

Reconstruction in the south essay

[Philosophy](#), [Freedom](#)



Arguably, after the civil war in America, the entire nation, especially the south faced a difficult era in rebuilding its economy, dealing with freed African American slaves, as well as rebuilding of the government. The reconstruction process included change of labor systems, agricultural systems, as well as sharecropping. The progressive changes were objectively focused in rebuilding a new America. After the civil war, many resources were needed to rebuild the nation; in fact, the 1870s depression worsened the situation. This is because many farmers experienced tremendous decrease in crop prices and production, with cotton production dropping by approximately fifty percent in the year 1872 to 1877. Additionally, other crops that depended on slave labor steadily declined in their production and prices, it included sugar, rice as well as tobacco. Hence, other strategies of farming were introduced; for example, sharecropping. Undeniably, sharecropping had some differences and similarities to slavery (Levine 50). After reconstruction, the agricultural labor system in the south also transformed. During the civil war, the labor system was tremendously disrupted. In the past, agricultural labor depended on slavery, but after reconstruction slaves fled away while others joined the army, as well as other slaves becoming independent in farming. After reconstruction, the owners of plantations tried to cultivate their lands using gang labor, but they were paying some wages. Blacks were against the move, and wanted complete independence where they could manage their time as well as entire life (Levine 67). Hence, sharecropping and Crop lien system emerged after the reconstruction. The changing form of agricultural labor systems developed because the planters and former slaves needed each other for

survival. In this case, planters provided the land, and other farm equipments, while former slaves provided labor.

Crop lien system was a credit system that was used in United States after the reconstruction, especially between 1860s to 1920s. After the war, farmers in the south had no cash to undertake farming. Therefore, crop-lien system was a strategy that allowed farmers to get credit before planting by borrowing based on harvest anticipation. The local merchants in the region supplied food and other needs in the entire year. After the harvest, farmers paid back their credits (Levine 150). The credit system helped sharecroppers, landowners as well as tenant farmers. Sharecropping was also another agricultural system after reconstruction. This refers to a farming system in which farmers provided labor on land owned by other individuals and during harvest, they share the benefits with the owners of the land. This was a dominant system of labor in the south. Sharecropping provided an opportunity for blacks to have control of their lives.

Conversably, there are differences and similarities between slavery and sharecropping. During slavery, the slaves had no ownership over land; they only provided labor. On the other hand, sharecropping gave an opportunity to the former slaves to be free. Their main function in this agricultural system was to provide labor. Basically, the slaves provided labor, while the planters provided the capital (Levine 215). Hence, there is a similarity between sharecropping and slavery. In sharecropping, labor supply is not attained through force, but rather by negotiations. Perhaps, slaves during before civil war and reconstruction process had no rights or freedom to control their lives. Moreover, they were not paid wages for the work done.

Sharecropping gave former slaves a chance to earn some wages as well as enjoying some freedom to control their lives.

Conclusively, after the civil war, plantations and agriculture in the south entered a state of confusion and adjustment. The reconstruction process shaped the farming systems in the south, of which it created an impact up to date. The changes in agricultural farming systems led to improvement of economy and empowered many former slaves (Levine pp15-35). After reconstruction, many whites strived to remain owners and deny slaves their rights. On the other hand, blacks in the South worked towards achievement of freedom, acquisition of education, right to vote, as well as becoming the owners of the land.

Work cited

Levine, B. Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's Economy.
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