

Reconstruction Essay

Reconstruction was after the Civil War. One major goal was to give African Americans freedom. Some people say Reconstruction did create true freedom for African Americans, some say it did not. Freedom means that citizens have all political, economic, and social freedoms. The most important part of political freedom is to have the right to vote. To have economic freedom, people should have the right to own property. To ensure social freedom all people should have the freedom of assembly. But people only have these freedoms as long as they do not interfere with the law (except if the law is unconstitutional or it violates their freedom) and they are on US land. African Americans were not free as the result of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

African Americans did not have political freedom. The Ku Klux Klan was a clan whose members hated African Americans. They discriminated African Americans and aimed to deprive them from their freedoms. One African American who experienced the Ku Klux Klan's violence said this: "One man said that I would get a bullet through me if I voted for the Republicans; or I would be driven home without anything to eat and would be attacked. I voted for the Democrats only to save the lives of myself and my family." (Ku Klux Klan Testimony). To have freedom, people need to have political freedom. African Americans did not have political freedom, because they could not vote for the party they wanted to. That means, African Americans did not have freedom, because they lacked political freedom. By the same token, South Carolina wanted the state to cast its vote for the Democrats. They used racist plans to achieve this. Poll tax was a tax that required voters to pay a tax when they voted. Whites could afford this tax, but most African Americans could not afford it. Literary tests were tests when voters were required to read

parts of the Alabama Constitution. There were easier and harder parts of this document. Whites usually had to read easier parts, but African Americans had to read harder parts. African Americans sometimes could not read it and they could not vote. Poll taxes and literary tests discriminated African Americans. They made voting difficult for African Americans and therefore limited their political freedom. Political freedom is required to have freedom. That means, African Americans did not have freedom.

African Americans not only lacked political freedom, but they were also deficient in economic freedom. African Americans got land from Sherman's Field Order 15. This field order gave African Americans abandoned land along the coast of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina. Some African Americans got land on St. Catherine's Island. But when the island's owner arrived, African Americans had to leave the island. In addition, President Andrew Johnson issued an order that gave back all Confederate land seized by the troops to the plantation owners. African Americans did not have economic freedom, because the government took away their land. Economic freedom is required to be free. African Americans did not have economic freedom and therefore they did not experience true freedom. But this was not the only way African Americans lacked economic freedom. Black Codes were laws that discriminated African Americans. One Black Code in the town of Opelousas stated that "No negro or freedman shall be permitted to rent or keep a house in town under any circumstances." African Americans could not own a house in the town, so they did not have the right to own property. Right to property is required to have economic freedom. African Americans did not have economic freedom and therefore they were not free.

In addition to the lack of political and economic freedoms, African Americans also lacked social freedom. Another Black Code in the town of Opelousas stated that "No public

meetings of negroes or freedmen shall be allowed within the town.” That means, African Americans lacked the freedom of assembly, since they could not make meetings in the town of Opelousas. Some people say that blacks did in fact have freedom of assembly, because the 14th Amendment solved the problem of the Black Codes. If the 14th Amendment solved the problem of Black Codes, African Americans did have social freedom. But it is not true that the 14th Amendment solved all the problems of the Black Codes. It only solved some of them. The 14th Amendment did not give African Americans the freedom of assembly. African Americans did not have social freedom, because they still lacked the freedom of assembly. That means, African Americans did not experience true freedom, because they lacked social freedom. Social freedom is required to experience true freedom.

African Americans were not free as the result of Civil War and Reconstruction. In 2020 legal immigrants have freedom. They have political freedom, since they can vote. They can choose their job, so they have economic freedom. They can also hold meetings, so they have the freedom of assembly and therefore social freedom. Legal immigrants have all political, economic and social freedoms, so they do experience true freedom.