Visualizing Reconstruction
Essays on the Untold Story
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Introduction” Telling the Untold Story

J. Brent Morris

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. Dubois’ 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 K-12 teachers in July 2017 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 twenty two 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.
Enslaved African Americans did not sit idly by during the Civil War and Reconstruction Era to be freed by their white counterparts. They played an operative role before, during, and after the official Reconstruction Era in becoming emancipated in all sense of the word, emotionally, physically, socially, politically, and economically.

Robert Smalls, a formerly enslaved man, was born and reared in Beaufort, South Carolina. He represents the African American who self actualized while helping others live a life of freedom. He freed himself and others while aboard a Confederate ship called the C.S.S. Planter. At a time when the South was in the midst of war, Smalls who labored aboard the naval ship, made the opportunity to free himself and hand over the Confederate naval vessel to the Union Naval Army. Mr. Smalls earned his freedom and went on to serve five times in Congress as a Democratic representative. Smalls left the legacy of fighting for the education of African American children by being the first individual in the U.S. Congress to put forth a request for equal education in 1868.

Harriet Tubman is often lauded as the Moses of the African American people during the antebellum era and Civil War. In addition to
being a conductor on the Underground Railroad and bringing over 300 people to freedom in the North, she was also a nurse, scout, and spy for the Union Army. One of many heroic moments in her life was her effort in the Combahee River Raid. Alongside James Montgomery, the Jayhawker, she helped lead over 700 enslaved African Americans to a Union Army ship. The courage and grit of a woman who was formerly a slave, and at times had a bounty on her head, never let the intrinsic drive to be free and help others achieve freedom slow her down.

Freedom came in many forms such as the freedom to read and write. Charlotte Forten (Grimke) answered the call to teach in the sea islands of South Carolina. She was born a free African American woman in
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Ms. Forten is known as the first African American teacher in the South. She spent time teaching the children (and anyone else who could afford to leave work) from the sea islands at the Penn Center School. Her journals are not easily accessible, but the copy here is from the archives at Howard University. This journal is unique in that it describes her time as a nurse to fallen soldiers from the 1st and 2nd South Carolina Regiment. Her writings describe the compassion and wonder she held for the soldiers. She was often taken with the intense desire the soldiers had to return to the battlefield even when they had been wounded.

1st South Carolina Volunteers are most notable as the first regiment of African American men fighting in the Civil War for the Union Army. This regiment consisted of enslaved African American men. It is imperative to point out the significance of what these men were facing when they agreed to fight for the Union against the Confederacy. Initially the African Americans who showed up to the Union Army to enlist were returned to their owners, or put to work in menial jobs such as digging latrines or laborer positions. Later, the escaped men were considered the “contraband.”

This image printed in Frank Leslies Illustrated Magazine entitled "Emancipation Day in South Carolina" depicts the African American soldiers of the 1st South Carolina (Colored) Volunteers alongside white Union soldiers as the stars and stripes are being presented. The soldiers of this
African American regiment consisted of enslaved men from local plantations and refugee men from neighboring states’ plantations from Florida. The reading of the Emancipation Proclamation held on the Smith Plantation is a symbol of the beginning of freedom to all. This lithograph symbolizes the collaboration between blacks and white in the military for the Union as a model to the formerly enslaved African Americans of Port Royal, South Carolina.

The 54th Massachusetts Infantry is another clear example of the African Americans’ desire to help themselves gain freedom. The men of the 54th Mass. Infantry, while mostly free born African American men, were still discriminated against in many instances such as lower wages than their white counterparts. Creating a regiment of all African American men was a huge undertaking that was met with opposition from its inception. Abraham Lincoln ultimately acquiesced and listened to leaders of the African American people such as Frederick Douglass to create the 54th Massachusetts Infantry. Douglass believed that “once the black man gets upon his person the brass letters ‘U.S.’, a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States.” This was a pivotal move in light of the former Militia Law of 1792 barring “persons of color from serving in the militia.”

*Photo Credit: Billie Howard Barnes*
There are many significant points to make about this photo. First, it is the grave of one of the courageous soldiers of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry who under the leadership of Robert Gould Shaw gave his life while battling at Ft. Wagner in Georgia. His surname is notable on the headstone, J. W. Freeman. At some point, either he or his family made the decision to shed the former owner’s name and claim the moniker of “free man.” His body is interred in the Beaufort National Cemetery to take his place with those who are honored for their service to our country. Abraham Lincoln established the National Cemetery for the burial of the Federal soldiers, white and black. In death, he is truly free.

There are numerous stories of African Americans showing courage, bravery, wit, and perseverance in the fight for freedom. Some of them have been told and documented while others still remain to be unearthed.

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○ Title and other information transcribed from caption card.

Frederick Douglass quote-

Photo: Public domain Combahee River Raid (June 2, 1863) combahee-river-raid_harpers_tubman.jpeg

Pages from Charlotte Forten's journal, July 23, 1863 Courtesy Moorland Spingarn Research Center, Howard University
“Being fixed to that condition for life”: The Contradictions of Free Labor in Reconstruction

Shaw Bridges

In the aftermath of the Civil War and Emancipation, Republicans in Congress and their supporters in the Northern media grappled with the concept of equal black economic and political participation that had for so long invigorated the antebellum debate over the perpetuation of the institution of slavery. Years before the first shots were fired on Fort Sumter, a coterie of abolitionists and former Whig politicians under the new sectionalist party banner of the Republican Party, advocated principles of individualism and self-determination in the marketplace, and the effacing of the southern states’ “peculiar” institution of slavery that violated them. In the words of Edward Atkinson, a leading Massachusetts textile manufacturer, the Civil War was “a war for the establishment of free labor, call it by whatever name you will.”1 With victory over the Confederacy, and the Republicans exonerated in the eyes of the Union’s supporters, the time came to demonstrate to the country and the world the supposed shared interests and advantages that accrue to the individual in a free labor society.2 Leading Northern politicians shared a belief in the inherent benefit of freed labor to a democratic society. As Abraham Lincoln said at the start of the war, “there is not of necessity any such thing as the free hired laborer being fixed to that condition for life.”3 A few Republican leaders in Congress and in the Union Military from 1861 to 1876 hoped to reshape the Cotton Kingdom as a liberal, egalitarian society in which no man would be arbitrarily set above another. The freeing of four million men and women with the 13th Amendment presented American newspapers and other popular media outlets across the nation with the challenge of depicting a fundamentally new vision of America in which these individuals would participate both politically and economically. If slavery was degenerative, and free labor it’s ideological antithesis, the burden fell on those who supported the latter to prove it was genuinely beneficial to all races and classes and to ultimately recast the south.

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in this ideal image. In the evolving politics of Reconstruction, the pictorial record becomes a testament to the competing visions for a post-bellum American political and economic landscape, in which the effort to create a more egalitarian, biracial democracy is ultimately derailed.

Even before emancipation in 1863, the Northern media began to explore new conceptions of black labor and what was to be done with these fugitives from the “Southern institution.” After General Benjamin F. Butler first defined the runaway slaves at Fortress Monroe off the Virginia coast in late May of 1861 as “Contrabands” of war, many Northern newspapers and media began to explore the contours of this transitional phrase in their depictions of these black fugitives. In these early depictions before emancipation, the Northern public was first exposed to the questions that would consume Reconstruction efforts over the succeeding decades, about the position of the newly freed people in a “free labor” society.⁴

Like most other derisive impressions of these fugitives in the early 1860s, the image titled the “The New Place,” which appeared in the December 27th, 1862 issue of Vanity Fair, bears all the hallmarks of the supposed transience and ‘apeishness’ of the black male contraband. The caption at the bottom of the image, which reads, “Yah! Yah! Dis Chile’s on de move to his new situmavation. Wonder what sort of pusson my new Massa’s gwine to be,” reveals the limited

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intelligence and ingrained dependence Northern whites associated with these wayward former slaves. Images depicting the newly arrived population of “contrabands” in Union army camps provoked consternation among the citizenry of the Northern states who feared that this new population would become a burden on a war-weary Union army.

The visual culture that developed around the African American laborer in the first years of Reconstruction, as with most enduring stereotypes, had its roots in antebellum descriptions of the “lazy” and “indolent” slave who was innately reluctant to apply his hands to work for their masters in Southern plantation society. Even as images of “wayward” contraband fomented animosity toward fugitive blacks, those in the Northern media who supported emancipation began to shape the counter-narrative of black individualism and self-reliance to contrast the more traditional account of black servility and dependence.
After the end of slavery was enshrined in the 13th Amendment, Northerners sympathetic to the plight of newly freed people looked back at the war as the overturning of an entrenched aristocracy to make room for the autonomous and self-reliant newly freed black. On July 29th, 1865, the Republican newspaper Harper’s Weekly published an image that overturns the trope of the supposedly lazy black. In the depiction the roles of industrious master and apathetic slave are reversed so the planter sits idly in a rocking chair while the farmer wields his hoe and pickaxe as dual symbols of production in the marketplace. Off in the distance, former slaves are toiling in the field, perpetuating the wealth of the man on the porch of the “Big House.” The leisurely existence these slaveholders enjoyed at the expense of their enslaved laborers plunged the nation of self-determining and industrious folk into war only a few years earlier. White Americans both in support or unfavorable toward the abolitionist calls for education and economic equity for the formerly enslaved in the post-bellum 1860s and 1870s could look on this image as a vindication of the wartime efforts of Northern soldiers to defeat the peculiar institution and free those unjustly forced to labor for others instead of themselves.
While some images reinforcing black independence served Northern propaganda for the abolitionist arm of the Republican Party, images such as the one above, convey a new reality for the former slaves. Taken on Edisto Island off the coast of South Carolina in 1862, this image shows formerly enslaved people, in the absence of the duress of the lash, farming sweet potatoes for themselves and their families instead of cotton for their former masters. Experiments along the South Carolina Sea Islands, which historians have since termed ‘rehearsals’ for Reconstruction, gave new opportunities for black men and women to not only exercise, but defend their newly won freedom. Instead of working for a wage and the hope of advancement in a capitalist market economy, as many advocates of nineteenth-century free labor ideology claimed was rational for all market participants, former slaves conceived of freedom in a different hierarchy than their Northern supporters. Freedmen and women desired land first and foremost as a prerequisite for economic and ultimately political security. By the end of the War, thousands of black men, women and children moved onto the abandoned rice plantations with the hopes of staking a claim to the 40 acres promised under General Sherman’s Special Field Order # 15. As a result of this changing landscape of economic production in the south, the yields in crops like sugar stood at

only one tenth of its 1861 amount in 1865. Labor shortages in the southern states and the demands of the newly freed people resulted in the development of the sharecropping system to replace the gang labor of slavery days. The incongruence between the economic interests of former slaves and their masters exposed the contradictions in the free labor ‘market values’ newly freed people were supposed to internalize after emancipation.

Interactions between slaves and the Freedmen’s Bureau indicate an abiding concern over the distribution of land and political power in a Reconstructed South. Established in March of 1865 by Act of Congress, the Freedmen’s Bureau was directed to supervise the “management of all abandoned lands, and the control of all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen from rebel states” and its officials were soon flooded with requests for various types of financial and legal assistance from the freedmen. The Northern press was quick to respond to the creation of this organization and its work on behalf of the freedmen. In a racist campaign posters issued during the Pennsylvania gubernatorial campaign of 1866, political opponents of Radical Republican policies rail against the Bureau as “An agency to keep the Negro in idleness at the expense of the white man.” The advertisement frames Reconstruction as a struggle for power between the races. Harking back to the earlier sympathetic juxtaposition of the lazy planter and his hard-working slaves, this racist image flips roles once again. The “indolent” black in the foreground of this image lays about dreaming up his outlandish aspirations for freedom. The Freedmen’s Bureau, often castigated by white Southern sympathizers as an abuse of government funding, is depicted here in the shape of the U.S. Capital Building with the words "Freedom and No Work" inscribed along its front and on its columns and walls are labeled with words including, "Candy," "Whiskey," "Indolence," "White Women," "Apathy," "Idleness," "Stews," and "Pies." These words, coupled with the images of white men in the backdrop plowing fields and chopping wood, portray the Bureau as a government agency for the “lazy” black man and against virtuous white womanhood and the hardworking white laborer.

Northerners who viewed this image believed the Bureau conferred unfair economic advantages to one race over another, and was therefore inconsistent with free labor tenets. Expecting to see evidence of the Bureau’s contribution to the degeneracy of black labor in the south, President Johnson sent generals James Steedman and Joseph Fullerton to survey complaints toward the institution in Southern cities. Overwhelmingly, freed men and women rallied in support of the institution. Eight hundred assembled at the Brick Church in Wilmington, North Carolina in support of the Bureau as a

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7 Ibid, 143.
protector of black labor against the abuses of the new planter class. Despite these efforts, any commiseration among Northern whites over the plight of freedmen in the south evaporated after an economic depression wracked the United States in 1773-4. Many whites began to view Reconstruction institutions like the Freedman’s Bureau as political overindulgence and evidence black men were being encouraged to become virtual “wards of the state.”

Over the succeeding years, black Southerners were hopeful, despite the many obstacles to their freedom. Initially, a more labor-friendly crop-lien system replaced the oppressive black codes of the 1860s. In a few enclaves along the South Carolina and Georgia coast, black laborers were able to purchase and maintain their own plots of land. These instances of successful land acquisition were few and far between, and the issuance of President Johnson’s Circular 15 thwarted any hope of creating a black free yeomanry in the south. By mid-1866, half of Bureau confiscated lands were returned to their former owners, and freedmen were encouraged to sign annual labor contracts. Free labor ideology rested in part on the assumption that contracts were negotiable and based on the consent of both the employer and laborer. Without recourse to land ownership, freedmen were stripped of their power to negotiate. If freedmen refused to sign contracts or to move off of the planters’ land, they could be arrested, convicted, and forced to work for private companies. During the Civil War, local sheriffs and judges worked together to re-enslave black men, using a loophole in the 13th Amendment allowing for free convict labor, to work on repairing bridges and roads. After the war, this convict-lease system provided Southern landowners with a new tool with which to coerce recalcitrant black laborers to accept more oppressive contracts. In the North, sympathizers of the freedmen saw this new system of forced labor as a virtual continuation of slavery sanctioned by state and local Southern governments. In 1875, Edward King published a record of an extensive tour of the states in the south and southwest undertaken in 1873, and the spring and summer of 1874 titled, The Great South: A Record of Journeys in Louisiana, Texas, the Indian Territory, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland. Sponsored by the periodical Scribner’s Monthly, the book

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11 Foner, Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877, 161, 164.
12 Douglas A. Blackmon, Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black People in America from the Civil War to World War II (New York: Doubleday, ©2008), 64.
portrays the “new” political, social and economic condition of the South that had taken hold after the Civil War. In the preface, the author reassures the readers that the travelers who undertook the journey through these states, “have endeavored, by pen and pencil, to give the reading public a truthful picture of life in a section which has, since the close of a devastating war, been overwhelmed by a variety of misfortunes, but upon which the dawn of a better day is breaking.” The dawn was for the “white” laborer and the resurgent planter class and the antiquated slavery-based economy was a hindrance to his ascendency in the south and southwest. The book artist James Wells Champney illustrates how this “New South” sustained aspects of the old in the form of black convict labor. The image depicts a “frequently” observed scene of convict gangs chopping down wood in the forests along southern roads, closely guarded by their white overseers.


14 Ibid.
holding rifles. Although it is a sympathetic image, the message of the book to a Northern audience is clear: slave labor degrades white labor.

In the aftermath of the collapse of Southern Republican state governments, blacks were effectively left disenfranchised and without the promise of land of their own to provide them with a measure of economic security. Despite the transformation of the South following the end of slavery, the fates of four million African American men, women, and children were far from certain. From contraband, to sharecropper, to convict laborer, the northern memory of Reconstruction faded with the advent of the image of the “New South” and all its capitalist “diversification.” In a famous speech delivered before the Bay State Club of Boston in 1889, proponent of the “New South” Henry Grady claims planter class of the old South “rested everything on slavery and agriculture, unconscious that these could neither give nor maintain healthy growth.” “The New South,” he argued, “presents a perfect democracy… less splendid on the surface, but stronger at the core.”15 Northerners congratulated themselves at the close of Reconstruction, and truly believed that free labor, and capitalism had finally triumphed. In the centerfold image below, published on October 23, 1895, by Keppler & Schwarzmann for Puck, a magazine of political satire and humor that ran from the end of Reconstruction in the 1870s through the early twentieth century, African Americans and Civil War veterans from North and South

descend upon the Cotton States Exhibition in Atlanta. On their left stands the
imposing visage of Abraham Lincoln as the personification of “Free Labor”
triumphant. Standing over the plow and wielding a sledgehammer, Lincoln
conveys the promise of a new tomorrow forged for everyone in the new
south. Gone is the image of convict laborers in the 1870s, and here to replace
it is a declaration of redemption, and prosperity for all. Here is the
sanitization of what Reconstruction meant in favor of the vindication of free
labor ideology.

The Civil War and Reconstruction forced the people of the United
States, north and south, to confront the question of how a newly freed
population would participate both in politics and the economy. Unable to
dissociate themselves from the racial prejudices born from slavery, Northern
and Southern whites justified the oppression of Jim Crow on the black man’s
supposed incapacity for self-governance and tendency toward vagrancy. The
print media became one medium for the conveying the story of black racial
inferiority to replace the narrative of a “free labor” society for the benefit of
both races. Although Reconstruction was ultimately derailed, this period in
our history has left historians with a plethora of visual material that
underscores the apprehensions of a white-majority body politic to come to
terms with this new experiment in biracial democracy.16

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the Indian Territory, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia,
Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia,

16 Images in this essay were gathered from various online databases and websites. These links
are a few good places for students to start their own search for rich primary material. Thomas
http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/harp/0531.html American Antiquarian,
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Learning the Language of Humanity

Amy Collins

In April, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. penned what would become an ultimate rebuke on the continuing question of the identity of Black Americans. In his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”, Dr. King weaves his narrative, of oppression, of subjugation, of waiting, into a response directed first at the clerics addressed in the letter, but more importantly at the nation that was in the midst of the ongoing struggle over rights of citizens, specifically the rights of the Black Americans.

If we consider who Dr. King was, a leader in Civil Rights, a leader in his community, a leader in the world, we must also consider what the world was telling Dr. King he was not. In the eyes and voices of those who would hope to silence him, Dr. King was less than a leader, less than a citizen, less than a man. In the most basic terms, Dr. King’s very identity would be stripped of him at every opportunity by simply taking away his name. “...when your first name becomes “nigger” and your middle name becomes “boy” (however old you are) and your last name becomes “John,”...” (King, 1963). To strip away his power, King’s title and his name are taken from him, and he is reduced to nothing more than a boy, and something less than a citizen.
Photographer Charles Moore, a 27 year old photographer for the Montgomery Advertiser, was present as Dr. King, with his wife Coretta Scott-King looking on, is pushed against the desk at the Montgomery, Alabama police station. Dr. King was arrested on this occasion for attempting to attend a hearing in the support of Ralph Abernathy, a prominent Civil Rights worker. The body language, the positions of power, the center focus on Dr. King, gives voice to the idea that King is not an equal, not an equal in status, nor in power, not a man, but a boy.

There is power in words, both in the words that we choose to use, and in the words we omit. When we hope to reduce someone to something less than, we can use simple words to take away their humanity, to reduce them to less than their own power, to less than their own vision, and certainly to give them an identity that is not theirs, but the version that is placed upon them by the words we use. In the history of the American collective, there is a certain flow of power and identity that comes with words. Words like slave, enslaved, property, chattel, fugitive, darkie, negro...all become part of the conflict in telling the story of citizens, individuals, of the most basic right of humanity. And with words, power is both recognized and destroyed.

In the most basic sense of America’s collective history, identity is reduced to a word. What does it mean to be a man? What are the connotations of being a man, and who is deemed worthy of the title? If we think to Dr. King, we see clearly in his writings, the power of man, of human. But, when we view through the historical lens of segregation, or discrimination, we find that a word so deceptively simple, becomes something else.

In the two images above, viewers can see the power of a word: man. The first photo was taken by Civil Rights activist and photographer Ernest Withers during the 1969 Memphis sanitation workers’ strike. Withers had taken opportunities before to document the struggle for Civil Rights’, and as a member of the Memphis community was influential in the planning of the march in Memphis. The second image, created by the artist John Jennings,
shows yet another interpretation of the word man. John Jennings centers his life on provocative questions: How can we show the work of underrepresented artists, especially those who do comics? How can we go beyond the racial stereotypes of traditional comic art to show the rich expression of black artists, past and present? And how can we help UB students see that creating art is a possibility for them, to recognize that “art is everywhere” and acquire what Jennings calls “visual literacy?”

“I am a man”, is it a question or a statement? Is there a reclaiming of power or identity, or does the word only hold weight if allowed? There is power in both images, but they do not rest alone. What is a man? What does it mean to claim to be a man? What does it look like to strip one’s identity as a man away, the slow erosion of power and identity? In the stories of enslavement, there is a common dehumanization, one in which the human as an identity is taken away, stripped away like layers of clothes, like layers of flesh, piece by piece, until what remains is a less than human state of being.

In the earliest roots of enslavement, the power of language becomes intertwined with the power of the enslaver and the stripped power of the
enslaved. There is no recognition of humanity when words like cargo and chattel are used. When a human being is reduced to the word “slave,” and when power is given in the word “master,” it becomes the dominant language. There is an endemic dehumanization in the very act of enslavement, but in order to keep power with the “master class,” there is a new language and vocabulary created. In this new vocabulary, identities are reduced to simplistic terms, names have no power, and a person’s identity isn’t their own.

The image below a sale notice of published by traders, David and John Deas. The Deas brothers’ lived in the Charleston, South Carolina area, and were particularly active in the trading of human “cargo.” The broadside image above, published for the sale dated July 14, 1769, is a quick study on the dehumanization of the human beings that were to be sold at auction on that day in July. A dissection of the broadside shows several words: cargo, prime, healthy, negroes; and finally a list, as if in a grocer’s transaction, men, boys, women and girls. But, aside from the large names at the bottom, that of the slavers, David and John Deas, there is no mention of humanity. There is just a simple reduction from humanity to cargo, with no acknowledgment of the suffering that this human cargo, these 94 human beings, would have endured after being forced from their homes and families for the cruelest, most inhumane existence.

In the image above, the viewer can see the figure of a man, shackled and nude. The detail of his features, the muscles and the stature are
prominent, however, his position is not one of power. And, perhaps equally important are the words in relation to the image: Am I Not a Man and a Brother?

The 1780’s abolitionist, Josiah Wedgwood and a craftsman, William Hackwood, would create a “slave medallion”, upon which the print of this image is based. The medallion was originally produced to bring a powerful piece of identity to those that would act as catalysts of change across the movement.

These medallion pins were intended to publicly voice the support of the wearer. Wedgwood and Hackwood’s powerful image, combined with the words, give voice to the voiceless. The image, one of a human, vulnerable, and at the mercy of someone else’s power, gives an opportunity and a choice to the viewer. There is no middle ground in this image. And, there should be no middle ground, no opportunity or out given to the viewer. Answer the question. Reportedly, one batch of Wedgwood’s medallions would make it’s way to Benjamin Franklin in 1788, with an accompanying letter, that included a note that the medallions would help to advance the idea and the understanding of freedom.

The eventual end of the horror of enslavement in the United States, after the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution changed the conversation, but added a whole new dimension. It would be a simple conclusion to say that there is a restoration of power. But the questions remain. What defines a man? What defines a human? What is the power of the word, or of the stripping of that word? How can one human reduce another to something less than by not only their actions, but by their words? That a man is a man, and that there is inherent humanity in the mere existence.

In the current struggle of both police and community brutality, segregation, socio-economic disparity, disenfranchisement, and the list goes
on, there is no inherent humanity. There is still reduction. We have yet to meet the question of Dr. King’s dream. We are miles away from reconciliation. And until we see each other first as humans, there will continue to be the diminished power that is inherent in language.

In this image, what will the viewer focus on? The power of the police? Or the child? The child who may or may not become a man. A boy that has a life ahead of him, if he is given the ability to grow, to thrive, to learn, to vote, to participate, to express himself, to be.

In the article that accomplished the image from “The Atlantic”, the author writes, “Some members of the public will wrongheadedly conflate Black Lives Matter activists and the criminals who used the cover of Sunday’s anniversary and the accompanying protests to fire guns, beat up and rob a St. Louis Post-Dispatch newspaper reporter, and smash the window of a small business that serves Ferguson. There is no evidence that those criminals were participants in the Black Lives Matter movement. The vast majority of its members have been nonviolent all year, conducting themselves with uncommon bravery and restraint in difficult circumstances.”

Uncommon bravery and restraint in difficult circumstances. There is bravery in the mere existence of the man. And, until it doesn’t take uncommon bravery for a man to survive, there will forever be the need to learn a new language. We have to stop talking about and to history the way that we do. It is past time to learn the language of humanity.
Images of Reconstruction

Monica Driver

Images, Images, Images, how important are images in news publications, text books, or shown on television? What impact can an image have on self-esteem, public opinion, and attitudes? Can images shown worldwide shape the perception of a race of people? How can the reader or viewer be sure the images they are viewing are true representations of the subject or person? Is there a way to discover hidden agendas? Isn't an image just that an image? Is it not the viewer, who gives value and merit, based on his or her personal experiences?


