



Democracy Reborn: The Fourteenth Amendment and the Fight for Equal Rights in Post-Civil War America

By Garrett Epps

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"Engaging . . . With a novelist's eye for biographical detail, Epps has written an . . . enthralling book."--*David W. Blight, Chicago Tribune*

The last battle of the Civil War wasn't fought at Appomattox by dashing generals or young soldiers but by middle-aged men in frock coats. Yet it was war all the same--a desperate struggle for the soul and future of the new American Republic that was rising from the ashes of Civil War. It was the battle that planted the seeds of democracy, under the bland heading "Amendment XIV." Scholars call it the "Second Constitution." Over time, the Fourteenth Amendment--which at last provided African Americans with full citizenship and prohibited any state from denying any citizen due process and equal protection under the law--changed almost every detail of our public life.

Democracy Reborn tells the story of this desperate struggle, from the halls of Congress to the bloody streets of Memphis and New Orleans. Both a novelist and a constitutional scholar, Garrett Epps unfolds a powerful story against a panoramic portrait of America on the verge of a new era.

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- Sales Rank: #3742815 in Books
- Published on: 2007-09-04
- Released on: 2007-09-04
- Format: Bargain Price
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.40" h x .93" w x 5.39" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 352 pages



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In December 1865, the 39th Congress had urgent business, says Epps in this passionate account of Reconstruction politics. If the former Confederate states were readmitted to the Union, ex-slaves would swell those states' congressional power, but without congressional protection, the freedmen would never be allowed to vote, and the Southern white elite would have disproportionate influence in the federal government. Epps follows every twist of Congress's response to this problem, and his energetic prose transforms potentially tedious congressional debates into riveting reading. He illuminates the fine points, such as the distinction in the 19th century between civil rights—relating to property and employment, which many thought blacks should have—and political rights, which some thought only educated men of wealth should have. Congressmen were not the only people energized by the conundrums of electoral representation. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton petitioned for women's suffrage on the same grounds as blacks. While Congress hammered out the 14th and 15th Amendments, white Southerners were putting in place the Jim Crow codes that would subvert those amendments until the 1960s. As constitutional scholar and novelist Epps (*The Shad Treatment*) notes in a rousing afterword, there are many corners in which they are not fully realized today. 7 pages of b&w illus. (Sept. 1)

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Review

"The Civil War amendments redeemed the Constitution from the slavery concessions that had betrayed its preamble and perpetuated human bondage both North and South. Garrett Epps' new book is indispensable reading for Americans to know how our constitutional history has affected us all. A combination of the finest scholarship with unsurpassed insight."--William Van Alstyne, Perkins Professor of Law emeritus, Duke University; Lee Professor of Constitutional Law, College of William and Mary

"Garret Epps is one of our best legal historians, and he has produced a fascinating book on the creation and impact of the 14th Amendment. The people who wrote our Constitution were America's original Founders, but the amazing group that produced the 14th Amendment were like our second wave of Founders, helping our nation be reborn into the democracy it is today."--Walter Isaacson, author, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*

"It is best to be blunt. This is a thrilling book. Garrett Epps has woven together the tragic strands of America's effort to deal with the issue of race in the Constitution. Law, politics and statecraft clash in a great drama."--Anthony Lewis, author of *Gideon's Trumpet*

"Garrett Epps is one of the most fluid and accessible writers in the legal academy. Not surprisingly, he has written a marvelous overview of immediate post-Civil War politics that gave us the Fourteenth Amendment and, as importantly, a new understanding of the American experiment."--Sanford Levinson, University of Texas Law School, author of *Our Undemocratic Constitution: How the Constitution Goes Wrong (and How We the People Can Correct It)*

About the Author

Garrett Epps is the author of *The Shad Treatment* and *The Floating Island: A Tale of Washington*. He is

Orlando John and Marian H. Hollis Professor at the University of Oregon School of Law where he teaches constitutional law and a special course in creative writing for law students. Epps writes fiction and poetry as well as nonfiction, and has translated or adapted literature into English from both Spanish and Italian. He has two children, Daniel and Maggie.

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