

Why did reconstruction fail? essay sample

War



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Reconstruction in the United States is historically known as the time in America, shortly after the Civil War, in which the United States attempted to readdress the inequalities, especially of slavery and many other economic, social and political issues including the poor relationship between the North and the South of America. These problems were highly significant in America, and a variety of groups in government tried to resolve these problems, but this only led to the Civil War. Unfortunately although there were numerous new constitutions and laws introduced to tackle these issues, it could be said that reconstruction did indeed fail, and there was a variety of reasons that many historians touch upon to why reconstruction did not fulfil its purpose.

Two significant acts were passed by congress in 1867, as many more were attempted to be passed, but in reality little had changed both economically and socially in America, especially the South who suffered the loss against the North, instead the 'reconstruction era' ironically consisted of numerous riots and graphic violence and failure instead of making the Country a better place socially, economically and politically, most historians would agree but it is still debated on what the fundamentally reason for this was, it was quoted that It could be said that a significant reason to why reconstruction failed was due to the strong white opposition in the South and the way that United States was constructed socially. The whites in the south simply didn't want change and some laws that was passed wasn't going to stop them, they already felt dominated and humiliated from the North after the Civil War and principally wanted to hold their ground.

They were angry over the fact that they shared no political power in the country, and that their states were being forced to change, when majority was satisfied, therefore resulted in lashing out socially and fighting against the ' new era of reconstruction' which ultimately resulted in failure. However why was the South angry at these changes? An Additional reason, one could say reconstruction was a failure was due to Poverty, as Powell suggests that " America's problems face with race and poverty had a lot to do with the preceding century's most egregious failures." (Powell, 1998). Poverty was particularly high in the South, especially after the Civil War, as they had lost their lands, along with the fact that their slaves, who do the majority of their work, had been freed? So in reality what opportunities did people in South have? How were they supposed to survive without the work and land that they so desperately needed?

If the whites in the South struggled to get work, then the opportunities were minimal for the blacks living in South during reconstruction as a slave himself reliably states that during reconstruction, poverty was at extreme cases and that being a free slave was not liveable, " The reconstruction was a mighty hard pull. Me and Ma couldn't live." Their poverty was so extreme that they had to go back without any dignity to their slave owners " we starting working for Mr. Emenson. He had a big store, teams and land. We liked it and I been here fifty six years now. There was so much wild game, living was not so hard." (Mckinney) It's evident that poverty left many African Americans in despair, they wanted their freedom so badly but they wanted to live more therefore had no choice but to go back to their slave owners. Reconstruction was meant to give everyone equal opportunities but

due to the poverty it simply gave people lack of opportunities both white and black, resulting in a failure.

An Alternative reason why Reconstruction failed was due to the dangerous racism in the South, all the African Americans really wanted was their equality, as slave at the time specified “ all I want is equal rights in the court house and equal rights when I go to vote.” (Lee, 1865), but reconstruction failed to achieve this. After the Civil War the whites had so much resentment towards to African Americans that they simply did not want them to have any rights whatsoever. They did everything they could to stop the African American’s in the south to gain the equality that they deserved and even though the Fourteenth along with Fifteenth Amendments were passed and Congress setting the Freedman’s Bureau, the black codes and violence stopped African Americans gaining their equality, and it was evident that the North simply did not care enough about the blacks right in the South to push for their equality, as W. E. B DuBois stated in his book that “ The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery.” (Bois W. E., 1962). Eric Foner agreed that yes indeed reconstruction was a failure like post – revisionists would agree but he can also see the side of revisionists who saw reconstruction in a more positive light. Foner concludes his opinion that although it was failure, there were also significant changes for black people, as it was the start of their freedom Reconstruction is one of the most controversial issues in American history, and to this present