Did 19th century images of emancipated men and women shape the prejudice, stereotypes and generalizations that are still prevalent today? After the Civil War there were many images published of newly freed men and women in news publications around the world. A popular publication in the United States, Harper's Weekly, often showed African- Americans enjoying everyday activities with exaggerated exuberance. As newly
emancipated men and women learned how to survive post civil war, many of their attempts to gain an education, vote and take care of their families were documented in print. The simple act of walking, could be showcased in a grandiose manner, with men and women parading with their heads held high and their chests puffed up with pride. Facial expressions, language, and clothing, were often exaggerated, mocked, and trivialized. Facial features were enlarged and clothing could be extravagant and inappropriate for everyday activities. Some images showed men and women of color as monkeys, or apes with bananas. The depictions often ridiculed efforts of assimilation into ‘normal’ life after slavery. The images served as proof, “The Black race was inferior to the white man in every way.” In Notes On The State of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson, reasoned blacks were inferior to whites with respect to their capacity for reason, imagination, and sentiment. After the Civil War, Harper’s Weekly published pictures that aligned with Mr. Jefferson’s sentiments, which lead to stereotyping, colorism and race-shaming. All of which can be seen in many publications today.

On May 21, 1870 Harper's Weekly, featured a cartoon about black Americans and education. In the illustration, “An Old Scholar”, author unknown, scale is used to highlight the age discrepancy of the “old scholar” attending school with children. As the grimacing, large woman sits on a bench (clearly made for children), a small child can be seen in the window
pointing at her with a large smile on his face. Smaller children can be seen in the background during ‘play time’. While the children are smaller objects in this illustration, they are an extremely important due to the insinuations made in the comments that accompany this image. The image clearly shows an age juxtaposition between adults and children attending school. The condescending text that accompanies the image, further mocks the desire of men and women who sought to gain education later in life.

"There is a negro school at Mcherrin Station, on the Richmond and Danville Railroad, where the teachers receive scholars of all ages and both sexes. Mr. Arvine, of Lunenberg, had an old cook, 71 years of age, who took it into her head to learn to speak and write the English language correctly; so she entered the school, and bringing her ten cents per day and
regularly paying it over to the teachers, she got along very well until, perhaps, at the end of the second week, she missed her lesson, and was kept in play time. The idea! an old negro seventy-odd years of age kept in play time."-- Danville (Va.) Times.

Once freed, emancipated men and women not only wanted to vote, they had a desire to participate in law making. As formerly enslaved men took political office, they were often portrayed as ignorant, crooks making a mockery of the legislative process. In the illustration, “Colored Rule in a Reconstructed State,” black lawmakers are shown communicating in an aggressive and combative manner.

On the cover of Harper’s Weekly, May 14, 1874, Thomas Nast’s representation of Black lawmakers depicts a chaotic scene. Black lawmakers
are shown with fists raised in fury. Their angry facial expressions, and aggressive jesters do not match their impeccable attire. The white men in the image appear to be overwhelmed, while observing a free-for-all. One white gentleman is shown with his hands up, as if in surrender. Above everyone in the sketch, Miss Columbia implores legislators, “Let us have peace.” Text accompanying the image, “The members call each other thieves, liars, rascals, and cowards. Columbia. "You are Aping the lowest Whites. If you disgrace your Race in this way you had better take Back Seats." This depiction of lawmaking on the Legislative floor, screams incompetence, and continues to stereotype the black race as unprepared to lead effectively without direct instruction and guidance from whites. Further, the reference of “aping” is a stereotype that paints African Americans as subhuman, lacking the intellectual fortitude to lead and govern effectively.

On November 3, 1866, Harper’s Weekly cover was of a young girl and her grandfather, titled Uncle Tom and His Grandchild. The image was purchased and then used on the cover of the newspaper. The article is encouraging in words, as it relates to the state of Negroes in 1866,(we have a young girl who would have been a slave, now learning and teaching her grandfather to read), but the image is an obvious example colorism. The article that accompanied the image had the following text, “A little child, almost white, and very beautiful, is teaching her grandfather—a pure negro—to read.” The article uses flowery language to describe the ‘almost’ white child. The unsigned article goes on to explain, “The picture, as we saw it, seemed to tell at the same time a very sad and a very hopeful story.” The article acknowledges “stereotyping and colorism” with the following quote, “The contrast of color, [is] almost violent in those so near of kin, told the history of a great wrong.” The latter statement clearly references the atrocities perpetrated during slavery, but the hope for a better nation after the war. The publication praises the progress of African Americans, while distributing images laced with colorism and stereotyping.

Another facet of stereotyping and colorism, is the belief that mulattoes, and light skinned blacks are more attractive than their darker hued brothers and sisters. Value and virtue is/was attributed to blacks with white or light skin, and wavy hair. The result are still seen today in images of black actors, and models, it is called white-washing. "White-washing," is the process of artificially lightening someone's skin color to conform to the mainstream standard of beauty. This is a common practice in the publication industry. Oscar nominated actress, Gabourey Sidibe’s complexion was considerably lighter when it appeared on the cover People in 2010. Lupita Nyong'o was named People’s “Most Beautiful” woman in 2014, BUT the magazine lighten her photo before it appeared on the cover. Publications also darken images to give a sinister, and evil appearance.
While both images of O.J. Simpson are frightening, the darker one adds a sinister undertone.

The white-washings of Ms. Nyong'o.
Oscar nominated actress, Gabourey Sidibe’s image is white washed on the left.

January 2018, H&M ran an ad, with an African-American child wearing a hoodie with the wording “Coolest monkey in the jungle”. The public outrage was swift, the apology, quicker. Some argue it was an honest mistake, who among us has not called a small child a “little monkey?” Others argued who among the masses has not heard or seen an African-American referred to as an, ape, monkey, or gorilla?
Knowingly or unknowingly, popular publications in the 19th century often contained images and articles that encouraged stereotyping of emancipated people. The detailed images showcased African-Americans as they learned how to live and survive post Civil War. While some readers found the satires entertaining, others believed the images revealed the racism with which America had always struggled, perhaps never so keenly as during Reconstruction. Throughout history stereotyping and colorism has shaped many perceptions in regards to African-Americans. The attitudes, are not isolated to America, H & M, the latest company to publicly stereotype darker hued people as monkeys, is a Swedish multinational clothing-retail company. Unfortunately, race-shaming, prejudices and colorism are mindsets embedded in the fabric of humanity. As long as physical differences can be observed in individuals, there will be prejudices, and categorizing. When exposed to images with generalizations concerning a race of people, it has been, and always will be important to know the purpose of the presentation, the author or illustrator ideologies, and always will be important to know the purpose of the presentation, the author or illustrator ideologies, and time frame in which the presentation was/is being presented. When generalizations about a race of people are constantly shown throughout the world, negative mindsets and prejudices are reinforced. As publications start to encourage and celebrate diversity, our world will become more inclusive all standards of beauty and acceptance.
Paternalism vs. Agency

Bob Fenster

When examining historical political cartoons, an individual must be cognizant not only of the lens with which they see the world, but the lenses that others use to view such items. Each viewer brings a set of life experiences and biases that shape their perceptions, in ways both subtle and profound. Those who favored emancipation and Reconstruction argued for better treatment of newly freed men and women, but at times may have done so from a sense of paternalism, a prescient assumption of Rudyard Kipling’s 1899 poem “The White Man’s Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands.” Visual representations often portrayed blacks as passive victims of racist southerners and neglected to show them as individuals who expressed determination to resist white supremacy, to work hard to support themselves and their families, and to maintain a sense of pride and dignity. This apparent denial of black agency is more readily apparent from a modern perspective and ultimately may not be in conflict with the reality of the situations depicted: blacks often were victims of violence and injustice without sufficient means to defend themselves.

Source: Josiah Wedgwood, “Am I Not a Man and a Brother?” 1787
One of the most enduring images from the era of American slavery is Josiah Wedgwood’s 1787 abolitionist seal “Am I Not a Man and a Brother?” which features a kneeling black supplicant in chains. The image, while well-intentioned as a condemnation of the institution of slavery, is fundamentally paternalistic, featuring a powerless enslaved man begging for better treatment. The goal of the image placed on medallions, jewelry, and pipes was to serve as propaganda that would help bring an end to slavery. No thought appears to have been given to the lasting effect that portraying black people as supplicants might have.

Source: Matthew Somerville Morgan, “Emancipation”, Fun (magazine), May 15, 1865.

In a similar manner, the engraving “Emancipation” features a black caricature groveling before Columbia, who says “Take thy freedom, and be thankful; for it has cost me much.” The cost is shown by the monument in the background listing both Abraham Lincoln and Stonewall Jackson, larger-
than-life figures of both sides of the Civil War, and the Biblical reference to “first born” sons being sacrificed by the Egyptians as punishment for continuing to hold Jews in bondage. The quotation from Columbia conveys the notion that black people should be grateful merely to be treated as human beings, so they shouldn’t even think about asking for voting rights, education, or 40 acres. The artist seems to be suggesting that the sacrifice of whites in the north and south was somehow greater than the injustices faced by enslaved people over the past century and a half.

That the source of this article was a British humor magazine initially raises some questions -- is it a reflection of the early imperialist psyche or could it meant to be an ironic indictment of the white northern mindset? The lack of cultural context makes this somewhat ambiguous, but once again raises the question of a potential side effect of satirical imagery. However, in a compendium of Morgan’s work, the illustrator includes a few paragraphs describing the work, stating in part, “The dream of Garrison the Liberator has come true at length... The manumitted negro falls upon his knees in gratitude to the gentle Spirit who had stricken off his chains.” There appears to be no irony whatsoever, rendering this piece particularly tone deaf.


Upon first inspection, the “Shall We Call Home Our Troops?” wood engraving seems like a straightforward image. It depicts a U.S. Marshal protecting a cowering freed man from a rich southerner with a whip. The title is a reference to the possible end of military occupation of the Reconstruction-era South as northerners began to grow tired of the expense of Reconstruction and the attention being paid to the problems of the south. In the engraving, the southerner appears as a diabolical figure, the marshal is heroic, and the black man is a defenseless victim. The caption, however, complicates matters. It is a quotation from an editorial in the Birmingham (Alabama) News that reads, “We intend to beat the negro in the battle of life & defeat means one thing—EXTERMINATION.” The statement is not a reflection of what the artist believes, rather an indictment of the sentiment expressed by a southern newspaper. The artist is credited as an essentially anonymous “C.S.R.,” who can be assumed a white northerner attempting to influence white northern readers of Harper’s Weekly to oppose an end to the military occupation of the South. If U.S. forces were to withdraw, the clear implication is that a resumption of white supremacy akin to slavery would occur, thereby
assuaging the concern of the Birmingham News author. A sympathetic northerner might see this piece and feel a return to the outrages and injustices of the past were too high a price to pay for the removal of the troops.

While the metaphorical depiction seems spot on, once again the black figure is powerless. Not a supplicant this time, just recoiling from potential violence and doing nothing to assert his strength or independence. In an extraordinarily powerful cartoon, Thomas Nast depicts a Union Army veteran and former enslaved man (indicated by the broken chains and a sign mentioning emancipation by Lincoln) who sits atop a monument listing the violence and abuses suffered by African Americans under slavery and during Reconstruction, including racist remarks made by Democratic politicians. As if those indignities weren’t enough, violent scenes of white violence appear on either side of the monument. But worst of all, three slain figures lie in a
pool of blood at the base of the monument – a
Source: Thomas Nast, “Patience On a Monument,” Harper’s Weekly, October 10, 1868
child, a woman, and an infant, all African Americans – his family.

Nast’s work here is a blistering depiction of the plight of African Americans embodied by one man who, though devastated by his grief, is yet a heroic figure, sitting atop the monument. A particularly literate reader might recognize the title as a to Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night where the character Viola tells Orsino about a woman with a unrequited love that cannot be consummated who “sat like Patience on a Monument, smiling at Grief.” Although the play is a comedy, Viola, in disguise as a man, is trapped in a tragic situation. There’s no doubt the character in the cartoon is a tragic figure and a victim, but he is also a heroic figure.


Here cartoonist Thomas Nast provides a different approach in which he makes his political point while simultaneously providing his black subject a significant measure of dignity and strength. Both scenarios are somewhat fanciful depictions that serve as stinging indictments of white southerners. In the first, he shows a dignified black farm worker carrying a hoe and pick axe.
His former master idly reads a newspaper while he leans back in his chair and says, “My boy, we’ve toiled and taken care of you long enough—now you’ve got to work!” A careless glimpse at the cartoon might lead the viewer to conclude that Nast is expressing the viewpoint of the white southerner, but the headline makes it clear that the artist is ridiculing the outrageous claim. The notion that a white plantation owner had toiled to take care of enslaved people who had worked under the worst possible conditions year after year is patently ludicrous. But unlike the distracted, obnoxious former master, the black worker stands upright and in the foreground, an image of strength and dignity.


Here an officer of the Freedmen’s Bureau stands as the peacemaker between crowds of armed white southerners and freed men. While there is an element of paternalism in the sense that the outside force of the federal government stands between the two parties, ostensibly in defense of the black men, the two groups appear to be evenly matched. The men on the right side of the cartoon are strong and unafraid, ready, perhaps even eager, to engage. Waud’s depiction tells a similar story as the “Shall We Call Home Our Troops” cartoon, but in no way serves to further the image of blacks as supplicants, defenseless victims, or cowards.

A modern artist would be far more cognizant of the challenge of depicting injustice without adding a second layer of victimization through the enduring power of the image than the artists of the 19th century. When even in 2017, American history textbooks feature only a handful of images of black people from this era, it is important for modern day students of history to consider both the power of imagery and the varying lenses audiences may be using to examine history.
How Education Evolved for African American Children in the South

Susan Ferguson

Civil War – pre-1863

School did not exist, as we know it during the Civil War. White children may have learned how to read and write at home with a tutor. If you were from a wealthy family, your parents might have paid for you to go away to school.

Before 1863, black children in the South did not go to school at all. They mostly lived their lives as slaves on a plantation. A white man owned them. They could not come and go as they pleased, and “fun” was not something they enjoyed. Many young children were forced to work very long days with their parents in the hot fields. They worked for their owner. They did not get paid for their work. In this picture, you can see the children in their work clothes. They are picking cotton and the huge field behind them tells you that they have a lot of work to do.

Student questions:
• What did children do instead of going to school every day?
• What can you tell by looking at the children in this picture?
• Who, what, when, where and why?
• What are your feelings about this picture?
It was against the law for slaves to learn to read and write. Some people thought this was wrong and they taught the slaves in secret. If they were caught learning to read they could be punished for breaking the law.

There were many people in the North who thought slavery was *immoral* and they wanted to end it. The Civil War was fought over slavery. President Lincoln wanted to free the slaves and help them start new lives. This is called *emancipation*.

Slaves were eager to be free and to live on their own. They wanted land, the right to vote and education. Education was very important to them. They knew that without it they could not be successful in the white man’s world. If they were not educated, they would not understand business contracts, land transactions or be able to get good jobs. They would be cheated and taken advantage of.

Some people, teachers and *missionaries*, came to the south to start schools for African Americans. In 1862, Laura Towne came from Pittsburgh, PA to start the first school for freed slaves near Beaufort, SC called the Penn School. Freed slaves, adults and children alike, were eager to learn and started attending Laura’s classes. Boys and girls, and men and women learned reading, writing and *arithmetic* so that they could get jobs and work for their own property.
Student Questions:
- Explain why African Americans wanted to go to school?
- Tell what is happening in this picture.
- How does the picture support the text?

After the war – Post 1863
Other teachers came and more schools were opened in various parts of the south in churches and homes so that freed people who had not been educated could learn to read and write. Students walked miles and miles to get to a school to learn.

**Student questions:**
- Why would an education be important if suddenly you have to take care of yourself?
- What do you notice about the children in this picture? Where are they?

**The Next 80 years - 1880 – 1960 – “Separate and NOT Equal”**

In the early 1900’s education continues to be very important and a priority for African Americans. A law was passed that make it OK to have separate schools for blacks and whites as long as the schools are the same. This is “separate but equal.” However, the schools were not equal. Communities put more money into the schools for the white families. In a poor county, there might only be one school and that would be for the white children. If there was a school for black children it might be in a barn or old leaky building, most often with no furniture or books or money from the county.
Education in Camden

In Camden’s early days, there were no public schools. Only the wealthy could seek higher education through private schools. By 1840 the state began to sponsor public school for its young people and by 1884, Camden had 29 schools in the county. These units consisted of one or two teacher schools with education for both white and colored students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shiloh District</th>
<th>Courthouse District</th>
<th>South Mills District</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
<td><strong>White</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Three Branch</td>
<td>1. Milldam</td>
<td>1. Fork</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Oak Ridge</td>
<td>2. Pond</td>
<td>2. Sharon</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Colored</strong></td>
<td><strong>Colored</strong></td>
<td><strong>Colored</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Wickham</td>
<td>1. Ivey Neck</td>
<td>1. Fork</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Sugar Hill)</td>
<td>2. Chantilly</td>
<td>2. Mile Swamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hickory Branch</td>
<td>3. Sawyer Creek</td>
<td>3. Old Swamp</td>
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</tbody>
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By the turn of the Century, Camden still maintained about 22 schools within walking distance for students. But, in 1913, South Mills built a high school with grades 1 – 11 as did Old Trap in 1921, Shiloh in 1923, and the Camden in 1926. Thus, in the 1920’s, Camden County had 4 high schools.

By 1945, South Camden was sending its high school students to Elizabeth City while South Mills retained their high school. The citizens of Camden began to demand a school system of its own and a referendum was passed to create a high school for white and colored students. Thus, in 1952, Camden High School was established for white students and Sawyer Creek High School was opened for the black students. South Mills retained its elementary school into the ‘60’s. In 1955, Sawyer Creek High School was renamed Marion Anderson High School with W.C. Witherspoon as principal. In 1969, the schools were totally integrated and today Camden has three schools: Grandy Primary (Grades k – 5), Camden Middle School (Grades 6 – 8) and Camden High School (Grades 9 – 12).
In 1884 in Camden County there were 29 schools. Schools were built in the center of each community so that children could walk to school. There were no buses.

Study this document and answer the questions.

Student Questions:
- Compare how many schools for white and how many for black students.
- How many schools do we have now in Camden?
- Were black and white students going to school together in 1952?
- Who was Mr. Witherspoon and where can you see him today?
- Why was the high school renamed Marion (Marian) Anderson? How can we find out more?

It was so important to have schools for all children, that communities had fundraisers to get the money to build schools for African American students. Between 1917 and 1932, more than 5000 schools were built in the south, partially funded by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation.
This picture is of the Rosenwald School in South Mills, NC.

**Student Questions:**
- What year did this school open?
- How many schools did Rosenwald build in NC?
- What do you notice about the students? (Look at the way they are dressed.)
- What is the meaning of the sign the students are holding?

Typically the Foundation put up part of the money to build the schools, while the African Americans in the community held fund-raisers for a portion and the county funded the rest. For instance, in the case of the Trotman School, the county paid $2000, local blacks raised $500 and the Rosenwald Foundation gave $500 for the school.

![Trotman Road School - 1947](image)

**Student Questions:**
- What is the year of the Trotman picture? How much time has passed between Trotman and the South Mills picture?
- What do you notice about the students in this picture?

1960 - Ruby Bridges
Separate schools were not the only thing that was divided by race. In the South, African Americans could not use the same bathrooms, water fountains, restaurants, and hotels as white people. They could not buy houses in white neighborhoods or shop in white stores. There were separate facilities for blacks and whites. During the Civil Rights Movement things began to change with the help of people like Martin Luther King.

Very slowly, things changed for public education and African American students. In 1954, a legal case called Brown vs. Board of Education said that it was illegal to separate students based on the color of their skin. It took a long time for all schools in the south to integrate.

**Student Question:**
*Study the document above again. How many years did it take for Camden County schools to fully integrate?*

In 1960, Ruby Bridges was 6 years old when she became the first African American child to attend an all white elementary school in New Orleans, Louisiana. Ruby was very smart. She passed a test that qualified her to go to the school where white children went. White parents did not like this. Schools in the south were still segregated. Ruby was escorted to school by U.S. Marshals because there were many protestors who wanted to hurt Ruby and her family. She bravely walked into school while people outside threw things and shouted at her. One person threatened to poison Ruby. White parents came into the school and pulled their children out. All of the teachers, except one, refused to teach Ruby because she was black. Barbara Henry taught Ruby for a whole year in a class by herself.
Student Questions:

- Imagine you are Ruby - how would you feel if you were not allowed to go to school?
- How would being the only child in class affect your learning?
- How would you feel if you weren’t allowed to shop at Walmart?

Today –

A lot of changes have happened since Ruby started school. Today the Federal, State and Local governments support the schools with money. Today all schools are integrated. All children in our county go to the same schools, where we have plenty of furniture, lots of qualified teachers, computers, books and libraries, school buses, playgrounds, and other resources. Today we work together to learn.

Word Bank

Immoral – against the rules of correct conduct
Slaves – a person who is the property of another
Emancipation – the act of freeing someone from bondage, or slavery
Missionaries – Person sent by the church to help others and teach about God
Segregated – separation based on race
Arithmetic – math
Integrated – give all racial, religious, ethnic groups the same opportunities
Teacher Page

Extensions:
- Pin on a map of Camden County the schools listed in the document.
- Write about why school is important.
- Research Marian Anderson and why she is famous.
- Create a time line of the events in the visual essay.
- Team analysis – Assign teams different sections of the essay. Jigsaw with guided questions and report back to class.
- American painter Norman Rockwell created a famous painting in 1964 about that first day. The title is “The Problem We All Live With.”

Student Questions:
What is “The Problem We All Live With?”

Books:
Working Cotton (1997), Sherley Ann Williams
Henry’s Freedom Box (2007), Ellen Levine
Ruth and the Green Book (2010), Calvin Alexander Ramsey
Freedom Summer (2005), Deborah Wiles
Weatherford
The Story of Ruby Bridges (2010), Robert Coles
If a Bus could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks (2003)Faith Ringgold

Resources:
http://abhmuseum.org/education-for-blacks-in-the-jim-crow-south/
http://library.sc.edu/digital/collections/scrosenwald/interviews.html (Rosenwald)


South Mills, Trotman, Camden article - Anne Burgess Jennings, Camden County, NC historian

http://ncgenweb.us/nc/camden/camden-county-schools/

Video: 
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBA2CL1uPCU “Educational Inequalities in SC”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZgnDbSQ4Jo&t=669s Ruby Bridges movie
Many years ago, I worked at a summer camp. One night, a couple of us were sitting and chatting, and one of my friends looked out across the pool deck at some trees. “Do you think those trees will be there in twenty years?” she mused. We all reflected on that for a moment, as contemplative as one can be at eighteen. The trees had been there when I was a seven-year old camper, and they were still there as of just a few years ago when my oldest son attended the summer camp.

With the wisdom of years, I think what my friend was implying is that trees stand as silent sentinels, witnesses to what transpires beneath their limbs in the shade. Many trees live hundreds of years. What do trees bear silent witness to?

The southern live oak can live to be hundreds of years old; some are estimated to be over 1,000. These live oak grow and form a lush canopy, with sweeping limbs that often support Spanish moss. It’s one of the most evocative images of “the Old South” in American pop culture. This “Avenue of Oaks” to 21st century sensibilities is quite charming and beautiful. But to what have these oaks borne witness? They are found on the Coffin Point Plantation, on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. African-American slaves
once worked the cotton fields found at this plantation, and passed beneath these very oak.

This plantation dates from circa 1801, and was built by Bostonian Ebenezer Coffin. At its height, Coffin Point measured 1120 acres, and housed 260 slaves. These slaves cultivated the highly lucrative long-staple sea island cotton.

Shortly after the American Civil War began, the Union Army and Navy reestablished control of much of coastal South Carolina, including Beaufort County, of which St. Helena Island is part. The Coffins would flee the advancing Union forces, essentially abandoning their property, as did all the planters of the region. It is important to note that the property left behind by the Coffins included the aforementioned 260 slaves.

As many as 10,000 slaves were found in the Sea Islands by the end of the Civil War. Many were left behind by their fleeing masters, while others escaped from the mainland to the protection and (presumed) freedom found where Union forces were in control. Just seven months after the Civil War had begun, it was all but over in the Sea Islands. The Coffin Point Plantation would be one of many plantations in this region which would become part of the so-called Port Royal Experiment

The Port Royal Experiment represented the North’s earliest efforts at the reconstruction of the social, economic, and political fabric of the South. The roots laid down in the Sea Islands would be the genesis of the broader Reconstruction the victorious North would impose on the South to varying degrees, at different times, in different places – both after Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, and after the War’s end. There were many stake-holders in the Port Royal Experiment: the Union Army and Navy, the
U.S. Treasury Department (Secretary Salmon P. Chase was an avowed abolitionist), Christian missionaries and other Northern charitable organizations, and most importantly the newly free and freed slaves themselves.

