

Fall 12-15-2014

# Reconstruction Delayed: How Presidents and the Southern Civil War Prolonged the End of Reconstruction

Jason V. Shelton

*The College at Brockport*, JasonVShelton@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd\\_theses](http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses)

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

To learn more about our programs visit: <http://www.brockport.edu/ehd/>

---

## Repository Citation

Shelton, Jason V., "Reconstruction Delayed: How Presidents and the Southern Civil War Prolonged the End of Reconstruction" (2014). *Education and Human Development Master's Theses*. 470.  
[http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd\\_theses/470](http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses/470)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Education and Human Development at Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education and Human Development Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact [kmyers@brockport.edu](mailto:kmyers@brockport.edu).

Reconstruction Delayed:  
How Presidents and the Southern Civil War Prolonged the End of Reconstruction

by

Jason Vernon Shelton  
December 2014

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of the State  
University of New York College at Brockport in partial  
Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Education

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page .....	1
Table of Contents .....	2
Introduction .....	3
Individual component parts .....	4
Conclusion .....	23
Curriculum inclusion .....	25
Appendices .....	34

Reconstruction is one of the most controversial periods in American history. The decade which followed the conclusion of the American Civil War featured debates in the North and extreme violence in the South. The major argument was over what the next steps would be in terms of reuniting the nation after a bloody conflict pitting brother against brother. Historians have confined the era into a twelve year period lasting from 1865 to 1876. However, the goals of Reconstruction were not achieved until well after the election of 1876, and even in 2014, there is still work to be done when it comes to reuniting the country. There is a question which is essential to understanding the era of Reconstruction and the events which have taken place in the United States as a result: Did Reconstruction ever end? This question is more relevant in present times than ever with the first African American President of the United States occupying the White House. Reconstruction never ended; for over half a century the efforts to achieve the goals of reconstructing the nation were not taken. With the onset of the Southern Civil War which consumed the former Confederacy after 1865; the ability to reunite the nation became all but impossible.

### **THE FAILURE OF THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA**

Reconstruction failed to be effective largely as a result of the lack of leadership from the Executive Branch and the inability of leaders to realize and accept the reality of events taking place in the South. The failure to take significant action to regain the peace in the former confederacy and prevent the devastating violence against African Americans and laws which victimized the recently freed slaves would haunt the nation for the next 100 years and beyond.

During the era of Reconstruction, three presidents took on the unprecedented and challenging task of rebuilding a “defeated” South and reuniting a nation still in shock from the brutal four year war and the first presidential assassination in United States history. Andrew Johnson, Ulysses S. Grant and Rutherford B. Hayes all failed to grasp the realities at hand and understand that as a result of the outcome of the American Civil War, a second civil war had broken out in the South. The actions of the three presidents who governed in Lincoln’s shadow would lose the Southern Civil War. The Southern Civil War would last until the Compromise of 1877 handed victory to Southern Democrats who were able to regain control of state and local governments and impose the segregationist political agenda that they had fought for.

The United States had used total war during the American Civil War to achieve military victory against the states that had left the Union and joined the Confederacy. This strategy included the overwhelming use of force against the enemy; however, during the Southern Civil War the Reconstruction presidents would not use the same strategy to control the violence taking place in what had become at the end of the American Civil War, a chaotic region. Presidents Johnson, Grant and Hayes would work in different ways and enact or oppose the policies which helped to shape the future of the South for all citizens both white and black. In the end, their inability to match the level of force used by Confederate extremists and take all necessary actions would result in a loss which still has implications in 21st century America. In order to understand how Presidents Johnson, Grant and Hayes neglected their roles in reconstructing America, it is important to examine their words and actions.

## ANDREW JOHNSON: SON OF THE SOUTH

Andrew Johnson as a leader was less than stellar and after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, Mr. Johnson would demonstrate the reasons that having him run as Lincoln's vice-president in 1864 were a critical mistake that would set the North on the road to defeat at the hands of Confederate extremists during the Southern Civil War. Upon taking office in April 1865, Johnson would quickly master two presidential powers at his disposal: the pardon and the veto. Both powers would end up assisting the Confederate extremists in their quest to win the new civil war being fought. In May 1865, Johnson issued a presidential proclamation that granted pardons "to all persons who have directly or indirectly, participated in the existing rebellion...amnesty and pardon with restoration of all rights of property, except as to slaves..."<sup>1</sup> The proclamation issued by Johnson in his role as the first Commander-in-Chief during the Southern Civil War proved to be a destructive act and was the wrong message to send the enemy during open warfare. The proclamation did exclude high ranking military and political officers of the Confederacy, however, former slave owners that had called for succession after the electoral victory of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and pushed the nation into the American Civil War were granted pardons.

President Johnson would later expand the pardons he granted and on December 25, 1868, a proclamation which served as a Christmas gift for Confederate extremists declared that:

unconditionally and without reservation, to all and to every person who, directly or indirectly, participated in the late insurrection or rebellion a full pardon and amnesty for the offense of treason against the United States or of adhering to their enemies during the late civil war, with restoration of all rights, privileges, and immunities under the Constitution and the laws which have been made in pursuance thereof.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Johnson, Presidential Proclamation of May 29, 1865.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Johnson, Presidential Proclamation of December 25, 1868.

The actions taken by Johnson with the use of such proclamations show that the South had an ally inside the White House. Another Presidential Proclamation issued by Johnson on August 20, 1866 marked the end of the official end of the American Civil War; the proclamation includes a section which states, “And I do further proclaim that the said insurrection is at an end and that peace, order, tranquility, and civil authority now exist in and throughout the whole of the United States of America.”<sup>3</sup> This is a misleading statement which was accurate in regards to the hostilities between the Union and the Confederacy; however, the South was not experiencing peace, order or tranquility in 1866 when the Southern Civil War was only getting started. The statement by Johnson could not be further from the truth as peace, order and tranquility would not exist in the South for the next century.

