

Document A: The Reconstruction Amendments (Modified)

The 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the United States Constitution are sometimes called the “Reconstruction Amendments.” They were passed in order to abolish slavery and to establish the rights of former slaves.

13th Amendment: 1865

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their **jurisdiction**.

14th Amendment: 1868

Section 1. All persons born or **naturalized** in the United States . . . are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall **abridge** the privileges or **immunities** of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

15th Amendment: 1870

Section 1. 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.

Vocabulary

jurisdiction: legal control
naturalized: made citizens
abridge: limit
immunities: rights

Document B: Black Codes (Modified)

In the years following the Civil War, many Southern states and cities passed Black Codes. These laws laid out what freed blacks were and were not allowed to do. The document below, passed July 3, 1865, is a Black Code from Opelousas, Louisiana.

SECTION 1. No negro shall be allowed to come within the limits of the town of Opelousas without special permission from his employers.

SECTION 3. No negro shall be permitted to rent or keep a house within the limits of the town under any circumstances.

SECTION 4. No negro shall **reside** within the limits of the town of Opelousas who is not in the regular service of some white person or former owner.

SECTION 5. No public meetings of negroes shall be allowed within the limits of the town of Opelousas under any circumstances without the permission of the mayor or president of the board of police. This, however, does not prevent the freedmen from attending the usual church services.

SECTION 7. No freedman who is not in the military service shall be allowed to carry firearms, or any kind of weapons, within the limits of the town of Opelousas without the special permission of his employer, in writing, and approved by the mayor or president of the board of police.

SECTION 11. All the foregoing provisions apply to freedmen and freedwomen.

Source: *Black Code from Opelousas, Louisiana, July 3, 1865.*

Vocabulary

reside: to live in

Document C: Henry Adams Statement (Modified)

In September 1865 I asked the boss to let me go to the city of Shreveport. He said, "All right, when will you come back?" I told him "next week." He said, "You had better carry a pass." I said, "I will see whether I am free by going without a pass."

I met four white men about six miles south of town. One of them asked me who I belonged to. I told him no one. So him and two others struck me with a stick and told me they were going to kill me and every other Negro who told them that they did not belong to anyone. They left me and I then went on to Shreveport. I saw over twelve colored men and women, beat, shot and hung between there and Shreveport.

Sunday I went back home. The boss was not at home. I asked the madam [the boss's wife], "where was the boss?" She said, "You should say 'master'. You all are not free . . . and you shall call every white lady 'missus' and every white man 'master.'"

During the same week the madam took a stick and beat one of the young colored girls, who was about fifteen years of age. The boss came the next day and whipped the same girl nearly to death. . . . After the whipping a large number of young colored people decided to leave that place for Shreveport. [On our way], out came about forty armed white men and shot at us and took my horse. They said they were going to kill every colored person they found leaving their masters.

Source: *Former slave Henry Adams made this statement before the U.S. Senate in 1880 about the early days of his freedom after the Civil War.*

Document D: Elected Black Officials during Reconstruction

During Reconstruction, thousands of African Americans were elected to local and state governments throughout the Southern states. In addition, 17 African Americans were elected to the United States Congress from Southern states between 1870 and 1877. Here are photographs of 6 of these 17 elected officials.



Blanche Bruce
U.S. Senator
Mississippi
1875-1881



Robert DeLarge
U.S. Representative
South Carolina
1871-1873



Jefferson Long
U.S. Representative
Georgia
1871



Joseph Rainey
U.S. Representative
South Carolina
1870-1879



Benjamin Turner
U.S. Representative
Alabama
1871-1873



Josiah Walls
U.S. Representative
Florida
1871-1876

Document E: Education (Modified)

In 1865 the United States government created the Freedmen's Bureau to help former slaves in Southern states. The Freedmen's Bureau helped people by providing medical supplies and health care and establishing schools.

The creation of schools for former slaves was an important part of Reconstruction. Before the Civil War, Southern states outlawed the teaching of reading and writing to slaves.

