

## And the War Came: The Civil War, 1861-1865

### Alexander Hamilton Stephens, The Cornerstone Speech (1861)

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*On March 21, 1861, Alexander Hamilton Stephens, vice president of the newly established Confederate States of America, stood before an overflowing crowd at the Athenaeum in Savannah, Georgia, and delivered a speech outlining what he believed was the great principle upon which the new government was created. Stephens, an erstwhile lawyer and congressman from Crawfordville, was originally opposed to secession, but chose to remain with his state when it left the Union in January 1861. Elected vice-president of the Confederacy in February, Stephens remained estranged from President Jefferson Davis through much of the war - partly as a result of the following speech. After the war he returned to political service in his native Georgia and in the U. S. House of Representatives. He was elected governor of Georgia in 1882 and died in office. The "Cornerstone Speech" was delivered extemporaneously and no official printed version exists. The text below was taken from a newspaper article in the Savannah Republican. SOURCE: Henry Cleveland, Alexander H. Stephens, in *Public and Private: With Letters and Speeches, Before, During, and Since the War* (Philadelphia, 1886), pp. 717-729.<http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Quad/6460/doct/861crrrstn.html>*

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Savannah, Georgia  
March 21, 1861

I was remarking, that we are passing through one of the greatest revolutions in the annals of the world. Seven States have within the last three months thrown off an old government and formed a new. This revolution has been signally marked, up to this time, by the fact of its having been accomplished without the loss of a single drop of blood. [Applause.]

. . . . But not to be tedious in enumerating the numerous changes for the better, allow me to allude to one other - though last, not least. The new constitution has put at rest, forever, all the agitating questions relating to our peculiar institution - African slavery as it exists amongst us - the proper status of the negro in our form of civilization. This was the immediate cause of the late rupture and present revolution. Jefferson in his forecast, had anticipated this, as the "rock upon which the old Union would split." He was right. What was conjecture with him, is now a realized fact. But whether he fully comprehended the great truth upon which that rock stood and stands, may be doubted. The prevailing ideas entertained by him and most of the leading statesmen at the time of the formation of the old constitution, were that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of nature; that it was wrong in principle, socially, morally, and politically. It was an evil they knew not well how to deal with, but the general opinion of the men of that day was that, somehow or other in the order of Providence, the institution would be evanescent and pass away. This idea, though not incorporated in the constitution, was the prevailing idea at that time. The constitution, it is true, secured every essential guarantee to the institution while it should last, and hence no argument can be justly urged against the constitutional guarantees thus secured, because of the common sentiment of the day. Those ideas, however, were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of

racess. This was an error. It was a sandy foundation, and the government built upon it fell when the "storm came and the wind blew."

Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests upon the great truth, that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery - subordination to the superior race - is his natural and normal condition. [Applause.] This, our new government, is the first, in the history of the world, based upon this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth. This truth has been slow in the process of its development, like all other truths in the various departments of science. It has been so even amongst us. Many who hear me, perhaps, can recollect well, that this truth was not generally admitted, even within their day. The errors of the past generation still clung to many as late as twenty years ago. Those at the North, who still cling to these errors, with a zeal above knowledge, we justly denominate fanatics. All fanaticism springs from an aberration of the mind - from a defect in reasoning. It is a species of insanity. One of the most striking characteristics of insanity, in many instances, is forming correct conclusions from fancied or erroneous premises; so with the anti-slavery fanatics; their conclusions are right if their premises were. They assume that the negro is equal, and hence conclude that he is entitled to equal privileges and rights with the white man. If their premises were correct, their conclusions would be logical and just - but their premise being wrong, their whole argument fails. I recollect once of having heard a gentleman from one of the northern States, of great power and ability, announce in the House of Representatives, with imposing effect, that we of the South would be compelled, ultimately, to yield upon this subject of slavery, that it was as impossible to war successfully against a principle in politics, as it was in physics or mechanics. That the principle would ultimately prevail. That we, in maintaining slavery as it exists with us, were warring against a principle, a principle founded in nature, the principle of the equality of men. The reply I made to him was, that upon his own grounds, we should, ultimately, succeed, and that he and his associates, in this crusade against our institutions, would ultimately fail. The truth announced, that it was as impossible to war successfully against a principle in politics as it was in physics and mechanics, I admitted; but told him that it was he, and those acting with him, who were warring against a principle. They were attempting to make things equal which the Creator had made unequal.

In the conflict thus far, success has been on our side, complete throughout the length and breadth of the Confederate States. It is upon this, as I have stated, our social fabric is firmly planted; and I cannot permit myself to doubt the ultimate success of a full recognition of this principle throughout the civilized and enlightened world.

As I have stated, the truth of this principle may be slow in development, as all truths are and ever have been, in the various branches of science. It was so with the principles announced by Galileo - it was so with Adam Smith and his principles of political economy. It was so with Harvey, and his theory of the circulation of the blood. It is stated that not a single one of the medical profession, living at the time of the announcement of the truths made by him, admitted them. Now, they are universally acknowledged. May we not, therefore, look with confidence to the ultimate universal acknowledgment of the truths upon which our system rests? It is the first government ever instituted upon the principles in strict conformity to nature, and the ordination of Providence, in furnishing the materials of human society. Many governments have been founded upon the principle of the subordination and serfdom of certain classes of the same race;

such were and are in violation of the laws of nature. Our system commits no such violation of nature's laws. With us, all of the white race, however high or low, rich or poor, are equal in the eye of the law. Not so with the negro. Subordination is his place. He, by nature, or by the curse against Canaan, is fitted for that condition which he occupies in our system. The architect, in the construction of buildings, lays the foundation with the proper material - the granite; then comes the brick or the marble. The substratum of our society is made of the material fitted by nature for it, and by experience we know that it is best, not only for the superior, but for the inferior race, that it should be so. It is, indeed, in conformity with the ordinance of the Creator. It is not for us to inquire into the wisdom of his ordinances, or to question them. For his own purposes, he has made one race to differ from another, as he has made "one star to differ from another star in glory."

The great objects of humanity are best attained when there is conformity to his laws and decrees, in the formation of governments as well as in all things else. Our confederacy is founded upon principles in strict conformity with these laws. This stone which was rejected by the first builders "is become the chief of the corner" - the real "corner-stone" - in our new edifice. [Applause.]

I have been asked, what of the future? It has been apprehended by some that we would have arrayed against us the civilized world. I care not who or how many they may be against us, when we stand upon the eternal principles of truth, if we are true to ourselves and the principles for which we contend, we are obliged to, and must triumph. [Immense applause.]

Thousands of people who begin to understand these truths are not yet completely out of the shell; they do not see them in their length and breadth. We hear much of the civilization and christianization of the barbarous tribes of Africa. In my judgment, those ends will never be attained, but by first teaching them the lesson taught to Adam, that "in the sweat of his brow he should eat his bread," [applause,] and teaching them to work, and feed, and clothe themselves.

. . . . Thus far we have seen none of those incidents which usually attend revolutions. No such material as such convulsions usually throw up has been seen. Wisdom, prudence, and patriotism, have marked every step of our progress thus far. This augurs well for the future, and it is a matter of sincere gratification to me, that I am enabled to make the declaration. Of the men I met in the Congress at Montgomery, I may be pardoned for saying this, an abler, wiser, a more conservative, deliberate, determined, resolute, and patriotic body of men, I never met in my life. [Great applause.] Their works speak for them; the provisional government speaks for them; the constitution of the permanent government will be a lasting monument of their worth, merit, and statesmanship. [Applause.]

. . . . Our growth, by accessions from other States, will depend greatly upon whether we present to the world, as I trust we shall, a better government than that to which neighboring States belong. If we do this, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas cannot hesitate long; neither can Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri. They will necessarily gravitate to us by an imperious law. We made ample provision in our constitution for the admission of other States; it is more guarded, and wisely so, I think, than the old constitution on the same subject, but not too guarded to receive them as fast as it may be proper. Looking to the distant future, and, perhaps,

not very far distant either, it is not beyond the range of possibility, and even probability, that all the great States of the north-west will gravitate this way, as well as Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Arkansas, etc. Should they do so, our doors are wide enough to receive them, but not until they are ready to assimilate with us in principle.

The process of disintegration in the old Union may be expected to go on with almost absolute certainty if we pursue the right course. We are now the nucleus of a growing power which, if we are true to ourselves, our destiny, and high mission, will become the controlling power on this continent. To what extent accessions will go on in the process of time, or where it will end, the future will determine. So far as it concerns States of the old Union, this process will be upon no such principles of reconstruction as now spoken of, but upon reorganization and new assimilation. [Loud applause.] Such are some of the glimpses of the future as I catch them.

. . . . As to whether we shall have war with our late confederates, or whether all matters of differences between us shall be amicably settled, I can only say that the prospect for a peaceful adjustment is better, so far as I am informed, than it has been.

The prospect of war is, at least, not so threatening as it has been. The idea of coercion, shadowed forth in President Lincoln's inaugural, seems not to be followed up thus far so vigorously as was expected. Fort Sumter, it is believed, will soon be evacuated. What course will be pursued toward Fort Pickens, and the other forts on the gulf, is not so well understood. It is to be greatly desired that all of them should be surrendered. Our object is peace, not only with the North, but with the world. All matters relating to the public property, public liabilities of the Union when we were members of it, we are ready and willing to adjust and settle upon the principles of right, equity, and good faith. War can be of no more benefit to the North than to us. Whether the intention of evacuating Fort Sumter is to be received as an evidence of a desire for a peaceful solution of our difficulties with the United States, or the result of necessity, I will not undertake to say. I would fain hope the former. Rumors are afloat, however, that it is the result of necessity. All I can say to you, therefore, on that point is, keep your armor bright and your powder dry. [Enthusiastic cheering.]

The surest way to secure peace, is to show your ability to maintain your rights. The principles and position of the present administration of the United States - the Republican party - present some puzzling questions. While it is a fixed principle with them never to allow the increase of a foot of slave territory, they seem to be equally determined not to part with an inch "of the accursed soil." Notwithstanding their clamor against the institution, they seemed to be equally opposed to getting more, or letting go what they have got. They were ready to fight on the accession of Texas, and are equally ready to fight now on her secession. Why is this? How can this strange paradox be accounted for? There seems to be but one rational solution - and that is, notwithstanding their professions of humanity, they are disinclined to give up the benefits they derive from slave labor. Their philanthropy yields to their interest. The idea of enforcing the laws, has but one object, and that is a collection of the taxes, raised by slave labor to swell the fund, necessary to meet their heavy appropriations. The spoils is what they are after - though they come from the labor of the slave . . . . [Continued applause]

# Confederate Constitution (1861)

"Permanent Constitution," Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries.