President Johnson would make matters even worse when he stated in his third annual message to Congress on December 3, 1867 that:

To me the process of restoration seems perfectly plain and simple. It consists merely in a faithful application of the Constitution and laws. The execution of the laws is not now obstructed or opposed by physical force. There is no military or other necessity, real or pretended, which can prevent obedience to the Constitution, either North or South. All the rights and all the obligations of States and individuals can be protected and enforced by means perfectly consistent with the fundamental law. The courts may be everywhere open, and if open their process would be unimpeded. Crimes against the United States can be prevented or punished by the proper judicial authorities in a manner entirely practicable and legal. There is therefore no reason why the Constitution should not be obeyed, unless those who exercise its powers have determined that it shall be disregarded and violated. The mere naked will of this Government, or of some one or more of its branches, is the only obstacle that can exist to a perfect union of all the States.<sup>4</sup>

The scolding statement issued by the President of the United States implies that by following the Constitution, Reconstruction would be resolved and that the national government is the only thing standing in the way of the Union being put back together again in a peaceful manner.

Johnson continued the message by arguing that:

Being sincerely convinced that these views are correct, I would be unfaithful to my duty if I did not recommend the repeal of the acts of Congress which place ten of the Southern States under the domination

---

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Johnson, Presidential Proclamation of August 20, 1866.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Johnson, Third Annual Message to Congress, December 3, 1867.

of military masters. If calm reflection shall satisfy a majority of your honorable bodies that the acts referred to are not only a violation of the national faith, but in direct conflict with the Constitution, I dare not permit myself to doubt that you will immediately strike them from the statute book.<sup>5</sup>

The argument is a clear message of Johnson's belief that he is right and Congress is wrong on the issue of the use of the military during Reconstruction. Worse, Johnson used the phrase "military masters" in a thinly veiled attempt to compare the occupation of the former Confederate states to the institution of slavery which had been in place prior to the end of the American Civil War. The political fighting in Washington also included a massive number of presidential vetoes of Congressional Reconstruction legislation.

The presidency of Andrew Johnson has become defined by his intense racism which would drive his actions and in the end lead to his impeachment by the House of Representatives and his near conviction by the Senate. However, the damage done by President Johnson during the Southern Civil War was significant and would set the government on a path towards defeat and would also leave the next president with hard choices and a difficult path to victory in the war taking place in the South. At the start of the Southern Civil War, Andrew Johnson was the best hope for bringing the nation back together and expanding freedom to blacks in the South who were being denied their basic rights. Instead, Johnson's actions would ensure that blacks in the South encountered a reality worse than what they had suffered before the defeat of the Confederates in the American Civil War. Reconstruction would begin under the reign of Andrew Johnson. The long process of uniting the nation and bringing the American people together was by no means an easy task. However, the failed leadership of President Johnson and his inability to realize that ending the Southern Civil War was the key to being able to reconstruct the nation would cost the country greatly.

---

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, Third Annual Message to Congress.

## **PRESIDENT GRANT: PEACE ABOUT ALL ELSE**

In the wake of Andrew Johnson, came hope with the election of the hero of the Union, General Grant. Ulysses Simpson Grant became president at a critical time during the Southern Civil War. After four years of a Southern Democrat in the White House who had engaged in frequent battles with Congressional Republicans over issues related to Reconstruction, the nation was ready for a change. President Grant would be more committed to the cause of preserving freedom for all Americans during Reconstruction; however, his record proves troubling and his actions and statements show that Grant would not provide the strong leadership needed for a victory in the Southern Civil War. In theory, President Grant should have been a strong chief executive, his leadership during the American Civil War was top notch and he effectively took the war to the Confederacy and was able to unleash a form of total warfare that allowed the North to achieve its war aims. President Grant was a different breed of leader than General Grant had been. Instead of a total war strategy to correct the injustices that had been taking place in the South, the new Commander-in-Chief craved peace.

Shortly after taking office in 1869, President Grant sent a special message to Congress on April 7th in regards to reintegrating Southern states which had not yet been welcomed back into the Union. In his message, Grant states:

...it is desirable to restore the States which were in engaged in the rebellion to their proper relations to the Government and the country at as early a period as the people of these States shall be found willing to become peaceful and orderly communities and to adopt and maintain such constitutions and laws as will effectually secure the civil and political rights of all persons with their borders.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Special Message from President Grant to the Senate and House of Representatives, April 7, 1869.

Grant's desire to bring the former Confederate states back into the Union as quickly as possible illustrates the frame of mind of a president who is not committed to winning a war at all costs. Instead is hopeful that the Confederate extremists responsible for the total warfare being waged in the South will end and that the rights of all individuals within the states will be secured. His goal for restoring the states that had attempted to leave the Union would become a reality; however, his hope for "peaceful and orderly communities" in the South would not be realized. His proposal to congress to make sure that the political rights for all individuals in states that had seceded from the Union was well intentioned, but would not take place in the South as a result of Grant's reluctance to engage in the level of warfare necessary to defeat the Confederate extremists taking control of the South.

During his final annual message to Congress, President Grant expressed his view of the role that he had played in Reconstruction, stating that "It was the work of the legislative branch of the Government. My province was wholly in approving their acts, which I did most heartily, urging the legislatures of States that had not yet done so to ratify the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution."<sup>7</sup> President Grant clearly sums up in the message that he believed that the role of the President during the Southern Civil War was to follow the lead of Congress and enforce the laws passed by them. Grant also makes it clear that he acted to convince states to ratify the 15th Amendment which he supported and would work hard to enforce. The thought of Grant not leading a charge but following is hard to grasp, but when placed in the context of the time, makes logical sense. During the era of Reconstruction, Americans in the North had endured four years in a nation at war. Husbands, fathers, sons and brothers were lost in the conflict. The presidency of Andrew Johnson has been a disaster for America and marked the first time an American

---

<sup>7</sup> Ulysses S. Grant, Final Annual Message to Congress, December 5, 1876.

president had been impeached. By the time President Grant came to power, Americans had had enough.

