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Essay: Definition of Freedom

America has gone through a series of political changes in her entire lifetime. Various leaders come and gone each has a different vision, plans, and objectives for the future. In America’s history, several revolutionary movements started and ended. One of the movements was Reconstruction, it was an era in which America has several leaders with different accomplishments and goals. The debate on the freedom meaning of freedpeople remained the major conflict in American history. It is argued that the definition of freedom change from the colonial era to reconstruction.

This essay is centered on the freedom definition of two time periods that is the colonial era and the reconstruction era. The period of the reconstruction era was started in 1865 when America just ended the civil war. At that point, America becomes fully functional but this was not the easier task(*Africans in Spanish-America: Slavery, Freedom and Identities in the Colonial Era | Hensel | INDIANA*). America faced massive deaths while the south was non-existent both economically and politically. The civil war was ended but about 4 million slaves do not have the idea that how they can earn their livelihood. In 1865 through the 13th amendment they become free as well as in the future it becomes a great concern to several political leaders. The political leaders appeared on the stage with different reconstruction plan and each of them believes that their idea is correct. So, the 13th amendment ended slavery but the actual idea of freedom was not elaborated properly. Through this issued proclamation slaves were free in their country but also in most of the federation. According to this proclamation, it is the responsibility of the union army to protect the rights of these peoples because they declared free now. After this emancipation over 200,000 former slaves joined the union army while the remaining stopped working. They were destroying the economy of confederation as they did not grow the crops which confederacy required for their support(*America’s Reconstruction: People and Politics After the Civil War*). But they all work together for the development of freedom vision. The major event occurred during the civil war when the triumphant of William Sherman met with freedmen in Georgia. They both have a conversation related to what does freedom means. In this conversation, the two most important things came out in which one was land(“Part Two”).

The African Americans always wanted to be landowners for which they were struggling from generations. So, in the reconstruction era, the definition of freedom is associated with land ownership. The other crucial aspect of freedom was to be left alone. Through the congress thirteen amendments, the idea of slavery was completely abolished which destroyed the institution of slavery(*America’s Reconstruction: People and Politics After the Civil War*). This is the dream of African Americans which they used to envision in their life daily. Through the abolishment of slavery, they have the opportunity to enjoy all sort of rights which they can’t in the slavery system. They were free to find a job, get married and have a family. But with the idea of freedom that was some of the existential ways that give the sense of burden on their heart, soul, and head through which they thought that these opportunities can be seized. So, the 13th amendment did not describe freedom they even did not use the term 'freedom'. The amendment simply says that “slavery may not exist in this country”. It also has the second clause which says that “Congress has the power to enforce this by appropriate legislation”. This point raised the question that is freedom still exists and the Reconstruction started the debate on the freedom definition. Though African Americansaspired by the fact that they become equal citizens. They were happy about getting the right to vote and other equal citizens’ rights. Being the equal citizen the black people's idea ran completely against white supremacy. By the end of the civil war, slaves were a transition from slavery to freedom(*America’s Reconstruction: People and Politics After the Civil War*). Then they set up schools, have medical privileges, develop their court system and settled on the land.

So, the definition of freedom related to the reconstruction era gave black people independence on their land. This provides common identity grounds to both black and white. But unfortunately, it remained divided because of racism. As it was believed by Southern white that they were better than African Americans.

The concept of freedom also remained the conflict issue in the colonial era between colonies, settlers, slaves and unions ("Defining Freedom"). The Europeans who settled in America defined freedom in a completely different way which includes economic freedom, religious freedom, and independence. However, the idea of freedom of slaves was literal. As the colonial vision for freedom on religion which is that most of the early settlers came to this New World for religious freedom. According to Mayflower, "Having undertaken, for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first Colony in the northern parts of Virginia.” However, the concept of freedom changed in America after some time. As with the end of the revolutionary war, America becomes independent and the freedom concept changed.

The foundation of America is based on the freedom idea but the definition of freedom is described differently from one person to the other person(*Africans in Spanish-America: Slavery, Freedom and Identities in the Colonial Era | Hensel | INDIANA*). Freedom also influences and shaped American involvement in conflicts and war which include WWII, Civil war and revolutionary war. The freedom theme also shaped the law which is evident in the constitution. Hence, it can be seen that the definition of freedom is different at a different time in America.

Work Cited

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