Many of the negroes . . . common plantation negroes, and day laborers in the towns and villages, were supporting little schools themselves. Everywhere I found them hoping to get their children into schools. I often noticed that workers in stores and men working in warehouses, and cart drivers on the streets, had spelling books with them, and were studying them during the time they were not working. Go outside any large town in the South, and walk among the negro housing, and you will see children and in many cases grown negroes, sitting in the sun alongside their cabins studying.

Source: *Sidney Andrews quoted in the Joint Report on Reconstruction, 1866. The document above is an excerpt from a report by a Northern white man to the United States government in 1866.*



Frederick Douglass Assesses the Mistakes of Reconstruction (1880)

Frederick Douglass was the most important African American leader in the country during the era of the Civil War and Reconstruction. He had been a vocal advocate of making emancipation a Union war aim, and after the war he lobbied for civil rights for blacks, including the right of suffrage. In a speech delivered in 1880, he looked back on the experience of Reconstruction and analyzed the fundamental errors that led to its collapse, emphasizing especially the failure to provide freedpeople with economic independence. Yet he assured his audience that a better day was coming.

How stands the case with the recently-emancipated millions of colored people in our own country? What is their condition today? What is their relation to the people who formerly held them as slaves? These are important questions, and they are such as trouble the minds of thoughtful men of all colors, at home and abroad. By law, by the Constitution of the United States, slavery has no existence in our country. The legal form has been abolished. By the law and the Constitution, the Negro is a man and a citizen, and has all the rights and liberties guaranteed to any other variety of the human family, residing in the United States.

He has a country, a flag, and a government, and may legally claim full and complete protection under the laws. It was the ruling wish, intention, and purpose of the loyal people, after rebellion was suppressed, to have an end to the entire cause of that calamity by forever putting away the system of slavery and all its incidents. In pursuance of this idea, the Negro was made free, made a citizen, made eligible to hold office, to be a juryman, a legislator, and a magistrate. To this end, several amendments to the Constitution were proposed,

FROM Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Boston: De Wolfe, Fiske and Co., 1892), pp. 609–15.

recommended, and adopted. They are now a part of the supreme law of the land, binding alike upon every state and territory of the United States, north and south. Briefly, this is our legal and theoretical condition. This is our condition on paper and parchment. If only from the national statute book we were left to learn the true condition of the colored race, the result would be altogether creditable to the American people. . . .

We have gone still further. We have laid the heavy hand of the Constitution upon the matchless meanness of caste, as well as upon the hell-black crime of slavery. We have declared before all the world that there shall be no denial of rights on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. The advantage gained in this respect is immense.

It is a great thing to have the supreme law of the land on the side of justice and liberty. It is the line up to which the nation is destined to march—the law to which the nation's life must ultimately conform. It is a great principle, up to which we may educate the people, and to this extent its value exceeds all speech.

But today, in most of the southern states, the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments are virtually nullified.

The rights which they were intended to guarantee are denied and held in contempt. The citi-

zenship granted in the fourteenth amendment is practically a mockery, and the right to vote, provided for in the fifteenth amendment, is literally stamped out in face of government. The old master class is today triumphant, and the newly-enfranchised class in a condition but little above that in which they were found before the rebellion.

Do you ask me how, after all that has been done, this state of things has been made possible? I will tell you. Our reconstruction measures were radically defective. They left the former slave completely in the power of the old master, the loyal citizen in the hands of the disloyal rebel against the government. Wise, grand, and comprehensive in scope and design as were the reconstruction measures, high and honorable as were the intentions of the statesmen by whom they were framed and adopted, time and experience, which try all things, have demonstrated that they did not successfully meet the case.

