

HST 202: History of the United States W14 (Escobar Meta 31101 31100)

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Forum 3

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Legacy of Reconstruction

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, February 22, 2014, 12:53 PM

This forum thread is for Legacy of Reconstruction posts and replies.

After studying the required materials, address the questions in your posts.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post.

To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Legacy of Reconstruction

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If not Birthright, what?

by Kenneth Green - Saturday, February 22, 2014, 10:27 PM

Question #1, deals with the issue of birthright citizenship, as it relates to the period of 19th Century Reconstruction in America. In the video, Foner points out that birthright citizenship is not the standard of citizenship for many other countries around the World. He makes an outstanding point that this was a revolution, "backwards" in American History. The Native Americans were born here long before 1492, (the accepted year as the date Europeans discovered The New World, in earnest.) And just think about the planting of flags, and claiming of claims, for white Europeans who honestly believed they were "Civilization" as they flocked to this continent. Section 1 of the 14th Amendment (Text 587) is an amazing reboot of human thought in North America. It's truly a re-evaluation, and bold progression by some really smart people who had just lived through a period of near apocalypse, by any standards. And as Foner points out, the reconstruction period is the Vice-President of the Civil War (not Andrew Johnson,) but the forgotten name or era. Yet it's significance is astounding. However, the forum question applies to the illegal immigration issue, today. And

I never knew it until this course, but birthright citizenship has its roots in the fact slaves were captured and brought into North America against their own will. And almost a century passed after 1776 until a "backwards revolution" of human thinking realized their children were here, no fault of their own. As it applies today? "Birthright citizenship" is now such a paradigm of "backwards revolution" that it's simply, American.

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Re: If not Birthright, what?

by Danny Lopez - Saturday, March 1, 2014, 11:57 AM

I agree with your forum on your take on the question on birthright citizenship, and how if we look back before the Europeans settled in the Americas. The Native Americans were born here before anyone else, and then pushed by the Europeans making seem like they were the immigrants, and the Europeans considered themselves as citizens. As you said about now about birthright citizenship is that a lot has change, now that many immigrants from different parts of the world come the U.S., and been here for awhile and give birth here making their children citizens as many countries don't give that right. It something that will continue more.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

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Ups and Downs

by Kira Iantorno - Sunday, February 23, 2014, 9:27 PM

Progress and freedom in U.S. History does not move forward in a positive and upward trajectory? When I read this question I pictured graphs depicted in cartoons, an arrow shooting off the graph upward direction. No U.S. History does not move forward in a positive and upward trajectory, in some cases it seems even the unit of time is in reverse in some of the decisions we make as a country. Reconstruction in relation to this is after Lincoln's assassination Johnson almost dropped that graph arrow straight down. It was supposed to be a time of the union coming together step by step in a gradually progressive way, and heal as a country. Yet Johnson's bitter attitude toward Confederate veterans and the fact that he was obvious racist was the perfect opportunity to put the country off track. "Booth's bullet therefore elevated to the presidency a man who still thought himself as primarily a Democrat and a Southerner"(pg. 581). So the answer is no, but as a country we still are moving upward and forward. With every down turn we rise up again eventually. Proof of this is despite all of its contenders, the civil war and reconstruction still gave birth to the 14th and 15th amendments and Foner states in the recording that Abolitionists "who fought for a definition of American citizenship severed from the concept of race." And his comment of rights today "Today in the United States, we have plenty of nice constitutional rights but some of them are being violated by the federal government with little problem." Wrapped up all together we can see we will have ups and downs in our country yet we will have people continually working to make it better.

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History repeats itself

by Thomas Stevens - Friday, February 28, 2014, 11:17 PM

When I think of Reconstruction I also think of the revolution that occurred in Iran in 1979 when Americans were taken hostage two days before Election Day on Sunday, November 4th, 1979. It's probably safe to say that Iranians are more familiar with our own history than we are of their history. I think of that because it marked a profound change in Iran's history. It was also during this time period that the people of Iran overthrew their leader, the Shah, whom our own Government had helped place in power. The Shah led an oppressive regime.

