The Untold Story

Visual Essays on America’s Reconstruction

Edited by

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The Untold Story
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Introduction:
Telling the Untold Story

The Reconstruction Era was literally a period of rebuilding—it entailed the reshaping of the ideologies of the defeated Old South and the physical re-construction of the region so desolated by the ravages of war, and, as a nation, developing policies that thoroughly remade and modernized America and laid the foundation for the "Second Reconstruction"—the Civil Rights Movements of the 1950s and 60s. The ending of slavery not only brought freedom to African Americans but also inaugurated a complex reshaping of fundamental American institutions including the lawmaking process, family structure, church organization, and the very definition of American citizenship itself.

On November 7, 1861 (long remembered by former slaves as the “day of the big gun-shoot”), just months after the fall of Fort Sumter, the Union Navy recaptured Port Royal, South Carolina. This prompted the panic and mass exodus of the region’s plantation owners, who left behind thousands of their slaves. This provided an opportunity for a dress rehearsal of sorts for Reconstruction known as the “Port Royal Experiment.” Northern strategists saw the newly freed people of the Sea Islands as an ideal test group for experiments in education, citizenship, and land ownership for potential implementation
after the war. The experience there prepared participants and observers for the more widespread, future implementation of truly revolutionary changes in education policy, civil rights, and democracy, and importantly showed that these policies could succeed in longer-range plans for the reconstruction of the South once the war could be brought to an end. Still, sandwiched as it is between the dramas of the Civil War and the Jim Crow era, Reconstruction suffers as one of the most understudied and misunderstood periods in American history.

Part of this misunderstanding is due to the history’s complexity—scholars’ interpretations of the period have ranged from 12 years of abject failure where unprepared, vengeful, and corrupt former slaves nearly ruined the South and a period of excessive punishment of the defeated former Confederacy by the victorious North, or, alternatively, as a bright age of hope that ultimately failed, but only insofar as it did not go far enough or achieve its lofty goals. Recently, scholars have agreed with W.E.B. Du Bois’ conclusion in his 1913 study Black Reconstruction in America that its overthrow was a tragedy, a “splendid failure,” whose revolutionary agenda could not overcome the overwhelming forces set against it.

Through the generosity of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the University of South Carolina Beaufort hosted a three-week summer institute for 30 K-12 teachers from July 12 - August 1, 2015 as a workshop for educators to learn more
about the history of the Reconstruction Era, and to demonstrate how that history has been influenced by events and personalities originating from the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia.

This three-week experience made history come alive to the participating teachers by placing rich historical sources in specific and broader context for classroom use. Beaufort County, South Carolina, the unquestioned cradle of Reconstruction, was an ideal location for interpreting the era, especially appropriate because of the combination of its remarkable historical buildings and archeological sites and the extensive number of extant primary sources that shed light on the lived experience of Reconstruction in the Lowcountry.

As both the birthplace of Reconstruction and of the new South, Beaufort County embodies every facet of Reconstruction politics, problems, and resolutions. No other place in the United States can showcase the number of historic structures and the ability to couple interpretations of every major theme of Reconstruction with the physical point-of-reference. New educational opportunities for freedmen, the role of the federal government through agencies such as the Freedmen’s Bureau, and the political involvement of African Americans are just a few of the national themes of the Reconstruction Era that are writ large in the local experiences and historical sites in Beaufort.

The early occupation of Beaufort by Union troops and the lasting influence of African-American leadership made
Beaufort a laboratory for Reconstruction activity. Reconstruction in Beaufort was both unique and representative of national themes. Many buildings of historical importance remain intact. In addition, the Lowcountry of South Carolina is home to many “firsts” occurring during the period of Reconstruction and arguably is the place where Reconstruction policies lasted the longest. It was where the United States military first recruited and trained formerly enslaved people to fight as Union soldiers and where humanitarian and missionary societies worked with the federal government to establish an extensive educational system for formerly enslaved people. The Beaufort area was also where the government experimented with various policies for providing services and land to African Americans and where the first African American towns evolved.

Participants created visual essays as final projects for the institute. Staff and visiting faculty were quite impressed at the quality of these works, and twelve are presented in this volume. Together, they shed new light on this critical period of American history, and they all contain the promise that the story of America’s Reconstruction will no longer be neglected in the nation’s primary and secondary schools.
The Hardening of Northern Race Attitudes, Justifying the End of Congressional Reconstruction

Robert Breckenridge

Our Institute has focused on the course of American history since the Civil War, extending the early parameter of the traditional periodization of Reconstruction to 1861 (the capture of the Beaufort area of South Carolina very early) and the ending parameter to 1915 (the death of Robert Smalls). Other conceptions of the Reconstruction period have been formulated and proposed, none, in my judgment, compellingly. However, there is, indisputably, a movement in the course of the Reconstruction from an early optimistic phase of sympathy, charity and egalitarianism toward the struggles of the freedpeople to a more pessimistic, skeptical, and disillusioned phase in which popular support, military protection and social and economic services were withdrawn from the project of promoting the incorporation of all Americans into the restored Union.

Because I live and work in a northern state, where people have sometimes been given a pass on the issue of why the Reconstruction was not more successful, I am particularly interested in documenting the racial attitudes of the North and demonstrating how they hardened to the point that federal efforts to guarantee civil rights to the freedpeople could be ended without effective protest there. All students, I think, tend to buy
into historical stereotypes and northern students are particularly susceptible to the temptation to let their ancestors off the Reconstruction historical hook. Consequently, I have selected a few readily accessible images from the popular culture of the day that exhibit widespread northern views about the freedpeople and their developing roles in national society, which images might be shared with students to help them construct a more informed view of the realities of the Reconstruction era.

The first image I have chosen comes from the February 24, 1866, issue of Harper's Weekly, a national newsmagazine published in New York through-out the Civil War, the Reconstruction and into the twentieth century. It presents a positive image of a young free African American woman, modestly and demurely dressed, seated next to a less elegantly dressed white woman, whose name in the caption (Mrs. McCaffraty) and whose liquor bottles in her market basket suggest she is an Irish-woman. Her facial expression suggests she is scandalized to find herself in the company of the young black woman in the Washington, D.C., streetcar. The image clearly suggests that it is not the young African American woman who is out of place on the streetcar but rather the prejudiced Irish housewife. Harper's Weekly is communicating that the freedpeople have as much of a right to ride on public
conveyances as anyone. This is a declaration of support for equality and fair treatment.

The artist of the first image is not known, but the second image I have chosen was drawn by the great German-American crusader for social and political reform Thomas Nast. It is entitled “Patience on a Monument” and also appeared in Harper’s Weekly (October 10, 1868). It is political propaganda in favor of the candidacy of the Republican Ulysses S. Grant. It is intended to evoke sympathy for the freedpeople who, more than three years after the end of the war, still had not reached anything like
social or political equality and were in fact suffering vicious and brutal violence against their families and the institutions they had labored to establish during the first years of the Reconstruction. Images recalling the horrors of the New York Draft Riots of July 1863 appear on the left and images of arson and lynching by the Ku Klux Klan appear on the right. The
massive monument in the center is engraved with a long list of outrages the black man at the top as suffered across the centuries of African presence in the New World as he gazes down piteously upon his massacred wife and children. Black corpses litter the ground. He is armed (possibly a former colored soldier) but he does not take up the weapon to threaten any of those who, from beneath, threaten him. He is a paragon of patience. This is another strong image of sympathy and solidarity with the black Americans as they suffer through the first wave of violence against the freedpeople. Nast and Harper's Weekly are urging voters to think of their commitment to the freedpeople as the election of 1868 approached.

By 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution had been ratified and many people were hopeful that black (male) suffrage would finally result in greater political strength and social power for the former slaves. In celebration of the ratification of the amendment, Harper's published this image (on March 12, 1870) by an unknown artist showing a cordial, good-natured, dignified, elderly black American man casting his vote with good humor and a positive attitude despite attack by certain states (represented by buzzing flies) that registered opposition to the amendment. Prominently shown are northern “flies” representing New York and New Jersey, whose legislatures were then dominated by Democrats. New York had, in fact, ratified the amendment but rescinded that vote. Clearly,
By 1873, that support was becoming even more attenuated. The nation was in the grip of the worst financial panic (depression) it had ever experienced; Indian wars being fought on the western frontier; the industrialization of the Northeast was producing huge profits, social inequalities and uncertainties; Radical Republican Stevens was dead and the dying Charles Sumner had only months to live; the Grant administration was rife with corruption; cities were exploding with immigrants and experiencing painful new issues; and the religious hegemony of the old Protestant order was beginning to unravel. The North had a lot of change to contend with and,
collectively, though not universally, the people who had demanded freedom and equality for the enslaved, began to divert the primary focus of their attentions.

Thomas Nast’s notorious surrender to the exaggerated reports of corruption and misrule by Republican freedmen in the South, “Colored Rule in a Reconstructed State” appeared in Harper’s on March 14, 1874. In this cartoon, black politicians stand in exaggerated and ill-fitting finery, in some unspecified
Southern legislative house, yelling names and threats at each other, with clenched fists and snarling, caricatured faces, while the protective personification of good government and civil liberty, Columbia, warns them from the podium as she shakes a broom at them, “You are Aping the lowest whites. If you disgrace your Race in this way, you had better take Back Seats.” While this is occurring, white members of the assembly look dismayed and horrified as gallery onlookers sit in dumb amazement. Leaving aside Nast’s reference to the infamous African-ape stereotype, his cartoon is a warning to self-important and corrupt black politicians to get their act together because they are not likely to get another opportunity to wield power again soon. He implies that the country - the Democrats, the disillusioned Republicans, the businessmen who need government to function smoothly and fluidly, anyone tired of corruption - will be uniting to send these misguided black leaders into the minority back seats, if they retain office at all. Nast is foretelling a dismal future for the reconstructed governments of the southern states, and he is using some powerful racist stereotypes to make his point. It is important to remember that this newspaper has a national readership though most subscribers live in the North. It seems correct to say that Northern support for the goals of Reconstruction is flagging, and by spring of 1874 racist depictions of the current problems, however exaggerated, are going to be within the bounds of fair play.
Nast’s cartoon “The Ignorant Vote - Honors are Easy” appeared on the cover of *Harper’s Weekly* two years later, on December 9, 1876. That was a month after the disputed and problematical Hayes-Tilden election which finally resulted in the compromise that left the Republicans still in power nationally and the South unsupervised and free of the threat of federal military intervention. Here Nast is suggesting that the freedpeople have
become as much of a ridiculous threat to democracy and problem for the nation as were the uneducated and violence-prone Irish ruffians who uncritically supported Tammany Hall corruption. And, comparing this depiction of a black American with that of the noble, dignified freedman in “Patience” cartoon, it appears Nast’s critical and sympathetic earlier artistic tendencies have yielded to the baser popular depictions of African-Americans. The political sophistication of the shoeless, grinning, black (Republican) voter of the South matches equally that of the leering, loud-mouthed Irish (Democrat) lout. This is not a statement of racial hopefulness, and there is no prospect of social and political harmony in electoral empowerment here. The colossal issues challenging the nation in the last decades of the nineteenth century resulted in a number of third party movements, but the most important was the People’s Party (or Populists), who nominated James B. Weaver for President in 1892. In this final political cartoon from that campaign, which I have found uncredited on a Columbia University website (among others), demonstrates how far Northern concern for the wellbeing and the civil rights of the freed people have drifted from the consciousness of the American electorate. In this cartoon, voters are urged to unite nationally in support of the Populist movement. Representatives of the North and the South throw their weapons, wrapped in their old grudges, into an open grave holding the skeletons of the dead, the hatred and the sectional issues of the past. Standing on a platform of fraternity,
the farmers and workers of all parts of the nation link arms, raise banners and march toward legislative power. There are no African Americans to be seen anywhere in the drawing. The artist who produced this cartoon understood that Northern race attitudes no longer separated the nation. Southern racism is no impediment to cooperation between the sections of the country. All these voters are united in their lack of interest in black families and rights. Economic necessity has produced popular unity and race issues will be ignored for the present. *Qui tacet, consentit*: whoever remains silent, gives his consent.