In the hurry and confusion of the hour, and the eager desire to have the Union restored, there was more care for the sublime superstructure of the republic than for the solid foundations upon which it could alone be upheld. To the freedmen was given the machinery of liberty, but there was denied to them the steam to put it in motion. They were given the uniform of soldiers, but no arms; they were called citizens, but left subjects; they were called free, but left almost slaves. The old master class was not deprived of the power of life and death, which was the soul of the relation of master and slave. They could not, of course, sell their former slaves, but they retained the power to starve them to death, and wherever this power is held there is the power of slavery. . . . The Negro today . . . is in a thralldom grievous and intolerable, compelled to work for whatever his employer is pleased to pay him, swindled out of his hard earnings by money orders redeemed in stores, compelled to pay the price of an acre of ground for its use during a single year, to pay four times more than a fair price for a pound of bacon and to be

kept upon the narrowest margin between life and starvation. Much complaint has been made that the freedmen have shown so little ability to take care of themselves since their emancipation. Men have marvelled that they have made so little progress. I question the justice of this complaint. It is neither reasonable, nor in any sense just. To me the wonder is, not that the freedmen have made so little progress, but, rather, that they have made so much—not that they have been standing still, but that they have been able to stand at all.

We have only to reflect for a moment upon the situation in which these people found themselves when liberated. Consider their ignorance, their poverty, their destitution, and their absolute dependence upon the very class by which they had been held in bondage for centuries, a class whose every sentiment was averse to their freedom, and we shall be prepared to marvel that they have, under the circumstances, done so well.

. . . When the serfs of Russia were emancipated, they were given three acres of ground upon which they could live and make a living. But not so when our slaves were emancipated. They were sent away empty-handed, without money, without friends, and without a foot of land upon which to stand. Old and young, sick and well, were turned loose to the open sky, naked to their enemies. The old slave quarter that had before sheltered them and the fields that had yielded them corn were now denied them. . . .

Taking all the circumstances into consideration, the colored people have no reason to despair. We still live, and while there is life there is hope. The fact that we have endured wrongs and hardships which would have destroyed any other race, and have increased in numbers and public consideration, ought to strengthen our faith in ourselves and our future. Let us, then, wherever we are, whether at the North or at the South, resolutely struggle on in the belief that there is a better day coming, and that we, by patience, industry, uprightness, and economy may hasten that better day.

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JOURDON ANDERSON

A Freedman Writes His Former Master (1865)

A few months after the war ended, Jourdon Anderson, who had fled slavery during the war, received a letter from his former master asking him to return with his family to their former home in Tennessee. Anderson reportedly dictated this reply. Whatever the letter's genesis, it succinctly expressed the meaning that freedom held for him and his family. His letter is a powerful statement of African Americans' hopes and expectations at the beginning of Reconstruction.

Dayton, Ohio, August 7, 1865.

To My Old Master, Col. P. H. Anderson,
Big Spring, Tennessee.

Sir:

I got your letter and was glad to find that you had not forgotten Jourdon, and that you wanted me to

FROM *New York Tribune*, 22 August 1865.

me good to go back to the dear old home again and see Miss Mary and Miss Martha and Allen, Esther, Green, and Lee. Give my love to them all, and tell them I hope we will meet in the better world, if not in this. I would have gone back to see you all when I was working in the Nashville Hospital, but one of the neighbors told me Henry intended to shoot me if he ever got a chance.

I want to know particularly what the good chance is you propose to give me. I am doing tolerably well here; I get \$25 a month, with victuals and clothing; have a comfortable home for Mandy (the folks here call her Mrs. Anderson), and the children, Milly, Jane and Grundy, go to school and are learning well; the teacher says Grundy has a head for a preacher. They go to Sunday-School, and Mandy and me attend church regularly. We are kindly treated; sometimes we overhear others saying, "Them colored people were slaves" down in Tennessee. The children feel hurt when they hear such remarks, but I tell them it was no disgrace in Tennessee to belong to Col. Anderson. Many darkies would have been proud, as I used to be, to call you master. Now, if you will write and say what wages you will give me, I will be better able to decide whether it would be to my advantage to move back again.