[Hostage Crisis on Wikipedia](#)

The Shah had also tried to reform the culture of Iran by allowing more power for women but the Islamic culture in Iran was not ready for that. The backlash that was created when the new leader, [Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini](#), came to power was profound. Many Iranian people were also murdered, tortured and imprisoned by their new leader. In Foner's podcast he states that "We are still living today with the legacy and consequences of the changes that took place..." I do say however, that the changes in Iran were not just about empowering women, the Shah was equally oppressive to his political opponents, but rather that we failed to return the Shah to Iran so that he could be tried in an Islamic court for the crimes that the new leaders of Iran had felt the Shah had committed while he was their leader. We did not turn the Shah over because he had done the United States many favors in helping to maintain the power balance in the Middle-East.

So, with some of the historical context offered, I would also argue that history does not always offer a "more positive and upward trajectory", as you stated in your post. One of the later leaders of Iran, [Seyyad Abolhassan Banisadr](#) made a point of arguing that Iran, no matter how circuitous its progress had/has been, it was engaged in progress none the less.

It is very difficult to define why the South has always been so resistant to change. I will also agree that Andrew Johnson did not help the cause, but perhaps he was on the Lincoln ticket because of the votes that he could help bring. In the end, it's probably all about the politics.

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2

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The theory of having rights put into practice

by James Price - Monday, February 24, 2014, 6:36 PM

I agree with Professor Foner's observation that while black people were given rights through Constitutional Amendments, their ability to utilize those rights were hindered by those in power unwilling to enforce the law (Podcast). I would also argue that some politicians used the law where they could to hinder the new rights of freed slaves.

The 13th Amendment brought the "Black Codes" with it, which Northern Republicans referred to as "quasi-slavery" (textbook p.583). Professor Foner states that "the 14th Amendment remained part of the Constitution, but it was ignored for many, many decades"

(Podcast). Lack of enforcement of the 14th Amendment is also shown in the textbook which states that "President Johnson did everything he could to block Reconstruction" (textbook p.589). Professor Foner also brings up a more current form of this issue when he discusses how "civil rights legislation [was] ignored" (Podcast). The Reconstruction shows us that just because a set of rights are given to a group of people does not mean that those people will be able to easily use those rights.

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Re: The theory of having rights put into practice



by Timothy Wilson-Haley - Saturday, March 1, 2014, 4:43 PM

The power struggles are what I find most interesting, which is why I appreciate the title of our textbook. Escobar made the point in Thursday's lecture that the 14th and 15th amendments, as well as the rewritten Southern state constitutions had more to do with punishing the former Confederate States than eliminating tyranny. In a way, it had to do with maintaining North-East control by enfranchising Southern political allies: the former slaves. Liberty, Equality, Power seems a more relevant title than ever.

However, as you noted, "the 13th amendment brought the 'black codes' with it". The Southern power structure wasn't about to willingly give up their national political weight, even though the radical Republicans argued it was given up when they seceded. I think the issues of having rights versus enforced law and positive or negative trajectories are closely related. Rights can be translated into political power. Those who already have political power will do everything they can to avoid sharing that power. The fighting will get even worse when personal prejudice and hatred are major factors. I agree that "just because a set of rights are given to a group of people does not mean that those people will be able to easily use those rights". This period in history shows that rights can actually be used against people, as evidenced by the declined quality of life the former slaves experienced when the planter class received just as much labor from them without any obligation to provide shelter, food, or medicine. As horrible as it was, slave owners at least had to protect the investment of an owned human being. With the black codes, the economically dominant class didn't even have to provide basic needs. Supposed "freedom" and "liberty" were used against the people that had just broken out of slavery.

