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Reconciliation in Post-Civil War America: Uniting a Divided Nation and its People

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Abstract

Overview: On November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln addressed a fractured nation. Standing on the battlefields at Gettysburg mere months after the fatal skirmish that occurred there, he began what would become one of his most famous proclamations.

Author's Reflection: My name is Taylor LaValley, and I am currently a sophomore nursing major minoring in Spanish for the health professions and psychology. When I was a first-year student, I was in the RW course Reconciliation and Recovery from Trauma. Since I plan on becoming a nurse practitioner, I was excited to research topics related to recovery from trauma. However, as I began the research process, I realized this was also an opportunity to pursue my interests in American History, specifically the Civil War.

The summer before I arrived at Fisher, I visited Gettysburg and the museum for the second time, and this helped spark my interest in researching reconciliation and recovery following the Civil War. After choosing this topic, I found it challenging to find scholarly articles and resources that described difficulties faced in reconciling. While I found numerous sources that described racial discrimination following the war, it was difficult to find those that explained why discrimination may have persisted, and what may have hindered reconciliation altogether. As I continued my research, and learned how to use different journals and databases, and how to tailor my searches using such resources, I was able to overcome these challenges. Throughout the writing process, I enjoyed being able to compile my research, and see how different events and perspectives of the people influenced reconciliation. Also, even though the Civil War was almost 200 years ago, I enjoyed analyzing its implications in today's society. If reconciliation had never occurred, what would have been the implications? Overall, the process of writing this paper taught me that most often, the most effective research papers are those done over a period of time. The process of research, writing, and editing takes time, but is necessary for producing the best paper possible.

Professor Bowman's Reflection: Taylor LaValley's research project was, start to finish, a labor of love. Her interest in the project stems from her passion for American history, and you could say that she started the research process the summer before college, when she toured the battlefields of Gettysburg on a vacation that she had asked for herself. The course focus on reconciliation led her into a thesis and approach that was as unusual as it was rewarding. She found a wide array of sources that led her into reading the scholarly work of historians, the speeches of presidents, and even the archival letters of abolitionists who traveled in the antebellum south. As we met throughout the project and discussed her progress, I knew that this project meant something to her, that she was inspired by the topic and the texts. I think great research needs motivation, and she certainly found it in this very impressive essay.

Taylor LaValley

Dr. Bowman

Research Based Writing

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Reconciliation in Post-Civil War America: Uniting a Divided Nation and its People

Introduction

On November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln addressed a fractured nation. Standing on the battlefields at Gettysburg mere months after the fatal skirmish that occurred there, he began what would become one of his most famous proclamations. As his speech commenced, he stated:

> Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. (Lincoln, 2013, par. 2)

In the opening lines of his address, Lincoln chooses to allude to the fight for freedom that once constituted the American Revolutionary War. He effectively compares the combat at hand to one more than a century earlier, in which American citizens banded together to fight for their independence and freedom. As innocent men lost their lives fighting for what they truly believed was right, they each helped create a land characterized by liberty and equality. From their sacrifice, a stronger nation was built, and in his speech, Lincoln can only suggest that the outcome of the Civil War will be much the same (2013). As he states:

It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who

fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the

great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion

to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here

highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God,

shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for

the people, shall not perish from the earth. (Lincoln, 2013, par. 2)

With this promise, both to the nation and its people, Lincoln assures the people that their

sacrifices will not have been futile (2013). While peace is sorely won without casualties, he

promised that eventually it would be won and that all people would consequently be treated like

human beings (Lincoln, 2013). Yet standing on the former battlefield of Gettysburg, one of the

bloodiest battles of the war, one could not help but question when exactly peace would be

established among the divided nation and its citizens.

The Civil War rapidly became one of the costliest wars in American history (McPherson,

2018). Resulting in over 750,000 casualties and the destruction of both Northern and Southern

communities (Cook, 2016), the Civil War was characterized by both brutality and loss. However,

when the fighting ceased in 1865, four years following the conflict in which Northern states were

pitted against their former compatriots of the Confederacy, reconciliation was not instantaneous.

Instead, reconciliation was a grueling, long process, which was accomplished due to the actions

of both the state and the federal government. Through encouraged healing processes and

resolving the challenges presented by the war, the people of the United States were eventually

able to reunite and reconcile following the Civil War. However, racial reconciliation largely

failed to occur and extended well into the twentieth century.

