that the four million, newly freed slaves had to face. Under Johnson's Reconstruction policy, the Black Codes of 1866 were created which were regulations of freedom for former slaves of the South. These Black Codes granted blacks certain rights such as legalized marriage, but denied them the right to vote or acquire land in some states. The Black Codes varied in each state, and although slavery was ended, it did not mean that African Americans gained complete freedom or equal rights of the white man. The Black Codes were a violation of free labor principles because of the

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demands they placed on the freed slaves to sign yearly contracts and work for a minimal amount of pay. One reason for the failure of efforts to guarantee freedmen full citizenship rights after the end of slavery is clearly expressed by John McCoy in Document 7. John McCoy was a slave for 27 years and his recollection demonstrates how Johnson's Reconstruction policy caused the North to oppose Johnson for his failure to ensure the emancipation of slavery in the South. John McCoy explains in his interview: "Freedom wasn't no different I knows of. I works for Marse John just the same for a long time. He says one morning, " John, you can go out in the field iffen you wants to or you can get our iffen you wants to, ' cause the government say you is free. If you wants to work I'll feed you and give you clothes, but you can't pay no money. I ain't gone none. " Humph, I didn't know nothing what money was, nohow, but I knows I'll git plenty victuals to eat, so I stays.... " Although slavery was abolished after the Civil War, for African Americans it was not completely accepted nor a reality for them , due to the continued discrimination against them by most Democrats and the white southerners. The opposition of most Democrats and moderate Republicans demonstrated the prejudiced view that most Southern whites held against the freedman. Although the Thirteenth Amendment freed the slaves, they did not feel that they should have the equal right to vote the same as whites. A speech given by Pennsylvania Congressman Benjamin Boyer expresses clearly the opposition of Democrats to the bill that Radical Republicans in Congress were trying to pass that would allow African-American men to vote in the District of Columbia. Boyer states: " It is common for the advocates of negro suffrage to assume that the color of the negro is the main obstacle to his admission to political equality.... But it is not the complexion of the negro

that degrades him...[the Negro is] a race by nature inferior in mental caliber... the negroes are not the equals of white Americans, and are not entitled.... to participate in the Government of this country... " Clearly one can see how much the white men felt that Negroes were inferior to them, not because their skin was black but because of their lack of mental capacity which made them unacceptable as equal to the white men. African Americans were forced into slavery in the South, and never were educated. The white men suppressed the African Americans, and kept them as an inferior class. Even so, the white men felt and believed that if blacks were (inherently) less intelligent, they should not be able to have a part in making any decisions pertaining to government matters. The political strain between the parties after the freeing of the slaves, and the beginning of the Reconstruction period caused widespread violence against blacks, as well as violence to the Republican party. Some Democratic politicians and merchants organized a military arm in the South (Tennessee, 1866) known as the Ku Klux Klan, which acted as a terrorist organization against blacks and the Republican leaders. The Ku Klux Klan used violence and intimidation against blacks who had acquired land or taken on a political position in the government. Many African Americans who held a political position were murdered. More than a hundred freed slaves were mercilessly murdered in Louisiana by the Ku Klux Klan during the Reconstruction period. On November 23, 1868, The New York Times report by George Thomas about the activity in Tennessee stated: " With the close of the last, and the beginning of the new year the State of Tennessee was disturbed by the strange operations of a mysterious organization known as the " Kuklux Klan".... its grand purpose being to establish a nucleus around which " the

adherents of the late rebellion might safely rally. " The adherents were the people and states that left the Union, and the Klu Klux Klan was an organization dedicated to the pre-Civil War status quo, keeping blacks as slaves- in bondage and uneducated. Although Congress was trying to make efforts to help the freedmen, the power of the Democratic party weakened its efforts. In 1874, the Democratic victory in Congress gave them more power, which led to the discredit of the Republican Party, and their efforts to grant African Americans equal civil rights . The Document 5 headline and story text from the New York Times, November 5, 1874 read: THE REPUBLICAN DEFEAT Our later telegrams only add to magnitude of the defeat experienced on Tuesday..... In the House [of Representatives] the Democrats' gains continue to increase in numbers. Document 5 shows the results of the Democratic victory which ultimately had a detrimental effect on Reconstruction. In addition, Supreme Court cases followed that ignored the 14th Amendment which was written to guarantee federal protection of citizenship. The Slaughterhouse Cases of 1873, failed to protect slaughterhouse workers by not protecting their jobs. In a later case, U. S v. Cruikshank (1876) the court failed to protect and respect the lives of African Americans who were murdered by white men who were anonymously set free by the court. Overall, the Democrats were prejudice and felt that African Americans were inferior which caused them to ignore their civil rights and not allow the Radical Republicans to win in their efforts for equality for all citizens. This Democratic victory eventually led to the bargain between President Hayes and the Democrats in 1876 which was the final stage of Reconstruction. In Document 8, the election of 1876 shows the results of the disputed election that was won by the Republican, Rutherford B. Hayes. For <https://assignbuster.com/ah-213-olds-7/>

this presidential election, there was a commission to deal with the election which had a Republican majority. Hayes was able to win by having one more electoral total vote and by the commission giving him the 20 disputed votes from Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida. For the first time in United States history, a candidate won the Presidency through compromise as he lost the popular election. This was known as the Compromise of 1877. Hayes representatives made an agreement with the Southern Democrats that he would recognize the South having Democratic control, and he would no longer intervene in local affairs. The Democrats were in turn supposed to respect the civil rights of African Americans and Hayes' presidency. The acceptance of the compromise meant the end of Reconstruction in the South, as the removal of all federal troops from the last three "unconstructed" Southern states: Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida took place as ordered by Hayes. However, the Democrats did not live up to their part of their bargain; they did not recognize African Americans as equal citizens which ultimately held them in a lower social class without the same rights as whites. In response to the abolition of slavery, Reconstruction took place in the history of the United States. During the period when the Republicans obtained more power than the Democrats in the South, African Americans were able to gain some of the same civil rights as whites. Some blacks held political offices, and obtained the right to vote. However, in 1874, when the Democrats took back the power in Congress, and the 1876 win by Hayes, the Reconstruction failed due to the discrimination and prejudice of white political leaders, and the majority of the Southern white population. Although the Reconstruction failed, it set a precedence for the civil rights movement and the definition of American freedom.