

UNITED STATES HISTORY

Directions: The following question requires you to construct a coherent essay that integrates your interpretation of Documents A-J and your knowledge of the period referred to in the question. High scores will be earned only by essays that both cite key pieces of evidence from the documents and draw on outside knowledge of the period.

1. In what ways did African Americans shape the course and consequences of the Civil War?

Confine your answer to the years from 1861 to 1870.

Document A

Source: Major General Benjamin F. Butler, report to the secretary of war, July 30, 1861.

In the village of Hampton there were a large number of Negroes, composed in a great measure of women and children who had fled thither within my lines for protection, who had escaped from marauding Rebels who had been gathering up able-bodied blacks to aid them in constructing their batteries on the James and York rivers . . .

First, what shall be done with them? Second, what is their state and condition? Upon these questions I desire the instruction of the department.

. . . Are these men, women, and children slaves? Are they free? Is their condition that of men, women, and children, or of property, or is it a mixed relation? What has been the effect of rebellion and a state of war on their status? When I adopted the theory of treating the able-bodied Negro fit to work in the trenches as property liable to be used in aid of rebellion, and so contraband of war, that condition of things was insofar met, as I then and still believe, on a legal and constitutional basis.

Document B

Source: Resolution of African Americans in Newtown, New York, August 20, 1862.

We, THE COLORED CITIZENS of Queens County, N.Y., having met in mass meeting . . . to consider the speech of Abraham Lincoln, . . . [wish] to express our views on the subject of being colonized in Central America or some other country. . . .

While bleeding and struggling for her life against slaveholding traitors, and, at this very time, when our country is struggling for life and 1 million freemen are believed to be scarcely sufficient to meet the foe, we are called upon by the President of the United States to leave this land and go to another country, to carry out his favorite scheme of colonization. But at this crisis, we feel disposed to refuse the offers of the President, since the call of our suffering country is too loud and imperative to be unheeded.

Document C

Source: Abraham Lincoln, a published letter, August 26, 1863.

There are those who are dissatisfied with me . . . to be plain, you are dissatisfied with me about the negro. Quite likely there is a difference of opinion between you and myself upon that subject. I certainly wish that all men could be free, while I suppose you do not. . . . You say you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you; but, no matter . . . negroes, like other people, act upon motives. Why should they do anything for us, if we will do nothing for them? If they stake their lives for us, they must be prompted by the strongest motive—even the promise of freedom. And the promise being made, must be kept.

Document D

Source: Republican Party platform, 1864.

. . . 3. Resolved, That as slavery was the cause, and now constitutes the strength of this Rebellion . . . justice and the National safety demand its utter and complete extirpation from the soil of the Republic; and that, while we uphold and maintain the acts and proclamations by which the Government, in its own defense, has aimed a deathblow at this gigantic evil, we are in favor, furthermore, of such an amendment to the Constitution . . . [that] shall terminate and forever prohibit the existence of Slavery . . .

7. Resolved, That the Government owes to all men employed in its armies, without regard to the distinction of color, the full protection of the laws of war . . .

Document E

Source: Charlotte Forten, African American teacher in the South Carolina Sea Islands, March 1864.

I never before saw children so eager to learn, although I had had several years' experience in New England schools. Coming to school is a constant delight and recreation to them. They come here as other children go to play. The older ones, during the summer, work in the fields from early morning until eleven or twelve o'clock, and then come to school, after their hard toil in the hot sun, as bright and as anxious to learn as ever.

. . . Many of the grown people are desirous of learning to read. It is wonderful how a people who have been so long crushed to the earth . . . can have so great a desire for knowledge, and such a capacity for attaining it.

Document F

Source: *The New York Times*, March 7, 1864.

There has been no more striking manifestation of the marvelous times that are upon us than the scene in our streets at the departure of the first of our colored regiments. . . .

Eight months ago the African race in this City were literally hunted down like wild beasts. They fled for their lives. When caught, they were shot down in cold blood, or stoned to death, or hung to the trees or the lamp-posts. Their houses were pillaged; the asylum which Christian charity had provided for their orphaned children was burned . . .

How astonishingly has all this been changed! The same [African American] men . . . now march in solid platoons, with shouldered muskets, slung knapsacks, and buckled cartridge-boxes down through our gayest avenues and our busiest thoroughfares to the pealing strains of martial music, and are everywhere saluted with waving handkerchiefs, with descending flowers, and with the acclamations and plaudits of countless beholders.

It is only by such occasions that we can at all realize the prodigious revolution which the public mind everywhere is experiencing. Such developments are infallible tokens of a new epoch.

Document G

Source: Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly*, August 5, 1865.



“And Not This Man?”

Library of Congress

Document H

Source: Proceedings of the Convention of the Colored People of Virginia, August 1865.

We claim, then, as citizens of this State, the laws of the Commonwealth shall give to all men equal protection; that each and every man may appeal to the law for his equal rights without regard to the color of his skin; and we believe this can only be done by extending to us the elective franchise, which we believe to be our inalienable right as freemen, and which the Declaration of Independence guarantees to all free citizens of this Government and which is the privilege of the nation. We claim the right of suffrage . . .

Document I

Source: Affidavit of Rebecca Parsons, former slave, 1867 (given to a Freedmen's Bureau agent).

Before me came Rebecca Parsons—a freedwoman . . . she was . . . a Slave of T. A. Parsons . . . she has four children now in possession of said Parsons. That when she was freed she informed said Parsons that she was going to her kindred. . . . He told her that she might go but her children belonged to Him & she could not have them . . . she found a home . . . & in February last she went to Parsons & demanded her children—Parsons told her “they were bound to him and that she should not have them unless she paid Him four thousand dollars.” . . . she was thus compelled to return without them—And she left them crying to go with Her.

Document J

AFRICAN AMERICAN AND WHITE PARTICIPATION
IN CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTIONS, 1867–1868



