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Legacy of Reconstruction

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

This thread is for discussions on the Legacy of Reconstruction topic.

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Passing laws v. having rights



by Dawn Taylor - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 1:27 PM

In Professor Foner's speech on the Legacy of Reconstruction, he talks about the significance of constitutional rights. He stated that the U.S. didn't need a new constitution during the Civil Rights Movement, there was no significant change to the constitution during this time.

What needed to be done was for the old constitution to be enforced. With the admission of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, all U.S. citizens, and even people of high authority (our government leaders) were, by law, required to enforce these constitutional rights to ALL people. This wasn't the case after the Reconstruction Era after the Civil War. It took until the 1960's (100 years later!) for change to really begin to happen.

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Re: Passing laws v. having rights

by Covita Hughes - Thursday, March 2, 2017, 9:47 AM

Also, the resistance and defiance of southern whites after the 13th amendment led to the passing of The Black Codes which restricted black freedom drastically. On page 566 in our text states that "treating blacks equally was scarcely considered" and the black codes kept Freedman from their constitutional rights.

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Re: Passing laws v. having rights

by Dawn Taylor - Thursday, March 2, 2017, 7:37 PM

As Professor Escobar lectured today about Black Codes during the Reconstruction Era, he pointed out that the 14th Amendment had not yet been passed. It struck me as almost funny that the Constitution has to be so literal or people won't follow it, and even then it is violated. It would seem to me to be logical that after the 13th Amendment was passed granting slaves their freedom that they would be free, just like all other Americans at the time. But the Constitution had to specifically state that they could vote, lease land, have jobs and other details just like all other Americans.

The only thing African Americans had so far was no more slavery. As freedmen, they had an uncertain roll now in society, as Professor Foner makes clear in his video lecture. What role would African Americans play in American society?

Lincoln himself feared that whites in the South would never extend equal rights to the freed slaves. In 1862, Lincoln encouraged freedpeople to emigrate to all-black countries such as Haiti, where they would have a chance to get ahead without having to face the racism of whites (text 561).

The effects are still felt today as racism continues in our country.

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Re: Passing laws v. having rights

by Covita Hughes - Thursday, March 2, 2017, 9:16 PM

Yes, so very much was so very wrong for way too long after the slaves were freed. I'm ashamed of my ancestors. The video Tuesday about the New Orleans Massacre (the race riot that killed over 200 people) and today's video about Vigilantes lynching whole families - with a death toll of over 2000 black men, women and children showed me how much real hatred was alive and well long after the Civil War.

What blows my mind is how creative the ex-confederates were in getting around the Constitution to continue on with using and abusing the freedmen and their mindset of white entitlement actually scares me. Seems wicked to create state laws to purposefully imprison unemployed black men, and then give them sentences that were far beyond cruel - all in order to serve their own self righteous needs and wants.

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Re: Passing laws v. having rights

by Jonathan Whittington - Saturday, March 4, 2017, 2:27 PM

Completely agree with your point. Nothing changed except the word slavery was no longer part of society. Everything else including how they were treated stayed the same. Back then the right vote was obviously something that everybody wanted and used compared to today where many people could care less. Not giving blacks this essential right that every other white person had tells you all you need to know about what southerners thought about black people at the time.

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Birthright citizenship

by Covita Hughes - Sunday, February 26, 2017, 8:10 PM

The period of reconstruction in the United States between 1863-1877 was a time that our nation addressed many questions on how to move forward as a Union with the emancipation of more than 4,000,000 emancipated slaves. Eric Foner defines this period in our history as “the effort of the nation to come to terms with the titanic changes that took place in the American life as a result of the Civil War.” Two main questions that arose had to do with what freedom actually was and what rights did American Citizens actually have. In 1866 two thirds of the House of Representatives and the Senate passed Civil Rights bills over President Johnson’s vetoes. Section 1 of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution defined all native born or naturalized persons, including blacks, as American citizens, thus giving them the same privileges and immunities as any other citizen of the united states. (text pg 570)

This decision made over a hundred and fifty years ago, has a “HUGE” impact on America today. There are many debates and controversies regarding the children of illegal aliens. What are we to do with the child born today of an illegal alien who is deported back to their homeland? Do we deport the mother leaving the child a ward of the State, essentially doomed to a life in foster care, or do force the mother to take the baby back to her potentially unsafe homeland that she escaped from, or do we change the Constitution once again to let the mother stay in America?