Of course, however, there were always important voices working for the elevation of the freedpeople in the South and, as they migrated west and north, in those places also. I want to close this brief exploration by drawing attention to a painting by
the great American Civil War illustrator and naturalist painter Winslow Homer, who lived the last decades of his life in Maine. Homer drew and painted black subjects throughout his long career and showed a particular sensitivity to the complex situation and noble aspirations of the freedpeople. Some believe his “Gulf Stream” may be his greatest painting, indeed the greatest painting produced in America, and that the condition of African Americans in the nation is its metaphorical subject. It depicts a thoughtful, solitary, muscular, stoic black man adrift on a dangerous sea, moving uncertainly in a direction over which he has no real control. Still, Homer has painted him looking determined and confident, not fearful or cringing. The sun shines on his damaged but seaworthy boat, and there is a ship on the horizon which perhaps brings rescue and hope. Is Homer, in 1899, three years after _Plessy_, reminding America of its duty to its African citizens? Is he sharing his own hope that that the future will bring another Reconstruction? The twentieth century, of
which Homer lived to see only the first decade, vindicated that hope, and it is still being vindicated in the twenty-first.

Sources:

www.HarpWeek.com (multiple pages),
http://www.columbia.edu/itc/history/foner/radicalism/week7-populism/


Reconstruction is the restoration of the notion that democracy should be colorblind in every facet of life; political, social and economic. It is the dilemma of how to fulfill the promise of what it is to be “American” with regards to African Americans, North and South. The image above is a common sentiment of Reconstruction, but leaves out the leaders and coalitions that are the untold story of Reconstruction.
Reconstruction was not a time where African Americans sat idly by and waited for their benevolent master and in recognizing this time period by the occupation of the Northern army historians reduce the role of African Americans in the campaign for equality. To say that Reconstruction begins with the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1st, 1863 is misleading. African American began working to build their own free communities as soon as they reach territory controlled by the Union army. “Contraband,” or slaves without masters, were given land to alleviate the burden on the United States army to provide for these people in July of 1862. “With assistance from the military, the contrabands received cut lumber from the army’s sawmill and began building individual homes that would eventually become a village known as Mitchelville.”¹ Mitchelville was a community where African Americans could cultivate the land to meet their needs giving them their first foray into free labor.

¹ Wise and Rowland, Rebellion, Reconstruction, and Redemption, 1861-1803: The History of Beaufort County, South Carolina, Volume 2, p. 129
“Rather than passive victims of actions of others or simply a “problem” confronting white society, blacks were active agents in the making of Reconstruction.”

One man who certainly was not passive was renowned Robert Smalls who not only commandeered a southern ship named The Planter and sailed to Northern forces but also piloted the USS Keokuk in a raid against Fort Sumter. He later again piloted the Planter in an engagement that saw his Captain surrender only to have Smalls take over and save the ship. Robert Smalls later was elected to both the South Carolina House of Representatives and Senate and the United States House of Representatives where he worked to change things not just for South Carolinians, rather the whole of the United States.

Free and Freed people in coalition governments with fellow Republicans were tasked with creating State Constitutions that arguably are the foundations for the Progressive Movement. One such aspect is public education. The new state constitutions of Louisiana and South Carolina allow for access to public education unconditional to race, color or previous condition. An example is The Penn Center in Beaufort County that educated African Americans after the war. Also, although the progressive policies did tax, the taxes would be used to help build new
infrastructure either destroyed during the war or inadequate to compete with the North to begin with.

President Abraham Lincoln was a catalyst in this quest for equality. After the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, almost 200,000 African Americans signed up for service in the United States military with the goal of earning equal treatment. Lincoln in a famous letter to James Conkling illustrates his intentions to keep his promise of the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln states, “If they stake their lives for us, they must be prompted by the strongest motive — even promise of freedom. And the promise being made, must be kept.”

Lincoln also signs the 13th Amendment without Congressional approval. The image of Abraham Lincoln as a benevolent benefactor is inaccurate however and furthers inaccuracies about Reconstruction. African Americans fought for their freedom and

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3 A letter from Abraham Lincoln to James C. Conkling August 26, 1863.
their country. A role of the president is also to protect the laws through the use of military force if necessary. This did not happen and after the War, “without troops, agents of the Bureau were ‘worse than useless.’”

The issuance of the Civil War Amendments (14th and 15th) was the attempt to change public policy on behalf of the African Americans by Congress. Charles Sumner said, “Without their votes we cannot establish stable governments in the Rebel states. Their votes are as necessary as their muskets.” Congress also passed the Enforcement Acts of 1870 and 1871, along with the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 and the Civil Rights Act of 1875. All of these Acts were trying to protect the rights of the African Americans that Southern whites were disregarding.

Focusing on the white perspective and highlighting the end of Reconstruction in 1877 when the North symbolically “pulls federal troops from the South” is a disservice to the gains of African American leaders and revolutionaries during and after this date. Robert Smalls serves in the House of Representatives until 1887. The last Reconstruction Congressman lasted until 1901, George Henry White. William D. Crum an African American was appointed Collector of the Port of Charleston by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1902. As one African American leader states about the appointment, “it therefore involves the

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5 Pierce, Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner, IV, p. 229 from DuBois, Black Reconstruction in America p. 199.
principle and policy of transcendent importance to the entire race.”

Doug Egerton says that “Reconstruction did not fail; in regions where it collapsed it was violently overthrown.” Free peoples and enslaved peoples had to be empowered to initiate the endeavor for equality and a triumvirate of power was formed between African Americans, the President and Congress. None of these agents worked singularly and without any one of these entities the “failure” that was Reconstruction is even greater. Unfortunately, since the 17th Amendment was enacted only six African American senators have been popularly elected. There is still a problem whether of blatant racism, educational opportunities or socioeconomics.

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The Place Where God Resides: “Where is my 40 Acres and a Mule?”

Valencia Abbott

In the old narrative of the Reconstruction period, it is played out like a giant chess game, where the white pieces have all the power and agency to strategize a win. The black pieces, though, are limited to a few key roles and not allowed to play under the same rules. The black pawns remaining passive, in the same stance as when the game began. But the historical truth of Reconstruction reveals a fuller and more diversified understanding of period that will come to define who and what America is. At the time, land ownership was imperative for people of African descent to establish their sense of place in the
world. This visual essay will explore the how the lack of access to land for most freedmen created the social, cultural, economic and political structure of contemporary America.

General Benjamin Butler, commander at Fort Monroe in Virginia, is credited for the political and military shrewdness that led him to name the enslaved people who escaped to the Union encampments “contraband of war.” As such, they became political pawns in the “War of Rebellion.” But enslaved people were using any means necessary to escape bondage long before they were called contrabands. They placed their names in the Book of Negroes for Lord Dunmore by choosing which side of freedom to strive for in the American Revolutionary War. They suffered under the flooring of First African Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia, which served as a station in the Underground Railroad. One enslaved man, Henry Brown of Virginia at the age of 33 literally packed himself in a box and was shipped north to freedom. These are just some of the ways enslaved people took the power to move themselves into a different place. The title bestowed upon them was contraband, and that means property. In actually it meant freedom, and as the picture illustrates it meant family. It meant a family that was finally together in the same place. From the beginning of the Civil War to near the end, the lives and interest of the enslaved people became paramount in finding a resolution. The Civil War was the tearing apart of the country due to the legalized bondage of nearly four million black people in 1865. Yet, many of these people, bounded and free had
started to dream of their own destiny. On January 12, 1865, General William Tecumseh Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton would meet with twenty black ministers in Savannah to find out the desires of their people. And from the heart and mouth of Garrison Frazier, the speaker for the black people, came a simple request: “‘We want to be placed on land until we are able to buy it and make it our own.’” The ability to carve out a place where these former slaves could control their own destiny was of the utmost importance. Not retribution or forgiveness, but simply to be able to earn success by the sweat of their brow – that is what Frazier and the others asked.

“The Savannah Colloquy” would set in motion a controversial maneuver that still resonates today. General Sherman signed military Field Order 15, authorizing a distribution of 400,000 acres of coastal land confiscated from the
Confederates that reached from South Carolina to northern Florida. “[E]ach family,” it said, “shall have a plot of not more than forty acres of tillable ground.” Due to the surplus of mules that were part of Sherman forces, he also decreed that the freedmen could have use of a mule. Land that had for generations and generations been worked with the sweat, blood and tears that were taken from their Motherland of Africa was not going to be returned to those who had long received its wealth. This was a key part of the “promissory note to which every American was to fall heir” – Martin Luther King Jr. way of evoking the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence in his “I Have a Dream “speech. For the descendants of those first black indentured servants turned enslaved people, General Sherman’s grant of land was the first step in finding their place and redeeming the cost from the Founding Fathers.

What would developed into Sherman’s reservation which was “The islands from Charleston south, the abandoned rice fields along the rivers for thirty miles back from the sea and the country bordering the St. John River, Florida.” From this into the black conscious and culture was the understanding that the debt owed was the land that would allow black men and women to find their place. The land would allow them with their own mind, hands and integrity produce and to make a way for themselves. Here in the place that was once owned by the person that held them captive, now they had the ability and the chance to shape their own destiny. Such as when Robert Smalls purchased
the McKee house at 511 Prince Street where he would have been considered property as such any other household good.

The issuance of land was more than a noble cause. It was more than righting a wrong that for some could never really be corrected, for many families scattered would never see each other again ever. It was more than compensation for the inhumanity that spewed through centuries and the repercussions that would resonate into present day. That piece of land, that 40 acres and mule was the hope that swelled in the hull of slave ships when the will to live was surpassed by the will to die. The land represented a place in the world where generations could hold onto each such as on the island of Sapelo in Georgia. A deed transferred from generation to present day land owners such as Cornelia Walker Bailey of Sapelo, represents her existence. In her words “when your heritage is denied and robbed that you hurt
inside and you feel like there is something missing.” So the land that holds the dust of ancestors, the traditions of family and familiarity and the foundation of economic substance is vital to the people that worked the land. Owning a piece of their own land is coming home, and at home is where God resides.
The Role of the Black Church in Antebellum and Reconstruction America

Michael Axon

Was the Black church attempting to fulfill the call that Jesus had so boldly announced in Luke 4:18-19 when it took on the role of preaching to the enslaved or rendering aid to freedmen and contrabands? Jesus said, echoing the words of the prophet Isaiah; “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

The church has been in the life of Africans since their landing on the shores of the Americas. Though prohibited from learning to read and write, Africans did attend church with their masters. In The Church in the Southern Black Community, historian L.F. Maffly-Kipp postulates that many white owners and clergy preached a message of strict obedience. They insisted on slave attendance at white-controlled churches, since they were fearful that if slaves were allowed to worship independently they would ultimately plot rebellion against their owners.
This church on St. Helena Island, South Carolina is illustrative of the church that slaves would have attended and sat in the balcony. In *Dreams of Africa in Alabama*, S.A. Diouf recalls that Christianity descended upon the black community and was a tremendous enabler for slavery. Slave owners forced their bondpeople to sit in the segregated balconies of their churches, or held special services for them on Sunday afternoons with tailored-made sermons.

When slaves had to go to the bathroom or wanted to be excused for any other reason, they would hold their hands up and keep them up until their master excused them to leave. After slaves were given permission to leave, they would hold up one finger as
they were leaving to inform anyone that saw them leave that they had been excused.

According to historian J. Whidden Long, most slaves went to the same church as their master, if they were allowed to go to church at all. However, there were a few churches that were organized and run by slaves separately from whites. Two of the earliest black churches in America were Silver Bluff Baptist Church started in 1770’s in Aiken, South Carolina and First African Baptist Church started in 1788 in Savannah, Georgia. The First African Baptist Church is the oldest continually operating black church in America.

The residents of Mitchelville founded the First African Baptist Church in 1862 as a means of meeting their community needs. The African church has long been at the center of Black
communities. In *An Encyclopedia of African-American Christian Heritage*, M.A. McMickle discusses how the Black church established itself as the greatest source for African-American religious enrichment and secular development. It was the black church that provided a true worship experience (combining traditional African worship with American worship style). Also, black churches served a host of secular functions, which placed them squarely in the center of black social life. Church buildings doubled as community meeting centers and schools.