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Post Civil War example of US history not moving forward



by Craig Olson - Monday, February 24, 2014, 7:51 PM

After the Civil War is a good example of US history not progressing. After the war Congress passed the Freedmen's Bureau and Civil right bills even though president Andrew Johnson vetoed them. (Text pg. 587) They then passed the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments providing equality for African Americans. This seems like America is moving in the right direction, however, even though equality for Blacks was the law it was hardly enforced especially in the south. Formation of white supremacist groups started forming such as the KKK. Actually enforcement of these rules and amendments did not take place until a

century later during the civil rights movement in the 1960's. (Eric Foner) America tried to provide equality for African Americans after the civil war, but rather things didn't change and people still saw blacks as less of humans as whites.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Post Civil War example of US history not moving forward



by James Price - Friday, February 28, 2014, 12:54 AM

I agree with you that the Reconstruction was a case of America taking one step forward and two steps back. While the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were a step in the right direction, the passing of the Black Codes (textbook p.583) and the Jim Crow Laws (class lecture), the actions taken by the KKK (textbook p.597), and the "Mississippi Plan" (textbook p.602) represented a giant leap backwards in black civil rights.

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Re: Post Civil War example of US history not moving forward



by Danny Lopez - Saturday, March 1, 2014, 12:08 PM

I agree about how the United States didn't progress after the Civil War, and how there still post war affects in the government was not agreeing on certain bills. Yes, the a good thing was helping the african americans being equal with three amendments, but like discussed in class the north forced the south on those laws when the north didn't even do it by punishing the south over post war affects as I mentioned. Many people like KKK didn't move forward in seeing black people as equal people, but as slaves still.

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Reconstruction - Mission Accomplished?



by Thomas Stevens - Monday, February 24, 2014, 10:25 PM

Learning of Foner's hypothesis of Reconstruction made me scream. Would I be too radical in arguing for ethnic cleansing of white men? OK, perhaps; I am after all a white man myself. But, it is obvious that it failed. Did they give up too soon?

The South never embraced the change that the Civil War brought and to this day still does not. To me it is not about citizenship or birthright; the Klan and the rest of the white racists did not care about that, they lost the war and the thought of a black man that they had dominated for two centuries raising himself up over the white man made their blood boil.

Foner talks of how the emancipated Blacks gained their freedom, but did they? Did they know they had freedom? How can one have rights if they do not know of them, even today? Did the white racists of the South acknowledge that Blacks had earned freedom? I don't think so.

Reconstruction is generally not known about because it failed. It fell far short to guarantee former slaves their rights for another 100 years when Martin Luther King Jr and others peacefully protested against police with fire hoses and vicious attack dogs. The whole question of citizenship is irrelevant and specious. I don't care whether Foner speaks of "Civil Nationalism", to the South it does not matter.

When the Southern politicians of today like to parade other politicians, such as Bobby Jindal throughout the media and say we are an inclusive party, one has to laugh at the utter ridiculousness of that concept and say they still haven't gotten it yet. While many of you may feel that my discussing the politics of today is not relevant and somewhat inflammatory, please be aware that Foner also does this in his presentation to British scholars via mixing the prior apartheid state of South Africa. I know what that was about, I lived it and experienced that the black citizens of South Africa actually took control of their government. They should have done that, they were and are still the majority.

I am not sure that Reconstruction helped paved the way for further struggle that Foner suggests ultimately helped move the issue of rights forward. In my mind it had more to do with the sacrifices that Blacks made in four 20th century wars which were so inequitably shared.

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Re: Reconstruction - Mission Accomplished?



by Kenneth Green - Tuesday, February 25, 2014, 5:53 PM

Wow, how interesting you bring a perspective from your experience in South Africa. Foner did mention that we didn't "re-write" our Constitution after the Civil War, but he pointed out that the South African constitution had to be re-written. Again in Reconstruction, these were the descendants of Europeans who even once spoke of the "White Man's Burden" in "civilizing" other races around the world. Combine the notion that some "scientists" of their day even regarded other races as less human, and it's easier to put their outrageous belief (only white men were citizens) into perspective.

However, I think you raise a great issue about how this white European ignorance transcends all the way to our present day, for some people. And it even took a man like Dr. King to confront this ignorance in just the last century- to end segregation. Some people on certain News Networks are now even declaring that Abraham Lincoln was a murderer, because slavery would have ended "all by itself." If that weren't so ridiculous to the point of dangerous for our times, it would be laughable. So I share in your outrage in much of what you said. And your right, it does create political consequences for those of us who do believe in Justice for all. (Just check the incarceration rates of every state.)

