

Freedoms of the black during and after the reconstruction period

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Freedoms of the Black during and after the Reconstruction Period

The slavery was one of the most significant causes of the Civil War in the United States. The inclusion of slaves in the war, nevertheless, propelled the cause for emancipation. The end of Civil War did abolish slavery, but racial equality was not fully met, even decades later. This paper chronicles the process that developed in the South that chipped away the freedoms granted to blacks during Reconstruction. By the 1900s, different Jim Crow laws intensified racial inequality, to which African Americans responded with either peaceful or violent methods, as they struggle for the realization of their freedoms.

During the Civil War, thousands of slaves left their plantations and headed for Union lines. The president stressed the end of slavery as one of the aims of the war, which led to the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1863 (Digital History). The Proclamation also approved the enlistment of black soldiers. By the end of the Civil War, 200, 000 black soldiers had participated in the Union army and navy and argued for their stake of citizenship in the postwar nation. Throughout the war, "rehearsals for Reconstruction" transpired in the Union-occupied South. In the South Carolina Sea Islands, the previous slaves claimed the land of their own, while government officials and Northern investors asked them to return to work on the plantations. This is how they remembered the contributions of these slaves during the war- they repaid the latter with empty promises, or at least, a superficial form of freedom.

The blacks continued to fight for freedoms during the Reconstruction. In the 1870's, the South and the North persistently recoiled from its promise of

racial equality (Digital History). By 1876, the nation wanted to fully discard the commitment to equality to all races (Digital History). After the blacks attained voting rights, secret societies developed in the South, which focused on restoring white supremacy in political and social life (Digital History). Most disreputable was the Ku Klux Klan, an organization of aggressive individuals, who created the reign of terror in some parts of the South, where numerous local Republican leaders were assaulted and murdered, and who lynched and killed numerous black Americans. After the Reconstruction period, the freedoms provided to the blacks became dimmer. Many states passed Jim Crow laws, which required racial segregation in all public facilities, with a purportedly "separate but equal" status for black Americans. In reality, these laws produced unequal treatment and accommodations that were usually poorer to those provided for white Americans, hence, they created numerous economic, educational and social disadvantages. Jim Crow laws persisted in the first half of the 1900s, as the white society became threatened by the broadening black political power (Targ Brill 67). Incrementally, legalized discrimination chipped away the blacks' freedoms. The blacks responded to these conditions in both pacified and violent manners. Booker T. Washington and similar-minded individuals espoused self-improvement, education, and hard work as the means of the success of blacks so that they can slowly attain racial equality (Targ Brill 69). W. E. B. DuBois, however, promoted bolder tactics in achieving racial equality (Targ Brill 70). Soon, riots between blacks and whites erupted in some states, prompting the rise of violence against racial inequality.

After the Reconstruction period, Jim Crow laws flourished. These laws further eroded the experience of freedoms for blacks, making the Emancipation Proclamation a broken promise. Blacks were segregated in schools, transportation, and other public areas. They were still treated inferior to whites and rarely able to execute their freedoms, including their right to vote. Thus, as the racist white society chipped away precious freedoms, the black community responded with diverse measures, with each of these measures asserting that the blacks have natural rights to God-given civil freedoms.

Works Cited

Digital History. America's Reconstruction. 2003. Web. 16 June 2011 .

Targ Brill, Marlene. America in the 1900s. Minnesota: Twenty-First Century Books, 2010. Print.