

HST 202: History of United States W17 (Escobar Meta 30937 30938)

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Legacy of Reconstruction
by Joe Escobar - Friday, February 24, 2017, 10:14 PM

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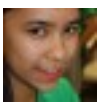
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Enforcing laws?



by Emily Phan - Saturday, February 25, 2017, 11:29 AM

Professor Eric Foner talks about how passing laws or “having rights” doesn’t necessarily mean the laws or rights will be or can be enforced. During reconstruction congress passed laws banning certain forms of discrimination but these laws were not enforced. An easy modern day example is the speed limit. The law says you can only go - for example 55mph but this law doesn’t really stop anyone from going a little faster. Also if you know there is almost no chance of being caught it is easy to break this law even further and go really fast. If someone is driving out in the middle of nowhere the speed limit is very hard to enforce. So when a politician wants to make a new law we must think how or even if it is possible to enforce such a law. Also we must think: *would the enforcement of the law be impractically expensive?* Say our town passed a law that required everyone to compost food scraps. Sound like a great idea right? We could be as green as Seattle. Even if they made this law it would be terribly hard to enforce. Would there be designated workers who would search through everyone’s garbage cans to make sure there wasn’t any compostable leftover pizza in there? Such a law would be horribly difficult and rather disgusting to actually make people follow. Passing a law and being able to enforce it are too different things.

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Sleeping Giants

by Katherine Fjordbeck - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 3:52 PM

As Professor Foner said in the audio clip, “rights on the books are not sufficient for enforcing” this is because the 14th amendment was ignored for decades until people started to act on it. Even though this revolution of reconstruction went backward rather than forward as Foner said “it laid a foundation for another century later” this shows that even though no officials really enforced the 14th amendment African American citizens technically did have equal rights in the books, just no one saw it that way. Their rights were seen as “sleeping giants” as Charles Sumner had said.

Showing that everyone knew that African Americans had just as many rights as whites in the US, just no one recognized that African Americans had these rights. They were “sleeping” until the 1950-60s Civil Rights Movements.

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Re: Sleeping Giants

by Katherine Fjordbeck - Wednesday, March 1, 2017, 11:42 PM

One of the first things said in Foner's audio clip is that 400 million men, women, and children got their freedom after the civil war which becomes a huge issue because there are many questions popping up about what are the rights of these former slaves. One example of a huge question was what are the rights of slaves? Can they have the same rights as white people? These were all huge questions that were brought up a lot post civil war. Also, all these people, were they citizens or aliens? Even Foner said that the "eve of the civil war, slaves were not even considered citizens they were considered aliens." So, after the Civil War many of the questions raised a lot of concerned for the American population. What was next for the US?

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Birthright Citizenship

by Hope Kelley - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 4:25 PM

This is a really hard subject that has always been a point of contention. I honestly don't know the right answers or even if there is one. I think birthright citizenship is good and bad. If you take a look at today's illegal immigration issue, you see men and women coming here and starting families and looking for a better life, which I think they should be able to do but they should do it legally. If those families are discovered they are deported, or at least the illegal people are, which leaves the question of what to do with the children, sometimes known as 'Anchor babies', who are technically legal because they were born in the United States. I think it also goes back and resembles the 19th century birthright citizenship. You have African people and families that have been born in the U.S. who's grandparents or great grandparents were brought here 100 years ago for slavery, and even if they were freed, they still weren't citizens. So when the Reconstruction started happening after the Civil War the 14th amendment of the U.S. constitution was created and it states, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." Even with this amendment in place there was and still is disenfranchisement of African Americans, and equal today of illegal immigrants. I think there are pros and cons to birthright citizenship and it's hard to be all for it or all against it.

