

H. Reconstruction (1865-77)

1. During the Civil War, when some of the Southern states had already been conquered by the Union, Abraham Lincoln began to work on putting the country back together again.
2. He offered amnesty (forgiveness and freedom from punishment) to Southerners as long as they swore loyalty to the Constitution and abolished slavery in their states. Sadly, they refused the bargain.
3. Although Lincoln was assassinated before it was completed, he supported the final solution to abolishing slavery: the **Thirteenth Amendment**.
4. This addition to the constitution reads: *“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.”*
5. After being accepted by 2/3 of the House of Representatives and Senate, the amendment was passed on to the state governments, of which 3/4 had to agree as well before it could become an amendment. Since some of the slave states were not part of the government yet, enough states agreed and the amendment became law.
6. Former slave owners of the South feared what newly freed slaves might do. They created new laws to try to keep them under control. These laws, known as “Black Codes,” said that all black people had to have a job, or the government could force them to work. This was a new kind of slavery!
7. In response to the “Black Codes” the Federal government created the Freedman's Bureau which worked to give freed slaves food and sometimes granted them 40 acres of land each so they could support themselves.
8. The government also created the **Fourteenth Amendment**, which said that all former slaves were citizens, and thus they were protected by the laws of the United States like everyone else.
9. When some Southern states refused to accept the Fourteenth Amendment, Northerners decide to shut down these government using the army, and force Southerners to create new ones.
10. The army supervised the creation of new state governments, which all had to accept the Fourteenth Amendment and allow black people to vote.
11. Since slaves had been kept illiterate and ignorant by their masters, it would be easy for others to control them even though they were free. A secret group of criminals called the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was formed by Southern white people to attack black people and make them afraid of voting.
12. Northerners known as “carpetbaggers” moved south in order to take advantage of the desperate condition of the people, making alliances with “scalawags” (Southerners who turned on their neighbors) in order to take political power for themselves.
13. The result was a long-running insurgency by the KKK and a military occupation of the South until 1877.
14. To complete the transformation of former black slaves into free American citizens, the federal government passed the **Fifteenth Amendment**. It said that all citizens had the right to vote.
15. To make sure that Southern states respected this amendment, the government also created laws called the “Force Acts,” which said that the police should protect all voters.
16. Although the feeling of Union had certainly not returned, Northerners tired of the challenge of remaking the social contract of the south, and when the governments seemed to have been reorganized in a stable manner, the Union army withdrew in 1877.

I. Citizenship and the Long Struggle for “Civil Rights”

1. Although the Reconstruction amendments to the Constitution freed the slaves, made them citizens, and gave them the right to vote, it would be a full *one hundred* years before the social contract of America was really changed to make these pronouncements a reality.

2. During that hundred years, it would still have been impossible for an African-American man like Barack Obama to be elected president.
3. During this long period, the African-American population struggled to rise up from its previous position of servitude and illiteracy into a position of true citizenship, where they were able to see themselves as worthy of equal respect and to insist on the protection of their rights. This is known as the “civil rights movement.”
4. The book *To Kill a Mockingbird*, also made into a famous movie, is a fictional dramatization of the culture of injustice due to racism in which a black man is unjustly put on trial for raping a white woman. Various real-life stories are shockingly similar, such as the story of a young black man named Emmett Till who was killed for “offending” a white woman, and whose killers were found not “not guilty” by a jury of white men. (They later confessed.)
5. The case of a black woman named Rosa Parks, though not as violent, shows the injustice of *segregation* and *discrimination*. Parks refused to give up her seat in the separate “colored” section of a public bus in Montgomery, Alabama to a white man, and was arrested. This led to the *Montgomery Bus Boycott*, and a court case that ruled that *segregated* public buses are “unconstitutional,” since all citizens are supposed to be treated equally by the government according to the law.
6. The *Rosa Parks* case was one in which the most famous champion of civil rights, a Baptist minister named *Martin Luther King Jr.* began to rise to prominence.
7. Public schools were also supposed to be *desegregated*, but Southerners were resistant, and when a young black girl named Ruby Bridges passed the entrance test to a public school in New Orleans and was allowed to attend, white families pulled their kids out, and some even threatened the little girl, who had to be escorted by federal marshals to and from school.



Ruby Bridges is escorted from her public school by Federal marshals. Famous American artist Norman Rockwell created a painting called “*The Problem We All Live With*” in honor of Ruby Bridges.

8. The struggle for civil rights for African-Americans culminated in the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*, in which Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I have a dream” speech at the Lincoln Memorial. The most famous lines from the speech are: “*I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal’ ...I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.*”
9. Because of the civil rights movement, the Federal government passed two laws to strengthen the 14th and 15th amendments: the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** and the **Voting Rights Act of 1965**, which reinforced the Reconstruction amendments and finally made them fully real.

- The Civil Rights Act made it illegal to discriminate against anyone because of race. The Voting Rights Act made it illegal to make different voting laws based on race.
10. Because of these changes, it became possible for African-Americans to become full citizens, and even for an African-American man to become president of the United States.
 11. Here is the complete summary of the evolution of the American social contract:

