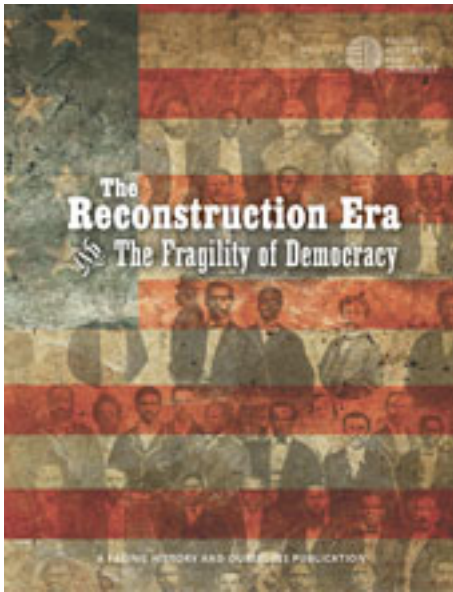




Beaufort's Reconstruction Initiative Enters Next Phase with the Launch of Educational Programs

By Mindy Lucas

Middle school teacher Emily Fowler sat in what amounted to a classroom of her own at the Santa Elena History Center in Beaufort recently.

Fowler, who teaches at Lowcountry Montessori in Beaufort, joined about 15 other educators, volunteers and community leaders for the launch of a new "Teaching the Teachers" pilot program which aims to equip educators with the skills and resources needed to teach Reconstruction.

It's a period in history that many Americans have no idea even existed, some in the group pointed out.

"I'm really encouraged," said Fowler later on a break, discussing the training.

Teaching the Lessons of History

Written by Mindy Lucas

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Once a history major herself, Fowler said it's the Montessori philosophy, or "Pedagogical Place," to give students a sense of where they fit into the timeline of history.

"I think this training will fit in well with that (philosophy)," she said.



The pilot program is actually one of several educational initiatives recently launched by the same group that successfully pushed for the designation of Beaufort's Reconstruction Era National Monument.

Now known as the Reconstruction Era National Historical Park, the site has brought new awareness to the critical role Beaufort played in Reconstruction, or the period just after the Civil War when the country grappled with the devastating and lasting effects of war and how to integrate millions of newly freed slaves into the country's social, economic and political systems.

Now, a new phase is beginning for the project, says Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling, who spearheaded both the initiative and the advisory board of more than 100 local, regional and national advisors.

"So we've gone from being advocates for a monument to being advocates for a grassroots educational program," said Keyserling.

The Long Road to a Monument

The effort to raise awareness of the critical role Beaufort played in Reconstruction wasn't always a smooth one.

The idea to create some sort of monument or official recognition of the area's role and historic sites began nearly 20 years ago with a visit from then U.S. Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt and historian Eric Foner.

Babbitt, who had read Foner's book, "Reconstruction, America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877," was the first person in his position to ask why Reconstruction was "entirely unheralded by the National Park Service," according to an article in *The Atlantic* about the visit in 2000.

After a long struggle, including opposition from then U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson and the Sons of Confederate Veterans, a renewed effort to establish a monument to Reconstruction was eventually revived in 2016 by U.S. Rep. James Clyburn and then U.S. Rep. Mark Sanford.

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