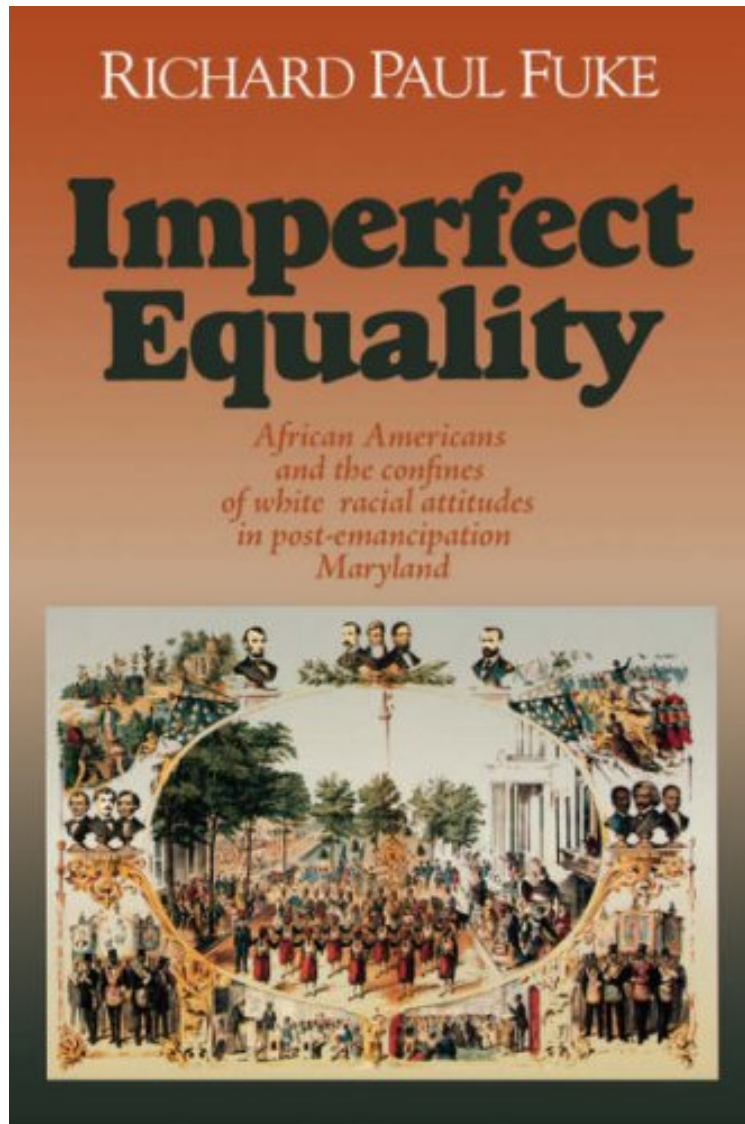


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Imperfect Equality: African Americans and the Confines of White Ideology in Post-Emancipation Maryland. (Reconstructing America)

Richard Fuke

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Richard Fuke : Imperfect Equality: African Americans and the Confines of White Ideology in Post-Emancipation Maryland. (Reconstructing America) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Imperfect Equality: African Americans and the Confines of White Ideology

in Post-Emancipation Maryland. (Reconstructing America):

In *Imperfect Equality*, Richard Fuke explores the immediate aftermath of slavery in Maryland, which differed in important ways from the slaveholding states of the South: it never left the Union; white radicals had a period of access to power; and even prior to legal emancipation, a large free black population resided there. Moreover, the presence of Baltimore, a major city and port, provided abundant evidence with which to compare the rural and the urban experience of black Marylanders. This state study is therefore uniquely revealing of the successes and failures of the post-emancipation period. The transition in Maryland from a slave to a free society, Fuke argues, presented to black Marylanders opportunities to achieve previously inaccessible goals. Blacks were able to realize some goals, such as greater land ownership, control over the labor of their children, education, and the formation of independent cultural and social organizations, through their own intrepidity combined with the support of white radicals as well as with the assistance of the Freedmen's Bureau, the United States Army, and some state-controlled agencies. Other goals—such as social equality, economic opportunity and advancement, and suffrage—remained beyond the reach of blacks, not only because of conservative white opposition, but also, Fuke argues, because of the attitudinal limitations of white radicals unable to confront the full range of post-emancipation possibilities. Calling upon a very broad range of sources, Fuke demonstrates that after emancipation, "Black Marylanders neither enjoyed total freedom nor suffered absolute coercion, but their struggle made two things clear: much of whatever they might accomplish, they would have to do by themselves; and such efforts would remain confined by white attitudes determined to regulate them."

State-based studies of the postemancipation experiences of African Americans are an important contribution to the literature. Each study affirms the essential notion that emancipation was freedom, but only in the narrowest sense of the term. The post-Civil War experiences of Maryland freedmen demonstrated to all African Americans that the journey to liberty would be a long one. Using the voluminous records of the Freedmen's Bureau, other federal and state records, census materials, manuscript resources and newspapers, as well as an extensive bibliography of secondary sources, Fuke details the limited nature of emancipation through chapters on the work of the Freedmen's Bureau, the quest for land, the plight of children, educational developments, urban patterns of Baltimore, and white racial attitudes. There is a particularly good discussion of the politics of race and the limits of the political ideology of freedom. Fuke's treatment of the essentially segregated black society is also significant. Missing is discussion of divisions within the black community over the meaning of emancipation and the strategies to be used to gain the full benefits of the postwar world. A selection of photographic reproductions enhances the book. Upper-division undergraduates and above. (Choice)

From the Inside Flap
In *Imperfect Equality*, Richard Paul Fuke explores the immediate aftermath of slavery in Maryland, which differed in important ways from the slaveholding states of the South: Maryland never left the Union; white radicals had a period of access to power; and even prior to legal emancipation, a large free black population resided there. Moreover, the presence of Baltimore, a major city and port, provided abundant evidence with which to compare the rural and the urban experience of black Marylanders. This state study is therefore uniquely revealing of the successes and failures of the post-emancipation period. The transition in Maryland from a slave to a free society, Fuke argues, presented to black Marylanders opportunities to achieve previously inaccessible goals. Blacks were able to realize some goals -- greater land ownership, control over the labor of their children, education, and the formation of independent cultural and social organizations -- through their own intrepidity combined with the support of white radicals and the assistance of the Freedmen's Bureau, the United States Army, and some state-controlled agencies. Other goals, such as social equality, economic opportunity and advancement, and suffrage, remained beyond the reach of blacks, not only because of conservative white opposition, but also, Fuke argues, because of the attitudinal limitations of white radicals. Calling upon a very broad range of sources, Fuke demonstrates that after emancipation, "Black Marylanders neither enjoyed total freedom nor suffered absolute coercion, but their struggle made two things clear: much of whatever they might accomplish, they would have to do by themselves; and such efforts would remain confined by white attitudes determined to regulate them".

About the Author
Richard Paul Fuke is Associate Professor of History at Wilfrid Laurier College in Ontario, Canada.