As to my freedom, which you say I can have, there is nothing to be gained on that score, as I got my free-papers in 1864 from the Provost-Marshal-General of the Department at Nashville. Mandy says she would be afraid to go back without some proof that you are sincerely disposed to treat us justly and kindly—and we have concluded to test your sincerity by asking you to send us our wages for the time we served you. This will make us forget and forgive old scores, and rely on your justice and friendship in the future. I served you

come back and live with you again, promising to do better for me than anybody else can. I have often felt uneasy about you. I thought the Yankees would have hung you long before this for harboring Rebs they found at your house. I suppose they never heard about your going to Col. Martin's to kill the Union soldier that was left by his company in their stable. Although you shot at me twice before I left you, I did not want to hear of your being hurt, and am glad you are still living. It would do

faithfully for thirty-two years, and Mandy twenty years. At \$25 a month for me, and \$2 a week for Mandy, our earnings would amount to \$11,680. Add to this the interest for the time our wages has been kept back and deduct what you paid for our clothing and three doctor's visits to me, and pulling a tooth for Mandy, and the balance will show what we are in justice entitled to. Please send the money by Adams Express, in care of V. Winters, esq., Dayton, Ohio. If you fail to pay us for faithful labors in the past we can have little faith in your promises in the future. We trust the good Maker has opened your eyes to the wrongs which you and your fathers have done to me and my fathers, in making us toil for you for generations without recompense. Here I draw my wages every Saturday night, but in Tennessee there was never any pay day for the negroes any more than for the horses and cows. Surely there will be a day of reckoning for those who defraud the laborer of his hire.

In answering this letter please state if there would be any safety for my Milly and Jane, who are now grown up and both good looking girls. You know how it was with poor Matilda and Catherine. I would rather stay here and starve and die if it comes to that than have my girls brought to shame by the violence and wickedness of their young masters. You will also please state if there has been any schools opened for the colored children in your neighborhood, the great desire of my life now is to give my children an education, and have them form virtuous habits.

From your old servant,

Jourdon Anderson.

P.S.—Say howdy to George Carter, and thank him for taking the pistol from you when you were shooting at me.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION

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A. B. RANDALL

Former Slaves Are Anxious to Record Their Marriages (1865)

Although most slaves were married, southern laws did not recognize the validity of slave marriages, and so slaves had to live with the constant uncertainty of whether at some point their marriage would be broken by sale. For former slaves, one of the cherished meanings of freedom was legal protection of the marriage bond. Near the end of the war, the chaplain of an Arkansas black regiment wrote the following letter to Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas, discussing the widespread desire of freedpeople to have their slave marriages legalized and their hopes for the future protected.

Little Rock Ark Feb 28th 1865

... Weddings, just now, are very popular, and abundant among the Colored People. They have just learned, of the Special Order No. 15. of Gen [Lorenzo] Thomas by which, they may not only be lawfully married, but have their Marriage Certificates, Recorded; in a book furnished by the Government. This is most desirable; and the order, was very opportune; as these people were constantly loosing [*sic*] their certificates. Those who were captured . . . on the 17th of January . . . had their Marriage Certificates, taken from them; and destroyed; and then were roundly cursed, for having such

papers in their possession [*sic*]. I have married, during the month, at this Post; Twenty five couples; mostly, those, who have families; & have been living together for years. I try to dissuade single men, who are soldiers, from marrying, till their time of enlistment is out: as that course seems to me, to be most judicious.

The Color[e]d People here, generally consider, this war not only; their *exodus*, from bondage; but the road, to Responsibility; Competency; and an honorable Citizenship—God grant that their hopes and expectations may be fully realized.