The Union’s armed forces primary objective was to reestablish Federal control in the rebellious southern states. Securing a deep natural harbor and a foothold along the coastline was key to this undertaking, and the Port Royal Sound and Sea Islands near Beaufort, SC, was an ideal region. The military conquest here, at Port Royal, was itself a brief affair, as the Union’s superior numbers, arms, and tactics quickly defeated the Confederates. What was left behind in the Beaufort region “was a political, social and economic vacuum” (Lowe) with the short- and long-term care, legal status, and prospects for thousands of abandoned slaves at its center.

General Thomas W. Sherman was the Union commander at Beaufort. Recognizing the logistic and humanitarian crisis he had on his hands he issued General Orders, No. 9. In this order, Sherman stated: “The helpless condition of the blacks inhabiting the vast area in the occupation of the forces of this command calls for immediate action on the part of a highly favored and philanthropic people.” He would also declare that said philanthropists should: “enable the blacks to support and govern themselves in the absence and abandonment of their disloyal guardians a suitable system of culture and instruction.” This would open the door to Christian missionaries, volunteers, and educators from the North. These missionary efforts would lead to the founding of the Penn School in 1862, the first school in the South with the mission of educating freed slaves.
Education has long been considered society’s “great equalizer.” The functioning and being productive in a civilized society is often a challenge for the illiterate. Now, in the sea islands of South Carolina, slaves who had heretofore been kept illiterate by law were being educated. This important step towards freedom and civic enfranchisement predates Congressional Reconstruction by nearly three years. Author Willie Lee Nichols Rose called the Port Royal Experiment “Rehearsal for Reconstruction.” Other factors and events would occur around the time the Penn School was founded bear this out.

Initially, the logistics of organizing the Port Royal Experiment fell to the Treasury Department. Salmon P. Chase, already a noted abolitionist, saw a great opportunity to begin to reconstruct the South. The Treasury Department was looking for ways to pay for the Civil War, and one way was to harvest the near-ready crop of Sea Island cotton. In order to accomplish this, Chase proposed paying wages to the African-Americans of the Sea Islands. This would serve a dual purpose: raise funds to pay for the war, and change the former slaves into self-sustaining wage earners. Unfortunately this contract labor system did not go far enough in moving from slavery to self-determining agency for the African-Americans of the Sea Islands.
As previously mentioned, the white planters of the Sea Islands fled their plantations. This opened up the door for Chase to both fund the war and move towards abolition through taxes. Property tax would be assessed on all Sea Island properties. All anyone had to do was pay their taxes, and they could keep their land. Needless to say, the plantation owners who had fled the Union forces would not or could not pay. This allowed for the auctioning off of plantations and parcels of land. Systems were put in place so African-Americans could purchase their own parcels and homes, raise their own crops, and provide for their families. The concept of owning and working one’s own land had a deep and powerful impact on the former slaves of the Sea Islands.
One former slave who would take advantage of the ability to own land was Robert Smalls. Smalls was a remarkable man, whose life story epitomizes the progress and shortcomings of emancipation and Reconstruction. He first came to fame as a former slave hired by the Confederacy, when he would commandeer a Confederate steamer, and sail it out of Charleston Harbor, turning it over to the Union Navy. Later in life, he would become a U.S. Congressman, and purchase and live in the home of his one-time owners.

At this juncture, it would be prudent to discuss the legal status of slaves on the Sea Islands. Remember, the Civil War did not start, per se, over the idea of freeing slaves. Rather, it began over conflicts of the right to spread slavery. The U.S. Constitution allowed for slavery, and there were many laws that protected an individual’s property rights. So, what to do with the slaves on the Sea Islands? Were they free? Should they be returned to absent planters? There were no easy answers. Some anti-slavery generals in the Union Army (with support from Salmon Chase) came up with the idea of contrabands, that slaves were part of property seized from insurrectionist civilians as a wartime measure. While this would not be a long-term solution once the war ends, it is (like wage-earning and land-owning) another important step in reconstruction and self-determination for African-Americans.

Union General David Hunter was an abolitionist, and his transfer to the Department of the South (commanding Union control of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina) and his actions here would reverberate deeply. First, on May 9, 1862, he would issue General Orders No. 11, stating “The persons in these three States – Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida – heretofore held as slaves, are therefore declared forever free.” Needless to say, the contrabands of the Sea Islands saw General Orders No. 11 as emancipation.
Lincoln would declare this order null and void ten days later, but issue his own formal Emancipation Proclamation to take effect January 1, 1863. Undeterred by the initial emancipation setback, General Hunter raised a contraband regiment in January of 1863 – that is an unauthorized regiment of African-Americans – which would become the 1st South Carolina Volunteers. (This regiment predates the famed 54th Massachusetts Regiment by almost three months.) Here again, Hunter’s actions were an important step in self-determination and agency for African Americans. The 1st South Carolina would open the doors for the 2nd South Carolina and the Massachusetts 54th. Now, African-Americans were part of the armed military fight for their freedom.

As stated earlier, President Lincoln would issue his formal Emancipation Proclamation effective January 1, 1863. Lost on most Americans is that this did not end slavery in the United States, nor did it actually set any slaves free. It declared an end to slavery in those states in rebellion as a war-powers measure, and the rebellious Confederate states weren’t being governed by Lincoln anyways. Nonetheless, free African-Americans, contrabands, African-American soldiers, and abolitionists alike all rejoiced. One of the first public readings of the Emancipation Proclamation was under a southern live oak in Beaufort, SC at Camp Saxton, home of the 1st South Carolina Volunteers. Nearly 3,000 African-Americans from the Sea Islands gathered in jubilation.
Mitchelville is a place almost lost to history. It was a town established by Union General Ormsby Mitchel in late 1862 on the former Drayton Plantation. First, it was for contrabands, and after Emancipation, freedmen. Due to changing economics, however, Mitchelville was largely abandoned by 1890. The significance of this town trumps its short existence. Here, African-Americans had self-government, electing their own town officials. Taxes were collected, and schooling was made compulsory for children. Here, at Mitchelville, the “what could be” of Emancipation and Reconstruction briefly was a reality. African-Americans were living in a self-governing, self-sustaining community; they were voting and children were going to school. They had rights, freedom, agency, and tilled their own land.

After Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox Court House in 1865, the social and Constitutional status of slaves, contrabands, and most African-Americans was still in question. It would take the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865 to abolish slavery. Now, African-Americans would be known as freedmen and freedwomen. The abolition of slavery, however, would not suffice. It did not grant anyone citizenship, nor did it grant anyone the right to vote, and it offered no protections. Heretofore some African-Americans had been set free, bought land, served in the military, but there was still much to be done so that African Americans would have self-determination and agency.

The Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups began organizing in the South in the waning days of the Civil War. Through terror
and intimidation, they sought to keep the newly freed African-Americans “in their place,” without franchise.

The 14th Amendment would be ratified in 1868. It would clarify citizenship, and make it clear this definition applied to African-Americans. Furthermore, it would guarantee “due process” and “equal protection of the laws” to all citizens, thereby applying the Bill of Rights to the states. The 15th Amendment would be ratified in 1870, and it would confer the right to vote to all male citizens regardless of “…race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Taken together, on paper anyways, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments (often called the Civil War Amendments) sounded like they collectively hit the “reset button” for the nation, and that the United States would be able to move forward, leaving the horrors of slavery, the destruction of the Civil War, and the death associated with both behind it. This was not to be so.

Reconstruction was the period of time in the United States after the Civil War. Politically, it lasted from 1867-1877. During some of this time, the North (particularly the Republicans in Congress), held the South accountable for the Civil War, and enforced the Civil War Amendments across the nation.

New state constitutions across the former Confederacy enfranchised African-Americans, and several states would have multi-racial governments. Dozens of African-Americans would serve in their state legislatures, fifteen would serve various terms in Congress (including Robert Smalls), and two African Americans would represent their states in the U.S. Senate. These political gains, and the accompanying social gains were to be short-lived, however. The recalcitrant and unrepentant South would not go through Reconstruction quietly.

By 1876, the North had fatigue from Reconstruction, and due to compromises made with the contested election of 1876, political
Reconstruction came to an end in 1877. Some see this as a failure of Reconstruction. According to teacher-historian Robert Fenster, the eradid not fail, however, but it was “derailed.” African-Americans never stopped fighting for their rights to the promises of our founding documents. They suffered through the inhumanities of slavery, they fought for their freedom, and they would not be denied “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” It would be a long, continuous, and on-going fight to secure these rights, however.

Through terror, coercion, political slight of hand, and due to lack of federal oversight, white politicians and power brokers across the South began to slowly chip away at the political and social gains of African-Americans and disenfranchise them. The Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 established the “separate but equal” doctrine, thereby allowing segregation and inferior facilities for people of color. George Henry White, of North Carolina, would be the last African-American Congressman just as the Jim Crow Era was ushered in, despite African Americans being the majority in many districts. Countless African-Americans continued the work of freedom and equality through the late 1800s and into the early 1900s. Some, like W.E.B. DuBois, were famous, but no one in power or politics really listened. Others, the unknown, would often struggle to survive, but kept alive their aspirations of realizing the promises of the 14th and 15th Amendments. Despite obstacles, the African-American community kept a premium on education, preparing leaders and lawyers for coming struggles.

Racism and terror, however, were not limited just to the former Confederacy. It ran rampant in the North, as well. Lynchings would continue as a brutal, lingering threat to “keep blacks in their place.” It is estimated that at least, 3,446 lynchings of African-Americans took place in the United States between 1882 and 1968 (NAACP), with many more likely never reported.
Slowly, beginning in the 1920s and 1930s, African-Americans across the country began taking more courageous and bold stands against oppression and segregation. As a people, African-Americans were fed up with their children not having a fair shake at the American Dream. A series of court cases involving school buses, books, and inadequate facilities would culminate with the landmark Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas in 1954. In its unanimous decision, the U.S. Supreme Court Declared:

This far-reaching decision of the Supreme Court, in over-turning Plessy v. Ferguson, repudiated nearly sixty years of case law, state and local laws, and the behavior of much of the American republic. This, however, was still not the end of the disenfranchisement of African-Americans, nor did it bring a speedy end to segregation. America would continue to reconstruct itself throughout the 1950s and into the present:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Montgomery Bus Boycott</td>
<td>1955-56</td>
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<td>Civil Rights Act</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Extended 1960</td>
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<td>Freedom Riders</td>
<td>1961</td>
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<td>Martin Luther King's &quot;I Have a Dream&quot;</td>
<td>1963</td>
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<td>Civil Rights Act</td>
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<td>Montgomery to Selma March</td>
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<td>Fair Housing Act</td>
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<td>Civil Rights Restoration Act</td>
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<td>Civil Rights Act</td>
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As of May 2017, the Brennan Center for Justice cited eight states with “recent litigation victories” and three more states with pending litigation that represent “challenges to restrictive [voting rights] laws.”

Clearly, the promises of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments from Reconstruction have not been delivered upon. That said, America continues
to reconstruct itself to this very day. No, Reconstruction did not end, and it did not fail. It is an ongoing struggle to ensure the promise of “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” for all Americans, regardless of race, creed, or gender. Once the court cases have ended, and after racism and prejudice have been put to a final rest, only then will Reconstruction have ended.

Post-script: This large southern live oak stands at the Mitchelville site. Based on its size, it stood when the site was the Drayton Plantation, and slaves worked the fields. This same tree was there when the freedmen exercised the right to vote and their children attended tax-funded compulsory education. Reflect back on the symbolism of trees, and for all the history that passes beneath their boughs. Listen to the wind that rustles through the leaves. Really listen. It’s the sound of history speaking to us. It asks us what of our present will become history for our children that we will look back on with pride?

Bibliography


The Black Eagle: Change Agent of the Slavery Mindset

Reginald Grigsby

The narrative of Reconstruction is complex and multifaceted. History has been extremely selective and exclusive in its depiction of freedmen and freed women during this era. African Americans were identified as children, helpless, and unable to function without the immediate supervised intervention of whites. At the onset of the Civil War, enslaved Africans were considered to be 3/5 of a person, chattel property, without any rights, and rendered ignorant by a system which made it illegal for them to be taught to read or write. This same exploitative system which deprived the formerly enslaved the ability to be independent, therefore rendering them inferior by the social construct of white supremacy. It also assisted in perpetuating an ideology that blacks were expected to serve whites. The image below depicts the day to day life of African American women pre/post antebellum south. These women labored as caregivers, maids, field hands, “bed warmers”, and cooks. This required sacrifice which took them away from being able to raise their own children. This African American woman is smiling, however, does her smile mask deeper internal feelings? The fact that she is taking care of the this image speaks to African American women. This image supports the mindset that blacks were to serve whites in all aspect of life. Does her slight smile suggest that she is content and happy within her current place in society? Or rather, does it simply imply that she enjoys taking care of the child and being a surrogate parent. The woman is holding the child in a caring and compassionate manner. This implies that she truly cares for the child. This portrait supports the ideology that African Americans are to serve whites. The larger establishment continued to perpetuate this mindset through intimidation and laws during slavery and after with the short lived government sanctioned Reconstruction. George Washington Murray was a change agent who believed the biggest obstacle for the newly freedmen and freed women was to remove the psychological bondage from which had become their reality for centuries during enslavement. He believed that the newly freed men and women had a struggle with the concept of freedom. George Washington Murray believed this was the most imperative obstacle for African Americans to overcome in their endeavor to achieve the true definition of freedom.
Born enslaved, George Washington Murray was taught how to read and write even though it was illegal. He was a farmer, teacher, inventor, land developer, as well as a federal customs agent. Later, he would become the only African American member of the United States Congress from 1893-1897. Mr Murray was highly respected, and was even identified as “the most intellectual negro in Sumter County” by a newspaper in 1893. George Washington Murray was a trailblazer. He was a crusader for Black equality: politically, economically, and socially. Murray would be given the nickname “The Black Eagle”, for this resemblance to the characteristics of a black eagle, dark in color, size, fearless demeanor, boldness and command of respect from others in nature. In this photograph, Murray is impeccably dressed, which demonstrates his ability to fit into the new places freedom would take him. He is seated upright, with almost a stoic face. He believed that African Americans had to free themselves from the harsh ramifications of centuries of legalized oppression. As a result, Murray appealed to the formerly enslaved to obtain an education, purchase land, and to become active in the political process. George Washington Murray was a political activist, who challenged black voter suppression in South Carolina and would be the last African American to hold a federal office from South Carolina until 1993.
South Carolina is ironically the birthplace of Reconstruction, with the implementation of the Port Royal Experiment, The Freedmens Bureau, and the hope of a new way of life for the formerly enslaved. George Washington Murray was a change agent and trailblazer who believed that African Americans had to become self sufficient in order to truly attain freedom. The first attempt to provide formal education for the freedmen and freed women came through the establishment of The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in Beaufort South Carolina, at Beaufort, South Carolina.
The Prevalence of White Supremacy in Reconstruction

John Hagan

On February 19th, 1866 President Johnson vetoed the original Freedmen’s Bureau Bill. Congress was able later to pass a new, watered down version that garnered enough, just enough votes to override a 2nd veto. In his message to Congress, in the 6th paragraph, he writes, “The Congress of the United States… has never deemed itself authorized to expend the public money…for one class or color of our people more than for another.”

Johnson’s rhetoric that the Freedmen’s Bureau was created to favor formerly enslaved African-Americans over everyone else became a consistent part of Democratic critiques of the Congressional Reconstruction being imposed by the so-called “Radical Republicans.” It also appeared liberally throughout the popular press at the time. It is through political cartoons from the Reconstruction Era that Johnson’s argument was probably understood by the general public. Through analyzing several of these images, contemporary students can understand how white supremacy provided the ideological fuel for Johnson’s veto against the Freedmen’s Bureau and Radical Reconstruction.

One such image to examine is the below print from 1866, entitled “The Freedman’s Bureau: An Agency to Keep the Negro in Idleness at the Expense of the White Man.”

In explicitly linking Congress to the welfare of “the negro” and the president to “the white man” this print sought to mobilize whiter voters to get
to the polls in 1866 and give President Johnson a Democratic majority, or a strong enough minority to effectively prevent Radical Republicans from controlling Reconstruction. Though ultimately unsuccessful in 1866, this messaging did eventually gain traction.

Within this cartoon, the most obvious attempt to mobilize white supremacy to block Radical Reconstruction is the caricature of the lazy, smiling, oafish looking African American laying down, resting, as white labors toil, while thinking, “Whar is de use for me to work as long as dey make dese appropriations?” The activation of this belief in the laziness of African-Americans is made even more potent by other aspects of the cartoon. All throughout the cartoon, the costs of the Freedmen’s Bureau are shown to great effect. In It includes the almost $7 million appropriated by Congress in July 1866 alone, and estimates of how much it will cost for the whole year. More in line with Johnson’s charge of the Freedmen’s Bureau favoring one race over the other, it is written that each negro soldier gets a $300 bounty for 2 years of service, while white soldiers got a $100 bounty for 3 years of service. In other words, the Freedmen’s Bureau is spending public money to favor black people over white people.

The final details that tie together the white supremacist ideas of this image are the words written on the capital building in the background. On the top middle of the building are the words “freedom and no work.” On columns towards both left and right, we see words describing different kind of foods and alcoholic beverages (rum, gin, candy, pies, stews, etc). On columns towards the middle we see the words indolence, apathy and idleness. And in between column in the middle of the building we see the words “white women” and “white sugar.”

This image, then, encapsulated almost the entire white supremacist argument against the Freedmen’s Bureau, and by extension radical reconstruction. The Republican Congress, according to this print, has favored black people over white people, and has spent too much money to give freedmen unfair benefits and rewards without requiring them to work. With this newfound freedom, and no requirement to work, idle African-American men have time to pursue their ultimate objective: white women. This danger to their women (and by extension their entire system of social values) could not be permitted.
Another expression of these beliefs can be found in the above cartoon. It originally appeared in Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper on October 6th, 1866. The magazine was a strongly patriotic, unionist newspaper not known to have sympathy for the South. The caption on the bottom of the cartoon, “The popular idea of the Freedmen’s Bureau—plenty to eat and nothing to do” implies that the perspective of the carton was not the perspective of the newspaper. Instead, it makes the (justified) claim that many people North and South believed the cartoon’s perspective on the Freedmen’s Bureau. There is less going on in this cartoon than in the first. However, it still illustrates the stereotypical image of freedmen—lazy, happily playing music, enjoying food on the public’s dime under the auspices of the Freedmen’s Bureau. It of course contains the exaggerated facial features known to be associated with African-Americans, then and now.
A key part of the Southern Democratic criticism of the Freedmen’s Bureau, and Radical Reconstruction more generally, is the prevalence of corruption. The image above, a print from Michigan in 1868, has books titled with controversial actions and alleged scandals of the Radical Republicans during Reconstruction. However, perhaps more telling is that the bookshelf is being held up on the backs of men on their hands and knees, each one identified with a state: Maine, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan. All of those are Northern states who fought with the Union during the Civil War. The implication is that the Freedmen’s Bureau was being paid for and perpetuated on the backs of hard-working (presumably white) Americans living in those states.

Analyzing these political cartoons requires thinking about what they leave out as well as what they include. All 3 cartoons contain imagery that is meant to show that hard-working white Americans were being asked to subsidize the idleness and lazy lifestyles of newly freed people. What they leave out is that, for literally hundreds of years, it was the labor of enslaved people that subsidized the wealth of not just individual slave-holders (which it obviously did) but the entire country. The American economy would not have been nearly as prosperous, and the country would not have been nearly as powerful, without that exploitation. An entire region of the country literally seceded to protect its economic way of life, based off the exploitation of enslaved people. So, even if the Freedmen’s Bureau was simply subsidizing the lives of formerly enslaved folks, there is a case to be made that this was just. However, that case does not have to be made, because unlike the implications of this cartoon, the Freedmen’s Bureau did nothing of the sort. It provided schooling, land, and help for freedmen to start to make lives for themselves. The lives of freed people were not full of idleness and indolence. They worked, and worked hard, for their piece of the American dream. These images also leave out the fact that both races, white and black, benefitted from the Freedmen’s Bureau and Radical Reconstruction. For example, the first public school system in South Carolina came from the Reconstruction government.

By focusing on the corruption of Radical Reconstruction and the Freedmen’s Bureau, Southern Democrats left out the corruption of their own attempts to redeem their states. Democratically elected governments in many Southern states were overthrown by force, using means that might be labeled terrorism. They also left out that black voters were systematically disenfranchised. By focusing on one kind of corruption and not (arguably) a much worse kind of corruption, the authors and publishers of these cartoons, or at least the people that made up their audience were exposing their own prejudices.

A good place to end is to return to the beginning. In his veto message of the original Freedmen’s Bureau bill, Johnson said it favored one race over
another. Harper’s Weekly, a pro-Republican and anti-slavery publication, ridiculed him and others who believed the same thing in the last cartoon to be considered, below, from 1865.

In this image, we see an African-American going to work under the supervision of a wealthy white family. It could easily be an image of slavery, but instead it’s one of early emancipation after the war. In the photo, the white man says, “My boy, we’ve toiled and taken care of you long enough—now you’ve got to work!” To state the obvious, during slavery white people didn’t toil or take care of African-Americans. But on a deeper level, this cartoon (perhaps unintentionally) criticizes Johnson in a different way: Johnson, by not wanting to favor one class of people over another, was doing exactly that.

Hundreds of years of enslavement left freed people in a vulnerable condition. It is not enough to simply say, “Slavery is over. Make your own way.” At least, not at first. This cartoon depicts what many said would happen, and what did actually happen: without land, and without help, freedmen were often at the mercy of the very same people who seceded to enslave them. The tragedy of Reconstruction was that, by the end of it, slavery had been replaced with something only marginally better than slavery. White people once again, as depicted in this last picture, were once again enriching themselves and the country of the labor of African-
Americans, who, though technically “free,” weren’t really in the economic sense free.

These four cartoons, in short, all demonstrate the prevalence of white supremacy during this period. During the Reconstruction period, you couldn’t advance the argument that African-Americans are lazy, that they are dependent on the government, that they take advantage of said government, that government programs designed to help them are corrupt and too expensive, and that those programs were unfair and discriminatory, unless you had a background assumption of white supremacy. If you made those arguments, and used images like the ones above to support you, what you were really saying is this: 1) there should be no redress for hundreds of years of enslavement 2) economic concerns matter more than fairness and justice, and 3) the evils of (alleged) corruption justify abandoning people who have been enslaved and exploited. In other words, and in contemporary language, black lives didn’t matter, not enough to do anything.
Powerlessness and Power

Amber Hastings

“Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation, are people who want crops without ploughing the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning; they want the ocean without the roar of its many waters. The struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both. But it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.” Frederick Douglass – 1857.

The history of America can easily be taught by simply taking a look at those who have power and those who do not. Although many people choose a different lens through which to study or learn history, the lens that may give learners the best understanding of the actual history of this place is by examining the people who have been freely given and who have fought for power. In particular, the history of America’s Reconstruction after the Civil War is a story of powerlessness and power. The concept of the American Dream has three basic spokes: the land of opportunity, faith in progress, and the power of the individual. All three of these spokes must combine together to create the basic ideals of the American Dream. However, America’s Reconstruction is a story of individuals who had no power but who fought for their rights, all the while proving that individuals who struggle to progress forward end up creating their own power source.

After fighting for their own freedom from slavery in the Civil War, African-Americans faced, in essence, a second Civil War in Reconstruction. They had been emancipated in 1863, and the Union had won the war in 1865. African-Americans had their “freedom” on paper, however, they had no homes, no jobs, and no ways of living beyond what they had known for generations in slavery. Between 1865 and 1870, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were included in the Constitution. African-Americans were “free” and had rights, but their lives did not reflect freedom or those rights. White supremacy still reigned.
For all intents and purposes, African-Americans were left powerless by a government that had allowed them to remain in slavery for generations and that was continuing to treat these “free” people as mere objects. The Black Codes were created to keep African-Americans from getting the idea that they had any rights whatsoever. These people had been promised freedom and liberty and equality, and they had none of it. They had been given a brief taste of freedom with the Jubilee of Union victory, and it was quickly ripped away from them. They had been promised 40 acres of land to work as their own by General Sherman. The land was redistributed to white people as quickly as it was promised to African-American people. White Americans continued to oppress African-Americans by any means necessary. The formation of the Ku Klux Klan came about during Reconstruction, and white supremacy was generally accepted by Americans as a whole. African-Americans were given voting rights, but they were nearly always manipulated by a corrupt system for their votes.
White voters would do anything they could to keep African-American voters from the polls. In terms of numbers, the African-American voters would greatly outweigh the white voters. Whites understood that with the passing of voting rights to African-American men (women would not be included until 1919), white voters would no longer be in the majority. Essentially, the power was shifting. But, most white Americans resisted that power shift with everything they had. Not only were African-American voters kept from voting by ridiculous voter suppression laws, they were also manipulated by whites who threatened violence and terror upon them. Because ballot boxes were not kept secret, white men could quite literally and figuratively hold a gun to an African-American man’s head to get him to vote the “correct” way.
African-Americans as a whole were in an utterly powerless position for hundreds of years. In disgusting acts of violence and terror, power was taken from African-Americans by white Americans who had done nothing to deserve the power they were freely given. As Douglass said, “Power concedes nothing without a demand.” African-Americans were not necessarily seeking power per se, but they were seeking rights and freedom and equality and justice. In gaining rights, they gained power. The system that was in place was designed to keep power from African-Americans, however, individual people during Reconstruction fought to change the control of power. Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Robert Smalls are just three names that represent hundreds of individuals who fought quietly and loudly for African-American rights. Despite some individuals being manipulated by force to vote a particular way, the strength in numbers created an interesting shift in how African-American individuals were perceived by whites. Because the numbers were in African-Americans’ favor, the vote being in their hands was extremely dangerous to the whites.
The idea that African-American men had power was terrifying to white voters and to the government as a whole. African-Americans could easily be victims, but they could also find strength and power in themselves and overcome the white minority, especially at the voting poll. Of course, some individuals were overpowered and their votes were tampered with by whites. However, before too long, African-Americans began to vote in favor of African-American leaders. There is great power in large numbers; when voters began to come together, those who once seemingly had no power began to gain power, if only little by little.

