

# National Park Service Civil War to Civil Rights Resources

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Though the Civil War began the movement to extend equality to African Americans, the promises of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments provide easier to accomplish in theory rather than in practice. The promising start towards racial equality soon faltered during the tensions of Reconstruction and laws were soon enacted across the country which enforced segregation of the races and the second-class status of African Americans.

Today, nearly 150 years since the end of the Civil War, people of all races, colors, creeds and beliefs continue the struggle to make America a nation where truly "all men are created equal."

## Thematic Studies:

- [Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations \(2004, rev. 2009\)](#)
- [Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States \(2000\)](#)
- [Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights \(2007, rev. 2009\)](#)

## Books

- [Creative Teaching with Historic Places](#)
- [Celebrate African-American Heritage in America's National Parks](#)
- [Slavery: Cause and Catalyst of the Civil War](#)
- [Hispanics in the Civil War](#)

## Lesson Plans

- [Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plans African American themes](#)
- [Teaching with Historic Places: The Emancipation Proclamation](#)
- [Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plans \(all topics\)](#)
- [Civil Rights Curriculum 1700 -1900](#) (Scroll past first page)
- [Martin Luther King Lesson Plans](#)

- [Brown vs Board of Education Curriculum Materials](#)
- [Teaching with Museum Collections: Frederick Douglas](#)
- [Teaching with Museum Collections \(All Lesson Plans\)](#)
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#### Travel Itineraries

- [Places Reflecting America's Diverse Cultures](#) (Include Essays)
- [Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement: We Shall Overcome](#)
- [Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plan \(Black History Month Features\)](#)
- [Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plans \(all African American themes\)](#)
- [Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plans \(all topics\)](#)

#### Virtual Exhibits

- [National Park Service Virtual Exhibits](#)

#### Other Useful Resources

- [Dr. Martin Luther King on the Emancipation Proclamation](#)
- [National Park Service Latino History](#)

# Web Guide to: Stories from Civil War to Civil Rights in the National Park Service

Meet some of the people and visit some of the places that shaped our nation. Below are links to National Park Service content. For more about African American History in the National Park Service visit: <http://www.nps.gov/history/aahistory/>.

## Booker T Washington National Monument

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### A Time of Reckoning



Though the end of the Civil War brought the 13th Amendment, ending slavery and providing emancipation for more than four million enslaved people, the Reconstruction era during which Booker T. Washington came of age witnessed legislation that attempted to limit African Americans' new found freedoms. [Read more »](#)

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- [Fort Davis National Historic Site](#)
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### African Americans in the Frontier Army



Following the Civil War, permanent African American regiments were constructed in the United States Army. Although segregated due to race, these regiments served with honor and distinction, and helped to tame the Wild West. [Read more »](#)

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- [Born of Earnest Struggle](#)



When the Civil War began President Lincoln's primary concern was preventing the fracturing of the nation. But in 1862, with a shaky northern economy, fading optimism for victory, and growing fears of foreign intervention, Lincoln began to see freeing the slaves, not as a constitutional dilemma or a moral choice, but as a way of regaining momentum in the war. [Read more »](#)

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- **Confronting Slavery and Revealing the "Lost Cause"**

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The Civil War culminated eighty years of sectional tensions - tensions begot at various times and places by debate over economic policies and practices, cultural values, the extent and reach of the Federal government, but, most importantly, the role of slavery within an American society striving for identity and economic strength on the world stage. [Read more »](#)

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- **Jefferson National Expansion Memorial**

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### **Dred Scott Case Trials**



For decades the Supreme Court moved carefully around various controversies regarding slavery, but in 1857 it did no such thing. In the Dred Scott decision, it swept away decades of equivocation and ruled that the United States government had no legal right to limit the expansion of slavery into any part of the nation. Abolitionists and free-soilers were stunned. [Read more »](#)

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- **Gulf Islands National Seashore**
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### **Exceeding Expectations**



During the fight for freedom, African American soldiers were forced to deal with discrimination on a regular basis. For no other reason than possessing a different skin color, these men were perceived to be inferior troops. Yet over several fierce fights, men such as the Louisiana Native Guard proved their worth. [Read more »](#)

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- **Civil War Defenses of Washington**
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### **Living Contraband - Former Slaves in the Nation's Capital During the Civil War**



For thousands of African Americans during the Civil War, Washington, D.C. was a beacon of freedom - and a place where they could work to assist the war effort. There they found themselves digging fortifications, driving wagons, or cooking, but as free men and women selling their services, many for the first time in their lives. [Read more »](#)

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- **Maggie L Walker National Historic Site**
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### **Maggie L. Walker**



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Maggie L. Walker led the African American community of Richmond, Virginia, in many aspects. She was involved in the struggle for civil rights and maintained her successful banking and newspaper businesses and charitable societies. [Read more »](#)