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Re: Birthright Citizenship

by Katherine Fjordbeck - Monday, February 27, 2017, 9:04 PM

I agree with what you have said in you point there's negatives and positives in either way you look at it. Yet, in the video with Professor Foner he mentions civic nationalism versus ethnic nationalism and since the US practices civil nationalism now, it's kind of hard to see where they are coming from when they don't except people that has had family for generations in this country. Especially since they played the race card with slaves as Foner had said "citizenship was defined by race not by not by birth" African Americans were only see at face value even if they had lived in the US for quite sometime. People still saw them as the underdog because of their race, even after fighting in a war for their country. So, wouldn't you think that these people who have been born here and now have their own families living on for multiple generations that they should be considered citizens?

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Re: Birthright Citizenship

by Hope Kelley - Friday, March 3, 2017, 3:24 PM

I agree with you also. I think they all should have been made citizen, especially if they fought in the war. I found an article Eric Foner wrote about reconstruction and there are a couple things that stood out to me. "Lincoln granted amnesty to most Confederates so long as they accepted the abolition of slavery, but said nothing about rights for freed blacks." Lincoln had freed the Blacks but he had no intention of giving them rights and making them citizens. I don't really understand the thought behind that but I can't really say much because I wasn't brought up in that time period.

Website: https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/29/opinion/sunday/why-reconstruction-matters.html?_r=0

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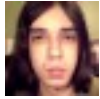
Re: Birthright Citizenship

by Katherine Fjordbeck - Friday, March 3, 2017, 7:56 PM

I really liked the part that you said that we weren't brought up in this time period, because it's true. From today's standards though this is not considered morally right. As Professor Foner said as well, "America was for white people black people are aliens here even if they were born here or had ancestors here for generations." This is appalling in today's standards to hear that. People would be in shock if they saw that on the news today. Yet,

even though this was a gruesome era, this did lay a solid foundation for people for the civil rights movement in the sixties, which would ultimately led to the world we live in today.

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Law but not Practice

by Kyle Quinoveva - Monday, February 27, 2017, 10:57 PM

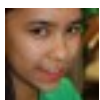
The issue of rights being had and rights being enforced is very much a central theme of reconstruction and post reconstruction but it applicable throughout almost any period of history. The Idea of things being in law but not in practice is often used in the, mostly legal, terms De Facto and De Jure: "In fact" (IE In practice) and "In law" respectively.

In the south during reconstruction states had to ratify their constitutions to be accepted back into the house and senate. Effectively, in law, former slaves were given broad rights comparable to those of white Americans. Additionally for a time former slaves enjoyed many of these freedoms granted to them under the law for example in September of 1867 there were over 700,000 black voters in reconstruction south (Textbook Pg. 469).

However this is only because federal troops and agencies like the Freedman's Bureau were there to enforce the rights in practice. As the presence of these methods of Northern enforcement vanished so did many of the rights, not in law but in practice. With implementation of things such as the Mississippi plan where blacks were coerced to vote democrat or barred from the poles and the denial of federal troops to be brought in to protect Mississippi had terrible implications (Text. Pg 481). Mississippi blacks were stripped of their rights not by official laws but by the refusal of much the white population to enforce those laws. They became de facto second class citizens despite having every right to be on equal terms with those of European ancestry.

As reconstruction would continue enforcement would fade until the compromise of 1877 in which reconstruction officially ended with the last withdrawal of federal troops and, with them, the last real enforcement of the rights of the freedmen for nearly a century.

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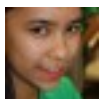
Progress?

by Emily Phan - Wednesday, March 1, 2017, 11:09 AM

What exactly constitutes progress and how do we measure it? Many elements make up progress in a society, for example, how kind the society is, how free, how easy it is to maintain a decent standard of living. Now I am not comparing the American society to other countries societies; that is a different discussion entirely. I am comparing American society as it is now to how it was in the past.

