Activity #2: Attitudes at the End of the War

Directions (Group A): The following document represents the testimony of an individual who either made Reconstruction policy, or who was affected by Reconstruction policy. Your teacher has placed you in a group to analyze this document. As you do so, complete the worksheet by answering the questions it contains. Although you should discuss the document as a group, each member of your group should answer the questions individually.

After all members of your group have finished completing their worksheets, each group will take on the role of a committee in Congress examining the problems faced by blacks in the aftermath of the Civil War. Consider solutions to the problems addressed by your document.

Each group will then create a list of specific problems that are hindering social reconstruction efforts according to the author of their document and, from that, suggest specific proposals to solve these problems and aid in the progress of reconstruction.

After answering these questions and creating their lists, each group should select a spokesman to report to the rest of the class. In turn, each spokesman will, in his report, assume the identity of the person who authored the group’s document.

After each group’s spokesman has given his or her report, the teacher will lead your class in a discussion of the similarities and differences of each report, trying to identify common themes or ideas that run through each of the reports.

Corporal Jackson Cherry, Company I, 35th Regiment, United States Colored Troops, 1865
http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/black_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=79

We have been faithful in the field up to the present time, and think that we ought to be considered as men, and allowed a fair chance in the race of life. It has been said that a black man can not make his own living, but give us opportunities and we will show the whites that we will not come to them for anything, if they do not come to us. We think the colored people have been the making of them, and can make something of ourselves in time. The colored people know how to work, and the whites have been dependent upon them. They can work again, and will work. A white man may talk very well, but put him to work, and what will he say? He will say that hard work is not easy. He will say that it is hard for a man who has owned so many able-bodied Negroes to have the Yankees come and taken them all away.
Activity #2: Attitudes at the End of the War

**Directions (Group B):** The following document represents the testimony of an individual who either made Reconstruction policy, or who was affected by Reconstruction policy. Your teacher has placed you in a group to analyze this document. As you do so, complete the worksheet by answering the questions it contains. Although you should discuss the document as a group, each member of your group should answer the questions individually.

After all members of your group have finished completing their worksheets, each group will take on the role of a committee in Congress examining the problems faced by blacks in the aftermath of the Civil War. Consider solutions to the problems addressed by your document.

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**Major General Rufus Saxton, Excerpt from testimony before Congress's Joint Committee on Reconstruction in 1866:** [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/black_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=81](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/black_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=81)

Major General Rufus Saxton was formerly commander of the Union forces that occupied Georgia's Sea Islands. After the war he was appointed to the post of Freedmen's Bureau's assistant commissioner for Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina.

[Question] What is [the freedmen's] disposition in regard to purchasing land, and what is the disposition of the landowners in reference to selling land to Negroes?

[Answer] The object which the freedman has most at heart is the purchase of land. They all desire to get small homesteads and to locate themselves upon them, and there is scarcely any sacrifice too great for them to make to accomplish this object. I believe it is the policy of the majority of the farm owners to prevent Negroes from becoming landholders. They desire to keep the Negroes landless, and as nearly in
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a condition of slavery as it is possible for them to do. I think that the former slaveholders know really less about the freedmen than any other class of people. The system of slavery has been one of concealment on the part of the Negro of all his feelings and impulses; and that feeling of concealment is so ingrained with the very constitution of the Negro that he deceives his former master on almost every point. The freedman has no faith in his former master, nor has his former owner any faith in the capacity of the freedman. A mutual distrust exists between them. But the freedman is ready and willing to contract to work for any northern man. One man from the North, a man of capital, who employed large numbers of freedmen, and paid them regularly, told me, as others have, that he desired no better laborers; that he considered them fully as easy to manage as Irish laborers. That was my own experience in employing several thousands of them in cultivating the soil. I have also had considerable experience in employing white labor, having, as quartermaster, frequently had large numbers of laborers under my control.

[Question] If the Negro is put in possession of all his rights as a man, do you apprehend any danger of insurrection among them?

[Answer] I do not; and I think that is the only thing which will prevent difficulty. I think if the Negro is put in possession of all his rights as a citizen and as a man, he will be peaceful, orderly, and self-sustaining as any other man or class of men, and that he will rapidly advance....