*The permanent Confederate Constitution, excerpted below, was ratified on March 11, 1861. It is probably not surprising that it greatly resembles the U.S. Constitution. The signers represented the first seven states to secede. Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina soon followed. The only extant copy, along with the only copy of the provisional Constitution that preceded it, were almost lost in the chaos of evacuating the Confederate capital of Richmond toward the end of the Civil War. The two documents were discovered and saved by a journalist in South Carolina in April 1865.*

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*Note: There are seven articles in the complete document.*

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## **Constitution of the Confederate States of America**

*We, the people of the Confederate States, each State acting in its sovereign and independent character, in order to form a permanent federal government, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity—invoking the favor and guidance of Almighty God—do ordain and establish this Constitution for the Confederate States of America.*

*Article I.*

*Section 1.*

*All legislative powers herein delegated shall be vested in Congress of the Confederate States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.*

*Section 2.*

*1. The House of Representatives shall be composed of members chosen every second year by the people of the several States; and the electors in each State shall be citizens of the Confederate States, and have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the State Legislature; but no person of foreign birth, not a citizen of the Confederate States, shall be allowed to vote for any officer, civil or political, State or Federal.*

*2. No person shall be a representative, who shall not have attained the age of twenty-five years, and be a citizen of the Confederate States, and who shall not, when elected, be an inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.*

*3. Representatives and Direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Confederacy, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all slaves. The actual enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the Confederate States, and within every subsequent term of ten years, in such manner as they shall, by law, direct. The number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every fifty thousand, but each State shall have at least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of South Carolina shall be*

*entitled to choose six; the State of Georgia ten; the State of Alabama nine; the State of Florida two; the State of Mississippi seven; the State of Louisiana six; and the State of Texas six.*

*4. When vacancies happen in the representation from any State, the Executive authority thereof shall issue writs of election to fill such vacancies.*

*5. The House of Representatives shall choose their speaker and other officers, and shall have the sole power of impeachment; except that any judicial or other federal officer, resident and acting solely within the limits of any State, may be impeached by a vote of two-thirds of both branches of the Legislature the limits of any State, may be impeached by a vote of two-thirds of both branches of the Legislature thereof.*

### *Section 3.*

*1. The Senate of the Confederate States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen for six years by the legislature thereof, at the regular session next immediately preceding the commencement of the term of service; and each Senator shall have one vote.*

*2. Immediately after they shall be assembled, in consequence of the first election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three classes. The seats of the Senators of the first class shall be vacated at the expiration of the second year; of the second class at the expiration of the fourth year, and of the third class at the expiration of the sixth year; so that one-third may be chosen every second year; and if vacancies happen by resignation, or otherwise, during the recess of the Legislature of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary appointments until the next meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such vacancies.*

*3. No person shall be a Senator who shall not have attained the age of thirty years, and be a citizen of the Confederate States; and who shall not, when elected, be an inhabitant of the State for which he shall be chosen.*

*4. The Vice-President of the Confederate States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no vote, unless they be equally divided.*

*5. The Senate shall choose their other officers; and also a President pro tempore in the absence of the Vice-President, or when he shall exercise the office of President of the Confederate States.*

*6. The Senate shall have the sole power to try all impeachments. When sitting for that purpose, they shall be on oath or affirmation. When the President of the Confederate States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside; and no person shall be convicted without the concurrence of two-thirds of the members present.*

*7. Judgment in cases of impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any office of honor, trust or profit, under the Confederate States; but the party convicted shall, nevertheless, be liable and subject to indictment, trial, judgment and punishment according to law.*

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### *Article IV.*

#### *Section 1.*

*1. Full faith and credit shall be given in each State to the public acts, records and judicial proceedings of every other State. And the Congress may, by general laws, prescribe the manner in which such acts, records, and proceedings shall be proved, and the effect thereof.*

## Section 2.

1. The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States, and shall have the right of transit and sojourn in any State of this Confederacy, with their slaves and other property; and the right of property in said slaves shall not be thereby impaired.
2. A person charged in any State with treason, felony, or other crime against the laws of such State, who shall flee from justice, and be found in another State, shall, on demand of the Executive authority of the State from which he fled, be delivered up, to be removed to the State having jurisdiction of the crime.
3. No slave or other person held to service or labor in any State or Territory of the Confederate States, under the laws thereof, escaping or lawfully carried into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor; but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such slave belongs, or to whom such service or labor may be due.

## Section 3.

1. Other States may be admitted into this Confederacy by a vote of two-thirds of the whole House of Representatives, and two-thirds of the Senate, the Senate voting by States; but no new State shall be formed or erected within the jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the junction of two or more States, or parts of States, without the consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned as well as of the Congress.
2. The Congress shall have power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations concerning the property of the Confederate States, including the lands thereof.
3. The Confederate States may acquire new territory, and Congress shall have power to legislate and provide government for the inhabitants of all territory belonging to the Confederate States, lying without the limits of the several States; and may permit them, at such times, and in such manner as it may by law provide, to form states to be admitted into the Confederacy. In all such territory, the institution of negro slavery as it now exists in the Confederate States, shall be recognized and protected by Congress, and by the territorial government; and the inhabitants of the several Confederate States and Territories, shall have the right to take to such territory any slaves, lawfully held by them in any of the States or Territories of the Confederate States.
4. The Confederate States shall guaranty to every State that now is or hereafter may become a member of this Confederacy, a republican form of government, and shall protect each of them against invasion; and on application of the Legislature (or of the Executive when the legislature is not in session) against domestic violence.

## Article V.

### *Section 1.*

1. Upon the demand of any three States, legally assembled in their several conventions, the Congress shall summon a convention of all the States, to take into consideration such amendments to the Constitution as the said States shall concur in suggesting at the time when the said demand is made; and should any of the proposed amendments to the Constitution be agreed on by the said convention-voting by States-and the same be ratified by the Legislatures of two-thirds of the several States, or by conventions in two-thirds thereof-as the one or the other mode of ratification may be proposed by the general convention-they shall thenceforward form a part of this Constitution. But no State shall, without its consent, be deprived of its equal representation in the Senate.

## Article VI.

1. The government established by this Constitution is successor of the Provisional Government of the Confederate States of America; and all the laws passed by the latter shall continue in force until the same shall be repealed or modified; and all the officers appointed by the same shall remain in office until their successors are appointed and qualified, or the offices abolished.

2. All debts contracted and engagements entered into before the adoption of this Constitution shall be as valid against the Confederate States under this Constitution as under the Provisional Government.

3. This Constitution, and the laws of the Confederate States, made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the Confederate States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding.

4. The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial officers, both of the Confederate States and of the several States, shall be bound by oath or affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the Confederate States.

5. The enumeration, in the Constitution, of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people of the several States.

6. The powers not delegated to the Confederate States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States, respectively, or the people thereof.

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1. South Carolina

R. Barnwell Rhett

C. G. Memminger

Wm Porcher Miles

James Chesnut, Jr.

R. W. Barnwell

William W. Boyce

Lawrence M. Keitt

T. J. Withers

2. Georgia

R. Toombs

Francis S. Bartow

Martin J. Crawford

Alexander Stephens



Benjamin H. Hill

Tho. R. R. Cobb

E. A. Nisbet

Augustus R. Wright

A. H. Kenan

3. Florida

Jackson Morton

J. Patton Anderson

Jas. B. Owens

4. Alabama

Richard W. Walker

Robt. H. Smith

Colin J. McRae

William P. Chilton

Stephen F. Hale

David P. Lewis

Tho. Fearn

Jno Gill Shorter

J. L. M. Curry

5. Mississippi

Alex M. Clayton

James T. Harrison

William S. Barry

W. S. Wilson

Walker Brooke

W. P. Harris

J. A. P. Campbell

6. Louisiana

John Perkins, Jr.

Alex de Clouet

C. M. Conrad

Duncan F. Kenner

Henry Marshall

Edward Sparrow

7. Texas

John Hemphill

Thomas N. Waul

John H. Reagan

Williamson S. Oldham

Louis T. Wigfall

John Gregg

William B. Ochiltree

## **George McClellan to Abraham Lincoln (July 7, 1862)**

*On March 8 1862, President Lincoln — impatient with General McClellan's inactivity — issued an order reorganizing the Army of Virginia and relieving McClellan of supreme command. Instead, McClellan was given command of the Army of the Potomac and was ordered to attack Richmond, the Confederate capital. According to legend, McClellan handed this letter to President Lincoln during Lincoln's visit to the field at Harrison's Landing, Virginia, on July 8, 1862. The letter conveyed McClellan's views of how the war should be fought if the Union were to achieve victory. Lincoln reportedly read the letter in McClellan's presence, replied "All right," and put it in his pocket with no further discussion of its contents.*

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Headquarters, Army of the Potomac,

Camp near Harrison's Landing, Va.,

July 7, 1862.

Mr. President:

You have been fully informed that [the] rebel army is in [our] front, with the purpose of overwhelming us by attacking our positions or reducing us by blocking our river communications. I cannot but regard our condition as critical, and I earnestly desire, in view of possible contingencies, to lay before your excellency, for your private consideration, my general views concerning the existing state of the rebellion, although they do not strictly relate to the situation of this army or strictly come within the scope of my official duties. These views amount to convictions, and are deeply impressed upon my mind and heart. Our cause must never be abandoned; it is the cause of free institutions and self-government. The Constitution and the Union must be preserved, whatever may be the cost in time, treasure, and blood. If secession is successful other dissolutions are clearly to be seen in the future. Let neither military disaster, political faction, nor foreign war shake your settled purpose to enforce the equal operation of the laws of the United States upon the people of every state.

The time has come when the government must determine upon a civil and military policy covering the whole ground of our national trouble.

The responsibility of determining, declaring, and supporting such civil and military policy, and of directing the whole course of national affairs in regard to the rebellion, must now be assumed and exercised by you, or our cause will be lost. The Constitution gives you power sufficient even for the present terrible exigency.

This rebellion has assumed the character of war; as such it should be regarded, and it should be conducted upon the highest principles known to Christian civilization. It should not be a war looking to the subjugation of the people of any State in any event. It should not be at all a war upon population, but against armed forces and political organization. Neither confiscation of property, political executions of persons, territorial organization of States, or forcible abolition of slavery should be contemplated for a moment. In prosecuting the war all private property and unarmed persons should be strictly protected, subject only to the necessity of military operations. All private property taken for military use should be paid or receipted for; pillage and waste should be treated as high crimes; all unnecessary trespass sternly prohibited, and offensive demeanor by the military towards citizens promptly rebuked. Military arrests should not be tolerated, except in places where active hostilities exist, and oaths not required by enactments constitutionally made should be neither demanded nor received. Military government should be confined to the preservation of public order and the protection of political rights. Military power should not be allowed to interfere with the relations of servitude, either by supporting or impairing the authority of the master, except for repressing disorder, as in other cases. Slave contraband under the act of Congress, seeking military protection, should receive it. The right of the Government to appropriate permanently to its own service claims to slave labor should be asserted, and the right of the owner to compensation therefor should be recognized.