Sum of ratings:3 (1)

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Please do not misunderstand me

by Thomas Stevens - Tuesday, February 25, 2014, 8:50 PM

I am sorry, I do not want to mislead you, but I have never been to South Africa. I lived during the time in history, and was fully conscious and aware, when it overcame the Apartheid system. I also personally knew white South Africans who left their country because South Africa drafted many young white people into their military to oppress the Black South Africans. Many whites were deeply opposed to the oppression that existed in their country, but many were also firmly entrenched in the system that had existed for over forty years. Unfortunately, back then, many whites in this country couldn't have cared less about the plight of Black South Africans and thus the issue did not garner much attention.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apartheid>

Yes, you are correct that racial superiority is not just an American phenomena, it has existed for hundreds of years on all continents.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_superiority

What has changed is that other countries have progressed whereas the southern areas of our country have not, or have been more resistant to change.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

2

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Re: Please do not misunderstand me

by Bart Golden - Thursday, February 27, 2014, 2:31 AM

Well put.

I agree with your assessment of reconstruction and the attitudes of southerner's towards the freedmen. Although in fairness I have to say it wasn't just the south. Those feelings of superiority fueled the race riots of the north as well.

As I ponder your question" did they know they were free" I can't help but think that perhaps they did. After all don't most of us think we are free, Yet the fed prints limitless cash that can only have value that is stolen from the cash in our very pockets, and at the same time an illegal federal income tax is strictly enforced on us and for the sole purpose of paying the rent on that very cash. Not one penny of the FICA goes to anything but the debt on the cash. Are we any less slaves today? We have the right (congress does/ delegation) to coin our own currency. We don't have to rent it from a private central bank that is committing constant theft from the entire populous. So where is the rage. I don't hear too many people objecting as we are stripped of our wealth and freedoms. The forum topic US history's forward,

positive and upward trajectory reminds me that freedom isn't free at all, it comes at the highest price and liberty is only for the vigilant. The founding fathers knew this and warned us to remain vigilant. They armed us with the constitution and the bill of rights, weapons against governmental tyranny but we have to wake up from the stupor that smart phones and video games, fluoride and bogus vaccines have bestowed upon us and get mad or else we may end up at the beginning again.

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The process of freedom



by Haden Peterson - Tuesday, February 25, 2014, 3:01 AM

He explains that history wasn't just a straight line of on going progress with freedom, that the united states didn't just get better and better. That citizenship at first was defined by race and not by being born in the us. Black people couldn't be considered citizens just because of they're skin color. Nowadays if you we're born in the US you're considered a US citizen. It's not like that in most countries. Because of the civil war, birthright citizenship is put into place. But that became an issue once generations of blacks we're growing. Even though free blacks we're being born in the US they still weren't considered US citizens. This issue created the 14th amendment stating that all persons born in the US (including blacks) we're US citizens, and also had the right to vote.

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Re: The process of freedom



by Danny Lopez - Saturday, March 1, 2014, 12:26 PM

I agree with you that freedom was a long progress, and a lot things to overcome. Things have sure changed till this day still changes will come. How back then to be considered to a be citizen you had to be white, and with amendments passing and how step by step race was not a factor anymore, and now if you were born on american soil was now considered a citizen. The minorities like african american were growing, and working to build this country were not citizens, and now with amendments passing help black men the right to vote. As discussed in class many white woman didn't like the fact that they were not the ones that got that right, and raised a lot angry woman. Just like the image one on the reconstruction cartoons on how Jefferson Davis from the South didn't like the changes that were going on in how a black man was in the senate.

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The Price of Liberty is Eternal Vigilance



by Bart Golden - Tuesday, February 25, 2014, 3:14 AM

Profound words. Words that ring true, not just in post-civil war reconstruction, but

throughout U.S. history and all history for that matter. I would add “The wages of complacency is subjugation “.

The reconstruction era saw the passing of many civil rights laws /codes/amendments that seemed to promise equality not just for African Americans but for all Americans. Sadly history shows that most if not all were merely gestures. Ideas or Ideals that were important enough to be written into law but for populous without the resolve to demand enforcement of the law. Even a hundred years later with the civil rights of the 60's have we seen the realization of equality? I would have to say no.