Residents of Mitchelville founded the First African Baptist Church in 1862
The red door pictured above is First African Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia where slaves worked in the evenings building this church and hired themselves out to acquire the money to buy the land. According to *The Meaning of Freedom: The Promise of Reconstruction* (Pearson Education) it was particularly important for black men and women to organize their own churches because most black people considered white ministers incapable of delivering a meaningful message. Nancy Williams recalled, “Ole white preachers used to talk wid dey tongues widdout sayin’ nothin’, but Jesus told us slaves to talk wid our hearts.” Once the church was paid for, they often painted the doors of the church red. Some postulate that churches adopted red doors to represent the blood of Christ. To some, the red of a door symbolized the blood of the Jewish Passover, which was
intended to protect against evil. Last but not least, a red door could simply mean that a church is mortgage free! (C Privor)

The Emanuel's congregation pictured above grew out of the Hampstead Church, located at Reid and Hanover Streets. The church in 1816 withdrew from the Charleston’s Methodist Episcopal Church over disputed burial grounds. The wooden two-story church that was built in 1872 was destroyed by the devastating earthquake of August 31, 1886. The picture above is an earlier configuration of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. Even when service was outlawed in 1834, the congregation continued the tradition of the African church by worshipping underground until 1865 when it was formally
reorganized, and the name Emanuel was adopted, meaning "God with us" (Emanuel AME Church).

Organized both spiritually and politically, black churches were not only given to the teachings of Christianity but they were faithfully relied upon to address the specific issues which affected their members. During slavery, African-American churches had been part of the Underground Railroad, helping slaves escape slavery to Canada where freedom lay. The picture below shows how First African Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia aided slaves in their efforts to run away. The diamond patterns were drilled throughout the bottom floor concealing tunnels that allowed slaves to escape while services were going on above the floor. During Reconstruction, Black churches became involved in sparring against the racial intolerance and violence targeted
against them. The deeper this involvement, the more the churches and their members were punished. But despite this punishment, African Americans maintained a deep faith in God, even concerning their own personal freedom and safety.

Reconstruction saw a huge growth in the number of black churches. The reason for the growth of black churches can be summed up by Richard Wright, in his book *12 Million Black Voices*, “It is only when we are within the walls of our churches that we are wholly ourselves, that we keep alive a sense of our personalities in relation to the total world in which we live.” Did the black church fulfill the call that Jesus had so boldly announced in Luke 4:18-19 when it took on the role of preaching to the enslaved or rendering aid to freedmen and contrabands? Black churches heeding that call believe they have provided a sanctuary for praise and worship of Christ, care for physical needs, education, free expression of their feelings, and political activism.

References:


Did the Thirteenth Amendment Truly Free the Slaves?

Harold Holt

According to the Thirteenth Amendment "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States…” However whites in the former slave states found ways to continue Southern society much as it had
been before the war. They continued to use fear, intimidation, laws and economic pressure to maintain their “white superiority”.

This illustration shows a white man intimating a Black man with a gun. There is a lot of symbolism here. The Black man is dressed like a farmer, perhaps a sharecropper. The white man appears to be a plantation owner or overseer. Not only is the white man stealing the sharecropper’s money, he is stealing his dignity. The Black man does not look afraid or mad. He simply appears defeated. The gun implies that whites are not only taking the Blacks livelihood, self-respect, courage – everything that is important to people – but also perhaps, their lives.
This drawing done after the Civil War clearly shows that the Black is still subservient to the white “master.” As you study this drawing you can still see signs that the Blacks are below the whites. The Black man is dressed in work clothes standing below the white family. The white family is dressed up enjoying themselves in the shade of the porch. Behind the Black man there are others working, perhaps his family. It appears that the Black sharecropper is waiting for an answer to what needs to be done in the fields that day while the white man sits back in his chair ignoring the Black man.

How were the whites able to maintain such control over the freedmen? They did it with a series of laws called Black Codes. The Southern feared that if the former slaves did not work their fields their agricultural economy would collapse. They needed a way to restrict the movement of their former slaves, insuring a steady labor force. The Black Codes identified Black people without jobs as vagrants subject to arrest. If they were unable to pay their fine they were forced to work for whoever paid their fine. This effectively re-enslaved freedmen by limiting their ability to find a new job, work for themselves, or migrate from the South.

Often Blacks were arrested and found guilty for no crime at all or for minor offenses, then sent to prison. Because southern governments had little money to build prisons for these “criminals,” they began leasing them to plantation owners in need
of field hands. It did not take long for these governments to realize that they could make huge sums of money leasing these convicts to coal mines, sawmills, and railroads too. Working conditions there were often worse than under the old plantation system.

A common practice was to arrest someone and then lease them for a month to pay the fine. After the month was up, the convict would not be free because he still had to pay for his uniform, room and meals. All this could add another month to the time he needed to serve. Once he was released he had to fear being arrested because he did not have a new job yet, and returned to the camp.

In this unjust system, the dream of freedom went terribly wrong for many former slaves. This picture taken in 1932 shows a young man sentenced to a forced labor camp in Georgia for vagrancy. What offense had this young man done to be placed in the sun, legs tied around a pick ax and hands tied below his knees?

http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/gastudiesimages/Sharecropper-Tenant%20Farmer%201911.htm

Sharecropping was the economic component of maintaining white superiority. As this photo suggests, in many cases it was not all that different then slavery. As one studies the contract below, it becomes clear that the arrangement was very one sided:
The sale of every cropper's part of the cotton to be made by me when and where I choose to sell…Work of every description… to be done to my satisfaction, and must be done over until I am satisfied...

(Source: Grimes Family Papers (#3357), 1882. Held in the Southern Historical Collection University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
https://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/122/recon/contract.htm)

The landowner, then, decided when and where to sell the cotton, and required that all work be done to “my satisfaction.” The landowner controlled every aspect of the situation. If a cropper got fed up with this arrangement and left, all the owner had to do was notify the sheriff, have him arrested, then lease him back for no pay – or worse, have him leased to someone who runs a forced labor camp.
Even though the dreams of freedmen were continually crushed, they and their posterity never gave up and the dreams have endured. It has been a hard fight and will continue to be a hard fight for freedom and equality. The chains of slavery have been broken. Civil rights laws now require equal treatment of African Americans. There are more job opportunities today because of better education. The political influence of African Africans is tremendous. But the question still needs to be asked – has the quote from Martin Luther King Jr. below been realized for African Americans?
The Missed Opportunity of the Freedmen’s Bureau

Christine Kadonsky

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands was established under the War Department by Congress on March 3, 1865. The Freedmen’s Bureau provided aid for the destitute, established schools, helped freedpeople locate family members, legalized marriages, supervised labor contracts, investigated racial confrontations, provided legal representation, and assisted black veterans. The most significant Bureau achievements involved education and health care. The Freedmen’s Bureau could not overcome a lack of funding and the prevailing attitudes toward race and Reconstruction in order to protect African Americans and ensure racial equality.

The Freedmen’s Bureau established schools and colleges for African Americans, who believed that education was critical to their freedom. One of the most important achievements of the Freedmen’s Bureau was creating about 3,000 schools for African Americans. Some of the first schools for formerly enslaved African Americans were established on the Sea Islands of South Carolina, which came under the control of the U.S. Army after the Battle of Port Royal on November 7, 1861. Photograph 1 shows the Freedmen’s School on Edisto Island,
South Carolina during the Civil War, c. 1862-1865. Many African American children attended school during the day and some adult freedpeople attended school in the evenings to learn to read and write.

Another goal of the Freedmen’s Bureau was to support African American families. By gaining their freedom, freedpeople could now marry for the first time. African Americans showed their desire to marry with the numerous wedding ceremonies conducted right after the Civil War concluded. Illustration 2, drawn by Alfred R. Waud for the June 30, 1866 edition of Harper’s Weekly, shows the marriage of an African American veteran and his wife in a ceremony conducted by Chaplain Warren of the Freedmen’s Bureau. Freedpeople also sought help from the Freedmen’s Bureau in locating their family members separated from them during slavery. While some families were reunited, it was difficult for Freedmen’s Bureau agents to find individuals with little information of their last known location usually years earlier. Dr. Eric Foner notes that Freedmen’s Bureau agents were worried about an abundance of African American orphans at the end of the Civil War. The agents were astonished by how many orphans became part of the black family structure. While the Freedmen’s Bureau tried to assist families, African American families were committed to supporting themselves.

People held differing opinions about the Freedmen’s Bureau. African Americans and some Northerners valued the
Bureau. Freedpeople sought assistance from Freedmen’s Bureau agents in meeting basic needs, locating family members, securing veterans’ benefits, and finding fair employment. African Americans wrote petitions to the Bureau about the injustices suffered by formerly enslaved people. While conducting an investigation of the Freedmen’s Bureau in the South, General Steedmen offered a crowd of 800 African Americans a hypothetical choice between the Freedmen’s Bureau and the United States Army and the audience chose the Bureau by a wide margin (“The Freedmen's Bureau" by The New York Times Learning Network). Some white Northerners also supported the Bureau. In an 1868 cartoon in Harper’s Weekly (Illustration 3), Alfred R. Waud portrayed the Freedmen’s Bureau as a necessary line of defense protecting African American Southerners from their white neighbors. While the agent is shown protecting the African Americans, people on both sides are armed, suggesting that the Bureau was preventing a race war. The cartoon was published a few weeks after Congress passed a law that phased out the Freedmen’s Bureau.

However, the Freedmen’s Bureau was opposed by many white Southerners and Northerners. The Freedmen’s Bureau was designed as a temporary measure. Congress decided to extend the Bureau’s work in an 1866 law, which President Andrew Johnson vetoed. Thomas Nast demonstrated his opposition to Johnson’s veto in one sketch of a larger cartoon in Harper’s Weekly on April 14, 1866 (Illustration 4). Johnson is pictured
kicking a chest of drawers, representing the Freedmen’s Bureau, down the stairs of the White House with scattered African Americans falling out of the bureau. The Congress overrode Johnson’s veto and the Freedmen’s Bureau continued to have agents in the South for three more years.

Many Northern Democrats also opposed the Freedmen’s Bureau. A poster issued during the Pennsylvania gubernatorial election in 1866 expressed some white Northerners’ complaints about the Bureau (Illustration 5). The poster advocated for the election of Hiester Clymer, who ran on a white-supremacy platform, supporting President Johnson’s Reconstruction policies. An African American man, portrayed negatively with exaggerated features, is lounging idly while white men are ploughing a field and chopping wood. A label near the man chopping wood says "The white man must work to keep his children and pay his taxes." The Freedmen’s Bureau is depicted as the domed structure in the background that resembles the U.S. Capitol, which is labeled with "Freedom and No Work." Its columns and walls are marked "Candy," "Rum, Gin, Whiskey," "Sugar Plums," "Indolence," "White Women," "Apathy," "White Sugar," "Idleness," "Fish Balls," "Clams," "Stews," and "Pies." Some white Northerners begrudged the assistance provided to African Americans by the Freedmen’s Bureau.

While the Freedmen’s Bureau had varied, ambitious goals, the Bureau was hampered by limited funding. The strong white opposition to the Freedmen’s Bureau in the North and South led
to limited Bureau resources. At its peak, there were less than 1,000 agents in the South. The Freedmen’s Bureau staff was cut significantly in 1869 and it ceased operations in 1872. The Reconstruction era was a missed opportunity for African Americans to gain full citizenship. Because of limited resources and white opposition, the Freedmen’s Bureau could not provide adequate assistance to African Americans during their first years of freedom.

References


The captions for the images provide bibliographical information.
(1) Freedmen's School on Edisto Island, South Carolina
Samuel A. Cooley, ca. 1862-1865, William Gladstone Collection, Library of Congress
http://www.loc.gov/item/2010647918/
(2) Marriage of a colored soldier at Vicksburg by Chaplain Warren of the Freedmen's Bureau
Alfred R. Waud, June 30, 1866 in Harper's Weekly
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009630217/
(3) The Freedmen's Bureau

Alfred R. Waud, July 25, 1868 in Harper’s Weekly

http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/92514996/
(4) **Johnson Kicking Freedmen’s Bureau**

One sketch from the “Grand Masquerade Ball Given by Mr. Maretzek at the Academy of Music”

Thomas Nast, April 14, 1866 in *Harper’s Weekly*

http://14thamendment.harpweek.com/asp/ViewEntryImage.asp?page=0&imageSize=m
(5) The Freedman’s Bureau! An agency to keep the Negro in idleness at the expense of the white man.