Many African-Americans were voted into positions of authority and respect, although the number of African-American political figures did not match the actual population. The fact that African-Americans were now being represented by their peers did much to promote movement towards actual civil rights.
Although, America’s Reconstruction is perhaps still ongoing in a lot of ways, through the power of individuals, we have seen much progress. Watching the news each night is proof that race relations are still an issue in our country. As historians uncover more and more of the stories of Reconstruction, we now know that these people did not sit idly by in their governmentally forced powerlessness. They worked to provide for their families and loved ones.

They toiled and shed much blood on Civil War battlefields. In overcoming the powerlessness that was forced upon them, they declared that they were worth fighting for. They created their own power when everything was stacked against them. We now know that the power had been in the hands of individuals all along.

Image #1 - Thomas Nast. "The Union as it was / The Lost Cause, worse than slavery." Harper's Weekly, October 24, 1874. Prints

Image #2 - Thomas Nast, “This is a white man’s government,” Harper’s Weekly, September 5, 1868. Cartoon.

Image #3 – “Of Course He Wants to Vote the DEMOCRATIC ticket!” Harper’s Weekly, October 21, 1876. Cartoon.

Image #5 – Hiram Rhoades Revels, Afro-American senator, three-quarter length portrait, seated by small table, facing right, c. 1870. Photo.

Image #6 - *Planting sweet potatoes, Edisto Island, South Carolina*, c. 1862. Photo.
“Freedom Will Be Theirs By the Sword”: Freedom Claims and Black Military Service during the Civil War and Reconstruction

Julia Konrad

In the Butler Medal, distributed by General Butler in 1865 to his black soldiers, the Latin inscription reads, “Ferro Iis Libertas Perveniet,” Freedom Will Be Theirs By the Sword. While generals would often give medals as parting tokens, the inscription here raises a crucial question in American history: what does freedom entail and who will have the power to define it?

Between President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the end of the Civil War, roughly 200,000 African Americans served in the U.S. Army and Navy. Their service presented a challenge to the prevailing racism of the time, codified in both federal and state law,
enshrined in local custom, and sustained in newspapers and political cartoons. Over the course of the war, the service of black men and women on the frontline presented an opportunity for white and black Americans to contest definitions of black freedom. Some artists used images of military service to advance arguments of economic, political or social rights for black Americans. Despite these images of black freedom, in 1883 the Supreme Court ruled the Civil Rights Bill of 1875 to be unconstitutional, inflicting a devastating challenge to freedom that would not be overcome for a century.

Before the Civil War, state laws like those of South Carolina codified a system of slavery that included a racial hierarchy and defined enslaved people as chattel property. In the South Carolina slave code of 1712, the legislature set forth a series of prohibitive statutes justified by the rationale that “[N]egroes and other slaves...are of barbarous, wild, savage natures.” Nearly thirty years later, the South Carolina slave code of 1740 inscribed slavery into positive law: “all Negroes and Indians...to be chattels personal, in the hands of their owners and possessors.” Nearly a century later, a South Carolina legislator, John C. Calhoun, justified enslavement through an argument of “public good,” claiming that through slavery, “the black race of Central Africa...attained a condition so civilized and so improved, not only physically, but morally and intellectually” (John C. Calhoun, “The ‘Positive Good’ of Slavery”, 1837).

In the face of this white supremacy, black leaders sought to recruit black soldiers to demonstrate the equal humanity of black Americans. In a broadside to “Men of Color,” Frederick Douglass urged black men to enlist for three years of service, “for yourselves and your liberty, by all your regard for God and humanity, by all your desire for Citizenship and Equality before the law” (Douglass, 1863). Douglass, like others of his time, saw military service as an opportunity for black men to prove their manhood to white America. His rhetoric reveals the meaning of manhood at the time of Civil War, marked by a willingness to die in order to serve national interests.
During their service, black soldiers sought ways to demonstrate their humanity to a society overwhelmed with racist ideology. Susie King Taylor traveled with the Thirty-Third South Carolina USCT. She, along with most of the troops in the Thirty-Third, was enslaved before the war. When the government offered black soldiers half the pay of their white counterparts, the Thirty-Third refused their salaries. She remembers, “They wanted ‘full pay’ or nothing” (Taylor, 1902). Black soldiers knew that their enlistment would serve as a powerful negotiating factor for economic rights. Charlotte Forten, a black schoolteacher in the South, saw the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment off before their attack on Fort Wagner. In her journal, she wrote of the honor they engendered through their service “that they should prove themselves to an unbelieving world as brave soldiers as though their
skins were white” (Forten, 1864). Unlike white soldiers, the Fifty-Fourth had to prove their humanity through their willingness to die. During the uphill assault at Fort Wagner, many did. With this sacrifice, they “have shown that true manhood has no limitations of color” (Forten, 1864). Military service provided an opportunity for black soldiers to participate in the construction of manhood at the time as one of armed power and manly sacrifice.

As the war wound down, black leaders referenced this military service in negotiations for their freedom. In doing so, they defined a construction of freedom that shaped and continues to define our American ideals. When General Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton sought a strategy for resettling newly emancipated families, they met with twenty African American leaders. These men directly linked their vision of freedom, one of land rights, to their past and future service in the Union forces. The New York Daily Tribune reported their request, “The way we can best take care of ourselves is to have land…and to assist the Government, the young men should enlist in the service of the Government” (New York Daily Tribune, 1865). Four days after the meeting, General Sherman issued his famous Field Order 15, redistributing roughly 400,00 acres to 18,00 freed men and women.

Thomas Nast published the above set of drawings in *Harper's Weekly* in 1865. As the nation debated how to reconstruct the United States after rebellion, the question of suffrage loomed large for both Confederate and black soldiers. This drawing was published soon after the war’s conclusion during the period known as Presidential Reconstruction. While Congress was not in session, President Johnson set in motion his own vision for readmitting Southern states. President Johnson pardoned nearly all Confederate soldiers and imposed little restriction on the new state legislatures. Southern legislatures passed state Black Codes to severely limit the legal, economic, and social rights of newly freed people. In the panel on the right, Nast depicts a black veteran, appealing to a sympathetic audience in his Union uniform. The soldier, like so many Americans by 1865, has suffered during the war; he appears with an amputated leg and on crutches. Nast juxtaposes this panel with a group of Confederate officers, who kneel at Columbia’s feet as she looks on with exasperation. The caption of the paired images reads, “Shall I trust these men, and not this man?” With this title, Nast appeals to critics of President Johnson, while also asserting the humanity of the black soldier. In his use of parallel language (“men” and “man”) to describe each panel, Nast affirms the manhood of the black soldier and elevates him to a status of equality with the Confederate officers.

In Alfred Waud’s “Mustered Out,” Waud depicts a homecoming between black soldiers and their families. The central scenes are family reunions, where wives embrace husbands, children reach for fathers, and young men return with dignity and honor. Clearly visible are the men’s guns. The honor and power that their Union service afforded has returned home. One white man sits atop a horse, surveying the scene. Waud’s drawing reflects an optimism that freedom for black soldiers will include more than the end of slavery alone. Established in 1865, the Freedmen’s Bureau served as a federal agency to address the needs and aspirations of freed people and refugees following the end of slavery and the war. The Bureau legalized marriages between newly freed men and women, while parents and siblings employed the Bureau to seek out family members torn apart by the slave trade. In 1866, the promise of freedom included the reunification and protection of black families.

Within eight years, the Radical Reconstruction of the Republican Party faced fierce resistance from Democrats and Southerners alike. When Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts proposed a Civil Rights Bill before the Senate in 1874, Southern segregationists vehemently opposed its passage. In the illustrated newspapers, cartoons like the one above, “Colored rule in a reconstructed (?) state,” showed black representatives as animal-like figures, who had brought chaos to Congress. This cartoon, like many others of the period, hearkened back to the early slave codes, where enslaved people were defined as barbarians and savages. These caricatures obscured the political agency of black people during Reconstruction to define their own freedom, as black congressmen defended a bill that would prohibit segregation. After hearing from Alexander Stephens, a staunch defender of white supremacy and the former vice president of the Confederacy, Robert Brown Elliott argued for the bill with an invocation of black military service. He said, “I have the honor to represent—the race which...flew willingly and gallantly to the support of the national Government.” He calls upon Congress to recognize the bravery of black soldiers and urges that their service might “incline you to respect and guarantee their rights and privileges as citizens.” As with the Nast cartoon of 1865, Elliott juxtaposes the “subordinate place” black soldiers face “after the battle,” as it seems “the enemies in war may be preferred to the sufferers.” Despite the depictions of black congressmen as unruly or savage, black men like Elliott insisted upon a definition of freedom that included social equality. While the bill did pass in 1875, the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional in 1883. The struggle to protect freedom would continue.

Sources:

Dr. Morris, p. 45: “An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and Slaves (1712)

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Susie King Taylor Remembers the Third-third USCT (1902)

New York Daily Tribune, February 13, 1865 – Colloquy of General Sherman, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and twenty African American leaders


History is Written by the Victors?:
Understanding the Stereotypes of Reconstruction.

Richard Lavoie

Winston Churchill is often attributed with the claim that history is written by the victors. As one of the “victors” of the Second World War, then, it was beholden on him to help write the history of that war, its successes and its failures. World War Two was an amazingly complex world event. It encompasses not just the war, but the struggle of millions of people who were brutally oppressed by their own governments. In many American high schools, World War Two is not taught in isolation, but it is taught in conjunction with the stories of those oppressed. It has become part of the narrative of the war. World War Two and the Holocaust are connected in time and in story. The liberation of the Concentration Camps was a military action that freed millions from bondage, starvation, and death. In the story that followed, the heroes of the war and the liberated survivors both were able to share their stories and fold them into the collective memory. This seems to follow suit in other complex world events. There is a hero, a victim, and an enemy. This simplistic structure allows us to understand multiple narratives of complex events when we are confronted with them in history.

The story of America’s Civil War and its Reconstruction, however, does not fit this model. For some reason, the traditional archetype is lost. When examining the Civil War, one finds that the words used, the ideas expressed, and ultimately the story as a whole has taken a strange turn. How we teach this time period, and ultimately how we understand it, is based on a combined view of northern political perspectives and moderately romantic views of a chivalric south. Recently, faint sounds of the African American success stories have begun to emerge, but many times, those are tempered with rhetoric from generations of students who never learned the complexity of the times and our failures to come to terms with prevalent racial divides. Reconstruction, as taught in many American curricula, is destined to fail. In a school district with a two year American history path, Reconstruction comes at the very end of the first course. Often times, teachers struggle with the depth and breadth of the vast curriculum of that course and barely cover this important topic. Those that do make it through the Civil War and into Reconstruction are up against tremendous odds.

The mainstream vocabulary of the Reconstruction period doesn’t help our students understand some of the most important aspects of these times. The words we use matter. The words we use to teach the past can
matter even more. The Reconstruction vocabulary sets up a false dynamic. The terminology reflects southern perceptions of many of the movements that came about during the Civil War and lasted through the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. The use of these terms predetermines many of the views our students have of Reconstruction. Their opportunity to discover the successes from within that time period are limited. There is even a strong argument that these arcane viewpoints of Reconstruction, determined by the words of Confederates are present, and possibly stronger, today than in our past. Our words matter and if history is written by the victor, perhaps something else was at stake when the victor wrote this history.

The origin of words can be difficult to determine without proper documentation and it is tough not to rely on apocryphal etymology when no clear documentation exists. However, there are classic examples of words used during the Civil War, terms that originated at that time and are still used in our modern vernacular. Many of these words carry with them a pejorative meaning when referencing those who supported the Union, Republicans, and Reconstruction. As a contrast, words examining the Confederacy’s history have taken on idyllic qualities of virtue and patriotism.

The words alone, however, were probably not strong enough to become part of our nomenclature. Images from the past added some meat to the bones of these words and have helped lead to a misunderstanding of the past; skewed by political and racial means to derail the advancement of African Americans during this period. Hopefully, new scholarship is beginning to shed light on this time period and the advancement of African Americans, both free and formerly enslaved, will become part of the mainstream version of the Reconstruction story.

In today’s society, words pop into the social construct and fade away on a regular basis. These memes have become part of our daily lives, but they’ve existed for many years before. After a series of workplace violent attacks concerning United States Postal workers it become common to hear someone say an upset person was “going postal.” This phrase, common in the later 1980s and early 1990s, has almost completely disappeared from the lexicon of the American teen. Memes that stick around, however, can leave a much stronger mark on society. How many times has someone expressed that they did not want to be “gypped” without realizing that it originated as a derogatory term concerning gypsies?

It is easy to look back into the Civil War and Reconstruction periods and find word origins that have stuck with us for over 150 years. One of the classic examples is the word sideburns. This term is based on the facial hair of General Ambrose Burnside. The story goes that Burnsides did everything backwards and his men began derailing him as General Sideburns. The terminology of the war that has stuck around and become part of our commonly used words and phrases today often contain persuasive meanings.
Even “sideburns” could be used to show the ineptitude of a Union General. There is another, probably apocryphal origin to the word “Hooker” connected to General Joseph Hooker and his supposed propensity to allow prostitutes to work in his camps providing services to his soldiers. These two words permanently demonized these two generals. Imagine if there were an alternate meaning to the word “Picket” that meant foolishly committing yourself to something without a chance of success.

Reconstruction is not different from the Civil War. There are numerous words used today, supported by images, that construct a view of that period that does not match the story that should be told. The origins of this phenomena may lay in a book by Edward Pollard entitled, “Lost Cause.” The concept of a morale victory is not new, but in the aftermath of the Civil War, the former Confederacy seemingly adapted this viewpoint for their lost cause. Before the war, Secessionists claimed they were preserving the institution of slavery and that their honor and bravery would prevail. After the war, when they had been defeated and slavery had ended, their memories changed. Numerous Confederate leaders, including Robert E. Lee, Jubal Early, and Jefferson Davis wrote about the glorious Antebellum South, the benefits of slavery, and the unfair disadvantage placed upon them by the industrialized northern force. Their words lasted into history while the words of other southerners, ones advocating a different viewpoint, dissipated into history until recently. Pushing this idea forward, into the minds of many Americans, were the numerous images put forth commemorating the bravery of Confederate soldiers and military leaders. Hundreds of monuments supported by the ladies of the Confederacy were commissioned in the south.

Another common feature found throughout the former confederacy were commemoration plaques. These plaques would hang in the homes of white southerners and would pay homage to those who served the cause. A common feature among these plaques would be portraits of Confederate leaders such as Lee, Davis, and Jackson. There can also be references to other commanders such as Johnson and Beauregard. The example provided here contains other images, including the conquest of Fort Sumter and a recreation of the Virginia state seal, with the words “sic semper Tyrannis” above the goddess of virtue who has conquered over tyranny. The plaque is encircled by copies of Confederate currency and included in this wreath of wealth there is a poem detailing how poor Confederate men marched off to fight for their way of life. The poem indicates that the southern currency was not worth much, because of economic factors outside of their control, but that those in grey didn’t fight for money. The poem encourages them to show these pieces of history to all so that their glorious sacrifices would live on in memory. The words of this poem were originally, according to some stories, written on the back of an unfinished Confederate $500 dollar bill.
The notoriety of the bill, the poem, and lost cause of the Confederacy were even showcased in the movie “Gone With The Wind.”

In order to make the “Lost Cause” argument stick, its supporters needed to forget about the “necessary evils” of slavery and turn popular opinion against those who advocated political equality for the recently freed African Americans of the south. The coalition usually includes three main groups. The first, obviously, are the African Americans, both recently freed and those born free, who took leadership roles in Reconstruction. The next group would include white Southerners who had decided to cooperate in the political, social, and economic changes impacting their world. Those northerners who traveled into the South, for a variety of reasons, after the war made up the remaining faction of the coalition. This triumvirate of freedom was making significant gains in the South and they were transforming the nation into one where political and economic equality would bring about social changes too. The “Lost Cause” supporters aimed to discredit all three factions. A particular incident in this process can be found while examining the Battle of Liberty Place in New Orleans, Louisiana in September of 1874.

For the African Americans, Democrats and former Confederates resorted to white supremacist arguments. They pushed forward social stereotypes that still exist today. They drew cartoons, wrote stories, and painted vivid pictures of a group of people who could not govern themselves and needed the helping hand of a white man; a white southern man who
knew how to control their population. The other group of white southerners, those working to create a new birth of freedom, had to be demonized. Collectively, they became known as scalawags. Prior to the war, the term was used for useless animals on the farm. Now, it was applied to Southerners who supported the Union during the war, those who lived in the south but disliked slavery, or those who began working with the Republicans at the war’s conclusion. Regardless, the Scalawags must be traitors to the lost cause. Their efforts during the war, and during Reconstruction, were a violation of the moral causes which led Southerners to proclaim their separation (both from the nation and from the races of men). General James P. Longstreet, who during Reconstruction was working with President Grant, and the Republican Governor of Louisiana, to repel the White League from trying to illegally take control of the state legislature. In the Battle of Liberty Place, as it became known, Longstreet commanded a militia that was partially composed of African American troops. As the struggle ensued, the Federal army needed to come in and relieve Longstreet’s beleaguered forces. He had once been General Lee’s “old warhorse” but now Longstreet was a traitor to the true south. He had his loyalty oath refused by President Johnson at the end of the war, being told that his was one of three that would never be granted (Davis and Lee were the other two), but now was being called the “local leper of the community” by his former friend Harvey Hill. If Confederate pride could turn on Longstreet, imagine the repercussion it could have on the unnamed hundreds (potentially thousands) of Southerners. The image from Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper on January 23, 1875 provides a false representation of the historical event. In this image, Uncle Sam stands up to US Grant. He chastises the President for his corruption and claims Grant wants all of the power in his hand. Uncle Sam is clearly represented as the hero in this depiction. There are no references to Longstreet or the African American troops who stood in defense of the elected legislature. If Longstreet were present in the image, then perhaps some southerners would realize that they too could support the efforts of Republicans. If the African American troops were depicted, then perhaps their efforts would be recognized by white northerners who were being inundated with stereotypical depictions of helpless souls. To commemorate the event, in history, a monument was built in 1891. Later, in 1932, the inscription above was added. It reads, “United States troops took over the state government and reinstated the usurpers but the national election November 1876 recognized white supremacy in the south and gave us our state.” Once again, the words matter. There are no references to Longstreet in this part of the memorial. His efforts, as a resident of the city and hero of the Confederacy, are ignored. The message calls federal troops usurpers; tying in the allusion of Grant as an autocratic tyrant. It also neglects the role of African Americans in preserving the state government completely and
makes the counter argument that white supremacy was recognized in the south by a national election. The depiction here is clear. The uprising in the city of New Orleans was a result of tyrannical measures within the Republican Party and loyal Democratic Americans fought patriotically to restore order in the south and their state. The “Lost Cause” argument personified. Those usurpers, the northerners who came to New Orleans, also garnished a nickname during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods. They were called carpetbaggers. In the eyes of the former Confederates, their sons and daughters, these people were opportunistic, greedy, and self-serving. The carpetbaggers moved south as early as they could. Their goals were to take advantage of a war-torn south. Sure, that is true to some extent. Some northerners purposely moved south to acquire land, to speculate, to turn a profit; but many came for other reasons. Some came to educate. Others came to provide aid to the recently freed man and woman. The intentions of the carpetbaggers were wide and varied, but regardless of ones’ own motivation, the defenders of the “Lost Cause” wanted them gone.

Violence and intimidation were the first methods used to scare these reformers away. The White Leagues, the KKK, and other paramilitary organizations made it difficult for freedmen to participate freely in government. With their efforts limited, it became increasingly more difficult for white Republicans to participate too. The combined efforts of Freedmen, Scalawags, and Carpetbaggers was losing ground to the white supremacists in New Orleans, in Louisiana, and in the former Confederacy. The rise of these paramilitary organizations, and the failure to fully suppress them by Federal forces, lent credibility to the Lost Cause point of view. The heroic knightly Confederate soldier was paying back those who had inflicted harm on his beloved southland. More and more pressure led more and more
people to begin supporting Democratic candidates and policies. This occurred within the south, but also within the nation. It was only a matter of times that the political implications would be felt. In 1877, Rutherford B. Hayes became President of the United States. Because of disputed election results in Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana, a deal was made that would provide Hayes with the presidency in exchange for the end of Republican reconstruction in the former confederacy. This left power vacuums in many areas of the south including Louisiana. As depicted in this image from an 1877 issue of Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, S. B. Packard from Maine is boarding a train. The sign on the side of the car reads, “All Aboard!! Carpetbaggers are especially requested to avail themselves of this rare opportunity.” The conductor of this train is Rutherford B. Hayes. Packard, at the time, was in a dispute in Louisiana over the position of Governor of the state. The removal of Federal troops, and Reconstruction policies, signaled his defeat. As he boards the train, Daniel Chamberlain awaits him. Chamberlain was in a similar spot to Packard. He had just “lost” his seat at the head of South Carolina’s executive branch to Wade Hampton, a former Confederate General. The conclusion of the Hayes-Tilden election not only saw the end of Republican Reconstruction policies in the south, but it saw the installation of Hampton and Francis Nicholls as Governors of their respective states. Both of these men had served as generals for the Confederacy and now were proving that the “lost cause” might not have been lost at all.

The scalawags were beginning to move north or assimilate into the new southern culture. The violence they faced made many of them comply
with Democratic policies and politicians. Many carpetbaggers, too, moved away from the south. They too succumbed to pressures and moved for safety. The opportunity for African Americans to move was not as prevalent. Racism existed in all of the American states and Democratic policymakers were getting elected in Northern elections too. Many African Americans were impoverished and whatever successes they had had in the early days of Reconstruction were being crushed by those in charge. The only real outlet for their freedom lay in the vote and that became the target of policymakers of the south looking to preserve a new version of the old antebellum ways.

The Democrats, looking for ways to discredit the 15th Amendment, began implementing restrictive election policies. Property requirements were designed to make sure that only wealthy men could vote. Poll taxes were created to make people pay a tax before voting. Literacy tests were developed to ensure that voters were educated. All of these strategies were aimed at making it more difficult for African Americans to exercise political power. Another policy implemented at this time was a Grandfather Clause. This clause, according an 1898 Louisiana law, exempted people from property and education requirements for registering and voting, if they, their fathers, or their grandfathers were eligible to vote prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. The image to the left depicts a satirical view of the literacy or educational requirement placed on southern elections. The Harpers Weekly cartoon from 1879 shows a barely literate white man underlining a poorly spelled version of the word educated. While the cartoon predates the Louisiana grandfather clause, it is indicative of the absurdness of these types of laws. Reconstruction policies of Louisiana had created integrated public schools, but this had long since stopped being enforced and African Americans found themselves disenfranchised.
We still use these words today. Carpetbaggers and Scalawags are used, by academics, to teach the Reconstruction period. These dismissive terms are often associated with fraud and corruption. Many times, these words appear as vocabulary terms in textbooks. They perpetuate an image of ineffective Republicans who had no success during Reconstruction. The use of grandfather clauses in our vernacular has taken on a neutral connotation with most people not even realizing its origin. The continuation of using these words, and others, subconsciously sets people up to have preconceived notions about the success and failures of reconstruction.

The early scholarly work of Reconstruction set a tone for the lost cause. It minimized the success of free African Americans. It alienated the efforts of northerners and southerners who were committed to fulfilling the American dream. In a way, these early works attempted to redeem the south and its cause. The pageantry of antebellum aristocracy has been shown in movies, film, and television today. A myth of what the south once was has
become the reality. The words we’ve used to tell the tale have set it up that way. The good guys were made to look bad. The lost cause version of the story also aimed at making the bad guys look good.
On December 20, 1864, South Carolina became the first state to secede from the Union and in turn caused the Civil War. During the next four years, America would experience a war that would cost the lives of 750,000 American men: white, African American, Union, Confederate, wealthy, and poor. The rebellion of the south forever altered the United States and would transition the country from a rebellion into a period of Reconstruction. David Blight argued that this Reconstruction period of the United States served as a referendum for the country; a time for the country to change or alter the course for the future direction of the country. Who could control the United States government? Who would control the US Congress? Who would rule in the defeated south, the Republicans or the Democrats? Who would be deemed as a citizen and what rights should that citizen receive? This time period was an opportunity for Americans to implement the promises of unalienable rights and potentially expand the definition of political stakeholders (ie: voters) from the founding documents of the Declaration of Independence. While factions of the federal government wanted to echo and advance those initial promises of the Declaration of Independence newly Reconstructed southern states openly resisted the goals of the federal government and attempted go back to the old principles of the Antebellum south; however, key influential African American leaders like Tunis Campbell will resist and not accept those southern expectations.