President Ulysses Simpson Grant failed to win the Southern Civil War that had begun prior to his taking office and continued until his successor in the presidency was declared by a political compromise which would place concern regarding which political party would hold power in Washington over safety and rights of all Southerners. Grant failed to take all the steps needed for the United States government to once again claim victor, this time against Confederate extremists who refused to accept the outcome of the American Civil War. Grant's view of the limited role played by the Chief Executive and his goal of balancing the protection of blacks in the South with the peaceful reconciliation between North and South both affected the performance of Grant while in office during Reconstruction. The President took action when he absolutely had to; however, the amount of intervention by the federal government to deal with the problems in the South resulting from the racial and political warfare was not enough. The ability of President Grant to serve as an active Commander-in-Chief during the war taking place in the South was hampered by political realities of the day.

### **RUTHERFORD B. HAYES: THE LAST RECONSTRUCTION ERA PRESIDENT**

As the outcome of the election of 1876 was still being decided, Rutherford B. Hayes wrote in his diary, on November 11<sup>th</sup>, that "...the great injury is in the South. There the amendments will be nullified, disorder will continue, prosperity to both whites and colored people, will be pushed off for years."<sup>8</sup> This observation by Hayes is a reminder of how bad conditions had become in the South during the Southern Civil War. It also shows that Hayes

---

<sup>8</sup> T. Harry Williams, ed., *Hayes: The Diary of a President, 1875-1881* (New York: D. McKay Co., 1964), 48.

feared what lay ahead for blacks in the South if Democrats recaptured the presidency. Hayes' diary entry proved to be an eerie glimpse into the future of the South and the Nation. The soon to be President of the United States would correctly predict the long nature of Reconstruction. Hayes also predicted that prosperity for African Americans would be pushed off for years, in the end it was pushed off for over a century.

Hayes entered the presidency after a controversial election in which his Democratic opponent; New York Governor Samuel Tilden had won the popular vote and was ahead in the Electoral College vote count. Four states would decide the outcome of the election and the course of events in the South for the next four years. In the end, a compromise was agreed on in which Hayes would be awarded the Electoral College votes needed to win the presidency and in return President Hayes would end the military occupation in Southern states, appoint a Southern Democrat to his cabinet and finally, rebuild the Southern economic infrastructure.<sup>9</sup> The agreement which would become known as the Compromise of 1877 allowed the Republicans to retain control of the nation and white Southern Democrats to take complete control of the South; the victory which they had been fighting for since the end of the American Civil War. The removal of federal troops from Southern states was not a major concession for President Hayes who noted in his Diary on March 14, 1877 that his policy was to "...trust-peace, and to put aside the bayonet. I do not think the wise policy is to decide contested elections in the states, by the use of the National army."<sup>10</sup> The desire expressed by President Hayes to not use the army to maintain order and fight against voting related intimidation and violence in the South is one of the worst actions taken by a president during the Southern Civil War. After over a decade of Reconstruction in the South, the desire was strong to finally have peace. However, handing over

---

<sup>9</sup> James A. Rawley, "Rutherford B. Hayes," in *"To the Best of My Ability": The American Presidents*, ed. James M. McPherson. (New York: Agincourt Press, 2004), 142.

<sup>10</sup> T. Harry Williams, *Hayes: The Diary of a President*, 81.

the South to the Confederate extremists who were murdering their fellow citizens in open warfare was the wrong choice for the Commander-in-Chief to make.

President Hayes in his first annual message to Congress on December 3, 1877, demonstrated the extent to which his perception of reality was from the reality of the situation in the South. In the message, Hayes wrote that “No unprejudiced mind will deny that the terrible and often fatal collisions which for several years have been of frequent occurrence and have agitated and alarmed the public mind have almost entirely ceased, and that a spirit of mutual forbearance and hearty national interest has succeeded.”<sup>11</sup> This part of the message is extremely important in understanding the reason for the South’s victory in the Southern Civil War. Hayes accurately describes the violence which took place with the end of the American Civil War and twelve years later was still widespread in the South as the Confederate extremists sought to complete the mission of regaining complete control of the South and achieve the goals which the Confederacy was unable to during the American Civil War. A president informing Congress that violence and murder of innocent civilians, individuals fighting for their rights, had “almost entirely ceased” is not only irresponsible it proved a decisive victory for the South. With Hayes in office believing that the Southern problem which he had inherited was solved, or close to being solved, and the military forces of the United States having been pulled from the Southern states, blacks and Republicans in the South did not stand a chance. Hayes’ first message to the nation’s legislative branch included another statement which was out of touch with the facts:

All apprehension of danger from remitting those States to local self-government is dispelled, and a most salutary change in the minds of the people has begun and is in progress in every part of that section of the country once the theater of unhappy civil strife, substituting for suspicion, distrust, and aversion, concord, friendship, and patriotic attachment to the Union.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Rutherford B. Hayes, First Annual Message to Congress, December 3, 1877.

<sup>12</sup> Hayes, First Annual Message to Congress, December 3, 1877.

For both political parties in the North who were ready to move on after the American Civil War and its aftermath, ending Reconstruction was a joyous occasion. However, the Commander-in-Chief failed to recognize the problems which still had to be dealt with in the South. The Southern Civil War was a source of major civil strife in the former Confederacy. Blacks were being denied the rights of citizenship both by violence and intimidation, but also with newly enacted laws passed by the Southern Democrats (Confederate extremists) who seized local and state governments.

The public and private statements of President Hayes provides a realistic assessment of the actions of the presidency after the Compromise of 1877. The compromise sold out freedmen and Southern Republicans. Politics over people is a trend when it comes to the Hayes administration, the compromise which placed the Republican in office came at the price of leaving African Americans, Northerners and Republicans in the South to fight for survival. It was more than a compromise it was a surrender document. The North did not just lose the Southern Civil War, the North conceded defeat in order to maintain the political goals of the Republican Party and their candidate. Hayes' actions are troubling when the outcomes of his presidency are examined in regards to the events that took place during his administration, and as a result of the lack of preventative actions against Confederate extremists, the injustices being perpetrated against blacks would continue for over a century. President Hayes has become known as the last Reconstruction President. However, the legacies of Hayes, Grant and Johnson have had a lasting impact on the successors who have had to deal with the fallout from the Confederate extremist victory in the South.