Did the reconstruction era change the face of life in America, sure? Was the union preserved, were the slaves freed? Well kind of. Was freedom and equality for all Americans realized under the law? NO! Far too many lives have been lost in an effort to give us the American dream. we have the law and the constitution behind us. When are we going to demand of our leaders the same accountability that we are all subject to as citizens?

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Birthrights a growing issue in the U.S.



by Danny Lopez - Tuesday, February 25, 2014, 2:09 PM

The Reconstruction in the United States after the civil war was not a fast healing time as people thought that things were back to normal. The reconstruction was a really tough time for the country to a strong country, the south was destroyed, and still didn't care about the North beliefs on slaves. Then the amendments 14th 15th that helped the black people become American citizens. In the text it stated, “When

a state had adopted a new constitution that granted equal civil and political rights

regardless of race and had ratified the 14th Amendment, it would be declared

reconstructed, and its newly elected congressmen would be seated.” (Text pg. 588) Now becoming a citizens has changed when immigrants give birth to a child here on American soil.

Now America is full of different races of immigrants that are giving birth here in the United States, and get their citizenship, but as in the video in the forum states that when birthright citizenship is not given in other countries, and not common like in the US. Looking back in history it is tough to define who was citizen of the Americas before the europeans dominated the lands, and pushed the actual citizens away, and treat them as immigrants the ones that were born here. America is a growing country full of different races that give birth to children here, and the US can't stop that.

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The Establishment of Birthright Citizenship



by Louis Gambee - Wednesday, February 26, 2014, 3:43 PM

In regards to Foner's first point about birthright citizenship, he discusses that birthright

citizenship was enacted through the 14th amendment. This amendment not only established "naturalization" or birthright citizenship, but also with its 1st section as our textbook describes on page 587 "has become the most important provision in the constitution for defining and enforcing civil rights". Foner also discusses that this directly applies to the national immigration issue today, because it gives those who are born from illegal immigrants, automatic naturalization or national citizenship. During reconstruction period, the enactment and passage of the 14th amendment, clearly changed the citizenship laws of our country, which used to prevent African Americans from becoming citizens. Citizenship before the reconstruction era used to be defined by race, but since the passage of the 14th amendment, it has lifted some citizenship restraints on race and ethnicity and has enabled anyone of any race, birthed in the U.S to become natural citizens.

As citizens, we have many natural rights that are protected. One of these main rights is our right to vote and influence elections. Unfortunately during this period, many African Americans were intimidated into not voting and influencing a particular election (discussed in our text on pages 602-603 with the Mississippi plan). This form of voter suppression, which goes against birthright citizenship and one's natural rights, still exists today. An example of this is the passages of voter ID laws (in order to prevent voter fraud), which are really meant to suppress the votes of minorities. Hopefully, our country will at some point, fully enforce the rights of birthright citizenship, and prevent these voter ID laws from occurring.

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Protcet laws and rights



by Matt Blackshear - Friday, February 28, 2014, 12:29 PM

I liked what professor Foner had to say about, "....rights on the books are not sufficient." Whats the point of having a law or rights if they are not going to be enforced? As we have discussed in class we are having problem with this now, in our rights as states to vote for the legalization of marijuana.

The ku klux klan played a big role in the restriction of blacks using their right to vote. However in this instance I believe its a good example where the gov. did enforce rights by establishing the bayonet rule. Our government needs to make sure our rights our being used and not being hindered, otherwise whats the point?

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Enforcement



by Marcus Mcphaul - Saturday, March 1, 2014, 10:23 AM

I agree with your point about the laws not being enforced, I believe it was especially hard at this time due to the fact that the southern states were not permitted back to the union quickly. This gave the southern states an even more negative connotation towards freedmen because these people who were not even considered humans by the constitution were now receiving there citizenship, even before whites in the south

who left the union. This negative feelings towards black is the reason the union felt the need to go to marshall law, just so freedmen could go about their lives and most important of all vote, without being terrorized.