1866, poster issued during the Pennsylvania gubernatorial election

http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661698/
“the single most dangerous threat to the internal security of the United States”:

Cycles of Democracy and State Violence, from Reconstruction to the “Second Reconstruction”

Kate Kokontis

“Law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice, and ... when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress.”

– Martin Luther King, Jr. A Letter from Birmingham Jail, 16 April 1963

Black self-determination, education, democratic and equitable participation in civil society, and the redistribution of wealth – most pressingly in the form of land redistribution – were central tenets within the nation’s Reconstruction after the Civil War as it was envisioned and promulgated by a preponderance of Black Americans and some of their more radical allies. In many parts of the South, and in some parts of the North and the West, freedpeople secured the right to define, determine, and enact
their own freedom. To be sure, in many parts of the nation African Americans continued to experience repression, structural poverty, and violence – even at the height of the Reconstruction era. However, a genuinely reconstructed nation was in the process of being built, in which laws protecting equal citizenship and rights – including voting and public education – existed and were often enforced, and in which public works and infrastructures were to be equally available, accessible, and guaranteed to citizens. And in various ways and places, the redistribution of wealth and power in the South began to be legitimately enacted. For a time federal law enforced a set of policies that enabled citizens to vote freely for candidates who would represent their own interests and communities; those elected officials were vested with power to create and enforce policy, public works, legislation, and judicial rulings; and power, land, and wealth were being split across the body politic rather than consolidated in the hands of a few wealthy people. Indeed, Reconstruction was one of the most progressive and democratic periods in all of United States history. However, although this vision is closely tied to the ideological foundations laid by the Declaration of Independence and other documents produced during the American revolutionary era, it nonetheless poses a tremendous threat not only to the antebellum plantocracy, but also to run-of-the-mill American capitalism and white hegemony. Therefore, defending this vision has often by necessity entailed a militant assertion of the right to claim an equal share, in order to
defend against the terrorism – manifested as state-perpetrated and state-sanctioned violence – that has consistently been deployed against such efforts to enact meaningful social change.

In this painting, which hangs in the Ralph Mark Gilbert Civil Rights Museum in Savannah, a group of African American ministers and community leaders are depicted in their meeting with Union General William Tecumseh Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton on January 12, 1865; the image shows all of

the men – ministers and federal officials – seated together at the table as equals; the room is seen from the perspective of one of the ministers, and clearly highlights the leadership of these men in directing the course of events in the meeting as well as in what would unfold from it. As Michael Benjamin has argued, the authority of these ministers was conferred upon them by their communities; thus their meeting with Sherman and Stanton represents an opportunity for the voices and needs of freedpeople themselves to shape federal policy. The ministers articulated a powerful vision of how formerly enslaved people conceived of their freedom, and the concrete steps that would need to be taken by both these communities of freedmen and by the federal government in order to ensure that this form of freedom would be successfully enacted. The ministers were unanimous in calling for land – the land in the South where their people had been enslaved, had worked, loved, buried their dead, and which they knew intimately, and which they had more than earned the right to own and to continue working – so that the freedpeople could establish self-sufficient communities and build the resources needed to determine how to participate in the larger economy. Nearly all agreed that this land should be set off from white Southerners, most of whom, as they knew all too well, harbored tremendous animosity toward them and their freedom. There was also general consensus that, given Emancipation and the inclusion of the freedmen in the Union army, the freedpeople’s loyalty to the United States would continue to be
strong and should continue to be expressed through service. The consequence of this meeting was Sherman’s Special Field Order #15, which echoed the ministers’ vision, and set aside a swath of confiscated land along the coast, thirty miles wide, from Charleston down to Jacksonville, and encompassing all of the Sea Islands, to be parceled out in lots of up to forty acres to heads of families.


Although land confiscation and redistribution did not, under Johnson’s disastrous assumption of power, prove to go the way that SFO 15 directed, there were nonetheless noteworthy instances of Black landownership across the South, and self-governed, self-determined Black communities. One powerful
example dates back to the period of the “Port Royal Experiment” in the Sea Islands. Mitchelville, on Hilton Head Island, was a self-governing Black community that came into being as a consequence of Union directives when large numbers of formerly enslaved people converged upon the Sea Islands during the period of its Union occupation. These refugees arrived in search of freedom, having learned that they would be considered “contrabands of war” and men, women, and children could be compensated for their labor for the U.S. army in this occupied territory – and, after 1862, that men could become Union soldiers. As of autumn 1862, nearly one thousand refugees lived in barracks, whose conditions were unsanitary and overcrowded, and so General Ormsby Mitchel, for whom the town is named, proposed creating a self-governed village for the freedmen; whites, including soldiers, required a government pass to enter the village, a measure put into place in order to protect residents – especially women – from abuses perpetrated by Union soldiers. Freedmen constructed a home for each family unit, as well as buildings such as churches, government buildings, general stores, and shops for blacksmiths and wheelwrights to do their work. Each home had space for residents to have a garden and raise

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8 It is important to note that, according to several primary sources displayed and interpreted in the Mitchelville exhibit at The Westin Hotel, this compensation was not to be straightforward wage-payment; the Union did not initially plan to pay the refugees, and indeed, the Quartermaster believed that the wages would actually be owed to the slaveowners rather than to the refugees themselves. That said, many refugees received provisions, clothing, or government vouchers for future payment, and some did receive direct wages for their labor.
chickens and produce to feed their families and trade with one another; indeed, residents’ trading their goods and produce with one another was a major source of livelihood. Additionally, some residents worked for the Union army in the capacity of blacksmiths, carpenters, soldiers, launderers, cooks, agriculture laborers in the Sea Island cotton fields, and other odd jobs; others worked in Hilton Head in the business district, docks, stables, or shops; and others worked for the town itself, in the capacity of policemen or elected officials. Residency in Mitchelville enabled Black men to vote; they elected councilmen, a recorder, and a marshal; the Council of Administration collected taxes, settled disputes over such things as wages, property, and taxes, and oversaw the local freedmen’s schools. Indeed, Mitchelville had the first compulsory education law in South Carolina: children ages six to fifteen were required to attend school. Adults held and attended night classes assiduously, as well. Mitchelville continued into the 1870s; many of its former residents purchased land elsewhere and continued to practice democratic self-governance in their new homes.⁹

⁹ Information for this section comes primarily from the exhibit about Mitchelville at The Westin Hotel on Hilton Head Island. Additionally, Rowland and Wise reproduce the articles from the town’s charter, as recorded by Whitelaw Reid, a New York Tribune journalist who visited the area in 1865 on pages 419-420 (Wise, Stephen R. and Lawrence S. Rowland. The History of Beaufort County, Volume II: Rebellion, Reconstruction, and Redemption, 1861-1893. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2015. Print.).
As we have seen in Mitchelville, the freedoms to self-govern and to claim an education were two of the most dearly held and powerful meanings of freedom for the four million previously enslaved Americans. This image of the African American members of the delegation to Louisiana’s Constitutional Convention of 1868; as was the case in other southern states, many of these delegates went on to become elected officials in the Reconstructed governments that these new constitutions drafted into being. The following image provides visual evidence of the impressive number of powerful Black leaders in Louisiana alone, and depicts them as individuals worthy of adulation. It also contains important banners flanking the central portrait of Lieutenant Governor Oscar J. Dunn; the text in these banners is taken from the articles of the 1868 Constitution that provided for the protection of individual rights in public space regardless of race, and for integrated public school for all children in Louisiana, irrespective of race or previous condition of servitude. It is absolutely crucial to understand that the conventions that led to these Reconstruction constitutions in southern states happened because of a groundswell of grassroots organizing and demand in the face of the Johnson administration’s allowance of an initial restoration of antebellum power, and that the democratic and just provisions made within these constitutions were then enacted by officials elected by a cross-section of the people who had never before had power. When they voted for people who represented their
interests, in turn those who were responsible for executive, legislative, and judicial interpretation and policy at local, state, and federal levels were responding to their constituencies; likewise, local elected officials advocated for and represented their communities’ interests. This represented a profound redistribution of power. These Reconstruction governments in the South, let it be noted, put money toward building strong public infrastructure including education systems, roads and bridges, and creating inroads for manufacturing and industry.

While it is true that there is a complex range of factors that contributed to the overturning of Reconstruction in Southern states, including the fallout from the economic depression that started in 1873; factionalism within the Republican party, including a corporatization and more pronounced backing of capitalism and business interests rather than democratic interests of the people; and labor unrest in the North that caused many northern capitalists to transfer their sympathies from the freedmen to the former planters; the primary reason that Reconstruction governments were brought down was terrorism. Although earlier during Reconstruction the federal government produced reports on Klan violence and responded with armed federal protection of elections, ordinary African Americans, and Reconstruction officials, this protection disintegrated over time. Sometimes the Klan and other white supremacist terrorist groups acted as organized operations, but
they strategically also decentralized their operations such that individuals laid in wait to shoot and kill individual Black activists and leaders. A key tactic that could be seen across the South was the rigging of elections – by assassinating or lynching Republican leaders, and by threatening and intimidating people at the polls to vote for Democrats or not to vote at all.
In the following image, a Black man is armed to defend himself as he stands in front of a wall of clippings from Southern Democratic newspapers that proclaim the legitimacy of using force to oust Republican officials and takeover elections. He stands before the murdered bodies of those killed by white "rifle clubs" during the Hamburg Massacre in Aiken County, South Carolina in 1876. Nast’s cartoon encapsulates at once the horrifying way in which African American freedoms were being violently repressed, and an image of an armed and muscular Black man – a kind of mythic image as well as a reality that provoked panicked response from whites – who will fight this reactionary shift to the death. The Hamburg Massacre, which took place in a Black community that represented an important stronghold of Republican power, represents an ugly turning-point in the restoration of Southern Democratic power. After an incident on July 4, 1876 in which two white farmers attempted to cross through a line of Black militiamen – who had been organized previously by the governor of the state, and were drilling in response to increased election violence – the head of the militia was called to a trial by one farmer’s lawyer, a former Confederate. On July 8, the trial date, the militia was attacked by white rifle club members under the direction of a former Confederate general, bearing two hundred guns and a cannon. They surrounded the Black militia, shot up the building in which they were sheltering, murdered a total of six Black men (including one who had nothing to do with the situation), and injured yet
Thomas Nast, “He wants a change, too,” Harper’s Weekly, October 28, 1876.

more. This act resonated quite broadly, as it came to serve as a demonstration that the violent strategy promulgated by Democrats – to intimidate or murder the Republicans into submission, rather than cultivating the fusion party that the state’s majority Black population would be more inclined to support – would work. After this incident, Martin Gary and other blatant white supremacists put their “Plan of 1876” into action
and the state fell to the Confederate-sympathizing, white supremacist southern Democratic party, effectively terrorizing and politically silencing African Americans throughout the state.\textsuperscript{10}

The government sanctioned both electoral violence and everyday acts of terrorism by looking the other way, by pulling out troops little by little to relocate them to fight in the Indian Wars and ultimately to end their presence altogether, and by allowing rampant lynchings to take place between 1880 and 1940 with no consequence for the perpetrators. According to Doug Egerton, Robert Smalls – a formerly enslaved man from Beaufort County, South Carolina who was a Union army hero and served five nonconsecutive terms in the U.S. House of Representatives (1874-1886) – kept a tally of the number of cases of murder he learned about over the course of his years holding various public office. Smalls counted 53,000 African Americans murdered between Emancipation and 1887.\textsuperscript{11} The number of lynchings that were perpetrated in the United States after Reconstruction likewise presents a horrifying figure; according to the most recent

\textsuperscript{10} For an excellent discussion of the particulars of these days in July, as well as their political ramifications and some important related historical documents, see Ehren Foley’s website South Carolina During Reconstruction (http://www.screconstruction.org/Reconstruction/Sites_of_violence/Entries
/1876/7/8_Hamburg_Massacre.html).

studies, nearly 4,000 Black people were lynched between 1880 and 1940.\textsuperscript{12}

These acts had a number of tragic effects. As a consequence of these Black lives being brutally taken, their families and communities were devastated by the loss of their loved ones. As a consequence of this staggering number of leaders removed from leading their people, Southern states saw a restoration of the Confederate planter class in power. There was no hesitation on the part of these so-called “Redemption” governments of the “New South” to rewrite their state constitutions to create new legal apparatuses that once again subjected Black Americans to a carceral system barely removed from slavery, built around new forms of disenfranchisement, debt peonage, and convict leasing. All three branches of the federal government shored up this coup d’etat, both passively and actively supporting the retraction of suffrage rights and reinstatement of what was essentially a new and coded manifestation of black codes.