It will be interesting to see how our Government deals with this current challenge facing America and how many lives will be affected.

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Passing Laws vs Enforcing Laws

by Jordan Selker - Monday, February 27, 2017, 10:37 PM

While the end of the civil war brought great changes to African American rights on paper, many lives remained in similar conditions, if not worse. "No states enfranchised a single black. Some of them even balked at ratifying the Thirteenth Amendment." (Pg 566) As confederate leaders received pardons and found themselves back in office, they took control of the reconstruction process. Many states adopted black codes, "Excluding black people from juries and the ballot box, did not permit them to testify against whites in court, banned interracial marriage, and punished blacks more severely for certain crimes." (Pg 566) How does one expect to receive the protection of the law when they are barred from testifying in it's courts? While many ex-slaves found themselves working on the same plantations for a small share of the crop, only enough to barely survive, the newly passed legislation was unable to have immediate positive impact on many black americans.

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Re: Passing Laws vs Enforcing Laws



by Dawn Taylor - Tuesday, February 28, 2017, 8:15 AM

America is still divided as far as prejudice is concerned toward people of different ethnic groups. You still see Confederate flags flown here in Eugene!

In Professor Foner's speech, he talks about the role the African Americans would play in American society and how we are still living today with the legacy and the consequences of the changes that took place during the Reconstruction Era. Not until the days of Martin Luther King, Jr. did we really begin to see dramatic change and keeping of the Constitution. This is 100 years after the Civil War.

Our government needs to lead by example in leadership of American society. If they don't treat African Americans with equal rights, how can we be expected to?

(By the way, there is no such thing as race. We are all the Human Race.)

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Re: Passing Laws vs Enforcing Laws

by Jordan Selker - Saturday, March 4, 2017, 8:44 PM

We are divided by our ethnic groups as are other countries around the world. When toddlers are put in a room together they will naturally segregate by race, it is an un-escapable truth that we are more comfortable with those similar to us. Unfortunately the meaningless differences we have in skin color became the differences of freedom and slavery, a rift that continues to shrink but will never fully close. Extreme segregation starting with slavery and continuing through reconstruction and even past the civil rights movements has left us with separate cultures that further slow down the reconciliation process, unaided by the aforementioned confederate flag bearers and systematic racism in the form of mass incarceration etc.. Today we see a much more watered down version of reconstruction era America where the government refuses to aide the previously oppressed to the point of lifting them up and out of poverty. Poverty ridden inter cities with underfunded schools keep those raised in these environments all but trapped, while kids like myself enjoy brand new schools and fantastic scholastic resources and support that enables me not only to make it to higher education, but test well enough to make it to the more prestigious schools and/or receive financial aid enabling my education even further. My path and many others in my shoes is cleanly paved, with educated loving parents helping me through. In a day and age where a criminal record or lack of secondary education can block your hopes of making it past a living wage, those who have had to climb out of the trenches of racism all the while carrying the weight of a rigged system against them.

Like in reconstruction those who benefit from the upper hand fail to understand the grim reality of what needs to be done, while we accept our privilege and shun those in history who came before us because their moral wrongs wear a different mask. While oppression may be minor in comparison to slavery and early reconstruction, it shares too much in common to be ignored.

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Re: Passing Laws vs Enforcing Laws

by Covita Hughes - Wednesday, March 1, 2017, 9:48 PM

Several things took place during reconstruction that diminished the freedmen's hope of enjoying the rights they were entitled to. On page 567 in our textbook, Sharecropping is described as a way that black families could work a piece of land for a share of the crop at harvest time. Although it seemed like a fair offer to the land owner, the black workers were resentful to the similarities the situation had to slavery that they were supposedly freed from, They wanted their own land to provide for themselves and in 1865 General Sherman issued an order to setting aside acreage for freedmen, however soon after, President Johnson proclaimed that land restored to the ex-confederates. (text pg 568) Over and over again blacks were promised rights and liberties, only to have them swiftly taken away. Laws were even made up to imprison black men on minor crimes with harsh sentences. Once these men were imprisoned, they were utilized by white men to work dangerous conditions in mines. (in class video - Slavery by another name) These men would work 16 hour days at a fraction of a price a regular laborer would, making the miners rich once again at the expense of the oppressed.