This principle might be extended, upon grounds of military necessity and security, to all the slaves within a particular State, thus working manumission in such State; and in Missouri, perhaps in Western Virginia also, and possibly even in Maryland, the expediency of such a measure is only a question of time.

A system of policy thus constitutional and conservative, and pervaded by the influences of Christianity and freedom, would receive the support of almost all truly loyal men, would deeply impress the rebel masses and all foreign nations, and it might be humbly hoped that it would commend itself to the favor of the Almighty.

Unless the principles governing the future conduct of our struggle shall be made known and approved, the effort to obtain requisite forces will be almost hopeless. A declaration of radical views, especially upon slavery, will rapidly disintegrate our present armies. The policy of the government must be supported by concentration of military power. The national forces should not be dispersed in expeditions, posts of occupation, and numerous armies, but should be mainly collected into masses

and brought to bear upon the armies of the Confederate States. Those armies thoroughly defeated, the political structure which they support would soon cease to exist.

In carrying out any system of policy which you may form you will require a commander-in-chief of the army, one who possesses your confidence, understands your views and who is competent to execute your orders by directing the military forces of the nation to the accomplishment of the objects by you proposed. I do not ask that place for myself. I am willing to serve you in such position as you may assign me, and I will do as faithfully as ever subordinate served superior.

I may be on the brink of eternity; and as I hope forgiveness from my Master, I have written this letter with sincerity towards you and from love of my country.

Very respectfully,

your obedient servant,

Geo. B. McClellan,

Maj.-Gen. Commanding.

## **Jefferson Davis, Address to the Provisional Congress (1861)**

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*Jefferson Davis had a long and varied career before reluctantly becoming the first and only President of the Confederacy. A West Point graduate, he was a congressman before becoming a hero in the Mexican War. That success led to his appointment as United States Senator from Mississippi. Davis later became a very able Secretary of War in the administration of Franklin Pierce. He later returned to the Senate where he was a supporter of the extension of slavery. Though he sought to avoid secession, when it happened he resigned from the Senate and was made the President of the Confederate States of America. In this document Davis justifies the Confederacy on historical and constitutional grounds.*

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The declaration of war made against this Confederacy by Abraham Lincoln, the President of the United States, in his proclamation issued on the 15th day of the present month, rendered it necessary, in my judgment, that you should convene at the earliest practicable moment to devise the measures necessary for the defense of the country. The occasion is indeed an extraordinary one. It justifies me in a brief review of the relations heretofore existing between us and the States which now unite in warfare against us and in a succinct statement of the events which have resulted in this warfare, to the end that mankind may pass intelligent and impartial judgment on its motives and objects. During the war waged against Great Britain by her colonies on this continent a common danger impelled them to a close alliance and to the formation of a Confederation, by the terms of which the colonies, styling themselves States, entered "severally into a firm league of friendship with each other for their common defense, the security of their liberties, and their mutual and general welfare, binding themselves to assist each other against all force offered to or attacks made upon them, or any of them, on account of religion, sovereignty, trade, or any other pretense whatever." In order to guard against any misconstruction of their compact, the several States made explicit declaration in a distinct article - that "each State retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power,

jurisdiction, and right which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled." . . .

Strange, indeed, must it appear to the impartial observer, but it is none the less true that all these carefully worded clauses proved unavailing to prevent the rise and growth in the Northern States of a political school which has persistently claimed that the government thus formed was not a compact between States, but was in effect a national government, set up above and over the States. An organization created by the States to secure the blessings of liberty and independence against foreign aggression, has been gradually perverted into a machine for their control in their domestic affairs. The creature has been exalted above its creators; the principles have been made subordinate to the agent appointed by themselves. The people of the Southern States, whose almost exclusive occupation was agriculture, early perceived a tendency in the Northern States to render the common government subservient to their own purposes by imposing burdens on commerce as a protection to their manufacturing and shipping interests. Long and angry controversies grew out of these attempts, often successful, to benefit one section of the country at the expense of the other. And the danger of disruption arising from this cause was enhanced by the fact that the Northern population was increasing, by immigration and other causes, in a greater ratio than the population of the South. By degrees, as the Northern States gained preponderance in the National Congress, self-interest taught their people to yield ready assent to any plausible advocacy of their right as a majority to govern the minority without control. They learned to listen with impatience of their will, and so utterly have the principles of the Constitution been corrupted in the Northern mind that, in the inaugural address delivered by President Lincoln in March last, he asserts as an axiom, which he plainly deems to be undeniable, that the theory of the Constitution requires that in all cases the majority shall govern; and in another memorable instance the same Chief Magistrate did not hesitate to liken the relations between a State and the United States to those which exist between a county and the State in which it is situated and by which it was created. This is the lamentable and fundamental error on which rests the policy that has culminated in his declaration of war against these Confederate States. In addition to the long-continued and deepseated resentment felt by the Southern States at the persistent abuse of the powers they had delegated to the Congress, for the purpose of enriching the manufacturing and shipping classes of the North at the expense of the South, there has existed for nearly half a century another subject of discord, involving interests of such transcendent magnitude as at all times to create the apprehension in the minds of many devoted lovers of the Union that its permanence was impossible. When the several States delegated certain powers to the United States Congress, a large portion of the laboring population consisted of African slaves imported into the colonies by the mother country. In twelve out of the thirteen States negro slavery existed, and the right of property in slaves was protected by law. This property was recognized in the Constitution, and provision was made against its loss by the escape of the slave. The increase in the number of slaves by further importation from Africa was also secured by a clause forbidding Congress to prohibit the slave trade anterior to a certain date, and in no clause can there be found any delegation of power to the Congress authorizing it in any manner to legislate to the prejudice, detriment, or discouragement of the owners of that species of property, or excluding it from the protection of the Government.

The climate and soil of the Northern States soon proved unpropitious to the continuance of slave labor, whilst the converse was the case at the South. Under the unrestricted free intercourse between two sections, the Northern States consulted their own interests by selling their slaves to the South and prohibiting slavery within their limits. The South were willing purchasers of a property suitable to their wants, and paid the price of the acquisition without harboring a suspicion that their quiet possession was to be disturbed by those who were inhibited not only by want of constitutional authority, but by good faith as vendors, from disquieting a title emanating from themselves. As soon, however, as the Northern States that prohibited African slavery within their limits had reached a number sufficient to give their representation a controlling voice in the Congress, a persistent and organized system of hostile measures against the rights of the owners of slaves in the Southern States was inaugurated and gradually extended. A continuous series of measures was devised and prosecuted for the purpose of rendering insecure the tenure of property in slaves. Fanatical organizations, supplied with money by voluntary subscriptions, were assiduously engaged in exciting amongst the slaves a spirit of discontent and revolt; means were furnished for their escape from their owners, and agents secretly employed to entice them to abscond; the constitutional provision for their rendition to their owners was first evaded, then openly denounced as a violation of conscientious obligation and religious duty; men were taught that it was a merit to elude, disobey, and violently oppose the execution of the laws enacted to secure the performance of the promise contained in the constitutional compact; owners of slaves were mobbed and even murdered in open day solely for applying to a magistrate for the arrest of a fugitive slave; the dogmas of these voluntary organizations soon obtained control of the Legislatures of many of the Northern States, and laws were passed providing for the punishment, by ruinous fines and long-continued imprisonment in jails and penitentiaries, of citizens of the Southern States who should dare to ask aid of the officers of the law for the recovery of their property. Emboldened by success, the theater of agitation and aggression against the clearly expressed constitutional rights of the Southern States was transferred to the Congress; Senators and Representatives were sent to the common councils of the nation, whose chief title to this distinction consisted in the display of a spirit of ultra fanaticism, and whose business was not "to promote the general welfare or insure domestic tranquility," but to awaken the bitterest hatred against the citizens of sister States by violent denunciation of their institutions; the transaction of public affairs was impeded by repeated efforts to usurp powers not delegated by the Constitution, for the purpose of impairing the security of property in slaves, and reducing those States which held slaves to a condition of inferiority. Finally a great party was organized for the purpose of obtaining the administration of the Government, with the avowed object of using its power for the total exclusion of the slave States from all participation in the benefits of the public domain acquired by all the States in common, whether by conquest or purchase; of surrounding them entirely by States in which slavery should be prohibited; of thus rendering the property in slaves so insecure as to be comparatively worthless, and thereby annihilating in effect property worth thousands of millions of dollars. This party, thus organized, succeeded in the month of November last in the election of its candidate for the Presidency of the United States.

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**"Lee at Fredericksburg", by J. Horace Lacy (1886)**

*Throughout the Civil War uphill charges almost invariably failed because of the range and deadly accuracy of small-arms fire when concentrated on exposed troops. The debacle at Fredericksburg in December 1862, where Union forces suffered more than twice as many casualties as their opponents, ended a year of bitter failure for the North on the eastern front.*

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Lee at Fredericksburg

by J. Horace Lacy

Published in The Century Magazine. Vol. XXXII. August 1886, No. 4.

As a general staff-officer thrown into relations confidential and intimate with our Confederate leaders, I had exceptional advantages for observation from behind the scenes of the incidents and actors in what was certainly one of the grandest dramas ever enacted upon the trembling stage of humanity.

[...]

Let me now relieve the tragedy, which deeply moves me, if it does not my readers, by an anecdote which gives a comic touch to the strange, eventful scene. The gallant soldier, the genial gentleman, and the now honored governor of Virginia will enjoy a good joke as much as any living man, even if the laugh is against him. My authority is General Jubal A. Early. General Lee gave to "Fitz," as we love to name him, the command of three brigades of infantry in addition to his division of cavalry, and assigned him to the post of honor as the rear-guard of the army on the retreat from Richmond. Sheridan pressed remorselessly on the rear. There was continuous fighting. There were no commissary trains, and the army which preceded them had stripped the country of all supplies for man or beast. Yet the cavalry of Fitz knew pretty well how to take care of themselves under the most adverse circumstances, and spreading out, they made out to live, and to do a great deal of hard fighting. An abnormal thing, unknown to naturalists through the ages, occurred during the closing scenes of our Civil War. The animal creation seemed infected by the madness of the hour. The sheep, usually the most innocent and inoffensive of animals, would rush upon a Confederate soldier, and it is established by the testimony of thousands of credible witnesses that many a sheep had to be slain by the soldiers in self-defense. The same strange malady had attacked pigs, geese, turkeys, and chickens long before. A portion of Fitz's cavalry, being thus assailed, slew and eat six or eight sheep belonging to an Amelia farmer, broke into his corn-crib, and, parching the corn on the cob, so strengthened the inner man that they were able to fight next day like their old baronial ancestors, whose mouths had once been filled with boar's meat and red wine. A small company returning not long after, the old man left his plow in the furrow, and, shuffling up to his worm-fence, inquired if General Lee had gained another victory. They replied, "No, no, old man, all is lost; the Yankees have whipped us at last, and General Lee has surrendered." "I don't believe a word of it," replied the old Virginia farmer. "General R. E. Lee never surrenders. You must mean that man, Fitz Lee, they call a general; I am glad he and his thieving cavalry have surrendered, but the real General Lee never surrenders"; and returning to his old Watts plow, they last they heard was, addressing an old wall-eyed, switch-tail bag of bones, "Well, Skewball, you are all the Yankees left me, but we'll tickle our good Amelia ground and make bread for Kitty and the children. We'll win the fight yet. General Lee hasn't surrendered; it's only that bumner Fitz!"

