

# The Civil War and After: An Evaluation of the Black Issue in the United States from 1861 To 2008

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**ABSTRACT:** This article analyses the Black issue in relation to the Civil War and its consequences regarding the period from 1861, the year when the war began, to 2008, the year when Barack Obama became the first black president of the U.S.A. Motivated by what happened to Blacks, it is an analysis carried out through the historical perspective to prove that African Americans' search for full citizenship remains a permanent struggle. In consideration of the cause and the end of the Civil War before dealing with the reconstruction and the reaction of Blacks to their own situation, the permanence of the Black issue is remarkable. As a result, it is noticed that while laws are progressively changing in favor of Blacks, the American reality does not offer them the privilege to enjoy their full citizenship which remains a conquest.

**Keywords:** Slavery, Civil War, Emancipation, Reconstruction, Blacks, citizenship, U.S.A.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In spite of the unity and the determination to secure its independence, the United States of America (U.S.A.) knew an internal military conflict or a Civil War (1861-1865). It opposed the Northern states defending the U.S.A. (the Union) to the Southern states having formed the Confederate States of America (the Confederacy). Both parts disagreed about many questions such as tariff on imported goods, powers of the national government, and slavery. This last question was the most dividing one as it referred to conditions of Blacks used as slaves. Consequently the South in favor of slavery seceded and the war began. It is obvious that in this war opposing Americans to Americans, the main concern was the improvement of Blacks' conditions as citizens. In the end, this bloody, destroying and lasting war within the same country caused important human and material damages. However the end of this war won by the North saved the Union. But what happened after for Blacks or African Americans? Some existing works in relation to that question can be mentioned: A. L. Robinson (2005) produced an essay about the post-civil war America in view of Blacks confronted to segregation with Jim Crow laws while G. Jaynes (2005) produced an essay on the period going from the Reconstruction to the World War I with a focus on the Blacks' integration in the economic field. The present work is then an opportunity to make shortly an historical development for an evaluation of the Black issue from 1861, the year when the war began, to 2008, the year when Barack Obama became the first black president of the U.S.A. Stating the hypothesis that the Civil War and its consequences were both in favor and against Blacks' integration in the U.S.A., the objective is to prove that African Americans' search for full citizenship remains a permanent struggle. In fact, the analysis of racial matters according to Herbert Blumer (qtd in Almaguer 2009, p. 17), "should start with a clear recognition that it is an historical product [...]." The work begins with the way the Civil war took place in relation to the slavery problem, then it retraces the reconstruction process following the end of the war with a focus on Blacks' citizenship, and it finally looks at Blacks' contribution to the improvement of their own conditions as American citizens.

## II. THE CIVIL WAR AND THE SLAVERY PROBLEM

The Civil War found its source in the slavery problem which was the debate on its abolition. It must be remembered that in the colonial process the quick development of more industries in depended on large plantations of cotton, tobacco, sugar cane, etc. for export to the North or to Europe, but it depended on the North for manufactured goods and for the financial and commercial services essential to trade. As plantations required an important manpower including nearly 4 million enslaved blacks, the Southerners considered slavery as a positive thing and, for them, only slaves could do hard work in the hot climate of the South.

The practice of slavery visibly became part of the real existence of the Southern states in attempt to materialize its identity:

Even though only one of every three white Southern families owned slaves, and of these the vast majority owned only one or two apiece, the Peculiar Institution was held to be sine qua non for

maintaining and enhancing the unique nature of Southern life. The region's foremost politicians devoted their legislative talents to protecting slavery, and insisting upon its legality even in those western reaches where it could not possibly be made economically feasible. (Rubin Jr., 1979, p.4)

Even if slaveholders formed a small minority of the population, they dominated Southern politics and society. The debate on slavery came up to Congress. Early in the 1780's, Congress passed an ordinance prohibiting slavery in the Northwest Territory and permitting it in the south-west one. The expansion of the U.S.A. raised again the debate. In fact, at its admission each new state conquered or acquired should clarify its statehood: being a free state or a slave state. For instance, if Louisiana and Missouri entered the Union as slave states, Illinois did it as a free state in 1818.