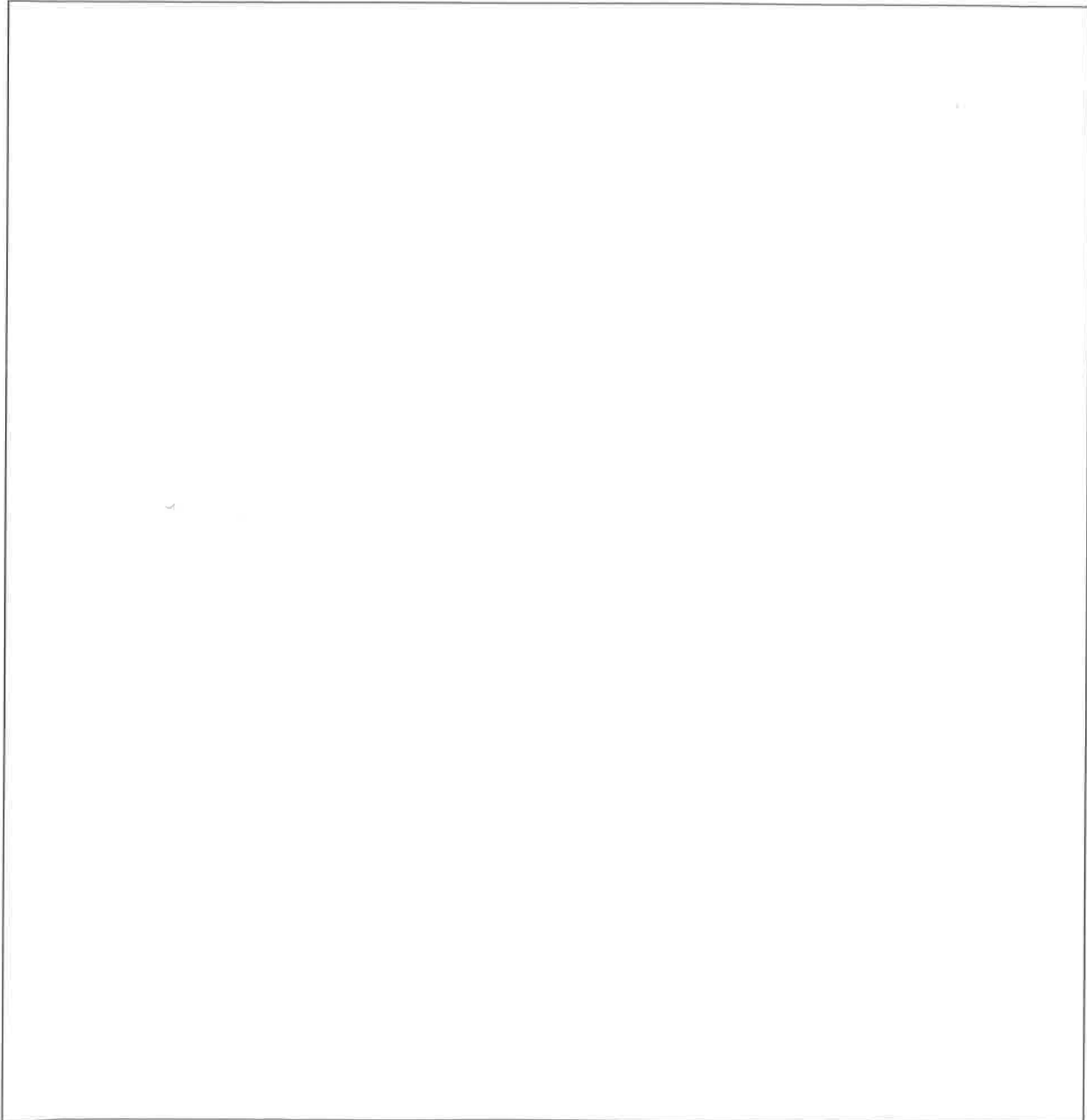
Most Respectfully

A. B. Randall

Coming to Consensus

STARTING NOW, YOU MAY ABANDON YOUR ASSIGNED POSITION AND ARGUE FOR EITHER SIDE.

Use the space below to outline your group's agreement. Your agreement should address evidence and arguments from both sides.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to write their group's agreement. The box is currently blank.

Name _____

ORGANIZING THE EVIDENCE

Use this space to write your main points and the main points made by the other side.

African Americans WERE free during Reconstruction: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document _____:

2) From Document _____:

3) From Document _____:

4) From Document _____:

African Americans were NOT free during Reconstruction: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document _____:

2) From Document _____:

3) From Document _____:

4) From Document _____: