

Commemorating the end of Slavery in the US

The Ratification of the 13th Amendment

Despite the assertion of equality in the Declaration of Independence, slavery was legal in all of the thirteen colonies in 1776. By the start of the Civil War, four million people, nearly all of African descent, were held as slaves in 15 southern and border states. Slaves represented one-eighth of the U.S. population in 1860.

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves only held in the eleven Confederate states that had seceded, and only areas of those states where the Union Army was in control.

The first of three Civil War Amendments, the 13th Amendment, abolished slavery in the United States. The proposed amendment passed the Senate in April 1864, but wasn't approved by the House of Representatives until January 1865 after failing twice before to get the two-thirds majority necessary. On February 1, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln approved the Joint Resolution of Congress submitting the proposed amendment to the state legislatures for approval. It took almost another year to reach the necessary three-quarters of the states needed to ratify the amendment. On December 6, 1865, Georgia was the 27th state to ratify the 13th Amendment, making

it law. Section 1 of the amendment states, *"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."*

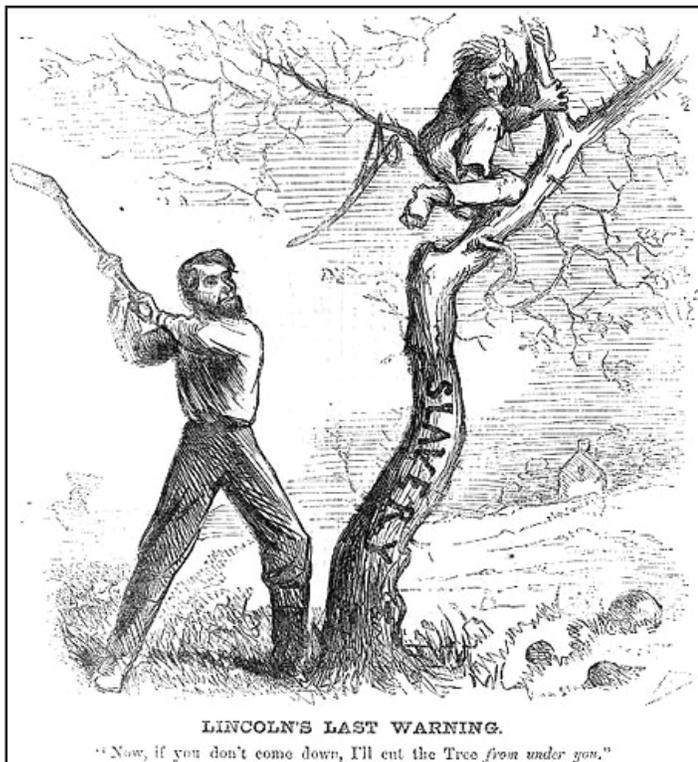
Newspaper Activities:

Look through the newspaper and other sources for people struggling for equal rights and protections. As a class, review the examples you've found and look for what they have in common. How are they unique?

After reading several editorials, write an editorial about equal rights.

Additional Resource:

For a lesson about the Civil War and Reconstruction go to <https://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/civil-war-reconstruction>



Wood engraving from Harper's Weekly, October 11, 1862

With the adoption of the 13th amendment, the United States found a final constitutional solution to the issue of slavery. Beyond that, the Civil War or Reconstruction Amendments sought to establish equality for black Americans. However, many states soon adopted "Black Codes" and "Jim Crow laws," rules and restrictions that by-passed constitutional requirements, continuing to treat African Americans as second class citizens.

All slaves were effectively freed before the end of 1865 but the struggle to achieve full equality and guarantee the civil rights of all Americans has proven to be a continuous fight that continues to the present day.

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