\textsuperscript{12} The Equal Justice Initiative has documented 3,959 lynchings of Black people in twelve Southern states between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and 1950; this research indicates that there were at least 700 more lynchings in these states than previously reported. Their excellent and thorough 2015 study *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror* is available online:

<http://www.eji.org/files/EJI%20Lynching%20in%20America%20SUMMARY.pdf>
Just as many historians have recently pointed out that we must be more rigorous and precise when periodizing and describing the trajectory of the first Reconstruction – its length as well as the factors that caused its demise in the South – we must do the same with the second Reconstruction. The 20th century liberation struggle did not suddenly begin in the 1950s, but rather was connected to and built on the basis of ongoing strategizing, research, organizing, and resistance throughout the Jim Crow era. This ranged from the work of the Citizens’ Committee in New Orleans to challenge legal segregation on public conveyances; to the tireless and heroic writing and activism of national figures such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett and W.E.B. DuBois; to black institutions such as churches, schools, universities, and benevolent societies that had local bases but in many cases larger regional, national, or even international networks; to national organizations like the NAACP. Nor did the Civil Rights movement end in 1965 with the passage of the Voting Rights Act, or in 1968 with Martin Luther King’s assassination; the struggle blossomed and expanded through the mid-1970s, and has continued to the present day. But it is crucial to recognize another chilling connection between the first and second Reconstructions: just as the powerful 19th century moment of democratic governance was eviscerated by terrorism from all sides, the liberation struggle in the 20th century was also largely a casualty of assassination and violence enacted with surgical
precision – only in the Second Reconstruction, the state was a much more active perpetrator.

Before Martin Luther King was assassinated, he had begun to expand his ideas about liberation – what it looked like and the factors that caused it to have been forcibly denied to many people, as well as the tactics and strategies for working to obtain it. His ideas evolved to include a strong critique of capitalism and imperialism. Throughout his career, and especially in the last years of his life, there is ample evidence of his being targeted by the FBI. After his assassination, COINTELPRO – the FBI’s Counter-Intelligence Program (1956-1971) that enacted covert operations to “neutralize” dissident groups – continued to disproportionately target Black-led and other groups working toward the liberation of poor people, people of color, and post-/colonial subjects.

In 1966, the Black Panther Party was formed in Oakland, CA by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. Although its reputation has been actively and intentionally sullied, in fact its central tenets, as they were articulated in the party’s Ten-Point Program and in the actual work the Panthers undertook, were very much in line with those of the first Radical Reconstruction.\textsuperscript{13} Just as black Union veterans defended their families and communities from the assaults of former Confederates and Confederate

\textsuperscript{13} The Ten-Point Program is reproduced on the Marxist History Archive: <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/1966/10/15.htm>
sympathizers, using the training they had received from their participation in the United States armed services, while helping to build self-determined community institutions and infrastructures, Panthers and their comrades asserted their right to defend their communities, while simultaneously establishing strong programs rooted in the communities’ needs. The Panthers engaged in militant self-defense of Black and other poor and POC communities in the face of rampant police brutality and the structural poverty and repression that were a consequence of the untimely end of the first Reconstruction, and established a powerful network of community-based programs across the country that were inspired both by their study of revolutionary socialism and by the concrete needs of the communities in which they were rooted. The party’s concerns coalesced around a strong anti-imperialist critique, and efforts to establish economic, social, and political equality across racial and gender lines. Programming included building coalitions with other organizations with similar goals and strategies for liberation, creating free medical clinics, door-to-door health services that tested community members for sickle-cell anemia, free breakfast programs for children, blood drives, free community political education classes, and reaching out to local gangs to help them move away from meaningless crime and instead direct their energies and anger toward participating in the struggle. J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the FBI, declared that the Black Panther Party represented “the single most dangerous threat to the internal security of the United
States,” and to “neutralize” this threat, as the Staff Report of the Church Committee\textsuperscript{14} reported, COINTELPRO used “dangerous, degrading, or blatantly unconstitutional techniques” to disrupt them and other leftist groups (it also stated that the FBI’s treatment of Martin Luther King was similar to that usually given a Soviet agent).\textsuperscript{15} Mainly, these techniques involved the use of infiltrators and strategically planted, fake correspondence to provoke in-fighting or warfare within groups and coalitions, or framing and/or arresting activists for crimes they did not commit – a technique which often, according to the Church Committee, resulted in incarceration, injury, or death of these activists. But COINTELPRO often also used outright assassination. Perhaps the most notorious and atrocious example is the brutal slaying of

\textsuperscript{14} That is, the United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, a U.S. Senate committee that was chaired by Senator Frank Church in 1975 to investigate illegal methods of intelligence-gathering on the part of the CIA and FBI.

\textsuperscript{15} From \textit{The Nation}, 1976, “Was Fred Hampton Executed?” by Jeff Cohen and Jeff Gottlieb:

“How March 4, 1968 (exactly one month before King was assassinated), Hoover issued this directive:

- ‘Prevent the Coalition of militant black nationalist groups. In unity there is strength, a truism that is no less valid for all its triteness. An effective coalition...might be the first step toward a real "Mau Mau" in America, the beginning of a true black revolution.
- ‘Prevent the rise of a "messiah" who could unify, and electrify, the militant black nationalist movement. Malcolm X might have been such a "messiah"; he is the martyr of the movement today...Elijah Muhammad is less of a threat because of his age. King could be a very real contender for this position should he abandon his supposed "obedience" to "white liberal doctrines" (nonviolence) and embrace black nationalism. Stokely Carmichael has the necessary charisma to be a real threat in this way.”
the 21-year-old chairman of the Chicago Black Panther Party chapter, Fred Hampton, and his 17-year-old comrade Mark Clark, on December 4, 1969. Thanks to a detailed floorplan of Hampton’s apartment that was provided by an informant who was planted by the FBI into the Chicago chapter of the Panthers, the FBI (in collaboration with the Cook County State’s Attorney and the Chicago Police Department) raided the apartment in the middle of the night, firing two hundred shots and killing Hampton in his bed where he was sleeping with his eight-months-pregnant partner. Clark was also killed in the raid. The cover-up for the story, which prevailed in the media at the time, was that Hampton had been shot after the Panthers initiated fire upon the police, who were serving a search warrant for weapons. It would be years before the truth was widely circulated.

This powerful image shows a man standing between a poster describing the community-based programming offered by the IL chapter of the Black Panther Party (i.e. Free Breakfast Program), and the bullet-riddled door of Chairman Fred Hampton’s apartment after the FBI/CPD raid in which he and Mark Clark were brutally assassinated. It may be read as a juxtaposition, but I believe it is more powerfully read as an

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16 Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez conducted an interview for Democracy Now! on the 40th anniversary of Hampton’s assassination, which included Deborah Johnson (Hampton’s fiancée) and Jeffrey Haas, author of The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther. The transcript can be found here: http://www.democracynow.org/2009/12/4/the_assassination_of_fred_hampton_how.
illumination of the pattern I am describing in this argument: true social democracy, Black self-determination, and the redistribution of power pose a significant threat to white hegemony, and have historically been punished by staggering violence when they threaten to be enacted too successfully.

In spite of COINTELPRO’s fairly comprehensive gutting of liberation movements in the late 1960s and the 1970s; a prison-industrial complex\textsuperscript{17} that Michelle Alexander has called

\textsuperscript{17} In the article “Shocking Facts about America’s For-Profit Prison Industry” (TruthOut, Thursday, 06 February 2014), Beth Buczynski points out that “in late 2013, a new report from In the Public Interest (ITPI) revealed that private prison companies are striking deals with states that contain clauses guaranteeing high prison occupancy rates—sometimes 100 percent. This means that states agree to supply prison corporations with a steady flow of residents—whether or not that level of criminal activity exists. Some experts believe this relationship between government and private prison corporations encourages law enforcement agencies to use underhanded tactics—often targeting minority and underserved groups—to fill cells. […] The worst part is that once captured by the prison industry, inmates are forced to work for pennies an hour,
“the New Jim Crow”; a massive surveillance state; and horrifying state violence against black and brown, poor, queer and trans people which manifests itself in shocking levels through police brutality, disappearances, and murder; we continue to see instances of resistance and self-determination very much in line with the principles that animated the “Radical” Reconstruction of the United States in the 19th century. These range from an extraordinary movement initiated by the late Mayor Chokwe Lumumba and continued after his death to reorganize Jackson, MS into the hands of its citizens through land trusts and cooperative economics; to the BlackLivesMatter movement’s insistence that we cannot look away from state violence, and instead must hold its perpetrators accountable and value the lives and humanity of Black people; to blossoming efforts to organize and create solidarity and knowledge in the face of the biggest threat in the present, climate change, and the ways that it will particularly pose a very dire threat to the most marginalized members of every society on the planet. We must take a long view in order to accurately recognize the patterns that constitute the history of antiblack and antidemocratic violence, and we must be vigilant in recognizing the ways in which the law and the state can be used both for democratic ends and for horrifyingly oppressive ones. And we must be stalwart and fearless in providing cheap labor for some of the most profitable enterprises in the world, including the U.S. Military.”
continuing the long struggle for democracy, self-determination, and liberation.
What Does the United States Flag Symbolize for Black Americans?

Mavis McLean

What does the United States flag truly represent to Black Americans? Since the Civil War, the flag became a tangible symbol of the rights and freedoms that were promised to the formerly enslaved African American people. It meant that education could be freely pursued, without fear of retribution. Families could be legally recognized as a cohesive unit and Black women would, in theory, be protected from sexual exploitation. Churches could be organized so that congregants could worship as they desired. Freedom of travel, without having to obtain permission, was also a highly anticipated right. The right to own, cultivate, and reside on land was another great hope for the freedmen. Emancipation meant the right to a trial by jury and the right to vote. In short, freedom meant citizenship and having the same rights as white Americans.

Because of the promise of equal rights and freedom, many Black men were eager to join the military to prove their loyalty to the union. Black troops were first used in the Civil War in the battle of Island Mound, MO. The First Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry, comprised mostly of escaped slaves from the
Arkansas and Oklahoma territories, fought the Confederates on October 29, 1862. However, it would not be the last time “Colored Troops” served with honor and dignity in the Civil War. The famed 54th Massachusetts Regiment, stormed Fort Wagner in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina on July 18, 1863. During the scrimmage, William Carney was the bearer of the American Flag. Carney received the Medal of Honor for protecting the flag despite being wounded several times during the assault. When he turned over the flag to another soldier, he modestly said, “Boys, I only did my duty; the old flag never touched the ground.”

“The Old Flag Never Touched the Ground” 1863
Blacks continued to serve in future wars. At the dawn of the 20th century, World War I began. Along with the war, a campaign to recruit Black soldiers was under way. The Wilson administration promised that once Black men “proved” their patriotism and usefulness in war, the nation would recognize them as equals.

Once again Black men answered the call of duty. However, when the veterans returned home, they did not receive the respect that they were promised. Instead, they encountered hatred and racial violence. White mobs lynched, hanged, shot, and burned at the stake at least 43 Blacks during this time. State government proved powerless or unwilling to prosecute the perpetrators.

“Colored Man Is No Slacker” is a World War I recruiting poster. The poster depicts African American patriotism, self-sacrifice, and courage as a soldier leaves home to enter war. This poster suggests that the war is an opportunity for Blacks to prove their patriotism and to serve their country. A United States flag flies prominently in the background of the poster.