[Question] It has been suggested that, if the Negro is allowed to vote, he will be likely to vote on the side of his former master, and be inveigled in the support of a policy hostile to the government of the United States; do you share in that apprehension?

[Answer] I have positive information from Negroes, from the most intelligent freedmen in those States, those who are leaders among them, that they are thoroughly loyal, and know their friends, and they will never be found voting on the side of oppression....I think it vital to the safety and prosperity of the two races in the south that the Negro should immediately be put in possession of all his rights as a man; and that the word "color" should be left out of all laws, constitutions, and regulations for the people; I think it vital to the safety of the Union that this should be done.

Source: Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction (Washington, 1866)
Activity #2  Attitudes at the End of the War

Directions (Group C): The following document represents the testimony of an individual who either made Reconstruction policy, or who was affected by Reconstruction policy. Your teacher has placed you in a group to analyze this document. As you do so, complete the worksheet by answering the questions it contains. Although you should discuss the document as a group, each member of your group should answer the questions individually.

Jourdan Anderson, an ex-slave from Tennessee, declines his former master’s invitation to return as a laborer on his plantation, August 7, 1865:

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/black_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=80

Dayton, Ohio, August 7, 1865

To My Old Master, Colonel P.H. Anderson, Big Spring, Tennessee

Sir: I got your letter and was glad to find you had not forgotten Jourdon, and that you wanted me to come back and live with you again, promising to do better for me than anybody else can. I have often felt uneasy about you. I thought the Yankees would have hung you long before this for harboring Rebs they found at your house. I suppose they never heard about your going to Col. Martin's to kill the Union soldier that was left by his company in their stable. Although you shot at me twice before I left you, I did not want to hear of your being hurt, and am glad you are still living. It would do me good to go back to the dear old home again and see Miss mary and Miss Martha and Allen, Esther, Green, and Lee. Give
my love to them all, and tell them I hope we will meet in the better world, if not in this. I would have gone back to see you all when I was working in the Nashville hospital, but one of the neighbors told me Henry intended to shoot me if he ever got a chance.

I want to know particularly what the good chance is you propose to give me. I am doing tolerably well here; I get $25 a month, with victuals and clothing; have a comfortable home for Mandy (the folks here call her Mrs. Anderson), and the children, Milly, Jane and Grundy, go to school and are learning well; the teacher says grundy has a head for a preacher. They go to Sunday-School, and Mandy and me attend church regularly. We are kindly treated; sometimes we overhear others saying, "The colored people were slaves" down in Tennessee. The children feel hurt when they hear such remarks, but I tell them it was no disgrace in Tennessee to belong to Col. Anderson. Many darkies would have been proud, as I used to was, to call you master. Now, if you will write and say what wages you will give me, I will be better able to decide whether it would be to my advantage to move back again.

As to my freedom, which you say I can have, there is nothing to be gained on that score, as I got my free- papers in 1864 from the Provost- Marshal- General of the Department of Nashville. Mandy says she would be afraid to go back without some proof that you are sincerely disposed to treat us justly and kindly- - and we have concluded to test your sincerity by asking you to send us our wages for the time we served you. This will make us forget and forgive old scores, and rely on your justice and friendship in the future. I served you faithfully for thirty- two years and Mandy twenty years. At $25 a month for me, and $2 a week for Mandy, our earnings would amount to $11,680. Add to this the interest for the time our wages has been kept back and deduct what you paid for our clothing and three doctor's visits to me, and pulling a tooth for Mandy, and the balance will show what we are in justice entitled to. Please send the money by Adams Express, in care of V. Winters, esq, Dayton, Ohio. If you fail to pay us for faithful labors in the past we can have little faith in your promises in the future. We trust the good Maker has opened your eyes to the wrongs which you and your fathers have done to me and my fathers, in making us toil for you for generations without recompense. Here I draw my wages every Saturday night, but in Tennessee there was never any pay day for the Negroes any more than for the horses and cows. Surely there will be a day of reckoning for those who defraud the laborer of his hire.

In answering this letter please state if there would be any safety for my Milly and Jane, who are now grown up and both good- looking girls. You know how it was with Matilda and Catherine. I would rather stay here and starve and die if it comes to that than have my girls brought to shame by the violence and wickedness of their young masters. You will also please state if there has been any schools opened for the colored children in your neighborhood, the great desire of my life now is to give my children an education, and have them form virtuous habits. <>P.S. -- Say howdy to George Carter, and thank him for taking the pistol from you when you were shooting at me.