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Birthright Citizenship, then to now

by Bailey Davis - Monday, February 27, 2017, 11:30 PM

According to our textbook, section one of the fourteenth amendment, "defined all native born or naturalized persons, including blacks, as American citizens"(pg. 570). This, which is today called "birthright citizenship" established that any person born within the United States was a citizen, and with that came all of the "privileges and immunities" of being an American citizen. At the time that this was written, the country was pulling itself back together after the Civil War. Those who had fought against slavery desired a "definition of citizenship that severed from race(Foner)," and many were questioning the rights of the nearly four million newly emancipated slaves. The fourteenth amendment granted them the title of United States citizens.

Today, because of that amendment, citizenship is granted to anyone born on United States soil. Historian Eric Foner points out that there are currently around twelve million illegal aliens in the United States today; however, if any of them had children here, those children would be considered citizens.

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Re: Birthright Citizenship, then to now

by Dawn Taylor - Thursday, March 2, 2017, 8:16 PM

With the passing of the 14th Amendment, I wonder if the writers thought about what this would mean for America in later years. Ireland ratified their Constitution in 2004 to end Birthright Citizenship. Should America follow their lead?

If America amended the Constitution to end Birthright Citizenship, we would most likely see a decrease in illegal immigration and our health care costs could decrease, but then we would become a less diverse nation, which is one of the great things about our country. There are positive and negative points you could argue to ending Birthright Citizenship.

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Racial and Civic Nationalism

by Matthew Molinari - Monday, February 27, 2017, 11:38 PM

The United States started off as a strictly racially defined nation, as seen how citizenship was granted to only white people. Eric Foner states, "we had an ethnic nationalism, that was grounded in the racial boundaries of slavery." and this was very true, as the driving force of the continuity of the nation at that time was race. It was a White man's world, where Blacks had no place politically or socially. This began to change, however, with the Reconstruction, as those who fought against argued for a national identity devoid of race.

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Re: Racial and Civic Nationalism

by Dawn Taylor - Tuesday, February 28, 2017, 8:27 PM

Can we say that we are all immigrants of the United States? Knowing more about the Reconstruction Era makes me think differently about this question. The passing of the 14th Amendment seemed to change so many things about our country. Today we have undocumented immigrants, whereas before the 14th

Amendment people were immigrating from Germany and Ireland. This is when our country shifted from ethnic citizenship (blatantly decided by the Dred Scott Supreme Court decision) to civic citizenship.

Professor Foner says that we are still living today with the legacy and the consequences of the changes that took place in American society during the Reconstruction Era. Not only are we experiencing the undocumented immigrant issue and the confusion of Birthright Citizenship, we are also still dealing with prejudices toward black people as well, which is really too bad.

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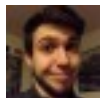


Re: Racial and Civic Nationalism

by Bailey Davis - Friday, March 3, 2017, 11:22 PM

Definitely. However the fight was far from over. While radical Republicans had a powerful influence from within the House of Representatives and the Senate, there was still social resistance to recognizing African American's as citizens. In the south, "black codes" were implemented, which prevented African American's from doing things such as owning land, or imprisoning them for simply not having a job. Meanwhile, the president, Andrew Johnson, was at best apathetic, and at worst supportive to the tragedies that affected the black community. He vetoed several bills that could have helped the situation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1866.

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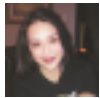


Re: Racial and Civic Nationalism

by Matthew Molinari - Saturday, March 4, 2017, 6:09 PM

I think you're right, but I would say that "social resistance" is putting it far too lightly. The policies put forth during the reconstruction, as part of the congressional reconstruction plan, were not just resisted, but flat out ignored or opposed. The ideological disconnect of the northern Republican legislators was so vastly different from their southern counterparts, that in essence they were attempting to force a fundamental social change upon a population of people whom were not ready for, and did not want, such a change. It was this clash of mindsets that lead to such extreme examples of opposition that set the stage for the parallels of racial tension between then and now, i.e access to citizenship, and access to voting. It is unfortunate how the actions designed to help the southern Black community in such a profound way, ultimately, however inadvertently, lead to systemic problems that wouldn't be addressed for over 70 years, until the Civil Rights movement began in the mid 50's.