<center>**Background Information on the Civil War and Reconstruction Era**</center>

The American Civil War

As Dr. James McPherson, a renowned historian, states in his paper entitled "A Brief Overview of the American Civil War", "While the Revolution of 1776-1783 created the United States, the Civil War of 1861-1865 determined what kind of nation it would be" (2018, par. 1). In the decades prior to the war, Northern and Southern states were engaged in a grave conflict regarding the status of one racial group within the nation: African Americans (McPherson, 2018). Throughout the first half of the 1800s, African Americans were enslaved people who primarily worked on plantations and farms in the South. Most often, plantation owners abused their slaves, neglecting and ignoring their human dignity and qualities based on the color of their skin. As such, many African Americans fled to Northern states, where slavery was illegal. As a result, tensions were created amongst certain groups of Northerners and Southerners, specifically, those who supported slavery and those who did not (McPherson, 2018). Furthermore, tensions were also increasingly heightened through westward expansion. While most Southern states argued and proclaimed that the new territories the United States was acquiring should permit slavery, many abolitionists and Northerners argued against allowing such. Ultimately, both sides were unwilling to compromise for decades, as it would influence the future practice of slavery across the growing and expanding nation (McPherson, 2018). While no actions were taken, each section of the country attempted to sway the newly formed states and territories to adapt their beliefs on the matter. Yet it was not until the election of 1860 that the states drew true lines in the sand (McPherson, 2018). When Abraham Lincoln, a Republican whose campaign focused on his promise to prohibit slavery within the new territories, was elected president, seven Southern states seceded from the Union (McPherson, 2018). Forming

their own nation, referred to as the Confederate States of America, these Southern States permitted and encouraged slavery (McPherson, 2018). When Lincoln and the states still under his control failed to acknowledge the Confederacy as a legitimate nation, war was ultimately unavoidable (McPherson, 2018).

On April 12, 1861, as the first shots of war rang out, it was amongst a billowing cloud of white smoke that the Civil War was about to unfold (McPherson, 2018). At Fort Sumter in Charleston Bay, South Carolina, the Confederacy claimed the military base as their own (McPherson, 2018). To exhibit this early victory, the army opened fire on the nearby federal garrison, refusing to cease until they lowered the American flag (McPherson, 2018). With this action, the Civil War officially began, as Lincoln consequently activated the militia to "suppress this insurrection" (McPherson, 2018, par. 4). Following this, throughout 1861, four more states would secede from the Union, while minor skirmishes occurred in Virginia, North Carolina, and Missouri (McPherson, 2018). However, in 1862, the brutality of the war drastically increased, and the war truly began impacting the lives of all American citizens (McPherson, 2018). While the early stages of the war were marked by battles such as those at Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Second Manassas, these battles could only begin to indicate what was to come (McPherson, 2018). In the next three years of the war, thousands of soldiers would lose their lives at Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Chickamauga (McPherson, 2018). As a result, by 1864, three years after the beginning of the war, the Union was forced to change their battle strategy to turn the tides of the war in their favor (McPherson, 2018). Now, they sought to destroy the Old South and its slavery foundation so that as Lincoln stated in his Gettysburg Address, a "new birth of freedom" could occur (McPherson, 2018, par. 5). While this strategy was initially ineffective, as the Confederate armies of General Robert E. Lee held off Northern advances and invasions,

Ulysses S. Grant turned the tide of the war with his appointment of general in 1864 (McPherson, 2018). Within a year, the Confederacy would be dismantled, and General Lee would surrender (McPherson, 2018).

In the year following Ulysses S. Grant's appointment as general of the Union army, the Confederacy sustained an immense number of casualties and losses (McPherson, 2018). Defeated at the battles of Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg among others, Lee was eventually forced to surrender to prevent losing more men (McPherson, 2018). Ultimately, on April 9, 1865, just three days shy of marking the four-year anniversary of the beginning of the war, Lee met with Grant at Appomattox Court House in his home state of Virginia (McPherson, 2018). There, Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to Grant, marking the conclusion of the conflict between them (McPherson, 2018). Consequently, throughout the duration of that same spring, the remaining Confederate armies quickly surrendered to Union forces (McPherson, 2018). When Confederate president Jefferson Davis was captured on May 10th, remaining resistance from Southerners quickly dissipated because the leader of their cause had become incapacitated and lost his power (McPherson, 2018). Thus, hostilities had officially been ceased. However, while there was no longer physical fighting among the states of the nation, peace would not be instantly created among its people due to heightened tensions.