From your old servant,

Jourdon Anderson

Activity #2: Attitudes at the End of the War

Directions (Group D): The following document represents the testimony of an individual who either made Reconstruction policy, or who was affected by Reconstruction policy. Your teacher has placed you in a group to analyze this document. As you do so, complete the worksheet by answering the questions it contains. Although you should discuss the document as a group, each member of your group should answer the questions individually.

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After answering these questions and creating their lists, each group should select a spokesman to report to the rest of the class. In turn, each spokesman will, in his report, assume the identity of the person who authored the group’s document.

After each group’s spokesman has given his or her report, the teacher will lead your class in a discussion of the similarities and differences of each report, trying to identify common themes or ideas that run through each of the reports.

Excerpts from the Testimony of Harry McMillan before the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, [June 1863]: http://www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen/mcmilln.htm

Testimony of Harry M'Millan. (colored)

Harry M'Millan testified—

I am about 40 years of age, and was born in Georgia but came to Beaufort when a small boy. I was owned by General Eustis and lived upon his plantation . . .

. . . Q What is your idea respecting the treatment of your people by the government—are they not to be taken care of?
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A. They are got to be taken care of in this way,—to be protected, because they have not sense enough yet to take care of themselves. I do not want the government to take too much expense on itself for them; I want it to let the colored people feel the weight of supporting themselves.

Q. In speaking of each other do you say "negro"?

A. We call each other colored people, black people, but not negro because we used that word in secesh times.

Q. Do the colored people in their intercourse and dealings with each other tell the truth?

A. It is not always their habit; they learned to talk false to keep the lash off their backs, but now they are getting knowledge and doing better.

Q. If a colored man gives his promise will he keep it?

A. Yes, sir; they know they ought to keep it.

Q. Will they steal from each other?

A. Not so much; they have done it, but they look upon this change as bringing about a different state of things.

Q. What induces a colored man to take a wife?

A. Well; since this affair there are more married than ever I knew before, because they have a little more chance to mind their families and make more money to support their families. In secesh times there was not much marrying for love. A man saw a young woman and if he liked her he would get a pass from his master to go where she was. If his owner did not choose to give him the pass he would pick out another woman and make him live with her, whether he loved her or not.

... 

Q. Suppose a son of the master wanted to have intercourse with the colored women was he at liberty?

A. No, not at liberty; because it was considered a stain on the family, but the young men did it; there was a good deal of it. They often kept one girl steady and sometimes two on different places; men who had wives did it too sometimes; if they could get it on their own place it was easier but they would go wherever they could get it.

Q. Do the colored people like to go to Church?

A. Yes, sir; they are fond of that; they sing psalms, put up prayers, and sing their religious songs.

Q. Did your masters ever see you learning to read?

A. No, sir; you could not let your masters see you read; but now the colored people are fond of sending their children to school.
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Q. What is the reason of that?

A. Because the children in after years will be able to tell us ignorant ones how to do for ourselves.

. . . Q. Have they any idea of the government of the United States?

A. Yes, sir; they know if the government was not kind to them they could not keep their liberty. When the war began a great many of us believed that the government could not conquer our masters because our masters fooled us. They told us we must fight the Yankees who intended to catch us and sell us to Cuba to pay the expenses of the war. I did not believe it, but a great many did.

Q. What would the colored people like the government to do for them here?

A. They would like to have land—4 or 5 acres to a family.

Q. How many here could manage and take care of land?

A. A good many. I could take care of 15 acres and would not ask them to do any more for me.

Q. Suppose the government were to give you land, how long would you take to pay for it—five years?

A. I would not take five years; in two years I would pay every cent. The people here would rather have the land than work for wages. I think it would be better to sort out the men and give land to those who have the faculty of supporting their families. Every able bodied man can take care of himself if he has a mind to, but their are bad men who have not the heart or will to do it.

Q. Do you think the colored people would like better to have this land divided among themselves and live here alone, or must they have white people to govern them?

