

Reluctant Emancipation

Recently I pointed out the connection between slavery and the Second Amendment to the Constitution.

The lasting effect of slavery on our history and society is by no means limited to that, of course. A century and a half later, involuntary servitude of mostly dark-skinned human beings, and resentment over the war that it took to end it, still influence our politics, social interactions, and the quality of the lives of the descendants of those slaves and those who, by their appearance, might have been.

The question has been asked, over and over, silently or aloud, "*How long will it take to get over it?*" There is no known answer to that. The knowledge, both from the science of genetics, and from innumerable examples, that there is no inherent difference, no superiority or inferiority that can be attributed to race; that "race" is actually an invalid concept, does not seem to banish bigotry from the minds of still too many Americans.

Recently it was reported that one state, Mississippi, refused to ratify the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery, until 1995, and even then failed to submit the documentation required to make it official, until February 7, 2013. The amendment was adopted in 1865 after 27 of the 36 states ratified it. By 1870, all states but Mississippi had ratified, the last being Texas.

[Mississippi Officially Abolishes Slavery, Ratifies 13th Amendment](#)

Mississippi's long refusal was said to be the fact that they were not compensated for loss of their human "property".

[Harper Weekly](#) describes the ratification process in greater detail.

Note that among the early reluctant states was New Jersey. It seems that some in northern states feared a mass migration of freed slaves to the north. Freeing the slaves was only the first step. Southern states resisted granting civil rights to former slaves, and even when the 14th and 15th Amendments made those rights non-optional, contrived to deny them in every way possible.

Despite a century of struggle that finally led to the Civil Rights act in 1964, other legislation, and national attention, the former Confederate states and similar-minded Republicans are still today working to try to disenfranchise their non-white citizens.

For many years, prior to the efforts of Lyndon Johnson in the passage of civil rights legislation, most segregationists were Southern Democrats, a tradition based on the fact that Republicans were the party of Lincoln and of post-war reconstruction. The Democratic party was divided between its liberal Northern wing and conservative bigots in the South.

Johnson knowingly led his party into a rejection of segregation and prejudice, realizing that it would shrink its base for a time, but it would gain in consistency of principles.

It should be noted that Johnson, despite his responsibility for the horribly bloody and needless Vietnam War, is deserving of praise for his courage and determination in transforming domestic policies. It may be impossible to reconcile the two sides of the same man, but we must recognize them both.

Naturally, the Republicans, who were already tepid in their support of civil rights, eagerly sought the disaffected former Democratic segregationists. Nixon's "southern strategy", later adopted by Reagan as well, proved advantageous for them. For a time it was not spoken of overtly, but understood nonetheless. Today it is not at all well-hidden, and seems to be a major factor in the ideological divide between the two parties.

If a stable, prosperous democracy, in which education is freely available, cannot reform racial attitudes more universally in 150 years than it has, what hope is there for world peace and harmony? On the other hand, progress has been made. Perhaps we should be more patient.

After all, Mississippi, the last holdout, has finally officially freed its slaves.

--cosmicrat Feb. 18, 2013.