The outcome of the Southern Civil War was different for the Confederate extremists than the outcome associated with the ending of the American Civil War, which concluded with the military defeat of the South. However, the failure by the North to take a hard line with the South in 1865 would lead to a conflict in the former Confederacy which would last for twelve years and result in the deaths of thousands during gruesome lynchings and assassinations aimed at taking revenge and denying civil and political rights to African Americans. The tactics used to win the new Southern Civil War constituted a form of total warfare carried out by the Confederate extremists who would impose on the recently freed African Americans a type of economic and social slavery worse than the type which they had known under the slave system which ended with the Union's American Civil War victory. The three presidents who held office during the official period of Civil War Reconstruction failed to act to safeguard the outcome of the American Civil War. As a second civil war raged against the victors of the American Civil War in the South; three presidents acted in a manner which handed victory to the South and delayed the achievement of reconstruction goals for over a century. President Andrew Johnson not only openly opposed measures passed by the Congress to respond to the situation in the Southern states with the use of unsuccessful vetoes. Johnson himself helped to create the situation with his lenient handling of the states which had been in rebellion and the issuing of numerous pardons to former Confederates. Johnson's successor, General Ulysses Grant came into office with high public confidence and hopes for a better Reconstruction policy; however, his two terms in the White House would prove to be a disaster for African Americans in the South and their white allies who were attempting to resist the Confederate extremists vying for political control of state and local governments. With few exceptions, Grant would prove to be more interested in the peaceful reunion with the South than winning the Southern Civil War and

ensuring the rights of all Americans. Reconstruction ended with the Compromise of 1877 and the presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes. The compromise which would keep a Republican in the White House was a betrayal of African Americans in the South seeking the freedom being denied by Confederate extremist Democrats with the use of black codes, intimidation and murder. Hayes would enter office believing that Reconstruction was not over and that with his presidency there was a chance for a new policy towards the South. However, history has proven that the one term of Hayes would end the era of Reconstruction for almost 85 years.

### **1877 TO 1953: PRESIDENTS DROP THE BALL....CITIZENS TAKE ACTION**

Federal troops would be withdrawn from the South during the administration of Rutherford B. Hayes. A move that handed victory to the ex-Confederate extremists that had been waging a war of terror in the South. The South would be lost to extremists and the Presidents who occupied the White House after Hayes would lose sight of the goals of Reconstruction. A series of inactive American Presidents would ignore the issue of civil rights for African Americans. This failure to act did not extend to American citizens in both the North and the South. Decades of work by African American press and leaders would ultimately result in a wave of momentum which would reawaken the cause of completing the work started and then abandoned after the American Civil War. The gap in strong Presidential leadership on issues of Reconstruction was devastating for the nation. The decades following Hayes ill-fated compromise which placed a desire to be president above working to ensure peace in the South.

The United States would move in a dangerous direction and embrace racism. The Ku Klux Klan was fading out until the 1915 film, *The Birth of a Nation*, would revive the movement and breed

a greater level of hatred and violence against minorities nation-wide. The film glorified the KKK and embraced the Confederacy. The film was at odds with the recently formed National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The events of the early 1900s would become an important time period as organizations, such as, the NAACP worked to gain equal civil rights for African Americans and would work to protect Americans from the violence used to intimidate minorities. These organizations stepped in to do that which America's chief executives were not doing, advancing the goals of Reconstruction.

### **PICKING UP THE CAUSE OF RECONSTRUCTION: DWIGHT EISENHOWER**

When President Dwight D. Eisenhower took office in 1953, the promise made by the nation to African Americans during the era of Reconstruction with the passage of amendments to the United States Constitution still had not been fully realized. This was especially true in the South where local governments denied African Americans equal rights as a matter of standard operating procedure.

In his 1954 State of the Union address to Congress, President Eisenhower addressed the status of civil rights in the nation by stating that "Segregation in the armed forces and other Federal activities is on the way out. We have also made progress toward its elimination in the District of Columbia. These are steps in the continuing effort to eliminate inter-racial difficulty."<sup>13</sup> Almost 80 years after the era of Reconstruction was ended in the American South by Rutherford B. Hayes. A new push would begin in the country to deliver on the promises made at the end of the American Civil War. For the second time in less than a century, an American general turned Commander-in-Chief would work to improve conditions in the South (and the rest of the nation) for all citizens. The Eisenhower administration would begin a second

---

<sup>13</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, Second Annual Message to Congress, January 7, 1954.

Reconstruction era that would build upon the efforts of his predecessors. Later in his administration, while Congress was in the process of passing a Civil Rights bill, pushed for by Eisenhower, the President addressed reporters making the case that the:

...civil rights action bill was designed and conceived in the thought of conciliation and moderation, not of persecution of anybody.

It seems to me that after the unanimous decision by the Supreme Court about segregation many things could have happened. You will recall that at that time I was asked questions right here in this group: did I contemplate sending the Army into the South to enforce this decision?

There was a great deal of stir, and it was time, as I saw it, for moderation and the development of a plan that everybody of good will could support.

Now, I have been very badly disappointed that some people see in this program an opportunity to disturb their own rights, or to interfere in their own social order, in an unjust and improper way. To my mind, this is a very moderate, decent thing to do, and I hope that some thinking on the part of all of us will lead others to believe the same way.<sup>14</sup>

The statement by Eisenhower addresses the fact that eight and a half decades after Reconstruction, there is still debate about the need to use the military to enforce law and order in the South. This is evidence of how slowly America had progressed since the end of the American Civil War. Eisenhower also points out that the civil rights bill features a conciliatory and moderate balance. This is a political compromise that belongs more in debates during the era of Reconstruction and of the late 1950s.

On June 19, 1957, President Eisenhower gave a response to a reporter's question, which could have been mistaken for a response that President Grant may have given during his tenure in office. Eisenhower had to make reassurances the legislation he supported was "conceived in the thought of conciliation" which is a tone more appropriate for the era which followed the American Civil War. The bill would become law and mark the start of the slow and turbulent

---

<sup>14</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, News Conference, June 19, 1957.

process of ensuring that the goals of Reconstruction outlined by the government in the 1860s were achieved.

