

How did the life for black people in America improve in the late 18th century?

American attitudes toward black people living in America had always been tainted to some degree; even the passing of the civil rights bill was backed in 1886 by Radical Republicans. This bill entitled blacks in America to the most basic of human rights, and freed them from Southern Black Codes, which were laws placing restrictions on free slaves' right to vote, testify against whites, as well as carry weaponry in public places.

President Andrew Johnson vetoed this bill in 1866, saying: "This is a country for white men, and by God, as long as I am President it shall be a government for white men."

Attempts to improve the situation for slaves continued with Lincoln's Reconstruction Plan, which, although did not itself improve the situation, forced states to declare their views on the subject of slavery, and make oaths to the Constitution. Radical Republicans opposed it, as it did not manage to ensure equal civil rights for freed slaves.

The Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution was then passed by Congress in 1867. The amendment was designed to grant citizenship to and protect the civil liberties of recently freed slaves. However, most Southern states refused to approve of this amendment and therefore Radical Republicans urged the passing of further legislation to impose these measures on the former Confederacy. The 'Klu Klux Klan,' an anti-black organization was one of many which undermined these and many proposals to improve black people's welfare.

It was not until December 1865, when the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution had been passed, that slavery was finally abolished everywhere in America. President Lyndon Baines Johnson managed to persuade Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act in 1964; this made racial discrimination in public places, such as theatres and hotels, illegal.

However, after the American Civil War most states in the South passed anti-African American legislation, or Jim Crow laws. This included laws that discriminated against blacks when it came to attendance in public schools and using of facilities such as restaurants, theatres, hotels, cinemas and public baths.

At the end of the American Civil War radical members of Congress attempted to destroy the white power structure of the Rebel states. The Freeman's Bureau was established by Congress on the 3rd of March, 1865. In the year that followed, the bureau spent 17 million dollars establishing schools, hospitals and providing homes and food for former slaves.

The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) became the main opponent of the Ku Klux Klan. To show that the members of the organization would not be intimidated, it held its 1920 annual conference in Atlanta, considered at the time to be one of the most active Ku Klux Klan areas in America.

Although the Klu Klux Klan was destroyed for a while, it was eventually reformed in 1915 by William J. Simmons, a preacher influenced by Thomas Dixon's book, *The Ku Klux Klan*.

The Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution, passed in June 1866, was designed to grant citizenship to and protect the civil liberties of recently freed slaves. However, this was not approved of by most southern states, and limited its effects.

In conclusion, over this period in time, the situation for black people was obviously recognized as dire, resulting in many people coming forward with new ideas and laws designed to help. These seem to have been undermined to a great extent by people opposing them, thus restricting their power. Some of these did have very positive effects,

such as the Freeman's Bureau, and others less so. Although racist attitudes definitely remained, the situation, and public awareness off it, seems to have improved on the whole.