Most of the time, Black slaves left the South and ran to the North to live in a free state. There were many runaway or fugitive slaves leaving the beast life in the slave states of the South. Tindall and Shi (1989, p. 384) have a comment on it in reference to Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel:

Antislavery forces found their most persuasive appeal not in opposition to the fugitive slave law but in the fictional drama of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, (1851), a combination of unlikely saints and sinners, stereotypes and melodramatic escapades—and a smashing commercial success. Slavery, seen through Mrs. Stowe's eyes, subjected its victims either to callous brutality or, at the hands of indulgent masters, to the indignity of extravagant ineptitude and bankruptcy. It took time for the novel to work its effect on public opinion, however.

This example of historians referring to a work of imagination produced by a female white writer to prove real facts simply explains how the country was concerned with that debate. The novel finally contributed to many Northerners' determination to put an end to slavery. The anti-slavery sentiment was obvious. But slavery resisted even when there were some visible actions against it. John Brown, a great fighter against slavery, with a group of armed people, invaded Virginia to free Slaves. Unfortunately he was arrested by the Marines, tried and hanged (L. C. Wood et al, p. 445). As the question of slavery was still unsolved, the opposition between the North and the South announced the separation. The South was about to secede in order to maintain freely the practice of slavery.

In the country, the anti-slavery states were more nervous than the slavery states. The South, including slavery states, feared a possible total prohibition of slavery and decided to cut all intercourses with the North by seceding from the Union. On December 20<sup>th</sup> 1860, the Deep South States (Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, South Carolina, and Alabama), all of them slave states came to form the Confederate States of America often called the Confederacy. They met at Montgomery, Alabama, to publish the new confederate constitution on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1861. This constitution stated that no laws could be passed against slavery. It provided a 6 years presidential term. And the first elected president of the confederacy was Jefferson Davis. The capital of the new nation was first Montgomery in Alabama, then Richmond in Virginia. When the South seceded to form the new nation, the U.S. president at that time, James Buchanan, simply declared that the southern states had no constitutional right to secede and the federal government had no power to control a state by force.

On March 4<sup>th</sup> 1861, the inauguration of the new federal (U.S.A.) president, Abraham Lincoln, took place and changed the Union vision on the secession. For Lincoln the Union must be saved. Unfortunately, the secession was the "casus belli" as the federal government was obliged to use military forces to annihilate the southerners' plan. In fact, as Lincoln spoke, the nation was moving toward the war. The hostilities began at Fort Sumter, one of the federal forts (military bases) located in the south at the entrance of Charleston, South Carolina. Even if Lincoln decided not to give up the fort without a struggle, the fighting did not last. Fort Sumter was occupied by the Confederacy on April 14<sup>th</sup> 1861. The war between the North and the South started. Four more states joined the Confederacy: Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina. And Richmond (Virginia) became the Confederate capital. There were two parties in conflict: the North and the South. For Southerners, they had to fight to maintain the separation and to win independence. For Northerners, they wanted not only to bring back the South to Union but also to free slaves. Behind separation the South did not want to stop slavery. Anyway for Lincoln, opposed to slavery, the main concern was to re-unite the nation.

The North, the Unionist which remained the United States of America, included 19 states plus 4 border-states permitting slavery but attached to the Union or the federal government (Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri). With a big population of 22 million peoples, the North had a greater military potential. But the South had only 9 million peoples including 3.5 million slaves whose loyalty to the Confederate cause could

hardly be assumed. The North also had more industries and its trade was developed while the South depended on Europe for manufactured products. Industries or factories should represent a big support for the army with machines, guns, canning food and other supplies, and good transportation as well. Moreover the North took profit from the blacks' contribution. However, young men in the North refused to join the army.

The South was the secessionist region which became the Confederate states of America including 11 states. It had the best military leaders who decided to fight for the Confederacy. The other advantage for the South was to defend its territories as the battlefield was its own soil. The North fighting far from home had the difficult task to conquer the South.