Traditionally, Reconstruction history is taught as a starting date of 1865 in which the war ended and the 13th amendment was ratified; however, Reconstruction starts in 1861 with the Port Royal Experiment on the sea island of South Carolina. Union forces came into the sea islands and discovered that the majority of plantations were abandoned by their white owners and only had the enslaved people remaining on them. These enslaved people transitioned to freedmen and became what the Union Army referred to as “contraband.”
The picture above depicts the contraband following Sherman in his 1864 March to the Sea through Atlanta. As Sherman burned the various plantations and cities, he would acquire former enslaved people, who carried minimal items for necessity, from those plantations and they would follow the army. With the large numbers of refugees following the Union Army and slowing them down, in Sherman’s mind he had to act. The illustration does not show Sherman and his commanding officer meeting with African American ministers and Sherman instituted his Special Field Order #15, and order for African Americans to acquire property from the over 400,000 acres taken by the Union Army from their former owners on the sea island. It insinuates African Americans as subservient and needing a white man to monitor their behavior and make sure that they do what is needed by the Union soldier in the bottom right. The leadership of African Americans potentially needed to be white.

Blacks leading other blacks was a major portion of the story that has been left out of the history of Reconstruction. The above engraving is the only image of Tunis Campbell\(^{18}\): an educated African American, abolitionist, editor, who was well connected and well networked. Hartwell drew this as an autobiographical representation of Campbell that would accompany his book, *Housekeeper’s Guide: Hotel Keepers and Head Waiters*. The visual is similar to Douglass’ image in his autobiography as it portrays a degree of education, success, and influence in a white world. This photo is significant in understanding Campbell as a determined, educated, and self-reliant man who might have wanted his image to be like that of Douglass because he worked with Douglass on *The North Star* and spoke with him on speaking tours against slavery. Campbell will be appointed by the governor of Georgia to be the superintendent over the sea islands where the refugees would be placed. While superintendent, Campbell barred whites from coming onto several of the sea islands and threatened criminal charges if they accosted any of the African Americans living on the islands. He set-up a tax system to establish schools and increase literacy, divided up the land and had individuals farm that land to create a self of African American self-sufficiency. After the war when whites came back and reclaimed their property from African Americans, Campbell invested his personal money to purchase property to have a place where African Americans could have land and claim their own social and economic self-sufficiency. The southern expectation of freedmen post war was for these freed peoples to be landless and be forced to come back to their former owners and work for them as field hands with little pay and to succumb to the sharecropping system. Campbell refused to allow that to happen with African American in McIntosh County, Georgia.

While Campbell was establishing and growing his community in McIntosh Georgia, the United States was experiencing a political shift. Andrew Johnson was battling the US Congress for the appropriate political policy of Reconstruction in the south until the Radical Republicans helped to pass the Military Reconstruction Plan of 1867 and place southern states into military districts monitored by a federal appointed governor. The federal government established a bureaucracy to monitor southern political and social actions. The illustration below was published in Harper’s Weekly, which was a pro-Reconstruction paper, in which the illustrator argues the “first votes” for these conventions of various African American voters. The voters

consist of the farmer, the businessman, and the Union soldier who fought in the war. The illustrator is optimistic about the open voting process while the white man is the one working the polling place and the vote is open and not secretive. There is no hint of repercussions for these African Americans voters that could come from white voters in the south. While this image shows the national symbolism, it shows the significance of Tunis Campbell and his political activism. Tunis Campbell helped to register African American in McIntosh County registering 675 blacks while there was only 128 registered whites.19

“The First Vote”20

“This is a white man’s government.”

( Text below the cartoon) “We regard the Reconstruction Acts (so called) of Congress as usurpations, and unconstitutional, revolutionary, and void.”

The above cartoon was published by Harper’s Weekly in 1867. Notice that the cartoon focuses on the three images of the Irishman on the left, the former Confederate soldier in the middle, and the wealthy business man from New England on the right while all three are stepping on the African American male laying on the American flag and reaching for the ballot box. In the background, there are examples of violence in the form of burning of buildings and potential lynchings. According to Harpers Weekly, these three white men are the three sects of the Democratic Party that are “stepping on the African American” in the south. The northern Irish and wealthy are teaming up, so to speak, with the southern Democrat to not focus on the importance of Reconstruction which is protection of the principles of liberty in allowing for African American civil rights and suffrage rights. Thomas Nast’s cartoon is more than mere propaganda, it is fact. There were threats of violence against African Americans who were actively involved in the implementation of American civil liberties for African Americans.

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Tunis Campbell served as an example of the violence of against African Americans. Campbell claimed that he was poisoned while registering blacks to vote in 1868 and became very sick, the other registrar died from the same poison, and was threatened by multiple whites in the county so much so that he had to alter his departure and transportation time for the convention.\textsuperscript{22} While the southern sect of the Democratic Party thought that intimidation and violence would keep African Americans from exercising and fighting for their civil liberties and constitutional freedoms, they were wrong. African Americans served as agents for themselves and fought the southern interpretation of Reconstruction with limited to no civil liberties and constitutional freedoms. Tunis Campbell was one of these African Americans.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{“Extract from the Reconstructed Constitution of the State of Louisiana.”\textsuperscript{23}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{22} Duncan, Freedom’s Shore: Tunis Campbell and the Georgia Freedman, 81.
\textsuperscript{23} Extract from the reconstructed Constitution of the state of Louisiana, with portraits of the distinguished members of the Convention & Assembly, A.D. 1868. Lithograph (1868).
With Military Reconstruction came the governmental bureaucracy but also the significance of state constitutional conventions. The above was not actually a picture but instead a lithograph representing the various African American delegates to the Louisiana Constitutional Convention. In the center in a full photograph was Oscar J Dunn, the Lt. Governor of Louisiana and 29 other prominent African American males who played a crucial role in advocating and granting African American males political and civil rights under the Louisiana Constitution. The above cartoon serves a symbol for African American participation to take an active and participatory role in fighting for their deserved rights during the Reconstruction era.

While these men were advocating for Louisiana African American males in the Constitution, Tunis Campbell not only served as a delegate to the Georgia Constitutional Convention but also fought for new statutes and advancements for African Americans in Georgia in general legislations and statutes.

Campbell was actively involved in the political scene of Georgia registering blacks to vote, advocating for education, editing conventions newspapers, and offering controversial resolutions. While Campbell was serving as the Vice President of the Republican Party in Georgia in 1867, which became part of the Georgia constitution, he proposed a resolution to abolish debt imprisonment in Georgia arguing this discriminatory practice utilized free black labor to benefit the state.24 As a state senator, Campbell not only molded the economic aspect of the Georgia Constitution but molded it socially by helping to institute laws that would protect the movement and allow equal access for peoples in public spaces. He wanted the anti-discrimination law to say “no discrimination on account of color or previous condition shall be made in this State” but the Georgia legislature widened the definition of citizens and discrimination from Georgia African Americans by solidifying “all Georgia citizens be entitled to equal civil and political rights and public privileges.”25 Tunis Campbell continued to fight for the equality for African Americans in Georgia that he saw being denied them. He held political offices and used his positions to fight for political and civil rights which was the exact opposite of what the Georgia governor and the southern redeemers wanted.

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24 Duncan, Freedom’s Shore: Tunis Campbell and the Georgia Freedman, 48.
25 Ibid, 49.
“Of course he wants to vote the Democratic ticket!”

The above cartoon was released in 1876 in Harper’s Weekly. The symbolism of the ballot box in the bottom right and an African American voter surrounded by white southerners intimidating him with violence shows the emphasis on voter suppression. In the left corner, there is a massive mob of southern, white men who wanted to ensure that the lone African American man either is intimidated and persuaded to vote for the Democratic candidate, to redeem the government with the southern Democratic Party, or to not practice his fifteenth amendment right to vote. This was a prime example of the shift of southern governments from Republican to Democrat. During the election of 1876, there was some controversy about the returns for the presidential candidates in South Carolina, along with several other states, and South Carolina became one of the three states involved in Compromise of 1877 with presidential candidates. This cartoon is very similar to Tunis Campbell. In 1871, the Republican governor of Georgia, Rufus Bullock, was ousted and replaced by a Democratic governor, along with several Democratic state congressmen and senators. The Georgia government experienced the redeemer government in 1871 which meant that Tunis Campbell began to lose his political power. Tunis continued to fight for equal citizenship for the African Americans in Georgia. He was a threat to the redeemer government. He was threatened, arrested, and even leased out for a year as a source of labor to a private businessman from the Georgia Department of Corrections. Upon his release from the work camp, Campbell and his family moved to Washington DC and lobbied Rutherford B Hayes to address the issues in Georgia and the failed Reconstruction experiment in Georgia.

26 Harper’s Weekly, October 21, 1876. Cartoon.
The experiment of Reconstruction had few successes but served as an overall failure for African Americans and the federal government to change the political and social dynamics in the former Confederate south. Southern governments had their own agendas to curtail the federal mandates of the initial ideals of the idea of natural rights for all American citizens. African Americans refused to yield their political rights that were granted to them by the federal government. Tunis Campbell served as that example. While Tunis Campbell was an example of dissidence to southern governments he continues to serve as an example of leadership and political activism.
The Power Dynamics of Sharecropping in the Reconstruction South

Tiana Mack

The Reconstruction South was ordered into a dualism of sharecropping and white supremacy. The exploitation of black cheap labor in the agricultural sector was reinforced by the legal system and justified by the prevailing ideology of white supremacy. My thesis is that while the Reconstruction amendments granted African American political independence, the sharecropping system denied African American economic independence. This visual essay is an overview of the injustices African Americans experienced under sharecropping in the Reconstruction South.

In the late nineteenth century, sharecropping replaced the economic system of the Southern American plantation economy. Blacks desired to better themselves and improve the quality of life for their families, setting goals of property ownership and self-employment. However, Reconstruction legislation failed to evenly redistribute land and wealth in the South, and African Americans were given the narrow options of sharecropping, tenant farming, or wage labor. It was not uncommon for ex-slaves to work for their former masters under new arrangements. Newly freed families claimed ownership of their bodies and labor by vehemently refusing to work in gangs managed by white overseers—for this too closely resembled slavery—but did opt to work the land in return for a portion of their crops.
To the left is a freedmen’s contract between Isham G. Bailey and freedmen Cooper Hughs and Charles Roberts in Marshall County, Mississippi January 1, 1867.

Source: Gilder Lehrman Collection

Black cropper families were expected to cultivate the land and pay a percentage of their crop in exchange for limited autonomy; the remainder was paid in interest to the landlord. Rural families obtained farming equipment by borrowing against their share of the crop. Black tenant farmers entered into a contract to rent the portion of the plantation they worked. They purchased food, clothing, and supplies on credit, using scrip money.
Tenant farmers were paid two-thirds of their share, as compared to the mere half received by sharecroppers. Consequently, renting was preferred over sharecropping, but both systems created a perpetual cycle of debt for poor black southerners. As noted in Remembering Jim Crow: “Even though this system developed as a ‘compromise’ between former slaves and slave owners over the terms of agricultural employment, people remembered the system with loathing. More often than not, sharecroppers would end each harvest season deeper in debt after their supplies were deducted from the landlord’s ledger.” As the deficit grew, families unable to settle their debts were confined to the land. It was not uncommon for black farmers to be delayed pay for their annual crop yield if they had delinquent credit for the upcoming year. White landlords manipulated the illiteracy of ex-slaves, tricking them into signing fraudulent contracts, worsening black families’ state of poverty. White landlords kept the accounts and had the law on their side if they were challenged.
This Harper’s Weekly July 29, 1865 article by Thomas Nast is titled “The great labor question from a Nast suggests that Reconstruction failed to change race relations and labor systems in the South.

The majority of black farmers were prevented from saving for the purchase of land; their income was spent on the cost of living or repaying debt. “Old Lem,” by the Harlem Renaissance poet Sterling Brown, captures the injustices blacks endured under these new arrangements:
They weigh the cotton
They store the corn
We only good enough
To work the rows;
They run the commissary
They keep the books
We gotta be grateful
For being cheated.

Planters and storekeepers routinely cheated black sharecroppers out of yearlong profits. Historian Leon Litwack writes, “Even as blacks came to learn soon after emancipation the limited content of their freedom and prospects, whites eager to retain their laborers found that a ‘slavery of debt’ worked almost as effectively as the old slavery of legal ownership.” Whites sought control over African American workers because they provided a strong cheap labor force. Surveillance was a part of everyday black rural life. Sharecropping constricted the movement of blacks, landlords were in charge of mail and telephone systems, and plantation owners rewarded black informants. The lands on which blacks built their lives were owned by whites. If white planters received any competition from blacks with successful crops, they were often driven off the land. Black farmers who aspired to own property were blocked from access to funding. Upstanding members of the community were denied loans and job security on the basis of their skin tone. Churches, businesses, farms, and schools—any representation of black economic success—were sabotaged, destroyed by lootings and burnings. Educated African Americans, businessmen, and property owners were vulnerable targets for lynchings. When asked what happened to sharecroppers who challenged injustices of the system, Malachia Andrews of Florida replied, “This was dangerous. Black folks as far as they thought wasn’t supposed to talk back, challenge the big boss I’ll say about harvesting and sometimes it would cause house burning. Sometimes it would cause flogging, hanging, and different things.” In the rural south, lynching was a common method of controlling the black labor force which instilled a fear of white authority.
In the late nineteenth century, nine-tenths of African Americans resided in the South, and 80% of this demographic was restricted to rural areas. The agricultural southern economy demanded a large workforce, and the black population labored as farm tenants and sharecroppers. Black agricultural workers produced the raw materials—sugar, cotton, and tobacco—which fed industrial northern and southern economies, but simultaneously the agricultural labor system grew more mechanized and commercialized. The organization of labor on large sugar plantations paralleled that of burgeoning industrial corporations. As big investors in sugarhouses, landlords and plantation owners demanded heavy supervision of tenant farmers and sharecroppers to ensure maximum annual turnovers. Tenant farmers—black and white—invested energy into cultivating lands which they would never own, nor did they have legal ownership of their raised crops. While acknowledging the limitations of sharecropping in the Reconstruction South, the Negro’s condition in America was one step removed from slavery and toward independence.
The Legacy of African American Sharecroppers

The *Briggs vs. Elliott* case has its origins in Clarendon, SC. Black members of this community courageously signed a petition to put an end to segregation. Some petitioners lost their jobs for signing. This is the first case to set the legal precedent for *Brown vs. Board of Education*. The petitioners were a community of sharecroppers, but they were. In the photograph, the petitioners are well dressed—not dressed like sharecroppers. They understood the power of self-presentation and the politics of responsibility.

In the 1960s, Fannie Lou Hamer was a leader of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. She went to represent the MFDP at the Democratic Convention of 1964 held in Atlantic City, New Jersey. When it was her time to speak, the white racist media cut to commercial so that her voice would not be heard on a national case. Hamer not only represented...
women and African Americans, but also the working class. At the convention, the MFDP was only granted symbolic seats and could not vote.

The petitioners in *Briggs vs. Elliott* and Fannie Lou Hamer were sharecroppers who put their lives and bodies on the line for what they believed. Despite the exploitation of black labor under the sharecroppers, blacks exercised their agency. Black sharecroppers were strategic thinkers and were politically active.

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“Ain’t I a Woman?” Competing Narratives of African-American Women

Anne McCarney

What does it mean to be a woman? There are many answers to this question—likely one for every woman. However, media images, whether intentionally or unintentionally, often shape the ideals of womanhood and the ideas people have about certain types of women. What ideas about African-American women circulated during Reconstruction? Were they accurate? What attitudes did they create in the viewer? Generally, images and media of the Reconstruction presented opposing views of African-American women—on one hand showcasing commonly-held stereotypes of these women as victims, hypersexualized, subhuman, and ridiculous, and on the other hand, more realistic images of women with agency, respectability, and dignity.

One of the most common views of formerly enslaved people, even amongst those sympathetic to their plight, has always been that the newly-freed people were victims unable to provide for themselves or direct their own lives. Often, these images were designed to elicit empathy and support for emancipation, the war effort, Reconstruction policy, and more. However, portrayal of victimization can be inherently demeaning and wasn’t always noble. The *Harper’s Weekly* image *Solution of the Labor Question in the South* from December, 1865 portrays a group of freedpeople encountering an “Inquiring Stranger” on horseback. Though only one of the group is female, she is foregrounded, and the lighter color of her outfit draws the viewer’s eye to her. She is clearly portrayed as victim—stooped over and literally burdened (with a basket). The stranger, who is almost certainly a Northerner, asks, “Well, now the war is over, what are you people going to do for a living?” The freedpeople answer, “Why, Master, we's gwine to draw.” “Draw what?” “Draw rations, Sir.”

This answer shows the group to be helpless. They have no vision for the future, no work ethic, and no options except to live on the charity of the government. The heavy dialect and half-completed thoughts emphasize lack of education (and perhaps intelligence), and their deference implies lack of agency. *Harper’s Weekly* generally tended to support Reconstruction policies, so here it is either highlighting the helplessness of the freedpeople in order to seek public support for aid, or it is, rather uncharacteristically, appealing to the fears of the white Northerners about having to support large populations of helpless freedpeople now that the war has ended.
Even when the idea of the victim was meant to support African-Americans, it did not give a fully human picture. In reality, African-American women had agency in many parts of their lives. Like their male counterparts, they knew what they wanted from freedom and took specific steps to achieve it. This often began with seeking freedom out rather than passively waiting for it to appear. African-American teacher Charlotte Forten Grimké, herself a woman with incredible agency, recorded one such escape in her diary:

Two girls, one about ten and the other fifteen, who having been taken by their master up into the country about the time of the “Gun Shoot,” determined to try to get back to their parents who had been left on this island. They stole away at night, and traveled through woods and swamps, for two days without eating…They had brave little hearts and struggled on, til at last they reached Port Royal Ferry. (Qtd in Schwalm 113)

Female agency continued as freedwomen took charge of many aspects of their lives. The 1862 photograph *James Hopkinson’s Plantation. Planting Sweet Potatoes* at first glance looks like a fieldwork photograph which could have been taken of enslaved people. However, the photo was taken on Edisto Island after the “Great Skeddale,” so these are freedpeople planting for themselves. That they plant sweet potatoes rather than cotton shows they have taken charge of their farming choices. They decided to plant food crops for themselves. The group is likely posed but is about half male and half female, showing equity. While most of the women are seated and
appear to be preparing the sweet potatoes, one hoes with the men. As in the previous image, she is foregrounded as if to emphasize the equal division of labor. Certainly in the 19th century, women laboring in the fields with men was not the ideal. Instead, domesticity and the ability to work exclusively in the home were the goals. Still, this image shows that women had the ability to keep pace with the men and were partners in the venture of creating a farm. It echoes Soujourner Truth’s 1851 speech: “I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman?”

African-American female agency is also clear from the stories of individuals. Harriet Tubman, of course, is the primary example of independent Black womanhood. Charlotte Forten Grimké, though a freeborn Northern woman, chose to leave New England, move to South Carolina and assist the newly freed as a teacher despite certain danger to herself if caught in the Confederate territory which surrounded the Sea Islands. A third significant woman of the time was Susie King Taylor. Her agency began early. She learned to read as an enslaved person in a secret school taught by other black women. Then she fled slavery to St. Simon’s Island and the Union troops. There she taught the first freedman’s school in Georgia, and later she accompanied the Union troops as a nurse. After the war, records for the Freedman’s Bank show that African-American women worked, often for themselves, and held bank accounts in their own names. For example, Clara Simmons, a married woman of Beaufort, SC applied for an account in 1870 with the occupation of sewer and washer working for herself (Ancestry).
Clara Sanchez, a married cook working for “herself generally” did the same (Ancestry). Even the early labor contracts, restrictive and abusive as they were, listed women along with their husbands on the same line implying a certain level of agency and equality.

A second tension in portrayal relates to women’s sexuality. A number of engravings and illustrations portrayed African-American women as hypersexualized temptresses. A prime example is the Political Caricature. No. 4. The Miscegenation Ball, an 1864 G. W. Bromley lithograph meant to discredit the Republicans and Lincoln’s re-election campaign by playing to fears of interracial relationships, specifically, Black women “stealing” white men with their overt sexuality. The image purports to show the ball after a campaign event in New York City. All of the dancers are white men dancing with African-American women. These women are sexualized in both physical appearance and in action. Though the women wear typical evening dress of the day, they are all thick-bodied, extremely large breasted, and have large lips. Two women are foregrounded on the right—one wearing large earrings and the other with twisted hair. Both features emphasize the exotic nature of these women.

The women’s actions are even more sexual. Standards of Victorian womanhood emphasized demure purity and modesty. These women dance with anything but. They clearly are dancing in a lively manner appearing to almost jump, again emphasizing their exotic nature. The two foregrounded women have lifted their skirts to expose their ankles and higher. To the viewer of the time, this would be shocking as “the strict dress codes of the
time denote[d] that female legs and ankles remain covered under swathes of fabric and to bare them is considered wholly indecent” (Aspinall). Among the couples seated along the sides of the room, the women’s behavior is even more shockingly sexual. The first woman sits on a man’s lap with her skirts tuck up to reveal her dangling leg. His hand appears to be reaching for her chest. The woman in the second couple puckers up giant lips going in for a kiss demonstrating female sexual desire, quite a taboo at the time. In the third couple, she actually straddles his lap facing him in a pose overtly sexual even today. Clearly these portrayals imply that African-American females are loose women, the direct opposite of the ideal of womanhood at the time. Unfortunately, this image has persisted to the present day with the Jezebel stereotype in everything from film to hip hop music videos. Even Halle Berry’s Academy-Award winning role in Monster’s Ball is a Jezebel. Though Berry certainly was a deserving actor, the fact that this was the first Black female leading role the Academy found worthy of an Oscar, is problematic.

This negative and prevalent stereotype is counteracted by images of respectable Black women. According to historian Barbara Welter, during the nineteenth century, “The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society, could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity” (21). Some illustrations of Black women accorded them those virtues as well. Alfred R. Waud’s 1866 Harper’s Weekly illustration titled Marriage of a Colored Soldier at Vicksburg by Chaplain Warren of the Freedman’s Bureau is one such example. The image of a marriage stands in direct opposition to the loose sexuality of the temptress image of The Miscegenation Ball.
The couple is surrounded by many well-wishers, most of them women. All the women in the picture are dressed modestly and appropriately. With the exception of the bride who wears an evening gown appropriate to the event, the women all have high-necked dresses according to the fashion of the times. That the dresses are white emphasizes purity. The bride and groom’s downcast eyes, and her hand by her face also emphasize purity and innocence, virtues rarely ascribed to African Americans in the popular press. The desire for marriage sets the woman and her husband squarely in the culture of middle class respectability, morality, and domesticity, especially as she is marrying a soldier, a respected figure at the time. The vast numbers of marriages which were conducted or legalized among freedpeople after the war makes this image far more accurate than the temptresses as well as more human. Harper’s equates African-American women with the ideal woman, a designation previously reserved to white women.

