DBQ: Reconstruction and the New South

Question: What changes did Radical Republicans try to make in the American South following the Civil War? Analyze the extent to which they were successful in transforming the region during the period 1865-1920.

Document A. Thaddeus Stevens, Speech to the House of Representatives, December, 1865

They (the southern states) ought never be admitted to the Union or gain representation in Congress until the Constitution shall have been so amended as to make it what its framers intended; and so as to secure perpetual ascendency to the party of the Union (the Republican Party); With the Constitution unchanged the Democrats will always have a majority in Congress and in the Electoral college. . . . I need not depict the ruin that would follow. . .

If we fail in this great duty now, when we have the power, we shall deserve and receive the execration of history and of all future ages.

1. Why did Thaddeus Stevens believe the South should not be allowed to be re-admitted to the Union at that time?

2. What did he believe needed to be done before they could be re-admitted?

Document B. Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1868)

Section. 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Identify TWO ways that the 14th Amendment was intended to protect the rights of African-Americans.

Document C. Edward King, a Northerner, on his visit to North Carolina, 1872

The House, when I visited it, was composed of eighty-three colored members, all of whom are Republicans, and forty-one whites; the Senate consisted of fifteen colored men, ten white Republicans, and eight white Democrats. The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House, both colored, were elegant and accomplished men, highly educated, who would have creditably presided over any commonwealth's legislative assembly. . . . The little knot of white Democrats sat glum and scornful amid the mass of black speakers. . . . I visited University a day or two after the revolution caused by the entrance of the first colored student, the Secretary of State himself. In the library, I saw the book from whose lists the white students had indignantly erased their names when they saw the Secretary's round, fair script beneath their own.

1. In what ways had the lives of African-Americans changed in North Carolina by 1872 compare to before the Civil War?

2. How did Southern whites respond to this change, according to the reading?

Document D. Go to http://www.270towin.com/historical-presidential-elections/timeline/ and look at the electoral college maps for the 1860, 1872, 1880 and 1884 presidential elections

1. For states that seceded from the Union in 1860, what changes took place in what party they voted for in the 4 presidential elections?

Document E. Democratic Campaign Plan of South Carolina, 1876.

Every Democrat must feel honor bound to control the vote of at least one Negro, by intimidation, purchase, keeping him away.

Never threaten a man individually. If he deserves to be threatened, the necessities of the times require that he should die. A dead Radical is very harmless—a threatened Radical is often troublesome, sometimes dangerous, and always vindictive.

Every club must be uniformed in a red shirt and they must be sure and wear it upon all public meetings and particularly on the day of election.

1. What tactics did the Democratic Party urge its members to use in trying to win the election of 1876?

Document F. A Southern Family, 1890.

1. How did the family pictured try to support itself economically?

Document G. Supreme Court Opinion in Plessy v. Ferguson (1896).

Plessy's argument also assumes that social prejudices may be overcome by legislation, and that equal rights cannot be secured to the negro except by an enforced commingling of the two races. We cannot accept this proposition. If the two races are to meet upon terms of social equality, it must be the result of natural affinities, a mutual appreciation of each other's merits, and a voluntary consent of individuals. . . . Legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts, or to abolish distinctions based upon physical differences, and the attempt to do so can only result in accentuating the difficulties of the present situation. If the civil and political rights of both races be equal, one cannot be inferior to the other civilly or politically. If one race be inferior to the other socially, the constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane.

According to the court, how can social prejudices be ended? How can they not be ended?

Document H. A southern business, circa 1920.

1. What does the picture tell us about the treatment of African-Americans in the South in 1920?

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