I am the more moved to send you these reminiscences, as in the providence of God your magazine occupies the foremost place as the great pacificator between the North and the South, holding the even scales of equal and exact justice, and pouring light on every act and incident of the great Civil War. You have not raked amid the deceitful ashes of the past, to bring together upon the altar of sectional hate the live coals of that fire which once burnt all too fiercely, but ever by kind, fair, and impartial utterances, giving both sides an equal show, you have poured oil upon the troubled waters and deserve that benediction which rests upon the peacemaker. It will not be long, as time is counted in the life of a nation, before the question will not be asked, Did he wear the blue or gray? or fight

under Grant or Lee? but rather, Did he obey the convictions of conscience and sternly follow the dictates of duty? was he willing to sacrifice life for principle? Did he illustrate American character and valor, and add to the proud heritage of his country's glory?

[...]

Oh, brothers and compatriots in this Republic, let us all echo in the silent chambers of the soul the still, small voice which speaks from the grave of the old hero who sleeps on the heights of Riverside Park: "Let us have peace."

## Retaliation in camp (1864)

*In May 1864, George W. Hatton, sergeant in Company C, First Regiment, United States Colored Troops, and his Union regiment were camped close to Jamestown, Virginia. Hatton had been a slave and now his unit was waiting in an area where some of the soldiers had once toiled as slaves. Hatton witnessed a scene of punishment and revenge and described what he saw in an article published in The Christian Recorder on May 28, 1864. A month earlier, he had been stationed in North Carolina, and recorded his thoughts about the government's changing attitude toward black soldiers and the efforts of black people to free themselves. "Though the Government openly declared that it did not want the negroes in this conflict, I look around me and see hundreds of colored men armed and ready to defend the Government at any moment; and such are my feelings, that I can only say, the fetters have fallen - our bondage is over."*

*SOURCE: From the Archives of Mother Bethel Church.*

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### **Camp of the 1st U.S. Colored Troops, Wilson's landing, Charles City Co., May 10th 1864.**

Mr. Editor: - You are aware that Wilson's Landing is on the James river, a few miles above Jamestown, the very spot where the first sons of Africa were landed, in the year 1620, if my memory serves me right, and from that day up to the breaking out of the rebellion, was looked upon as an inferior race by all civilized nations. But behold what has been revealed in the past three or four years; why the colored men have ascended upon a platform of equality, and the slave can now apply the lash to the tender flesh of his master, for this day I am now an eye witness of the fact. The country being principally inhabited by wealthy farmers, there are a great many men in the regiment who are refugees from this place. While out on a foraging expedition we captured Mr. Clayton, a noted reb in this part of the country, and from his appearance, one of the F.P.V's; on the day before we captured several colored women that belonged to Mr. C., who had given them a most unmerciful whipping previous to their departure. On the arrival of Mr. C. in camp, the commanding officer determined to let the women have their revenge, and ordered Mr. C. to be tied to a tree in front of headquarters, and William Harris, a soldier in our regiment, and a member of Co. E, who was acquainted with the gentleman, and who used to belong to him, was called upon to undress him, and introduce him to the ladies I mentioned before. Mr. Harris played his part conspicuously, bringing the blood from his loins at every stroke, and not forgetting to remind the gentleman of days gone by. After giving him some fifteen or twenty well-directed strokes, the ladies, one after another, came up and gave him a like number, to remind him that they were no longer his, but safely housed in Abraham's bosom, and under the protection of the Star Spangled Banner, and guarded by their own patriotic, though once down-trodden race. Oh, that I had the tongue to express my feelings while standing upon the banks of the James river, on the soil of Virginia, the mother state of slavery, as a witness of such a sudden reverse!

The day is clear, the fields of grain are beautiful and the birds are singing sweet melodious songs, while poor Mr. C. is crying to his servants for mercy. Let all who sympathize for the South take this narrative for a mirror.

Yours Truly,  
G.W.H.



## **Susie King Taylor, from *My Life in Camp with the 33rd United States Colored Troops* (1902)**

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*Susie King Taylor traveled with the Thirty-third U.S. Colored Regiment in which her husband served. She and her husband were two of five thousand slaves who escaped to the Union army. This excerpt describes some of the daily life of a soldier and a soldier's wife and the special indignities suffered by African-American fighting men. SOURCE: Susie King Taylor, *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33rd United States Colored Troops* (Boston: 1902), pp. 15-16, 26- 28, 32-35.*

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I was enrolled as company laundress, but I did very little of it, because I was always busy doing other things through camp, and was employed all the time doing something for the officers and comrades . . . . The first colored troops did not receive any pay for eighteen months, and the men had to depend wholly on what they received from the commissary, established by Gen. Saxton. A great many of these men had large families, and as they had no money to give them, their wives were obliged to support themselves and children by washing for the officers of the gunboats and the soldiers, and making cakes and pies, which they sold to the boys in camp. Finally, in 1863, the government decided to give them half pay, but the men would not accept this. They wanted "full pay or nothing." They preferred rather to give their services to the state, which they did until 1864, when the government granted them full pay with all the back pay due . . . .

I learned to handle a musket very well while in the regiment and could shoot straight and often hit the target. I assisted in cleaning the guns and used to fire them off, to see if the cartridges were dry, before cleaning and re-loading, each day. I thought this was great fun. I was also able to take a gun all apart and put it together again . . . .

We had fresh beef once in a while, and we would have soup, and the vegetables they put in the soup were dried and pressed; they looked like hops. Salt beef was our standby. Sometimes the men would have what we called slap-jacks. This was flour made into bread and spread thin on the bottom of the mess-pan to cook; each man had one of them with a pint of tea for his supper, or a pint of tea and five or six hardtack. I often got my own meals and would fix some dishes for the noncommissioned officers also.

About the first of June, 1864, the regiment was ordered to Folly Island, staying there until the latter part of the month, when it was ordered to Morris Island. We landed on Morris Island between June and July, 1864. This island was a narrow strip of sandy soil, nothing growing on it but a few bushes and shrubs. The camp was one mile from

the boat landing, called Pawnell Landing, and the landing one mile from Fort Wagner  
.....

About four o'clock, July 2, the charge was made. The firing could be plainly heard in camp. I hastened down to the landing and remained there until eight o'clock that morning. When the wounded arrived, or rather began to arrive, the first one brought in was Samuel Anderson of our company. He was badly wounded. Then others of our boys, some with their legs off, arm gone, foot off, and wounds of all kinds imaginable. They had to wade through creeks and marshes, as they were discovered by the enemy and shelled very badly. A number of the men were lost, some got fastened in the mud and had to cut off the legs of their pants, to free themselves. The 103rd New York suffered the most, as their men were very badly wounded.

My work now began. I gave my assistance to try to alleviate their sufferings. I asked the doctor at the hospital what I could get for them to eat. They wanted soup, but that I could not get; but I had a few cans of condensed milk and some turtle eggs, so I thought I would try to make some custard. I had doubts as to my success, for cooking with turtle eggs was something new to me, but the adage has it, "Nothing ventured, nothing done," so I made a venture and the result was a very delicious custard. This I carried to the men, who enjoyed it very much. My services were given at all times for the comfort of these men. I was on hand to assist whenever needed.

## **When Historians Disagree**

### **What Did the Civil War Do to the United States?**

James McPherson's book, *Battle Cry of Freedom* is considered by many to be the defining work on the Civil War for this generation. In his conclusion McPherson summarized the outcome of the war on the United States—the ways in which the country came to think of itself as a single nation rather than a collection of states, the way slavery was ended forever, the ways in which northern ideas of commerce and northern attention to urban and industrial life came to dominate the nation that emerged from the war. Without challenging the importance of any of those outcomes, historian Drew Gilpin Faust points out a quite different outcome: The fact that for most people living through and immediately after the war the war's terrible cost in lives lost was far more immediate and far more important than any other matter. These two historians do not disagree but they do emphasize dramatically different issues as the most important outcome of the war that all historians agree that Americans fought against each other between 1861 and 1865.

James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 859-862.

Arguments about the causes and consequences of the Civil War, as well as the reasons for northern victory, will continue as long as there are historians to wield the pen—which is, perhaps even for this bloody conflict, mightier than the sword. But certain large consequences of the war seem clear. Secession and slavery were killed, never to be revived during the century and a quarter since Appomattox. These results signified a broader transformation of American society and polity punctuated if not alone achieved by the war. Before 1861 the two words “United States” were generally rendered as a plural noun: “the United States are a republic.” The war marked a transition of the United States to a singular noun. The “Union” also became the nation, and Americans now rarely speak of their Union except in an historical sense...

The old federal republic in which the national government had rarely touched the average citizen except through the post-office gave way to a more centralized polity that taxed the people directly and created an internal revenue bureau to collect these taxes, drafted men into the army, expanded the jurisdiction of federal courts, created a national currency and a national banking system, and established the first national agency for social welfare—the Freedmen’s Bureau. Eleven of the first twelve amendments to the constitution had limited the powers of the national government; six of the seven, beginning with the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, vastly expanded those powers at the expense of the states...

What would be the place of freed slaves and their descendants in this new order? In 1865, a black soldier who recognized his former master among a group of Confederate prisoners he was guarding called out a greeting: “Hello, massa;

Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Random House, 2008), pp. xi-xviii.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the United States embarked on a new relationship with death, entering into a civil war that proved bloodier than any other conflict in American history, a war that would presage the slaughter of World War I’s Western Front and the global carnage of the twentieth century. The number of soldiers who died between 1861 and 1865, an estimated 620,000, is approximately equal to the total American fatalities in the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean War combined. The Civil War’s rate of death, its incidence in comparison with the size of the American population, was six times that of World War II...