The Reconstruction Era

While fighting had ceased amongst the North and South, this newly established peace did not correct the causes, destruction, or problems the war had created. As such, in the decades following the war, the United States entered a new era primarily focused on reconstruction and reconciliation of the nation ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). Appropriately, this era was referred to

as the Reconstruction Era and became a time of political and social reform ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.)

Throughout the course of the Civil War, as the North came to occupy larger areas of the South, Lincoln began formulating plans to unite the nation ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). While primarily focusing on unifying the states as quickly possible, Lincoln also felt that the reintegrated states needed to abolish slavery within their constitutions ("Reconstruction Era, n.d.). Thus, as the end of the war drew closer, Congress ratified the 13th amendment in December of 1865, which abolished slavery within the United States ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). While Lincoln was unfortunately assassinated before he could see his other plans for reconstruction come to fruition, vice president Andrew Johnson adopted some of his policies and plans for rebuilding the war-torn nation ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). As a result, Southern states were required to take a vow before rejoining the Union, in which they pledged loyalty to both the nation and its policy of abolishing slavery ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). However, this vow was not all that it appeared to be.

Throughout the Reconstruction Era, Congress passed a series of acts designed to aid African Americans as they became integrated into society and further helped rebuild war-torn areas ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). While the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands was formed to help provide former slaves with relief and assistance, other legislation such as the 14th Amendment ensured their rights and citizenship ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). Yet despite these measures, African Americans' rights were still continuously limited within the Southern states. To secure elements of their former political and socioeconomic structure, numerous Southern states passed a series of black codes, which limited African Americans' rights and granted them second-class citizenship ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). As a result, most

African Americans experienced few if any changes in the way they were treated. Furthermore, a series of Reconstruction Acts helped repair and rebuild war-torn areas, while promoting a sense of unity and healing ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). Yet peace was still to come, as certain challenges such as lingering tensions and difficulty of forgetting the brutality of war hindered reconciliation.

Defining Reconciliation

Reconciliation

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, reconciliation is defined as "the action of reconciling" (2019, par. 1). Generally, following a conflict, regardless of what type of conflict has occurred, people begin to reconcile and reunite. During this time, people may address the challenges that were the source of the conflict and seek to further resolve these challenges. Due to this, there are numerous kinds of reconciliation, which include both sectional and racial reconciliation.

Sectional Reconciliation

Sectional reconciliation can best be described as the reconciliation between two or more sections of a country (Cook, 2016). Within the United States, sectional reconciliation became necessary following the Civil War, as Southern state comprising the Confederacy rejoined the Union (Cook, 2016). With their reunification, the citizens of these states, who formerly had different opinions on topics such as the role of the government and slaves within society, were forced to reunite. As such, sectional reconciliation became increasingly necessary to ease reunification and healing between these two groups and encourage unification.

Racial Reconciliation

Racial reconciliation is reconciliation amongst two or more races. Within the United

States, racial reconciliation has been most prominent among African Americans and Caucasians. Prior to the Civil War, American Americans were enslaved, primarily working on plantations within the Southern states. With their freedom granted by the Emancipation Proclamation and 13th Amendment, African Americans had a newfound role in American society following the conflict ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). While they could own land and be paid for their work, many had tumultuous encounters and interactions with the people who formerly enslaved them ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). Increasingly, as discrimination and unjust treatment of African Americans persisted throughout the century, racial reconciliation became crucial if the United States was to prosper as a united nation.

The Importance of Reconciliation

Following the Civil War, tensions reached an all-time high within the United States. Although the conflict had officially been resolved, peace was not immediately reached. Specific challenges remained, generally the result of allegiances formed during the war (Coffield, 2012). For the nation to reunite and begin healing and moving forward from the casualties of war, certain strategies were used to encourage reconciliation. If reconciliation had not occurred, there may yet be divisions and tensions between Northerners and Southerners, strengthened by sectional and racial discrimination.

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Challenges of Reconciliation

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Reconciliation, both sectional and racial, was not instantaneous following the Civil War. The destruction the war had reaped had severely impacted the manners in which citizens viewed the war, and furthermore, those whose allegiance did not match their own became outcasts (Coffield, 2012). As a result, certain challenges persisted as the reconciliation process began.

Generally, these challenges were related to one of three factors, which include: discrimination instigated by war allegiances, reaped destruction, and memories of the brutality of the war.

Post-War Discrimination and Allegiances

Throughout the course of the Civil War, families were forced to ally themselves with either the Union or Confederacy. While numerous factors influenced such a decision, three key factors were the driving force behind such decisions (Coffield, 2012). First, people generally aligned themselves with the country whose ideals they best supported (Coffield, 2012). Usually, these beliefs were sectional, as Southern states generally supported slavery. However, in certain cases, individuals' opinions differed from their fellow community members (Coffield, 2012). As such, some chose to adhere to their beliefs rather than support the section of the country they lived in (Coffield, 2012). Furthermore, while some attempted to remain neutral throughout the war, for many, this was impossible (Coffield, 2012). As the war spread across vast areas of the nation, many unenlisted men were recruited by both forces passing by (Coffield, 2012). While there were numerous reasons driving war-time allegiances, most of these reasons were disregarded following the war (Coffield, 2012).

Following the war, tensions remained high among Northerners and Southerners. As a result, as people moved across the country, many allegiances from the war led to discrimination (Coffield, 2012). For those who held different allegiances, tensions were often heightened, and discrimination ensued (Coffield, 2012). However, individuals' choices also influenced how they were treated (Coffield, 2012). As Joe Coffield states in his article, "Overall, the results imply that it was the general influence of the War (destruction) and individual choices made during the post-War period that resulted in the 1870 wealth holdings of Southerners instead of a concerted effort by the War's victors to punish the South" (2012, p. 103).

Destruction of the War

The Civil War reaped insurmountable damage across the United States. As battles spread across the entirety of the nation, few areas were left untouched. While battlefields were littered with the remains of war, many nearby towns had been destroyed or affected by the conflict as well. Crops had been burned or ravaged, and the landscape of the United States had been drastically changed. As related by James Gallaman's narrative *A Tour of Reconstruction: Travel Letters of 1875*, abolitionist Anna Dickinson described in one of her travel letters, 10 years following the Civil War how, "Virginia looks very little richer than when we saw it ten years ago. The train was an improvement on the cattle bodies we then inhabited, but the country has the same open & dreary look, — the fences still down, the fields largely uncultivated… The towns are dusty & frowsy, & the people, black & white, dustier & frowsier" (2011 p. 233). In many areas of the South, which was slowly rebuilt in the years following the war, such conditions predominated. As a result, while the North began to flourish, it could be difficult to look past the differences in the levels of devastation reaped (Dickinson & Gallman, 2011). Thus, for Southerners, it became increasingly difficult to reunite with their Northern counterparts who were thriving.

War-Time Memories

While the destruction of war still surrounded many, memories of war were equally as slow to dissipate. Costing more than 750,000 soldiers their lives, the Civil War quickly became one of the most fatal and costly wars in American history (Cook, 2016). As a result, for those soldiers who did return home, the brutality of the war was often impossible to forget. Due to this, numerous Northerners and Southerners may have found it difficult to reconcile with one another, as they remembered the ferocity of their fellow soldiers. As Cook states in his article "The

Quarrel Forgotten?: Toward a Clearer Understanding of Sectional Reconciliation", "sectional memories – northern as well as southern—countered and sometimes trumped the gushing rhetoric of nationalist politicians." (2016, p. 414).

Methods Used to Encourage Reconciliation

As the country remained divided following the Civil War, it became increasingly apparent that governmental actions were needed to encourage healing, recovery, and reconciliation on a national level. In other words, it was anticipated that if a sense of unity and nationalism were promoted, these beliefs would slowly be adopted by the people themselves. Due to this, as Harris explains, "emphasizing sectional reunification contends that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, regimental and state monument dedications, patriotic speeches, personal narratives, 'Blue-Gray' reunions, and even combined support for the American war effort against Spain in 1898 yielded a triumphal, national, and most important, a reconciled version of Civil War memory" (Harris, 2007, par. 2). However, little action was taken to aid in the reconciliation amongst African Americans and former slaveholders.

The reunification of Northerners and Southerners was often collectively encouraged through memorial dedications, patriotic speeches emphasizing unity, and "Blue-Gray" reunions (Harris, 2007). Together, such actions encouraged both former soldiers and citizens to focus on the courageous actions of the soldiers and the positive results of the war, rather than the losses that defined it (Harris, 2007). As a result, "Veterans selectively drew from the past to validate the present. In so doing, they left sectionalism behind" (Harris, 2007, par. 2). Harris specifically describes such an example of encouraged reconciliation by describing a "Blue-Gray" reunion that occurred 50 years after the conclusion of the Civil War (2007). He states:

In July 1913, veterans of the United States and Confederate armies

gathered in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to commemorate the fifty-year anniversary of the

Civil War's bloodiest and most famous battle. The four-day 'Blue-Gray Reunion'

featured parades, reenactments, and speeches from a host of dignitaries, including

President Woodrow Wilson. Striking among the event's activities was the lack of a

comprehensive remembrance of the war's causes and consequences. Veterans and other

public figures highlighted only the virtuous aspects of soldiery such as courage, valor,

and selfless devotion. Thousands of spectators enthusiastically approved of President

Wilson's remarks to former Yankee and Rebel alike: 'Valor? Yes! Greater no man shall

see in war; and self-sacrifice, and loss to the uttermost; the high recklessness of exalted

devotion which does not count the cost'. Any mention of slavery or emancipation was

conspicuously absent." (Harris, 2007, par. 1)

Thus, overall, "Blue-Gray" reunions, war dedications, and patriotic speeches successfully

promoted a message of unity and nationalism (Harris, 2007). However, as Harris states, Wilson

failed to address slavery and emancipation and did not promote racial reconciliation as he did

sectional reconciliation (2007).

Unity and nationalism were also strengthened between the North and South following the

Civil War through a war with Spain (Harris, 2007). Largely influenced by yellow journalism, the

Spanish-American War began in 1898 following the explosion of the USS Maine in Havana

Harbor, Cuba. Thought to be the result of an underwater mine, the United States declared war on

Spain shortly thereafter to avenge the lives of those lost. Due to the formation of a common

enemy, Spain, and a common goal to fight for, which was to free Cuba from Spanish oppression,

Americans citizens reunited to fight for a shared cause (Harris, 2007).

The Occurrence of Sectional and Racial Reconciliation

In the decades constituting the Reconstruction Era, sectional and racial reconciliation became necessary to help unify and heal a divided nation. While governmental actions helped encourage reconciliation among Northerners and Southerners, it generally failed to occur amongst African Americans and their Caucasian counterparts.

Sectional Reconciliation

Throughout the duration of the Reconstruction Era, Northerners and Southerners slowly reconciled their differences and reunited, reducing the divisions that had formed within the nation during the Civil War (Cook, 2016). While sectional tensions remained high following the war due to its painful memories or individuals' war-time allegiances, these tensions were ultimately resolved (Coffield, 2012). Through further promoting a message of nationalism and unity with memorial dedications and "Blue-Gray reunions", Northerners and Southerners were encouraged to forget the losses and brutality of war and rather focus on the bravery of those who fought (Harris, 2007). In addition, they were also motivated to reconcile with one another, in which they would recognize each army's losses, and forgive one another for the gruesome events that had unfolded throughout the conflict (Harris, 2007). As a result, many Northerners and Southerners reconciled during this time. Furthermore, by also uniting as one army in the nation's fight against Spain in the Spanish American War, Northerners and Southerners successfully reconciled and reunited in order to fight a common enemy, Spain, as both a unified and powerful entity (Harris, 2007). Thus, it can be concluded that despite its length and associated difficulties, sectional reconciliation amongst Northerners and Southerners occurred following the Civil War.

Racial Reconciliation

Ultimately, racial reconciliation failed to occur following the Civil War. In the decades following the conflict large numbers of African Americans were still treated as though they were slaves. As black codes such as Jim Crow laws in the South restricted their rights and freedoms ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.), race induced discrimination and injustice persisted throughout the Reconstruction Era (Williams, 2012). As Kidada Williams states in his book *They Left Great Marks on Me: African American Testimonies of Racial Violence from Emancipation to World War I*, "In the fall of 1878, renascent whites in northern and central Louisiana attacked, leaving blacks traumatized and 'charitably exiled.'" (2012, p. 55) Such raids occurred across the South, specifically in larger cities such as Atlanta, Charleston, New Orleans, and Little Rock (Williams, 2012). As a result, African Americans were forced to abandon their homes and flee North to avoid the violence occurring in their cities (Williams, 2012). However, in some cases, race-related violence was inescapable, especially as lynching and the formation of hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan became widespread across the South (Williams, 2012). As a result, in the late 1800s, 20 to 44-year-old African Americans were more likely to be killed than their white counterparts (Green & Hamilton, 2013). While there was a not significant difference in the mortality rates for African Americans of mixed race and non-mixed-race males, there was a significant difference in the mortality rates amongst mixed and non-mixed females (Green & Hamilton, 2013).