As the Eisenhower presidency came to an end, work was still being done by the administration when it came to the issue of civil rights. President Eisenhower would support a second civil rights bill. On May 6, 1960 the President would make the following statement after signing the bill into law:

The new Act is concerned with a range of civil rights problems. One title makes it a crime to obstruct rights or duties under Federal court orders by force or threat of force. That provision will be an important deterrent to such obstruction which interferes with the execution of Federal court orders, including those involving school desegregation. Provision is also made to assure free public education to all children of Armed Forces personnel in the United States where local public school facilities are unavailable. By authorizing the FBI to investigate certain bombings or attempted bombings of schools, churches and other structures, the Act will deter such heinous acts of lawlessness.<sup>15</sup>

The federal government was taking wide sweeping actions to address problems which had begun during the era of Reconstruction as a result of the failure by Presidents Johnson, Grant and Hayes to recognize and take measures to stop the Southern Civil War. In 1960, legislation was enacted to finally achieve the goals of Reconstruction. Eisenhower goes on to state that:

The new Act also deals significantly with that key constitutional right of every American, the right to vote without discrimination on account of race or color. One provision, which requires the retention of voting records, will be of invaluable aid in the successful enforcement of existing voting rights statutes. Another provision authorizes the use by federal courts of voting referees. It holds great promise of making the Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution fully meaningful.<sup>16</sup>

This statement further demonstrates the commitment of Eisenhower to complete the process of reconstructing the nation and finishing the work began 85 years earlier.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower began the process of ensuring that all American citizens had equal protection and rights under the law both in the North and the South. This work had

---

<sup>15</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, Statement by the President Upon Signing the Civil Rights Act of 1960, May 6, 1960.

<sup>16</sup> Eisenhower, Statement Upon Signing the Civil Rights Act of 1960.

begun unsuccessfully in the wake of the Union victory over the Confederacy in the American Civil War. Eisenhower's work would continue under the leadership of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. However, much like during the Southern Civil War, the fight over equal rights was not easy and in some cases, was not without bloodshed. Reconstruction appeared to have ended in failure in 1877, however, with the work of President Eisenhower toward achieving the goals of Reconstruction; it is important to reassess the commonly held belief that Reconstruction actually ended in the 1800s. The era of Reconstruction did end with the compromise which placed Rutherford B. Hayes in office. However, the ideals of Reconstruction never ended, the efforts to achieve it just were pushed off as predicted by Hayes in his diary.

### **JFK: CONTINUING THE SECOND RECONSTRUCTION**

When John F. Kennedy took the reins of presidential power from Dwight Eisenhower in 1961, the rebirth of Reconstruction was in good hands. Eisenhower had worked to reinforce efforts by previous presidents to ensure the rights of African Americans, which was the unfulfilled promise of post-Civil War Reconstruction. In the final year of his presidency, Kennedy summed up the century since the American Civil War by stating that:

There can hardly have been a year during the past century when something did not happen which might have seemed ample cause for cynicism, apathy, or despair. But this report will show, I think, that American Negroes have never succumbed to defeatism but have worked bravely and unceasingly to secure the rights to which as American citizens they are entitled.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> John F. Kennedy, Remarks Upon Receiving Civil Rights Commission Report, "Freedom to the Free," February 12, 1963.

This statement is a wakeup call that Reconstruction never actually ended, it just stopped being a national legislative priority for the American government. African Americans never stopped working to achieve the rights promised by the Constitutional Amendments of the Reconstruction era. The 1960s would be a decade of rapid change in the nation in terms of civil rights and Kennedy's statement is a summary of his efforts and a prediction of what was to come.

On June 11, 1963, President Kennedy gave the American public his honest assessment of the state of African American civil rights:

One hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free. They are not yet freed from the bonds of injustice. They are not yet freed from social and economic oppression. And this Nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free.

We preach freedom around the world, and we mean it, and we cherish our freedom here at home, but are we to say to the world, and much more importantly, to each other that this is a land of the free except for the Negroes; that we have no second-class citizens except Negroes; that we have no class or cast system, no ghettos, no master race except with respect to Negroes?

Now the time has come for this Nation to fulfill its promise. The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or State or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them.

The fires of frustration and discord are burning in every city, North and South, where legal remedies are not at hand. Redress is sought in the streets, in demonstrations, parades, and protests which create tensions and threaten violence and threaten lives.

We face, therefore, a moral crisis as a country and as a people. It cannot be met by repressive police action. It cannot be left to increased demonstrations in the streets. It cannot be quieted by token moves or talk. It is a time to act in the Congress, in your State and local legislative body and, above all, in all of our daily lives.

It is not enough to pin the blame on others, to say this is a problem of one section of the country or another, or deplore the fact that we face. A great change is at hand, and our task, our obligation, is to make that revolution, that change, peaceful and constructive for all.

Those who do nothing are inviting shame as well as violence. Those who act boldly are recognizing right as well as reality.<sup>18</sup>

President Kennedy with this address issued a call to action to complete the work of Reconstruction and provides evidence that it was still taking place a century after the Civil War took place. Kennedy's strong use of language in the address serves as a reminder of the fact that

---

<sup>18</sup> John F. Kennedy, Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights, June 11, 1963.

the nation had delayed and stalled for decades in completing the work began after the Union's victory over the Confederacy in 1865.

### **LBJ: PROGRESS MADE...BUT NOT DONE YET**

The November 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy meant that for the second time in American history, a Democrat from the South named Johnson would become president after the death of a president. 1963 was much different from 1864, however, and Lyndon Baines Johnson was no Andrew Johnson. The difference between the two men can be describe best with a quote made by Lyndon Johnson in 1964: "We believe that all men are created equal. Yet many are denied equal treatment."<sup>19</sup> This is something that the Lyndon Johnson truly believed. Andrew Johnson who had owned slaves would never have supported this sentiment.

The civil rights efforts of the Johnson administration advanced reconstruction in a rapid manner that helped shape society and paved the way for an African American to become president (although it would take almost half a century for this to occur). Lyndon Johnson would oversee the passage of a series of Civil Rights Acts. In 1968, at the signing of the 1968 Civil Rights Act, President Johnson gave an assessment of the progress being made in achieving the goals of reconstruction:

I do not exaggerate when I say that the proudest moments of my Presidency have been times such as this when I have signed into law the promises of a century.