In the Civil War the United States, North and South, reaped what many participants described as a “harvest of death.” By the midpoint of the conflict, it seemed that in the South, “nearly every household mourns some loved one lost.” Lost became commonplace; death was no longer encountered individually; death’s threat, its proximity, and its actuality became the most widely shared of the war’s experiences. As a Confederate soldier observed, death “reigned with universal sway,” ruling homes and lives, demanding attention and response. The Civil War matters to us today because it ended slavery and helped to define the meanings of freedom, citizenship, and equality. It established a newly centralized nation-state and launched it on a trajectory of economic expansion and world influence. But for those Americans who lived in and through the Civil War, the texture of the experience, its warp and woof, was the presence of death.

bottom rail on top dis time!" Would this new arrangements of rails last?

The Civil War confronted Americans with an enormous task, one quite different from saving or dividing the nation, ending or maintaining slavery, or winning the military conflict—the demands we customarily understand to have been made of the Civil War generation. Americans North and South would be compelled to confront—and resist—the war's assault on their conceptions of how life should end, an assault that challenged their most fundamental assumptions about life's value and meaning.

## Reconstruction, 1865-1877

### **Anna Julia Cooper, From *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South* (1892)**

*Born in Raleigh, North Carolina, Anna Julia Cooper was the daughter of a slave. Anna was educated at St. Augustine Normal School and Collegiate Institute, and in 1877 she married one of her teachers, George A. C. Cooper. By 1881, Cooper (a widow since her husband's death in 1879) was attending Oberlin College in Ohio. Earning a degree in 1884, she accepted a position in Ohio at Wilberforce University, but she stayed only a year, leaving to take a position at St. Augustine. After being awarded an MA from Oberlin College, she relocated to Washington, D.C., to teach at M Street School, where she served as principal from 1901 to 1906. Her speeches and essays were collected in *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South* (1892). She advocated civil rights, women's rights, suffrage for women, and an American literature that would be more inclusive and would render respectful images of African Americans. Believing in the importance of education for black Americans, she became one of the first African American women to receive a Ph.D. when she earned a doctorate from the Sorbonne at age 65. Cooper gave a voice to the disenfranchised black women of the nineteenth century while anticipating the feminist movement of the twentieth century.*  
SOURCE: *A Voice From the South*, Anna Julia Cooper. Xenia, Ohio: The Aldine Printing House, 1892

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### **The Status of Woman in America**

Just four hundred years ago an obscure dreamer and castle builder, prosaically poor and ridiculously insistent on the reality of his dreams, was enabled through the devotion of a noble woman to give to civilization a magnificent continent.

What the lofty purpose of Spain's pure-minded queen had brought to the birth, the untiring devotion of pioneer women nourished and developed. The dangers of wild beasts and of wilder men, the mysteries of unknown wastes and unexplored forests, the horrors of pestilence and famine, of exposure and loneliness, during all those years of discovery and settlement, were braved without a murmur by women who had been most delicately constituted and most tenderly nurtured.

And when the times of physical hardship and danger were past, when the work of clearing and opening up was over and the struggle for accumulation began, again woman's inspiration and help were needed and still was she loyally at hand. A Mary Lyon, demanding and making possible equal advantages of education for women as for men, and, in the face of discouragement and incredulity, bequeathing to women the opportunities of Holyoke.

A Dorothea Dix, insisting on the humane and rational treatment of the insane and bringing about a reform in the lunatic asylums of the country, making a great step forward in the tender regard for the weak by the strong throughout the world.

A Helen Hunt Jackson, convicting the nation of a century of dishonor in regard to the Indian.

A Lucretia Mott, gentle Quaker spirit, with sweet insistence, preaching the abolition of slavery and the institution, in its stead, of the brotherhood of man; her life and words breathing out in tender melody the injunction

Have love. Not love alone for one  
But man as man thy brother call;  
And scatter, like the circling sun,  
Thy charities on all.

And at the most trying time of what we have called the Accumulative Period, when internecine war, originated through man's love of gain and his determination to subordinate national interests and black men's rights alike to considerations of personal profit and loss, was drenching our country with its own best blood, who shall recount the name and fame of the women on both sides the senseless strife, - those uncomplaining souls with a great heart ache of their own, rigid features and pallid cheek their ever effective flag of truce, on the battle field, in the camp, in the hospital, binding up wounds, recording dying whispers for absent loved ones, with tearful eyes pointing to man's last refuge, giving the last earthly hand clasp and performing the last friendly office for strangers whom a great common sorrow had made kin, while they knew that somewhere - somewhere a husband, a brother, a father, a son, was being tended by stranger hands - or mayhap those familiar eyes were even then being closed forever by just such another ministering angel of mercy and love.

But why mention names? Time would fail to tell of the noble army of women who shine like beacon lights in the otherwise sordid wilderness of this accumulative period - prison reformers and tenement cleansers, quiet unnoted workers in hospitals and homes, among imbeciles, among outcasts - the sweetening, purifying antidotes for the poisons of man's acquisitiveness, - mollifying and soothing with the tenderness of compassion and love the wounds and bruises caused by his overreaching and avarice.

The desire for quick returns and large profits tempts capital oftentimes into unsanitary; well nigh inhuman investments, - tenement tinder boxes, stalling, stunting, sickening alleys and pestiferous slums; regular rents, no waiting, large percentages, - rich coffers coined out of the life-blood of human bodies and souls. Men and women herded together like cattle, breathing in malaria and typhus from an atmosphere seething with moral as well as physical impurity; reveling in vice as their native habitat and then, to drown the whisperings of their higher consciousness and effectually to hush the yearnings and accusations within, flying to narcotics and opiates - rum, tobacco, opium, binding hand and foot, body and soul, till the proper image of God is transformed into a fit associate for demons, - a besotted, enervated, idiotic wreck, or else a monster of wickedness terrible and destructive.

These are some of the legitimate products of the unmitigated tendencies of the wealth-producing period. But, thank Heaven, side by side with the cold, mathematical, selfishly calculating, so-called practical and unsentimental instinct of the business man, there comes the sympathetic warmth and sunshine of good women, like the sweet and sweetening breezes of spring, cleansing, purifying, soothing, inspiring, lifting the drunkard from the gutter, the, outcast from the pit. Who can estimate the influence of these "daughters of the king," these lend-a-hand forces, in counteracting the selfishness of an acquisitive age?

To-day America counts her millionaires by the thousand; questions of tariff and questions of currency are the most vital ones agitating the public mind. In this period, when material prosperity and well earned ease and luxury are assured facts from a national standpoint, woman's work and woman's influence are needed as never before; needed to bring a heart power into this money getting, dollar-worshipping civilization; needed to bring a moral force into the utilitarian motives and interests of the time; needed to stand for God and Home and Native Land versus gain and greed and grasping selfishness.

There can be no doubt that this fourth centenary of America's discovery which we celebrate at Chicago, strikes the keynote of another important transition in the history of this nation; and the prominence of woman in the management of its celebration is a fitting tribute to the part she is destined to play among the forces of the future. This is the first congressional recognition of woman in this country, and this Board of Lady Managers constitute the first women legally appointed by any government to act in a national capacity. This of itself marks the dawn of a new day.

Now the periods of discovery, of settlement, of developing resources and accumulating wealth have passed in rapid succession. Wealth in the nation as in the individual brings leisure, repose, reflection. The struggle with nature is over, the struggle with ideas begins. 'We stand then, it seems to me, in this last decade of the nineteenth century, just in the portals of a new and untried movement on a higher plain and in a grander strain than any the past has called forth. It does not require a prophet's eye to divine its trend and image its possibilities from the forces we see already at work around us; nor is it hard to guess what must be the status of woman's work under the new regime.

In the pioneer days her role was that of a camp-follower, an additional something to fight for and be burdened with, only repaying the anxiety and labor she called forth by her own incomparable gifts of sympathy and appreciative love; unable herself ordinarily to contend with the bear and the Indian, or to take active part in clearing the wilderness and constructing the home.

In the second or wealth producing period her work is abreast of man's, complementing and supplementing, counteracting excessive tendencies, and mollifying over rigorous proclivities.

In the era now about to dawn, her sentiments must strike the keynote and give the dominant tone. And this because of the nature of her contribution to the world.

Her kingdom is not over physical forces. Not by might, nor by power can she prevail. Her position must ever be inferior where strength of muscle creates leadership. If she follows the instincts of her nature, however, she must always stand for the conservation of those deeper moral forces which make for the happiness of homes and the righteousness of the country. In a reign of moral ideas she is easily queen.

There is to my mind no grander and surer prophecy of the new era and of woman's place in it, than the work already begun in the waning years of the nineteenth century by the America, an organization which has even now reached not only national but international importance, and seems destined to permeate and purify the whole civilized world. It is the living embodiment of woman's activities and woman's ideas, and its extent and strength rightly prefigure her increasing power as a moral factor.

The colored woman of to-day occupies, one may say, a unique position in this country. In a period of itself transitional and unsettled, her status seems one of the least ascertainable and definitive of all the forces which make for our civilization. She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, and is as yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both. While the women of the white race can with calm assurance enter upon the work they feel by nature appointed to do, while their men give loyal support and appreciative countenance to their efforts, recognizing in most avenues of usefulness the propriety and the need of woman's distinctive co-operation, the colored woman too often finds herself hampered and shamed by a less liberal sentiment and a more conservative attitude on the part of those for whose opinion she cares most. That this is not universally true I am glad to admit. There are to be found both intensely conservative white men and exceedingly liberal colored men. But as far as my experience goes the average man of our race is less

frequently ready to admit the actual need among the sturdier forces of the world for woman's help or influence. That great social and economic questions await her interference, that she could throw any light on problems of national import, that her intermeddling could improve the management of school systems, or elevate the tone of public institutions, or humanize and sanctify the far reaching influence of prisons and reformatories and improve the treatment of lunatics and imbeciles, - that she has a word worth hearing on mooted questions in political economy, that she could contribute a suggestion on the relations of labor and capital, or offer a thought on honest money and honorable trade, I fear the majority of "Americans of the colored variety" are not yet prepared to concede. It may be that they do not yet see these questions in their right perspective, being absorbed in the immediate needs of their own political complications. A good deal depends on where we put the emphasis in this world; and our men are not perhaps to blame if they see everything colored by the light of those agitations in the midst of which they live and move and have their being. The part they have had to play in American history during the last twenty-five or thirty years has tended rather to exaggerate the importance of mere political advantage, as well as to set a fictitious valuation on those able to secure such advantage. It is the astute politician, the manager who can gain preferment for himself and his favorites, the demagogue known to stand in with the powers at the White House and consulted on the bestowal of government plums, whom we set in high places and denominate great. It is they who receive the hosannas of the multitude and are regarded as leaders of the people. The thinker and the doer, the man who solves the problem by enriching his country with an invention worth thousands or by a thought inestimable and precious is given neither bread nor a stone. He is too often left to die in obscurity and neglect even if spared in his life the bitterness of fanatical jealousies and detraction.