How kind is our society? Well it differs in different areas. We try and especially kind to minorities and women now a days. However many feel fine bashing the majority or saying horrible things about men. Just look at this last election. One candidate praised minorities and women to the sky and a huge portion of the country felt as if this candidate didn't care about their interests. In trying to right a wrong of the past we have created another wrong. Also we live in a society where we are told our own feelings are most important. We have self esteem programs, hate free zones, safe spaces, etc. All of this says that ourselves and our feelings are what we need to take care of. We come first, and after this we can care about others. Compare this to the farmers and other ordinary people in the time we are learning about. They had to help each other and lived in a society where being kind and helpful to neighbors was part of the culture. The national government wasn't going to help them out in the west when their barn burned down. They had to depend on the kindness of their neighbors when they were in trouble. Nowadays if a neighbor or friend gets sick or needs money we expect some social program to help them and do not help as much as we could. The kind of self-centeredness we now prize as individualism wasn't nearly as prevalent in the past as it is now.

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Re: Progress?

by Emily Phan - Wednesday, March 1, 2017, 11:12 AM

How free is our society? Rules make people less free. In America there are more rules now than in the past. Some of the rules may be very good rules and others may be terrible but there are more rules now than there were in the past. Because there are more rules our actions are more often restricted. Being restricted makes people less free.

How easy is it to maintain a decent standard of living? In this category we are better off than our forefathers. The basics of life are more readily available to more people now than in the past, and having more than just the basics of life is a norm. People sometimes latch on to the idea that bettering technology is the only standard for measuring progress. People see all the new gadgets and pieces of technology in our society and think that this proves our society is better than it was a hundred years ago. But just having better technology can not be the only standard with which we measure our progress.

In conclusion we have made progress in our society in some ways and gone back in others. Progress is like waves. It goes up and down. The real question is whether the tide is coming in or going out. Is progress in society getting gradually greater or is it getting less? Whichever it is we are in for a slow and bumpy ride. Perhaps if it all averaged out we would find that progress has neither gone forward nor backward.

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Re: Legacy of Reconstruction Topic #1

by Jarred Finn - Friday, March 3, 2017, 4:04 PM

'During the time of reconstruction our nation was trying to figure out a way to fix the broken system and put the union back together. One of the bigger issues that the government had to address was the slavery issue. Slavery was officially abolished after the emancipation and the thirteenth amendment. This left the question of what rights would the freed slaves receive, and that was the problem because many had no solution. This brought about the fourteenth amendment which states, "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside." This would mean that any person born in the U.S. is a legal citizen. which is total opposite of how it was pre-reconstruction. This law is the exact reason why we allow illegal immigrants to come here, have children and then their children are automatically granted citizenship. As professor Foner said, there are many other nations where just because you are born here from illegal parents you aren't granted citizenship. So we have the law that does allow this to happen and that law is because of our history in which the slaves were freed and granted citizenship because they were born here. At that time it was the only way to automatically grant African Americans citizenship. Maybe it is time for a change to the law because of today's current issues in which there are many immigrants flooding into this country illegally and having children which adds to more of the illegal immigrants even though they are technically legal. It affects the legal citizens here because our tax dollars go towards the Illegal parents children who is legal because since the kids are legal they are eligible for many social welfare programs. So this problem dates way back to the reconstruction age when millions of slaves were freed and granted citizenship. Reconstruction was a rough time for American history in which many laws were created to help put back together the union. It shows that maybe some laws need changing because some were created in times when they only really worked for the current time period because reconstruction was a time in which immediate solutions needed to be created.

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Re: Legacy of Reconstruction



During the war, Lincoln encouraged freedmen to emigrate to Africa to escape the social racism and inequality building in the country, and that would certainly grow after the war (p.561). The Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment ended slavery and gave blacks their freedom, but they did not grant them civil rights, citizenship or even enforce their freedom. In fact, the reconstruction of America after the war was slavery by another name, and even worse than slavery (lecture, Nast's "The Union as it was" cartoon). After the war, Lincoln's goal was to reunite the country. The main issue became the pardoning and reacceptance of Southern, ex-Confederate states into the Union, and their leaders back into political positions. It seemed like only Republicans and black right's supporters were still fighting for equality.