I shall never forget that it was more than 100 years ago when Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation--but it was a proclamation; it was not a fact.

---

<sup>19</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, Radio and Television Remarks Upon Signing the Civil Rights Bill, July 2, 1964.

In the Civil Rights Act of 1964, we affirmed through law that men equal under God are also equal when they seek a job, when they go to get a meal in a restaurant, or when they seek lodging for the night in any State in the Union.

Now the Negro families no longer suffer the humiliation of being turned away because of their race.

In the Civil Rights Act of 1965, we affirmed through law for every citizen in this land the most basic right of democracy--the right of a citizen to vote in an election in his country. In the five States where the Act had its greater impact, Negro voter registration has already more than doubled.

Now, with this bill, the voice of justice speaks again.

It proclaims that fair housing for all--all human beings who live in this country--is now a part of the American way of life.<sup>20</sup>

Johnson's assessment of how the United States government had worked to pass laws which corrected wrongs that had been and were at the time being committed against African Americans is a key point in demonstrating the fact that Reconstruction was still being undertaken a century after it had begun in the shadow of the American Civil War.

### **A TRIP DOWN OLD COURT HOUSE ROAD**

The election of President Obama was both historic and an opportunity for real dialogue on the status of race relations in the United States. It is also evidence beyond any doubt that revival of reconstruction goals in the 1950s and 1960s were successful; especially when compared to the limited gains and major setback that are associated with the era of Reconstruction.

Appomattox, Virginia, was made famous as a result of the event it hosted at the end of the American Civil War. The event was the April 1865 surrender of the Confederate forces commanded by General Robert E. Lee to Union General U.S. Grant. The surrender was the event which marked the end of the Civil War. The terms of surrender that the two generals

---

<sup>20</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, Remarks Upon Signing the Civil Rights Act, April 11, 1968.

would agree on set the tone for how future Confederate surrenders would go. In the now well-known McLean house on Old Court House Road, Generals Grant and Lee took part in the event which would end a war and simultaneously begin Reconstruction. The county of Appomattox is well aware of its place in American history and has attempted to capitalize on it by branding themselves as the place “Where Our Nation Reunited.”

On the eve of the 150th anniversary of Lee’s surrender to Grant; Visitors driving down Old Court House Road to the Appomattox Court House National Park will encounter a shocking scene: proudly displayed Confederate flags. As hard as it is to believe that 150 after the nation was “reunited” there are still residents who take great pride in the separatist past that the Confederacy represented. Among the road side display of Confederate flags is the Appomattox chapter of the Museum of the Confederacy and its life-sized poster of General Lee encouraging passer-byers to stop and checkout his uniform and sword. Inside the recently constructed building is a tribute to the soldiers of the Confederate army including uniforms, flags, correspondence and Robert E. Lee’s death mask (in case seeing his uniform and sword is not enough).

A trip down Old Court House Road is a vivid reminder that 150 years later, in a state that the first African American president was able to win in two elections; the progress towards the goals of Reconstruction are still a work in progress.

## **IN THE END: THE CURRENT STATUS OF RECONSTRUCTION**

The concept of Reconstruction in America which occurred after the American Civil War never ended. The decade following the Civil War featured the passage of three Constitutional

amendments aimed at ensuring the freedom, equality and voting rights of the recently freed African Americans. The Reconstruction era featured three presidents who in one way or another failed to successfully manage efforts to achieve Reconstruction. In 1865, the defeated South slipped into a second civil war between the ex-Confederates and African Americans. The lack of strong leadership in stopping the violence in the former Confederacy led to the failure of Reconstruction efforts. It is not possible to rebuild a region structurally, economically, politically and socially if they never stopped the fighting. 1865 marked the end of warfare in the North but it also marked a new target for warfare in the South. The actions taken (or in some cases, not taken) by Presidents Johnson, Grant and Hayes during the initial era of Reconstruction delayed the progress which needed to be made. The 85 years that followed the Compromise of 1877 would not be without progress, however, any movement toward the achievement of reconstructing the South would not be sufficient enough to complete the tasks started at the end of the Civil War.

The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was the strong revival of Civil War Reconstruction. Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson would make-up for the weak leadership of the men who served in office before them. The willingness to enforce the laws of the land made a major difference in the outcomes when compared to the outcomes of the 1860s and 1870s. The support of legislative acts written to ensure the equal rights for African Americans took political courage. The period saw major accomplishments with the passage of Civil Rights Acts which gave the federal government the resources needed to carry out the mission of reconstructing the nation. The presidents that followed Lyndon Johnson would continue the trend and the process of reuniting the nation would slowly continue. 2008 would see a major

step towards America living up to the promise of Reconstruction with the election of Barack Obama, the nation's first African American president.

## **TRANSFORMING THE RESEARCH INTO INSTRUCTION THAT WORKS**

Did Reconstruction ever end? This is an essential question which needs to be considered and studied by educators. The study of the decade-long era which followed the American Civil War is a key period in United States history which has impacted the nation ever since. The era of Reconstruction has been deemed to have ended around the election of President Rutherford B. Hayes who removed the federal troops from the South and ensured the failure of Reconstruction. Prior to the end of the American Civil War, Union leaders were already working on plans for what would come after a Union victory against the Confederacy. The goals of Reconstruction were clear: ensure the rights of recently freed African Americans, rebuild the South and reunite the divided nation. Current teaching trends in American history focus on the failure to complete the goals of Reconstruction in the decade immediately following the American Civil War. However, Reconstruction did not end in 1877.

The goals of Reconstruction were not forgotten, the achievement of the goals was just delayed as a result of the failure of the Reconstruction era Presidents to recognize the need for order to be restored in the South prior to attempts to reconstruct the war torn region. Progress was made during the era of Reconstruction but the outbreak of a Southern Civil War made it impossible for the achievements to have any really meaning. Social Studies curriculum also is ineffective at presenting Reconstruction as an ongoing effort and connecting the dots from the 1860s and 1870s to the 1960s and to present day current events. The original research presented

focuses on the concept that Reconstruction never actually ended and the efforts to successfully achieve the goals of Reconstruction are still taking place 150 years later.