And yet politics, and surely American politics, is hardly a school for great minds. Sharpening rather than deepening, it develops the faculty of taking advantage of present emergencies rather than the insight to distinguish between the true and the false, the lasting and the ephemeral advantage. Highly cultivated selfishness rather than consecrated benevolence is its passport to success. Its votaries are never seers. At best they are but manipulators - often only jugglers. It is conducive neither to profound statesmanship nor to the higher type of manhood. Altruism is its mauvais succes and naturally enough it is indifferent to any factor which cannot be worked into its own immediate aims and purposes. As woman's influence as a political element is as yet nil in most of the commonwealths of our republic, it is not surprising that with those who place the emphasis on mere political capital she may yet seem almost a nonentity so far as it concerns the solution of great national or even racial perplexities.

There are those, however, who value the calm elevation of the thoughtful spectator who stands aloof from the heated scramble; and, above the turmoil and din of corruption and selfishness, can listen to the teachings of eternal truth and righteousness. There are even those who feel that the black man's unjust and unlawful exclusion temporarily from participation in the elective franchise in certain states is after all but a lesson "in the desert" fitted to develop in him insight and discrimination against the day of his own appointed tune. One needs occasionally to stand aside from the hum and rush of human interests and passions to hear the voices of God. And it not unfrequently happens that the All-loving gives a great push to certain souls to thrust them out, as it were, from the distracting current for awhile to promote their discipline and growth, or to enrich them by communion and reflection. And similarly it may be woman's privilege from her peculiar coigne of vantage as a quiet observer, to whisper just the needed suggestion or the almost forgotten truth. The colored woman, then, should not be ignored because her bark is resting in the silent waters of the sheltered cove. She is watching the movements of the contestants none the less and is all the better qualified, perhaps, to weigh and judge and advise because not herself in the excitement of the race. Her voice, too, has always been heard in dear unfaltering tones, ringing the changes on those deeper interests which make for permanent good. She is always sound and orthodox on questions affecting the well-being of her race. You do not find the colored woman selling her birthright for a mess of pottage. Nay, even after reason has retired from the contest, she has been known to ding blindly with the instinct of a turtle dove to those principles and policies which to her mind promise hope and safety for children yet unborn. It is notorious that ignorant black women in the South have actually left their husbands' homes and repudiated their support for what was understood by the wife to be race disloyalty or "voting away," as she expresses it, the privileges of herself and little ones.

It is largely our women in the South today who keep the black men solid in the Republican party. The latter as they increase in intelligence and power of discrimination would be more apt to divide on local issues at any rate. They begin to see that the Grand Old Party regards the Negro's cause as an outgrown issue, and on Southern soil at least finds a too intimate acquaintanceship with him a somewhat unsavory recommendation. Then, too, their political wits have been sharpened to appreciate the fact that it is good policy to cultivate one's neighbors and not depend too much on a distant friend to fight one's home battles. But the black woman can never forget - however lukewarm the party may to-day appear - that it was a Republican president who struck the manacles from her own wrists and gave the possibilities of manhood to her helpless little ones; and to her mind a Democratic Negro is a traitor and a time-server. Talk as much as you like of venality and manipulation in the South, there are not many men, I can tell you, who would dare face a wife quivering in every fiber with the consciousness that her husband is a coward who could be paid to desert her deepest and dearest interests.

Not unfelt, then, if unproclaimed has been the work and influence of the colored women of America. Our list of chieftains in the service, though not long, is not inferior in strength and excellence, I dare believe, to any similar list which this country can produce.

Among the pioneers, Frances Watkins Harper could sing with prophetic exaltation in the darkest days, when as yet there was not a rift in the clouds overhanging her people:

Yes, Ethiopia shall stretch  
Her bleeding hands abroad;  
Her cry of agony shall reach the burning throne of God.  
Redeemed from dust and freed from chains  
Her sons shall lift their eyes,  
From cloud-capt hills and verdant plains  
Shall shouts of triumph rise.

Among preachers of righteousness, an unanswerable silencer of cavilers and objectors, was Sojourner Truth, that unique and rugged genius who seemed carved out without hand or chisel from the solid mountain mass; and in pleasing contrast, Amanda Smith, sweetest of natural singers and pleaders in dulcet tones for the things of God and of His Christ.

Sarah Woodson Early and Martha Briggs, planting and watering in the school room, and giving off from their matchless and irresistible personality an impetus and inspiration which can never die so long as there lives and breathes a remote descendant of their disciples and friends.

Charlotte Forten Grimke, the gentle spirit whose verses and life link her so beautifully with America's great Quaker poet and loving reformer.

Hallie Quinn Brown, charming reader, earnest, effective lecturer and devoted worker of unflagging zeal and unquestioned power.

Fannie Jackson Coppin, the teacher and organizer, pre-eminent among women of whatever country or race in constructive and executive force.

These women represent all shades of belief and as many departments of activity; but they have one thing in common - their sympathy with the oppressed race in America and the consecration of their several talents in whatever line to the work of its deliverance and development.

Fifty years ago woman's activity according to orthodox definitions was on a pretty clearly cut "sphere," including primarily the kitchen and the nursery, and rescued from the barrenness of prison bars by the womanly mania for adorning every discoverable bit of china or canvass with forlorn looking cranes balanced idiotically on one foot. The woman of to-day finds herself in the presence of responsibilities which ramify through the profoundest and most varied interests of her country and race. Not one of



the issues of this plodding, toiling, sinning, repenting, falling, aspiring humanity can afford to shut her out, or can deny the reality of her influence. No plan for renovating society, no scheme for purifying politics, no reform in church or in state, no moral, social, or economic question, no movement upward or downward in the human plane is lost on her. A man once said when told his house was afire: "Go tell my wife; I never meddle with household affairs." But no woman can possibly put herself or her sex outside any of the interests that affect humanity. All departments in the new era are to be hers, in the sense that her interests are in all and through all; and it is incumbent on her to keep intelligently and sympathetically en rapport with all the great movements of her time, that she may know on which side to throw the weight of her influence. She stands now at the gateway of this new era of American civilization. In her hands must be moulded the strength, the wit, the statesmanship, the morality, all the psychic force, the social and economic intercourse of that era. To be alive at such an epoch is a privilege, to be a woman then is sublime.

In this last decade of our century; changes of such moment are in progress, such new and alluring vistas are opening out before us, such original and radical suggestions for the adjustment of labor and capital, of government and the governed, of the family, the church and the state, that to be a possible factor though an infinitesimal in such a movement is pregnant with hope and weighty with responsibility. To be a woman in such an age carries with it a privilege and an opportunity never implied before. But to be a woman of the Negro race in America, and to be able to grasp the deep significance of the possibilities of the crisis, is to have a heritage, it seems to me, unique in the ages. In the first place, the race is young and full of the elasticity and hopefulness of youth. All its achievements are before it. It does not look on the masterly triumphs of nineteenth century civilization with that blase world-weary look which characterizes the old washed out and worn out races which have already, so to speak, seen their best days.

Said a European writer recently: "Except the Slavonic, the Negro is the only original and distinctive genius which has yet to come to growth - and the feeling is to cherish and develop it."

Everything to this race is new and strange and inspiring. There is a quickening of its pulses and a glowing of its self-consciousness. Aha, I can rival that! I can aspire to that! I can honor my name and vindicate my race! Something like this, it strikes me, is the enthusiasm which stirs the genius of young Africa in America; and the memory of past oppression and the fact of present attempted repression only serve to gather momentum for its irrepressible powers. Then again, a race in such a stage of growth is peculiarly sensitive to impressions. Not the photographer's sensitized plate is more delicately impressionable to outer influences than is this high strung people here on the threshold of a career.

What a responsibility then to have the sole management of the primal lights and shadows! Such is the colored woman's office. She must stamp weal or woe on the coming history of this people. May she see her opportunity and vindicate her high prerogative.

## **Charles F. Johnson and T. W. Gilbreth, The Memphis Riot (1866)**

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*The Memphis riot began on May 1, 1866, when the horse-drawn carriages of a black man and a white man collided. Fighting broke out as a group of black soldiers from nearby Fort Pickering tried to intervene to stop the arrest of the black man by the mainly Irish-American police. Passions escalated into three days of racially motivated violence between the police and black residents of Memphis. When peace was restored, forty-six blacks and two whites had been killed, five black women raped, and hundreds of black homes, schools, and churches had been vandalized or destroyed. The following is the report of an investigation into the riot prepared for General Oliver Otis Howard, Commissioner of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands. SOURCE: The Freedmen's Bureau Online, Records of the Assistant*

*Commissioner for the State of Tennessee, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869. National Archives Microfilm Publication M999, roll 34 "Reports of Outrages, Riots and Murders, Jan. 15, 1866-Aug. 12, 1868."* <http://www.freedmensbureau.com/tennessee/outrages/memphisriot.htm>

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Memphis, Tenn. May 22 '66  
Maj. Genl. O.O. Howard  
Commissioner B.R.F. & A. L.  
Washington, D.C.

General,

In accordance with the instructions contained in S. O. No. 64, Ex. II, War Dept., B. R. F. & A. L. dated Washington, D. C. May 7, 1866 and your letter of "confidential instructions" of the same date, I have the honor herewith to submit a report of an investigation of the late riots in Memphis.

I reached Memphis May 11th and I found General Fisk, the Asst. Commissioner for Ky. and Tenn, here. He had already directed his Inspector General Col. C. T. Johnson to institute an investigation and I found the Colonel had commenced his work and was well advanced.

At the suggestion of General Fisk I immediately conferred with Colonel Johnson and we determined to make a joint investigation and report. We have taken some affidavits and as many more could have been procured if we could have taken the time.

I have the honor to be  
Very Respectfully  
Your Obedt. Servant  
(sd) T. W. Gilbreth  
Aid-de-Camp

*Report of an investigation of the cause, origin, and results of the late riots in the city of Memphis made by Col. Charles F. Johnson, Inspector General States of Ky. and Tennessee and Major T. W. Gilbreth, A. D. C. to Maj. Genl. Howard, Commissioner Bureau R. F. & A. Lands.*

The remote cause of the riot as it appears to us is a bitterness of feeling which has always existed between the low whites & blacks, both of whom have long advanced rival claims for superiority, both being as degraded as human beings can possibly be.

In addition to this general feeling of hostility there was an especial hatred among the city police for the Colored Soldiers, who were stationed here for a long time and had recently been discharged from the service of the U.S., which was most cordially reciprocated by the soldiers.