As our nation, approached the 1940’s, the economic and social conditions of Blacks still had not improved. There was widespread bigotry and discrimination in restaurants, hotels and other public spaces throughout America. Employment opportunities for most Blacks were relegated to low paying jobs such as maids, cooks, chauffeurs and butlers – service jobs that aided in making the lives of White citizens more comfortable. Photographer Gordon Parks’, “American Gothic”, shows Ella Watson, a Washington, DC cleaning woman. Mrs. Watson is
"American Gothic", Gordon Parks, Washington, D.C., 1942,
pictured at her job in a government building, holding a broom and a mop is by her side. The flag is the conspicuous backdrop. Watson described her life as “full of misery, bigotry and despair.” The photo appeared on the front page of the Washington Post and would go on to become the symbol of the pre-civil rights era's treatment of minorities and was widely regarded as “an indictment of America”. The picture suggests that even though
Watson lives in the “land of the free”, she was still not free to determine her own destiny because of her limited economic and social opportunities.

By the 1960’s, race relations had reached a crisis point in America. Mass protests and demonstrations were held throughout the South. These protests were met mostly with violent resistance from those who wanted to maintain the “southern way of life”, a life which denied Blacks equal rights and protection. Photographer James Karales captured an image of Lewis Marshall, a 15 year old boy, carrying an American flag as he walks 54 miles from Selma to Montgomery in a march for voting rights. His friend held the other end of the flag so that it wouldn’t touch the ground. It appears that Marshall finds comfort and protection in the flag as he contemplates the possible dangers ahead on his journey. The two boys became iconic symbols of the Civil Rights movement, their photographs were used on stamps and book covers. The National Park Service created a statue in Lewis’ image at the midpoint between Selma and Montgomery. Incredibly, Marshall did not know that this photograph existed or that there was a monument in his likeness until he was in his 60’s. Lewis was reported to have been moved when he saw the photograph and the stature for the first time.
Over 50 years ago President Kennedy addressed civil rights, calling it “a moral issue...as old as the Scriptures and...as clear as the American Constitution. The heart of the question is whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated.” These words are still relevant today. Since the death of Trayvon Martin in 2012, there have been numerous deaths and injuries of Blacks as result of blatant misuse of power by Whites. “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot”, “I Can’t Breath” and “Black Lives Matter” have sadly become part of the American lexicon. This image shows a protest in Ferguson after the shooting death of 18 year Vonderrit Myers by an off-duty police officer. The rallying cry
of “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” is shown on a placard and the American Flag is displayed upside down, as sign of distress – not disrespect.

Have the promises and hopes that the flag symbolizes been fulfilled in Black America? This question still lingers in our society, with no clear answer. That is a matter of prospective. There is good news and bad news on this issue. The bad news is that although much has improved, I feel that the promise of equality has remained, for the most part, largely unfulfilled for Black Americans. The good news is, I still believe that full equality is possible and that one day it will be achieved.
Education as a Pathway to Freedom

Tracy Middleton

Education, economic stability and voting were three avenues freed men and women viewed as a pathway to freedom; however, of those, education was the most fundamental. It was through education that the newly freed people became literate, which led to economic independence, and helped them understand political issues so they could vote responsibly.

One of the first freedmen’s schools was started in the early years of the Civil War on a South Carolina Sea Island. Laura Towne, a young northern missionary arrived on the Sea Islands in June 1862. She and her fellow teacher, Ellen Murray, opened a school out of the back room of a plantation house with nine adult students, and eventually a large number of children that a more permanent structure was needed. Their classes consisted of students across all ages. Serving people who were dubbed “contraband of war” during Union occupation of this area, the school would eventually become the Penn Center located on St. Helena Island, South Carolina.
In other Union-occupied areas throughout the South, 
schools were built for contrabands while the Civil War raged on. 
This image from a contraband camp in Trent River near 
Roanoke, Virginia shows a deep hunger for education as the 
students are shown holding and reading books. With as many as 
1,000 people in a camp, all dependent on children to help put 
food on the table, the contrabands found other ways to make 
ends meet so their children could go to school. “I am willing to 
make any sacrifice that my little ones may be educated” was a 
common comment among the freedmen, including men and 
women who often did not have food for the next day. O.E. 
Doolittle, a teacher in Newbern, North Carolina, wrote in 1863
that there was, “an average attendance of three hundred pupils” in her evening school. Both daytime and evening classes were filled with contrabands desiring an education.

Moreover, education was not just for children. Men and women wanted an education as well, and often went to school with their children. A teacher at Camp Kimball near the Trent River in North Carolina wrote, “I now have 212 names registered, of all ages from five years to sixty-one. I have fathers and mothers with their children.” In Alexandria, Virginia, a teacher wrote that they opened a school with seventy-five scholars, and two and a half months later, the number of scholars
had jumped to 225. Their evening schools for adults were also well attended. The hunger for education was so strong that it was not uncommon for elderly men and women to read well into the night after their day’s work was completed. This watercolor, painted by artist Henry Louis Stephens in 1863, shows a poor man living in a sparsely furnished, humble dwelling reading a costly newspaper under candlelight with the headline, “Presidential Proclamation, Slavery,” which refers to the
Emancipation Proclamation. Reading newspapers was key to learning about current political events, and once the right to vote was granted, newspapers informed the newly freed men so they could vote responsibly.

Education was not limited to literacy. In 1863, teacher B.L. Canedy, from Newbern, North Carolina, commented in a letter to the New England Education Commission for Freedmen that in addition to a morning session for both boys and girls, she also had an afternoon session in which she taught girls and women how to sew. These women and girls used their new sewing skills to make clothes for destitute freed men and women, as well as quilts for the soldiers. The classes enabled the freedwomen to contribute to the betterment of their community and aid in the war efforts. While this image was taken in 1866 after the war, it does correlate to what teacher Canedy wrote in
her 1863 letter.

After the war, newly freed men throughout the South took control of their children’s education by becoming trustees of independent schools and seeking educated African-Americans to teach their children. In an effort to ensure education for all freedmen, black elected representatives pushed various initiatives forward. For example, in South Carolina, Robert Smalls advocated for mandatory public education and Richard Cain introduced a bill to use proceeds from public land sales to support public schools. These bold legislators made education a real possibility for large numbers of black children and adults.

Out of the freedmen’s desire for education, economic independence and voting, education gained the most traction and continued well after the end of Reconstruction. Though enactment of the Jim Crow laws toward the end of the 19th century prevented southern blacks from voting and prevented most southern blacks from achieving economic independence, the public school system created during the years of the Civil War and through Reconstruction survived. Education also progressed at independent schools like Penn, which continued to thrive by preparing students for success in their communities.
Through the efforts of their families and legislators, black students began to reap the benefits of education. However, as time continued, a severe disparity grew between the education of white and black children, and black parents once again stepped up to ensure that their children received a quality education. The parents of the seven individuals in this image challenged the school district in Clarendon County, South Carolina for not providing an equitable education, as black children were promised in the Supreme Court’s 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision that upheld the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine. Their legal challenge, Briggs v. Elliot, became the first court case that combined with others, ultimately led to the 1954 landmark Supreme Court decision, Brown v. Board of Education.
There are many heroes in this story of education as a pathway to freedom, from contrabands of war to citizens standing up for the right to learn. Thanks to whole communities’ burning desires to learn, the education formerly denied people under slavery flourished in freedom, and continues to thrive today. While education for African American provides a pathway to economic freedom today, we have to ask the question, do all African American children have equal access to education or is there more work to be done?

Sources


"Sea-island School, No. 1,--St. Helena Island. Established in April 1862."


Rebecca K. Sharp, “‘Their...Bedding is wet Their floors are damp’ ‘Pre-Bureau’ Records and Civil War African American Genealogy’, Prologue Magazine, National Archives, Summer 2007, Vol. 39, No. 2.


African American nurses were important in assisting doctors both in the field and at hospitals during the Civil War. Often times these nurses were freed enslaved women acting as volunteers, as is the story of Susie King Taylor. She was born into slavery on the Grest Farm on the Isle of Wight, Georgia, in 1848. As a small child she often was placed at the foot of the bed of her mistress to sleep and keep her company when the master was away. If the master would come home during the night, she was then moved to the floor. At age seven, Susie was sent to Savannah to live with her grandmother and was able to learn to read and write from a free black
woman, Mrs. Woodhouse. Because it was illegal to teach enslaved people to read and write, the young students would wrap their books in paper so white people wouldn’t see the books. When Susie became proficient, she later was taught by two different white children, Katie O’Connor who attended school at the convent, and James Blouis, her landlord’s son. These two had befriended her and were teaching her without the knowledge of their white parents. After the Union fleet took Fort Pulaski, Susie was taken by her uncle to St. Simon’s Island, where her literacy came to the attention of the Commodore Goldsborough who asked her to take charge of a school for children on the island. About 40 children attended her school by day, with a number of adults attending at night.

Camp Saxon and Mitchellville were established in 1862 by the Union Army after capturing Port Royal, South Carolina. Mitchellville became known as part of the “Port Royal Experiment.” Freed people were called contraband and were sent to Mitchellville to establish temporary homes and be schooled with a Union goal of helping them become independent and self-supporting. The camp was home for up to 10,000 former slaves with General Major Rufus Saxon in charge.

In October of 1862, Susie was enrolled as a laundress at Camp Saxon in Beaufort, S.C., with the 33rd U.S. Colored Troops. She traveled with the troops to several battles and took
on the role of nurse. Clara Barton was attending wounded soldiers in the Beaufort Hospital in 1863 and Susie was able to learn from her. Lack of available training lead the African American nurses to acquire information by observation and instructions from camp doctors. In her book, Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33\textsuperscript{rd} United States Colored Troops, Susie said, “It seems strange how our aversion to seeing suffering is overcome in war, --how we are able to see the most sickening sights, such as men with their limbs blown off and mangled by the deadly shells, without a shudder; and instead of turning away, how we hurry to assist in alleviating their pain, bind up their wounds, and press the cool water to their parched lips, with feelings only of sympathy and pity.”

Susie King Taylor often accompanied the troops to battle. As the wounded arrived back at camp, she would give “assistance to try to alleviate their suffering.” She shared the story of the patients wanting soup so she used condensed milk and turtle eggs to make custard. Her ingenuity was successful and the men enjoyed a “delicious custard.” Herbal remedies Susie had learned as a child helped her succeed as a nurse. During an outbreak of small pox, she drank sassafras tea, known for its properties to keep the blood in a good condition, which helped the immune system.

Susie served for four years and three months in the Union Army hospitals without receiving any pay and never
received a pension. She said, “I was glad...to go with the regiment, to care for the sick and afflicted comrades.” After the Civil War, Susie returned to Savannah and opened a school for black children. She also taught adults how to read and write in the evenings. Her husband died and she went North where she
worked for several different families as a laundress or cook. Eventually, Susie received a pension from her husband’s service in the Union Army. Susie King Taylor continued in her pursuit of helping the “boys in blue” by organizing the Corps 67, Women’s Relief Corps, auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic in 1886. She served in many leadership positions in the Corp, including guard, secretary, treasurer, and president. The objectives of the Corp were to promote and help run Memorial Day celebrations, which were established to honor the deceased Union soldiers and nurses. The Corps also petitioned the federal government for nurses’ pensions, and promoted patriotic education.

Before the civil war, women were not allowed to be nurses. It was thought to be improper for women to attend to sick or wounded men that were not their husbands. As the war progressed it became necessary to open up the nursing ranks to women. The freed young women, like Susie, who volunteered
and worked alongside doctors in the Civil War started a legacy.

The Freedmen’s Hospital School of Nursing was founded for African–Americans by Black surgeon Dr. Daniel Hale Williams on November 15, 1894. Howard University acquired the Freedmen’s Hospital and School of Nursing in 1967. The nursing school closed in 1973 with a total of 1700 African American nurses graduating from that institution.

