

The impact and significance of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments on black life ...

[History](#)



A few things are more treasured by Americans than their rights and freedoms, their culture and constitution promotes and requires that all persons are considered equal before the law notwithstanding their racial, religious or any other different orientation. However, this has not always been the case, America has a very dark past concerning discrimination, and it has taken hundreds of years and struggle by the government and people to overcome. Slavery engenders some of the darkest time in American cavitation where inequality was the norm; however, after the civil war; it was outlawed in most American states, mostly due to the efforts of Abraham Lincoln. 1 The thirteenth amendment, which was first of the three the reconstruction amendment; it was proposed and strongly supported by Abraham Lincoln before he was assassinated, a few months later; it was accepted and passed by the house in to law. It outlawed slavery and forced slavery with the exclusion of being a punishment for a crime that has been proven, slavery would not occur on American soil or any territory it controlled. The amendment had a significant impact in the struggle to eliminate slavery form the United States, although several states had independently disallowed slavery, passing it as a law made it the duty of the federal government to stamp it out. The passing of the amendment meant African Americans had considerably more freedom; they were no longer held as property, they could live free and start independent lives without fear of separation or many of the atrocities suffered under slavery. The Fourteenth Amendment was ratified on July 9, 1868; it declared that all persons, born or naturalized in the United States, were entitled to American citizenship including the African Americans who were formerly slaves. The amendment

was meant to protect and guarantee the rights and freedom of slaves freed under the 13th amendment, through this amendment, African Americans began to enjoy the full law protection. ² Before this amendment, African Americans under unfair laws, which despite, recognizing their freedom did not acknowledge their equality before the law, as such even when injustices were committed; against them the systems openly favored whites. The fourteenth amendment however ensured they were entitled to equal and fair treatment; this further secured those rights in posterity since it stipulated that congress could not make any amendments or laws that would prevent these equal rights even through Supreme Court decisions. The amendment, while originally meant to cover freed slaves later came to extend to people with disabilities, the elderly, women children and other minority groups and is indeed one of the most quoted of the three amendments. ³ The amendment is responsible for the harmonious existence of the diverse populations that comprise the nation today making it possible for people of all colors, races, and creeds to enjoy and live under the equal protection of the law. The fifteenth amendment was a continuation in the steps to allow more freedom and rights not only to the African Americans but also women and other group's that had been retrospectively discriminated. Despite the equal treatment provided for in the 14 amendment, several groups such as black people and women were not allowed to participate in democratic elections in their respective states or nationally. The fifteenth amendment which was ratified in 1870, forbids governments, federal or state form laws infringing on the rights of any American citizen to vote based on the their race, color, sex or retrospective conditions of servitude. It also took away the

mandate of determining the conditions required for voting from states, some had discriminatory policies and the federal government wanted to standardize the requirements countrywide. This was however opposed from many quotas and many states especially southern ones found loopholes in the legislation to lock out African Americans, in some states it was required that for one to vote they must own property. Other methods included poll tax and grandfather clauses as well as locking out those who were not literate, most of these limitations affected the former slaves, many who were uneducated and poor. 4 While these were often successful in legally locking out many blacks, there were those who qualified to vote and for the first time in history, African Americans, although not in their entirety, were able to decide the destiny of their country. These laws were only adjusted 95 years later by removing the extra requirements for voting until one only needed to be an American citizen to possess the right to vote. Ultimately, although what was written in the laws did not always translate in actions, the reconstruction amendments gave African Americans and other minority groups a base on which to commence the fight for their rights and freedoms. Subsequent achievements, such as civil rights movements, gay rights and many other freedoms not limited to the African American struggle that have taken place in America were possible, partly because of the ground laid in the reconstruction amendments. Bibliography " Civil War 13th Amendment" Rare Coin Articles 13th Amendment History. (n. d). <http://www.monacorarecoins.com/rare-coin-articles/civil-war-13th-amendment/>

[Accessed 24/02/2013] Ewalt, Matthew. " Overview of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendment; Their Purpose and How They Shaped America" Yahoo

<https://assignbuster.com/the-impact-and-significance-of-the-13th-14th-and-15th-amendments-on-black-life-and-americas-development/>

voices. (2008). <http://voices.yahoo.com/overview-13th-14th-15th-amendment-1530841.html?cat=37> [Accessed 24/02/2013] Mitchell, Steven. "About the 14th Amendment" Ehow.com. (2013). http://www.ehow.com/about_4564184_the-14th-amendment.html [Accessed 24/02/2013] Kelly, Martin "What is the Fourteenth Amendment and what does it mean?" (n.d). About.com <http://americanhistory.about.com/od/usconstitution/a/14th-Amendment-Summary.htm> [Accessed 24/02/2013]