This has frequently resulted in minor affrays not considered worthy of notice by the authorities. These causes combined produced a state of feeling between whites and blacks, which would require only the slightest provocation to bring about an open rupture.

### **The Immediate Cause**

On the evening of the 30th April 1866 several policemen (4) came down Causey Street, and meeting a number of Negroes forced them off the sidewalk. In doing so a Negro fell and a policeman stumbled over him. The police then drew their revolvers and attacked the Negroes, beating them with their pistols. Both parties then separated, deferring the settlement by mutual consent to some future time (see affidavit marked "A"). On the following day, May 1st, during the afternoon, between the hours of 3 and 5, a crowd of colored men, principally discharged soldiers, many of whom were more or less intoxicated, were assembled on South Street in South Memphis.

Three or four of these were very noisy and boisterous. Six policemen appeared on South Street, two of them arrested two of the Negroes and conducted them from the ground. The others remained behind to keep back the crowd, when the attempt was made by several Negroes to rescue their comrades. The police fell back when a promiscuous fight was indulged in by both parties.

During this affray one police officer was wounded in the finger, another (Stephens) was shot by the accidental discharge of his pistol in his own hand, and afterward died.

About this time the police fired upon unoffending Negroes remote from the riotous quarter. Colored soldiers with whom the police first had trouble had returned in the meantime to Fort Pickering. The police was soon reinforced and commenced firing on the colored people, men, women and children, in that locality, killing and wounding several.

Shortly after, the City Recorder (John C. Creighton) arrived upon the ground (corner of Causey and Vance Streets) and in a speech which received three hearty cheers from the crowd there assembled, counselled and urged the whites to arm and kill every Negro and drive the last one from the city. Then during this night the Negroes were hunted down by police, firemen and other white citizens, shot, assaulted, robbed, and in many instances their houses searched under the pretense of hunting for concealed arms, plundered, and then set on fire, during which no resistance so far as we can learn was offered by the Negroes.

A white man by the name of Dunn, a fireman, was shot and killed by another white man through mistake (reference is here made to accompanying affidavit mkd "B").

During the morning of the 2nd inst. (Wednesday) everything was perfectly quiet in the district of the disturbances of the previous day. A very few Negroes were in the streets, and none of them appeared with arms, or in any way excited except through fear. About 11 o'clock A.M. a posse of police and citizens again appeared in South Memphis and commenced an indiscriminate attack upon the Negroes, they were shot down without mercy, women suffered

alike with the men, and in several instances little children were killed by these miscreants. During this day and night, with various intervals of quiet, the nuisance continued.

The city seemed to be under the control of a lawless mob during this and the two succeeding days (3rd & 4th). All crimes imaginable were committed from simple larceny to rape and murder. Several women and children were shot in bed. One woman (Rachel Johnson) was shot and then thrown into the flames of a burning house and consumed. Another was forced twice through the flames and finally escaped. In some instances houses were fired and armed men guarded them to prevent the escape of those inside. A number of men whose loyalty is undoubted, long residents of Memphis, who deprecated the riot during its progress, were denominated Yankees and Abolitionists, and were informed in language more emphatic than gentlemanly, that their presence here was unnecessary. To particularize further as to individual acts of inhumanity would extend the report to too great a length. But attention is respectfully called for further instances to affidavits accompanying marked C, E, F & G.

The riot lasted until and including the 4th of May but during all this time the disturbances were not continual as there were different times of greater or less length in each day, in which the city was perfectly quiet, attacks occurring generally after sunset each day.

The rioters ceased their violence either of their own accord or from want of material to work on, the Negroes having hid themselves, many fleeing into the country.

### **Conduct of the Civil Authorities**

The Hon. John Park, Mayor of Memphis, seemed to have lost entire control of his subordinates and either through lack of inclination and sympathy with the mob, or on utter want of capacity, completely failed to suppress the riot and preserve the peace of the city. His friends offer in extenuation of his conduct, that he was in a state of intoxication during a part or most of the time and was therefore unable to perform the high and responsible functions of his office. Since the riot no official notice has been taken of the occurrence either by the Mayor or the Board of Aldermen, neither have the City Courts taken cognizance of the numerous crimes committed.

Although many of the perpetrators are known, no arrests have been made, nor is there now any indication on the part of the Civil Authorities that any are meditated by them.

It appears the Sheriff of this County (P. M. Minters) endeavored to oppose the mob on the evening of the 1st of May, but his good intentions were thwarted by a violent speech delivered by John C. Creighton, City Recorder, who urged and directed the arming of the whites and the wholesale slaughter of blacks.

This speech was delivered on the evening of the 1st of May to a large crowd of police and citizens on the corner of Vance and Causey streets, and to it can be attributed in a great measure the continuance of the disturbances. The following is the speech as extracted from the affidavits herewith forwarded marked "B" . . . "That everyone of the citizens should get arms, organize and go through the Negro districts," and that he "was in favor of killing every God damned nigger" . . . "We are not prepared now, but let us prepare and clean out every damned son of a

bitch of a nigger out of town . . . "Boys, I want you to go ahead and kill every damned one of the nigger race and burn up the cradle."

The effect of such language delivered by a municipal office so high in authority, to a promiscuous and excited assemblage can be easily perceived. From that time they seemed to act as though vested with full authority to kill, burn and plunder at will. The conduct of a great number of the city police, who are generally composed of the lowest class of whites selected without reference to their qualifications for the position, was brutal in the extreme. Instead of protecting the rights of persons and property as is their duty, they were chiefly concerned as murderers, incendiaries and robbers. At times they even protected the rest of the mob in their acts of violence.

No public meeting has been held by the citizens, although three weeks have now elapsed since the riot, thus by their silence appearing to approve of the conduct of the mob. The only regrets that are expressed by the mass of the people are purely financial. There are, however, very many honorable exceptions, chiefly among men who have fought against the Government in the late rebellion, who deprecate in strong terms, both the Civil Authorities and the rioters.

#### **Action of Bvt. Brig. Genl. Ben P. Runkle, Chief Supt., Bureau R.F. and A.L. Sub-District of Memphis**

General Runkle was waited upon every hour in the day during the riot, by colored men who begged of him protection for themselves and families, and he, an officer of the Army detailed as Agent of the Freedmen's Bureau was suffered the humiliation of acknowledging his utter inability to protect them in any respect. His personal appearance at the scenes of the riot had no affect on the mob, and he had no troops at his disposal.

He was obliged to put his Headquarters in a defensive state, and we believe it was only owing to the preparations made, that they were not burned down. Threats had been openly made that the Bureau office would be burned, and the General driven from the town. He, with his officers and a small squad of soldiers and some loyal citizens who volunteered were obliged to remain there during Thursday and Friday nights.

#### **The origin and results of the riot may be summed up briefly as follows:**

The remote cause was the feeling of bitterness which as always existed between the two classes. The minor affrays which occurred daily, especially between the police and colored persons.

The general tone of certain city papers which in articles that have appeared almost daily, have councilled the low whites to open hostilities with the blacks.

The immediate cause was the collision heretofore spoken of between a few policemen and Negroes on the evening of the 30th of April in which both parties may be equally culpable, followed on the evening of the 1st May by another collision of a more serious nature and subsequently by an indiscriminate attack upon inoffensive colored men and women.

Three Negro churches were burned, also eight (8) school houses, five (5) of which belonged to the United States Government, and about fifty (50) private dwellings, owned, occupied or inhabited by freedmen as homes, and in which they had all their personal property, scanty though it be, yet valuable to them and in many instances containing the hard earnings of months of labor.

Large sums of money were taken by police and others, the amounts varying five (5) to five hundred (500) dollars, the latter being quite frequent owing to the fact that many of the colored men had just been paid off and discharged from the Army.

No dwellings occupied by white men exclusively were destroyed and we have no evidence of any white men having been robbed.

From the present disturbed condition of the freedmen in the districts where the riot occurred it is impossible to determine the exact number of Negroes killed and wounded. The number already ascertained as killed is about (30) thirty; and the number wounded about fifty (50). Two white men were killed, viz., Stephens, a policeman and Dunn of the Fire Department.

The Surgeon who attended Stephens gives it as his professional opinion that the wound which resulted in his death was caused by the accidental discharge of a pistol in his hands (see affidavit marked "B"). Dunn was killed May 1st by a white man through mistake (see affidavit marked "B"). Two others (both Policemen) were wounded, one slightly in the finger, the other (Slattersly) seriously.

The losses sustained by the Government and Negroes as per affidavits received up to date amount to the sum of ninety eight thousand, three hundred and nineteen dollars and fifty five cents (\$98,319.55). Subsequent investigations will in all probability increase the amount to one hundred and twenty thousand dollars (\$120,00.00).

(signed) Chas. F. Jackson  
Col. And Insptr. Genl. Ky. & Tenn.  
T. W. Gilbreth  
Aide-de-Camp.

## **Frederick Douglass, Speech to the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1865**

*Congress approved the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery in February, 1865, and the Union's final military victory over the Confederacy that spring assured the destruction of the slave system. The American Anti-Slavery Society, long in the forefront of the abolitionist movement, met in May, 1865, to discuss its future. Black leader Frederick Douglass addressed the Society, urging it not to disband but to continue the fight against racial discrimination.*

SOURCE: Philip S. Foner, ed., *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. IV (1955).

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...I do not wish to appear here in any fault-finding spirit, or as an impugner of the motives of those who believe that the time has come for this Society to disband. I am conscious of no suspicion of the purity and excellence of the motives that animate the President of this Society [William Lloyd Garrison], and other gentlemen who are in favor of its disbandment. I take this ground; whether this Constitutional Amendment [the thirteenth] is law or not, whether it has been ratified by a sufficient number of States to make it law or not, I hold that the work of Abolitionists is not done. Even if every State in the Union had ratified that Amendment, while the black man is confronted in the legislation of the South by the word "white," our work as Abolitionists, as I conceive it, is not done. I took the ground, last night, that the South, by unfriendly legislation, could make our liberty, under that provision, a delusion, a mockery, and a snare, and I hold that ground now. What advantage is a provision like this Amendment to the black man, if the Legislature of any State can to-morrow declare that no black man's testimony shall be received in a court of law? Where are we then? Any wretch may enter the house of a black man, and commit any violence he pleases; if he happens to do it only in the presence of black persons, he goes unwhipt of justice ["Hear, hear."] And don't tell me that those people down there have become so just and honest all at once that they will not pass laws denying to black men the right to testify against white men in the courts of law. Why, our Northern States have done it. Illinois, Indiana and Ohio have done it. Here, in the midst of institutions that have gone forth from old Plymouth Rock, the black man has been excluded from testifying in the courts of law; and if the Legislature of every Southern State to-morrow pass a law, declaring that no Negro shall testify in any courts of law, they will not violate that provision of the Constitution. Such laws exist now at the South, and they might exist under this provision of the Constitution, that there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in any State of the Union....