A major difference in each of these pairs of images is, of course, the human dignity allowed to the women and the respect shown to them by the image’s creator. The women planting sweet potatoes and the bride and her female companions are presented as fully human, as people the white, Northern viewer would recognize. They are not caricatures or stereotypes. Often, though, Black women were portrayed as ridiculous and subhuman. The facial features in The Miscegenation Ball, for example, are generally exaggerated to the point of ridiculousness, and their actions are those of savages rather than a respectable woman. These undignified images continued into Reconstruction and beyond. Solomon Eytinge’s 1876 Harper’s Weekly illustration titled The Centennial—Visit of the “Small Breed” Family is one example. In this image, a Black family attends the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. The family includes four women (mother, grandmother, and twin girls) and four men (father and three sons). As in many of the previous images, a woman is centered and draws the eye. All of the family members gaze in awe and wonder at the sights they are seeing, but their wonder is exaggerated and the family is a caricature of a real family. Their wide eyes, goofy grins, pointing fingers, and gaping mouths show them to be childlike and unaccustomed to any kind of sophistication. In essence, they are clowns. This image of backwardness is emphasized by their clothing which is oversized, overly fancy and yet outdated in fashion. They are posers striving for the status and dignity of affluent (white) visitors, but they are not and can never be middle class or respectable no matter how much they pretend. Additionally, the poor manners (pointing) and enormous clothing may also critique the domestic sphere—the ability of the woman to correctly raise her family. The cartoon argues for white superiority, especially in intelligence and dignity.
White superiority was often shown in even more blatant terms regarding African-Americans. In The “Small Breed” Family, males and females had similar characteristics, but a lack of dignity could certainly be focused on females alone. An important aspect of visual representation of women has always been representation of beauty. Images from before Reconstruction to today have rarely shown Black women as beautiful. Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper highlighted concepts of ideal beauty in its illustration The Goddess of Liberty in 1870. The caption asks “What is she to be? To what complexion are we to come at last?” It plays on fears that people of color will dominate American life and on fears of miscegenation. The ideal beauty is clearly the white woman in the center. The Native and Asian representation are stereotypical but not truly ugly. The African-American woman is presented as hideous, animal-like, and stupid with her giant lips and nose, dull eyes, and poorly coiffed hair. Instead of a crown like the first three women, she wears the headscarf of a field worker emphasizing her low status. (Of course, the irony is that the Irishwoman—now certainly considered white—was presented as probably the lowest in status.) Since Lady Liberty was the highest ideal of femininity, compassion, and virtue, showing such a negative vision of a Black Lady Liberty implies that a country with African-Americans in leadership roles would be degraded and inferior. It tells us Black women are subhuman, an attitude that persists today when a woman as classy and capable as Michelle Obama can be called an “ape in heels” (qtd in Simpson).
Of course, these images of African-American women as ridiculous and subhuman are false. Portraits of the day show women of dignity and quality. The Library of Congress has collected a number of these, and they directly contradict the harmful stereotypes of many illustrations. This first image, likely taken in the 1860s based on the clothes, emphasizes the ideal of domesticity showing her as a mother and, since it is paired with the male photo, likely as a wife. She is dressed well but modestly. Her slight smile and direct gaze into the camera humanize her thoroughly. The second portrait probably dates to the 1870s given her outfit. She is dressed stylishly. Her outfit has none of the ridiculousness of the illustrations. Her hat and parasol add touches of elegance that are certainly lacking in the illustrations. Unfortunately, these portraits were usually private while the illustrations had a national audience and influenced far more attitudes.
There were some illustrations which portrayed an overall ideal image of African-American women, but they were rare. One of the most famous is Fernando Miranda’s *The Statue of ‘The Freed Slave’ in Memorial Hall* from *Frank Leslie’s Historical Register of the Centennial Exposition*, a 300+ page book of images and articles from the 1876 Centennial Exposition. Unlike the “small-breed” family, these African-American visitors are human, and Miranda draws them with dignity and respect. The focus of the illustration is, of course, the statue. The visitors include six women and one girl as well as three men and one boy. The large number of women emphasizes female interest in art and culture.
The crowd includes people of a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds—the woman in the middle back wears a sunbonnet—but the majority of these women (and men) are middle class, possibly emphasizing again that a person must be middle class to be respectable. They are dressed in a careful, sophisticated manner. Though embellished, their dresses are typical of affluent Americans; rather than looking like ridiculous posers, these women belong in this class. The women embrace the ideals of marriage, home, and family. The woman on the right walks sedately with a man, likely her husband. The woman on the left is an attentive and careful mother who clearly encourages her children’s curiosity and education. Her son is holding a book emphasizing the importance of literacy and education amongst African Americans. Even the lower class woman in the back is treated with dignity; she closes her eyes as if giving thanks for breaking the chains of slavery. Everyone in the image has humanity and dignity. Their facial features are real, and there is no hint of condescension or the ridiculous. They are refined, educated people rather than the childlike, subhuman people shown in other illustrations. This illustration demonstrates the possibility of a sympathetic and accurate portrayal of African-Americans, and the contrast makes the horribly-stereotypical portrayals all the worse.

Images have power—the power to create attitudes and to shape values and action. African-American women during Reconstruction were sometimes shown as people of strength, resilience, respectability, and dignity. Unfortunately, they were many other times shown as sexualized
temptresses, victims, or subhuman and ridiculous. In too many people’s minds these images created attitudes and stereotypes that live on today. Although Reconstruction began long ago, African-American women still must fight the ideas that they are helpless or lazy, that they are hypersexual, that they are not beautiful, that they are ridiculous, less than human, unintelligent, and so on. The narrative needs to finally shift to one that allows full humanity and dignity for Black women and for all people.

Works Cited


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New Birth of Freedom?: Voter Suppression from 1865 to 1965

Daniel McNamara

In his incisive book, The Facts of Reconstruction, Mississippi Republican leader John R. Lynch asked provocative and sobering questions in his defense of Congressional Reconstruction: Was the enfranchisement of the black men at the South by act of Congress a grave mistake? Were the reconstructed State Governments that were organized as a result thereof a disappointment and a failure? Was the Fifteenth Amendment to the Federal Constitution premature and unwise? (6)

Among other things, Lynch clearly and persuasively stated that the answer to these questions was a definite no. A key element of his viewpoint, based on personal experience, was that voting rights for African American men were essential to the success of Reconstruction. The right to vote for African Americans and their unfettered access to voting have been critical to establishing that “new birth of freedom” to which President Lincoln referred in the Gettysburg Address. But since 1865, there have been sustained efforts to reestablish and maintain White supremacy through a variety of means to suppress the vote of African Americans. These means--racial terrorism, intimidation, political campaigning, and lawmaking--have been used to accomplish and implement voter suppression targeted at African Americans. While voter suppression has been a serious issue up to the present time, the problem of voter suppression directed at Black Americans was most blatantly evident from 1865 to 1965.

One noteworthy aspect of voter suppression from 1865 until the present is that it has not been solely advocated by southern White racists. This becomes abundantly clear when one examines a poster from 1866 that was printed in support of Pennsylvania Democratic Party gubernatorial candidate, Hiester Clymer. This poster’s very banner headline is reference to the proposed Fifteenth Amendment. Entitled The Constitutional Amendment!, it explicitly denounces Republican Party support for “Negro Suffrage...,” as it is referred to on the bottom.
Republican gubernatorial candidate John Geary’s (“Pennsylvania Governors”) name is boldly printed on the top left of the poster, and on the bottom, directly under the large capital letter words “THE RADICAL PLATFORM,” the poster warns that “Every man who votes for Geary or for a Radical Candidate for Congress, votes as surely for Negro Suffrage and Negro Equality, as if they were printed on his ballot.” This in Pennsylvania over two years before the Fifteenth Amendment was passed by Congress in February of 1869. In case the reader of this poster missed the point about its expressed outrage against the proposal of Black men voting, the upper right of the poster lists the names of Republican congressional candidates, beginning with the famed abolitionist Congressman Thaddeus Stevens. All names in this column are listed under the title of “The BLACK Roll.”

The composition of this Pennsylvania Democratic Party poster includes the text framing a cartoon of a polling place. The racism exhibited in the cartoon is palpable. In front of an open door labeled “POLLS,” a group of African American men, evidently newly freed given the similarity of their workmen’s clothing, appears to be trying to push through the door in order to vote. The force of their effort is conveyed by the movements of their hands pushing against the back of a white man, and their legs shown with their knees lurching forward. The Black man on the right is portrayed forcefully thrusting out his left leg with knee bent and foot in the air. And who is being pushed aside by this brutish mob of Black men? White men: two Union
soldiers on the left side of the door and gentlemen wearing a top hat and a bowler hat on the right. The comments made by some of these men drive home this poster’s overtly racist appeal to suppress the Black vote: “I thought we fought for the Union;” “Surely, we did not fight for this.” The alarm bell is further sounded against African American suffrage with the poster’s comment by one of the Black men, who asserts in stereotypical words, "Dat's so Brudder Yank, and you need our votes now. De poor White Trash must stand back." A dog whistle, without question. Black men, this Northern campaign poster warns, simply cannot be allowed to vote. The best way to suppress the Black vote is to vote against those nefarious Republicans who would attempt to perpetrate such an assault on White men. This poster makes clear that voter suppression in the North complemented and reinforced voter suppression in the South at the beginning of the Reconstruction Era. Of course, this racist point of view did not go unanswered.

In 1870, G.F. Kahn created an illustration that was printed in Baltimore after the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. This print celebrates this third of the Reconstruction amendments in several interesting ways. To begin with, it quotes Section 1 of the Amendment: “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” The design of this remarkable illustration is architectural,
employing pillars, capitals, and arches. The two central pillars are labeled “Education” and “Science,” and resting on top of each, securing the arches, are two capitals which are labeled “Ballot Box.” The careful and harmonious execution of the design contribute to the celebratory tone of this print. While these design elements are integral to the conception of this powerful print, it is the people illustrated in it who make clear its message that the recently ratified Fifteenth Amendment was already having positive consequences. Ones for which Baltimoreans should be rightly grateful and proud.

With the exception of the symbols of Liberty and one of the children, the figures illustrated are male. Above the arches on the top of the print are Abraham Lincoln in a wreath, with four other White men on either side of him. Among these are President Ulysses S Grant and martyred abolitionist John Brown. These men are notable for their varied roles in leading the effort to destroy the slave power of the Confederacy, and thus it may be inferred that they would look kindly on “The Fifteenth Amendment And Its Results,” the title of the print. The center of the print, directly below Lincoln, is a group of Black men who appear to be leaders in Baltimore. They are all mounted on horseback, dressed formally with sashes and top hats, and backed up by Black soldiers grouped behind them. To the left of this grouping of Black leaders and soldiers are a Black teacher with two students. They are well dressed and attentive to the lesson at hand. Indeed, the young girl is holding a book, clearly indicating her commitment to “Education.” To the right of the center grouping are two Black men, one a blacksmith and the other a carpenter. The blacksmith, located in the foreground, looks out to the viewer with purpose and determination as the carpenter diligently attends to his constructive work. All of these African Americans, this illustration seems to be suggesting, have demonstrated the blessings of a constitutionally ordered liberty. They embody the hope and promise of the Fifteenth Amendment as it enables African Americans to have the opportunities to learn, prosper, and build the community. But would the Fifteenth Amendment, as so illustrated, be allowed to work its promise for African Americans? The voting rights efforts of the modern Civil Rights Movement underscore the fact that the efforts to suppress the Black vote largely succeeded for many decades into the 20th century. Lawmaking was an essential part of this aspect of voter suppression.

Among the most prominent examples of lawmaking used to implement the suppression of the Black vote was the South Carolina Constitutional Convention of 1895. This convention saw two leaders--one Black and one White, one Republican and one Democrat, one humanitarian, one racist--pitted against each other in a dramatic contest to determine the extent of democracy in South Carolina: Robert Smalls and Benjamin Tillman. The enslaved man who seized the moment to free himself, his family, and others by sailing “The Planter” out of Charleston
harbor. And the “Pitchfork” whose unbridled hatred for and vituperative rhetoric targeted at Black Americans are undeniable matters of the historical record. A closer look at the historical record will make plain the extreme contrast in Smalls’ and Tillman’s perspectives of Black men and their worthiness to and capacity for the vote.

Suffrage was guaranteed by the South Carolina Constitution of 1868. Article VIII, section 2 states: “Every male citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years and upwards...without distinction of race, color, or former condition...shall be entitled to vote...” (Morris 135). This progressive constitution was established in the early stage of Congressional Reconstruction, and was challenged in 1895 by Democratic Party leaders led by Benjamin Tillman. This challenge was answered in a speech made by Robert Smalls, who was a delegate at the 1895 Constitutional Convention (Morris 151). In what must have been an extraordinarily disconcerting moment in South Carolina’s history for the advocates of Black male suffrage, who had good cause to believe that this should not have been a matter for discussion, Smalls made clear what he saw as the sole reason for the convention, and of its potential harm:

Mr. President, this Convention has been called for no other purpose than the disfranchisement of the Negro. Be careful and bear in mind that the elections which are to take place early next month in very many of the States are watching the action of this Convention, especially on the suffrage question. (Morris 152)

He goes on to state the sacrifices made by African Americans throughout the South since the start of Reconstruction, including the number killed (53,000) with only three white men held to account. Smalls also emphasized the loyalty and industriousness of African Americans, making the case that Black men are worthy and diligent citizens who pay their taxes (152). For Smalls, the voting rights of Black men should have been beyond review. Of course, in a state where the legislature approved of the “eight-box” law in 1882 as a blatant stratagem to invalidate the ballots of illiterate Black voters and to discourage the Black vote (Kantrowitz 97), Smalls knew better. But he valiantly disputed the 1895 Convention’s renewed effort to suppress Black voters.

The opposing view of Benjamin Tillman’s is well illustrated in the following cartoon. The cartoon notes Tillman’s unrepentant hatred of African Americans. Professor Bernard Powers stated that Tillman was motivated by a fear of a rising Black/White populist and Republican coalition, and saw that a coalition of farmers in North Carolina’s legislature might spread to the Palmetto State (lecture). The political cartoon THE NEGRO ISFRANCHISED at first glance appears to be very uncomplicated in terms of its written language (Schomburg).
After all, the subtitle states that denying the vote to the Black man is the beginning of his return to enslavement. South Carolina’s Senator Benjamin Tillman is directly quoted, indicating his intention to “keep every negro in our State from voting.” What could be clearer than that? A closer study of it, perhaps, might elicit some disagreement about the cartoonist’s message. The image of Tillman is not offensive in all its elements, though his words most certainly are to those who believe in egalitarian principles and democracy. His stature and bearing are complimentary, even dignified with his left arm extending outward, and his left hand making a clear, but not violent signal to “stop.” If one looked at a photograph of this South Carolina politico, one would note that he had lost the sight in his left eye and that he had a fairly prominent nose. The cartoonist shows him with the right side of his face in full profile and with a nose that is certainly not prominent. His clothing is nicely styled and tailored, with his head covered by an attractive Stetson hat. What is completely offensive, in addition to the racist quote by Tillman and the overall message that he is strongly advocating the disfranchisement of Black men, is the nonchalant way he is gripping a whip with his right hand. Among the most powerful symbols of the unrelenting brutality of slavery, this whip suggests that Tillman is the lead enforcer of Black disfranchisement. The unexaggerated nature of how he is rendered, in a way, makes his disturbing threat to extinguish the African American vote more easy to comprehend and, for us today, to fear because it is rendered without distortion or exaggeration. The whip and the words send a clear message. Perhaps this is exactly what racists wanted in their “statesmen.” Of course, the Klansman with rifle beside the voting official adds force to the message, as does the depiction of the Black man attempting to vote: he is elderly, unarmed, and also determined while confronted by mortal threat.
This gentleman, who appears to ignore Tillman, will not allow his vote to be suppressed. He appears to be in a weakened state in terms of his stature, further reinforced by his removal of his hat. He is elderly, bearing a cane, and could be viewed as being incapable of resisting the effort to intimidate him and to suppress his vote. And yet, this African American gentleman continues to move toward the ballot box.

“Pitchfork” Ben Tillman had his way. He later reflected the following about his relentless effort to disfranchise Black men:

[The Black man] is not meddling with politics, for he found that the more he meddled with them the worse off he got. As to his “rights”—I will not discuss them now. We of the South have never recognized the right of the negro to govern white men, and we never will. We have never believed him to be equal to the white man, and we will not submit to his gratifying his lust on our wives and
Embedded in this vile, racist, and hypocritical rant are those code words to encourage the degradation and lynching of Black men. The dog whistle reference to the Black male “gratifying his lust” was tailor made for justifying Black voter suppression. Remembering that whip in Tillman’s right hand in the cartoon above, it is hard to imagine Klansmen and others not taking the cue and launching an assault on the latest African American man arrested on the trumped up charge of violating a White woman. Professor Powers, in commenting on Tillman’s racist daughters without lynching him. I would to God the last one of them was in Africa and that none of them had ever been brought to our shores. (“Speech of Senator Benjamin R. Tillman” 147) speeches, highlighted Tillman’s reference to the vote as a “manly” thing reserved for White men. Powers added that racists like Tillman did not see Black men as men (lecture). He also emphasized the connection between the Reconstruction Era and the Jim Crow Era, and the “ferment” of the later Civil Rights Movement that continued during those difficult times (lecture). More on this later.

But the goal of Ben Tillman had been achieved, as the following 1906 Puck illustration by Udo Keppler makes evident. No longer in any way restrained, Tillman is shown to be the demonstrable White supremacist that he exulted in being. The satirical denunciation of Tillman in this print is, as he is about to strike with his whip the “Negro Voter,” clearly indicated by the reference to Uncle Tom’s Cabin and the setting amidst cotton bulbs and Spanish moss in the foreground and the river steamboat in the background (Keppler). Antebellum Era restored.
South Carolina was certainly not alone in the effort to disfranchise Black men. This occurred throughout the South. An interesting additional factor that contributed to voter suppression in the late 19th century was the rise of the Populist Party, as noted previously by Professor Powers. This political development was a major concern and complicating factor for Democratic Party leaders across the South, like Ben Tillman. While there were populists who did support interracial cooperation and the Black vote, the Populist Party in North Carolina seemed to drive the Democratic Party there to work diligently at suppressing the Black vote.

Indeed, the prospect of the Populist Party and the Republican Party collaborating to defeat their Democratic Party rival was a matter of great moment to Democrats in the Tar Heel State (Ayers 300-301). This was the “fusion” threat to Democratic Party domination (301). Adding to this matter, there was in the late 1890s a rising tide of racial tensions in North Carolina that was fueled by White newspapers like the Wilmington Messenger, which editorialized that “We hope the white men will...wipe out negro rule for all time in this noble old commonwealth” (Ayers 301). By the year 1900, the illustration below was emblematic of the White supremacist will to crush the Black vote through legislation and violence. Printed in the Raleigh News & Observer on July 4, 1900, it depicts a monstrous vampire bat with the demonic face of a Black man. He has descended on a ballot box, massive arms outstretched, and fingers with hideous nails apparently in the act of crushing tiny White men and women. On the monster’s wings are spelled, in bold letters, “NEGRO RULE.” This kind of yellow journalism was part of the effort to convince North Carolina’s White men to vote in favor of a state constitutional amendment that would impose a poll tax and a literacy test in order to register to vote. In the wake of the Wilmington Riot of 1898 (Ayers 302-303), as well as other disturbances, this voter suppression effort succeeded.
That “ferment” to which Professor Bernard Powers referred (lecture), was the strong and sustaining current of Black institutions such as the Black Church, the NAACP and other organizations, the participation of Black men and women in World Wars I and II, Black educational institutions, their students and educators, and more. All of these strongly developed during the Reconstruction Era and after it, and provided the foundation for the Civil Rights Movement (Powers lecture). However fierce the White supremacist efforts to degrade and destroy the presence and involvement of African Americans in the politics and governments of the United States, those institutions endured, inspired, nurtured, and nourished the Black leaders and participants of the Civil Rights Movement. The photographic evidence documenting this is abundant. By focusing on the voter registration campaign called Freedom Summer, the impact of this “ferment” becomes evident.

[In Greenwood, MS, SNCC’s voter registration worker Monroe Sharp was arrested on July 16, 1964]

The photograph documenting his arrest was taken by Ted Polumbaum. Sharp is wearing a buttoned denim jacket and denim pants. Over the top left pocket of his jacket is a button, the center of which states “We shall overcome.” The flap of the top right pocket is open because two pencils are sticking upward and out of it, erasers exposed. A book with a piece of paper over it is protruding from the lower right jacket pocket. There could be a number of explanations for the items in Mr. Sharp’s filled pockets. The pencils could be there to record the names of Greenwood’s Black citizens interested in registering to vote. Or perhaps he had them to write
notes in the book he was carrying, or a letter home to his parents. Monroe Sharp has an expression of quiet resignation, perhaps tinged with anguish in his eyes. The photograph seems to be conveying the message that Sharp is willing to be a martyr in the cause of Black voter registration. His body language and the momentary pose captured by Ted Polumbaum infuse an almost Christ-like spirit to Sharp’s arrest. What could be a greater counter-narrative image to the monstrous vampire image of a Black man printed in the Raleigh News & Observer of July 4, 1900? The poignance and dignity of Monroe Sharp’s expression are deeply compelling. And the powerful indictment of Ben Tillman’s legacy of Black voter suppression, and those who governed by it, are made abundantly clear by it.

One striking contrast with the two wooden pencils in Monroe Sharp’s denim jacket pocket is the menacing and large wooden police baton held in the right hand of the Greenwood Auxiliary police officer whose left hand is grasping Sharp’s left forearm. The pencils and the police baton are emblematic of two things that have been integral parts of the history of voter suppression against African Americans: the determination of African Americans to secure their Fifteenth Amendment guarantee of the right to vote, and the White supremacist will to crush that determination by any means. For example, a police officer used the butt end of his baton to literally crush out the eyes of World War II U.S. Army veteran Isaac Woodward. This horrific assault against a veteran who stood up for himself occurred in a town where Ben Tillman’s message of hate and degradation of Black men had become well accepted by White racists (Morris 172-173). Monroe Sharp might well have been given the same treatment were it not for the presence of Mr. Polumbaum and his camera. One wonders how he was treated inside the jail to which he was taken. What is certain is that Monroe Sharp, and hundreds of others involved in Freedom Summer’s effort to resist endemic voter suppression, made the courageous commitment to put an end to this fundamental assault on a basic right in American democracy.

The second photograph of Freedom Summer is one of a group of Freedom Summer workers and volunteers having an outdoor meeting (“The Mississippi Summer Project”). It is a mixed race and mixed gender meeting that appears to be supervised by the young man in the white shirt and dark pants, who is African American. In one way, this photograph exemplifies what has been a fact for hundreds of years. African Americans have been the leaders of the efforts to work for and achieve their freedom and the democratic rights that freedom entails.
From another angle, this photograph suggests that there have been changes by the early 1960s. White men and women, in this case very young ones, have embraced a racially integrated, collaborative effort to achieve liberty that is directed by equally young African Americans. James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were part of this voter registration effort. Of course, they would be kidnapped, tortured, and murdered near Philadelphia, Mississippi by members of the local sheriff’s department and the Ku Klux Klan. In the State of Mississippi during the summer of 1964, working and volunteering to register Black citizens to vote had been answered by men who would have been, no doubt, enthusiastically applauded by Ben Tillman. The fact that Southern White leaders in Congress and in state governments were outraged by the efforts of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner to support the registration of Black voters and not disturbed by their murders is indicative of the fierce determination of White racists to maintain Black voter suppression in Dixie. The efforts of James Chaney and the hundreds of other Freedom Summer workers and volunteers took a lot of courage in the face of unrelenting legal and illegal terrorism. And the positive response of Black citizens they appealed to took, perhaps, even more courage.
Above, Willie McGhee is sitting on the step of his home in Hattiesburg, Mississippi (Polumbaum). The furrowed lines of his face are in marked contrast to the smooth, unwrinkled complexions of Johnny Waters and Jason Plum. They suggest that he had endured things that they had not endured. No judgements here regarding the youthful Waters and Plum. Mr. McGhee’s weathered, taught expression seems to match the weathered wood planks that are the exterior surface of his home. They have seen quite a few seasons of the real Mississippi: the Mississippi of Ross Barnett, and White Citizens Councils, and Klansmen, and literacy tests. At least Mr. McGhee was unburdened by the poll tax that once weighed on the shoulders of poor Black and White citizens in states like Mississippi. Yes, that is right. Section 243 of the 1890 Mississippi Constitution established a poll tax on those who would be registered to vote (“The Mississippi Constitution of 1890”). Of course, the Twenty-fourth Amendment that was ratified in January of 1964—months before Freedom Summer—eliminated the poll tax in federal elections. But the literacy test was still legal. A fact that would have been on the mind of any potential voter in the Magnolia State. Especially a Black potential voter like Willie McGhee. Along with the racist registrars who “graded” the voter registration form’s literacy test. Voter suppression has been a major fact of American political life for as long as American independence. But it became a particularly notable fact of American political life from the Reconstruction Era and into the 1960s. The prospect of Black men, and later Black women, becoming part of the “new birth of freedom” that victory in the Civil War offered, was unimaginable for the White supremacists of the former Confederacy, their strong supporters in the North, and their heirs in the Jim Crow South. They would spare no effort to repudiate the idea of
equality for African Americans, especially in the realm of voting. Though those racists were successful for too long, the determined struggles of Black Americans to secure their voting rights were ultimately realized when President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law on August 6, 1965. What would John R. Lynch say about Freedom Summer and its culmination in the Voting Rights Act? Would he be surprised by the continued efforts, even after two world wars and more, by African Americans to struggle against a still powerful Klan, in states governed by White men who admired Ben Tillman, and Woodrow Wilson. What would he write in response to the murders of James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman? And how do we today view these American citizens, and their actions, along the turbulent timeline of American History from 1865 to 1965?

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Comparison of Images and Cartoons of the Ku Klux Klan in Northern and Southern Publications circa 1866-1870

Jill Nysse

Although its origins are somewhat sketchy, the Ku Klux Klan, or KKK, probably began as a social organization in Tennessee in 1866. There is speculation that the name derives from the Greek word kuklos, or “circle”. The passage of the Military Reconstruction Acts in March 1867 shifted the Klan’s focus to political goals, and it is believed that former Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest became the group’s first overall leader or “Grand Wizard”. He played a significant part in establishing the group’s goals of defeating Republicans on the political front and controlling and disenfranchising freedmen (formerly enslaved men).