Also, throughout the Reconstruction Era and consequent decades, many African Americans were still treated as though they were slaves through forced labor practices (MacNeil & Lehrer, 2012). Throughout the 1800s, large numbers of African Americans were also unjustly incarcerated, or imprisoned for the most trivial of crimes (MacNeil & Lehrer, 2012). Due to this,

many African Americans prisoners were forced to work for the Southern states as convict laborers, where their work went unrewarded and unpaid (MacNeil & Lehrer, 2012). Also, in other cases, those who were unable to pay their fines or bail were forced to work or were sold to a company as free labor until said corporation paid their fines for them (MacNeil & Lehrer, 2012). One such example is in the case of Green Cottenham. Arrested for vagrancy, Cottenham could not afford his fines and was therefore sold to a coal mining company (MacNeil & Lehrer, 2012). During his time at the company, Cottenham was expected to work for two years until the corporation covered what he owed in fines (MacNeil & Lehrer, 2012). Unfortunately, five months into the job, Cottenham died due to the terrible working conditions present there (MacNeil & Lehrer, 2012). Thus, it can, therefore, be concluded that true reconciliation ultimately failed to occur amongst the two groups until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

Conclusion

The Civil War quickly became one of the most well-known conflicts in American history. Resulting in over 750,000 fatalities (Cook, 2016), the American Civil War was characterized by brutality and division of the nation. As a result, in the decades following the conflict, referred to as the Reconstruction Era, healing, reconciliation, and recovery of the nation became the government's primary focus ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). As a result, numerous governmental regulations and actions were taken to help encourage healing amongst both the sections and races of the nation ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). Thus, Northerners and Southerners began to reunite and reconcile their differences, effectively resolving numerous tensions remaining between them. However, while the American Civil War forever changed the policy and perception of justice within the United States, and the reforms of the Reconstruction Era effectively united the sections of a divided nation, reconciliation ultimately failed to occur between African Americans and

former slave-holders. Despite reforms such as the 13th and 14th amendment, which granted African Americans their freedom and gave them citizenship, most still experienced race-based discrimination and injustice ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). Due to the widespread continuation of forced labor practices throughout the South (MacNeil & Lehrer, 2012), in culmination with race-related violence and being physically prevented from exercising their basic rights such as voting, most African Americans would not truly be treated equally until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (Williams, 2012). Therefore, it can ultimately be concluded that post-Civil War reconciliation and recovery was a demanding process encouraged by actions of the government and that while these actions ultimately resulted in sectional reconciliation, they failed to unite African Americans and their white counterparts.

Although the Civil War concluded approximately 150 years ago, its effects have had a multigenerational impact on the policies of the United States, as well as American society itself. Primarily leading to the abolishment of slavery, the Civil War effectively led to the liberation of hundreds of thousands of African Americans across the nation ("Reconstruction Era", n.d.). The direct result of these actions, enslavement of African Americans is currently non-existent in the United States today, where instead most are treated equally. However, it should be noted that African Americans' fight for equality has been a multigenerational process, ultimately concluding with the illegalization of segregation in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Yet, this has not completely eradicated the problem of race-related discrimination and violence within the nation. As a result, it is now one's responsibility more than ever to treat others as their equals, regardless of their race. Furthermore, due to the actions taken by both the state and federal government, reconciliation occurred amongst Northerners and Southerners, despite being a strenuous process. Due to this, in current times, Northerners and Southerners often work harmoniously with one

another, working under and for a united nation. However, if reconciliation amongst these sections of the nation had failed to occur throughout the Reconstruction Era, tensions and disagreements between the two opposing groups would have remained, directly impacting their ability to reconcile and reunite. Therefore, it can be concluded that both sectional and racial reconciliation have directly impacted current American culture and society, leading to the formation of a nation in which all men are truly created equal. However, in order to continuously promote this value, one needs to treat their peers as their equals, regardless of their race, heritage, beliefs, religion, or former homeland.

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