The original research shows that Reconstruction set the tone for how the next century and beyond would play out in the United States in terms of race relations. The failure of Presidents Andrew Johnson, Grant and Hayes failed in the mission to successfully achieve the goals of Reconstruction and stop the Southern Civil War resulted in the 14th and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution becoming ineffective for almost a century. Over the 100 years that followed, the successors to the Reconstruction Presidents would continue pursuing the goals of post-war Reconstruction. Essential questions resulting from the research include: How did Reconstruction continue after 1877 and in what ways are Americans still attempting to achieve the goals of Reconstruction? Both of these questions are critical in understanding the ongoing nature of Reconstruction. The two questions both are important elements of future lessons on the subject of Reconstruction in light of the original research.

The original research presented in the second part of the thesis process is being utilized in educational practice aimed at improving the teaching of Reconstruction with the creation of a website aimed at providing resources for educators. The website can be found at the web address: [sheltonreconstruction.weebly.com](http://sheltonreconstruction.weebly.com). The website uses a variety of tools to allow educators to better understand and teach Reconstruction as one continuous event in United States history. The website's home page features a link to the abstract of the original research answering the question: Did Reconstruction ever end? This question is the theme that the website is built around. The home page also has a video clip of an interview with Civil War historian James McPherson commenting on the similarities between the era of Reconstruction and the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s.

The website features pages which support the thesis of the original research. Sections included on the website are video clips, links to other websites, materials for educators, and recommended readings. The resources found in these sections of the website provide educators with a solid foundation to create updated curriculum on the subject of Reconstruction. The video clips from YouTube include a documentary on the Second Civil War which occurred in the South after the American Civil War. Other video clips found on the website are interviews with some of the most well-known historians on the topic of Reconstruction. The final clip is an interview with baseball player Buck O'Neil who shares his predictions of racial realities in America.

The links section of the website is designed to give easy access to other sites that also offer resources for educators. Links found on the page include PBS webpages designed to go along with documentaries on the Second Civil War and Jim Crow. Links to other teacher sites that offer lesson plans and activities are also included on the Reconstruction links section of the website. The objective of this section is to provide educators with additional tools that have already been published online and that support the evidence presented in the original research.

The website offers educators a section where materials and activities can be found but no lesson plans. The purpose of this section is to present materials that teachers can introduce into lessons that are already created but are missing the connection between the efforts to achieve the goals of Reconstruction after 1877. The materials featured on the website are meant to get educators who may not want to or are unable to use a fully created lesson plan in their teaching, but do want to include the ideas put forth in the original research into the curriculum. The inclusion of short and to the point materials and activities will allow teachers to slip in the

messages of the original research by using the less time consuming activities that still will further the essential objectives of the website and the complete lesson plans.

The activities include a Venn diagram which compares and contrasts the era of Reconstruction which occurred during the Southern Civil War with the Civil Rights era which came a century later. The objective of the diagram is to recognize the common themes of both eras and that the fight for equal rights did not end with the end of the Reconstruction era because Reconstruction from the American Civil War never ended. Other materials included on the website are based on a primary source, such as, the 14th Amendment which features constructed response questions to get students to think critically about the document. The website uses materials that educators can use to create lessons that will appeal to a variety of learners. The use of video, be it a whole documentary or just a quick clip will help audio-visual learners to better grasp the concepts being taught in the lesson.

A major element of the website is the page featuring lesson plans. This page offers educators complete lessons dealing with the concepts put forth in the original research on Reconstruction. Lesson plans found on the page include a “Voting Rights Walking Tour” focusing on the history of Voting Rights for African Americans from the Reconstruction era up to present day. The walking tour includes five stops with each stop featuring documents focusing on a different era. In order to get students to key on the essential concepts, a note packet to be filled out by students is one the website. The packet includes questions about the primary source documents found at each stop of the tour. The lesson encourages student-centered learning and is meant to enhance student’s abilities to critically examine and analyze primary source documents and draw conclusions. The walking tour has the main objective is to

give students a chronological look at African American voting rights since Reconstruction in a manner in which they are not being lectured.

The second lesson plan is a Document-Based Question dealing with the essential question of the original research: Did Reconstruction ever end? The DBQ features 10 documents ranging from the Reconstruction era to modern times. The documents include text from speeches by Frederick Douglass and Barack Obama; political cartoons; graphs and primary source images. The scaffolding questions that accompany the documents are geared at assisting students with analyzing the document and how it relates to the essential question. The Document-Based Essay Question is the same question that was the starting point for the original research paper and uses sources which will help create academic thought and discussion as to whether Reconstruction ended in 1877 or is still taking place in 2014. No formal lesson plans are on the website for the DBQ since the directions are on the first page of the packet.

The final lesson found on the website is one featuring the “Images of Reconstruction.” In this activity, students are divided into small groups. Each group will be given a part of an image to examine and respond to. After students share their reactions to the image, the entire image is shown to students. The purpose is for students to analyze the small details in a section of an image which might otherwise have been overlooked. However, showing only portions of an image can change the impact and nature of the image. For example, an image of firefighters spraying a hose is a completely different image than that of an image of firefighters spraying the hose at other people, therefore it is important for the entire to be shown at some point during the lesson.

The three lesson plans featured on the website are all efforts to encourage critical thinking about the longevity of Reconstruction using primary source documents. The lesson

plans were designed to reflect the important lessons learned from the original research and the best teaching practices. The importance of understanding that the goals of Reconstruction did not end in 1877 are the backbone of the three original lesson plans and will serve to help educators and students identify and comprehend the impact that Reconstruction still has on the United States.