Information Sources:

- Slide #1 and #3 Information from the book, “Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33rd United States Colored Troops” by Susie King Taylor. Published by the author in Boston in 1902.
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Five Myths of Reconstruction

Vincent Stewart

The Reconstruction Era was one of the most significant Era’s in American History yet; it is often overlooked and ignored. Reconstruction is typically viewed within the context of a twelve-year time span between the years of 1865-1877 beginning with the 13th Amendment and ending with the Compromise of 1877. Reconstruction is often painted with one stroke of a brush and viewed as a punitive era in which all southerners were punished for their efforts in the Civil War. Furthermore, African American’s are typically viewed as helpless victims of racist terrorist organizations and their campaigns of violence. Lastly, Reconstruction has been viewed as a separate phenomenon from the Civil Rights Movement in which it was not. This essay is looking to explore above-mentioned myths of Reconstruction in order to set the record straight.

Putting history into a categorized timeline of eras, ages, and events, and restraining them with dates implies that all historical events have a clear beginning, 1865 and an end, 1877. As with the case of Reconstruction, it is disputed when it began and when it ended and yet, does not accurately reflect the facts of the matter. In reality, some of the first efforts to reconstruct America began as early as 1862, in Mitchellville, SC with the Port Royal Experiment. The byproduct of this reform moreover,
could be felt long past 1877 with examples of men like Robert Smalls and George Henry White, who both continued to serve in the House of Representatives through the late 19th century. It could be equally argued that the reform begun in 1862 didn’t end until the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Act. Why? Because the same laws that were passed to grant African Americans Freedom, Citizenship and Voting Rights were not upheld by the local and Federal Governments. Thus, Reconstruction or the Civil Rights Movement lasted over one hundred years, until the nation was fully reconstructed.
The Reconstruction Era was not homogenous phenomenon. The reality of the matter is that the Reconstruction experience differed for various groups of people. For example, the concept that Reconstruction was punishing the South does not take into consideration that the south was comprised of a mixture of people, freedmen, freemen, planters, and yeoman farmers. Indeed the political and economic power of the planter aristocracy was marginalized in comparison to during the antebellum era, but to suggest that their loss of power reflects the entire southern experience, essentially misrepresents the reality of that era. Certainly, freedmen or poor whites would have not perceived Reconstruction as punitive, for they benefited from the upheaval of Southern Society, particularly the planter aristocracy.
As the “First Colored Senators and Representatives” reflects, African Americans, freemen and freedmen, achieved status’s they never would have imagined obtaining just a decade and a half earlier.

Although it can be argued that Reconstruction was brought to a halt by the Compromise of 1877 it is most likely that violence and terrorism brought Reconstructions to a standstill more so than a political compromise brought about its end. Organizations such as the Red Shirts and Ku Klux Klan would stop nothing short of what would amount to the “extermination” of African Americans and most certainly their removal from political power. It would appear as if they wanted to rewind the
clock and as the image below suggests, restore the “Union as it Was” Through Campaigns such as the Mississippi Plan or Shotgun Policy, southern based white Supremacist organizations played a central role in curbing African Americans freedom and political power, necessitating the rise of what is remembered as the Civil Rights Movement.

Despite the onslaught of violence and stories that are commonly depicted in mainstream media and Hollywood culture, African Americans did not sit by idly to be slaughtered or to give up their rights they fought so hard to secure. In reality, African Americans all over the south organized militias such as Alabama’s Magic City Guards, or South Carolina’s Laurens County Militia, who regularly drilled for the purpose of preserving their freedom, political rights and protecting their family. This is even truer in places where African Americans were a majority such as parts of South Carolina, Florida and Louisiana. Not only did African Americans fight back, but also in some instances, those same terrorist organizations like the Red Shirts, would not even enter into these heavily populated, heavily armed African American Communities. As time passed, that resistance and militancy shifted away from actual armed resistance and became more peacefully oriented, nonetheless peaceful nonviolent
confrontation is equally as powerful a fight. It was that fight that won African Americans access to rights first put into law almost 100 years earlier.

Reconstruction and the Civil Rights Movement although different, were one in the same. Following the Civil War, the Federal government gave African American’s equality with the
passage of the Reconstruction Amendments. This radical shift of federal policy towards this minority group empowered African Americans to participate as citizens in the American democracy. However, resulting from terrorism, those rights afforded to African Americans on paper, by the turn of the 20th century were just that, only on paper. Regardless of the fact that African Americans went to the grave fighting for those rights, the failure of the government to protect these rights and uphold the constitution helped to spark what we consider the Civil Rights Movement but what is also referred to as, the 2nd Reconstruction.

In conclusion, the story of Reconstruction as demonstrated above cannot be looked at only through the lens of the conventional historical dialogue. In addition, we have to take into consideration the untold story by looking at the era from a grassroots level up, rather than simply from the top down. This
approach allows us to expose the myths of Reconstruction and reveal the depth and diversity of the era. Most importantly, it breaks us away from the monotonous dialogue associated with Reconstruction that has so often left the era overlooked and ignored.
Reconstruction: The Untold Story
Ericka Morris

The story of Reconstruction, one of the most mysterious eras in American history, is an example of what America could have been. Experts have various opinions as to when Reconstruction actually began, such as the Emancipation Proclamation reading at Emancipation Oak in January of 1863 or when the planters fleeing the impending arrival of Union Troops fled the islands leaving the populations of Africans behind. The end of Reconstruction is just as uncertain. In the image, *Emancipation Day in South Carolina*, expresses the hopes and optimism of African Americans. For the first time, African American families in the south could visualize a life where finally the power to remain together was in their hands.
The image **Family Record, Before the War and Since the War** from 1880 represents the number one right afforded to families, the ability to stay together and even look forward to future generations. Reconstruction could have ended when the United States sent the last of its troops to toward the West to secure Manifest Destiny or in the 1900’s as the very last of the
“radical members of Southern legislature” served the last days of their terms.

The Image below, **American Progress**, depicts westward expansion, as the country turned its attention to being one nation from “sea to shining sea”, the Southern conflicts and concerns were no longer as much of a concern in the North or nationally. The specifics are nebulous and fluid, a collection of over-arching questions and underlying perspectives and up to the interpretation of the individual, or supported by the lens in which the research is collected and analyzed.

![American Progress Image]

Because Reconstruction has been avoided and for all suits and purposes ignored by most, conjecture and propaganda has been able to replace fact and truth, as a result this temporary
marriage of humanity and democracy remains for the most part, “untold”. Reconstruction isn’t discussed because the end of reconstruction is a shame that can be shared by both Southern white terrorism and Northern white supremacy, both regions are equally complicit in the “deconstruction”. These were insurmountable for the newly emancipated and previously disenfranchised African Americans of the South and the Abolitionist and freemen of the North to contend with, and the nation turned its back on the plight of African Americans, and the disgrace is easier to hide away than face and explain.

Reconstruction may be one of the most important, longest lasting, most honorable and comprehensive endeavors that the United States has ever attempted. This is the story of heroes and villains of mythical proportions; Robert Smalls of Beaufort, South Carolina is literally a Herculean super hero figure, stealing the Steam ship The Planter in 1862 and delivering it to Union hands while spiriting away his family and other disguised fleeing Enslaved Africans, in one fail swoop. With ready and eager hands, the coastal island freedmen, the first African American community of freedmen is established at Mitchellville in Port Royal. Almost 40,000 freedmen flocked to the coastal islands seeking protection and opportunity. African American freedmen and freemen answer the call for leadership, attending the Constitutional Convention and serving their communities, for once in proportion to their respective demographics. By 1870, the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments had been ratified, and finally
the hope of equality now seemed to be federally protected. After centuries of second class citizenship and brutal enslavement, all Americans were being promised liberty and freedom. Unfortunately, these efforts are cut short by fear and ruthlessness of white terrorism and a nation of lawmakers that allowed murder, intimidation, corruption and fear to be their guide.

Even though there were still African American politicians in office after 1880 in states like South Carolina, by 1900 there were almost none. Political strides were halted, land that was
finally in the hands of its true masters was taken away along with rights and liberties. The Southern states were able to turn back the hand so time. Land was reclaimed, new institutions of slavery such as share-cropping and leasing convicts arrested for vagrancy were enforced. As African Americans in the South fought this new era of lynchings, violence and disenfranchisement, the rest of the nation turned its attention toward the West. The Jim Crow Jubilee image represents a character from a minstrel show from Louisville, KY that eventually became the term for prejudicial and discriminatory practices as well as a derogatory caricature used to demean and belittle African Americans during Reconstruction.

Reconstruction was America idealized, for a shining moment. This most “splendid failure” as Dubois called it, for a time, did something that was unheard of, it afforded African Americans the opportunity to experience some semblance of citizen and even human rights, and they embraced this opportunity, and everything changed. This should be the story that we wear prominently, with a national pride. It should be the same story to humble us in our shame, letting the darkest parts of our souls take us asunder and failing to remain this ideal. Reconstruction is the story of Americans finally experiencing a small taste of liberty and humanity, the making right of wrongs, the creation of great legacies from people using their own agency and determination. America does not want to remember Reconstruction because it does not want to remember that shame
of failure, but in the process it has also forgotten the temporary victory. Whether it sprung forth from the pages of the Emancipation Proclamation, rose and bloomed from the soils of Mitchellville, marched down from the North with Sherman, or came alive in the court houses of the legislature, was not allowed to mature and truly establish equitable opportunity or insure with sustainability rights and liberties. The lynching image is from Center, TX, and was on a post card, the writing on the back suggests that the victim is a 16 year old boy. Even as African Americans in the South laid down their lives to protect these vanishing liberties and freedoms as a result “heritage” has replaced “history” and the past has been reimagined in the contemporary.
WEBSITES FOR IMAGES

1. “Lynchers” - https://abagond.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/lynchers.jpg
About the Contributors

Valencia Abbott When I have to describe myself, I start with that I am a country girl that likes to read. Born and raised in Ruffin, North Carolina to two parents that did not get a high school diploma but valued the importance of a high school education for their own children. I am the oldest of their four children and would eventually make the long trek from home to Salisbury, North Carolina, little over two hour drive, where I attended Catawba College and received a BA in Political Science-Pre-Law and minored in Speech. Marriage, babies and eighteen years later I would end up back in college, this time seeking a Master’s degree while I work towards my teacher’s certification. With lots of turns, missteps, a divorce and moving and living in two states, finally completed my teacher certification in 2007 and received my Masters from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro in Liberal Studies in 2009. I returned back there in 2010 to receive a certificate Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in African American Studies.

After teaching middle school in various schools in North Carolina and Virginia, I finally received a high school Social Studies position at Rockingham Early College High School in Wentworth, NC which is in county that I grew up in. So I am
happy to be back home. This is my third year at the Early College as this year I was chosen as the Teacher Of The Year. This is the second time in my ten year career span that I have received the honor. Currently I am on the board of the Piedmont Preservation Blues Society, The Reidsville Historical Commission and on the program committee of the Museum & Archives of Rockingham County. I finally took my love of photography to next level by taking a photography class last semester, and I plan on going further with my skill level by reading the manual to the camera and taking other classes.

I am the mother of three adult daughters, Jasmine, DeAnna and Nicolle and son-in-law, Justin. I am the grandmother of two grandchildren, JayLynn and Kyan.

"Knowing our past is great, knowing our purpose is even greater." -- Dr. Umar Johnson

**Michael Axon** is a graduate of the University of South Florida with a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science education. He has a Master of Arts degree in education from West Georgia University and an Educational Specialist degree from the University of Phoenix. He holds a professional in human resources certification from the Human Resource Certification
Institute, a mediation certificate from the Justice Center of Atlanta, and a paralegal certificate from the National Center for Paralegal Training.

He has more than ten years experience teaching Advanced Placement United States Government, World History (Gifted and Accelerated), United States History (Gifted and Accelerated), and Economics classes. More than five years working as a coordinator in Human Resources for a major public school district. With Responsibilities for facilitating resolution efforts relative to complaints of civil rights violations and allegations of employee wrongdoing. More than ten years experience as an educational representative responsible for handling of services for members. Developed and conducted organizational training and employees relations materials. Assisted in contract negotiations and arbitration presentation for an educational organization on behave of its’ members. Responsibilities included recruitment and organizing of members, handling grievances, solving work related problems for members and working with attorneys in the coordination of services for members. He is currently the CEO of Educo Consultants, LLC, an employment resolution and training group.

He is the current Social Studies department chairperson at Stephenson High School located in Stone Mountain, Georgia. Currently teaching Accelerated/Gifted World History,
Accelerated/Gifted United States History, and Advanced Placement American Government on the block schedule. There are eleven teachers in the Social Studies department.