A Good Horse and a Gun

Organization of the KKK beyond the local level was likely extremely loose, but locally, groups of mostly Confederate veterans were able to carry out terrorism and violence. “A good horse and a gun” were the requirements
for membership in the Ku Klux Klan. In March 1868, Republican organizer George Ashburn was murdered in Georgia. With goals of intimidating black voters or white supporters of the Republican party, Klan members disguised their identities with ridiculous costumes. By examining the above image closely, it seems clear that this klansman is well known enough locally that he must also disguise his horse to protect his identity. It is also interesting to speculate as to who might have helped him sew and assemble this garb. Was it his wife? A local tailor? The cross on his helmet indicates a possible belief that he is conducting “holy” work. Significantly, this picture was taken in broad daylight, in a place where he felt safe, and it is obviously a membership he wanted to commemorate. If you look closely, there is a ring on his right hand. This might be one clue to his identity that he overlooked.

While the Klan’s costumes seem ridiculous to us today, their violence and terrorism was quite serious. From January to November 1868, the Freedman’s Bureau reported 336 murders in Georgia alone. The Klan also carried out terroristic activities ranging from “disciplining” (whipping or otherwise terrorizing) black women for “insolence” to assassinating Republican leaders of either race. Not surprisingly, this form of terrorism was very effective. In the April 1868 elections in Columbia County, Georgia, klansmen were able to cow not only black voters, but even armed federal soldiers, and as a result, only one vote was cast for the Republican candidate Ulysses S. Grant.

This was a Thomas Nast cartoon, originally printed in Harpers Weekly, August 8, 1868 on page 512. The head wound suggests an execution style murder of the black man, and the disheveled placement of the body suggests the contempt for the slain man. Empathy is suggested by the representation
of the victim. The black man is presented in a dignified way, and is not caricatured. His body is lying in front of a gravestone that lists the “accomplishments” of the KKK. The reference to the Seymour Ratification is explained further in the next image.

This cartoon, which appeared in the Tuskaloosa Independent Monitor on Sept. 1, 1868, openly threatens two local politicians, “Carpetbagger” Reverend Arad S. Lakin, the Northern-born incoming president of the University of Alabama (who carries the carpetbag labeled “OHIO”). The other victim is Dr. Noah B. Cloud—agricultural reformer, superintendent of education. He is called a “scalawag” by Ryland Randolph, publisher of the newspaper and local KKK leader, for joining Alabama’s reformed state government. The caption, which reads “a prospective scene in the city of oaks 4th of March 1868”, promises this sort of violence should Horatio Seymour, a Democrat, become president on March 4, 1868.
This cartoon, originally published in Harpers Weekly in 1874, implies the condition of formerly enslaved individuals is worse than slavery, due to the actions of the KKK and the White League, another terrorist group. The promise of freedom and the initial hopes and aspirations of black men and women during the start of Reconstruction was been dashed. Note the images of lynching and burning schoolhouse, the reader lying on the ground and the death’s head above. The phrases “the Union as it was”, “this is a white man’s government” and “the Lost Cause” make clear the political and social goals of the Klan. Note the knife and gun in the belt of the klansman and the bayoneted rifle the White League member carries. These are all strong images of violence, and show what has happened in the South after the end of the Civil War.

file:///C:/Users/usclibn/Desktop/Ku%20Klux%20Klan%20in%20the%20Reconstruction%20Era%20_%20New%20Georgia%20Encyclopedia.htm
Reconstruction is the time in American history where formerly enslaved black people were freed from the bonds of slavery and attempted to obtain freedom in all its multitude of facets. Eric Foner in *Forever Free* challenged the reader to consider that to Black Americans, freedom meant more than the removal of chains. To many of the newly freed, freedom encompassed other rights: civil equality, suffrage, ownership of property, economic autonomy, access to education, and the stabilization of family life.27 In this essay, I will focus on the freedom to vote. In 2017 this issue seems especially prescient; voter suppression efforts have increased since the Supreme Court ruled in *Shelby County v. Holder* to remove preapproval under section 5 of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This allowed nine Southern states to change their election laws without advance federal approval. This new period of voter suppression has invoked unsettling memories of the Reconstruction era. Yet Americans currently are voting at historically low levels and the level of apathy and often ignorance of the electoral issues is often a subject of editorial commentary. I would like to explore the voter suppression efforts in the Jim Crow period and the simultaneous efforts black Americans made to exercise their right to vote guaranteed by the 15th Amendment.

In the election of 1868, black men could vote in the south, but did not have the right to do so in many areas of the North and West. The republican party was aware that the Democratic party was making a comeback and the black vote might be key to holding power. Consequently, they sponsored a constitutional amendment to ensure that black men would have the right to vote (and presumably vote Republican). The 15th Amendment, granting African-American men the right to vote, was formally adopted into the U.S. Constitution on March 30, 1870.

The amendment reads: “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

In the initial debate, radical Republicans had proposed that voting restrictions barred include those based on property, literacy, and other classifications, rather than just on race.28 Ironically, the inclusion of

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restrictions other than race in the amendment was opposed by some New England and Western delegates for reasons that had nothing to do with the South and the newly freed black men. Instead these delegates favored having the ability to include voting restrictions that could exclude the Irish and Chinese. Consequently, the amendment focused solely on race.

The Reconstruction Act had authorized black voting only in the South, now African Americans celebrated the extension of suffrage to the entire country. In this first image, one can view the hopes and promise that the 15th Amendment was seen to promise. This is one of several large prints commemorating its enactment. The artist portrays the black men in upper class and military clothing. There is much in the image that would indicate that the formerly enslaved men have earned this right through hard work and education. The ballot boxes rest on “Education” and “Science” columns and are wreathed in oak leaves, a symbol of longevity, humble beginnings, patience, faith, power, endurance, and strength. There are various black men working, including a teacher, blacksmith, stonemason, and a senator. Also included are white benefactors, including Lincoln, and historic figures such as John Brown. The implication is that the voting men were indeed in high company, and deservedly so.

“‘The Fifteenth Amendment and its results’, G.F. Kahl,1870, Lithograph
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003690774/

As Frederick Douglass had predicted, black men came out in droves to vote. In these early days, there were not the legal restrictions that came

http://15thamendment.harpweek.com/HubPages/CommentaryPage.asp?Commentary=03Creation

29 Foner, page 148
later, but there were plenty of discouragements against the franchise. In this next illustration, entitled “The First Vote”, voting was not private which meant that even if the act of voting was uncontested it took courage to do so. The message in this image is clearly positive: the pride of the older black man in voting is apparent from his posture and bearing. This illustration was from the pro-Republican party Harper’s Weekly and includes representative members of the black community standing in line to cast their ballots. The older gentlemen at the front of the line is clearly a workingman as indicated by the tools in his pocket. As he reaches forward with his ballot, he has no expectations of privacy but shows no fear. The tone of the illustration is one of respect for the other black voters represented as seen by the lack of physical and facial distortions.

In the first elections at the end of the Civil War the southern white aristocracy largely boycotted the election process, but were then terrified and angry at the loss of power that resulted as black men swept into power. Clearly, a change of tactics was seen to be needed and the intimidation became more violent and blatant.

“Of course, he wants to vote the Democratic ticket!” A.B. Frost, from *Harper’s Weekly*, October 21, 1876, Cartoon

This cartoon depicts the type of intimidation used in the south by the democratic party to prevent former slaves from voting republican. Although the artist was clearly hostile to this practice, the African American was portrayed as a caricature with exaggerated features showing the generalized racism even in positive material. One’s general impression, however, is one of sympathy since the potential voter was outnumbered and outgunned. The caption states, “Of course he wants to vote the Democratic Ticket! Democratic ‘Reformer’. You’re as free as air, ain’t you? Say you are, or I’ll blow your black head off.” These efforts were successful in the 1868 election. For example, in Kansas, over 2,000 murders were committed in connection with the election. In Georgia, the number of threats and beatings was even higher. And in Louisiana, 1000 blacks were killed as the election neared. In those three states, Democrats won decisive victories at the polls.\(^{30}\)

\(^{30}\) [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/grant-kkk/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/grant-kkk/)

This image, on the other hand, shows the incredible courage of black men who attempted to vote in face of a clear message against black suffrage. This image was in Harper’s Weekly and seemed to be a northern prediction of a coming Democratic sweep in the south by nefarious means. The villains of these intimidation tactics are also clear, the author names the “white League” which was a paramilitary organization formed in 1874 to intimidate black men from voting and turn republicans out of office. The black men portrayed are shown as very respectful and one must wonder if the artist felt he needed to show the men as deferential and thus less frightening to white audiences.

Considering the clear prohibition against voter restrictions tied to race in the 15th amendment, legal restrictions placed on voting had to be surreptitious (although violence and fraud continued). For example, southern politicians embraced literacy tests to exclude black votes, incidentally restricting access to many poor whites. The tests were designed with failure as the goal so that even intelligent, well-educated African Americans would not be successful because of the confusing, difficult questions. If that didn’t serve its purpose, failure was guaranteed since the answers were judged subjectively by a white registrar.

This 1879 cartoon from Harper’s Weekly is clearly criticizing the use of literacy tests for African Americans as a qualification to vote. A man identified as "Mr. Solid South" is shown writing on a wall, "Eddikashun qualifukashun. The Black man porter be eddikated afore he kin vote with us Wites, signed Mr. Solid South." Although the statement is signed by Mr. Solid South, it could be argued that it is Uncle Sam who is derisively writing the words which would imply general American condemnation. Here it is clear the artist is not arguing for the vote because of some virtue of the formerly enslaved man on the woodpile since he looks slovenly and absurdly comic. Instead the artist’s message seems to be that white men in the south were similarly illiterate. Congress finally abolished literacy tests in the South with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and nationwide in 1970.

Another type of commonly used restriction on voting was the poll tax. Again, this was an effort to circumvent the 15th amendment and would include poor whites in its sweep. This was started in Georgia in 1871 and was followed by every southern state in subsequent years. The Georgia poll tax probably reduced overall turnout by 16-28%, and black turnout in half.31

31 J. Morgan Kousser, The Shaping of Southern Politics Suffrage Restriction and the
Although the states argued revenue justification for these laws, the disenfranchising purpose was clear since no states brought prosecutions against anyone for failure to pay the tax. In 1964, the states ratified the 24th Amendment which prohibited poll taxes in federal elections. Two years later, the Supreme Court struck down poll taxes as unconstitutional violations of the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment in Harper v. Virginia Board of Elections.

Another effective disenfranchising technique used after 1890 was the ‘whites only’ primary. These efforts were cleverly designed to avoid the reach of the Reconstruction amendments which only regulated state behavior. The states could argue that Democratic Party was a private association which was able to regulate and select its “membership.” The effect was devastating for black voters since the south had effectively become a one-party region as the disenfranchisement of black republicans came to fruition. This meant that the election was basically a foregone conclusion by the general election vote which the African American were nominally allowed to participate. The whites only primary wasn’t struck down by the courts until 1953 in the Supreme Court’s ruling in Terry v. Adams.

Lastly, some southern states, notably Mississippi, also used a grandfather clause to disenfranchise African Americans. This stated that only voters whose grandfather could vote before the Civil War was eligible for registration. Without even mentioning race, this measure obviously excluded all African Americans. This measure, along with the others already discussed were overwhelmingly successful. Mississippi reduced the number of African Americans registering to vote from 90% during Reconstruction to less than 6% in 1892. The grandfather clause was found unconstitutional inn 1915 in Guinn v. United States, though the ruling was ignored in some states and circumvented in Oklahoma.

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32 http://www.umich.edu/~lawrace/disenfranchise1.htm
34 http://www.blackpast.org/aah/grandfather-clause-1898-1915
There are few images I could locate from the southern press, probably because there were no Southern weeklies. I have included the above image to show the attitudes of the public that was opposed to the African American franchise. This image was not from the south, but from a 1866 Pennsylvania election gubernatorial election by the Democratic supporters of white supremacist Hiestet Clymer. In this image, there are African American pushing past white veteran soldiers and other whites to vote. There is a myriad of messages in this poster both implicit and explicit. The author is playing on soldiers and their families supposed outrage that seemingly poor and ignorant black men would think they had more right to vote than poor whites and especially white veterans. In addition, there is a clear class message since a wealthy white man is shown lamenting losing his power to black men. Although this image predates the 1874 economic panic and labor unrest, there might be audience receptive to the view that blacks would be a competitive threat in the north. In addition, there is clear appeal to the fear that blacks are ignorant and will be pawns to be manipulated and “ruled” by the Republicans.

Disenfranchisement of African-Americans in Reconstruction was based on both laws, violent terrorism and fraud. In the 20th century, most of
these efforts were ruled unconstitutional. However, the limitations of the 15th amendment regarding voting restrictions leave our system vulnerable to continued efforts to suppress voting by African Americans and other groups.
Silencing the Squeaky Wheel of Progress

Elise Robison

“Slavery… that slow Poison, which is daily contaminating the Minds and Morals of our people” (George Mason, 1773). In my quest to seek clarification on the national narrative that is still very problematic when discussing African Americans, I wanted to re-examine the 13th Amendment and assess its ties to modern day mass incarceration and the current national dialogue that is occurring across this country.

By examining political cartoons, images, documents, and photographs, my objective is to gain a better understanding of the power of images and how imagery coupled with words has shaped our historical memory. Our memories have thoroughly impacted how we as a country have chosen to tell the story of Reconstruction and the newly freed men/women and their story through time. Although some may say Reconstruction was merely derailed, it is to be argued that its progress was stunted by silencing the voices of the oppressed persons for whom justice and law have been sporadic in providing protection against the political, social, and economic inequalities that have consistently plagued this country.

The 13th Amendment was a starting point for the literal freeing of the former slaves. I have selected a cartoon from Harpers Weekly by Thomas Nast titled, “The Emancipation of Negros, January 1863 – the past and the future”. In this cartoon Nast is attempting to show the celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation written and read by Lincoln in the landmark movement of freeing the slaves. As you look at the picture you can get a biblical feel to the way the story is displayed and told with Abe Lincoln enclosed in a frame in lower center of the photo. Within this photo Nast was able to capture the past and the perceived present for the newly freed slaves and the potential promises a new beginning holds. Above Lincoln, in the center of the photo is a slave family pictured; I believe this depiction of the family holds multiple points of power through the use of imagery and placement. Family was an integral part of the slave narrative that might have been sold from biological family members; religion, friendship, and companionship were essential for survival in slave communities. Portraying this as the focal point in this political cartoon shows just how essential the family unit is to the progression of the newly freed men and women. The caring and empathetic nature is a perfect portrayal of the care and conditioning it would take to weather such tragic social, political, economic, and humanitarian oppression. The family is placed in the center of the cartoon acting as the axel of the wheel of progress. The surrounding segments of the drawing act as spokes to a wheel; and the rotation of the wheel represents the movement of progress.
wheel signaling a progress towards the natural rights newly freed persons had been granted. With the drawings on the left of the photo you can see things that occurred in the past for the slaves. For example, at the bottom left of the photo you see the whipping of slaves and the physical oppression imposed on the slaves by the masters of “their” universe.

As the wheel rotates you see the slave auctions that continue mentally and physically oppress. In the clouds in a very Michelangelo stylistic form you see the devil pictured as a ruler of the world of slavery as their ultimate master. This Biblical like portrayal of life not only displays the actual implications of good and evil but; also acts as a nod to the extreme faith most slaves carried within them to manage their daily lives. As the wheel continues to rotate towards progress in the photo you see the devil fade to angels in the clouds and segments of the cartoon that depict what the promise of Emancipation can bring such as; freedom of space and place, education, opportunity in the work force, and the ultimate freedom of the vote. Progress takes time but, the sentiments delivered in this picture cannot go unnoticed and the power that is granted with such simple words and concepts of what being a newly freed person entails. Lincoln with his words “I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorizes thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons (Lincoln, 1/1/1863). With these words and this proclamation the freeing of the slaves was stated and lawfully done however, progress does not just happen at the drop of the pen but with action.
The second political cartoon I have selected is depicting the negative fallacies of the Freedmen’s Bureau which intern will contribute to a skewed narrative of what a “freed black body” will desire and be capable of politically, socially, and economically. The political cartoon I have selected is titled “The Freedman’s Bureau and Agency to keep the Negro in Idleness at the Expense of the White Man”. Not only is the African American man the focal point of the cartoon but also he is depicted in such a way that displays the outdated stereotypes of the era. With an over emphasis on his ape like characteristics that plays on physical image but to as well as intelligence which was frequently used to depict blacks as being genetically less than capable. In the cartoon displayed above his physical traits are assumptions of what the “American Dream” is for the man that is depicted. Placing “white women” as a focal point of black male desire set an unrealistic path of trying to protect the purity of white women from the newly freed “untamed” beings. By the papers openly printing such blatant misconceptions of black aspirations they merely belittled the power of the American dream and set up false narrative of fear that was linked to the newly freed persons. This false narrative led to the creation of American terrorist that bore out of fear of the unknown and ignorance that surrounded the newly freed persons. With this new found threat the nation needed to find a way to suppress of fears of society and create a way of controlling the newly freedmen to protect the innocence of white society from black
ways. So a system of imprisonment was created that acted as a form of servitude where black bodies would still be used for free labor as they were in slavery. However, now this form of servitude begins to take on another form. Incarceration, the technicality for subduing the progress of these newly freed slaves.

The third image I selected is of a Southern Chain Gang in 1898. The thinking behind the selection of this particular photograph stems from a quote in the book “Slavery by Another Name”. “The Harsher reality of the South was that the new post-Civil War slavery was evolving-not disappearing” (Blackmon, pg 352). This transformative step slavery took can simply be quantified to a new form of servitude. Some of the men in servitude were captured and held by former white masters and forced into terrible working conditions with no pay and abusive overseers. In this photo the men are depicted in striped prisoners garb with tools for working the soil. While it may appear to be a contrast from the formerly enslaved people; it has just transformed into slavery by another name. However, the largest difference with the shift in the forms of servitude is the profiting of the system. The benefit has shifted from singular plantation masters to benefiting the system that profits off the enslavement/incarceration of newly freed persons. Thus making way for the necessity of the prison industrial complex; which continues to have a solution for the perceived problem of the Black populous and their integration into society. If you face the situation of imprisonment you cannot economically contribute to bettering your own life but to a system, which will hold ultimate power over your future. This not only cuts off economic freedom but the freedom to have power over your
life. The pipes are closed for funding educational conquest but are wide open for the profitable prisons by continuing to fill them with the free labor at the expense of Black lives and freedom. Often times those impacted by this situation can see their impeding faith but do not have the resources or the power to stop the pipeline from sucking them in only to find the pipes are an infinite path of pipes leading to the draining of their society.

I have selected two political cartoons that represent the defunding of public education and the prison industrial system that profits off the bodies it collects. I have selected a cartoon from the Youth Justice Collation on school to prison pipelining. Two white characters have been sketched with labels on their suits indicative of their societal status. One bearing the sign of “sorry no funds, public education” and the other “prison industrial complex, welcome”.

These two signs symbolize the defunding of a future because the future has already been solidified an unfortunate collateral of when capitalism and society meet. The other political cartoon I have selected that I believe goes hand and hand with this by Horsey in his Los Angeles Times, 2014 cartoon titled “The American Dream Game”. In this cartoon Horsey displays two characters in a game that represents life. The white student having a straight path that is much shorter with two squares that give him privileges that are only accessible by white ethnicity and ancestry. The African American is subject to a much more windy path to reach the same goal of the “American Dream”. These two depictions display in a simplistic format the systemic differences in our societal piping. The sullen look displayed on the Black students face in juxtaposition of the look of confusion and or disbelief on the White students face is the depiction of the lack of awareness many people face with the social inequalities we are presented
with in this present day. The White student at the bottom ask “are you just slow or what?” not realizing the free passes he had been granted by right of birth. This lack of acknowledgement of racial privilege is apparent in the lack of empathy this character is displaying for another persons struggle.

Our attempts to stop this pipelining of young African Americans has been halted by the silencing of our voices on a national level. Black lives matter…. ALL LIVES MATTER… I can’t breath… Lets wait for the facts… Unarmed black male… The police felt like his life was in danger… BLUE LIVES MATTER. Our narrative in this country has been skewed by the
victors whom are ashamed of their truths, so ashamed that they’ve eliminated many attempts at allowing facts to be presented on a variety of topics. The last cartoon I have selected is of Colin Kapernick who decided to take on a silent protest of police brutality by kneeling during the National Anthem. In doing this he has been blackballed from the NFL and currently has not been signed by a team. He has been called a traitor and his jerseys have been burned at an alarming rate. People telling him he’s being disrespectful. Now, I am choosing to address this for a number of reasons but the most important being a closure to my story. The more skewed the narrative is the less people will be willing to hear of the struggles that the African American community is facing. This cartoon depicts a White male flying the confederate flag pointing the finger at a kneeling Colin Kapernick silently protesting the flag he believes has not protected him. Ironically we as a country historically have been quicker to support a narrative of racism and hate than we have of progress and equality. This cartoon depicts just that.

Through examining the 13th Amendment and its link to mass incarceration today you can see that the false narratives we as a country have been should have been in place to keep the oppressors comfortable. At the expense of the once silenced oppressed. Oppression is powerful it changes narratives, bends history, and eliminates progress. How can we address the shortcomings of history if we can’t acknowledge their presence?

Works Cited
2. Library of Congreses: “The Freedman's Bureau! An agency to keep the Negro in idleness at the expense of the white man”. “Twice vetoed by the President, and made a law by Congress. Support Congress & you support the Negro Sustain the President & you protect the white man”. 1866
3. Blackmon: Slavery by Another Name “Southern chain gang” pg. 352
5. Youth Justice Collation: School to Prison Pipeline cartoon (date and original artist unknown)
“Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters, U.S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States” (McPherson 163).

For the freed black men, who were either already freedmen free, escaped slaves, or newly freed due to the Emancipation Proclamation, among other acts, joining the military was more than a means for securing their freedom, it was about the preceding opportunities to advance, not just as African Americas, but as citizens of the United States of America. Becoming
a soldier after years of servitude for their masters, allowed them to envision what it means might mean to be American. It was about self-sacrifice, courage, hope, and a chance to become a citizen of a nation that gave the promise of equality, fairness, and justice. As Frederick Douglass proclaimed in his speech concerning the enlisting of hundreds of freedmen into the military, once these men have completed their duty to their government and their country, who would be willing to deny them the rights of men that are due to them, in the same way as whites, after having “proven their patriotism” (163) but more importantly, their loyalty to a cause that deemed blacks’ inferior to the superior white race, showcasing their own supremacy. This last sentence needs clarification.

One of the first photos (as seen above in figure 1) of the initial military infantry, recruited entirely of blacks, with all white officers as their leaders, shows the Army’s first all-black regiment, is of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry from the North. This was the first all-black regiment that recruited, which ere army and was at first originally viewed as an experimental endeavor. It is a far cry of from the previous pictures of African Americans, who were depicted as grotesque, idle, destitute, and dehumanizing. Instead, the troops of this regiment are standing tall and proud, in full uniforms, cleaned, shaven, with their muskets in their hands, displaying their sense of pride at supporting a cause for liberty, not as slaves, but as freemen, as soldiers, and future citizens of a new social and national order.

It became evident even before the creation of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, the Union troops realized early on that if they wanted to overtake Charleston, South Carolina, they would have to take over capture two major Confederate forts in the Charleston Harbor that worked diligently to protect their famous city, Fort Sumter and Fort Wagner, on Morris Island, which “guarded the entrance to the harbor” (Kashatus, 1). Note: Maybe move this description of the 54th’s attacks on Sumter and Fort Wagner to the end of the essay, where you talk about this campaign?

Prior to the recruitment of these brave souls, it was difficult to enlist black men into the army. At the beginning of the Civil War, strong opposition by the North to enlist blacks due to widespread prejudice and the “1792 law which barred ‘persons of color from serving in the militia’” (1) kept the U.S. government from accepting recruits into the army. These views began to shift when the Northern Union troops lost major decisive battles against the Confederates and fewer whites refused to join the army, further prompting Congress to pass two acts, one of which is the Confiscation Act “declaring all slaves of rebel masters free as soon as they came into Union lines” and the “Militia Act,” which allowed the president to “‘employ as many persons of African descent’” (2) into the Union army in any naval or military service for the Union cause. In addition, Congress also repealed the
1792 law, granting full recruitment into the military of any persons, regardless of race or ethnicity. Under these new acts, the War Department granted permission to General Saxton, military governor of the Sea Islands, South Carolina complete jurisdiction to create five regiments of black troops, with white officers. While there were continuous debates and opposition from many Unionists, black volunteers begun enlisting into the military. This was the start of a new era, one in which the federal government recognized blacks equal enough to serve alongside their fellow white counterparts in joint effort for freedom and recognition of their valor and dedication to their country, in the hopes of granted their constitutional rights.