As the war was taking place, there should be a winner to end it. And the Union designed some military strategies which could be summarized as follows: to blockade the South, to control the Mississippi River, to capture Chattanooga, Tennessee (Chattanooga was the key city for the South), and to capture Richmond, Virginia. These strategies clearly defined the objectives of the Northern states defending the Union: to stop secession and save the United States of America. Its president, Lincoln, ordered a naval blockade of the South in April 1861. The next year, in February 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant led the Union troops from Illinois into Tennessee and overwhelmed southern forces.

At the beginning of the year 1863, Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation declaring that all slaves were free in the South but not in the border states (Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, West Virginia, Kentucky). Though "Lincoln had always insisted that the purpose of the conflict was to restore the Union, not to free the slaves," one may also notice that "[...] by a stroke of a pen [he] had changed the conflict from a war for the Union into a revolutionary struggle for abolition" (Tindall and Shi, 1989, p. 384). Even if the Confederacy did not accept the Proclamation, this document completed the strategy of the Union. All abolitionists in the North and Europe supported the war with greater strength.

After besieging Vicksburg, Mississippi, on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1863, the Union army and warships controlled the Mississippi River from north to south. They captured Chattanooga in September 1863. The South did not cross arms as the war was going on. Its new military leader, General Robert E. Lee attempted to invade the North in vain. Beyond two and a half years of fighting, the North won three quarters of its objectives. Richmond was still defended by General Robert E. Lee. To overcome this resistance, Lincoln appointed General Grant, Commander of all the armies in March of 1864. Grant's plan was successful with the march on Richmond. At the same time, General William T. Sherman (leading a Union army southeastward from Chattanooga) was marching through Georgia. General Lee's forces (Confederate army) were surrounded at Richmond and they surrendered. On April 9<sup>th</sup> 1865, the Civil War came to an end with the victory of the Union. Unfortunately, Lincoln, re-elected president for a second term in 1864, was assassinated on April 16<sup>th</sup> 1865.

### **III. THE RECONSTRUCTION AND THE BLACK ISSUE**

Even though the debate on how to reconstruct the Union was started before the end of the Civil War, Reconstruction became the main concern during the post-bellum years when the seceded states joined back the Union. It must be understood all initiatives to re-unite the nation, to repair infrastructures, and to foresee a better future for Blacks as former slaves (freedmen). There were presidential plans as well as the congressional plan to carry out this enterprise. Anyway, the Reconstruction came to an end.

Lincoln's initiatives for Reconstruction dated from 1862 during the civil war. First, Southern States (Tennessee, Arkansas, and Louisiana) re-conquered by the Union Armies were placed under military authorities replaced by a civilian government the next year. Then, thanks to the presidential pardon power, rebel states could be restored after taking an oath of allegiance to the Union and its Constitution. In addition, they had to recognize the end of slavery. Each former Confederate state would come back to the Union under these conditions. It was clearly defined in the Proclamation of Amnesty issued in December 1863. When 10% of voters in a given state had taken this oath, these citizens could vote in elections that would create new state governments and new state constitutions (Tindall and Shi, 1989, p. 441). After a state government had been formed and a constitution recognizing the end of slavery ratified, that state would once again be eligible for representation in Congress and Lincoln would consider the state fully readmitted to the Union. Some northerners thought this plan was less severe against the South and it discriminated blacks who could not take the loyalty oath, vote, or hold office. When Lincoln realised he should propose a new plan, he was assassinated. As his assassination took place while he was ruling the U.S.A. for a second term, his Vice-president, Andrew Johnson, a Southerner from Tennessee, replaced him. Johnson was loyal to the Union. All along his career, he had never been in favor of slaveholders imposing their will in the South before the war, and this convinced northerners.

