

# Slavery in the united states: impact of civil war in american and the proclamatio...

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After the conclusion of the American Civil War and the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, the remaining African-American slaves were freed from servitude. This freedom presented a somehow miraculously unforeseen logistical issue regarding the nature of what this now fully enfranchised population was to do. Realistically, there were two options available to freedmen at the time; either they stayed working in the agricultural realm or they journeyed northwards in hopes of a factory job. These two options both come with obvious benefits and detriments. Staying in the South was logistically and financially easier, while the North provided a less racist (although marginally) environment where freedmen could enjoy more rights. Conversely, to many freedmen, Southern agricultural work made them feel as though they were still slaves, whereas travelling to the industrial north was a much larger financial risk. During the Era of Reconstruction, if former slaves wished to be employed, they had to choose from two less-than-illustrious options that exposed how the Emancipation Proclamation skewed the U. S. economy and system of government in a multitude of ways.

For the freed slaves who remained in the rural South who didn't own land (which was most of them), they took up labor contracts on plantations under white men who were, until recently, slave owners. Oftentimes, these contracts would be unfair; a pittance to what the freedmen should be earning, a factor contributed to racism and the white underestimation of the black understanding of how wages work. This prompted the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau, which was a government organization that sought to right these wrongs that persisted against people of color even after the

slaves were freed; they also provided much needed aid to struggling families. “ Despite this important work [referring to the Freedmen’s Bureau], elite Southerners resented the intrusion of the federal government and joined with Northern Democrats to denounce the Bureau as an unnecessary federal imposition on states’ rights.” The combination of the Bureau and the freedmen caused all forms of strife between Southern blacks and whites, such as political, economic and social. Political strife was evidentially due to the Bureau’s infringement on states’ rights, despite having an admirable goal. The means in which the Freedmen’s bureau attempted to negotiate fairer working contracts for free blacks was questioned by many; and is what ultimately led to its downfall.

The rapid release of blacks from servitude completely altered the Southern economy, as it had been based on slavery for 200 years. Plantation owners weren’t accustomed for paying wages, and as a result of this, often went bankrupt. One of these former slave owner, for instance, was Colonel P. H. Anderson. “ Anderson sold the nearly 1, 000-acre estate to his attorney for a pittance, in an apparent attempt to get out from under his crushing debt.” Finally, despite recent legislative events, racism still persisted, and even flourished in the South; especially with the formation of the KKK. In addition, Southern states found loopholes and other quasi-legal methods of restricting black freedom in ways that wouldn’t be resolved until nearly 100 years later with the implementation of the Civil Rights act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These restrictions as well as lynch mobs, racial slurs, segregation, and other forms of degradation towards blacks in the South

made it a less than hospitable place to live for people of color from the Reconstruction Era to the 1960's and even now.

In the North, blacks faced less racism, but city jobs in factories were much harder to acquire, making it somewhat more of a financial risk. Despite this, cities blossomed with an influx of freedmen, raising unemployment, as well as fostering a fear of black crime as a result of such. Additionally, this influx was the impetus for urbanized xenophobia which plagued the future influx of various populations into major U. S. cities well into the 1920's. Despite these risks, many slaves still chose to leave because they didn't want to stay on the plantations, regardless of their wages. "If I stay here, I'll never know I'm free," said one freedwoman." This train of thought makes perfect sense, as making unfair wages working the same land under the same master whom had owner you seems like a small step up from traditional slavery.

At the end of the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln passed the Emancipation Proclamation. Shortly after this, amendments were ratified and legislation was passed that finally ended forced servitude in the United States. While it was obviously a good thing to free all the slaves, it presented a plethora of unforeseen problems economically, socially, and politically. Due to the huge increase of people who needed a job, unemployment rose and freed slaves had two options (usually) when it came down to earning money. They could either stay in the South working on agricultural pursuits, or go north to big cities in hopes of building a better life. Neither option is particularly illustrious, but each has different benefits and costs attached to it. Staying on a plantation was easier, as they didn't need to travel, and already knew

how to do the work; although the cities offered the promise of a better future as well as reduced racism and different surroundings. Unsurprisingly, many freed slaves did not like the idea of staying on plantations- it was basically a step up from slavery; but did that justify the risk of moving to a big city? During Reconstruction, former slaves had rather limited options, due to a multitude of factors, when it came to earning a living wage. This complicated the growth and mood of the nation dramatically during the years following the U. S. Civil War.