After two years of war after the succession of the Southern states from the Union, with no real end in sight and the “seemingly endless casualty lists” (Gates, 136), it became clear to Lincoln and his administration that the recruitment of black freedmen would be necessary for any chance to preserve the Union. Facing opposition from the North, Lincoln waited for the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation prior to the massive call and calling for the recruitment of black soldiers from the North. Boston’s black leader Lewis Hayden urged the Massachusetts governor John A. Andrew to formulate a regiment of black troops. Receiving official notice from the War

![Figure 2. “To Colored Men. 54th Regiment!” Image courtesy of Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston (original Boston: J. E. Farwell & Co., [1863])](image)

Hayden urged the Massachusetts governor John A. Andrew to formulate a regiment of black troops. Receiving official notice from the War
Department, the governor enlisted Amos Lawrence, George L. Stearns, William Bowditch, John M. Forbes, Frances G. Shaw, and Morris Hallowell, all wealthy upper class men to “serve on an advisory committee and organize the regiment” (137). Mixed reactions occurred among the blacks. Some rushed to enter the military with the hope of ending slavery and racism at the same time; others were hesitant, fearing aggression and mistreatment among white officers from the Army. Frederick Douglas, the famous abolitionist, generated and sent out recruitment posters to persuade black men to enlist in the “Colored Men to Arms!” campaign, raising up to $5000 for the cause, with while the government promising promised equal pay, benefits, and resources to the soldiers and their families for their service. In the figure below, the recruitment poster proposed special privileges including “13 dollars a month” pay, “good food and clothing,” and “state aid to families.” In addition, it was a chance for the men to fight for a cause bigger than themselves, the price of freedom and liberty. Some of the wording in the poster, begs the question: , what did the bounty signify, as it states “’Bounty $100 at the expiration of the term of service.” Typically, a bounty is was a reward paid to those citizens who bring brought in a fugitive on the run, but in this circumstance, it meant that each soldier would be paid an additional 100 dollars each for joining the service.

The issue of unequal pay equality soon became an issue, as white soldiers were paid $3 dollars more a month, and many black recruits didn’t receive the benefits promised to them, such as state aid for families and s. Some bounties were as low as $50 dollars. Feeling responsible for the unequal pay of black soldiers, Governor Andrews and the Massachusetts legislature vowed to pay the difference out of their own monies and did so by passing an act in November 1863 using state funding (Massachusetts Historical Society, p. 1). This prompted many enlistees to reject the governor’s proposal and rebel against this unequal treatment, demanding full benefits from the federal government. General Shaw, the commander of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, and his brother in law, George William Curtis, believed in the equalization of white and black military pay. Curtis wrote an editorial to that effect in the magazine, Harper’s Weekly, published on February 13, 1864, in an attempt to persuade popular opinion in support of the equalization of pay, even lobbying Congress for changes to that effect. The picture below is a copy of that editorial written by Curtis, entitled “A Gross Injustice.” In the editorial, he calls Congress and the rest of the racist nation out of their prejudices claiming…” “If colored men are apes, don’t enlist them.” Why treat black soldiers with indifference by the federal government then have a call to arms to help them defend their nation, their honor, and their liberty in times of war? The editor points out their hypocrisy and inability to see that the black soldiers are not just soldiers, they are men, human just like the whites and should be treated with the same dignity and
respect, for they have “risked their life for the country…. we shall not fail to protest as earnestly and persistently as we can” (Curtis, p.1-2). Congress didn’t pass the legislation to grant full equal pay to black soldiers until June 15, 1864, four months after Curtis’ publication (History Net, p.2).

Figure 3. “A Gross Injustice.” Courtesy of the House Divided Project-Harper’s Weekly, February 13, 1864, p. 98: 2.)
After the “Militia Act” was passed and Lincoln’s administration began the mass recruitment of African American freedmen and escaped slaves, there continued to be opposition about what role the African Americans would play in their new found roles of as “soldiers.” Representations of African Americans in cartoons and illustrations began to shift from negative depictions of the freedmen to more positive characteristics, as portrayed in cartoons and illustrations. One of the depictions of the ideal can be seen in the picture below, entitled “The Escaped Soldier Slave and the Union Soldier,” taken from a *Harper’s Weekly* magazine editorial published on July 2, 1864. This short editorial published in *Harper’s Weekly* describes two pictures, has two illustrations of the same man – one shows him as a fugitive slave from Montgomery, Alabama and the other as a Union soldier. While at first he was a “poor fugitive oppressed with the weariness of two hundred long miles of dusty travel,” *Harper’s Weekly* explains that he enlisted in the USCT and became a “solder crowned with freedom and honor.” The Union soldier image doesn’t adequately portray what the African Americans endured after being enlisted into the army. Many of the soldiers were not only discriminated against by the white officers, but they were and segregated from their white counterparts. The army was reluctant to commission black officers, specifically and many black soldiers. Many of them were denied supplies or rations. Nevertheless, despite the unequal treatment, the Union soldiers prevailed and showed their strength in numbers and on the battlefield.

Figure 4. “The Escaped Slave and the Union Solder” (Courtesy of the House Divided Project- *Harper’s Weekly*, July 2, 1864, p. 422:1.)
The men of the 54th Massachusetts regiment trained hard at Fort Miegs in Readville, MA under the careful scrutiny of the white officers, many of whom didn’t believe the black soldiers wouldn’t have the guts and the glory to march off to battle. To show their support of for the troops prior to their entrance into battle against Fort Wagner on Morris Island, SC, Governor Andrew visited the troops along with abolitionists including Frederick Douglass, whose two sons had enlisted into the regiment, and “presented Shaw with regimental flags” (History Net, p. 4). They had a special parade for the troops in Boston. Shaw continuously protested the ill treatment of his troops, especially when he realized they were forced to do manual labor on a wharf bound for Port Royal and go on a “pointless raid on the town of Darien” (4). Shaw felt like this troops weren’t given the opportunity to prove what they were trained to do and determined to do, protect their country, support the Union cause wholeheartedly, even if that meant to die with their men, with dignity and honor. The war for the soldiers was more about a few rations, state aid, or even the $13 a month, it was their chance to stand up against the inequalities and injustices faced not just by the soldiers, but for the entire African American race.

The picture below, is a prime example of a soldier from the 54th Massachusetts regiment who acted on principle, one signifying honor and loyalty to his country, an act of patriotism, even though he was a product of the discrimination the African American soldiers continuously faced. William Harvey Carney was, born a slave in Virginia, escaped, and enlisted in the 54th Massachusetts. During the fighting, Carney rescued the American

Figure 5. William Harvey Carney, Medal of Honor, 54th Massachusetts
(Image credit: Massachusetts Historical Society, photo taken in 1864)
flag when the standard bearer fell. He carried the flag to the enemy's ramparts and back, saying "Boys, the old flag never touched the ground!"

Carney, due to his bravery and diligence to survive, was severely wounded from the battle, in his chest, legs, and arms, and yet “keep the flag aloft.” (Horton & Horton, p. 1) Carney and the other men of the 54th regiment remained laying top some of the men, many severely hurt, and were later able to escape when reinforcements came. He was discharged from the army for his wounds. Carny was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1900 for rallying the troops at Fort Wagner.

Seven months after the 54th Massachusetts Infantry paraded on Boston Common, Robert Gould Shaw led about 600 troops of 54th Massachusetts Regiment in an assault on Fort Wagner at the mouth of Charleston Harbor. Nearly half were killed, wounded or captured. Shaw was killed and tossed into a common grave with seventy-four of his men. The picture below, is a mural painting of the attack at Fort Wagner. It is a powerful account of the chaos that occurred during the battle, but reminiscent of the pride and perseverance that the men showed as they fought against the Confederates. In one part of the scene, two African Americans tried to save their dying commander, General Shaw, as they apply pressure to his wound in the chest to stop the bleeding. In the center of the picture is a depiction of Carney holding on to the flag for dear life in an expression of sheer will and determination to not go down without a fight and uphold their emblem of patriotism and loyalty to the Union. Though they failed to take the fort, their skill and courage quelled any doubt about the fighting ability of African-American soldiers. It further proved that the valiant soldiers’ ability to fight courageously and relentlessly in any battle, and sealed the notion that they should have the same rights and privileges as an American citizen, as the whites did.

Figure 6. "The 54th Massachusetts regiment, under the leadership of Colonel Shaw in the attack on Fort Wagner, Morris Island, South Carolina, in 1863," mural at the Recorder of Deeds building, built in 1943. 515 D St., NW, Washington, D.C. Image courtesy of Carol Highsmith, photographer
Works Cited


Soldier Citizens: African Americans’ Fight for Citizenship and Rights

Michael Schutz

Nearly ninety percent of the Union army consisted of volunteers. These were the men (and some women) who chose to leave their families behind to risk their lives for their country. The citizen soldier – the individual who, like Cincinnatus in ancient Rome, heeds his nation’s call to service in time of crisis – is the quintessential American hero, from the time of Washington through the WWII G.I. to present day. Appropriately, the volunteer soldier has always been held as the highest American ideal of selflessness, courage, discipline, and devotion. By the end of the Civil War over 180,000 African Americans had served in the Union Army, despite not being considered citizens of the country they were fighting for. Uniquely for African Americans, soldier came first, and only through their sacrifices on the field of battle did they win freedom and citizenship for all African Americans.

As was the case for so many events and changes, the first African American troops during the Civil War were mustered at Point Royal, South Carolina. The Port Royal harbor and surrounding sea isles were captured by Union forces in the fall of 1861, which resulted in what has become known as the “great skedaddle” of white Southerners from the area. As the war raged on throughout the country, freed African Americans and Union forces immediately began the process of reconstruction, establishing schools and independent communities. The US army also moved quickly to secure the valuable islands, the cotton they grew and to prepare for continued military advances into the South. The lack of reinforcements from the Union army though caused them to first consider utilizing the formerly enslaved persons, whose legal status was now unclear, as soldiers.

On May 12, 1862 five hundred African American men were offered the opportunity to join the army, and as Laura Towne, the missionary teacher from the North, noted, “nearly all were eager to go” (110). These volunteers became the first black regiment of the war, but even as they trained their status was unclear. General Hunter had acted without official orders from Washington, and Lincoln, always conscious of popular opinion throughout the North and especially within the loyal slave-holding Border States, was extremely wary of the political consequences of what was considered the revolutionary step of arming African Americans. Although awareness of the African American troops in Port Royal was not widely known in the North, the reaction in the Confederacy was both quick and predictable. Confederate
President Jefferson Davis used the presence of armed black soldiers to rally Southerners to increase their war efforts and cast the Union army as villains who would arm “slaves for the murder of their masters” and declared Hunter a felon subject to execution if captured (119). As the cartoon from an 1861 northern newspaper captioned “dark artillery, or, How to make the contrabands useful” shows, the idea of African American soldiers at the start of the war was seen as a laughable concept because they lacked the intellect, courage, and discipline required of a soldier.

https://www.loc.gov/item/89716300/

Although the regiment in Port Royal was ultimately disbanded without seeing combat, Hunter described the soldiers as, “attentive and enthusiastic – displaying great natural capacity in acquiring the duties of the soldier,” and declared it a “complete and marvelous success (117).” Although there are other sporadic accounts of African Americans being used by or in the army or as armed guards, it was not until the Emancipation Proclamation was issued on January 1, 1863 that African Americans gain full access to the United States Army. The Proclamation not only declared over 3 million enslaved people in rebelling states free, but ordered that all persons, “of suitable condition… be received into the armed service of the United States…” This opened the floodgates for black enlistments from both free African Americans from the North, and newly liberated slaves. Lincoln recognized the inseparable nature of these two pieces of the Emancipation Proclamation – freedom and fighting. In the face of opposition to both of these in the North he stated clearly that, “if they [African Americans] stake
their lives for us, they must be prompted by the strongest of motive – even the promise of freedom. And the promise being made, must be kept.”

Although this iconic painting, “Storming Fort Wagner”, depicting the storming of Fort Wagner by the 54th Massachusetts colored regiment, was not painted until 1890, its depiction of the heroic charge symbolizes what was becoming a common attitude in the North by the end of the war. The image of an African American soldier carrying the American flag over the ramparts and black and white Union soldiers fighting side by side reflects the newly held respect for African American soldiers which was impossible not to influence wider racial views.

http://cdn.loc.gov/service/pnp/pga/01900/01949r.jpg

In March of 1864 the New York Times described the rapid and revolutionary changes that had taken hold throughout the North. Having been rocked by a racially fueled draft riot the previous year in which African Americans had been brutally attacked and killed and during which an African American orphanage was burned to the ground, New York in the spring of 1864 had undergone a radical transformation as it witnessed the departure of a colored regiment. Watching the soldiers march off towards battle New Yorkers, “saluted with waving handkerchiefs, with descending flowers, and with the acclimations and plaudits of countless beholders.”

These and many other contributions to the war effort did eventually lead to changing attitudes towards all African Americans among Northerners. By the end of the war many were convinced that the courage and sacrifice shown by African American soldiers had earned their race at least equal political rights, even if the overwhelming majority of white Americans were still far from feeling full equality. Thomas Nast’s cartoon from August 1865 “Shall I Trust These Men and Not This Man?” features Columbia both looking down with scorn at former Confederate leaders seeking pardons and standing beside a wounded, but proud, African American soldier. Nast’s
cartoon reflected the increasingly more common view at the beginning of Reconstruction as the nation faced a myriad of questions regarding who would be citizens and with what rights, that perhaps African American soldiers were more deserving of the honor than traitorous white southerners.

These newly held beliefs led to the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments abolishing slavery, defining citizenship, and the right to vote regardless of race, respectively. During the period of Reconstruction Northern support for African American rights brought about major changes throughout the country as African Americans participated in and heavily influenced the political process for the first time in America’s history. In South Carolina African Americans represented a majority of the delegates that developed the South Carolina Constitutional of 1868, which included such progressive and democratic reforms as universal male suffrage, abolishing debtor’s prison, public education, and an increase in women’s rights (a provision for female suffrage was narrowly defeated). During the Reconstruction years African Americans throughout the South participated in elections and served in office at local, state and national levels.

Despite these legal and political advances during the Reconstruction years, the gains proved to be short lived. During the course of the Civil War the South was devastated economically and socially and a large percentage of adult males had been wounded or killed. However, the one thing the South did not lose was their belief in white supremacy and they set about restoring
a social system that reflected those beliefs as soon as they were able to.
Because black citizen soldiers represented a threat to this ideology, they were specifically targeted in the years after the Civil War. In 1868 Secretary of War Edwin Stanton issued a report to Congress that described how black veterans, “were the special objects of persecution, and in hundreds of instances have been driven from their homes.”

After the end of Reconstruction America regressed into segregation and Jim Crow laws and the sacrifices African American soldiers had been made were quickly forgotten. The United States Navy, where the lack of volunteers, isolation, and the dangerous nature of the duty had resulted in the branch to be historically integrated on ships was first segregated in the 1890s. At the 50th anniversary of the battle of Gettysburg, while the KKK surged in popularity and violence and persecution was inflicted on blacks across the country, President Wilson spoke only of honor, reconciliation, and the greatness of America. Despite being the largest ever reunion of Civil War soldiers from both sides of the war, the only African Americans present were servants. As Frederick Douglass lamented in 1871, Americans chose to forget, in the name of patriotism and reconciliation, the sacrifices and honor of the African American soldiers of the Civil War.
There would of course be more wars to fight though. During World War I, over 350,000 African Americans served in the armed forces, but were forced to serve in segregated units and were used almost entirely as support troops due to similar arguments used at the outset of the Civil War: that they lacked the courage and discipline required of a true soldier. And so despite the service of hundreds of thousands of African Americans, little changed in America’s segregated society, and indeed many returning veterans were attacked or lynched once returning home as whites sought to stamp out any ideas of change following World War I. This attitude was on display in the Senate when Mississippi Senator James Vardaman warned that returning black veterans would, “lead to disaster” because the service had, “inflate[d] his untutored soul with military airs” which would lead to demands for political rights that the Mississippi had long denied them.

Mass violence was effective in silencing a Civil Rights movement after World War I, and instead, the most dramatic turning point though would come two decades later with America’s entry into World War II. During the course of that conflict over 1 million African Americans served in the armed forces despite poor treatment in segregated units. As in the Civil War, many black regiments became highly decorated, including the 761st tank battalion, which received a Presidential Unit Citation for “extraordinary heroism.” The 99th fighter squadron, commonly known as the Tuskegee Airmen, received 150 flying crosses. At the same time African Americans recognized the irony and contradictions of fighting for democracy and right across the world while being denied basic rights home in America, leading to the double V campaign for democracy at home and abroad.

Many Americans saw these demands for equal citizenship, and the very notion of African Americans in uniform, as a threat to their way of life.
As African American veterans returned home, attacks against them were terrifyingly common because what they had achieved in war, if recognized, had the potential to undermine America’s racial caste system. One of the most pivotal attacks was against Isaac Woodward, a decorated army sergeant, who, within three hours of his honorable discharge and while still in uniform, was arrested and attacked by white police officers after attempting to use a restroom marked as white. Woodward’s eyes were gouged during the attack, leaving him permanently blinded.

As was almost always the case, his attacker was acquitted by an all white jury. Although these attacks were intended to further solidify America’s system of white supremacy, the attacks against those who had so honorably served their country so outraged many Americans that so that many realized changes must be made. As was the case at the end of the Civil War, the sacrifices and courage of African Americans during and after the war led to dramatic changes in American attitudes towards race. President Truman, himself a veteran of World War I, was outraged by the attack on Woodward and others, exclaiming: “my very stomach turned over when I learned that Negro soldiers, just back from overseas, were being dumped out of army trucks in Mississippi and beaten” and declaring, “I shall fight to end evils like this” Truman (341).

Historians continue to debate when the modern Civil Rights movement, often referred to as the Second Reconstruction, began, but it is widely agreed that the service and new expectations of African Americans in World War II was the catalyst for the changes that would come in the following decades. In many ways the changes that occurred throughout the 1950s and 60s were simply the fulfillment of the promises made during Reconstruction of full citizenship and rights for African Americans. It is important to remember though that the gains first seen during Reconstruction were quickly rolled back in the decades that followed. As the historian
David Blight has stated, there is not a steady trajectory throughout time towards equality and justice and, “history is not going anywhere in particular.” As history has show, rights won can be lost and without continued courage and sacrifice nothing can be gained.
“History does not merely refer to the past…history is literally present in all we do.” This quote from James Baldwin encapsulates the most important lesson United States history teachers must convey to students: the impact of history on events today. All one must do is turn on the television to see the impact of the Reconstruction era on present-day America. However, according to Reconstruction scholar Eric Foner, the Reconstruction period is the one from all of American history that high school students and adults have the least amount of knowledge. According to Stanford’s Daisy Martin, 50% of AP students got zero points on the Reconstruction short answer question on the Advanced Placement United States History test. This lack of knowledge certainly impacts the memory of the period, but it does not hinder the importance of the period on the lives of these Americans. In addition, many see issues around race and memory of the Civil War and Reconstruction as one present exclusively in the South; this is simply not the case. Every American is impacted by these issues. The events that occurred during the Reconstruction period, traditionally placed between 1865 and 1877, are impactful in the lives of Americans today regardless of geographical location within the nation and are essential learning which must be taught to American students.

With the newly minted Reconstruction National Memorial in January 2017, Reconstruction has been increasingly in the national consciousness. Signing the proclamation to make this site a national memorial was one of the last acts of President Barack Obama’s presidency. The process to get the park created was one ridden with controversy and turmoil. Michael Allan, a National Park Ranger that worked for over a decade advocating for the establishment of a national park commemorating the period of Reconstruction, stated people did not even want to say the word “Reconstruction” aloud in the beginning of the discussion. Foner, instrumental in the establishment of the site, says that “…the United States, both in public memory and public policy, has yet to come to terms with the impact of slavery on its history, and the long-term consequences of the overthrow of Reconstruction.” Teaching students the true nature of the institution of slavery and the ramifications of it help move the nation in the direction of coming to terms with it. Additionally, having open and honest dialog with students about slavery will undoubtedly help them learn the connections between it and the current racial dynamics of the United States.
Image 1 shows South Carolina Congressman Jim Clyburn with the Park Service director, Jonathan Jarvis at one of the sites for the park. Taking the controversy into consideration, it is not coincidental that it was a black congressman that helped push for the park or that it was the first black President that finally signed the park into existence. There were concerns for those in favor of the site if the paperwork was not pushed through quickly enough to be signed before the end of President Obama’s tenure, the park would never come to fruition. This is evidence to support Foner’s assertion that the nation as a whole has yet to come to terms with slavery and Reconstruction.

The Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist group formed by former Confederate soldiers during Reconstruction to continue the oppression of freedmen and freedwomen, is thought by many students to be a dead or dying institution. However, this organization has been front and center in the news again as of late. Symbols of hate such as the Confederate flag (which is in actuality the battle flag of the Army of Northern Virginia) and white hoods
(not part of the KKK uniform until after Reconstruction when introduced in
the popular film *Birth of a Nation*) are found on streets of many American
cities. Nowhere has it been more prominent recently than in the city of
Charlottesville, Virginia. Image 2 shows a rally held to protest the removal of
the Robert E. Lee statue. The strength in this picture, though, is the counter
protesters. In response to the symbolism of the Ku Klux Klan are signs
declaring “Racism Destroys Lives” and “SMASH White Supremacy.”
Similar to the Reconstruction era, individuals and groups are standing up to
hate and terrorism today. Arguments and rhetoric used by the KKK today
and during the end of the nineteenth century are similar: fight against the
changes occurring or the power of white people will be diminished.
Understanding the history of the KKK will help students recognize coded
language that is used today. As well, learning the history of the monuments
will help students understand the meaning the monuments have for many and
why people want them removed. The Lost Cause mentality formulated
during Reconstruction is still alive and well; this is clearly demonstrated in
the image below.

![Image 2: July 8, 2017 KKK Rally in Charlottesville, Virginia](image)


Being from the northern part of the Midwest and a Union state
during the Civil War, my students typically believe the Ku Klux Klan is a

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part of the South but not our home. It is essential students understand this organization is alive and well throughout the entire nation. An important tool illustrating this for students is the Hate Map from the Southern Poverty Law Center. This map shows the hate groups the organization is tracking throughout the entire nation. Students need to see we are still fighting the battles of Reconstruction throughout the nation—not just in the South. Another way to illustrate this is to show students local examples. Image 3 is from a recent news report in my own state of Minnesota. This KKK recruitment placard was found in a local high school. This placard illustrates for students not only the evidence of the KKK’s existence in Minnesota but also that the organization is working to recruit younger members. It is likely a student brought this into the school, so the inference can be made that teenagers are a part of this group in the Twin Cities area. Understanding this helps students see the importance of learning the history of this hate group and its origins in the Reconstruction period.

Image 3: Wood Placard with KKK Message found at Twin Cities High School


Voting rights is a topic covered by all teachers while teaching the Reconstruction time period. Often students—as well as adults—believe while voting restrictions were put into place for African Americans in conjunction with the passage of the 15th Amendment, voting inequalities were defeated in
the 1960s with the Voting Rights Act. However, students must understand that while the language and terminology may be different, the same fight is being had. Across the nation municipalities and states are fighting various battles surrounding voting rights. One of the most popular is around Voter IDs. During the November 2012 election, Minnesota voted whether or not to include a Voter ID requirement as an amendment to its Constitution; it was defeated.

Image 4 shows a group protesting in the Minnesota state capitol building against the Voter ID Amendment. The summer before the election, the amendment was polled to have the support of about 50% of voters. The campaign against the amendment intensified that fall focusing on the disenfranchisement of the elderly. (See the sign that says “Protect Grandma’s Vote.”) Shortly after this campaign, opposition rose among voters. The image shows only white people protesting the amendment. When analyzing this image, it is essential to question the role of race in the controversy and debate.

**Image 4: Minnesota Voter ID Amendment Defeated in 2012**

As illustrated in the Ku Klux Klan rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, (shown in Image 1) one of the most controversial topics in the news today is the renaming and removal of sites. One must only look to the popular Lake Calhoun in Minneapolis for an example of this happening in the Twin Cities. According to a report on the history of the name by the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board, “Lake Calhoun has been called Lake Calhoun since the early 1820s as recorded in the journals of travelers in the region.” Though the commission failed to find direct evidence to support the claim, the name
of the lake is widely recognized as honoring the Vice President and Secretary of State John C. Calhoun. Calhoun was a prominent and powerful national politician who passionately advocated for slavery in the decades prior to the Civil War. In May 2017 the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board voted unanimously to change the name to Bde Maka Ska, the Dakota word meaning ‘White Earth Lake.’ This change was preempted with a great deal of debate and was followed with a great deal of controversy. In fact, the day after the vote was held, the new sign was vandalized using spray paint with “let the community decide” (as shown in Image 5).

Image 5: Minneapolis Lake Name Change and Vandalism

Teachers are continually striving to create relevancy for students with the curriculum. Recognizing relevancy helps students connect to the curriculum and become more invested in what is being taught. If students or adults do not understand the history of Reconstruction, they will not fully understand the racial issues that still plague the United States. All of these images represent a story that has recently been covered by the national or regional media: voting rights, the prominence of white supremacy groups, or determining what historical figures or events should be memorialized in monuments or national park sites. Each of these is rooted in Reconstruction. Students must understand the history of Reconstruction to completely consider the nation’s current—and future—state. It is through teaching students these lessons that we can strive to foster empathy, compassion, and understanding in the next generation.