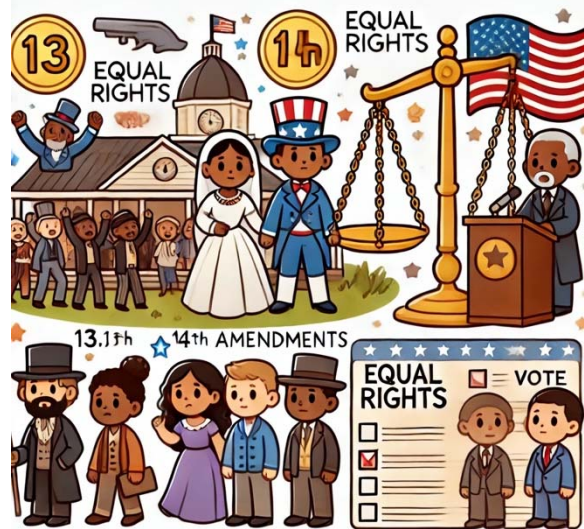


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Freedom Amendments

After the American Civil War ended in 1865, the United States faced a big question: What would happen to the millions of newly freed African Americans? To help answer this, the government passed three important amendments to the U.S. Constitution: the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. These changes helped shape American society by ending slavery, giving citizenship rights, and allowing African American men to vote.

The 13th Amendment: Ending Slavery

The 13th Amendment, passed in 1865, made slavery illegal in the United States. Before this, enslaved people were forced to work without pay and had no rights. Now, they were legally free. However, life was still very difficult. Many formerly enslaved people had no homes, jobs, or education. Some worked as sharecroppers, renting land and paying for it with a share of their crops.

The 14th Amendment: Citizenship and Rights

In 1868, the 14th Amendment was passed. It said that anyone born in the U.S. is a citizen. This meant that African Americans were now legally recognized as citizens. It also said that all people, no matter their race, should be treated equally under the law. This was important because some Southern states passed Black Codes, unfair laws that limited the rights of African Americans. The 14th Amendment was meant to protect them from discrimination.

The 15th Amendment: The Right to Vote

In 1870, the 15th Amendment was passed, giving African American men the right to vote. Before this, only white men could vote in most places. The amendment said that no one could be denied the right to vote because of their race. This was an important step toward fair elections. However, some Southern states created poll taxes, literacy tests, and other unfair rules to stop African Americans from voting.

The Impact of These Amendments

The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments helped change America by giving freedom and rights to African Americans. However, not everyone followed these new laws. Some people found ways to ignore or work around them, leading to continued struggles for equality. Even today, these amendments remain important symbols of justice and fairness in American history.