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Re: Protcet laws and rights



by Danny Lopez - Saturday, March 1, 2014, 12:40 PM

Yes, I agree even though these amendments were passed and like discussed in class about how the north forced the south on obeying these laws, and the north not following them, and not following them. yes still a lot of problems over rights in states. KKK didn't care about the black men having the right to vote, and how they saw them as slaves, and made their statement on them.

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Re: Legacy of Reconstruction issue 4



by Marcus Mcphaul - Saturday, March 1, 2014, 10:15 AM

When it comes to American history, our progress has been anything but a continuous line of increasing freedom. We see it first with women's rights before the civil war and now we see it with freedmen during the reconstruction. With slavery abolished new laws were enacted by our accidental Democratic president Andrew Johnson, such as the "black codes," and a harsh dislike for blacks halted the progress of the civil rights movement and even put freedmen in a worse position than they were in when they were slaves. Even though freedmen were promised land for their years of unpaid labor this did not happen, especially in the south. Under the Black Codes freedmen were forced to work in a labor economy that often led to very little pay and debt. Without slavery the southern plantation owners could not force freedmen to work, but they also did not need to provide food and houses for their workers making the switch almost beneficial for them. On the other hand freedmen have to try and support themselves and there family with little to no money along with trying to provide a safe shelter for their families to live in. Finding a safe shelter was also very difficult for freedmen due to terrorism from groups such as the Klu Klux Klan and the white league. I think most freedmen would choose the slavery before the civil war over the "freedom" they received during the reconstruction almost every time.

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Re: Legacy of Reconstruction issue 4 /No going back



by Kira Iantorno - Saturday, March 1, 2014, 11:42 AM

While I agree with you on "When it comes to American history, our progress has been anything but a continuous line of increasing freedom" I would have to disagree with you on " I think most freedmen would choose the slavery before the civil war over the "freedom" they received during the reconstruction almost every time". If this were true

African Americans would have given their votes away to southern white men, and no need for KKK they would have just "obeyed", but they didn't. The ability to vote and have rights even with the heartache of racism and intimidation was still better than going back to being a slave without civil liberties. They wanted their freedom and were willing to fight for it, to hold on to what Lincoln had started. Despite Andrew Johnsons racist endeavors to undo what Lincoln had done Radical Republicans and Freedmen were not going to go down without a fight. Freedmen in the south endured the worst of what racism could possibly cause but despite that, American history shows us that these rights are worth fighting for and that going back is not an option.

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Birthright Citizenship

by Jacob Sanders - Saturday, March 1, 2014, 6:00 PM

This portion of the video was of particular interest to me because, as Foner states, the reconstruction period had long lasting implications that immediately affect us today. The idea that being born somewhere inherently makes you a citizen is (as Foner states) almost uniquely American. What was once a great step forward in the rights of freedmen after the civil war, now represents what appears to be a glitch in the system. This relates to the idea that American history represents periods of progression and regression, and in an ironic twist of fate, what once stood as a mighty pillar of civil rights for recently liberated slaves, not stands as a flaw of immigration.

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Positive and Upward Trajectory

by Michelle Coming - Saturday, March 1, 2014, 11:25 PM

In the video clip Foner says "We Americans like to think that our history is a straight line of greater and greater freedom, we began perfect and have been getting better ever since." I'm inclined to agree with him on this point. A major example of this was the struggle between Andrew Johnson and Congress over Reconstruction issues of the Freedmen's Bureau and Civil Rights bills (Which were ultimately passed despite Johnsons veto.). Through the reconstruction years there were bitter disagreements about what to do with the newly freed slaves of the south, as well as the traitorous Confederate leaders. During this Reconstruction time period slaves not only gained their freedom with the 13th Amendment to the Constitution but their citizenship (14th) and their right to vote (15th). On the other hand according to the Reconstruction Act of 1867 that Congress ultimately settled on, many of the Confederate leaders/supporters lost their places of high political power as well as suspending their right to vote until their state "adopted a new constitution that granted equal civil and political rights regardless of race and... ratified the 14th Amendment..." (textbook, 588). This demonstrated both granting and taking away of rights that Foner describes. Foner quotes Thomas Wentworth Higginson "Revolutions may go backwards" and I have to also agree to this, the reconstruction period definitely demonstrates that.

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