Andrew Johnson followed his predecessor's plan and he kept on naming governors in former Confederate States. These governors would organize constitutional conventions, and only those who took the loyalty oath prescribed by Lincoln could vote for delegates to these conventions. High-ranking Confederate officials and people owning land worth \$20,000 or more could vote only if they were personally pardoned by the president (Tindall and Shi, 1989, p. 444). Once new state governments had been so organized, Johnson would deem the states to have re-joined the Union. The restored state should first take an oath of loyalty to the Union. But, in so doing, he did not require Lincoln's 10% of voters (Tindall and Shi, 1989, p. 441). Johnson was also very liberal in his pardoning policy, granting clemency to the most unrepentant rebels. In northern eyes, however, the worst affront was the institution by the new southern governments of the so-called Black Codes. These laws were meant to circumscribe black economic options and thus force the freedmen to continue working as plantation labourers. Under Johnson's presidency, the states meeting in Convention ratified the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment inspired by Lincoln. Its first section reads: "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" (Wood et al, p. 222). The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment officially abolished slavery at the end of 1865. It is clear that Reconstruction was strongly concerned with Blacks' rights denied by slavery.

Concerning Blacks' rights, Johnson's plan was rejected by some radicals in Congress such as Charles Sumner. The latter, though a Southerner, required more freedom for Blacks. For Senator Sumner of Massachusetts as well Representative Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, and other radical republicans, only Congress could better guarantee Negro right not Johnson's plan materialized by the black codes. Consequently, for Radical Republicans Congress should completely renovate the policy. They believed that Reconstruction represented a "golden moment" during which they could swiftly institute important social and economic changes in the South. Led by Sumner and Stevens, these politicians sought to take control of Reconstruction from the president, and to use a more powerful federal government to guarantee civil and political rights (including the right to vote) for the freedmen. Stevens and others even advocated that the government distribute land to the freedmen in order to ensure their economic independence. Because of this opposition, Congress passed the Civil Right Act in March 1866, reinforced by the passing of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment which reaffirmed state and federal citizenships for all Americans irrespective of race, birth, or naturalization in the following lines making its first section:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws (Wood et al, p. 222).

So, contrary to the presidential plan started by Lincoln and followed by Andrew Johnson, there was the congressional plan. In addition to the passing of the Civil Rights Acts, it kept on with the passing of other laws in 1867(Tindall and Shi, 1989, p. 450):

- 1- Military reconstruction act, an act stating the formation of new government in southern states.
- 2- Command of the Army Act, an act requiring the approval of the president's military decision by the army hierarchy.
- 3- Tenure of Office Act, an act requiring the consent of the senate if the president removed or appointed an office-holder.

When President Johnson violated this last law by suspending Mr Edwin M. Stanton the Secretary of War (august 1867), Stevens initiated an "impeachment" which finally brought President Johnson to trial before the Senate. After a three-month real from March 5<sup>th</sup> 1868 to May 26 1868, he was not found guilty. Though they disliked Johnson, many in Congress believed that ousting the president would set a dangerous precedent; as a result, his accusers failed to gather the two-thirds vote in the Senate needed for conviction. Johnson ended his presidential term in 1869. He was replaced by an elect president Ulysses S. Grant, a Civil War hero and a republican supporting also the congressional plan for reconstruction. It completely changed life in the South. The changes were most dramatically felt in the political field. Blacks had significant political potential after gaining the right to vote, especially in states such as South Carolina, Mississippi, and Louisiana, where they made up a majority of the population. Initially, they played a relatively small role in the Reconstruction governments, even in states where they constituted a majority.