Things would go from bad to worse after the South realized their war torn cotton fields would need to be replanted, and their homes and railroads rebuilt. With their workforce now freed, southerners would have to do it all on their own, in a time of economic crisis. Southern states enacted Black Codes, that excluded blacks from juries and voting, banned interracial marriage, punished blacks more severely than whites for the same crime, denied them from testifying against a white man in court, and were forbidden from leasing land. Unemployed blacks were considered vagrants that were arrested, fined and forced to work for a white landowner until they repaid their debt, which might take years because pay was near to nothing and, because they were no longer property, the employer would charge for stay (P. 566, lecture Thursday). The freed blacks that weren't forced to work in fields still did because the south's economy didn't provide for wages or jobs for blacks. They were payed instead with a share of crops. The promise of land to freed people during the war was retracted and given back to ex-Confederates so they could keep blacks under control by returning them to plantations. Successful black men were culled by white leaders and laws prohibited blacks owning guns. (pgs. 566 to 569). These atrocities led to the revolt of Republicans and black right's supporters who demanded the right to vote for freedmen.

The 14th Amendment, which would give blacks citizenship, caused such outrage among ex-Confederates and anti-black whites in the North, that race riots erupted in the streets. Many were injured and killed, and black schools and Freedmen buildings burned. Democrats refused to cooperate in passing Reconstruction Acts and ratifying the 14th Amendment. Political parties were divided and at each other's throats constantly. Even after southern states were accepted back into the Union, racist resistance grew into terrorist groups, like the KKK, who hung blacks and white supporters and threatened black and Republican voters (pgs. 570 to 574).

Though freed people were slowly receiving their rights during and after the war, half the country was still fighting a racial war. Even when freedmen won a victory in civil rights, they it wasn't enforced by state or federal governments. Johnson, a dedicated Democrat, encouraged opposition to Reconstruction Acts and civil liberty laws, and overlooked most violence against blacks, only getting involved after Congress passed over his veto, dividing the southern states in five military districts, and almost impeached the president. Progress was made, but at the expense of many lives, and economic and political crisis. It took the constant struggle of many people to fight for something that wouldn't fully be appreciated until a century later, for "the price of liberty is eternal vigilance" (Eric Foner, video).

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Immigration: The Never Ending Debate

by Hannah Ward - Friday, March 3, 2017, 10:32 PM

Immigration is a huge discussion today, just as it was back during the era of reconstruction. Foner stated that the main question for the nation during this time was regarding the status of the millions of newly freed slaves. In the United States, citizenship was defined by race before the Civil War. From the 19th century on, we have had this idea of birthright citizenship, which has changed our nation into a civic nation. Not many other countries are like that. Most others are based on racial nationalism. His example was comparing us to Germany. If a child is born in Germany to parents who are not German citizens, then the child, along with the parents, are not citizens. According to Foner, this decision to change to civic nationalism was a major change for America. This all came about because of reconstruction after the Civil War.

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Having rights vs. enforcing and exercising those rights

by Rikkianne Chatfield - Saturday, March 4, 2017, 11:36 PM

My appreciation for the historian Eric Foner is increasing as our class goes on. I agree completely with his statement about very few people knowing anything about the Reconstruction period. I know very well I am unfortunately one of those individuals, and I have to admit with as much learning that I am accumulating from this class equally so I am focusing on unlearning as much. (For ex: believing all southerners were slave owners, Lincoln freed the slaves with the Emancipation Proclamation, and so on.) Learning about one of the most significant aspects of

Reconstruction being the military enforcement of ensuring the 14th and 15th amendments and how this was effort was mislead by the decision of Hayes and the compromise of 1877. “A third goal of Reconstruction, enforcement of equal civil and political rights promised in the 14th and 15th Amendments, was betrayed by the Compromise of 1877.” (From our class textbook pg. 657) This is what propelled the coming decades for freedman into further suppression. Which is relevant to the issue proposed in our forum of having “rights” and enforcing and exercising the rights is not the same.

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