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- **Harpers Ferry National Historical Park**
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### **Niagara Movement - Cornerstone of the Modern Civil Rights Movement**



To combat the injustices of Jim Crow laws and legal segregation, W.E.B. Du Bois and other leading civil rights advocates created the Niagara Movement and held their first public meeting at Storer College in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, invoking the spirit of John Brown. [Read more »](#)

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- **Reconstruction**
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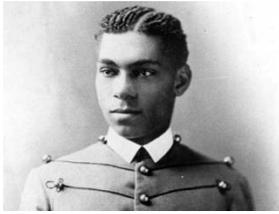


During Reconstruction, the Federal government pursued a program of political, social, and economic restructuring across the South-including an attempt to accord legal equality and political power to former slaves. Reconstruction became a struggle over the meaning of freedom, with former slaves, former slaveholders and Northerners adopting divergent definitions. Faced with increasing opposition by white Southerners and some Northerners, however, the government abandoned efforts for black equality in favor of sectional reconciliation between whites. [Read more »](#)

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- **Fort Davis National Historic Site**
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### **The First African American Graduate of West Point**



In 1877 Henry O. Flipper became the first African American to ever graduate from the United States Military Academy at West Point. However, his image was soured by events four years later when he was dismissed from the Army, and for 117 years his court martial tarnished his good name. [Read more »](#)

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- [\*\*The Freedmen's Colony on Roanoke Island\*\*](#)

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Roanoke Island is most famous for its "Lost Colony" of the 1580s, but 280 years later was the scene of another bold experiment on a new frontier. Following its capture by Union forces in 1862, Roanoke Island became the site of a Freedmen's Colony for newly freed African Americans, where education and a new way of living could be experienced. [Read more »](#)

## Stories from Emancipation and the Quest for Freedom

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- [\*\*The Robert Gould Shaw Memorial\*\*](#)

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The individuality of the figures in the Shaw Memorial is one of the monument's most striking and affecting characteristics. This version is on display at the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site near Cornish, New Hampshire. [Read more »](#)

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- [\*\*Civil War Defenses of Washington\*\*](#)

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## The United States Colored Troops and the Defenses of Washington



Coming from free states, or straight off of the plantations, freemen or former slaves, thousands of African Americans fought to destroy slavery once and for all with the United States Colored Troops. Despite the skepticism or outright hostility of some whites, these troops played a major role in both defending the Union capital and taking the Confederate one. [Read more »](#)

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- **Fort Monroe National Monument**

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## Fort Monroe and the "Contrabands of War"



In the early months of the Civil War, slaves were fleeing to Union lines seeking freedom but emancipation was not yet a stated war aim of President Lincoln. At Fort Monroe, General Benjamin Butler came up with a creative solution to this difficult situation. [Read more »](#)

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- **Fort Smith National Historic Site**

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## Fort Smith's United States Colored Troops



Although African-Americans served in every previous American war, it was through the decisions of specific commanders. In a controversial move, the War Department called for all Union commanders

to receive black soldiers into the Union forces. This official action led to the formation of the 11th Regiment United States Colored Troops, among others, in the fall of 1863. [Read more »](#)

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- **Antietam National Battlefield**
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### **Freedom At Antietam**



- As a result of the Union victory at the Battle of Antietam, Abraham Lincoln was able to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, making the Civil War a fight to end slavery as well as preserve the Union. [Read more »](#)
  - **Civil War Defenses of Washington**
- 

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- **Wilson's Creek National Battlefield**
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### **Slaves, Unionists, and Secessionists**



Local residents of the Wilson's Creek, Missouri area in 1861 were a microcosm of the divided nation, bringing with them different backgrounds and beliefs about slavery and Union. For example, John Ray and his wife, Roxanna, whose farm would be in the midst of the battle, were slave owning Southerners, though they supported the Union. [Read more »](#)

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- **The Changing War**

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Begun as a purely military effort with the limited political objectives of reunification (North) or independence (South), the Civil War transformed into a social, economic and political revolution with unforeseen consequences. As the war progressed, the Union war effort steadily transformed from a limited to a hard war; it targeted not just Southern armies, but the heart of the Confederacy's economy, morale, and social order-the institution of slavery. [Read more »](#)

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- **The Freedmen's Colony on Roanoke Island**

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- **The Military Experience**



The course of the war was the cumulative result of political, economic, and social policies that affected (and were affected by) military operations and battles waged across a front spanning 2,000 miles. The battles and campaigns of 1861-65 ultimately demonstrated that the simple application of massive military force, even with innovations in technologies and tactics, was insufficient to resolve a conflict between two sections mobilized against one another politically, socially, philosophically, economically, and emotionally. [Read more »](#)

**See attached book for more information about  
African American History in National Parks**