A. They are obliged to have white people to administer the law; the black people have a good deal of sense but they do not know the law. If the government keep the masters away altogether it would not do to leave the colored men here alone; some white men must be here not as masters, but we must take the law by their word and if we do not we must be punished. If you take all the white men away we are nothing. Probably with the children that are coming up no white men will not be needed. They are learning to read and write—some are learning lawyer, some are learning doctor, and some learn minister; and reading books and newspapers they can understand the law; but the old generation cannot understand it. It makes no difference how sensible they are, they are blind and it wants white men for the present to direct them. After five years they will take care of themselves; this generation cannot do it.

Q. Do you think the colored men are willing to fight for their liberty?

A. Yes, sir; if the government will protect them and give them a chance; but they must have white officers.

Q. Suppose the government protect the colored men against their masters and sell the land, half to the colored, and half to the white, what would be the effect—would not the colored man sell his land to the white man.
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A. I think he might; some of them are lazy and they do not understand how to take care of themselves against the white man; it is necessary to have some one here to do justice to both parties.

Q. Would the colored men like to go back to Africa?

A. No, sir; there is no disposition to go back, they would rather stay where they are. . . .
Activity #2: Attitudes at the End of the War

Directions (Group E): The following document represents the testimony of an individual who either made Reconstruction policy, or who was affected by Reconstruction policy. Your teacher has placed you in a group to analyze this document. As you do so, complete the worksheet by answering the questions it contains. Although you should discuss the document as a group, each member of your group should answer the questions individually.

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After each group’s spokesman has given his or her report, the teacher will lead your class in a discussion of the similarities and differences of each report, trying to identify common themes or ideas that run through each of the reports.

Thomas Long a former slave and a private in the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, assesses the meaning of black military service during the Civil War, 1870:

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/black_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=78

We can remember, when we fust enlisted, it was hardly safe for we to pass by de camps to Beaufort and back, lest we went in a mob and carried side arms. But we whipped down all dat- - not by going into de white camps for whip um; we didn't tote our bayonets for whip um; but we lived it down by our naturally manhood; and now de white sojers take us by de hand and say Broder Sojer. Dats what dis regiment did for de Epiopian race.

If we hadn't become sojers, all might have gone back as it was before; our freedom might have slipped through de two houses of Congress and President Linkum's four years might have passed by and notin' been done for us. But now tings can neber go back, because we have showed our energy and our courage and our naturally manhood. Source: Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment (Boston, 1870).
Activity #2: Attitudes at the End of the War

Directions (Group F): The following document represents the testimony of an individual who either made Reconstruction policy, or who was affected by Reconstruction policy. Your teacher has placed you in a group to analyze this document. As you do so, complete the worksheet by answering the questions it contains. Although you should discuss the document as a group, each member of your group should answer the questions individually.

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Col. Samuel Thomas, a Freedmen's Bureau official, describes the attitude of ex-Confederates toward the former slaves, 1865: [http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/black_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=82](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/black_voices/voices_display.cfm?id=82)

Wherever I go -- the street, the shop, the house, or the steamboat -- I hear the people talk in such a way as to indicate that they are yet unable to conceive of the Negro as possessing any rights at all. Men who are honorable in their dealings with their white neighbors will cheat a Negro without feeling a single twinge of their honor. To kill a Negro they do not deem murder; to debase a Negro woman they do not think fornication; to take the property away from a Negro they do not consider robbery. The people boast that when they get freedmen affairs in their own hands, to use their own classic expression, "the niggers will catch hell."

The reason of all this is simple and manifest. The whites esteem the blacks their property by natural right, and however much they may admit that the individual relations of masters and slaves have been destroyed by the war and the President's emancipation proclamation, they still have an ingrained feeling
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that the blacks at large belong to the whites at large, and whenever opportunity serves they treat the colored people just as their profit, caprice or passion may dictate.

Activity #2: Attitudes at the End of the War

**Directions:** As you read your group’s assigned document, answer the questions that follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is giving the testimony?</td>
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<td>Why is the person giving the testimony? What object is he trying to achieve?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What attitudes about reconstruction can you find in the person’s testimony?</td>
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<tr>
<td>When is the testimony given?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What problems does this person mention that will have to be solved during reconstruction?</td>
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</tbody>
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