



1954

Brown v. Board of Education

The Supreme Court rules segregation in public schools unconstitutional.

(Above, a newly desegregated Virginia classroom, 1954)

1964

Civil Rights Act

Prohibits discrimination in public places such as restaurants and movie theaters.

1965

Voting Rights Act

Outlaws practices used to disenfranchise black voters in the South.

1978

Affirmative Action

In *Regents v. Bakke*, the Supreme Court rules that race may be considered in college admissions.

2013

TODAY

The Supreme Court will revisit affirmative action and consider whether part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is still necessary.

Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri—had abolished slavery on their own.

But the Emancipation Proclamation was not enough to destroy slavery. There were 4 million slaves and 15 slave states in 1860. By early 1864, Lincoln and the Republicans realized that to permanently end slavery, they would have to amend the Constitution. The 13th Amendment was narrowly passed by Congress in January 1865 and ratified in December—eight months after the end of the Civil War and Lincoln's assassination.

Reconstruction & Beyond

The amendment marked the start of a new struggle to fulfill the promise of emancipation. After the Civil War, during the era of Reconstruction (1865-1877), Congress passed the 14th and 15th amendments (*see Timeline*), which recognized blacks, including former slaves, as U.S. citizens and granted black men the right to vote. For a time, blacks achieved a measure of political power in the South, and were elected to the House and Senate from a number of states.

But Reconstruction also provoked a backlash. White lawmakers in the South later amended their state constitutions and pushed through local "Jim Crow" laws to severely narrow the scope of black citizenship. The laws also enforced

strict racial segregation in schools and other public places, and by the early 20th century had effectively destroyed black voting in much of the South.

It would take another 50 years for real change to begin to take place. After World War II, the civil rights movement began to gather steam. In the 1960s, another wave of landmark federal legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (*see p. 10*), restored civil and political rights to African-Americans.

Even as we commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, questions about Lincoln and his reasons for issuing his wartime order remain. Some historians see him as a reluctant emancipator, a president who for a long time was unwilling to transform a war for the Union into a war to abolish slavery. Others think of Lincoln as a political genius who was biding his time until public opinion caught up to his views. There are those, too, who find both explanations inadequate, seeing them as failing to capture the complex nature of who Lincoln was as a politician and a man.

Either way, most historians agree that Lincoln not only managed to keep the Union together at a time when its survival was in great doubt but also succeeded in moving the nation into its next stage of moral development. •

'If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it.'