



# STATE OF CHANGE: CIVIL RIGHTS THE VIRGINIA CONSTITUTION

## About the Exhibit

### *State of Change: Civil Rights and the Virginia*

**Constitution** is a collaborative project of the John Kenny Forrer Learning Commons. The exhibit creators are:

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1776

**29 JUNE**

### Introduction to the Virginia Constitution

Virginia has had a state constitution since 1776 when the Declaration of Independence was signed. Since being drafted in 1776 there have been five major draft changes to the Virginia Constitution: 1830, 1851, 1864, 1870, and 1902. In 1969 there was a special assembly in Richmond which amended the Virginia Constitution that was ratified in 1971 and serves as our current constitution.

1777-1859

### Pre-Civil War Era

Life as a slave in the Valley was difficult, as it was everywhere. Physical punishment was part of the system. Hiring, often considered an especially severe form of slavery, was prevalent in the Valley. Under this system, masters, often from slave-rich eastern Virginia, sent their surplus bondpersons elsewhere to labor for a fee. The term of service typically was one year, and it removed slaves from their homes and families, instead saddling them with year-to-year instability.

1866-1949

### Post-Civil War Era

Following the Civil War, the idea of the "Lost Cause" began to emerge.



Scholarship Curator,  
Class of 2022

- Vickie Montigaud-Green—Research Support Librarian
- Decklan Wilkerson—Special Collections Intern, Class of 2021

For more information about the exhibit, visit our About the Exhibit page.

## Sign Our Virtual Guest Register

Let us know what you think of the exhibit. You can sign our virtual guest register and leave comments by visiting our guest register page.

Among the key aspects of Lost Cause ideology were beliefs that the Civil War was not fought over slavery and that the South was doomed to fail in the conflict yet fought anyway. During Reconstruction, much literature emerged promulgating these ideas.

1950-1970

### "The Times They Are a-Changin'": The Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement had a major influence on the 1971 Virginia Constitution. Without questioning the status quo, Jim Crow laws would have permeated society for even longer than they did. Such laws included the segregation and disenfranchisement that was codified in the earlier 1902 Virginia Constitution.

1950-1960

### The Church of the Brethren and the Civil Rights Movement

The Church of the Brethren was a major proponent of civil rights and dedicated considerable resources in advocating for racial equality. Multiple documents preserved in Bridgewater College Special Collections exhibit the Brethren's commitment to racial equality. Archived sermons address racial harmony.

1963

### The Danville Protests

In the summer of 1963, the city of Danville, Virginia, erupted in protests with growing calls by African Americans for equal opportunity. One among several catalysts for increased civil rights action occurred on June 5th.

1971-2021

### The 1971 Constitution



In Richmond, in 1970 the Virginia state governor at the time, Mills Godwin, formed a joint effort with the Virginia General Assembly to form the Commission on Constitutional Revision. This committee met in 1968 and worked to modernize the Constitution as the last major changes to the Virginia Constitution were in 1902.

**2021-**

## **There's Work Left to Be Done**

There's much more to explore in terms of Virginia's Constitutions and Civil Rights. We've provided further reading suggestions to help you find books that expand on what we have covered in this exhibit. Let's keep reading and keep the conversation going.

### **Bridgewater College Library Services**

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