After Reconstruction governments had been created, some southern whites set to work to destroy them. The tactic they found most effective was violence. Beginning in 1868, The U.S.A. was under the republican reign and the country knew some troubles due to white southerners forming groups in the image of the Ku Klux Klan and similar organizations. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a secret group which members dressed in white masks and



robes, terrorized Negroes, in an effort to oppose their voting right or their participation in political affairs. "It was a kind of resistance to the laws which explained the birth of the KKK meaning that blacks were not freed from white supremacists' project to deny their citizenship by all means. That reality which goes lasting in different forms till now" (Loumbouzi and Nkie Mongo, 2019a, p. 239). Not only many of Negroes were killed, but also some whites were in danger since Klansmen's activities threatened Carpetbaggers (Northern White Republicans and opportunist established in the south for economic reasons) and Scallawags (Southern White Republicans) (Tindall and Shi, 1989, p. 457). Although Grant won the 1868 presidential election with the slogan "Let Us Have Peace" (Tindall and Shi, 1989, p. 458), the violence continued. In 1869, Congress initiated the 15th Amendment to the Constitution which section 1 stipulates: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude" (Wood et al, p. 222). This amendment attempted to guarantee the continuation of black suffrage by outlawing the denial of voting rights on the grounds of race. The Enforcements Acts (the Ku Klux Klan Acts) passed by Congress in 1870 and 1871 outlawed the Klan's activities. "Although the Klan is impotent politically and openly denounced from all sides, it remains a dangerous force which thrives on racial and religious bigotry. Because of its past history, whenever the Klan moves there is fear of violence" (King Jr., 1991, p. 469)

Apart from the Black issue, the Reconstruction process was mainly concerned with the unity of the Nation shackled by the secession. The political tendency of this program did what it could to reconstruct the Nation but it came to an end only during Hayes' presidency. The Republican Rutherford B. Hayes won the 1876 elections and became (the 20<sup>th</sup>) President. In fact, after the disputed votes, the Electoral Commission created by Congress declared him president in reference to secret compromise, the Democrats accepted to support the new President to deal fairly with Negroes if Hayes could withdraw Federal troops from the South. Hayes named a white Southerner in his Cabinet (as Postmaster-general) and provided the South with Federal funds for the construction of new railroads. Moreover, to start his term, Hayes did what he promised by withdrawing Federal troops from the Louisiana and South Carolina. There were no longer Reconstruction governments in the South. This announced the end of Reconstruction.

In matters of Blacks' rights, the post bellum period maintained the problem and a real life could not be imagined for this group of people made of former slaves or descendants of slaves in view of what M. E. Mebane (1979, p. 93-94) notes:

Indeed, life in the South, for nearly a century after the civil War, was static, unchanging. A Black could be born, live his allotted number of years and die and, literally, have nothing happen to him during his life. The social and political and economic system of the South planned it that way. For by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century segregation laws in the South had fixed the black man and woman at the bottom of the social order, the planners hoped, forever.

The case of life in the South illustrates Blacks' lasting pains as experienced in one way or another in the country because of the historical inhuman practice which brought their parents there. Anyway, Blacks are convinced that the situation can change.

#### **IV. BLACKS AND CIVIL RIGHTS**

Civil rights are not specific to African Americans or Blacks in America. They are political, economic, and social rights which citizens are supposed to enjoy equally irrespective of their race or origin in a country. Here, these rights are appreciated in relation to Negroes or Blacks also known as Afro Americans or African Americans. From slavery to segregation, they were maintained as non-citizens in the U.S.A. in general and in the southern states in particular. This state of things motivated Civil War and remained one of the main concerns of Reconstruction. Did the two events change African Americans' plight? They did or they did not, the question is still on debate and it helps know African Americans' reaction to their own conditions.

In 1619, Blacks were indented servants with the first "twenty negroes" who arrived at Jamestown. A few years later, they were used as slaves to white masters in the primitive colonies, and the triangular trade increased. This was the source of Blacks' problems in the U.S.A. Long before the Civil War, some Negroes tried to fight as they could to improve their situation (for example: in 1663, the first slave revolt took place in Gloucester, Virginia; in 1800 Gabriel Prosser organized a slave revolt at Richmond, Virginia; in 1829, Nat Turner conducted the most important slave rebellion of the U.S.A.; just before the Civil War, Frederick Douglass told the whites that July 4 was not a blacks' day; etc). In the last decades of the 1800's, Blacks were losing some of their essential rights such as the right to vote. They were disfranchised.