The lesson plans available on the website encourage students to be divided into small groups. While teachers are free to ignore this suggestion, there are a few different reasons for the plans calling for groups instead of whole classes. In reality, it is easier for students to complete the tasks from the lesson plans and actively engage the material if there are fewer students looking at the documents. Educational research, however, is the larger reason for the call to educators to break up large classes into small groups. Group work is good for students to be a part of as pointed out by Denis Newman, Peg Griffin and Michael Cole in *The Construction Zone: Working for Cognitive Change in School* (1989), “When People with different goals, roles, and resources interact, the differences in interpretation provide occasions for the construction of new knowledge.”<sup>21</sup> The insight made by Newman, Griffin and Cole is as relevant today as it was two decades ago. Group work is an important part of any student’s educational development and the use of small group work allows students, who may not normally offer the perspective in a full class setting, to share their unique viewpoints on the material being presented to students. Interpretation is an essential element in the lesson plans presented on the website. Students are asked to examine documents and draw conclusions. This requires students to draw on their knowledge and experiences in order for them to formulate a response to the documents.

---

<sup>21</sup>D. Newman, Griffin, P., & Cole, M. (1989). *The Construction Zone: Working for cognitive change in school*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2.

The website was created with the lessons learned and questions raised from the original research on Reconstruction in mind. The primary objective of the website is to use documented educational practices to develop resources for educators and promote the concepts introduced in the research. The process of reconstructing American after the Civil War has not yet been completed and since the goals laid out from post-war Reconstruction are still a work in progress educators and historians need to re-evaluate how they approach the topic of Reconstruction and the periods which followed. The Civil Rights movement is not a second Reconstruction, it is still a part of the Reconstruction which began in April 1865. The century in between the two periods does exist and it does matter. Efforts were made and people died in efforts to ensure equal rights.

In too many classrooms across the nation, students learn about post-American Civil War Reconstruction up until 1877 and are told that it ended with the Compromise of 1877. The efforts for African Americans to fully gain the rights promised to them in the shadow of the Civil War is a key piece of the story of American history that is lacking in most textbooks and classrooms. In the six years since the first African American was elected President of the United States, the nation continues to have issues with race relations. Looking at a newspaper and seeing stories about riots in American towns over children being shot by law enforcement officials of another race is both shocking and a great opportunity to discuss the long history of Reconstruction and the impact it has on society.

Current events are a major aspect of the social studies and serve as an important tool in connecting the world that students live in with the historical events of the past. The website includes links to news websites which can be used in the classroom to begin discussion that can be used to make essential connections to the past. The story of the police shooting of an 18 year

old in Missouri in the summer of 2014, for example, is a current event featured on national news and on Twitter, Facebook and other social media sites. Because of the vast amount of media attention that the shooting received, students will have at least a passing knowledge of the event and more likely, an opinion about what happened. This is a chance for educators to discuss the goals of Reconstruction and connect them to the current event. Classroom discussion can then focus on deciding if Reconstruction is still taking place in the United States.

Reconstruction for too long has been a topic that has been taught in a manner which leaves out major elements. The violence that took place in the defeated South is included in lesson plans and textbooks, however, educators need to stay current on the era of Reconstruction and the new trend of historians classifying the violence as a Southern Civil War which pitted defeated ex-Confederates against African Americans and white Republicans. The recognition that a second civil war took place in the South immediately following the American Civil War is critical when considering the history of Reconstruction. Rebuilding and reuniting a nation becomes impossible when a war is being fought and violence is widespread. The first step to reworking the teaching of Reconstruction is including the history of the Southern Civil War as part of any unit on Civil War Reconstruction. The next step is making the connection across American history from 1877 to 2014 is part of the ongoing struggle to achieve the goals of Reconstruction. It is essential that educators focus on including the efforts to achieve the promise of the 14th and 15th Amendments to the United Constitution into curriculum. Educators also need to make sure that students understand the ongoing struggle for civil rights for the century that followed General Lee's surrender to General Grant in April 1865.

The original research presented in this thesis presents the idea that Reconstruction never ended. The idea that the historical events are connected is nothing new, however, the concept

that the struggle for equality and civil rights are all part of Reconstruction is something that was left out of the teaching of American history. In response to the conclusions of the original research and the new questions raised by it, a website has been created as a resource for educators and anyone else interested. The website features a variety of materials, including lesson plans, classroom activities, video clips, reading recommendations and links to other websites in an effort to help fill in the gaps and encourage educators to recognize and include into the curriculum the expanded Reconstruction movement in American history courses.

## Bibliography

- Eisenhower, Dwight D. Second Annual Message to Congress, January 7, 1954.
- Eisenhower, Dwight D. Transcript of News Conference, June 19, 1957.
- Eisenhower, Dwight D. Statement by the President Upon Signing the Civil Rights Act of 1960, May 6, 1960.
- Grant, Ulysses S. Special Message to House of Representative and Senate. April 7, 1869.
- Grant, Ulysses S. First Annual Message to Congress. December 5, 1876.
- Grant, Ulysses S. Presidential Proclamation of October 18, 1871.
- Hayes, Rutherford B. First Annual Message to Congress. December 3, 1877.
- Johnson, Andrew. Presidential Proclamation of May 29, 1865.
- Johnson, Andrew. Presidential Proclamation of August 20, 1866.
- Johnson, Andrew. Presidential Proclamation of December 25, 1868.
- Johnson, Andrew. Third Annual Message to Congress. December 3, 1867.
- Johnson, Lyndon B. Radio and Television Remarks Upon Signing the Civil Rights Bill, July 2, 1964.
- Johnson, Lyndon B. Remarks Upon Signing the Civil Rights Act, April 11, 1968.
- Kennedy, John F. Remarks Upon Receiving Civil Rights Commission Report, "Freedom to the Free," February 12, 1963.
- Kennedy, John F. Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights, June 11, 1963.
- Newman, D., Griffin, P., & Cole, M. (1989). *The Construction Zone: Working for cognitive Change in school*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rawley, James A. "Rutherford B. Hayes." In *"To the Best of My Ability": The American Presidents*, edited by James M. McPherson. New York: Agincourt Press, 2004.

Williams, Harry T., editor. *Hayes: The Diary of a President, 1875-1881*. New York: D. McKay Company, 1964.

NOTE ON SOURCE: Presidential primary resources including speeches and remarks are from the American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/index.php>.