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A shift in requirements

by Amy Aguilar - Monday, February 27, 2017, 11:52 PM

There are profound differences between the racial citizenship of the early United States Republic and modern day Germany, in comparison to the civic nationalism and birthright citizenship of the present constitution of the United States. During the Reconstruction period of the United States the U.S. constitution was ratified in order to include emancipated slaves. The thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments are examples of the United States attempting to change its citizenship laws from racial citizenship to civic citizenship.

The differences between racial citizenship and civic citizenship being that racial citizenship relies on different factors such as folk, ancestry, culture, and race. Civic citizenship only relies on one factor, if you were born in the country of origin. Furthermore, the reconstruction period exemplifies a shift in the requirements for citizenship in the United States.

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The lasting effect of Reconstruction on Racial Nationalism vs. Civic Nationalism

by James Jennings - Monday, February 27, 2017, 11:54 PM

Prior to the period of reconstruction following the end of the Civil War nationalism in the United States was primarily based on ideas of race. There was a tie between how we thought of ourselves as American citizens and how we thought of as race stemming from the peculiar institution that was slavery, with the most apparent example being how the Irish and the Germans were viewed during their biggest periods of immigration, not as new citizens from Europe but as foreigners coming into the country to disrupt the social and political structures that were in place.

However following the end of the Civil War and after the Emancipation Proclamation it became easier to define what it meant to be a United States citizen. American citizenship was less about the status of race or based on the social structure of slavery but on a changing civic definition of freedom and rights.

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Re: The lasting effect of Reconstruction on Racial Nationalism vs. Civic Nationalism

by Dawn Taylor - Wednesday, March 1, 2017, 8:20 PM

With the U.S. being a very diverse country, we can't tell so much today who is a foreigner or an undocumented immigrant. People who come here from Mexico or any other country need jobs to support their families, just as anyone else does.

But we seem to have a problem here. Many immigrants want to work, and white people want hand-outs. The people from Mexico seem to be taking our jobs. But are they? So here we have this hot topic of building a wall between the U.S and Mexico.

This is still a free country but if you want to live here, you have to follow the rules.

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Re: Legacy of Reconstruction

by Jonathan Whittington - Friday, March 3, 2017, 12:07 PM

To me the legacy of reconstruction is a legacy of failure. The radical republicans of the time seemingly had the all the right ideas in mind to try and help Africans Americans gain equality in society, but unfortunately the middle ground republicans and obviously the democrats had different ideas In mind. It seems to me that really the only change that was made was eliminating the term slavery. Other then that things got worse and it was almost a system of worse slavery then it was before. Jim crow laws and black codes were essentially slavery in a different term. Sad to think that a civil war was thought for really no change at all to take place. Reconstruction to me is like taking one step forward but then two steps back.

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Birthright citizenship and the definition of nationalism

by Anthony Aviles - Saturday, March 4, 2017, 9:05 PM

We are still living today with the legacy and the consequences that took place during the Reconstruction era. Foner states that there are 12 million illegal aliens in the United States. We deem constitutionally that they don't have the same rights as citizens and there not protected by the constitution. However, children born by illegal immigrants in the United States are deemed citizens. Citizenship is granted to any individual born in the United States. The birthright citizenship defined in the 19th Century applies to illegal immigration issues today. Why is it that the child of an illegal citizen a legal citizen? Foner states that this is not the case for many developed countries. This makes for a very complex issue because many people believe these illegal immigrants should be deported however, their children that are born here are allowed to live here and are citizens.

Another claim Foner states is that we as a country (mainly politicians) boast in a civic nationalism rather than other developed countries represent racial nationalism or ethnic nationalism. Racial nationalism is based on the culture, language and ancestry. Civic nationalism is the ideology that anyone can become a citizen. However, this was not always the case. Prior to the civil war, other races not deemed white and especially black people were seen as foreigners to the United States. The only group

to recognize blacks as citizens prior to the civil war and believed in civic nationalism were the abolitionists. They were despised by many and seen as a minority. When the citizens of the Union fought against slavery during the civil war, they also fought for a defined citizenship different from racial ties.

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