Blacks' disfranchisement could be explained both racially and politically. Racially speaking, despite the constitutional progress in matters of citizenship in the U.S.A., white racism did not end mostly in the South

using the black manpower in its Plantations. Many white racists continued to regard Blacks as beasts even in the absence of slavery. They could not imagine a better life for former slaves or descendants from slaves. As such they should not vote. Politically speaking, the continuing impoverishment of Blacks and some white farmers gave the opportunity to the rising of a third political party: Populist Party or People's Party founded in 1891. This new party made itself popular by idealizing the farmer-based protest. Not only the populists divided the white vote but they also courted the Black vote what could become in some cases a balance of power. Consequently Southerner democrats feared the Populists' reign over the state governments thanks to black voters. In their appeal to poor white southerners for support, they claimed that the South could be dominated by Blacks. To avoid this so-called danger, they referred to disfranchisement. From the beginning of the 1890's, Southern States disfranchised Negroes through some laws such as the poll tax or literacy tests which prevented Blacks and poor whites together from voting as many of them lacked education and opportunity. To favor poor white voters, they passed a law called Grandfather Clauses stating that a person can vote if his father or grandfather had voted in 1867 when Blacks could not vote (It was only later in 1915 that the Grandfather Law was denied by the Supreme Court).

Blacks were also denied their rights because of segregation materialized by Jim Crow Laws. Even though the practice of segregation was a violation of Federal Civil Rights Acts which prohibited discrimination in places of public accommodation, it existed many years before 1890. From slavery to the Reconstruction, whites Southerners and Negroes could not go to the same public places. In matters of religion, for instance, Blacks finding that the largest religious groups in the South (Baptist and Methodist Churches) after the Civil War were controlled by whites, they created their own religious groups. Some laws passed in the Southern states officialised segregation between whites and Blacks everywhere. They were called Jim Crow Laws and required separation in schools, hotels, hospitals, playgrounds, restaurants, employments, in public transportation, and parks. The term Jim Crow originates from an old minstrel song performed by a white who impersonated an old, limping black slave, nicknamed Jim Crow.

The Blacks' issue needed more solutions than before because of disfranchisement and racial segregation. Some Black leaders reacted to this state of things. Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois, for example, gave different points of view to the following main question: how to contribute to the Blacks' improvement? Booker T. Washington (Booker Taliaferro Washington), born about 1856 in Virginia of a slave mother and a white father, attended a College for freedmen, Hampton Institute in Virginia too. In 1881, as a teacher he started a College for Negroes, Tuskegee Institute, in Alabama. For him, Negroes were poor because they had few skills. He then recommended practical (vocational) education to Negroes in order to establish an economic base for their progress. He founded several organizations, including the National Negro Business League. For Armstead L. Robinson (2005, p.114), "No person better exemplified the positive impact of access to education on black upward mobility than Booker T. Washington." Anyway, his contribution to Blacks' improvement through education is differently appreciated by W. E. B. Du Bois (William Edward Burghardt Du Bois). Born of black parents in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 1868, the latter first experienced racial practices as an undergraduate at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. He was the first Black to earn a PhD from Harvard University. Regarding also education as the inevitable solution for Blacks to improve their situation before anything else, he opposed his vision to that of Booker T. Washington:

This is an age of unusual economic development, and Mr. Washington's programme naturally takes an economic cast, becoming a gospel of Work and Money to such an extent as apparently almost completely to overshadow the higher aims of life. Moreover this is an age when the more advanced races are coming in closer contact with the less developed races, and the race-feeling is therefore intensified; and Mr. Washington's programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races (Du Bois, 1982, p. 87)

Du Bois claimed for a strong black leadership through higher education. Practical education was good, but only higher education could help Blacks stand as leaders able to challenge segregation through social protest and political action. Fighting against disfranchisement, he became one of the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909.