Slavery is not abolished until the black man has the ballot. While the Legislatures of the South retain the right to pass laws making any discrimination between black and white, slavery still lives there. [Applause.] As Edmund Quincy once said, "While the word 'white' is on the statute-book of Massachusetts, Massachusetts is a slave State. While a black man can be turned out of a car in Massachusetts, Massachusetts is a slave State. While a slave can be taken from old Massachusetts, Massachusetts is a slave State." That is what I heard Edmund Quincy say twenty-three or twenty-four years ago. I never forget such a thing. Now, while the black man can be denied a vote, while the Legislatures of the South can take from him the right to keep and bear arms, as they can—would not allow a Negro to walk with a cane where I came from, they would not allow five of them to assemble together—the work of the Abolitionists is not finished. Notwithstanding the provision in the Constitution of the United States, that the right to keep and bear arms shall not be abridged, the black man has never had the right either to keep or bear arms; and the Legislatures of the States will still have the power to forbid it, under this Amendment. They can carry on a system of unfriendly legislation, and will they not do it? Have they not got prejudice there to do it with? Think you, that because they are for the moment in the talons and beak of our glorious eagle, instead of the slave being there, as formerly, that they are converted? I hear of the loyalty at Wilmington, the loyalty at South Carolina—what is it worth?

["Not a straw."]

Not a straw. I thank my friend for admitting it. They are loyal while they see 200,000 sable soldiers, with glistening bayonets, walking in their midst. [Applause.] But let the civil power of the South be restored, and the old prejudices and hostility to the Negro will revive. Aye, the very fact that the Negro has been used to defeat this rebellion and strike down the standards of the Confederacy will be a stimulus to all their hatred, to all their malice, and lead them to legislate with greater stringency towards this class than ever before. [Applause.] The American people are bound—bound by their sense of honor (I hope by their sense of honor, at least, by a just sense of honor), to extend the franchise to the Negro; and I was going to say, that the Abolitionists of the American Anti-Slavery Society were bound to "stand still, and see the salvation of God," until that work is done. [Applause.] Where shall the black man look for support, my friends, if the American Anti-Slavery Society fails him? ["Hear, hear."] From whence shall we expect a certain sound from the trumpet of freedom, when the old pioneer, when this Society that has survived mobs, and martyrdom, and the combined efforts of priest-craft and state-craft to suppress it, shall all at once subside, on the mere intimation

that the Constitution has been amended, so that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall hereafter be allowed in this land? What did the slaveholders of Richmond say to those who objected to arming the Negro, on the ground that it would make him a freeman? Why, they said, "The argument is absurd. We may make these Negroes fight for us; but while we retain the political power of the South, we can keep them in their subordinate positions." That was the argument; and they were right. They might have employed the Negro to fight for them, and while they retained in their hands power to exclude him from political rights, they could have reduced him to a condition similar to slavery. They would not call it slavery, but some other name. Slavery has been fruitful in giving itself names. It has been called "the peculiar institution," "the social system," and the "impediment," as it was called by the General conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It has been called by a great many names, and it will call itself by yet another name; and you and I and all of us had better wait and see what new form this old monster will assume, in what new skin this old snake will come forth. [Loud applause.]

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### Document Analysis

1. What rights does Douglass see as crucial to establishing full citizenship for African Americans?
2. How does Douglass compare black civil rights in the northern and southern states?
3. What course does Douglass advise for dealing with the defeated Confederacy?

### The Freedmen's Bureau Bill, 1865

Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands to provide aid for freed people and to oversee free labor arrangements in the South. President Andrew Johnson's policy of liberally pardoning ex-confederates and returning their land frustrated Bureau commissioner General O. O. Howard's efforts to resettle freed people on confiscated lands. Congress extended the life of the Bureau in 1866 over Johnson's veto. Always underfunded, the Bureau nonetheless succeeded in helping establish schools, overseeing free labor contracts, and providing legal support for freed people.

**Source:** Henry Steele Commager, *Documents of American History* (1973); U.S. Statutes at Large, Vol. XIII, p. 507ff.

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#### AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A BUREAU FOR THE RELIEF OF FREEDMEN AND REFUGEES

*Be it enacted*, That there is hereby established in the War Department, to continue during the present war of rebellion, and for one year thereafter, a bureau of refugees, freedmen, and abandoned lands, to which shall be committed, as hereinafter provided, the supervision and management of all abandoned lands, and the control of all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen from rebel states, or from any district of country within the territory embraced in the operations of the army, under such rules and regulations as may be prescribed by the head of the bureau and approved by the President. The said bureau shall be under the management and control of a commissioner to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate...

**Sec. 2.** . That the Secretary of War may direct such issues of provisions, clothing, and fuel, as he may deem needful for the immediate and temporary shelter and supply of destitute and suffering refugees and freedmen and their wives and children, under such rules and regulations as he may direct.

**Sec. 3.** That the President may, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, appoint an assistant commissioner for each of the states declared to be in insurrection, not exceeding ten in number, who shall, under the direction of the commissioner, aid in the execution of the provisions of this act;... And any military officer may be detailed and assigned to duty under this act without increase of pay or allowances...



**Sec. 4.** That the commissioner, under the direction of the President, shall have authority to set apart, for the use of loyal refugees and freedmen, such tracts of land within the insurrectionary states as shall have been abandoned, or to which the United States shall have acquired title by confiscation or sale, or otherwise, and to every male citizen, whether refugee or freedman, as aforesaid, there shall be assigned not more than forty acres of such land, and the person to whom it was so assigned shall be protected in the use and enjoyment of the land for the term of three years at an annual rent not exceeding six per centum upon the value of such land, as it was appraised by the state authorities in the year eighteen hundred and sixty, for the purpose of taxation, and in case no such appraisal can be found, then the rental shall be based upon the estimated value of the land in said year, to be ascertained in such manner as the commissioner may by regulation prescribe. At the end of said term, or at any time during said term, the occupants of any parcels so assigned may purchase the land and receive such title thereto as the United States can convey, upon paying therefor the value of the land, as ascertained and fixed for the purpose of determining the annual rent aforesaid

**Question:**1. How does the Bill treat the issue of abandoned lands in the South? What hope did it offer freed people?

# When Historians Disagree

## Understanding Reconstruction

While historians of Reconstruction disagree with each other, the greatest differences among those who study this era tend to be between historians who themselves live at different times. In 1988, Eric Foner, a widely respected historian, wrote:

Revising interpretations of the past is intrinsic to the study of history. But no part of the American experience has, in the last twenty-five years, seen a broadly accepted point of view so completely overturned as Reconstruction—the violent, dramatic, and still controversial era that followed the Civil War. Since the early 1960s, a profound alteration of the place of blacks within American society, newly uncovered evidence, and changing definitions of history itself have combined to transform our understanding of race relations, politics, and economic change during Reconstruction.

The civil rights movement of the 1960s challenged historians to take a fresh and very different look at the decade immediately after the Civil War.

The first historians to study Reconstruction did so soon after the era. Led by Columbia University History Professor William Dunning, members of the “Dunning School” concluded that Reconstruction was a terrible failure. Writing at a time when the United States was rigidly segregated by race, these writers saw the so-called “redemption” of the South by white southerners was a story to celebrate. One significant voice challenging the “Dunning School,” was the African American scholar W.E.B. DuBois. Only much later did a new generation of historians begin to reconsider Reconstruction. When they did, these historians came to conclusions that were almost the opposite of the “Dunning School.” They saw Reconstruction as a bright and promising moment that was all too quickly ended by violence and apathy.

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| William Archibald Dunning, <i>Reconstruction Political and Economic</i> | W. E. B. DuBois, <i>Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880 (originally</i> | Eric Foner, <i>Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877</i> |
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*(New York: Harper & Brothers, 1907), pp. xv, 11-12.*

Moreover, few episodes of recorded history more urgently invite thorough analysis and extended reflection than the struggle through which the southern whites, subjugated by adversaries of their own race, thwarted the scheme which threatened permanent subjection to another race... With the collapse of the Confederacy all the slaves became free, and the strange and unsettling tidings of emancipation were carried to the remotest corners of the land. As the full meaning of this news was grasped by the freedmen, great numbers of them abandoned their old homes, and, regardless of crops to be cultivated, stock to be cared for, or food to be provided, gave themselves up to testing their freedom. They wandered aimless but happy through the country, found endless delight in hanging about the towns and Union camps, and were fascinated by the pursuit of the white man's culture in the schools which optimistic northern philanthropy was establishing wherever it was possible.

While the negro population, whose labor was so indispensable a factor in the productive

*published 1934; republished New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 587, 590.*

The chorus of agreement concerning the attempt to reconstruct and organize the South after the Civil War and emancipation is overwhelming. There is scarce a child in the street that cannot tell you that the whole effort was a hideous mistake and an unfortunate incident based on ignorance, revenge and the perverse determination to attempt the impossible ...

The chief witness in Reconstruction, the emancipated slave himself, has been almost barred from court. His written Reconstruction record has been largely destroyed and nearly always neglected. Only three or four states have preserved the debates in the Reconstruction conventions; there are few biographies of black leaders. The Negro is refused a hearing because he was poor and ignorant. It is therefore assumed that all Negroes in Reconstruction were ignorant and silly and that therefore a history of Reconstruction in any state can quite ignore him. The result is that most unfair caricatures of Negroes have been carefully preserved; but serious speeches, successful administration and upright

*(New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. xxv-xxvi.*

Although thwarted in their bid for land, blacks seized the opportunity created by the end of slavery to establish as much independence as possible in their working lives, consolidate their families and communities, and stake a claim to equal citizenship. Black participation in Southern public life after 1867 was the most radical development of the Reconstruction years, a massive experiment in interracial democracy without precedent in the history of this or any other country that abolished slavery in the nineteenth century...

Racism was pervasive in mid-nineteenth-century America and at both the regional and national levels constituted a powerful barrier to change. Yet despite racism, a significant number of Southern whites were willing to link their political fortunes with those of blacks, and Northern Republicans came, for a time, to associate the fate of the former slaves with their party's *raison d'être* and the meaning of Union victory in the Civil War. Moreover, in the critical interrelated issues of land and labor and the persistent conflict between planters' desire to re-exert control over their labor

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| <p>system, was thus occupied, the returning Confederate soldiers and the rest of the white population devoted themselves with desperate energy to the procurement of what must sustain the life of both themselves and their former slaves.</p> | <p>character are almost universally ignored and forgotten... In other words, every effort has been made to treat the Negro's part in Reconstruction with silence and contempt.</p> | <p>force and blacks' quest for economic independence, race and class were inextricably linked.</p> |
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