**Robert Breckenridge** was born and obtained his early education in Illinois but, after sojourns in diverse other places, now lives in coastal Maine and teaches social studies at Lincoln Academy, an ancient town academy chartered when Maine was still part of Massachusetts. He has been teaching in Maine for the last decade. He has a long-standing interest in justice issues, philosophy and the history of Western and U.S. religious ideas. He is married to a charming woman from Lima, Peru, and they are parents of two grown sons. Robert spends summers working as a guide for Historic New England and, in free time, traveling to faraway places and exploring the waters of rural Maine via kayak.

**Matthew Britton** has been an educator for almost 5 years. He earned his undergraduate from the University of Kansas in History and a Master’s of Arts in Teaching from The Citadel. Upon graduation Matthew received a teaching offer at Cane Bay High School to teach US History and Youth Court. At Cane Bay,
Matthew was very successful on state end of course assessments and helped create a standardized district assessment. He also launched the Cane Bay Youth Court and was an active participant in everyday school life. At the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year Matthew and his wife moved to Savannah where he accepted a job offer at the historic Sol C. Johnson High School, home of the Atom Smashers. At Johnson High School Matthew has continued to teach and have success teaching US History. He also began teaching World History and American Government at Johnson High School. Above academics Matthew was the assistant coach for the Regional Playoff Atom Smasher Baseball team and began the Autograph Club where students research and write professional athletes requesting autographs on a sports card.

Matthew has a passion for learning and loves going to museums and reading, traveling and experiencing new things. Matthew’s interests on Reconstruction stem from growing up in Lawrence, Kansas which was the abolitionist capitol of Kansas during Bleeding Kansas. Matthew attended a 2013 seminar on Reconstruction presented by Eric Foner in New York City. Along with history and Reconstruction, Matthew enjoys baseball and its historical components. He has a collection of over 120 autographed baseballs and has been to ten of the thirty Major League Baseball stadiums and many Minor League Baseball stadiums.
Minuette Floyd is an associate professor of art education and Director of the Young Artist’s Workshop at the University of South Carolina School of Visual Art and Design. She teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses which assist in the preparation of art education majors to become teachers in Pre-Kindergarten through Twelfth grade. Her research interests focus on multicultural art education, interdisciplinary art instruction, and documentation of folk traditions.

She is a graduate of the Riley Diversity Leadership Institute (Midlands Class V, 2012) sponsored by Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. Awards include the Dr. Deborah Smith Hoffman Mentor Award (2012), the J. Eugene Grigsby Award (2010), the Mac Arthur Goodwin Award (2009), Living the Legacy Award given by the National Council of Negro Women, (2009), National Outstanding Performance in Higher Education Award (2003), the Mary J. Rouse Award for Art Education (2002), and the South Carolina Art Education Association Award for Art Education (2001). She is the past chair of the Committee on Multietnic Concerns, an affiliate of the National Art Education Association. She serves on the steering committee of the Arts in the Basic Curriculum Project, the board of the South Carolina Alliance for Art Education, and the Education Advisory Committee at the Columbia Museum of Art.
She received two Fulbright Hays Awards to travel and study in both Senegal (2009) and South Africa (2002). Additionally, grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the South Carolina Humanities Council, and the South Carolina Arts Commission enabled her to compile a photographic documentary based on African-American Camp Meeting Traditions.

This interactive exhibition, consists of 42 large black and white photographs, is scheduled to be shown at the Avery Center in Charleston, SC, the Ritz Museum and Theatre in Jacksonville, Florida, and the Martha’s Vineyard History Museum in 2015-2016. The exhibit was displayed at the Charlotte Museum of History in North Carolina and the Moore Methodist Center at St.Simon’s Island, Georgia in 2010, and the McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina in 2008.

Her book entitled *A Place to Worship: Carolina Camp Meetings, An African-American Tradition* will be published through the University of South Carolina Press.

**Harold Holt** graduated from Fergus Falls Community College with an AA in 1976, University of Minnesota-Morris in 1979 with
a BS, and earned a Masters of Liberal Arts in 1995 from Moorhead State, Moorhead, MN.

He has been teaching since 1982 in Pelican Rapids, MN. He has taught in seventh grade American History, eight grade Geography, and Senior World Affairs. His current teaching assignment is US History for ninth and tenth graders.

Since 2008 he has been involved in several grants/teacher workshops:

2008-2013 Teaching American History Grant though Minnesota State University - Moorhead, Moorhead, MN;

2012 MN Historical Society Northwest Fur Trading Post Immersion, Pine City, MN;

2013 Colonial Williamsburg Teaching Institute, Williamsburg, VA;

2014 Amer. Industrial Revolution, NEH Landmark of American History & Cultural Workshop, Detroit, MI;

2015 Buchwald Summer Fellowship, Ashland University, Ashland OH.
Christine Kadonsky has taught Early U.S. History to ninth grade students in her hometown of Wausau, Wisconsin for 14 years. She just completed her first year as the Wausau West Social Studies Department Chair. Christine enjoys team teaching at the high school level within a flexible modular schedule. She was honored to be selected as the 2014 Wisconsin VFW Citizenship Education High School Teacher of the Year and the 2010 Gilder Lehrman Institute Wisconsin History Teacher of the Year. Christine enjoys traveling and participating in professional development during the summer. She has participated in teacher workshops across the country and toured England, Germany, Ghana, Barbados and China. She toured India during Spring Break this year. In addition to travel, Christine enjoys supporting the arts (art, music, theater), photography, and cheering on the Packers and Wisconsin Badgers.

Kate M. Kokontis is a Founding Faculty member of the Academic Studio at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, and the Assistant Chair of the Integrated Humanities department. She earned her B.A. from Yale, a post-baccalaureate certificate in painting from the Studio Art Centers, International – Florence, and her Ph.D. in Performance Studies from U.C. Berkeley. At NOCCA, she teaches Integrated Humanities, which she has co-developed to be an interdisciplinary world history, literature, and
cultural studies program taught over four years. She has taught 9th, 10th, and 11th grade Integrated Humanities (which spans chronologically from the Big Bang through the 19th century), though has lingered in 11th grade for the past several years, teaching the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries -- including a unit on the Civil War and Reconstruction. Additionally at NOCCA, Kate co-facilitates the Student Leadership Council, helps to coordinate collaborations between departments, and is very involved in the Plessy Project, an endeavor shared by the NOCCA Institute and a number of community organizations to commemorate and continue the long history of Black freedom struggle in New Orleans and beyond. Right now she is working on a novel and an academic book project emerging from her dissertation, “Performative Returns and the Rememory of History: genealogy and performativity in the American racial state.” Kate also is involved in social, educational, and environmental justice endeavors around New Orleans, within and outside her home institution.

**Mavis McLean** has been involved in the field of education since 1993. Prior to becoming a classroom teacher, she has held positions in commercial banking, retail management and post-secondary education. Currently, she is an instructor of digital design and business technology in the Academy of Digital Arts at
Marianna High School in Marianna, FL. Mavis is an Adobe Education Trainer, Adobe Campus Leader, and Adobe Certified Associate in Visual Communications using Photoshop. In addition, she is a Microsoft Certified Trainer, Florida Digital Educator and a Microsoft Office Specialist in Word, Excel, and PowerPoint.

Mavis is a graduate of Florida State University’s College of Business with a B.S. degree in Marketing and she has a Master of Business Education degree from Florida A & M University. In her spare time she enjoys viewing vintage photography collections and studying the works of acclaimed photographers such as Eudora Welty, Gordon Parks and James van der Zee. She also enjoys writing poems and short stories. Her work has been published in FSU’s Black Student Union’s Awareness newspaper and placed 2nd in Chipola College’s poetry contest. Mavis is very excited to be selected for this year’s institute and is looking forward to meeting and collaborating with her colleagues, as well as project faculty and staff.

Tracy Middleton teaches 8th grade English language arts and social studies at Del Dios Academy of Arts and Sciences in Escondido, California. In addition to teaching, she provides professional development in historical thinking, the College,
Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards, and facilitates a team of teachers in the NCSS C3 Literacy Collaborative. During the summer, she is a Master Teacher for Colonial Williamsburg and peer facilitates high school teachers at the Colonial Williamsburg summer teacher institute. Tracy currently serves on the California Council for Social Studies Executive Board as the Southern Area Vice President. She has also co-authored an article, “California Teachers and Social Studies: A Survey Report on Approaches to Curriculum and Instruction”, published in the California Council for Social Studies Social Studies Review. When not immersed in social studies, Tracy enjoys quilting, watching her son play basketball, and traveling with her family.

**Ericka Morris** Raised in a “globe-trotting” Army family, Ericka was born in Heidelberg, Germany and raised in: Philadelphia, Chicago, Long Island, Lawrence (KS) and Bremerhaven, Germany. She graduated from the University of Kansas in 2003 with a Bachelors of Arts degree in American, African and African American Studies. On returning to Philadelphia after graduation, Ericka has worked as an educator for the last 10 years while finishing a Master in Multi-Cultural Education at Eastern University in St. Davids, PA.
Ericka is a dedicated (Urban) educator and has spent the last decade teaching and writing curriculum, consulting in curriculum, discipline and classroom management and creating literature and multimedia resources for instruction in the Historical and contemporary African American experience.

J. Brent Morris teaches, writes, and lectures on slavery and antislavery in America. He is Assistant Professor of History at the University of South Carolina Beaufort and Director of the NEH teachers' institute "America's Reconstruction: The Untold Story." He received his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 2010, and has been awarded recent grants or fellowships from the Association for Documentary Editing, the University of South Carolina Institute for Southern Studies, the University of South Carolina Institute for African American Research, Cornell University, Oberlin College, the New York Humanities Council, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. His book Oberlin, Hotbed of Abolitionism: College, Community, and the Fight for Freedom and Equality in Antebellum America was published by the University of North Carolina Press in 2014. He is also the author of Yes Lord I Know the Road: A History of African Americans and South Carolina, 1526-2008, forthcoming from the University of South Carolina Press, and co-editor (with Vernon Burton) of Reconstruction at 150: Reassessing America’s “New Birth of Freedom” and (with Blakeslee Gilpin) The Antislavery Papers of John Brown. He is
the author of twenty five articles, reviews, and encyclopedia entries that have appeared in the New York Times, Civil War History, the Journal of African American History, Southern Studies, the South Carolina Historical Magazine, The World of the Civil War: A Daily Life Encyclopedia, the Encyclopedia of Slavery in the Americas, and Encyclopedia of the Early Republic and Antebellum America. His research on Reconstruction Era South Carolina was awarded the Malcolm C. Clark Award of the SC Historical Society in 2010, and he has been awarded recent grants or fellowships from the Sea Islands Institute, the Association for Documentary Editing, the University of South Carolina Institute for Southern Studies, the University of South Carolina Institute for African American Research, Cornell University, Oberlin College, the New York Humanities Council, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

**Vincent Stewart** is a social studies teacher at Bowie High School in Bowie, MD. He has taught just over ten years after receiving a B.A. in History at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. Mr. Stewart has taught a variety of subjects, some of which include African/African American History, AP U.S. History and Modern World History. In attending the Reconstruction: An Untold Story seminar, this will have been Vincent’s 3rd summer seminar through the National Endowment
for Humanities. Like in years past, Mr. Stewart looks forward to the opportunity to research, engages scholars, other educators, and ultimately bring back to his classroom a priceless experience that will help enrich student learning and understanding on an extremely important aspect of American History, Reconstruction.

Lori Williams-Martin The two biggest compliments I get as a teacher are that I make learning fun and I am fair.

I started 36 years ago as a middle school Language Arts teacher, but have moved to middle school Social Studies. I have taught full time in Iowa, Illinois, Texas, and Colorado. I also substitute taught in Nebraska and Maryland. I have been at my current position in Colorado for the past 17 years. History is so much more fun to teach and I found a renewed love for the classroom after I switched. I earned my BS from Iowa State University and over the years I have acquired over 50 additional hours in many various areas.
2015 National Endowment for the Humanities
Summer Institute participants at the historic Penn Center,
Frogmore, South Carolina