The movement of Blacks for their rights or simply the Civil Rights movement kept on with other Black leaders in the mid-1900. It shifted to a new stage when a brave black woman, Rosa Park, refused to give up her seat to a Whiteman while she was in the part reserved for blacks in a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1955. Following Rosa Park's arrest, black people strengthened the bus boycott and created the Montgomery Improvement Association presided by Martin Luther King Jr. The latter also founded the Southern Christian Leadership Association (SCLA) in 1957. "King believed that God was calling on both black and white Americans to examine their conscience about the state of race relations" (Washington, 1991, p. xiv). He

expertly led the movement and forced discussion of inequality in the United States. In fact, he studied the principles of non-violence of the Indian nationalist leader Mahatma Gandhi and successfully implemented them in his struggle for civil rights in the United States. Contrary to the non-violent protest, the Black Muslims or the Nation of Islam advocated racial separation and wanted to achieve equality by “any necessary means”. Joining this organization in 1952, Malcom X became its prominent leader. He left it to form a secular Black Nationalist group, the Organization of Afro- American Unity (OAAU). For the Trotskyist and biographer of Malcom X, George Breitman (qtd in Moses, 2005, p. 162), “Malcom had not become an integrationist.” Both Malcom X (1925- 1965) and Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968) were early assassinated. But the struggle for civil rights kept on and brought some changes. The third Monday in January of each year, for instance, has been celebrated as King’s day in America since 1983.

The election of Barack Obama as first Black president in America cannot make people forget the African Americans’ lasting struggle or proclaim the end of their minority status. In fact, in a study made on the role of new technologies and police misconduct with smartphones and social media help unveiling numerous scenes of police brutality against Blacks, it is noted:

In major cities of the United States, the 1990s, and the early 2000s were marked by several cases police abuses towards Blacks. Yet from the election of Barack Obama in 2008 and his reelection in 2012 as president of the United States, race-related police brutality has recrudesced and took a more warlike shape, with the killing of several unarmed black men by police officers. (Loumbouzi and Nkie Mongo, 2019 b, p. 64).

Instead of listing those well known cases of white policemen’s brutality against innocent Blacks, it must be understood that no privilege is offered to African Americans even when one of them became president as they were not given the privilege to enjoy their full citizenship at the end of the lasting and damaging Civil War. The comparison is true to the extent that both events in their time are closely linked to the future of Blacks. It is known that Barack Obama was not elected for Blacks but his election was a victory over racism what is strongly relevant in reference to various forms of injustice having victimized Blacks for long in America. Two centuries before, in their way to stop slavery, the starting point of Black issue, Americans were fighting against Americans in a Civil War which end was supposed to prevent Blacks from being ill-treated on racial basis. Progress is noticeable along the road towards Blacks’ full citizenship, but their civil rights still represents a main issue. Blacks and their leaders are not fighting alone since all the Nation is with them by its particular concern with human rights as progress made in matters of laws to complete the constitution proves it.

## V. CONCLUSION

The Civil War also called the War of the Union made Americans fighting Americans because of slavery. That armed conflict was a damaging one because of the strong resistance opposed by the Confederacy rejecting the abolition of slavery but it came to an end. The debate on the same question kept on with some solutions found in the post bellum period devoted to the reconstruction of the Nation. Unfortunately, the present study carried out through an historical perspective has helped notice that if the Union was saved at the end of the war, Blacks were maintained in their initial position which they always claim to change. Even though, there was a real improvement in matters of laws from the Emancipation Proclamation to amendments and other Acts in favor of Blacks, it is not surprising to hear some of them saying “Though we are not slaves, we are not free” (qtd in Shade, 2005, p. 92). It is paradoxical to notice the emergence of the Klan threatening and killing Blacks as it has been common to see white policemen brutalizing Blacks during the first Black president’s terms. Black citizens representing a minority did not fully enjoy their rights to freedom and equality in the U.S.A. Except the 1619 group of the 20 servants, Blacks entered the history of America by the door of slavery which seems to keep on charging them until now in different forms through disfranchisement, segregation, and violence. All along the years Blacks have been fighting and they have to keep on fighting to conquer their full citizenship since no laws are against their claims but a minority of white racists vainly aiming to triumph over the will of the Nation.

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